

Training trainee solicitors

The Solicitors Regulation Authority requirements

Education and Training Unit

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1. Becoming authorised to employ trainees

The purpose of the training contract is to give trainees supervised experience in legal practice through which they can refine and develop their professional skills. The training contract is the final stage of the process of qualification as a solicitor. Trainee solicitors gain practical experience in a legal environment such as a solicitor's firm, a local authority or an in-house legal department.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) determines the standards that must be met by trainees and the organisations that train them. Organisations intending to provide training must agree to meet the mandatory standards before they are authorised by the SRA as training establishments and before they offer training contracts.

Training future solicitors can be rewarding, generating long-term benefits for your organisation and the profession. But it takes time and resources to provide adequate training. If you are thinking of employing trainees, you should be sure that your organisation is able to provide the experience and supervision they need.

The key training requirements are that trainees must

- be paid at least the prescribed [minimum salary](#)
- gain [practical experience](#) in at least three distinct areas of English law, including opportunities to develop their skills in both contentious and non-contentious work. If your organisation cannot offer this range of experience, you must arrange for a [secondment](#) for the trainee to gain the relevant experience. Alternatively, you may wish to consider offering a modular training contract jointly with another organisation.
- be given opportunities to develop the skills they will need in practice so as to meet the [skills standards](#)
- maintain a [training record](#), linking the experience they have gained to the skills they have developed
- be closely supervised by qualified solicitors or others with the appropriate experience in English law
- receive regular feedback and appraisals throughout their training with at least three formal appraisals during the training contract
- be allowed paid study-leave to attend courses prescribed by the SRA, such as the Professional Skills Course. The training establishment must pay the Professional Skills Course fees.

Once your organisation is authorised, it will be permitted to employ a maximum of two trainees for each partner or senior solicitor with a current and four previous consecutive practising certificates. Your organisation may also be monitored by the SRA to ensure that the training it provides is of an appropriate quality and standard.

The training principal

Your organisation must nominate a training principal who agrees to take overall responsibility for training, and who must be

- a partner or director in private practice (or, outside of private practice, of equivalent status to a partner) who is a solicitor of England and Wales with a current and four previous consecutive practising certificates of England and Wales, or
- a justice's clerk or a solicitor of England and Wales in a government department in at least their fifth year of admission, or
- a solicitor of England and Wales who has been a registered European lawyer for a continuous period of at least four years before admission

The training principal must fully understand the training requirements. The training principal

- liaises with the SRA
- advises the SRA of any changes relevant to training, such as the name of his or her successor
- ensures that
 - anyone involved in the supervision of trainees has adequate legal knowledge and supervisory experience or training
 - trainees maintain an adequate [training contract record](#)
 - trainees receive regular feedback and performance reviews including at least three [appraisals](#) during the training contract
 - there are suitable pastoral arrangements for trainees

The training principal can delegate these responsibilities to others, but the trainee must be informed of this.

At the end of the training contract period, the training principal certifies that the trainee has met the required standards. The training principal should be aware that all trainees who plan to be admitted on or after 1 September 2006 are required to obtain a satisfactory criminal record check (standard disclosure) from the [Criminal Records Bureau](#) (CRB). A CRB standard disclosure includes details of any current and spent convictions, police cautions, reprimands and final warnings held on the Police National Computer. The SRA also makes use of overseas criminal records information services whenever appropriate. The trainee – not the training principal – is responsible for applying for the required CRB standard disclosure. The SRA sends trainee solicitors CRB check forms and guidance approximately 12 weeks before the scheduled end of their training contract.

If you wish to make an application for your firm to become an authorised training establishment, you should complete and return (with the authorisation fee) an application for authorisation to take trainees. To request an application form, please e-mail info.services@sra.org.uk.

2. Recruiting trainees

You can recruit trainee solicitors only after your organisation has been authorised as a training establishment. Recruiting the best trainees for your organisation is essential, and operating good recruitment processes will help you achieve this.

