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**Recording, Confirming and Registering Qualifying
Work Experience (QWE) from Work Placements:
A 'Ten Top Tips' Toolkit For Students - and
Guidance on Completing the SRA QWE Template**

Item Type	Other
Authors	Todd, Andrea; Blackburn, Lucy
Rights	Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International
Download date	15/05/2023 09:45:18
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Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10034/627781



**RECORDING, CONFIRMING AND REGISTERING QUALIFYING WORK
EXPERIENCE (QWE)
FROM WORK PLACEMENTS:**

**A 'TEN TOP TIPS' TOOLKIT FOR STUDENTS
AND
GUIDANCE ON COMPLETING THE SRA QWE TEMPLATE**

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This Toolkit is intended to assist students in understanding the rules about Qualifying Work Experience and how it may apply to work placements. The definition of work placements in this document includes periods of formal or informal 'work experience' (typically of up to a few weeks) as well as 'placements' and 'internships' (typically involving attending the workplace over a longer period of time, sometimes organised by, or with the help of, the student's education provider).

With thanks to the members of the North West Careers in Law Advisory Network who provided valuable input into this document by way of peer review prior to publication.

1. WHAT ARE THE RULES ABOUT APPLYING TO BE A SOLICITOR?

If you want to be registered as a qualified solicitor, you need to apply to the Solicitors' Regulation Authority (SRA)¹ to be admitted to the roll of solicitors. This means that your name appears on the 'roll', which is an online list of qualified solicitors held by the SRA. You also get a 'practising certificate' to show you are qualified. This needs to be renewed every year to allow you to carry on practising as a solicitor. The annual individual practising certificate is usually funded by the employer.

In September 2021, a new set of rules was introduced setting out what you need to show the SRA when you apply to be admitted to the roll. This new set of rules is called the Solicitors' Qualifying Examination (SQE) route to qualifying as a solicitor.

Under the new rules, when you apply for admission as a solicitor you need to show that you:

1. Have an undergraduate degree (it does not have to be in law)²;
2. Have passed the SQE 1 and SQE 2 central assessments³;
3. Have completed two years' full-time equivalent of Qualifying Work Experience ('QWE')⁴; and
4. Meet the SRA's character and suitability requirements (i.e. show you are sufficiently honest and trustworthy to be a solicitor)⁵.

Everyone who starts a degree (in law or in anything else) from September 2022 must take the SQE route if they want to qualify as a solicitor.⁶

Here is a bit more information about the SQE route:

SQE 1 tests your legal knowledge by way of two multiple-choice assessments, each containing 180 questions. SQE 2 tests your practical client-facing skills, such as interviewing, advocacy and drafting. The standard for these assessments is that of a newly qualified solicitor on their first day at work. Students will usually (but don't have to) sit SQE 1 before they sit SQE 2.

QWE can be collected from working in up to four organisations, including law firms, law centres, charities, in-house legal teams and university legal advice clinics (for advice about QWE from university clinics please consult our Ten Top Tips Toolkit for Student Volunteers, available on the CLEO website here: <https://www.cleo-uk.org/qualifying-work-experience/>). You can collect QWE at any time, even before you sit any of the SQE assessments. You can undertake QWE in an organisation outside of England and Wales so long as a solicitor qualified in England and Wales is able to confirm that you have done this.

¹ The SRA is the organisation that regulates solicitors in England & Wales

² Under the old (pre-September 2021) rules, you needed to get a law degree (or a different undergraduate degree plus a law conversion course)

³ Under the old rules, you needed to do the Legal Practice Course (LPC) and the Professional Skills Course (PSC)

⁴ Under the old rules, you needed to do a two-year Period of Recognised Training (Training Contract) with a firm of solicitors. At the end of the two-year training contract, you (or more likely your firm, on your behalf) would then apply, and pay a fee, for you to be registered with the SRA as a qualified solicitor.

