



Estate Agents Authority increases level of Salespersons Qualifying Examination to raise standards

(10 January 2006) To boost professional standards in the estate agency trade and enhance consumer protection, the Estate Agents Authority will raise the level of the Salespersons Qualifying Examination (SQE) from July 2006. In addition, to meet the needs of the trade, the frequency of the paper-based SQEs and Estate Agents Qualifying Examinations (EAQE) will be increased from 2007.

In July 2005, the Authority brought in a new format for and raised the standard of EAQE. To ensure all new salespersons also meet the professional standard expected, the Authority considers there is a need to increase the level of SQE as well.

To test candidates' professional knowledge in a more comprehensive way, the format of the current SQE will be revised and the allotted time extended.

Mr Joseph Tsang Hon-ping, Chairman of the Authority's Professional Development Committee, said: "Enhancing the professional standard of the trade is our goal. To ensure that new practitioners, including front-line salespersons, meet the professional standard and fulfil the many practical requirements of the job, we consider it necessary to raise the level of the qualifying examinations as a means to enhance protection for the public."

The current SQE is assessed as a whole. This allows a candidate with a high overall mark to pass even if he/she performs poorly in important areas such as land search.

The new SQE will entail three main changes:

- 1. The new SQE will consist of two parts. Candidates will be required to pass both parts in order to qualify.**

Part I will test a candidate's knowledge on various sections of the syllabus. Part II will feature one or two comprehensive case studies portraying a real-life client situation that will test all the



practical knowledge expected from a salesperson including, in particular, interpretation of a land search. Candidates will be required to pass both parts in order to qualify.

2. The new SQE will last 2 hours 30 minutes.

To compensate for the more difficult features of the new examination and to allow sufficient time for comprehension of the case studies in Part II, the new SQE will be extended from its current length of 1 hour 15 minutes to 2 hours 30 minutes.

3. All Qualifying Examinations will use a paper-based format.

To accommodate the new SQE requirements (which include case studies), the new SQE will be offered in a paper-based format only. All entrants will be required to sit the paper-based examination and the computer-based SQE will be abolished after 22 March 2006.

The paper-based SQE is currently organised three times each year in March, July and November. The next paper-based SQE will take place on 23 March 2006 (the same day as EAQE). This will be the last SQE before the above revisions are implemented. Candidates who wish to take the current SQE must register with the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority on or before 27 February 2006 (late registration is available on 16 and 17 March 2006 with payment of a \$200 administration fee). Those registering on or before 27 February 2006 will be able to take either the paper-based or computer-based format, subject to availability of seats. Seats are limited, especially for the computer-based SQE, and will be assigned on a first-come-first-serve basis. Candidates may be assigned dates and/or modes other than their first preference.

In the second half of 2006, both EAQE and SQE (new format) will be held in July and November as scheduled.

In addition, since the number of people seeking an Estate Agent's Licence has risen considerably recently, the Authority will increase the frequency of the paper-based EAQEs and SQEs from the existing three



times a year to four times a year, starting from 2007. This will help shorten the waiting time for candidates wanting to sit the examinations. To accommodate those who wish to take both EAQE and SQE, the two types of examinations will be held in the same month (March, June, September and December) but on different dates. This means, from 2007, there will be a total of eight Qualifying Examinations (four EAQEs and four SQEs) a year.

The number of individual licensees hit 21,884 in 2005, representing an increase of more than 17% compared to 2004 and an increase of 42% compared to 2003.

In 2005, a total of 12,052 candidates took EAQE and SQE. The average pass rate for EAQE was 29%. The average pass rate for SQE was 74%.

Passing the qualifying examinations is a pre-requisite for obtaining a licence. For enquiries and further details regarding examinations, please telephone the Authority's professional development hotline 2150 2468 or visit the Authority's website at <http://www.eaa.org.hk>.

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