Types of training contract

You can offer three types of training contract, and you may want to consider which type of training contract will be of most benefit to your organisation and the trainee before you recruit trainees. The training contracts are

- the customary contract, ie a two-year full-time training contract, with the trainee working full time after satisfactory completion of the Legal Practice Course
- the part-time training contract, with the trainee working part time for at least two and a half days per week, up to a maximum of four years, after satisfactory completion of the Legal Practice Course
- the part-time-study training contract, which is completed in three to four years, at the same time as the trainee studies a qualifying law degree, or the Common Professional Examination (also known as the Graduate Diploma in Law) and/or the Legal Practice Course.

Equal opportunities

In recruiting trainees, your organisation must comply with equal Rule 6 of the Solicitors Code of Conduct 2007 which is available at <http://www.sra.org.uk/rule6>.

The Voluntary Code for the Good Recruitment of Trainees

The [Voluntary Code for the Good Recruitment of Trainee Solicitors \(PDF 48K\)](#) operates for training establishments that recruit undergraduates two years in advance of the start of the training contract. If this applies to your organisation, and it is a signatory to the code, you can advertise the fact.

Download information on good recruitment practices – [Training trainee solicitors: Guidelines on recruitment and selection \(PDF 45K\)](#).

Offering a training contract

You must send a successful candidate a letter of offer as soon as possible following your decision.

Please note that prospective trainees must be enrolled as a student member of the SRA. This is a prerequisite of a student commencing the Legal Practice Course and the training contract.

You should also be aware that the SRA will not register a full-time or part-time training contract unless the trainee has already passed the Legal Practice Course.

The letter of offer must specify the following:

- the type of training contract, with start and end dates
- starting [salary](#) and arrangements for salary review
- any conditions to which the offer is subject, for example
 - confirmation of successful completion of the Legal Practice Course or student membership of the SRA
 - fees your organisation will pay in respect of re-sits and re-attendance on the Professional Skills Course (you are required to pay for the first attempt)
 - any probationary period before the contract is signed
- how training will be organised, such as
 - the nature of your organisation's practice, the areas of law and the [skills](#) in which the trainee will gain experience
 - whether the trainee will work in separate departments or 'seats' and, if so, how this will be arranged
 - how long the trainee should expect to spend in each area of law
 - details of any [secondments](#)
- any other benefits, including benefits in kind, sickness benefit, holiday entitlement
- hours of work and office hours
- any arrangements for continuing employment on completion of the training contract

You can use your own form of offer letter. The SRA's sample offer letter can be amended to suit the needs of your organisation.

3. Employing trainee solicitors

Entering into a training contract

When the trainee begins work, you must enter into the appropriate training contract and [register](#) it with the SRA.

Each contract is in a standard form, and sets out the contractual obligations of the trainee and the training establishment. The training contract cannot be amended without prior approval of the SRA.

There are three types of training contract:

- The full-time training contract is for two years, and can only be commenced after successful completion of the Legal Practice Course.
- The part-time training contract covers a maximum period of four years, and can only be commenced after successful completion of the Legal Practice Course. The total length of time spent in the training contract depends on the usual number of days worked each week (not including overtime or weekend work). The full-time contract, in which the trainee works five days per week, is for two years (or 730 days). So, if the trainee works
 - two and a half days per week, the period is four years (1,460 days)
 - three days per week, the period is three years and four months (1,216 days)
 - four days per week, the period is two years and six months (913 days)
- The part-time-study training contract normally lasts between three and four years. The trainee works and, at the same time, is studying
 - the last two years of a part-time qualifying law degree (QLD), or
 - the part-time Common Professional Examination course (CPE) (also known as the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL)), and/or
 - the part-time Legal Practice Course (LPC)

The time spent in a part-time-study training contract counts at half time (ie two years in the part-time-study training contract counts as one year of the total training period).

