

## Candidate Brief

Kaplan

Academic Director of the  
Solicitors Qualifying Examination



U0903

**September 2020**

**Managing Director**

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## **1) Background to Kaplan and the role of Academic Director**

In April 2017, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) announced their decision to introduce a new Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE). The introduction of the SQE will bring significant change to the current qualification framework and will be the sole route to qualifying as a Solicitor of England and Wales. In 2018, following an extensive tender process, Kaplan was appointed as the independent assessment organisation for the SQE.

Kaplan provides education, training and assessment across professional services, including in law, financial services, accountancy and banking. It has direct experience of assessment within the legal sector in England and Wales as the provider of the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (QLTS). Kaplan will not provide training for the SQE.

The SRA and Kaplan have worked with stakeholders from across the legal and education sectors to develop and test the SQE. Kaplan will run the SQE on behalf of the SRA, having been appointed as the assessment provider for a period of eleven years from the introduction of the SQE in Q4 2021.

The SQE will ensure that everyone meets the same consistently high standards to become a solicitor via a two part exam and is one of the three parts of the Statement of Solicitor Competence (see below for more information).

We are now seeking to complete the building of our senior team by appointing an Academic Director of the SQE. Drawing upon the expertise and experience of the Kaplan team particularly in its delivery of the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (QLTS) and the experience and expertise of the Academic Director of QLTS, this position will have ultimate responsibility for the content and quality of the final assessments.

The successful candidate will become part of the leadership team who will have collective responsibility for building the team and developing and delivering the new examination to upwards of 13,000 candidates per year.

This is a high profile, demanding and influential role. Working closely with the SRA, the Director of Learning and Qualifications, the Director of Operations, the Director of Psychometrics and the academic team it offers an exciting and rare opportunity to be part of the team responsible for the design and development of a major new national licensing examination.

## 2) Job Description and Person Specification

### Academic Director SQE

Location:	Flexible, with approximately 2 days a week spent in London N7
Grade:	A3
Reports to:	Director of Learning and Qualifications
Direct reports:	Academic Heads of SQE Stage 1 and SQE Stage 2, Head of Quality and Equality
Key stakeholder:	Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), SQE Leadership Team

### Who we are and what we stand for

We design and deliver world-leading professional assessments. In 2018, we were appointed as the independent assessment organisation for the new Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) which will be introduced in 2021. This will become the sole route to qualifying as a Solicitor of England and Wales and be taken by upwards of 13,000 candidates per year.

We are part of the Kaplan group, one of the world's largest and most diverse education and assessment providers. We operate in over 30 countries and maintain relationships and partnerships with more than 1,000 school districts, colleges and universities, professional bodies and over 10,000 businesses. Our vast breadth and scope in terms of both capabilities and assets sets us apart.

As an employer, we work hard to make sure this a great place where everyone has an opportunity to succeed, regardless of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or other belief, marital status, pregnancy or parenthood. If you require any adjustments, or additional support within the recruitment process, please contact us directly and we'll do our best to help.

To view our candidate privacy notice [click here](#).

### How you'll help us succeed

This is a high profile, demanding and influential role. Working closely with the SRA, the Director of Learning & Qualifications and the academic team it offers an exciting and rare opportunity to be part of the team responsible for establishing, operating, improving and growing a major new national licensing examination.

Drawing upon the expertise and experience of the Kaplan team, particularly in its delivery of the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (QLTS) and the experience and expertise of the Academic Director of QLTS, this position will have ultimate responsibility for the content and quality of the final SQE assessments.

### Leading the Academic Team in delivering the SQE

- Working with the Director of Psychometric and Assessment Development to become highly conversant in the methodology of high stakes assessments leading to licensure
- Taking forward the development of individual assessments
- In conjunction with the Academic Heads, consider changes to the assessments and assessment methodology to improve the accuracy and reliability of the SQE
- Liaison with the Operational team and Pearson VUE over delivery of the assessment
- Line management responsibility for the Academic Heads of SQE1 and SQE2
- Leading the appointment of candidates to key academic roles
- Leading the recruiting and training of writers and assessors including actors
- Sitting as a member of Boards and Panels
- Taking a role in attendance during live skills assessments including providing academic guidance
- Making a significant contribution to the writing, editing, checking, updating and review of questions for the MCT and skills assessments both in their subject area and outside it.

