



LawCAB

CENTRAL
APPLICATIONS
BOARD LTD

ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT 2023

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Introduction

This annual statistical report provides information about the market for professional law courses for academic year 2023-24. This is the second annual report to contain information about applications and enrolments for SQE courses offered by CAB members alongside information about GDL and LPC courses.

The report covers: The evolution of the market for these professional legal education courses, trends in applicant behaviour, applicant demographics and equality and diversity indicators, routes to university courses, and funding. Unlike the statistics for the GDL and LPC, which include all applications for these courses at all institutions offering them, the SQE statistics do not cover the whole market, although the share of the non-legally qualified market that CAB is covering is steadily increasing as the market normalises. As SRA data on SQE sitters is only published some time after the event, we do not yet have a time series that can be read across from CAB data into SRA SQE data, however there are still useful insights to be gleaned from a comparison across GDL, LPC and SQE applications and enrolments.

The highlights of this analysis are as follows:

- The LPC market is shrinking at an increasing rate, and now almost entirely consists of LLB/QLD graduates.
- The total market for LPC/SQE courses taken through LawCAB for applications in 2023/24 was 13% lower than for academic year 2018/19. This reflects the fact that some candidates may go through providers, including short course providers, not listing courses on LawCAB in order to prepare for SQE assessments, but it may also reflect the possibility that there are fewer candidates seeking qualification in the early years of the SQE.
- Despite the decline in the LPC, numbers applying for the GDL have remained resilient, reflecting the ongoing need for conversion courses.
- There is no evidence yet of any EDI benefit from the SQE, indeed quite the reverse appears to be happening, given the high proportions of Russell Group candidates in the SQE application figures for these first few years of this route's existence.

It is far too soon to reach any firm conclusions based on these statistics, as applications and enrolments for the SQE continue to grow rapidly year on year.

The rest of this report sets out the underlying statistics which have led to the above observations.

The Market for Professional Legal Education in 2023/24

The Demand for and Supply of Full-Time LPC Courses

In 2023, eighteen higher education institutions opened applications for academic year 2023/24 places on the Legal Practice Course (LPC), with just under 10,000 places on offer. This was the year in which the effects of the introduction of the SQE began to be felt more fully, as demand for the LPC halved and enrolment stood at just over 40% of its 2018 level.

Table 1: The Evolution of the Demand for and Supply of LPC Courses, 2018-2023

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<i>Places available</i>	10,901	11,021	11,021	11,021	11,021	9,887
Enrolment	6,545	6,896	7,338	6,415	5,331	2,836
New applications	7,993	8,314	8,728	7,752	6,705	3,726
<i>Deferrals from previous year</i>	583	607	582	517	469	443
Total applications (including deferrals)	8,576	8,921	9,310	8,269	7,174	4,169
<i>Enrolments/applications %</i>	76%	77%	79%	78%	74%	68%
<i>Annual change in total applications</i>	2.0%	4.0%	4.4%	-11.2%	-13.2%	-41.9%
<i>Annual change in enrolment</i>	2.3%	5.3%	6.4%	-12.6%	-16.9%	-46.8%

The Demand for and Supply of Full-Time GDL Places¹

For academic year 2023/24, nineteen institutions offered GDL, or equivalent, conversion courses compared to twenty-six in 2022/23. The number of available places, however, continued to outstrip demand.

New applications for conversion courses have picked up after a post-COVID low in 2022, and enrolment numbers for academic year 2023/24 were not far off 2018 levels. This can be attributed in part to the ongoing requirements of the Bar Standards Board for a GDL qualification from non-law graduates, but possibly also to the realisation among candidates that they will need a solid foundation in law in order to build a law career in the medium term, let alone in order to meet the rigours of the SQE assessments.

¹ Note: GDL statistics in this report refer to courses designed for non-law graduates that are agnostic in their outcome (i.e. they are not linked explicitly to either the SQE or Bar preparation). Courses which are advertised as suitable for both law and/or non-law graduates, offered in preparation for the SQE are, on the other hand, counted in the SQE statistics.