⁵ This is the only requirement that remains from the old rules.

⁶ Anyone who had finished, started, or accepted a place on a qualifying law degree by 21 September 2021 or on the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) by 1 September 2021 has a choice: they can take the SQE route, or they (currently) have until 31 December 2032 to take the LPC (subject to institutions continuing to offer the LPC). There is also the option for students who have completed the LPC to do the SQE 2 assessment and two years of QWE instead of doing a training contract.

There is no longer any official requirement to do a two-year-long training contract, as was the case under the pre-September 2021 rules. Being able to collect QWE from up to four different organisations replaces this training contract. However, some law firms may still want you to do a two-year period of training⁷ with them so that they feel that you've been properly 'trained up' in how the firm works before they will give you a permanent job as a solicitor. This is their decision.

If you have not yet decided whether to go down the route of becoming a solicitor, you should still keep records of any QWE you have undertaken and have these confirmed internally by the relevant organisation (see below). Even if you decide not to be a solicitor (or if you do, but decide not to use that particular work placement as one of your pieces of QWE), you will be able to talk about the transferable skills and experiences that you have been exposed to during your placement in job interviews and on application forms.

2. WHAT IS QWE?

For work to count as QWE, you must:

1. Be providing 'legal services'; **and**
2. Have the opportunity, when providing these services, to develop two or more of the competencies in the Solicitor Statement of Competence (a list put together by the SRA showing what you need to be able to do to be a competent solicitor: you can access the list [here](#)); **and**
3. Have the work signed off by a qualified solicitor.

Legal Services:

When you are on a work placement, you are likely to be assisting the fee earners who are involved in the provision of advice to clients. This is included in the definition of 'legal services' as it is *'the provision of legal advice or assistance in connection with the application of the law or with any form of resolution of legal disputes'* (Legal Services Act 2007, s.12(3)(b)(i)).

Some common examples of what will not be counted as 'legal services':

- Time spent assisting in one of the firm's professional services departments e.g. marketing or HR;
- Time spent on activities ancillary to billing (e.g. preparing schedules to attach to client bills);
- Reading through files for your own interest.

Some common examples of what will be counted as 'legal services':

- Taking notes of client court/tribunal proceedings, or meetings related to a client matter, for your supervisor;
- Preparing bundles;
- Drafting documents;
- Researching a legal point for your supervisor to use on a live case.

⁷ Some law firms are still labelling this period as a 'training contract'



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NOTE: ‘mocked up’ activities which you are set during placement to keep you busy, but that are not directly linked to a client matter, are unlikely to count as QWE.

Competencies:

When planning the work that you do on placement, try to make time for a discussion with your supervisor before you start, to discuss how you may get the opportunity to develop a range of the competencies noted in the Solicitor Statement of Competence.

3. HOW MUCH QWE TIME WILL I GET FOR PLACEMENT?

A year of QWE is a ‘full time equivalent’ year, which means it’s equivalent to having worked full time (e.g. 9am until 5pm, five days a week) for a year.

As a rule of thumb, you should expect, in principle, to be awarded QWE for the time you spend actively supporting fee earners in their client work. Your placement provider will be able to confirm how much of the work placement will be counted as QWE.