A part-time study training contract is normally for two calendar years from the start date of the part-time course. However, trainees may commence a part-time study training contract part way through a course.

The options for part-time-study training contracts are as follows:

- the final two years of a part-time QLD followed by a two-year part-time LPC
- a two-year part-time CPE or GDL followed by a two-year part-time LPC
- a two-year part-time LPC followed by one year in a full-time training contract

It is also possible to undertake a part-time LPC followed by a part-time training contract; further details are available from the SRA.

Registering a training contract

The [training principal](#) and the trainee must sign the training contract within three months of the trainee starting work. You must register the training contract with the SRA within 28 days of it being signed.

A copy of the contract does not need to be sent to the SRA. You should complete and send to the SRA an application to register a training contract, along with the registration fee; to request an application form, e-mail info.services@sra.org.uk. The form confirms the type of

training contract, the start and end dates, the salary the trainee will be paid, and details of any time to count that has been granted.

When the contract has been registered, the SRA will notify the trainee, confirming the expected end date of the training contract.

Recognising experience gained outside the training contract

Some trainees may have worked in a legal environment and gained equivalent experience before starting a training contract. Your organisation can, at its discretion, recognise relevant prior experience and take this time into account so as to reduce the period of the training contract. This is known as 'time to count'.

Time to count granted is granted at half equivalent, up to a maximum of six months. For example, in order to reduce the training contract period by three months, the trainee must have at least six months of equivalent experience. Trainees should make an application to the training principal using a time to count application form; to request an application form, e-mail info.services@sra.org.uk.

When considering such applications, the training principal should be satisfied that the experience gained meets the appropriate standards. Time to count can be granted where

- the experience is less than three years old
- the work completed is equivalent to that in a training contract
- the trainee has been appropriately supervised and appraised regularly

The information on which the application is based must be documented.

For further information, download [Training trainee solicitors: Guidelines for recognising previous experience \(time to count\) \(PDF 46K\)](#).

The minimum salary

Trainee solicitors should be paid at least a minimum salary as prescribed by the SRA. The salary levels are reviewed annually.

Current minimum salary levels, which came into effect on 1 August 2008, are

- £18,420 for trainees working in Central London
- £16,500 for trainees working elsewhere

In accordance with the standard training contract, these levels apply to all trainees. Current recommended salary levels are

- £18,870 for trainees working in Central London
- £16,790 for trainees working elsewhere

Induction of trainees

At the beginning of the training contract, your organisation must provide an induction for all trainees, including those who have worked for you before in another capacity.

The induction is an opportunity to clarify the roles and responsibilities of those who will be involved in the trainee's training, to familiarise the trainee with office procedures, to introduce fellow staff members and to explain the nature of the work they will undertake.

The induction does not need to be formal or lengthy, but it should cover

- an introduction to your organisation, the training scheme, the [skills standards](#) and your expectations of the trainee
- how the training will be organised
- the form of the training (contract) record that you want the trainee to keep, how and when it is to be completed, and when it will be reviewed
- arrangements for supervision, performance review and appraisals
- your office procedures, such as office hours, holidays, health and safety
- your IT and office equipment and systems for time-recording and billing
- library and research facilities
- secretarial and administrative support
- pastoral-care arrangements

Your organisation might find the SRA's sample induction checklist useful if you do not already run an induction programme. You can download [Training trainee solicitors: Induction checklist \(PDF 41K\)](#).

Absences during the training contract

Trainees should receive a minimum of 20 days and a maximum of 25 days of annual leave. Annual training with the reserve forces is also permitted.

Up to 20 days of uncertificated sick leave is allowed. For periods of absence of over four months, for reasons relating to illness / maternity leave / paternity leave / unpaid leave with the training establishment's consent, the training contract must be extended. To request a training contract time-extension form, e-mail info.services@sra.org.uk.

Sick pay is at the discretion of the training establishment. Trainees on maternity leave are eligible for statutory maternity benefits.