Table 2: The Demand for and Supply of Full-Time GDL Courses, 2018-23

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<i>Places available</i>	5,632	5,624	5,614	5,574	5,384	5,134
<i>Enrolment</i>	2,984	3,209	3,884	3,607	2,214	2,868
<i>New applications</i>	4,562	4,746	5,816	5,295	3,084	3,938
<i>Deferrals from previous year</i>	436	410	441	585	385	423
<i>Total applications (including deferrals)</i>	4,998	5,156	6,257	5,880	3,469	4,361
<i>Enrolments/ applications %</i>	60%	62%	62%	61%	64%	66%
<i>Annual change in total applications</i>	-4.1%	4.0%	21.4%	-6.0%	-41.0%	25.7%
<i>Annual change in enrolment</i>	-2.7%	7.5%	21.0%	-7.1%	-38.6%	29.5%

The Demand for and Supply of SQE Courses

The total supply of SQE courses is difficult to assess, since not all options are provided by former LPC providers and even the SRA’s list of training providers is unclear as it contains many organisations who registered to use the SRA’s SQE trademark but who do not in practice provide any courses or materials at present. There are, however, sixteen CAB member institutions which offered SQE courses in 2023 in different forms, ranging from full one-year Masters’ courses and postgraduate diploma courses through to modular preparation courses. All three types were also offered separately for law graduates and non-law graduates but not consistently by different institutions. This underlines the fact that the professional postgraduate law course market has still not settled down post launch of the SQE.

The detailed breakdown of the supply and demand for different types of SQE courses is made available to CAB member institutions bi-annually but a summary is shown in table 3. This shows that applications for courses through CAB are converging steadily on SRA numbers for all first-time sitters of the SQE who were not already qualified lawyers. In 2023, for example there were 3,757 first-time non-foreign qualified sitters of the SQE, 43% had some work experience, implying that there were 2,141 candidates who would most likely have fitted the usual profile of a candidate applying for courses through CAB. Although we do not yet know the number of SQE candidates sitting assessments who will have prepared for the assessments following courses enrolled for the academic year 2023/24, we can see that as the SQE market normalises, more and more candidates will come through courses selected via CAB.

Table 3: The Supply of SQE Courses through CAB, 2021-23

Year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Enrolment	217	973	2,311
<i>New applications</i>	556	1,769	3,193
<i>Deferrals from previous year</i>	0	63	122
Total applications (including deferrals)	556	1,832	3,315
<i>Enrolments/applications, %</i>	39%	53%	70%
<i>Annual change in total applications</i>	N/A	36%	32%
<i>Annual change in enrolment</i>	N/A	348%	138%

Trends in Applicant Behaviour

LawCAB application data provides insight into some interesting trends in the behaviour of aspiring entrants to the legal profession.

(a) The Timing of applications

The timing of applications for all courses has demonstrated a fairly consistent pattern in recent years.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of applications (based on application fees paid) from academic year 2019-20 through academic year 2023-24. This illustrates a roughly similar pattern across these years, with candidates looking for courses all year round, a slight pause in applications around exam time in May and a very busy period between June and August. Setting aside the clear peak of the COVID affected years in 2019-20 and 2020-21, there appears to have slightly more volatility in applications through the spring, with a much less pronounced “application season” over summer 2023.

Figure 1: Monthly Applications, 2019-23

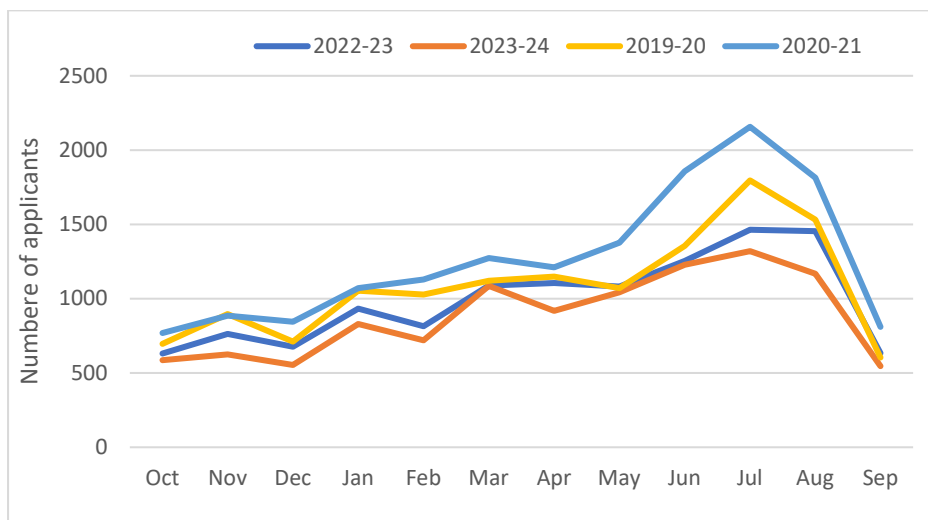
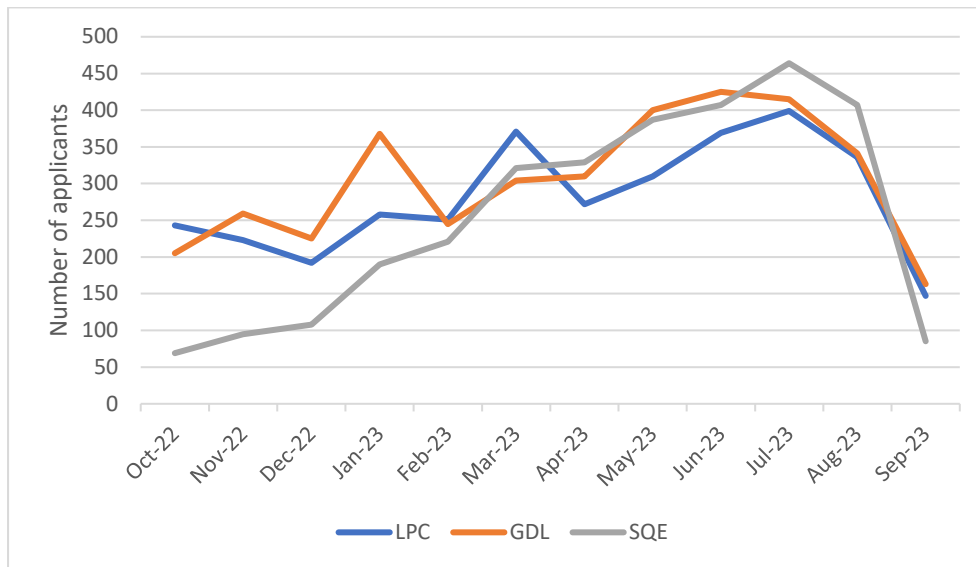


