



FAQs about continuing competence

Updated 23 January 2025

We require solicitors and registered lawyers to maintain their competence to carry out their role. This means they must keep your knowledge and skills up to date, including any relevant legal, ethical and regulatory obligations relevant to their role.

We have [resources to support solicitors, registered lawyers and their employers](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/understanding-continuing-competence/) [https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/understanding-continuing-competence/], as well as the frequently asked questions below.

Continuing competence basics

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What are the continuing competence requirements?

All solicitors with a practising certificate and registered European, foreign or Swiss lawyers are required to maintain their competence and keep their knowledge and skills up to date. This involves:

- regularly reflecting on their practice and addressing any identified learning and development needs. This includes reflecting on all aspects of their role.
- keeping their understanding of any relevant legal, ethical and regulatory obligations up to date.

Find out more and take a look resources to [help you meet these requirements](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/understanding-continuing-competence/) [https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/understanding-continuing-competence/].

Who does continuing competence apply to?

If you are practising:

- as a solicitor and have a practising certificate, including those who work in-house
- as a solicitor but exempt from holding a practising certificate under Section 88 of the Solicitors Act 1974
- overseas and your practice predominantly relates to England and Wales as set out in rule 1.3 of our [Overseas and Cross-border Practice Rules](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/overseas-cross-border-practice-rules/#rule-1) [https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/overseas-cross-border-practice-rules/#rule-1]
- a registered European, foreign or Swiss lawyer.



Do the continuing competence requirements apply if I work overseas?

Yes, if you are practising:

- as a solicitor, a registered European, foreign or Swiss lawyer and have a practising certificate or registration
- overseas and your practice predominantly relates to England and Wales as set out in rule 1.3 of our [Overseas and Cross-border Practice Rules](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/overseas-cross-border-practice-rules/#rule-1) [<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/overseas-cross-border-practice-rules/#rule-1>].

This means you must keep your knowledge and skills up to date, including any relevant legal, ethical and regulatory obligations relevant to your role.

I am a registered foreign lawyer, do the requirements apply to me?

Yes, we require registered foreign lawyers to maintain their competence to carry out their role. This means you must keep your knowledge and skills up to date, including any relevant legal, ethical and regulatory obligations relevant to your role.

When does the continuing competence year start and end?

It follows the practising year, which runs from 1 November until 31 October each year.

Checking and monitoring

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How do you check for continuing competence?

Solicitors and registered European or Swiss lawyer must make a declaration to us when renewing their practising certificate or registration. This states that they have:

- an up to date understanding of the legal, ethical and regulatory obligations relevant to their role and
- reflected and addressed any identified learning and development needs and
- are competent to perform your role.

For registered foreign lawyers, if they have not maintained their competence, they should [report this to us](https://higher-) [<https://higher->

rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/enforcement/solicitors-reporting-themselves/.

We can restrict their practice if we have concerns about their competence based on the information you provide when making this declaration or report.

How do the SRA monitor continuing competence?

We monitor annual declarations and reports. We can restrict solicitors' or registered lawyers' practice if we have concerns about their competence based on the information they provide when making this declaration.

We use a range of tools to help us identify if solicitors or registered lawyers are maintaining their competence, including:

- Carrying out thematic reviews and inspections where we have competence concerns about an area of practice or a type of practice setting.
- A rolling programme of inspections to check on the extent to which firms are complying with anti-money laundering regulations.
- Carrying out specific checks on training and supervision arrangements in firms to understand the steps they take to assure themselves that the solicitors they employ are maintaining their competence.
- Reviewing training records to understand if and how solicitors are maintaining their competence.

Meeting our requirements

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How many hours of continuing competence do I need to do?

There is no minimum requirement. Instead, you should reflect on your work and complete learning and development that keeps you competent. This includes keeping your understanding of any relevant legal, ethical and regulatory obligations up to date.

What activities can I use for my continuing competence?

You can decide which activities will help you keep your knowledge and skills up to date. This could include watching webinars or attending events, training courses, reading guidance or learning from colleagues.

Who should pay for my continuing competence?

This should be a discussion between you and your employer. There are a range of ways to meet your learning and development needs, some of them are free. See [our resources \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/understanding-continuing-competence/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/understanding-continuing-competence/) for further information.

Recording your continuing competence

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[How do I record my continuing competence?](#)

Whilst not a regulatory requirement, you should consider how you can evidence you are maintaining your competence if required by us through our work. For help with recording your learning and development, see [our resources \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/record-evaluate/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/record-evaluate/).

[How long do I need to keep learning and development records for?](#)

We do not currently specify any minimum or maximum period for retaining training records. However, while not a regulatory requirement, you should consider how you can evidence you are maintaining your competence if required by us through our work.

If you cannot meet our requirements

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[If I am away from practice, for example on maternity leave, what should I do?](#)

You do not need to reflect on your work when you are not practising for a substantial period of the practising year. This could include long term sickness, career break, and maternity, shared parental or adoption leave.

Before you return to work, you should reflect on your practice and address any learning and development needs, including your professional obligations.

[What do I do if I am going to be out of practice for a while?](#)

You do not need to reflect on your work when you are not practising for a substantial part of the practising year. However, before you return to

work, you should reflect on your practice and address any learning and development needs.

What do I have to do when I return to work?

You should reflect and address any learning and development needs.

Can I have an extension my continuing competence requirement?

No, we cannot grant an extension. If you cannot complete all your activities you may wish to prioritise those which will best make sure you are competent to practice and deliver a proper standard of service.

I am unable to complete my continuing competence, what do I do?

We expect all solicitors to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. You should therefore complete it as soon as possible so you are competent to practice and deliver a proper standard of service.

We can restrict your practice if we have concerns about your competence based on the information you provide when making our annual declaration.