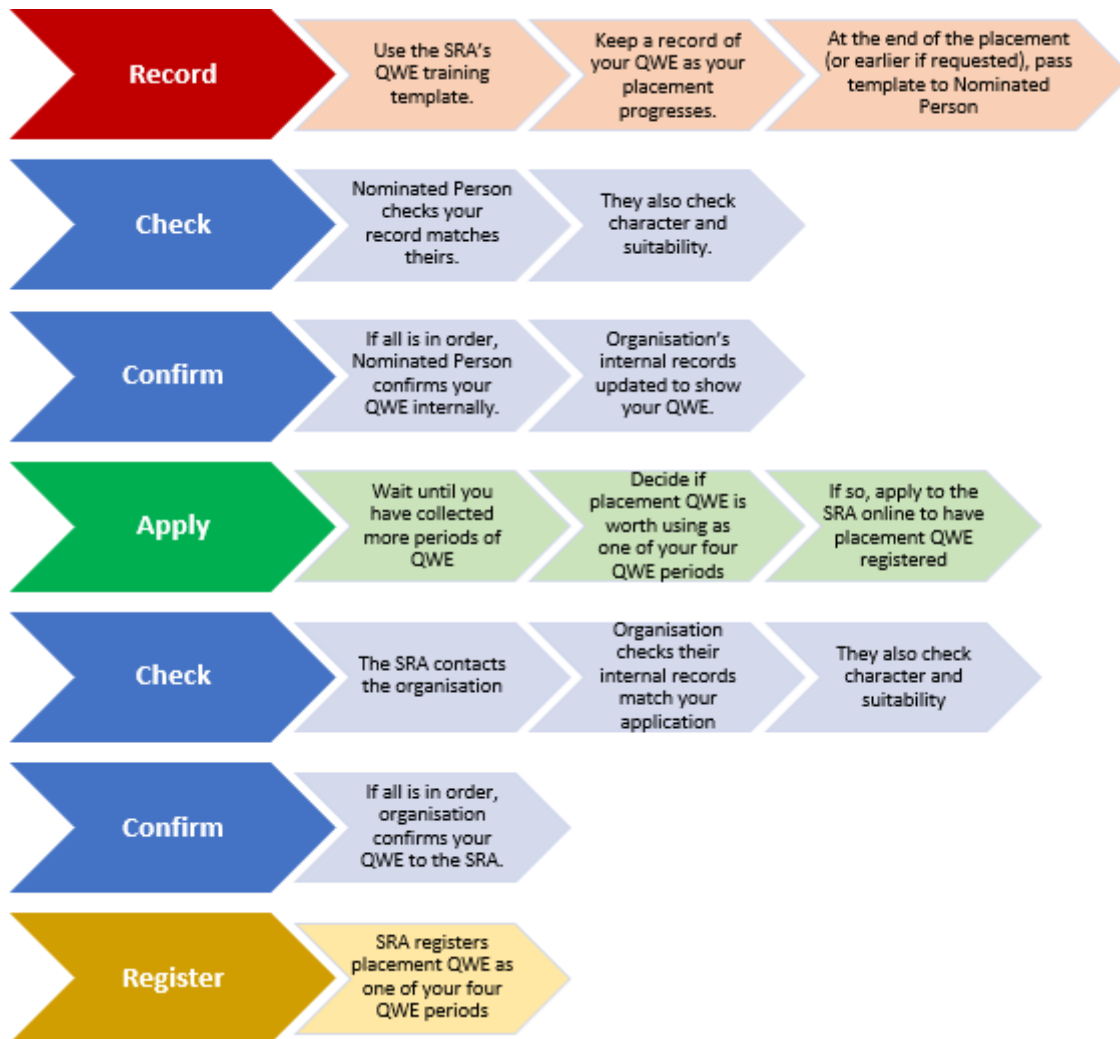
Examples:

- If you are working on placement for a number of weeks, and on each of your working days during these weeks your time is spent actively assisting with client matters, it is likely that these whole weeks will count as QWE;
- If you are on placement once a week for a ten-week term, you will be potentially able to claim ten days of QWE, not ten weeks’ worth.

You will need to think very carefully, later on, about which periods of QWE you want to register with the SRA, because it may not be possible to ‘take back’ a period that you have registered. For this reason, we strongly recommend that you wait until you have more periods of QWE to claim before making a decision about whether you use the period that will be provided by your work placement.

4. WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR CLAIMING QWE?

Below is a quick summary of what happens from when you start recording your placement QWE to when you have it registered with the SRA. Each of the steps is explained in more detail in the rest of this guide.