Figure 2 breaks the overall applications figure down into the different course types that applicants applied for through LawCAB in 2023. This clearly shows the growth in applications made for SQE courses in the first half of the year, with a similar peak and drop-off as applications for the GDL and LPC, as the new academic year began.

Figure 2: The Timing of Released Applications, 2023-24







Source: LawCAB/Stripe

(b) Decision time

Although many candidates come to the LawCAB website already knowing for which courses they plan to apply, others are uncertain about their options. The time taken by candidates between the first creation of their LawCAB application forms and eventual payment and submission of an application, is shown in figure 3.

Figure 3 illustrates how candidates are increasingly dividing into those who know which qualification route they intend to take, often because this is required by a training contract provider, compared to those who are uncertain whether to take the LPC or SQE route. Nearly a third of applicants were still taking over a month to complete applications in 2023.

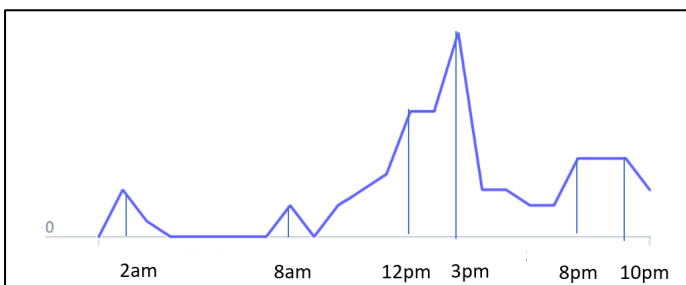
Figure 3: Time Taken by Candidates to Complete Applications, 2021-23

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Time from registration to submission
	41%	34%	48%	One week or less
	22%	12%	10%	Between one and two weeks
	13%	17%	12%	Between two weeks and a month
	25%	37%	30%	Longer than one month

Application data also tells us that candidates are most likely to apply on Mondays, with Saturday being the least popular day for completing and submitting an application. This pattern becomes less pronounced towards the end of the application cycle, but is still evident. It has also remained constant over the last few years and seems, so far, unchanged by SQE courses offered by institutions on an academic cycle.

There is also a fairly consistent pattern across the year in relation to the time of day when applicants finally press “send” on their applications, with a definite bias towards the afternoon and evening, as shown by the typical example in figure 4 based on 22 July, which was the busiest day for applications in 2023.

Figure 4: Typical pattern of application timings, 2023 (based on 22 July 2023)



Source: Stripe

Who are Professional Law Course Students? Applicant Demographics and Equality and Diversity Indicators

Equality and diversity indicators have always been an important part of CAB’s monitoring activity but have become even more important in the light of the introduction of the SQE route to solicitor qualification, which claims diversity as an important central principle of its design. 2023/24 applications were the first significant year of SQE applications taken through LawCAB and so it is interesting to compare various EDI indicators across the GDL, LPC and SQE.

Gender Identity

The gender breakdown across all courses is broadly consistent, with female candidates representing between 58-65% of all applications and enrolments for GDL, LPC and SQE courses. Female applicants are also consistently more likely to enrol in courses than their male counterparts. The initial tendency when the SQE had just launched, for male candidates to be (marginally) more likely than their female counterparts to opt for the SQE route to qualification, has more or less disappeared.

