

# **SQE: EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE SOLICITORS QUALIFYING EXAMINATION\***

**(\*BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK)**

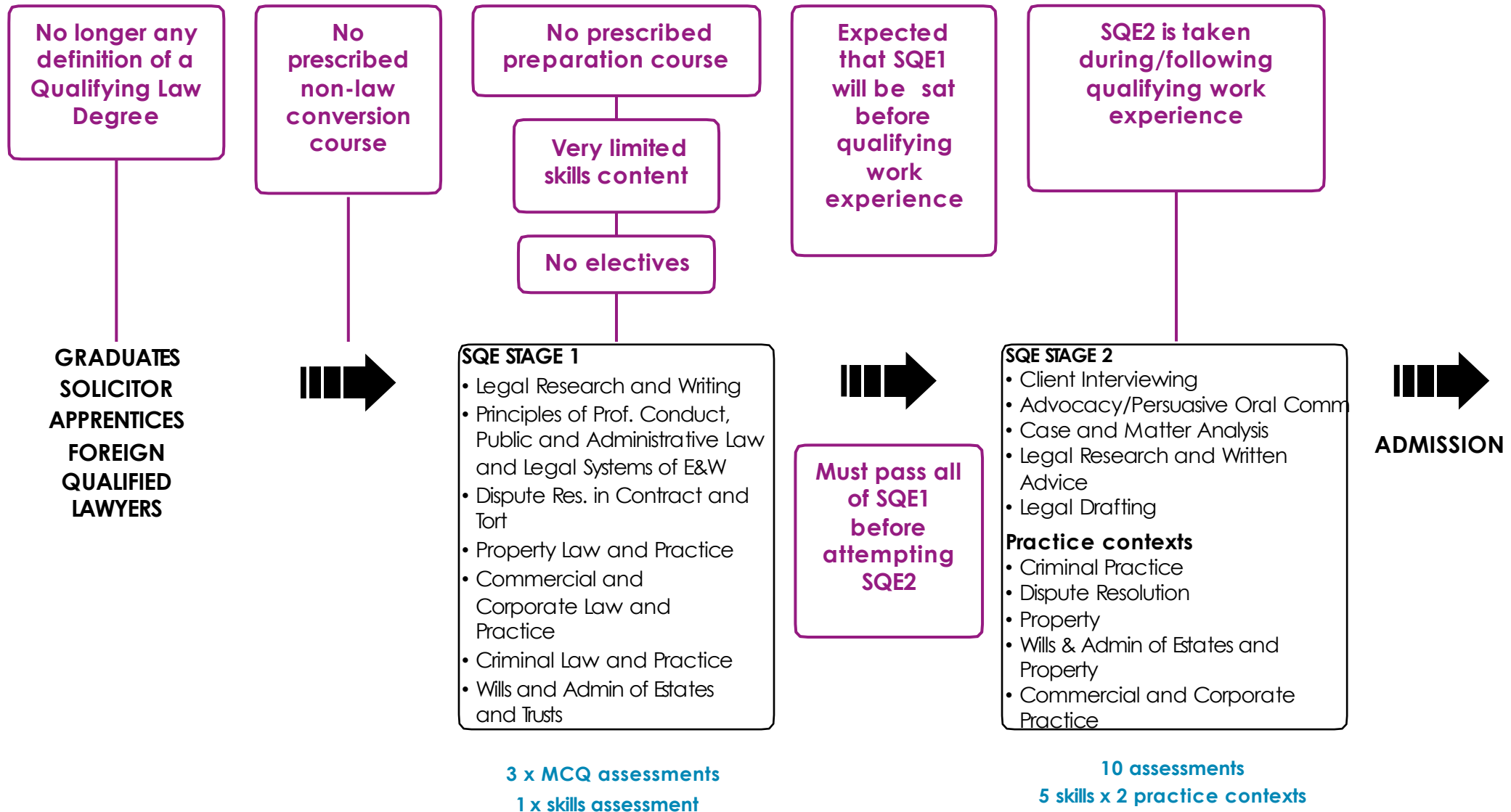
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**JUNE 2019**