5. HOW DO I KEEP A RECORD OF MY QWE?

You will need to keep a record of the competencies you have been exposed to during your placement using the SRA's QWE training template, available on the SRA website [here](#). You should keep a careful note as you go along of the competencies to which you believe you have been exposed, and how to evidence them, as it will be very difficult to look back on this at a later point to try to pinpoint these. We recommend therefore that you should always have the training template close to hand so that you can fill it in as you go along.

IMPORTANT: see the guidance attached to this toolkit for recommendations on how to fill in the SRA's QWE training template for work placements.⁸

⁸ There are some companies offering platforms via which you can record your QWE electronically if you have been matched for work experience through them, for example <https://www.lawqwe.com/> and <https://flex.legal/>. In the absence of being matched through such an organisation, we advise that you complete the SRA's template on their website having considered the recommendations in the attached guidance.

You need to take personal responsibility for this. The keeping of a personal QWE record is led by the individual (not the organisation) and it is up to you to explain to the Nominated Person*, on the template, what competencies you have been exposed to. They will then need to decide whether they can confirm this period. If you have provided enough evidence of the competencies to which you have been exposed, and there are no character or suitability issues, then they will sign off the QWE period for internal record-keeping purposes.

***Nominated Person:** *this is the person nominated by the organisation to confirm your QWE. This may be the same person for the entirety of your work placement, or it may be that the supervisor for each team you have worked with will sign off the experience you gained within their team. You should confirm with the firm who to go to with requests to sign off QWE before you start your work placement. You should also confirm with them how long they will keep their internal records of QWE, because whilst there is no maximum period for claiming QWE, the firm may destroy records after a certain period in accordance with their data retention rules.*

6. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTER AND SUITABILITY RULES?

When signing off your QWE, the Nominated Person will need to confirm that during the period of QWE, no issues arose around your character or suitability. This will include issues that arise both inside and outside of the workplace, and can encompass matters such as:

- engaging in criminal behaviour (including failure to purchase a ticket for public transport);
- making ill-informed posts on social media;
- poor behaviour at firm or client events.

If something does occur during your placement that you believe may impact your character and suitability, we strongly recommend that you discuss this with the Nominated Person, because in all likelihood they will not be able to confirm your character and suitability when they are asked to internally confirm your QWE nor when the firm receives a message from the SRA asking them to confirm your QWE.

7. WHEN AND HOW SHOULD I ASK FOR CONFIRMATION FROM THE NOMINATED PERSON?

We would advise that you agree this prior to commencing, or at the start of, your work placement. We recommend that you ask the following questions:

1. *For the purposes of having your QWE internally recorded by the organisation:* Will there be one Nominated Person covering the whole work placement, or will the Nominated Person change as the work placement progresses (e.g. a different Nominated Person will sign off my work for each of the departments I work in)?
 2. *For the purposes of having your QWE internally recorded by the organisation:* How often should I submit the QWE training template (e.g. every week, every month or some other timeframe that the Nominated Person would prefer)?
-



3. *For the purposes of registering your QWE with the SRA:* Who is the Nominated Person whose name I should use if I decide to apply to the SRA to have my period of QWE with this organisation registered? i.e. who within the organisation is responsible for responding to requests from the SRA to have QWE registered?

Even if you think you may not want to use your work placement QWE as one of your four periods when you apply to the SRA to register QWE, you should still get your work placement QWE confirmed internally at the organisation, as this creates a record which the organisation can check against if you do in fact end up using your work placement QWE as one of your periods. If there is no internal record, the organisation has nothing to check your application to the SRA against, so it is always best to get the period internally confirmed, just in case.

If your work placement spans a number of years (e.g. one day per week for the duration of your university course), record the details for each year on the same template, but make clear that the information is from a different year. See the attached guidance on completing the QWE training template for how this might look.