A small number of candidates every year declare their gender identity as non-binary. Although this categorisation was introduced in 2017 it has only been in the last few years that any applicants have actually used it.

Table 4: Full-Time GDL Applicants by Gender Identity, 2018-23

	<i>Year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Other</i>
<i>as % total applicants</i>	2021-22	39.9%	59.8%	0.3%
	2022-23	41.7%	58.1%	0.2%
	2023-24	42.0%	57.8%	0.2%
<i>as % total enrolments</i>	2021-22	38.5%	61.2%	0.3%
	2022-23	40.0%	59.8%	0.2%
	2023-24	41.1%	58.7%	0.2%
<i>Enrolments as % applicants</i>	2021-22	62.5%	66.4%	71.4%
	2022-23	63.3%	67.9%	66.7%
	2023-24	64.5%	62.0%	62.5%

Table 5: Full-Time LPC Applicants by Gender Identity, 2018-23

	<i>Year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Other</i>
<i>as % total applicants</i>	2021-22	33.8%	66.1%	0.04%
	2022-23	34.9%	64.9%	0.1%
	2023-24	34.3%	65.5%	0.2%
<i>as % total enrolments</i>	2021-22	33.7%	66.2%	0.05%
	2022-23	35.0%	64.9%	0.12%
	2023-24	32.9%	66.9%	0.22%
<i>Enrolments as % applicants</i>	2021-22	79.7%	80.1%	100%
	2022-23	75.6%	75.2%	85.7%
	2023-24	69.0%	73.7%	100%

Table 6: SQE Applicants by Gender Identity, 2021-23

	<i>Year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Other</i>
<i>as % total applicants</i>	2021-22	37.8%	61.6%	0.5%
	2022-23	36.6%	63.4%	0.1%
	2023-24	34.8%	65.2%	0.1%
<i>as % total enrolments</i>	2021-22	35.1%	64.0%	0.9%
	2022-23	36.3%	63.6%	0.1%
	2023-24	34.2%	65.8%	0.1%
<i>Enrolments as % applicants</i>	2021-22	34.9%	39.0%	66.7%
	2022-23	54.2%	54.8%	100%
	2023-24	68.0%	69.8%	50.0%

Age

The vast majority of applicants for GDL, LPC and SQE courses through LawCAB are under 35 years of age, as shown in tables 7-9, with GDL applicants, not surprisingly, slightly older on average than LPC applicants. Interestingly, the age profile of SQE applicants through LawCAB has changed since the launch of the first preparatory courses and, as numbers have increased, has converged on a similar distribution as that of LPC applicants.

Table 7: Full-Time GDL applicants and enrolments by age range 2021-23

Age Group	% Total Applications 2021/22	% Total Enrolments 2021/22	% Total Applications 2022/23	% Total Enrolments 2022/23	% Total Applications 2023/24	% Total Enrolments 2023/24
16-25	66.4%	74.1%	61.2%	70.9%	67.4%	76.0%
26-35	24.2%	20.0%	27.3%	21.4%	21.2%	17.6%
36-45	6.2%	3.9%	7.2%	5.0%	7.8%	4.2%
45+	3.2%	2.00%	4.3%	2.7%	3.6%	2.2%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 8: Full-Time LPC applicants and enrolments by age range 2021-23

Age Group	% Total Applications 2021/22	% Total Enrolments 2021/22	% Total Applications 2022/23	% Total Enrolments 2022/23	% Total Applications 2023/24	% Total Enrolments 2023/24
16-25	81.2%	83.3%	72.9%	74.4%	78.2%	82.9%
26-35	14.3%	13.4%	21.8%	21.9%	14.2%	12.4%
36-45	2.5%	1.9%	3.2%	2.3%	4.8%	3.0%
45+	2.0%	1.4%	2.1%	1.4%	2.8%	1.7%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 9: Full-Time SQE Applications and Enrolments by Age Range 2021-23¹

Age Group	% Total Applications 2021/22	% Total Enrolments 2021/22	% Total Applications 2022/23	% Total Enrolments 2022/23	% Total Applications 2023/24	% Total Enrolments 2023/24
16-25	55.9%	72.0%	57.2%	63.0%	77.0%	83.7%
26-35	28.7%	14.9%	30.6%	27.4%	17.0%	14.0%
36-45	10.5%	8.9%	7.9%	5.8%	4.1%	1.5%
45+	4.9%	4.2%	4.4%	3.8%	1.9%	0.8%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In the first two years of the existence of the SQE route, LawCAB's applicants for SQE courses have been noticeably younger than those taking assessments, based on the statistics published by the SRA. This discrepancy has so far largely been accounted for by the legacy group of paralegals and foreign applicants sitting assessments. In 2023/24, with larger numbers of domestic candidates sitting the SQE having undertaken preparatory courses, we should begin to see a greater degree of convergence between the age profile of LawCAB applicants and domestic SRA candidates for SQE assessments.

