

# STEP QUALIFIED PRACTITIONER ROUTE RULES AND REGULATIONS

## 1 Overview

**1.1 Aim** - The aim of the Qualified Practitioner route is to determine whether the applicant has acquired an appropriate level of knowledge to ultimately become a Full Member of STEP entitled to use the TEP designation.

**1.2 Format** – Achieving STEP Full membership entails achieving a minimum of 50% on each of three essays within three years of enrolment on the Qualified Practitioner route. Essays are graded separately.

**1.3 Entry eligibility** – The Qualified Practitioner route is open to individuals who have either of the following;

- 10 years of relevant work experience in trust and/or estate planning
- 5 years of relevant work experience in trust and/or estate planning and a professional qualification or vocational degree

Prior experience and qualifications will be verified by submission of a CV/resume upon application.

Recognised qualifications for entry onto the Qualified Practitioner route are subject to modification as required by STEP without prior notice to the public, and, any such changes are effective as of the date of publication on the STEP website.

## 2 Essay Submission

**2.1 Submission eligibility** – Before submitting papers a candidate must have been approved onto the QP route and as an Affiliate Member of STEP, and have registered the given paper(s). An application fee, registration fee and annual membership subscription apply.

**2.2 Essay topics** – Essay topics are confirmed every January and published in the QP section of the STEP website ([www.step.org/qp](http://www.step.org/qp)). Candidates may only submit one essay from each of the four topic areas, unless a previous submission from one area was awarded a Fail, in which case the area may be revisited until a Pass is achieved. Essay topics are subject to change annually. Please note that it is the QP student's responsibility to ensure that the essay submitted deals with one of the essay topics from the current year in accordance with the list found on the STEP website.

**2.3 Paper registration** – To submit an essay, a QP student must complete a Topic Registration Form, accompanied by payment. Payment will not be refunded for essays that are not submitted or do not receive a passing mark. Payment cannot be transferred to other papers or submission dates. Topic Registration Forms without payment will not be accepted.

**2.4 Essay submission checklist** – Essays must be accompanied by the following documents, or will not be accepted:

- Cover Sheet
- Bibliography
- Reflective Log

**2.5 Essay intake** – Essay intakes occur twice each year, on the first Friday in July and the first Friday in October. Essays must be received by STEP at the London office on the intake deadline date, and should therefore be posted in advance according to the sender's location. Electronic submissions may be accepted in place of hard copies in extenuating circumstances. More than one essay may be submitted for each intake date.

**2.6 Extensions of intake deadline** – Essay deadlines cannot be extended. Please ensure you are aware of the deadline for your chosen submission session and plan accordingly. Deadlines are stated on the STEP website. QP students who register more than one paper for each submission session can find it difficult to complete all papers in the timeframe; please consider this when registering papers.

**2.7 Copyright** – QP students will retain copyright of their essay, however, STEP reserves the right, and will do so on a random basis, to call for an oral presentation to be made on the subject presented as and when it shall so decide.

## 3 Essay Format

**3.1 Word count** – Students should expect to write 4,000 – 5,500 words. This word count is a guideline; the essential requirement is to cover all aspects of the question in depth. References, citations, headings and footnotes are not included in the word count. Cover Sheet, Bibliography and Reflective Log are also not included in the word count.

**3.2 Presentation** – Please consider the following when presenting your essay;

- Membership number should be clearly displayed on the right-hand side of each page
- Do not include your name or company details anywhere on the paper – this is to protect anonymity at the marking stage
- Essays must be type-written and double-spaced
- Essays must be submitted loose-leaf, i.e. not stapled
- Page numbers must be included
- Print on one side of the paper only with a 1 inch / 2.5 cm margin

## 4 Plagiarism & Misconduct

All QP students must read and adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy. All acts by an individual that result in a false academic evaluation such as misconduct, which includes but is not limited to: plagiarism; submitting an essay that has been written by someone else; falsification or misrepresentation of an academic evaluation; and forgery of academic records or supporting documents are prohibited, and will be taken very seriously by STEP.

Submission of the Cover Sheet signifies your acknowledgement and understanding of the Academic Integrity Policy. Any submissions that do not include a Cover Sheet or acknowledgement of this policy will be rejected.

## 5 Grading

**5.1 Marking** – Essays are sent to an examiner with senior level expertise in the topic area for anonymous marking. This examiner will be determined by a panel of adjudicators according to jurisdiction. The examiner will mark the essay in accordance with specific criteria provided for them.