Don't wait until after your placement has ended to fill in your QWE training template. There is no limit on how far back you can claim QWE, but if you leave it too long to record the QWE and to request for it to be confirmed, your contact at the firm may legitimately say that they can't sign it off if the template doesn't contain enough detail of the competencies you were exposed to, and/or because they can't check their records given the amount of time that has passed, and/or because records aren't available to confirm your character and suitability.

8. WHEN AND HOW SHOULD I APPLY TO REGISTER QWE WITH THE SRA?

You only need to register your two years' QWE by the time you apply to be admitted as a solicitor. You do so by applying online via the [mySRA](#) system: you need to create an account to do this.

Whilst it's possible to apply to register a period of QWE as soon as you have completed it, we strongly recommend that you don't apply to the SRA to register your placement QWE until a later date. This is because you may later regret having registered the work placement QWE with the SRA if you get the opportunity to gain a longer period of QWE with another organisation that you could have used instead, and as we noted above, it may not be possible to swap this later. There is no rush to apply for registration of QWE at the SRA as there is no time limit on when you gained the period of QWE. We recommend that you ask the organisation to confirm your QWE internally (i.e. they check your QWE template and if they agree, they keep a record of what you have done for their own purposes), but hold off on applying to the SRA to register that period until later, when you have other periods of QWE under your belt.

When you apply to register QWE in the SRA system, you need to provide a start date and an end date. If you have undertaken several work placements at the same firm over several years, you do not separate out each year of placement. Instead, you put the start date as the first date you started on placement, and the end date as the last date you were on placement.

For example, if you undertake a placement for a few days per week from January to December 2023, and you gain eight weeks full-time equivalent of QWE (in total, when the days are added up over the year), and then you do a full-time placement for five weeks in June/July 2024, you would put the



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start date as January 2023 and the end date as July 2024, and use this as one block of 13 weeks. Whilst these were collected at different times, they are still counted as one block, with one organisation. This block of 13 weeks would only be counted as one of your four periods of QWE.

9. HOW WILL EMPLOYERS VIEW MY QWE?

Be aware that any employment relationship between a law firm - or other organisation - and its employee has nothing to do with the SRA. The SRA can intervene when a supervisor refuses to sign off valid QWE, but they won't intervene if you find yourself in a position where you already have, for example, a month of QWE from being on work placement, but your employer is still insisting that you undertake a period of training with them for a full two years.

Technically, you would be able to qualify as a solicitor after 23 months of working for that firm, if you've also passed SQE1 and 2 and are of good character. However, if your employer doesn't want to pay for you to apply to the SRA to be admitted as a solicitor until the two-year period of training with them is over, then they are free to include this in any contract of employment, and once signed, you would be contractually bound by its contents.

It would of course be open to you to apply to the SRA to be admitted to the roll of solicitors after 23 months, but if your employer has made it clear to you that they will not pay for your practising certificate (nor will they include you on their list of individuals charged out to clients at the hourly rate of a solicitor) until you have completed two years with them, then you would need to pay for the practising certificate yourself. You should also consider the potentially negative impact this would have on your relationship with your employer if you plan to continue working with them post-qualification.

10. IS PLACEMENT NOW ALL ABOUT QWE?

No. QWE should not be seen as the sole purpose of undertaking a work placement.

We recommend you bear the following in mind when starting a placement:

Placement activities that do not attract QWE can still provide you with an invaluable opportunity to be exposed to how law firms and similar organisations work, notwithstanding that some activities you participate in might not attract QWE. There are many compelling reasons why you should still do non-QWE placement work, not least being able, in job applications and during interview, to talk about the exposure you have had to life in a law firm or similar organisation.

QWE should be seen as useful preparation for SQE2. A number of competencies that will be tested in SQE2 may not be QWE-bearing (e.g. you taking part in mocked-up activities so your supervisor can assess your ability to draft, write, or research) so your placement may still help you prepare for that (the SQE2 competencies are listed on the SRA website [here](#)).

