THE ROUTE TO QUALIFICATION AS A JERSEY LAWYER

Issued 1May 2026

Status

This Note is intended to provide a summary overview of the pathway to qualification as a Jersey lawyer. It is intended to provide background information only, and prospective candidates for admission to the profession in Jersey should carefully consider the laws and regulations relating to admission.

Who is this Note relevant to?

Anyone interesting in becoming a Jersey-qualified lawyer.

Overall Statutory Framework

Jersey maintains two branches of the legal profession:

- advocates (rights of audience before all courts), and
- solicitors (also known as écrivains, with rights of audience limited to the Petty Debts and Family courts).

Qualification and admission to practise law in Jersey is governed principally by:

- the Advocates and Solicitors (Jersey) Law 1997 (the "**1997 Law**"), which sets the substantive requirements for admission to the Bar as an advocate and admission as a solicitor, the role of the Royal Court in the process, qualifying examinations, and employment experience required.
- the Advocates and Solicitors (Qualifying Examination) Rules 1997 (the "**QE Rules**"), which prescribe the structure, content and administration of the Jersey qualifying examinations.
- the Advocates (Specified Examinations and Assessments) Rules 2013 (the "**SEA Rules**"), which identify certain non-UK professional qualifications that may satisfy the "specified examinations" requirement, principally for admission to the Bar as an advocate.

Qualification and Admission as a Solicitor

1. Substantive Requirements

A person is entitled to be admitted as a solicitor if the Royal Court is satisfied that they are a fit and proper person **and** that they meet the criteria for one of two alternative requirement routes.

2. Route A - Standard Academic Route

The applicant must:

- hold a law degree from a British university or another institution approved by the Board, including specified core law subjects, **or** have passed a recognised Common Professional Examination (CPE) type course; **and**
- have enrolled on the Jersey Law course and passed the relevant Jersey qualifying examinations; **and**
- have completed 3 years' employment in a relevant Jersey legal office within the 6 years preceding the application for admission.

3. Route B - Experience-Based Route

Alternatively, the applicant must:

- have enrolled on the Jersey Law course and passed the relevant Jersey qualifying examinations; **and**
- have completed 5 years' employment in a relevant Jersey legal office within the 10 years preceding the application; **and**
- have completed at least 2 of those years within the 4 years immediately prior to the application for admission.

4. Relevant Office and Employment Rules

4.1 A relevant Jersey legal office includes:

- an advocate's or solicitor's office in Jersey,
- the Law Officers' Department, or
- the Judicial Greffe.

4.2 Key Features:

Employment must be predominantly legal and normally full-time (32+ hours/week).

Part-time work may count pro rata.

Limited overseas employment may count if Jersey-law-focused and certified, subject to time caps.

Absences over six weeks generally do not count, except for approved Jersey law study leave.

5. Admission Procedure

Once qualified:

- the candidate applies to the Attorney General;
- the application is placed before the Royal Court;
- upon approval, the applicant is admitted as a solicitor and takes the statutory oath.

Qualification and Admission as an Advocate

1. Principal Routes to Admission

A person may be admitted to the Jersey bar if the Royal Court is satisfied that they are fit and proper **and** they meet one of two routes.

1.1 Route A - direct Bar route

The applicant must have:

- passed recognised external professional examinations (e.g. England & Wales Bar or solicitor qualification, or other specified examinations), **and**
- enrolled on the Jersey Law course and passed the relevant Jersey qualifying examinations; **and**
- have completed 2 years' employment in a relevant office within the preceding 4 years.

1.2 Route B – admission via solicitor status

The applicant must:

- already be admitted as a Jersey solicitor; and **either**
- have passed recognised external professional examinations, **or**
- have practised as (or been employed as) a solicitor for 3 years within the preceding 6 years in a relevant office.

Specified Overseas Qualifications

The SEA Rules widen the pool of acceptable "specified examinations" for Jersey bar admission. These now include:

- the examinations and assessments included in any course validated by the Faculty of Advocates in Scotland for admission as a member of the Faculty of Advocates in Scotland.
- the examinations and assessments included in any course accredited by the Law Society of Scotland for admission to the Roll of Solicitors in Scotland.
- the examinations and assessments leading to the award of a Certificate of Professional Legal Studies by the Institute of Professional Legal Studies of the Queen's University of Belfast or the equivalent for the time being recognized by -

(a) the Executive Council of the Honorable Society of the Inn of Court of Northern Ireland, or

(b) the Law Society of Northern Ireland.