Table 10: SRA Figures on Age Profile of Candidates for Assessment

Age Group	Jan 2023 SQE1	Jul 2023 SQE1
16-24	36%	27%
25-34	47%	53%
35-44	11%	14%
45-54	3%	4%
55-64+	1%	<1%
Unknown	2%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Source: SRA SQE Quality Assurance Report 2022-23

Ethnicity

Tables 11 to 13 show the ethnic breakdown of UK applicants for GDL, LPC, and SQE courses from 2021 to 2023. These tables show that the GDL is much more likely to be pursued by white candidates as a route to qualification than direct entry to the LPC or SQE routes. This perhaps reflects the higher likelihood that UK candidates of non-White British ethnicity will come from lower income backgrounds, since the GDL is a second degree, and as such is likely to be less attractive to individuals concerned about funding.

These tables also show that there was a higher proportion of white candidates represented in both SQE applications and enrolments compared to the LPC. It is too early to say what might lie behind this and additional analysis on EDI issues in qualification routes being undertaken by Exeter University, and due to be published later in 2024, may shed further light.

Table 11: Full-Time UK GDL applicants and enrolments by ethnicity, 2021-23

	% of UK applicants 2021	% of UK applicants 2022	% of UK applicants 2023	% of UK enrolments 2021	% of UK enrolments 2022	% of UK enrolments 2023
<i>White</i>	63%	63%	61%	65%	64%	62%
<i>Black</i>	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%
<i>Asian</i>	10%	11%	12%	10%	10%	12%
<i>Mixed</i>	6%	6%	7%	6%	6%	7%
<i>Other</i>	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%
<i>Unknown</i>	14%	13%	12%	14%	13%	12%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 12: Full-Time UK LPC applicants and enrolments by ethnicity, 2021-23

	% of UK applicants 2021	% of UK applicants 2022	% of UK applicants 2023	% of UK enrolments 2021	% of UK enrolments 2022	% of UK enrolments 2023
<i>White</i>	50%	51%	49%	50%	52%	50%
<i>Black</i>	6%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%
<i>Asian</i>	18%	21%	26%	18%	20%	26%
<i>Mixed</i>	5%	5%	6%	5%	6%	6%
<i>Other</i>	3%	3%	4%	2%	2%	3%
<i>Unknown</i>	18%	13%	8%	19%	14%	9%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 13: SQE applicants and enrolments for Full-Time study by ethnicity, 2021-2023

	% of UK applicants 2021	% of UK applicants 2022	% of UK applicants 2023	% of UK enrolments 2021	% of UK enrolments 2022	% of UK enrolments 2023
<i>White</i>	48%	52%	52%	53%	52%	54%
<i>Black</i>	9%	7%	8%	6%	6%	7%
<i>Asian</i>	22%	21%	21%	19%	20%	20%
<i>Mixed</i>	5%	6%	5%	5%	7%	5%
<i>Other</i>	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%
<i>Unknown</i>	13%	11%	11%	14%	13%	11%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Disability

Table 14 shows the number of UK nationals enrolling in GDL, LPC and SQE courses with certain self-declared disabilities. The proportion of those declaring some disability was fairly consistent across all courses and dyslexia and mental health issues remain the greatest proportion of declared disabilities across all types of course across all years.

Table 14: Full-Time Enrolments of UK nationals by disability, 2021-23

Form of Disability	GDL			LPC			SQE		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
<i>Autistic Spectrum Disorder</i>	3%	3%	4%	2%	2%	5%	0	<1%	<1%
<i>Blind/partially sighted</i>	<1%	<1%	<1%	3%	2%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
<i>Deaf/ hearing impairment</i>	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%	<1%	0	<1%	<1%
<i>Dyslexia</i>	32%	33%	31%	30%	29%	24%	32%	30%	35%
<i>Mental health issues</i>	21%	25%	22%	29%	26%	25%	36%	24%	17%
<i>Multiple disabilities</i>	8%	6%	7%	6%	6%	10%	<1%	8%	8%
<i>Unseen disability, eg diabetes, epilepsy, asthma</i>	11%	10%	10%	14%	13%	15%	<1%	16%	14%
<i>Wheelchair user/ mobility difficulties</i>	1%	<1%	<1%	3%	<1%	2%	0	0	<1%
<i>Not listed</i>	23%	20%	21%	11%	19%	17%	<1%	14%	14%
<i>Personal care support</i>	0	0	0	<1%	0	<1%	0	0	0
Total UK nationality enrolments citing disability	355	228	285	496	535	268	22	88	189
% of Total UK enrolments	10%	15%	15%	8%	14%	13%	10%	14%	12%

Routes to Qualification and Funding

Academic background and access to funding also have an important influence on the diversity of candidates. We now have two years' worth of data on how the availability of the SQE route to qualification may influence the path that candidates take and how they fund qualification.

