

## Changes to the SQM audit process from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017

Recognising Excellence Ltd will begin delivering SQM audits from 1 April 2017 and will replace the current SQM administrator, SQM Delivery Partnership, from this date.

The SQM Standard has not been changed. We are confident that the level the standard is pitched at is appropriate, and provides effective quality assurance. The SQM will continue to provide assurance regarding the processes and procedures in place at a provider.

The award of the SQM will continue with the firm wide approach of the current contract, but with an increase in the requirements for file reviews, interviews and office visits at the Pre-QM stage. Award of the SQM will also now happen at this stage, before going into a 3 year audit cycle.

The table below details the changes;

Requirement Description	New Requirement	Action
File Sample Number of Files	<p>Number of client files to be sampled and reviewed (based on the number of FTE staff employed by the SQM Applicant in relation to the delivery of Legal Services):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FTE 1 – minimum of 8 files</li> <li>• FTE 2-6 – minimum of 15 files</li> <li>• FTE 7-15 – minimum of 25 files</li> <li>• FTE 16-60 – minimum of 35 files</li> <li>• FTE 61+ - minimum of 45 files</li> </ul>	The minimum requirements have been strengthened
File Sample composition	<p>As a minimum the file sample must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 file per work area (category of law)</li> <li>• 1 file per category of law delivered at each office</li> <li>• 1 file per supervisor</li> </ul> <p>The exact mix and volume of files sampled will need to be representative of the profile of the Legal Service Provider. File samples must be taken across each office, work area (categories of law) and supervisor.</p>	The minimum requirements have been strengthened
Staff interviewed – Number of staff	<p>The number of staff interviewed will be based on the number of FTE staff employed by the SQM Applicant in relation to the delivery of Legal Services. Staff interviews must include the Supervisors, Quality Manager(s), relevant fee earners and any new starters/trainees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FTE 1 – 1 staff member</li> <li>• FTE 2-6 – minimum of 3 staff members (or 2 staff members where there are 2 FTE).</li> <li>• FTE 7-15 – minimum of 5 staff members</li> <li>• FTE 16-60 – minimum of 10 staff members</li> </ul>	The minimum requirements have been strengthened



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FTE 61+ - minimum of 15 staff members</li> </ul>	
Staff interviewed - composition	The exact mix and volume of staff interviewed must be representative of the profile of the Legal Service Provider. Interviews must be taken across each office, work area (categories of law) and supervisor.	The minimum requirements have been strengthened
Multiple Offices- Number of offices to visit	<p>Where the SQM Holder has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 offices the Audit should include a visit to the lead office only.</li> <li>between 3 and 6 offices, the Audit should include a visit to the lead office and 1 other office (an exception is where the SQM Applicant is a sole practitioner using between 3 and 6 offices, in which case the SQM Auditor is only required to visit the lead office).</li> <li>between 7 and 10 offices, the Audit should include a visit to the lead office and 2 other offices (an exception is where the SQM Applicant has fewer than 7 FTEs using between 7 and 10 offices, in which case the SQM Auditor should visit the lead office and 1 other office).</li> <li>11 to 15 offices, the Audit should include a visit to the lead office and 3 other offices (an exception is where the SQM Applicant has fewer than 16 FTEs using between 11 and 15 offices, in which case the SQM Auditor should visit the lead office and 2 other offices).</li> <li>16+ offices, the Audit should include a visit to the lead office and 4 other offices (an exception is where the SQM Applicant has fewer than 61 FTEs using more than 16 offices, in which case the SQM Auditor should visit the lead office and 3 other offices)</li> </ul> <p>The selection of the other office(s) to visit should be based on which office undertakes the largest volume of work.</p>	The minimum requirements have been strengthened

### Equalities and Diversity

We have strengthened equality and diversity requirements in the new SQM contract to take account of legislation and reflect the LAA's own commitment to equality and diversity.

Providers will now be expected to provide equalities data as part of their audit process.