Absences resulting from industrial action are treated in the same way as sick leave. Participation in industrial action does not, of itself, bring into question the suitability of the trainee to become a solicitor.

Cancellation of a training contract

From time to time, a trainee and their training establishment may wish to terminate a training contract. This can be done by means of

- mutual agreement, completing an application to register the transfer/cancellation of a training contract; to request an application form, e-mail info.services@sra.org.uk. The training principal certifies that the trainee has satisfied the period of training, and is of suitable character to become a solicitor. Both parties sign to confirm their agreement to the cancellation. The completed form is sent to the SRA.
- a cancellation clause, where the training contract is conditional on the trainee passing the CPE and/or the LPC and the trainee does not pass.
- an application to the SRA by either party. This situation usually arises where there are training-related problems that cannot be resolved internally. The problems may relate to concerns about training quality, trainee performance or trainee conduct.

The SRA encourages training principals and trainees to resolve issues internally – if at all possible. If this proves impossible, contact the SRA.

4. Practical experience in law

Trainee solicitors must gain practical experience in at least three distinct areas of English law. They also must have opportunities to develop their skills in contentious and non-contentious work – as specified in the [skills standards](#).

Training may be organised in one of two ways

- the trainee works in at least three distinct departments or 'seats,' spending a specified period (usually about six months) in each
- the trainee works in various areas of law on a day-to-day basis, in line with the type of work available

However the training is organised, it is essential that

- enough time is spent in each area for the trainee to be trained properly in it. Although the SRA does not specify the amount of time this would take, it anticipates that it could not be achieved in less than the equivalent of three months during the training period
- the trainee is guided and tutored in professional conduct, ethics and client care
- the level and complexity of the trainee's work is increased gradually during the training period
- the trainee is supervised properly and their performance reviewed and appraised regularly
- each trainee maintains their own training record, keeping track of the work they have done and the skills they have used

Practice skills standards

During the training contract, trainee solicitors develop and apply the practice skills they will use as qualified solicitors.

The key elements of each skill – and the type of experience that will help trainees to develop it – are specified in the skills standards.

Trainees develop the skills through a mixture of the following activities

- completing work and tasks by themselves
- assisting others
- observing experienced practitioners

Supervisors must ensure that, over the course of their training, the amount and type of work given to trainees adequately covers each skill and is of an appropriate level and complexity for the trainee in question.

Advocacy and oral presentation

On completing the training contract, trainee solicitors should be competent to exercise the rights of audience available to solicitors on admission.

Their experience will enable them to understand

- the communication skills of the advocate
- the techniques and tactics of examination, cross-examination and reexamination
- the need to act in accordance with the ethics, etiquette and conventions of the professional advocate

The tasks trainees perform must enable them to grasp the principal skills required to prepare, conduct and present a case:

- identifying the client's goals
- identifying and analysing relevant factual and legal issues, and relating them to one another
- summarising the strengths and weaknesses of the case
- planning how to present the case
- outlining the facts in simple narrative form
- formulating a coherent submission based on the facts, general principles and legal authority in a structured, concise and persuasive manner

The following activities are likely to foster these skills:

- helping to advise on pre-trial procedures
- helping to prepare cases before trial
- with one or more lawyers, attending the magistrates' courts to observe trials, bail applications, pleas of mitigation or committal, and observing submissions in chambers, examination, cross examination and reexamination in open court
- observing proceedings in family cases, industrial tribunals, planning tribunals or other tribunals or forms of dispute resolution
- as training progresses, and under appropriate supervision, conducting interim applications before a Master or District Judge
- becoming involved in presentations for clients or in preparing or delivering in-house training

Case and transaction management

Trainee solicitors must begin to acquire skills in managing and running a case or transaction.