SEE OVERLEAF FOR WORK PLACEMENT-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE ON HOW TO FILL IN THE SRA'S QWE TRAINING TEMPLATE.



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GUIDANCE ON COMPLETING THE SRA'S QWE TRAINING TEMPLATE FOR WORK PLACEMENTS

This guidance is to be read in conjunction with the SRA's QWE Training Template. You do not have to follow the guidance in this document, but it has been produced to help students, and Nominated Persons, to take a consistent approach to completing this form, so we do recommend that you follow it where you can.

Before reading further, please consider the details in the box below about our fictitious placement student, Melina:

Melina undertakes a work placement at the firm Stones Betts LLP while she is a student at Newland University. She goes out on placement one day per week during her first year (2021-22) and again during her second year (2022-23). She collects six weeks (30 days) of QWE in her first year, six weeks in her second year, and in third year (2023-24) she undertakes a placement during the summer after graduation (June/July 2024) and qualifies for 5 weeks of QWE from that placement.

Melina has agreed with the Nominated Person that whilst she will keep a record of her QWE week by week, she will only approach the Nominated Person for confirmation of this at the end of each placement (which in this case is in Summer of 2022, Summer of 2023, and Summer of 2024).

Below is an example of how Melina's QWE training template may be filled in across the years. Extracts from the QWE training template are reproduced with kind permission of the SRA.

Note that the examples in the template below relate to only one section of the SRA template, and in relation to only one client each time. This is for reference purposes only. In reality, Melina would in fact be keeping reference to tens, and potentially hundreds, of entries across the year, in each of the fields within the QWE training template.

We recommend you open the QWE training template from the SRA website (available [here](#)) so you can consider it in conjunction with this guidance note.



AT THE END OF 2021-22:

At the end of 2021-22, Melina should have a full list of the competencies she has been exposed to during that placement year. In order that the Nominated Person(s) can identify the cases she has been working on, she includes the client reference number. An extract is provided below of how one of the sections of her SRA template might look:

Competence	Have I had experience? What was it/what did I do?	How can I evidence my experience?	What did I learn?	Do I need more experience?
Obtain relevant facts in a matter	2021-22: SMI.023-0056 I helped my supervisor, Harjeet Patel, to interview this client about her employment law matter and produced an attendance note afterwards	2021-22: SMI.023-0056 The attendance note on file provides evidence of this	2021-22: SMI.023-0056 I learnt the importance of not interrupting so that I can gather all necessary facts from the client.	Yes, I will benefit from more experience on this

Melina also completes several other sections of the template in the same manner, some relating to this case and some to other cases she has worked on that year (using the client number again).

TIP: remember client confidentiality and data protection! Do not include matters in this template that might compromise the client’s confidentiality or personal data. Do not include any reference to the client’s name or the names of other parties in the matter, nor to the nature of the advice given (e.g. ‘I wrote a letter telling the client her case was weak’). It is better to just use the client reference number, which all firms should generate. If the firm does not generate client reference numbers, speak to the Nominated Person(s) at the firm about the best way to identify the client in the template, so that they can identify the case for which you are claiming QWE without using the client’s name.

Once a check has been undertaken by the Nominated Person(s), Melina’s template is completed as follows:

Section 1 - Placement details

	Placement 1	Placement 2	Placement 3	Placement 4
Organisation	Stones Betts LLP			



Start date	Oct 2021			
End date	June 2022			
How much of this time counts towards overall QWE requirement	2021-22: 6 weeks			

AT THE END OF 2022-23:

At the end of her second year of placement, in 2022-23, Melina again fills in the boxes explaining the competencies she has been exposed to during that year.

An extract is provided below of how one of the sections of her template might look (she also fills in other sections of the template reflecting the work she has done that year). NOTE: Melina keeps the previous year's details in the form and adds this year's. This is so that all detail is provided in just one form, which is easier for the Nominated Person(s) as it enables them to add up the QWE undertaken last year and this year into one block (see the 'Section 1' extract on the next page).

