



## **Becoming an external CPD provider**

### Guidance on applying for authorisation

Education and Training Unit

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For alternative formats, email [info.services@sra.org.uk](mailto:info.services@sra.org.uk) or telephone 0870 606 2555.

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## **Introduction**

Thank you for your interest in becoming a continuing professional development (CPD) course provider.

This document contains details of the procedures for authorisation by the Solicitors Regulation Authority as an external provider of CPD courses, including the requirements and criteria CPD courses must meet and the terms and conditions of authorisation.

You can download and complete an application form to become an authorised external course provider for CPD purposes.

Please download the application form, and send the completed form, together with a cheque for £350 made payable to "The Law Society," to

The Finance Department  
The Solicitors Regulation Authority  
Ipsley Court  
Berrington Close  
Redditch  
Worcestershire  
B98 0TD

DX 19114 Redditch

## Requirements and procedures of authorisation as an external CPD provider

### Procedure of authorisation

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) authorises course providers to self-accredit courses that are suitable for solicitors. The aim of the authorisation procedure is to satisfy the SRA that prospective providers will offer appropriate courses that meet the criteria.

External authorisation applies to courses that are relevant to the work of solicitors, meet the criteria, and are

- open to the general public but of relevance and benefit to solicitors, or
- public courses specifically designed for solicitors, or
- designed specifically for the staff of solicitors' firms or in-house legal departments.

External applicants are required to complete an application form, provide full details of a future appropriate course and pay a non-refundable fee of £350 (which includes the fee for the first course) for consideration of the application. The application fee is waived for Local Law Societies, Young Solicitors Groups and Law Society Recognised Groups, but a £25 fee for the first course is payable on application. The authorisation period is 1 November to 31 October of each year. A list of recognised groups can be downloaded from [www.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk) under Member services/Special interest groups/Other groups/Useful practitioner associations and groups.

Providers will be asked to pay the appropriate fee for each accredited course at the end of each year. The current fee per course is £25, up to a maximum of 300 courses. If the same course is repeated, providers should pay for each time it is run. There is a minimum fee of £100 for providers accrediting fewer than four courses. If the provider does not run a course for 3 or more consecutive years then the authorisation may be terminated or the provider asked to provide materials for the next course.

Applications will **not** be processed unless all of the information and the correct fee are supplied with the application form. **Note: the application will be rejected if the course materials contain out-of-date information.** Therefore, applicants should ensure that the information provided is based on a future course and as much detail as possible is given when the application is made.

**Providers should allow a minimum of six weeks for the application process to be completed. Please note that delays will inevitably occur if the required information is not supplied.**

**The application should not relate to a course which is scheduled to take place within the 6 week timeframe and for which accreditation is sought.**

If 6 weeks' notice is not given prior to the course date, the course will not be accredited for CPD purposes.

Course materials will be sent to specialists for assessment.

Course materials and other relevant information provided to the SRA will be treated as confidential by the SRA and/or anyone requested to assess the materials.

Satisfactory monitoring of the first course accredited by newly authorised providers is a condition of authorisation.

### **Separate applications**

Authorisation as an external provider does not include the following types of courses

- distance-learning courses
- other courses that may be designated by the SRA from time to time

Providers of such courses should make separate application to the SRA. Distance learning courses and the compulsory management course have their own application forms. These are available from Information Services, telephone +44 (0)1527 504450. Lines are open 08.30 hours – 17.00 hours, Monday – Friday. You can also download an application form for authorisation to provide these courses.

### **Requirements of authorisation**

An authorised provider may self-accredit courses that are suitable for solicitors, eg law, legal practice, professional skills and management courses.

Providers must ensure that accredited courses meet the criteria for authorisation as an external CPD course provider. Providers must also

- **calculate the number of CPD hours for each suitable course and notify solicitors of the number**

The number of hours is calculated by totalling the number of hours of tuition, excluding registration and lunch, tea and coffee breaks. It is not necessary to round the time up or down, as courses may be credited with hours and minutes.

**Please note:** Allocation of credit is the responsibility of the provider.

- **grade each course to indicate the level of expertise expected of delegates**  
The course grade should be clearly indicated on advertising materials and other course literature, and providers should allocate a grade according to the following scheme.