Trainees must be given work to enable them to understand the importance of

- producing a schedule for a case/transaction, broken up – where necessary – into phases
- planning out phases of work to include time, cost and risk management
- developing techniques to diarise, follow up and revisit matters at the appropriate time
- keeping accurate records and attendance notes
- effectively managing files
- regularly and fully reporting back to clients
- co-ordinating teams to review progress and revise options
- bringing matters to a timely, client-satisfactory conclusion
- wrapping up the matter, closing the file, and recovering costs and disbursements

To develop these skills, trainees should work on larger cases or transactions as members of a team, or they should be given smaller transactions to run themselves, under close supervision.

Client care and practice support

To enable trainees to work effectively in an efficient practice, they must develop the skills required to manage time, effort and resources.

They should be given work that will enable them to

- prioritise tasks
- set and meet deadlines
- review and report progress on matters
- balance immediate and long-term objectives
- keep appropriate records
- understand the processes of setting fees and billing clients

Activities that will help them to achieve this include

- planning work by the use of their diaries
- using email, word-processing, scheduling and organisational systems regularly and appropriately
- working effectively with support staff
- recording expenses and disbursements and obtaining reimbursement
- opening and closing files

Trainees should develop good working habits, and supervisors should check this regularly.

Communication skills

Trainees should understand the need to refine their communication skills so that they can present oral and written communication in a way that achieves its purpose and is appropriate to the recipient.

They should be given work that will help them to

- select appropriate methods of communication
- express ideas concisely, clearly and logically
- use appropriate language
- use correct grammar, syntax and punctuation
- pay attention to detail by proof-reading, checking the format and numbering of documents, cross-referencing and using consistent terminology
- listen actively and speak effectively

Trainees can develop these skills by

- drafting letters, internal notes and memos
- reporting to clients and others by telephone
- taking notes in meetings
- dictating notes and letters

The importance of keeping clients regularly informed of the progress of a matter and the client care procedures in Rule 15 should be emphasised to trainees. Trainees should be given regular advice, guidance and feedback on their performance.

Dispute resolution

Trainees should become familiar with contentious work and gain a full understanding of the skills and practice of resolving disputes, including settling, mediation and adjudication, in a fair, cost-effective and timely way that meets client needs.

Trainees should be given opportunities to observe and/or assist in resolving disputes so that they will understand the need to

- take careful instructions
- identify the client's purpose and advise on the possible outcomes and costs
- thoroughly research the parties' liabilities
- gather evidence from witnesses or elsewhere
- consider all the options for resolving a dispute
- meet deadlines and keep clients informed of progress
- draft or prepare papers to assist in resolving a contentious matter
- control information central to the dispute throughout the proceeding
- represent the client and the client's interests through meetings, conferences and hearings
- ensure that settlements and judgements are secure and enforceable

Trainees can develop these skills by attending tribunal hearings or ADR meetings, observing proceedings and assisting with the preparation of cases.

Supervisors should explain how the work the trainee undertakes fits into the strategies pursued in a case and into the context of litigation as a whole. Trainees should be given feedback on work they have done and should be offered a perspective on the significance of their work to the case as a whole.

Drafting

Trainees should recognise the need for and be able to produce documents that are clear, precise and achieve their purpose.

They should be given work that enables them to

- maintain a standard of care that protects client interests and meets client objectives
- address all relevant and factual legal issues
- identify relevant options
- demonstrate a critical use of standard forms and precedents
- draft documents that
 - are consistent and coherent
 - are clear and precise
 - meet any requirements of form and style

Trainees can develop these skills by drafting

- witness statements and affidavits
- corporate resolutions
- wills and trust deeds
- statements of case
- transfer of property documents
- leases
- instructions to counsel
- contracts

The complexity of trainees' work should be increased incrementally, and they should be given opportunities to amend drafts of documents received from the other side and to practise using standard forms and precedents.

Interviewing and advising

Trainees should understand the importance of identifying the client's goals along with the need to take accurate instructions. They should be given opportunities to observe and to conduct interviews with clients, experts, witnesses and others.