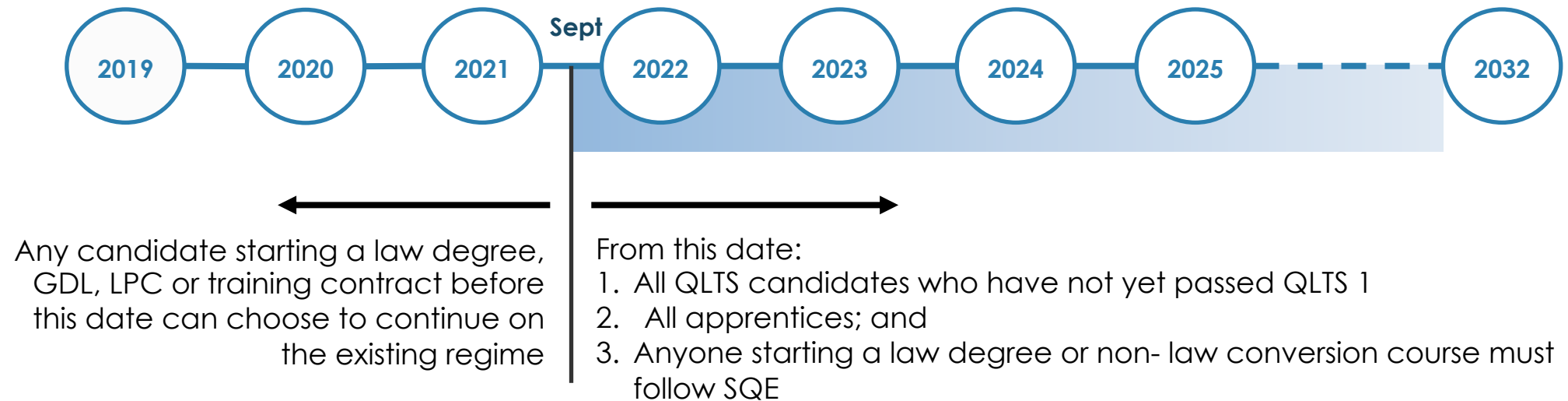
## In this morning's session...

- **The SQE** – what do we know so far?
- **Getting ready for practice** – will the SQE be enough?
- **Possible programmes and delivery models**
- **Solicitor apprenticeships** - including graduate entry options
- **Points to consider**
- **Q&A**

# SQE: The SRA's Proposal



# SQE Implementation Timeline



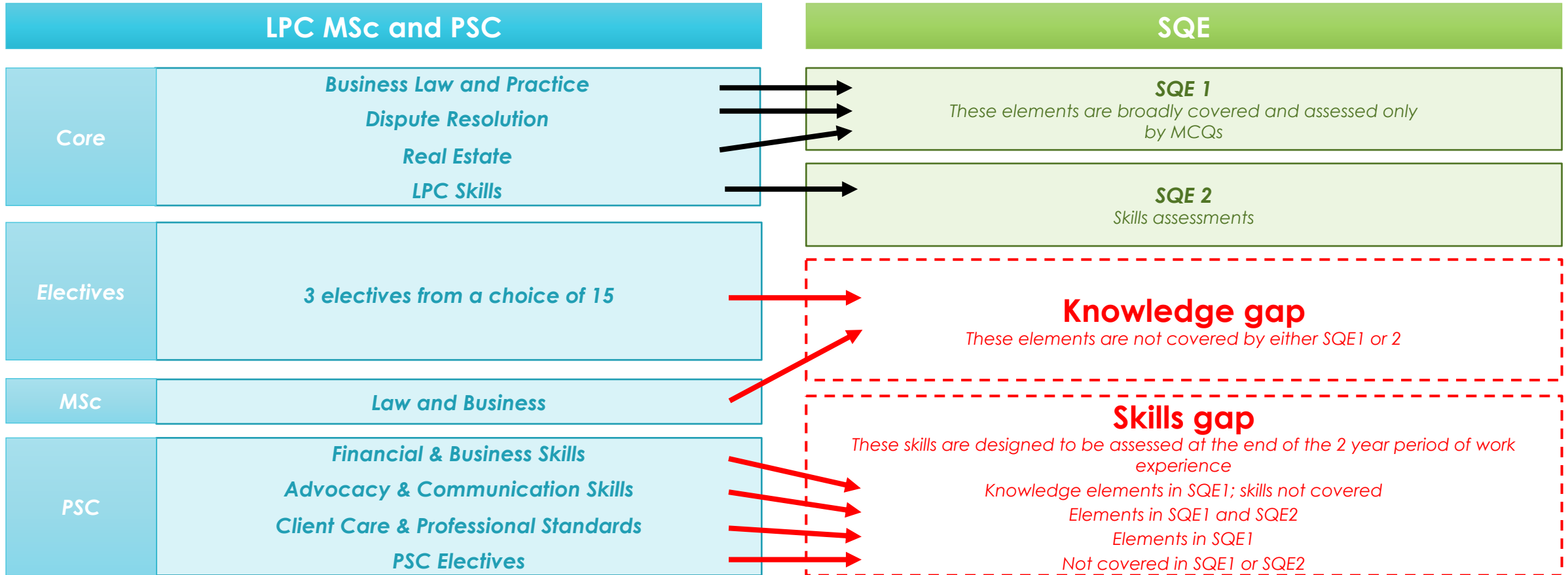
Key questions generated by the proposed change:

