

News story: Civil news: change of Specialist Quality Mark administrator

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New Specialist Quality Mark administration contract starts in tandem with small changes to audit process.

A new administrator will be responsible for delivering work for the Specialist Quality Mark (SQM) from 1 April 2017. The work will in future be carried out by Recognising Excellence and there will be a small number of changes to the audit process.

The current contract with SQM Delivery Partnership ends on 31 March 2017.

What does this mean for providers?

1. Starting 1 April 2017 audits should be booked by emailing: sqm@recognisingexcellence.co.uk.
2. Audit award process will have fewer stages.
3. Increase in requirements at the pre-quality mark stage.

More details are available on our 'quality standards' page on GOV.UK – see link below.

Requirement for contract-holders

It is a requirement for legal aid contract holders to hold either the SQM or the equivalent Lexcel accreditation. This will continue for anyone wanting to deliver services under the new civil contracts in 2018.

We confirmed this requirement would remain when we announced on 20 January 2017 that a procurement process for these contracts would start in April 2017.

Accreditation valid after 31 March 2017

All organisations with SQMs valid after 31 March 2017 should check they have a copy of their certificate.

If you are unable to find your current SQM certificate, you may request a copy from the outgoing audit provider, SQM Delivery Partnership. Such requests must be made before 31 March 2017.

Further information

[Legal Aid Agency quality standards](#) – to find out more about the standards and new administration arrangements