Tables 15 and 16 show the breakdown of routes to qualification. A number of interesting themes emerge from these.

- First, as the transitional period for the introduction of the SQE progresses, the LPC is increasingly taken by candidates with a qualifying law degree, of whom a consistent proportion (roughly a third) are Russell Group graduates. The proportion of LPC enrolments coming from GDL graduates is likely to more or less disappear after 2023/24, as the final candidates who took up a place before December 2021 work through the system.
- Most of those enrolling for an SQE course through LawCAB were new graduates, compared to the 35% of 2023 SQE assessment sitters who were qualified lawyers from other jurisdictions. Russell group graduates were even more disproportionately represented in SQE course enrolments compared to LPC enrolments, a proportion that has grown dramatically over the short life of many SQE preparatory courses and which now accounts for over 50% of all graduate enrolments on the SQE. This is likely to reflect graduate recruitment patterns by employers who fund course fees.

Table 15: Route to the LPC, Enrolments for Full-Time Study 2021-2023

<i>Route</i>	<i>2021/ 2022</i>	<i>% Total enrolments 2021/22</i>	<i>2022/ 2023</i>	<i>% Total enrolments 2022/23</i>	<i>2023/ 2024</i>	<i>% Total enrolments 2023/24</i>
<i>GDL</i>	1584	26%	1349	27%	278	10%
<i>QLD/LLB</i>	4,598	74%	3,681	73%	2,396	89%
<i>o/w Russell Group</i>	1,827	29%	1,465	29%	807	30%
<i>FILEX</i>	15	0%	22	0%	13	0%
TOTAL	6197	100%	5052	100%	2687	100%

Table 16: Route to SQE courses, Enrolments for Full-Time Study 2021- 2023

<i>Route</i>	<i>2021/ 2022</i>	<i>% Total enrolments 2021/22</i>	<i>2022/ 2023</i>	<i>% Total enrolments 2022/23</i>	<i>2023/ 2024</i>	<i>% Total enrolments 2023/24</i>
<i>New graduates</i>	194	91%	900	93%	2,130	96%
<i>o/w Russell Group</i>	58	27%	376	39%	1,158	52%
<i>Lawyers from other jurisdictions</i>	19	9%	59	6%	73	3%
<i>Previously completed LPC</i>	1	0%	6	1%	7	0%
TOTAL	214	100%	965	100%	2210	99%

Who Funds Participation in the Courses?

Tables 17 – 19 show how applicants funded their enrolment in GDL, LPC and SQE courses between 2021-23.

This shows a consistent, high proportion of self-funders for the GDL, which goes some way to explain the earlier tables focused on diversity data.

Table 17: How the GDL is funded, enrolments for Full-Time Study 2021-2023

<i>Course Fee Payer</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
<i>Self-funded²</i>	3,023	88%	1,684	83%	2,166	83%
<i>Employer</i>	409	12%	348	17%	430	17%
TOTAL	3,432	100%	2,032	100%	2,596	100%

The most striking point to emerge from these tables, however, is the shift from employer funding for LPC courses to those courses to help candidates prepare for the SQE assessments. It is also noteworthy that the total amount of employer funding for postgraduate courses has fallen between 2021 and 2023, with 265 fewer funded places across the LPC and SQE combined, a fall of around 15%.

² Including funding from parents or guardians

Table 18: How the LPC is Funded, enrolments for Full-Time Study 2021-2023

<i>Course Fee Payer</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Self-funded	4,396	71%	3,327	66%	2,217	83%
Employer	1,801	29%	1,725	34%	470	17%
TOTAL	6,197	100%	5,052	100%	2,687	100%

Table 19: How the SQE is Funded, enrolments for full-time study 2021-2023

<i>Course Fee Payer</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>2022/23</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>2023/24</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
<i>Self-funded³</i>	192	90%	703	73%	1,122	51%
<i>Employer</i>	22	10%	262	27%	1,088	49%
TOTAL	214	100%	965	100%	2210	100%

Table 20 shows the share of Russell Group graduates amongst those obtaining sponsored or funded enrolments in courses in 2023. This further underlines that the chances of a non-Russell group graduate being funded through the GDL are vanishingly small.