They should be given work that helps them understand the need to

- prepare for an interview
- allow clients or professional advisers to explain their concerns
- identify the client's goals and priorities
- use appropriate questioning techniques
- determine what further information is required
- identify possible courses of action and their consequences
- help the client decide the best course of action
- agree the action to be taken
- accurately record the interview, confirming the instructions and the action that needs to be taken
- establish a professional relationship with the client, and deal with any ethical problems that may arise

Trainees can develop these skills by observing and taking notes of meetings and interviews, whether face to face or on the telephone.

The purpose of a meeting should be explained to the trainee, and the conduct of the meeting should be reviewed with them afterwards. Where a trainee is conducting an interview, the supervisor should carefully monitor any advice given by the trainee during the meeting, and give guidance and feedback on the trainee's performance after the meeting.

Legal research

Trainees should learn to find solutions by investigating the factual and legal issues, analysing problems and communicating the results of their research.

They should be given work that makes use of traditional and computerised research tools and sources, business information and other relevant sources.

Trainees could be required to

- research specific legal issues and factual, historical or commercial matters
- prepare for client interviews
- analyse corporate searches
- investigate title to property and other relevant searches
- review title documents and clients' papers
- assist with due diligence enquiries

The person allocating the work should give the trainee

- background information on the context and purpose of the research
- clear instructions
- defined tasks

- information about any limitations to be imposed on their research
- guidance on where to begin

Trainees must also be given guidance and feedback on their performance.

Negotiation

Trainees should understand the processes involved in contentious and noncontentious negotiations appreciate the importance to the client of reaching agreement or resolving a dispute.

They should be given opportunities to observe negotiations conducted by experienced practitioners and/or to conduct negotiations under close supervision. They should be given work that will help them understand the process of negotiation including

- identifying the central issues and explaining them to the client
- assessing the bargaining-positions of each party
- planning a negotiation
- establishing an agenda at the start
- listening actively
- using appropriate questioning techniques
- generating alternative solutions to resolve the issues
- using an appropriate negotiating style
- identifying the strategy and tactics used by the other side
- documenting the agreement or settlement
- explaining the benefits and disadvantages of the agreement or settlements

Guidance should be given on the purpose of negotiation, and feedback should be provided on the outcome and on the trainee's performance.

Secondments

If your organisation cannot provide trainees with experience in three separate areas of law, or experience in the range of contentious and non-contentious work required by the skills standards, you must arrange for the trainee to be seconded.

When arranging a secondment, you must ensure that the trainee will be

- adequately supervised
- appraised regularly
- given training in English law

You do not need to seek SRA approval for a secondment of up to one year if it is to

- another solicitor's office in England and Wales
- an overseas branch office
- an organisation that is authorised to take trainees

You will need SRA approval for secondments that are

- for longer than one year, and/or
- to an organisation that is not authorised to take trainees

If you intend regularly to second trainees to an organisation that is not authorised to take trainees, such as a law centre or a client company, you can apply for 'blanket' approval.

When making an application for approval for a secondment, you should specify

- the name of the organisation where the trainee will be seconded
- the type of work the trainee will be doing
- the name and experience of the person who will supervise the trainee during the secondment
- the time-period of the secondment
- confirmation that the training requirements will be adhered to during the secondment

Details of any secondments should be included on the “certificate of training” at the end of the contract.

You can download [Training trainee solicitors: Modular training contract guidelines \(PDF 52K\)](#).

Formal training

Trainees must attend and successfully complete the Professional Skills Course (PSC) during the training contract. The course is organised by authorised providers. The PSC guidelines give full details of the course content and the authorisation requirements.

Training contract record

Training principals must ensure that trainees maintain an adequate record of their training throughout the period of the training contract. It is used to record the experience that the trainee is getting and the skills that the trainee is developing. The trainee should enter information into the training record at frequent intervals. By the end of the training contract, the record should show that the trainee has good experience in at least three distinct practice areas and has met the skills standards.

