

Understanding your continuing competence requirements

Updated 2 April 2025

We require solicitors and registered 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.

Who our requirements apply to:

- Solicitors who have a practising certificate, including those who work in-house.
- Solicitor who are exempt from holding a practising certificate under Section 88 of the Solicitors Act 1974.
- Solicitors practising overseas, but their 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>).
- Registered European, foreign or Swiss lawyers.

Steps we expect you to take:

1. Reflect – regularly consider the quality of your practice, in all aspects of your role. You should reflect on all [areas of your practice](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/competence-statement/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/competence-statement/>) and not just on the quality of your technical legal knowledge, for example working with others including clients. You should also consider your ethical and professional obligations, including awareness and application of any [warning notices and guidance](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/topic/all-topics/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/topic/all-topics/>). We have issued that are relevant to your work.
2. Identify – through reflection, identify your learning and development needs.
3. Plan and address – regularly update a plan on how you will address your learning and development needs.
4. Record – keep an up-to-date record of your learning and development activity. You can use our [template](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/>) to help you do this. If you are using another approach, please make sure you include how you identified your learning and development needs.
5. Evaluate – think about the effectiveness of your learning and development.

Find out more about these steps and how to complete them:

- [reflect and identify](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/reflect-identify/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/reflect-identify/>).
- [plan and address](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/plan-address/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/plan-address/>).
- [record and evaluate](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/record-evaluate/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/record-evaluate/>).

Use our learning and development template to [record your activities](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/>). We also have templates that help you reflect, prioritise and evaluate your needs.

Find out more in our [Competence Statement](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/competence-statement/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/competence-statement/>).

Steps to continuing competence



Telling us you are competent

As part of the annual certificate renewals, a solicitors with a practising certificate (or intend to hold one), and registered European or Swiss lawyer, must declare that they:

- have up to date understanding of the legal, ethical and regulatory obligations relevant to their role and

- have reflected and addressed any identified learning and development needs and
- are competent to perform their role.

When making this declaration, you should satisfy yourself that you:

- are acting honestly and with integrity in making the declaration
- have addressed any identified learning and development needs
- are competent in all aspects of your role, not just technical legal practice.

For registered foreign lawyers, if you do not maintain their competence, you should [report this to us](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/enforcement/solicitors-reporting-themselves/) [\[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/enforcement/solicitors-reporting-themselves/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/enforcement/solicitors-reporting-themselves/).

Whilst not a regulatory requirement, you should consider how you can evidence you are maintaining your competence. This includes how you identified your learning and development needs. We regularly ask solicitors to provide evidence to us.

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

Confirming your continuing competence



What firms must do

To comply with our [Code of Conduct for Firms](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-firms/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/code-conduct-firms/>), all firms we regulate must make sure that their solicitors and registered lawyers are competent to carry out their role.



Additional resources

We have additional resources to help you meet your requirements if you practise:

- [criminal or civil advocacy](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/advocacy/) [https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/advocacy/]
- [in the coroners' courts](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/practising-coroners-court/) [https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/practising-coroners-court/]

- [in the youth court](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/youth-court-advocacy/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/youth-court-advocacy/>).

You can also take a look at our [frequently asked questions](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/continuing-competence-faqs/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/continuing-competence-faqs/>).

You should also make sure you are aware of and apply [any warning notices or guidance we have issued](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/topic/all-topics/) (<https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/topic/all-topics/>) that are relevant to your work.

[Steps to continuing competence - Infographic](#)