Table 20: Training Contract/Sponsored Enrolments 2023

	% Russell Group graduates in sponsored enrolments	% UK Nationality Russell Group graduates in UK sponsored enrolments
<i>GDL</i>	81%	86%
<i>LPC</i>	57%	52%
<i>SQE</i>	75%	76%
Total	72%	73%

³ Including funding from parents or guardians

International Applicants

Most candidates applying for GDL and LPC courses and for SQE courses offered through LawCAB are UK nationals. Nonetheless, as shown in table 23, international applicants account for a significant minority of applications and enrolments for different courses.

In 2022/23, over a third of all applications for the GDL and more than a quarter of all applications for the LPC came from UK nationals. However, for both courses, over 80% of applicants for 2022/23 courses were UK domiciled, which suggests that students already studying in the UK are an important source of applications for postgraduate professional law courses.

Figures for 2022/23 applications show that international applicants were much more heavily reflected in applications for SQE courses than in the legacy GDL and LPC. This in part reflects the fact that international candidates were less likely to be eligible for legacy routes but may also reflect the much greater flexibility of the qualifying work experience element of the SQE for international candidates when compared to the LPC route.

Table 21: Share of International Applicants⁴ in Applications and Enrolments, 2022-23

	<i>Share of international students in total applications</i>		<i>Share of international students in total enrolments</i>	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
<i>GDL</i>	36%	36%	25%	25%
<i>LPC</i>	26%	30%	22%	25%
<i>SQE</i>	42%	37%	33%	30%

Table 22 shows a breakdown of international student applicants and enrolments by EU/EEA and rest of the World categories, for comparison with past data. Pre-Brexit, EU/EEA candidates would historically have accounted for around 15% of all applicants and rest of the World applicants for around 9%. These percentage shares have been reversed since around 2020 for both GDL and LPC statistics but interestingly, both the EU/EEA and rest of the World share in SQE applications and enrolments have risen from this level in 2023, although the latter has risen more significantly.

⁴ International is defined by nationality

Table 22: Share of International Applicants⁵ in Applications and Enrolments, 2023

	2023 Applications			2023 Enrolments		
	GDL	LPC	SQE	GDL	LPC	SQE
<i>UK National</i>	64%	70%	63%	75%	75%	70%
<i>RoW</i>	28%	21%	27%	17%	15%	20%
<i>EU/EEA</i>	8%	9%	10%	8%	9%	10%
All	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Tables 23-25 show in greater detail the breakdown amongst the nationalities most frequently reflected in applications and enrolments for different courses. This shows that populous Common Law countries, such as Pakistan, India and Nigeria continue to account for the biggest source of applications and enrolments for all types of professional law courses, including SQE preparation. As in previous years, the proportion of applicants eventually enrolling in courses following their application, varies widely. In general, applications from wealthier countries, not surprisingly, tend to convert more consistently into enrolments.

Tables 24 and 25 show that 2023 was the breakthrough year for international SQE applications. There were more international applicants for SQE courses than for the LPC and almost as many enrolments. This illustrates very clearly the attractiveness to foreign applicants of the flexibility of the SQE route to qualification compared to the LPC route, which includes the challenge of securing a training contract. There is a similar broad spread of nationalities applying for SQE and LPC courses, and both applications and enrolments for SQE courses show a consistent increase across all nationalities, with the odd exception (e.g. Nigeria) where domestic economic circumstances may account for some variation.

⁵ International is defined by nationality

Table 23: Top 20 Nationalities applying for and enrolling in full-time GDL courses, 2021-23

<i>Nationality</i>	Applications			Enrolments			% Enrolment/Applications		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
<i>Pakistani</i>	169	134	181	47	51	48	28%	38%	27%
<i>Ghanaian</i>	152	117	151	53	30	37	35%	26%	25%
<i>Indian</i>	164	106	129	71	50	51	43%	47%	40%
<i>Nigerian</i>	85	62	38	22	15	10	26%	24%	26%
<i>US Citizen</i>	95	61	88	56	30	44	59%	49%	50%
<i>Chinese</i>	84	51	77	45	25	42	54%	49%	55%
<i>French</i>	54	32	47	32	19	31	59%	59%	66%
<i>Bangladeshi</i>	53	32	51	17	9	18	32%	28%	35%
<i>Italian</i>	69	31	47	45	15	31	65%	48%	66%
<i>Irish</i>	38	29	43	22	23	29	58%	79%	67%
<i>Hong Kong</i>	97	28	42	63	18	32	65%	64%	76%
<i>German</i>	28	20	24	18	14	13	64%	70%	54%
<i>Canadian</i>	44	20	25	20	7	15	45%	35%	60%
<i>Turkish</i>	45	15	25	18	4	9	40%	27%	36%
<i>Polish</i>	19	13	18	13	8	8	68%	62%	44%
<i>Spanish</i>	25	13	20	12	10	13	48%	77%	65%
<i>Romanian</i>	12	12	13	5	8	10	42%	67%	77%
<i>Dutch</i>	19	11	14	10	7	9	53%	64%	64%
<i>South Korean</i>	22	10	10	14	7	6	64%	70%	60%
<i>Portuguese</i>	15	7	7	6	5	4	40%	71%	57%
<i>All international</i>	1774	1108	1436	841	505	652	47%	46%	45%

