

SQE Reverse Engineering

MCQ Analysis Checklist

METHOD: Do not treat an SQE-style MCQ as a memory test alone. Reverse engineer what the question is built to test, identify tiger traps and distractors, then rebuild the reasoning in the right order.

Before choosing an answer

1. Identify the subject and narrow issue

What area is being tested, and what precise legal distinction or procedural step decides the question?

2. State the legal mechanism before reading the options too closely

Can you articulate the rule or decision process in one or two sentences?

3. Mark the facts that activate the rule

Which facts genuinely matter to the legal outcome?

4. Circle possible tiger traps

Which details might trigger the wrong rule, an irrelevant calculation, an outdated regime, or an exception that is not actually engaged?

5. Classify each answer option

Correct rule? Wrong rule? Right rule but wrong application? Old law? Overbroad? Missing an exception?

6. Check chronology and regime

Does the answer depend on a date, commencement provision, transitional rule, track, value threshold, client type or jurisdiction?

7. Test the intended answer against primary law

Where accuracy matters, verify the statutory provision, rule or current appellate authority rather than trusting the supplied feedback.

8. Change one fact

What small factual change would make a distractor become correct? This is often the fastest way to understand the boundary of the rule.

Distractor anatomy

Common distractor	Question to ask
Correct principle, wrong facts	What element is missing on these facts?
Old law / transitional regime	What date or saving provision would have to be present?
Client liability confused with opponent liability	Who owes whom, under which legal relationship?
Rule stated too broadly	What qualification, exception or discretion has been omitted?
Irrelevant detail	Does this fact activate any element of the rule?
Arithmetic bait	Is this actually a calculation question, or merely a classification question?

One-page analysis grid

Question topic

What is the examiner really testing?

Decisive facts

Tiger traps

Best answer - and why

Why each distractor is wrong

Authority / rule to verify

Changed fact that alters the answer

Revision anchor

REMINDER: For costs questions, always separate what the client may owe their own solicitor from what may be recovered inter partes. Then check the applicable costs regime, including fixed recoverable costs where relevant.

Use current primary sources where the question is time-sensitive: legislation.gov.uk, the Civil Procedure Rules / Criminal Procedure Rules, SRA or BSB materials, UKSC, Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, and Find Case Law.