- When to transition to SQE? Incremental transition or 'big bang'?
- When should trainees take SQE 2?
- What is the impact on trainee induction and ongoing development programmes?

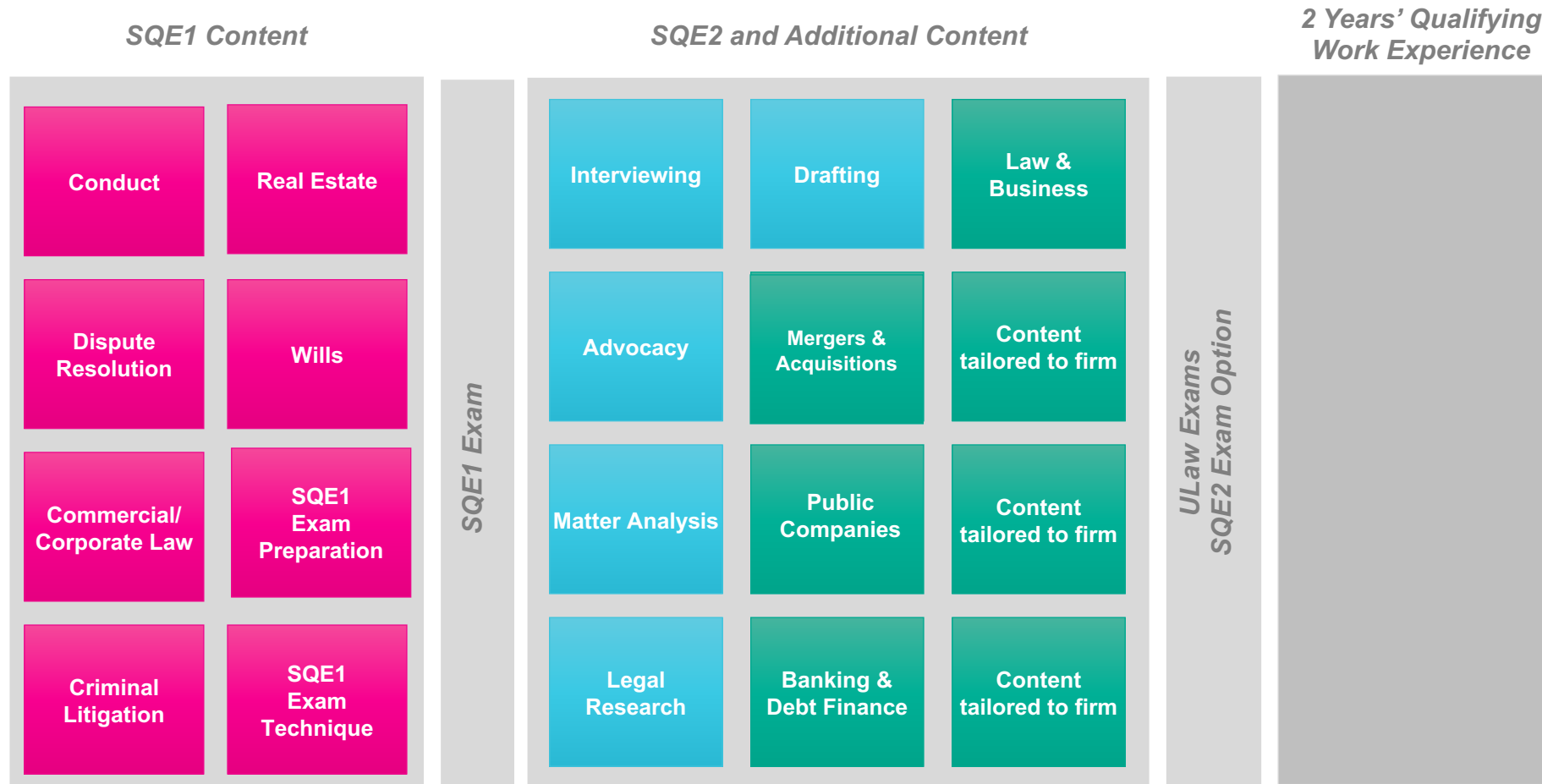
# What do we know so far?