The trainee should use the preparation and review of the training record as an opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt and where there may be gaps in their experience and skills.

The SRA does not prescribe the format of the training record, but it recommends that the record include

- details of work performed
- skills used (with reference to the [skills standards](#))
- the trainee’s observations or reflections on their performance
- any other training or professional development
- any professional conduct issues that may have arisen

Supervisors will find it helpful to review the training record regularly, to ensure that the trainee is undertaking work of a breadth and depth sufficient to meet the requirements. The training record also can be used as part of appraisal and performance review.

5. Supervising trainees

Most organisations employ trainees anticipating that they will contribute to the future development of the business. Good training demands significant time and resources, and good supervision is vital to ensure that trainees make a worthwhile contribution during their training and remain motivated and committed to your organisation.

The supervisor's role in training should not be underestimated; the supervisor is responsible for providing practical day-to-day training and for giving trainees appropriate opportunities to develop their legal skills and knowledge.

On a day-to-day basis, and throughout the training contract, trainees may be supervised by a number of different people within your organisation – including partners, solicitors or experienced legal executives. The training principal must ensure that anyone who supervises trainees has the appropriate legal knowledge and supervisory experience or training to perform the role effectively. Supervisors must be allocated adequate time and resources, and they must demonstrate a sound understanding both of the training requirements and of all that is expected of them as supervisors.

Supervisors' responsibilities are to

- allocate work and tasks of an appropriate level, gradually increasing the level and the complexity of the work over time, while encouraging the trainee to suggest solutions independently
- provide a balance between substantive and procedural tasks that – as a whole – demands the use of a broad range of skills
- provide clear instructions and ensure that they have been understood
- offer advice and guidance on appropriate research methods and materials along with sufficient information and factual background about a case or matter
- set a realistic time-scale for work to be completed and answer questions as they arise, within a supportive environment that does not deter the trainee from asking questions in the future
- monitor the trainee's workload to ensure they have a sufficient but not excessive amount of work
- ensure that the trainee maintains an up-to-date training record that identifies the work they have performed and the skills they have deployed
- review the training contract record regularly to ensure that an appropriate balance of work and skills is struck
- give regular feedback to the trainee regarding their performance, recognising achievements and improvements, and constructively addressing areas that require further effort
- conduct or participate in formal appraisals of the trainee
- provide an environment that encourages the trainee to take responsibility for their own development

Information on the type of work that can be given to trainees to help them develop their skills is included in the skills standards.

You can download [Training trainee solicitors: Guidelines on supervising trainee \(PDF 45K\)](#). The guidelines may assist supervisors, particularly those who are new to the role, to handle situations such as delegating work, offering feedback, coaching and improving performance.

6. Performance review

At the end of the training contract, the training principal certifies the training, and he or she must be satisfied that the trainee has received appropriate training and has achieved the required skills.

For training principals to be sure of this, and for trainees to learn from their experience in practice, develop their skills, and improve their performance, trainees require feedback on the tasks they have performed.

Trainees should get feedback on a day-to-day basis and through regular informal progress reviews and appraisals.

Informal review

An important part of measuring and ensuring that the appropriate standards are being achieved and developed is regular review of the trainee's performance.

There should be frequent, informal reviews of the trainee's training record. The SRA recommends an informal performance review about once per month. This will help supervisors and trainees to

- review progress toward agreed objectives
- deal with any difficulties close to the event
- compare the breadth and depth of work being performed by the trainee with requirements of the skills standards
- address any professional conduct or ethics issues that may have arisen
- discuss future training

Appraisals

The purpose of a formal appraisal is to review the trainee's overall performance, assess the development of their skills, identify areas of strength and weakness, agree new objectives and plan future training. The appraisal should not include any surprises, because problems should always be dealt with as they arise.

A minimum of three formal appraisals should be conducted during the two-year training contract: one in the first year, one in the second year, and one at the end. However, the SRA recommends that trainees be appraised formally every six months.