Table 24: Top 20 non-UK Nationalities applying for and enrolling in full-time LPC, 2021-23

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Applications</i>			<i>Enrolments</i>			<i>% Enrolment/Applications</i>		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
<i>Indian</i>	113	117	61	70	56	41	62%	48%	67%
<i>Pakistani</i>	102	106	118	52	46	52	51%	43%	44%
<i>Nigerian</i>	161	102	51	99	49	22	61%	48%	43%
<i>Italian</i>	65	73	39	58	54	28	89%	74%	72%
<i>Ghanaian</i>	65	67	40	37	36	22	57%	54%	55%
<i>Canadian</i>	68	57	28	44	39	22	65%	68%	79%
<i>Hong Kong</i>	65	56	19	41	36	14	63%	62%	74%
<i>US citizen</i>	51	54	20	39	35	16	76%	65%	80%
<i>Malaysian</i>	58	53	28	47	38	16	81%	72%	57%
<i>Irish</i>	63	49	39	51	40	27	81%	82%	69%
<i>French</i>	59	47	27	53	35	23	90%	74%	85%
<i>Trinidadian</i>	54	46	57	37	21	25	69%	46%	44%
<i>Singaporean</i>	54	46	18	48	34	11	89%	74%	61%
<i>Polish</i>	62	46	32	52	39	25	84%	85%	78%
<i>German</i>	51	41	23	40	29	18	78%	71%	78%
<i>Cypriot</i>	51	40	27	37	32	17	73%	80%	63%
<i>Chinese</i>	42	38	17	27	26	10	64%	68%	59%
<i>Greek</i>	37	37	14	30	27	10	81%	73%	71%
<i>Romanian</i>	35	35	17	28	28	12	80%	80%	71%
<i>Portuguese</i>	40	28	22	35	16	13	88%	57%	59%
<i>All International</i>	1848	1743	1114	1415	1108	670	77%	64%	60%

Table 25: Top 20 non-UK Nationalities applying for and enrolling in full-time SQE courses 2021-23

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Applications</i>			<i>Enrolments</i>			<i>% Enrolment/Applications</i>		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
<i>Indian</i>	19	93	97	5	26	43	26%	28%	44%
<i>Nigerian</i>	23	82	67	6	28	22	26%	34%	33%
<i>Pakistani</i>	16	51	124	4	11	47	25%	22%	38%
<i>Ghanaian</i>	22	30	50	4	5	14	18%	17%	28%
<i>Malaysian</i>	5	30	45	4	17	31	80%	57%	69%
<i>Canadian</i>	6	24	29	1	17	22	17%	71%	76%
<i>Italian</i>	6	22	39	2	15	26	33%	68%	67%
<i>Chinese</i>	9	20	35	2	11	19	22%	55%	54%
<i>US citizen</i>	5	17	33	1	9	18	20%	53%	55%
<i>Singaporean</i>	3	17	28	1	13	22	33%	76%	79%
<i>French</i>	5	14	31	0	11	21	0%	79%	68%
<i>Irish</i>	7	14	35	4	10	27	57%	71%	77%
<i>German</i>	6	14	29	2	7	22	33%	50%	76%
<i>Hong Kong</i>	2	13	36	1	6	28	50%	46%	78%
<i>Romanian</i>	3	10	16	2	6	12	67%	60%	75%
<i>Portuguese</i>	3	9	21	0	9	13	0%	100%	62%
<i>Polish</i>	5	8	26	4	5	22	80%	63%	85%
<i>Greek</i>	0	5	17	0	2	11	0%	40%	65%
<i>Dutch</i>	4	5	11	1	3	7	25%	60%	64%
<i>Cypriot</i>	0	4	13	0	4	11	0%	100%	85%
<i>All international</i>	230	734	1182	66	317	666	29%	43%	56%

Concluding Remarks

The market for professional law courses continues to transform as the SQE takes over from the LPC as the main route to qualification as a solicitor, and this transformation is speeding up. Nonetheless, it is clear from both LawCAB statistics and enquiries handled through the LawCAB portal, that there is still much confusion and uncertainty amongst candidates and employers about the best route to choose, or to sponsor candidates through. This continues to validate the role of CAB as an organisation that exists to demystify qualification routes and to help candidates make their choices.

CAB Ltd Secretariat

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