### Partnership with the SRA

- Building a positive and productive relationship with the SRA
- Exercising judgment in advising the SRA as Academic lead of its assessment body
- Taking a role in being part of the team that liaises with the SRA on a regular basis
- Identifying any significant challenges and concerns early and find solutions in conjunction with the other members of the senior management

### Stakeholder Engagement

- Making a significant contribution to the programme of stakeholder engagement being undertaken with the SRA supporting others and providing the lead at stakeholder events as required

Carry out any other duties that are within the scope, spirit and purpose of the role as requested by your line manager or senior manager. As business requirements change, the job description will evolve.

### **What you'll bring**

#### Essential

- Professionally qualified as a solicitor of England and Wales
- Knowledge of or a willingness to quickly develop knowledge of assessment methodology for high stakes credentialing assessments)
- An ability to think originally, analytically and strategically
- An ability to lead, manage and develop a team of highly qualified and experienced solicitors
- An ability to make a significant contribution to the writing and editing of multiple choice and skills assessments for the SQE
- An ability to respond positively under pressure to challenging deadlines
- Strong communication and presentational skills

**Desirable**

- Experience at a senior level of teaching and/or examining law
- Experience at a senior level within high stakes credentialing assessment
- Experience of working in a professional environment with a variety of stakeholders
- Experience of working with a regulator
- Strong administrative skills and proficient in the use of business software packages
- An ability to build a strong and productive relationship with partners and stakeholders

**What you can expect**

A competitive salary & clear pay structures, progression paths, and a comprehensive benefits package. You'll be joining a great place, driven by a shared purpose, where everyone can succeed and build a brighter future together.

### **3) Salary and Benefits**

The salary for this role will be £80,000. More may be available for an exceptional candidate.

6 month probationary period

Stakeholder pension scheme

Access to subsidised private health insurance

Life assurance

Income protection assurance

Employee assistance programme

28 days holiday

## 4) Application Process and How to Apply

### Application Process

Thewlis Graham Associates will acknowledge all applications. These will be assessed against the criteria in the Job Description and Person Specification section and the people who best meet these will be invited for a covid-secure interview with Thewlis Graham Associates.

Longlisted candidates will be advised by email. After a consultation between Kaplan and Thewlis Graham Associates a shortlist will be drawn up and shortlisted candidates invited for a covid-secure interview with the Client. All candidates will be informed of the outcome following this date.

To apply for this opportunity, please email the following documents (in word format) to [applications@thewlisgraham.com](mailto:applications@thewlisgraham.com), quoting reference **U0903. Closing date 8 October 2020.**

1. A comprehensive CV
2. A covering letter containing:
  - Your reasons as to why you would consider yourself suitable for this role
  - Your current remuneration details and notice period
  - The name, job title, organisation, email address and mobile phone number of two professional referees. (Please note: referees will not be approached without your prior permission.)

*Please ensure that you include your mobile phone number and email address in your application. Do not hesitate to call Claire Drummond on +44 (0)20 7850 4781 if you have any queries.*

## 5) Diversity Monitoring

Please click [HERE](#) to complete the diversity monitoring survey.

This is independent of the recruitment process but please do complete the survey with your application as Thewlis Graham Associates is committed to monitoring and analysing diversity information so that we can ensure that our processes are fair, transparent, promote equality of opportunity for all, and do not have an adverse impact on any particular group.

Any information provided on this form will be treated as strictly confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. It will not be seen by anybody directly involved in the selection process. No information will be published or used in any way which allows any individual to be identified.

### Conclusion:

We are looking for someone dynamic, with outstanding communication skills who is able to build and maintain strong productive partnerships and has an eye for detail and analysis.