- **Assessment Provider?** Kaplan using Pearson Vue centres
- **What type of MCQs will be used?** Single Best Answer questions (SBAs) with 5 options. These give candidates 5 alternative answers from which they must choose the best answer.
- **What will the pass mark for SQE 1 and 2 be?** No set pass marks – to be based on professional judgement of solicitor examiners.
- A panel of solicitors looks at each question to judge how many just competent newly qualified solicitors (out of 10) would have got the question right. (Modified Angoff).
- **SQE Pilots** – feedback?
- **Application to Legal Services Board** - 2020

# Is the SQE enough? Knowledge and skills gaps

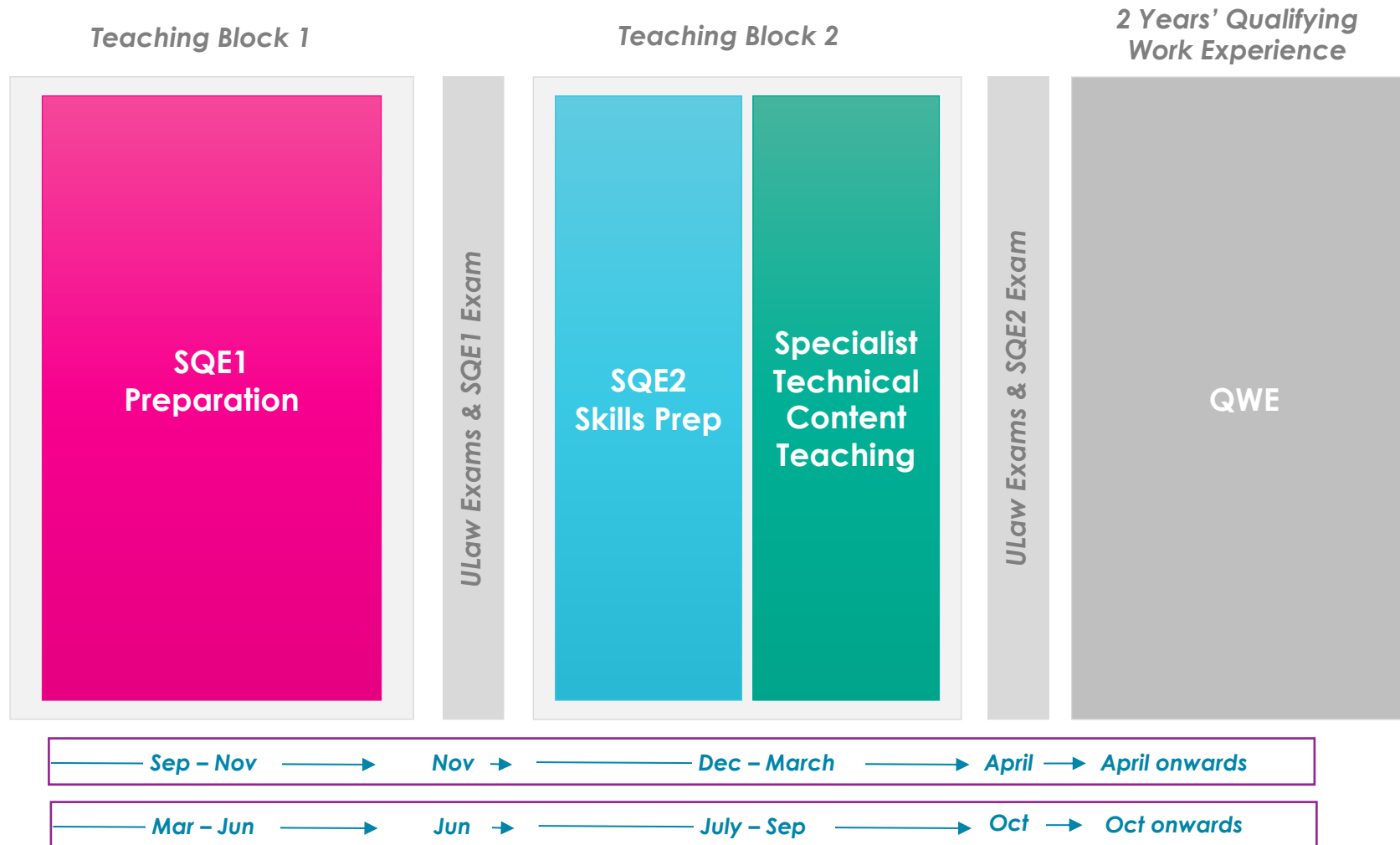


# Masters' programmes incorporating SQE1 and SQE2 preparation



Programme modules are indicative only and could be delivered using a variety of delivery models.

# SQE Qualification Example



N.B. This programme could be awarded as a Masters degree

# Lessons from the Bar...

- The Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) has had centralised MCQ assessments for some papers since 2010

## CHALLENGES

- ✘ There was no pilot before the first assessments
- ✘ Law schools did not set the assessments
- ✘ Use of practitioners to set assessments led to overly high standards and assessing of obscure topics
- ✘ Wide syllabus and not being able to cover all in teaching
- ✘ Higher fail rate