Competence	Have I had experience? What was it/what did I do?	How can I evidence my experience?	What did I learn?	Do I need more experience?
Obtain relevant facts in a matter	2021-22: SMI.023-0056 I helped my supervisor, Harjeet Patel, to interview this client about her employment law matter and produced an attendance note afterwards	2021-22: SMI.023-0056 The attendance note on file provides evidence of this	2021-22: SMI.023-0056 I learnt the importance of giving the client room to speak and not interrupting so that I can gather all necessary facts from the client.	Yes, I will benefit from more experience on this
	2022-23: BRE.0033-0098 I interviewed the client about his family law matter	2022-23: BRE.0033-0098 See the attendance note on file	2022-23: BRE.0033-0098 I learnt the importance of dealing with a client when they	I feel that I am improving at client interviewing but need to concentrate now



			become very upset during the interview.	on making sure I keep interviews to time.
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Once a check has been undertaken by the Nominated Person(s), Melina's template is completed as follows:

Section 1 - Placement details

	Placement 1	Placement 2	Placement 3	Placement 4
Organisation	Stones Betts LLP			
Start date	Oct 2021			
End date	June 2022 June 2023			
How much of this time counts towards overall QWE requirement	2021-22: 6 weeks 2022-23: 6 weeks Total: 12 weeks			

AT THE END OF 2023-24:

At the end of her third year, in 2023-24, Melina again fills in the boxes explaining the competencies she has been exposed to during that year.

An extract is provided below of how one of the sections of her template might look (she also fills in others reflecting the work she has done that year):

Competence	Have I had experience? What was it/what did I do?	How can I evidence my experience?	What did I learn?	Do I need more experience?
Obtain relevant facts in a matter	2021-22: SMI.023-0056 I helped my supervisor, Harjeet Patel, to interview this client about her employment law matter and	2021-22: SMI.023-0056 The attendance note on file provides evidence of this	2021-22: SMI.023-0056 I learnt the importance of giving the client room to speak and not interrupting so that I	Yes, I will benefit from more experience on this



	<p>produced an attendance note afterwards</p> <p>2022-23: BRE.0033-0098 I interviewed the client about his family law matter</p> <p>2023-24: STE.098-0006 I interviewed the client about her small business query</p>	<p>2022-23: BRE.0033-0098 See the attendance note on file</p> <p>2023-24: STE.098-0006 See attendance note on file</p>	<p>can gather all necessary facts from the client.</p> <p>2022-23: BRE.0033-0098 I learnt the importance of dealing with a client when they become very upset during the interview.</p> <p>2023-24: STE.098-0006 I learnt the importance of reminding the client at the beginning of the length of time we have available for the interview.</p>	<p>I feel that I am improving at client interviewing, but need to concentrate now on making sure I keep interviews to time.</p> <p>I am happy with my experience of interviewing clients, but appreciate that it is always good to gain more experience so will seek these out at my next place of work.</p>
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Once a check has been undertaken by the Nominated Person(s), Melina's template is completed as follows:

Section 1 - Placement details

	Placement 1	Placement 2	Placement 3	Placement 4
Organisation	Stones Betts LLP			
Start date	Oct 2021			
End date	June 2022 June 2023 July 2024			
How much of this time counts	2021-22: 6 weeks 2022-23: 6 weeks 2023-24: 5 weeks			



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towards overall QWE requirement	Total: 12 weeks Total: 17 weeks			
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Melina and the Nominated Person both keep a copy of this template:

- Melina now has a record of one block of 17 weeks of QWE that she could use as one period of QWE when applying to the SRA to register her QWE, if she chose to.
- The Nominated Person has a full record of Melina's activity that can be used to check against if the SRA contacts them (or their successor) to ask for confirmation that Melina completed the QWE she has applied to register.