- Introductory
- Intermediate (for delegates with some prior knowledge of the subject)
- Advanced (for delegates with substantial knowledge of the subject)
- Update (for delegates with or without prior knowledge of the subject)

- **notify solicitors of the Solicitors Regulation Authority CPD reference**

All providers are allocated a Solicitors Regulation Authority CPD reference, which should be used for all courses accredited and must be notified to solicitors attending courses.

- **keep records of solicitors who attend courses**

The Solicitors Regulation Authority does not keep records of individual solicitors' course attendance; delegates should enter the details of the course in their personal CPD training record.

Providers are required to keep attendance records for at least two years from the date of each course. The SRA may ask to see attendance lists or confirmation of an individual solicitor's attendance.

Continued authorisation is subject to satisfactory routine monitoring of courses by the SRA and continued compliance with the terms and conditions. In the first instance this would normally be done by Solicitors Regulation Authority delegate questionnaires. However, monitoring may be undertaken by assessment of course materials or by attendance at courses by a Solicitors Regulation Authority observer.

The SRA maintains lists of the providers offering courses in each of the main subjects. Providers are asked to confirm the subjects and locations offered. The details are included on the appropriate list, are available on the SRA's website (visit [www.cpd.sra.org.uk](http://www.cpd.sra.org.uk)), and are made available to solicitors on request.

The SRA reserves the right to withdraw authorisation of providers who do not run courses during a period of three years. A further application must be submitted if they plan to resume offering courses.

Please contact the Validation and Monitoring team on 0870 606 2555 if you have any further queries.

## **Criteria for authorisation as a CPD provider**

### **Course details**

Providers should demonstrate that their courses and administration meet the criteria shown below. For the purposes of authorisation 'a course' is a training session that is relevant to the work of a solicitor, accredited for CPD, and lasts for one hour or longer (sessions lasting between 30 minutes and less than one hour will count for a maximum of 75 percent of the CPD requirement).

Conferences and coaching and mentoring may be offered in a slightly different way. Please see page 1 of the application form.

### **Aims and intended learning outcomes**

The course aims and intended learning outcomes should be clearly set out and should include

- the course content and its purpose
- who the course is designed for and the level of prior knowledge/understanding that should be achieved on completion of the course
- whether the subject would be taught in depth or dealt with as an overview
- what delegates should be able to do on completion of the course

### **Content**

The content should meet the aims and intended learning outcomes and should therefore be

- relevant and suitable to the work of a solicitor
- set at the correct level for the intended delegates
- up-to-date and factually correct
- concise and clearly set out

### **Course presentation**

The method of presentation used should be

- appropriate to meet the course aims and intended learning outcomes
- relevant to the needs of the delegates
- properly thought out
- set at the correct level
- where possible, varied to encourage learning

## Course material

All accredited courses of one hour or more, including conferences, must include supporting course materials.

It should be made clear how the materials will be used – for example, to be worked through, as background material, or as a source of reference for use afterwards.

The course materials should relate to a future course and should cover the aims and intended learning outcomes and be

- clearly organised
- up-to-date (out of date materials will be rejected)
- well presented
- accurate
- comprehensive

In addition, course material should include

- a course programme/timetable indicating the length of the course and time that will be spent on each section
- relevant cases and legislation where appropriate
- details of method of presentation including where appropriate:
  - a) role plays
  - b) exercises
  - c) workshops
  - d) case studies
  - e) one-to-one, coaching/mentoring

Courses of at least 30 minutes' and less than one hour's duration should have clear aims and intended learning outcomes and details of items to be covered (this might include copies of case studies and/or handouts). Courses of this length will only count for 75% of an individual's CPD requirement.

The course materials should not infringe copyright or contain any defamatory material.

## Conferences

It is appreciated that it is not always possible to provide materials for a conference in advance. Therefore, if a complete set will not be available prior to the conference then the conference will need to be assessed. This will involve either:

- (a) an assessor attending the conference who will need to be provided with a complete set of materials at the conference; or
- (b) the submission of delegate questionnaires after the conference along with a complete set of course materials which will be forwarded to an assessor for approval.