Essays that receive a marginal fail after initial marking are referred to a second examiner. The second examiner also independently marks the essay. An average of the two marks will determine the final mark.

**5.2 Grading** – Results will be issued as Pass, Fail or Distinction. Essays are marked out of 100, with a pass mark of 50. Exceptional papers that are awarded a mark of 80 or above will pass with Distinction and the highest scoring QP students will be honoured in the STEP Worldwide Excellence Awards. The precise mark for each paper is for internal use only, and will not be issued to the QP student. Passed papers will carry equal weighting towards the route to Full membership, irrespective of the specific mark awarded.

**5.3 Results** – Essay results are released according to the annual timetable, which is available on [www.step.org/qp](http://www.step.org/qp). Results are released by e-mail; QP students are responsible for ensuring their e-mail address is up to date. Results will not be released to members with any fees outstanding (application, registration or subscription fees). If you require an invoice, please contact the STEP office with your request.

**5.4 Appeals procedure** – A QP student can request a re-mark of their paper by contacting STEP and paying a Paper Re-Mark Fee (see Fees). Candidates have 21 days from the date they receive their results to appeal.

On request, QP students who have failed a paper can be sent a copy of the Examiner's comments. Examiners are asked to provide feedback on failed papers only. If a candidate then requests a re-mark, STEP will determine a third party to re-examine the paper. Papers will be reviewed without the mark or comments of the first examiner. Candidates are not allowed to enter into discussion regarding the outcome of their appeal whilst the appeal process is underway.

The decision of the second Examiner is final, however, if a candidate is not satisfied by the above procedure he/she may apply to the Qualified Practitioner Committee who may in exceptional circumstances either review any disputed paper or refer it to another examiner for review. Candidates can submit a statement (no more than 500 words) to support their application to the Committee.

If the result of the re-mark is to alter the outcome of the essay from a Fail to a Pass, then the re-marking fee will be refunded. The ruling of STEP is final.

Once results have been issued by STEP, if, for any reason, candidates do not receive them, it is their responsibility to contact STEP to ask for them to be re-sent. The appeals process will be void if a candidate has not requested their results one month after they have been issued.

## 6 Completion of the Qualified Practitioner Route

**6.1 Extensions of three year period** - An extension of one year may be granted to individuals who require more time to complete their essays. Extension requests will be addressed on a case by case basis, and will be subject to the approval of STEP. Should an extension request be granted, the fee is 100 GBP. Should a QP student require an extension due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. parental leave, medical reason etc) the extension fee may be waived at the sole discretion of STEP given sufficient and appropriate documentation. Any essays submitted under extension must address a current topic.

**6.2 Suspensions** – A member's Qualified Practitioner application may be suspended if a student;

- Fails to maintain payment of annual STEP Affiliate membership fees
- Fails to complete the Qualified Practitioner programme within the established three-year timeframe and an extension has not been approved
- Commits any act of plagiarism and/or misconduct according to the STEP Academic Malpractice Policy and/or the STEP Code of Professional Conduct

**6.3 Upgrade to TEP** – Upon passing three essays, QP students will be eligible to upgrade from Affiliate membership to Full membership of STEP, and will earn the right to use the TEP designation.

## 7 Fees

The following fees will apply for all candidates undertaking the QP route:

- Application fee
- Affiliate membership annual subscription
- Paper registration fee for each submission

Details of these fees, according to jurisdiction and currency, can be found at [www.step.org/fees](http://www.step.org/fees)

The following fees may also apply to some QP students, should they choose:

- Paper re-mark fee
- One year extension fee (100 GBP)

## 8 CPD

STEP automatically treats members that have submitted a QP paper as having met their CPD requirements for that year in recognition of the time spent on research and writing.

All membership categories must undertake CPD, so candidates that have not submitted a paper for any given year may be included in STEP's annual CPD reviews.

## 9 Grandfathered Terms and Conditions

Students who registered for the Qualified Practitioner route prior to the release of these Rules and Regulations on 20th January 2017 will continue to have four years from the date of enrolment to complete their application. All other Rules and Regulations stated here are effective immediately for all registered on this route.

### **Paper submissions to be sent to:**

The Membership Department  
STEP Office  
Artillery House (South)  
11-19 Artillery Row  
London  
SW1P 1RT

Submission of the paper(s) for which you have registered will signify your agreement to these Rules and Regulations, as stated on your paper's Cover Sheet. You must keep a copy of your thesis paper(s).

If you have any queries, please phone the STEP Office on **+44 (0)20 3752 3700** or send an e-mail to **[step@step.org](mailto:step@step.org)**