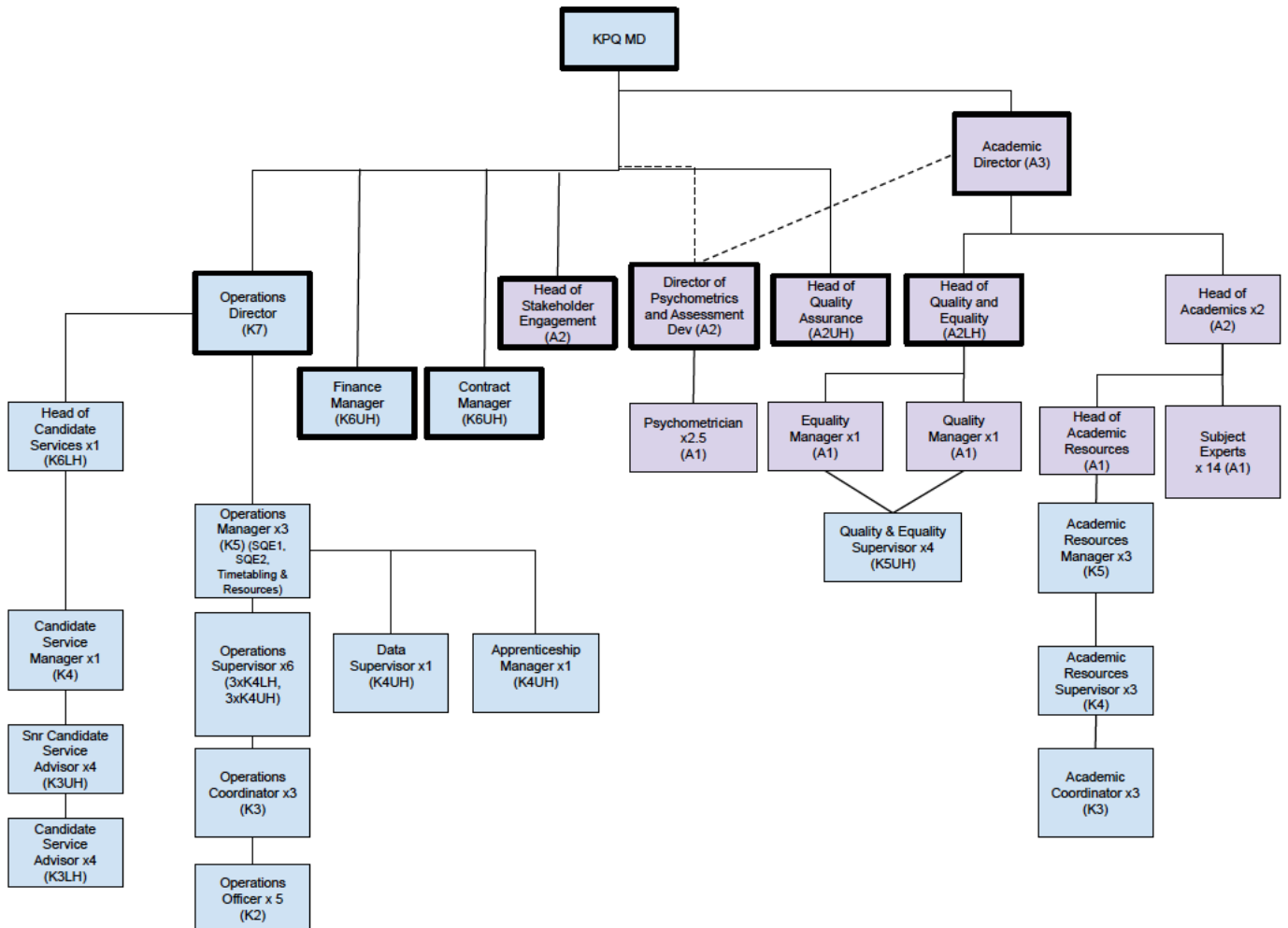
This is a unique opportunity to join a high performing team and make a strategic difference to the education and practice of solicitors for the future.

**Sarah Thewlis**  
**Managing Director**

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## 6) Organisation Chart





The Academic team currently consists of 2 Head of Academics and 5 Subject Experts.