- the examinations and assessments included in any course validated by the appropriate body for admission as an Australian lawyer, as defined in the Legal Profession Act 2008 of Australia or any re-enactment thereof.

- the examinations and assessments included in any course validated by the appropriate body for admission as a barrister and solicitor under the Lawyers and Conveyancers Act 2006 of New Zealand or any re-enactment thereof.

These are relevant only for satisfying the external professional qualification requirement; they do not remove the need to pass the Jersey qualifying examinations or complete Jersey-based employment.

The Jersey Qualifying Examinations

1. Eligibility to Sit

To apply to sit the qualifying examinations, a person must:

- be at least 21 years old;
- meet the specified educational requirements set out in the QE Rules; and
- be enrolled on an approved course of instruction (currently the Jersey Law Course provided by the Institute of Law Jersey).

2. Preliminary v Final Examinations

Under the QE Rules, **candidates without a recognised legal qualification** must sit:

- preliminary examinations (English law core subjects), **and**
- final examinations (Jersey law).

Candidates **with a recognised legal qualification** need sit only the final examinations.

3. Subjects

3.1 Preliminary Examinations (if required):

Six papers in core English law and EU law, including contract, tort, criminal law, constitutional law, equity and trusts.

3.2 Final Examinations:

Six compulsory Jersey law papers:

(a) the Jersey legal system (including the history of Jersey law, its sources, customary law, the writers on Jersey law and the relevance of Norman customary law, English common law and the law of other legal systems) and constitutional law;

(b) the law of contract;

(c) the law of testate and intestate succession;

(d) the law of immovable property;

(e) civil procedure and criminal procedure, including legal professional ethics;

(f) the law of security over movable property and bankruptcy;

plus

(g) one optional paper (company, trust, or family law), subject to limited exemptions.

3.3 Time Limits and Sittings

Examinations are held twice yearly.

Candidates must pass all final papers within six successive sittings.

Conditional passes and limited extensions are available in exceptional circumstances

Typical Pathway to Qualification in Jersey

1. Jersey Solicitor pathway (typical)

(a) Obtain a recognised law degree (or non-law degree plus conversion).

(b) Complete required employment in a relevant Jersey legal office.

(c) Enrol on the Jersey Law course and pass the relevant Jersey qualifying examinations.

(d) Apply for admission as a Jersey solicitor.

(e) Be admitted and sworn as a Jersey solicitor (écrivain) before the Royal Court.

2. Advocate pathway (typical)

(a) Obtain a recognised professional qualification (e.g. England & Wales barrister or solicitor).

(b) Complete required employment in a relevant Jersey legal office.

(c) Enrol on the Jersey Law course and pass the relevant Jersey qualifying examinations.

(d) Apply for admission to the Jersey bar.

(e) Be admitted and sworn as an advocate before the Royal Court.

Alternatively, qualify first as a Jersey solicitor and subsequently progress to the Jersey bar via the Jersey solicitor qualification route.

Key Points

Jersey qualification is court-controlled, not regulator-controlled.

The Jersey qualifying examinations are mandatory in almost all cases.

Practical experience in Jersey is a core requirement for both branches.

External qualifications are recognised only to a defined extent, preserving the distinctiveness of Jersey law.

Exemptions

There is no general power to exempt a person entirely from the qualifying examinations, but there are limited, tightly defined exemptions relating to (a) parts of the examinations and (b) who must sit the preliminary examinations.

1. No Exemption from the Qualifying Examinations as a Whole

As a starting point:

- passing the Jersey qualifying examinations is mandatory for admission as either an advocate or a Jersey solicitor.
- Neither the 1997 Law nor the QE Rules permit wholesale exemption from the qualifying examinations based on seniority, overseas qualification, or experience.
- The only exemptions permitted are specific and partial, as set out below.