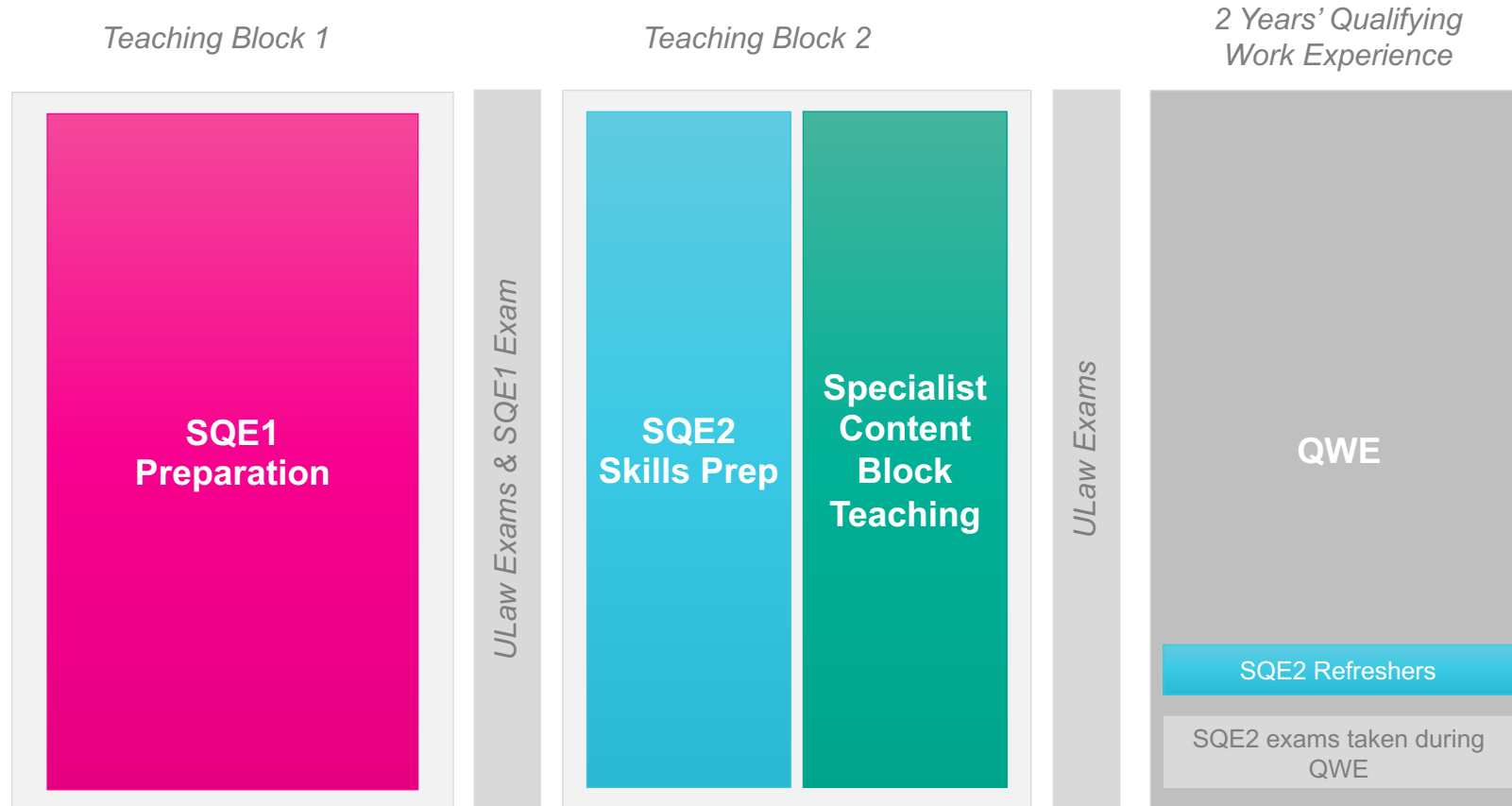
## SOLUTIONS

- ✓ SRA is running SQE pilots in 2019 before launching in 2021
- ✓ BSB now includes law schools in design
- ✓ Clearer instructions to students that not every aspect of the syllabus can be covered in class – pre and consolidation reading
- ✓ ULaw developed practice MCQs to support students and introduced tech to allow students to self-test on breadth and depth of the syllabus
- ✓ Higher pass rates – ULaw was top performing provider in 2018

# Graduate Entry Solicitor Apprenticeships

- Two main options post A-levels:
  - Paralegal apprenticeship: 2 year programme
  - Solicitor apprenticeship: 5 - 6 years from A-levels to qualification
- It is possible to deliver a graduate entry option. Graduates can take SQE1 and SQE2 and complete 2 years' QWE in the same time as conventional route
- Flexible Blended Learning – Block and day release options
- Cost Effective – Levy-paying firms can maximise their levy to minimise fees
- Non-law graduates – Can use this route but will take longer
- N.B. Augar Review – May 2019

# SQE Qualification Example 2



N.B. This model would be apprenticeship compliant delivered either on day or block release model. Could be awarded as a Masters degree.

# Funding Graduate Apprenticeships

- Levy-paying employer can offset levy contributions against costs of training and assessment
- Non-levy paying employers entitled to 95% government funding. Employers pays only 5%
- Price to be agreed between employer and training provider (N.B. £27,000 cap)
- Apprentices must be paid throughout the apprenticeship including any front-loaded training. Salaries during this period?
- N.B. Augar Review

# Points to Consider for Graduate Apprentices

- Need to balance -
  - ✓ Ability to offset levy against training costs and assessment fees
  - ✓ Or 95% govt contribution
  - ✓ NI exemption
  - ✗ Need to pay apprentices throughout training
  - ✗ 20% off the job training requirement
  - ✗ Need to sit SQE 2 in final six months of training
  - ✗ Employment considerations
  - ✗ HR resource requirements

## Some additional points to consider

- Should you consider using graduate solicitor apprenticeships?
- Will seat rotation continue in the post-SQE era?
- Will your firm give credit for prior qualifying work experience?
- How to blend 'conventional' graduates, paralegals and legal apprentices within the business model and how to make these work together?
- The future is not one size fits all – opportunity to innovate and review pathways for junior lawyers
- This is a rapidly evolving situation e.g. Augar Review last week