The form of assessment will be decided by the Validation & Monitoring Officer dealing with the application. The prospective provider will be issued with a temporary CPD reference to accredit that conference only; the reference will expire after the conference date. The application should be accompanied by a letter explaining that the application is for a conference and advising at what stage in the process a

complete set of course materials will be available. A six week notice period would need to be given to make any necessary arrangements for an observer to attend.

#### Joint applications

Occasionally applications will be received from two organisations who have decided to deliver courses/conferences in joint names. Very often one of the organisations will already be authorised to accredit courses and the other will not. In this event a new application for external authorisation will need to be made.

#### **Course tutors/speakers**

The course tutors/speakers should have

- relevant qualifications/experience in the subject area
- the necessary practical skills/experience to present the course effectively

#### **Course venue and accommodation**

The course venue and accommodation should be

- free from interruptions
- where possible, easily accessible with facilities for the disabled
- well ventilated and temperature controlled
- as soundproof as possible with good acoustics

It should also have

- where possible, natural daylight with blinds/curtains
- writing surfaces for the delegates
- comfortable seating
- if required, good audio visual/sound equipment
- a supply of refreshments

#### **Administrative arrangements and support services**

Course providers should ensure there are appropriate and effective administrative arrangements and support services for delegates.

These should include

- a nominated person(s), or a system to deal with enquiries from delegates
- the provision of advice for prospective delegates on the most appropriate course(s) to meet their needs
- appropriate and effective record keeping of delegates' attendance at courses
- allocation of the relevant CPD credit for accredited courses
- notification of the Solicitors Regulation Authority CPD reference to delegates
- details of the cancellation policy.

## **Assessment**

Please note that this criterion refers to assessment of the course work – for example, by examination, completion of a project, assignments, multiple choice questionnaires, etc, which the provider is responsible for assessing.

The arrangements and methods of assessment should be appropriate, clearly set out and easy to understand.

## **Evaluation**

Providers must have a system in place for evaluation by the delegates of the quality of each course. This should include

- a method of obtaining feedback from delegates of whether the course(s) met the standards set out above ([download a sample delegate questionnaire](#))
- analysis of the feedback received, over each 12-month period, which would be made available to the SRA on request

Administrative arrangements for monitoring individual courses may be delegated.

## **Administration**

Providers should nominate a person who will take responsibility for ensuring that courses/seminars will comply with the terms and conditions of authorisation. This person should be a partner, senior manager or senior officer of the organisation, although the day-to-day running of the courses may be delegated.

## **Termination of authorisation**

Providers may terminate their authorisation at any time by notification in writing to the Validation and Monitoring team.

The SRA may terminate the authorisation if

- the SRA considers that continuation of the authorisation would be detrimental to the interests of the profession or those who attend courses, or
- there is evidence of a poor standard of administration by the provider, or
- there is evidence that the provision of courses is below a standard which is acceptable to the SRA, or
- a bankruptcy order or voluntary arrangement is made in respect of the provider or the provider is entered into administration, receivership or liquidation or is dissolved or has a receiving order made against it or enters into an arrangement with creditors, or
- the annual fees are not paid

## **Terms and conditions of authorisation**

The provider should undertake to

- pay the appropriate annual authorisation fees
- only accredit qualifying courses that meet the criteria laid down by the SRA

- maintain a record of the names of those solicitors who wish to claim CPD credit for their attendance at courses and submit copies of the attendance records to the SRA on request
- for the purposes of monitoring, on request, make available details of forthcoming courses and, without charge, co-operate with the SRA in the monitoring of courses
- where the SRA is investigating a complaint, provide course materials and all relevant details as requested
- notify the Validation and Monitoring team, in writing, of any changes to the business address or the nominated contact person

**Please note:**

The Solicitors Regulation Authority's logo is only for use with its own products and services and is not available or permitted for use by outside organisations.

**The SRA may change the criteria for accreditation of courses upon three months' notice.**

**Enquiries**

All enquiries about these arrangements should be addressed to

Information Services  
The Solicitors Regulation Authority  
Ipsley Court  
Berrington Close  
Redditch  
Worcestershire  
B98 0TD

or

DX 19114 Redditch

Telephone 0870 606 2555, or if calling from overseas please telephone +44 (0)1527 504450

Lines are open 09.00 hours – 17.00 hours, Monday to Friday.