2. Exemptions from the Preliminary Examinations

2.1 Who must sit the preliminary examinations

Under the QE Rules, a candidate **who does not have a "legal qualification"** must sit:

- the preliminary examinations, and
- the final examinations

2.2 Automatic exemption where the candidate has a legal qualification

A candidate is exempt from the preliminary examinations if they **have a recognised legal qualification**, meaning they have passed one of the following:

(a) a qualifying law degree of a British University or of such other university or institution as the Board approves which meets specified subject requirements;

(b) the examinations and assessments included in any course validated by the Common Professional Examination Board in England and Wales;

(c) the examinations and assessments included in any course -

(1) validated by the Law Society of England and Wales for admission as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of England and Wales (or the examinations formerly set by the Law Society of England and Wales for that purpose), or

(2) accredited by the Law Society of Scotland for admission to the Roll of Solicitors in Scotland; or

(d) the examinations and assessments included in any course –

(1) validated by the Bar Council for call to the Bar of England and Wales by any one of the Inns of Court in England (or the examinations formerly set by the Council of Legal Education for that purpose), or

(2) validated by the Faculty of Advocates in Scotland for admission as a member of the Faculty of Advocates in Scotland; or

(e) passed the examinations and assessments leading to the award of a Certificate of Professional Legal Studies by the Institute of Professional Legal Studies of the Queen's University of Belfast or met such equivalent requirements as may be recognized for the time being by -

(1) the Law Society of Northern Ireland, or

(2) the Executive Council of the Honorable Society of the Inn of Court of Northern Ireland.

Such candidates sit only the final (compulsory Jersey law and optional papers) examinations.

No application for exemption is required; the exemption is automatic by operation of the QE Rules.

3. Exemptions from Individual Papers in the Final Examinations

3.1 French and Norman law exemption (University of Caen)

A candidate may be exempt from the optional paper in the final examinations if they have obtained one of the following qualifications from the University of Caen:

- certificat d'Études Juridiques Françaises et Normandes, or
- certificat d'Études de Droit Français et Normand.

This exemption:

- applies only to the optional paper (company law, trust law, or family law);
- does not exempt the candidate from the compulsory Jersey law papers.

3.2 Transitional exemptions for earlier examinations (historical)

The Rules contain transitional provisions for candidates who sat earlier forms of the qualifying examinations before reforms in 2014, under which:

- passes in earlier subject combinations are treated as passes in the current paper structure; and
- earlier Caen qualifications continue to be recognised for exemption purposes where obtained within the transitional framework.

These provisions are now largely spent but may remain relevant for legacy candidates.

4. Discretionary Exemptions and Conditional Treatment

4.1 Discretion to treat degrees as sufficient

The Board of Examiners has a discretionary power to treat a legal degree as satisfying the educational requirements even where its subjects do not exactly correspond to the specified core law subjects.

This is not an exemption from sitting the examinations, but can affect eligibility to sit the final examinations without first sitting the preliminary examinations.

4.2 Conditional Passes (not an exemption)

Where a candidate narrowly fails a paper of the preliminary examinations, the Board may treat them as having passed conditionally, subject to passing the failed paper later.

This mechanism mitigates rigid failure, but does not remove the requirement to pass all papers.

5. What is Not an Exemption

It is important to be clear that the following do not give any exemption from the Jersey qualifying examinations:

- admission as a barrister or solicitor in England & Wales;
- admission in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Australia or New Zealand;
- long professional experience overseas;
- previous practice within Jersey without passing the qualifying examinations.

Even where such qualifications are recognised as “specified examinations” for Jersey bar admission purposes, the Jersey qualifying examinations remain mandatory.

6. Summary Table

Area	Exemption available?
Entire qualifying examinations	No
Preliminary examinations	Yes, if the candidate has a recognised legal qualification
Individual compulsory Jersey law papers	No
Optional papers	Yes, although limited and with specified French / Norman law qualifications
Based solely on overseas qualification	No
Discretionary relaxation of degree content requirement	Yes, but not an exam exemption

---

For further guidance on these issues, and guidance on conduct issues more generally, please contact the Operations Manager, Law Society of Jersey.