The appraisal must be conducted face to face, and the discussions must be recorded and documented. During the discussion, the trainee should have an opportunity to ask questions and to raise any concerns they may have.

The SRA does not prescribe the form of the appraisal documentation. However, sample appraisal documentation is available, and can be used unaltered or adapted to suit your requirements. You can download [Training trainee solicitors: Performance and development review \(sample appraisal form\) PDF 50K](#). If you would like further information or guidance on establishing an appraisal system, download [Training trainee solicitors: Guidelines on performance review and appraisals \(PDF 84K\)](#).

7. Support services

Your organisation should have adequate support arrangements for trainees including

- a desk for the trainee's own work
- appropriate secretarial support
- access to library and relevant research facilities

8. Trainee responsibilities

Training is not a one-way process; trainees have responsibilities and obligations under the training contract. As a trainee, you must ensure that you understand your duties under the training contract, that you are familiar with the training requirements and that you know what you are expected to achieve during the training.

You must ensure that you

- maintain an up-to-date training record of the work you have done linked to the skills standards. Your firm may prescribe the training record format; if it does not, you can download and use the SRA's sample training contract record.
- take responsibility for your own self-development (completing and reviewing your training record, and reflecting on your experiences and what you have learnt are important aspects of this)
- develop good working practices by managing your time, effort and resources effectively
- raise any concerns with your training principal (for example, if you are not being given training in three areas of law, or you are not given a mix of contentious and non-contentious work, or you are not covering the skills standards)
- if you are unsure about the work or tasks you have been asked to do, ask your supervisor for clarification
- let your supervisor know if you are given too much or too little work or if the work you are given is too challenging, not challenging enough or not varied
- if you make a mistake, inform your supervisor or training principal as soon as possible
- be open and honest when you are given feedback on your work and during [performance reviews](#)
- satisfactorily complete the Professional Skills Course before the end of your training contract and before you apply for admission to the roll of solicitors

Self-development

As a trainee solicitor, you should enjoy your training, do whatever you can to develop your skills, and take responsibility for your self-development.

You should

- plan your own programme of development, which could include, for example, ways in which you can achieve the skills standards
- read and research journals and keep up to date with new statutes and regulations
- build up a personal file, which could include your training record, precedents and your reflections on what you have learnt
- conduct self-appraisals, thinking about your strengths and weaknesses, and ways in which you can develop your strengths and eliminate your weaknesses. You can then discuss this with your supervisor at your performance reviews
- develop your social and interpersonal skills
- suggest solutions to problems, even if you are not certain that they are correct
- if you make a mistake, admit it, and face up to any consequences

9. Monitoring

The SRA monitors training establishments to ensure that they are providing adequate training.

The Society recognises that organisations invest significant time and resources in training. The purpose of the monitoring scheme is to identify and recognise best practice and, where necessary, to provide guidance and advice on training improvements. The current monitoring scheme was launched in 2000; many organisations that have been monitored have found the exercise constructive and useful.

The first stage of the monitoring process is for training principals and trainees to complete questionnaires detailing how the training requirements are being satisfied.

The Society might then select the organisation for a monitoring visit. A qualified solicitor with experience of training and the training requirements undertakes the visit. During the visit, the monitor discusses the training provision with the training principal and trainees and sometimes with others involved in training. At the end of the visit, the monitor meets with the training principal to discuss areas of best practice and to agree any actions that may be needed for improvement.

A monitoring report is sent after the visit to the training principal and the trainees interviewed.

You can download [Training trainee solicitors: Guidelines on monitoring of training contracts \(PDF 46K\)](#); it includes full details of the monitoring scheme and procedures.

10. Contact information

The SRA can be contacted by

- e-mail at info.services@sra.org.uk
- telephoning Information Services, the SRA, on 0870 606 2555
- writing to The Solicitors Regulation Authority Ipsley Court, Berrington Close, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 0TD or DX 19114, Redditch