

Continuing professional development

Frequently asked questions for solicitors

Education and Training Unit

Last updated 13 March 2008

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For alternative formats, email info.services@sra.org.uk or telephone 0870 606 2555.

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What are the CPD requirements for a solicitor who returns to part-time legal practice or employment following a period in which they suspended the requirements (eg having been out of legal practice or employment due to maternity / paternity leave)?

What happens regarding CPD requirements if a solicitor or Registered European Lawyer (REL) is not in practice for a period of time?

Can trainee solicitors accrue CPD credit prior to admission?

What CPD training records are solicitors and Registered European Lawyers required to keep?

What types of activities qualify for CPD credit?

Activities that can be counted for the purposes of CPD credit are outlined in [Continuing professional development: Solicitors Regulation Authority requirements](#).

When does the CPD year start and end?

The CPD year runs from 1 November to 31 October.

How is the CPD year calculated?

A solicitor's or a Registered European Lawyer's (REL's) first full CPD year begins on 1 November immediately subsequent to his or her date of admission or registration. Solicitors and RELs admitted or registered on 1 November immediately enter their first CPD year.

However, there are several exceptions, including special requirements for solicitors who have been out of practice for a period of time.

I completed the Best Practice course in my second CPD year. Do I need to attend the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 1 during my third CPD year?

No. You do not need to attend the compulsory Management Course Stage 1. As you attended the Best Practice Course before your third CPD year, you should ask the Solicitors Regulation Authority to grant you a concession, and you should make a clear note in your training record.

Solicitors who have attended the Best Practice course in their first or second CPD year and wish to attend the Management Course within their third CPD year may claim CPD credit for attending the Best Practice course (normally, six CPD hours).

Can hours of training completed in one CPD year be carried over to the following CPD year?

The CPD requirement of 16 hours per year is a mandatory minimum. Any hours of CPD training accrued over and above the minimum cannot be carried over to the next period.

How is CPD credit claimed?

Attendance at courses

CPD course providers notify delegates of the number of hours of credit allocated and the provider's reference; individual solicitors must enter this information, together with the date and course title, into their personal CPD training record.

Distance learning courses

The name of the course provider, the provider's reference, the course title, the date(s) on which the course was undertaken, and the number of hours of credit should be entered into the training record.

Other activities

Other activities include delivery/preparation of courses, coaching/mentoring, writing books/articles and research. Details of the activity and the number of hours undertaken should be entered on the training record. It is advisable to enter in your personal record details of all developmental activities, even if you are unsure whether they can be claimed for CPD credit.

Download a [CPD training record form](#).

Are solicitors required to attend any compulsory CPD courses?

Attendance at compulsory courses only applies to newly qualified solicitors.

Solicitors in their first full CPD year are required to attend the Client Care and Professional Standards and Financial and Business Skills modules of the Professional Skills Course (PSC).

Exemptions may be claimed by the following:

- those who have attended the relevant modules of the PSC prior to admission
- those who qualified by attending a Legal Practice Course (LPC) and completing all modules of the PSC
- those who transferred from another jurisdiction and who passed the Professional Conduct and Accounts paper of the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test (QLTT)
- solicitors transferring from Scotland via QLTT

Solicitors are not required to write in for confirmation where the above applies. All other solicitors are required to attend the two PSC modules by the end of their first CPD year. CPD credit may be claimed for attending the modules after admission.

Solicitors are also required to attend the compulsory Management Course Stage 1 before the end of their third CPD year. CPD hours may be claimed for attending the compulsory management course.

An application can be made for exemption from the Management Course Stage 1 if a solicitor within the last five years

- has gained significant experience of a solicitor's practice and of management issues as they arise in practice (and can provide examples of experience gained in at least three of the five topic areas of the course), or
- has attended a similar course, covering the same ground

Are there any exemptions from the scheme?

There are no exemptions from the CPD scheme, but there are waivers from some of the requirements.

Download Solicitors Regulation Authority [guidelines on CPD-requirement waivers](#).

What should a solicitor or Registered European Lawyer (REL) do if he or she is unable to comply with the CPD requirements?

The Solicitors Regulation Authority recognises that, under certain circumstances, some individuals may find it difficult to comply with the requirements. In such cases, the Solicitors Regulation Authority's underlying aim is not to penalise, but rather, to assist solicitors bring themselves into compliance. Any solicitor who finds himself or herself in difficulty should immediately contact the Professional Competence Team on 0870 606 2555, indicating what training, if any, he or she has already completed and setting out the reasons for his or her non-compliance.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority may grant an extension of time to make up any shortfall, or it may grant a concession to attend a specific course outside the CPD year.

However, please note that persistent non-compliance with CPD requirements is a serious matter, and may result in delays in issuing a practising certificate and/or disciplinary procedures.

Where can information about accredited CPD courses be found?

You can browse our [listings of authorised CPD providers](#).

Alternatively, telephone Information Services, the Solicitors Regulation Authority, on 0870 606 2555.

What is the position in relation to solicitors and Registered European Lawyers whose firm or employer will not pay for their CPD training or who have limited income?

It is the individual's responsibility to ensure their own compliance with CPD requirements. Firms and employers are not obliged to pay for CPD courses or allow time off to attend courses.

Individuals in such circumstances are advised to consider taking one or more of the following courses of action:

- Contact your local Solicitors Regulation Authority. Many local law societies provide CPD training courses at reasonable costs.
- Undertake distance-learning courses, which may be more cost effective. Some legal journals are also authorised for CPD purposes.

- Contact providers to establish whether they operate a discount or subscription scheme.
- Contact special interest groups such as the Association of Women Solicitors, the Solicitors Family Law Association, and the Young Solicitors Group. These organisations tend to offer courses at reasonable costs.
- Attend as a guest at in-house courses. Many firms of solicitors are authorised to provide CPD courses on an in-house basis. If you are in contact with any such firms, they might be willing to invite you to attend their courses as a guest. They will not be able to charge you if they have signed a normal in-house provider agreement with the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Browse our [listings of authorised CPD providers](#), or telephone Information Services, the Solicitors Regulation Authority, on 0870 606 2555.

If a one-day Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course covers more than the required three topics, can I claim CPD credit for having completed the additional topic(s)?

Yes.

Download information on [Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course topics](#).

I have been admitted for more than four years, and I am not required to attend the compulsory Management Course, but I want to attend. Can I claim CPD credit for attending?

Yes.

I have completed the three compulsory topics in the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Management Course, and I want to attend a course covering the two remaining topics. May I claim CPD credit for attending?

Yes.

Download information on the [content of the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course](#).

Who can claim exemption from the compulsory Management Course?

Application can be made for exemption from the compulsory Management Course Stage 1 if the solicitor within the past five years

- has gained significant experience of a solicitor's practice and of management issues as they arise in practice (giving examples of experience gained in at least three of the five topic areas of the course), or

- has attended a similar course covering the same material.

Who runs the Solicitors Regulation Authority's Management Course?

Download a [list of providers](#).

Who is required to attend the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 1?

Newly qualified solicitors must attend the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 1. They may do so at any time during their first three CPD years.

Download [information on Management Course Stage 1 content](#).

Download [information on Management Course Stage 1 providers](#).

Does the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 1 attract CPD credit?

Yes. Solicitors who attend the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 1 may claim CPD credit.

How long does the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 1 last?

The Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 1 lasts for approximately seven hours. Some providers offer it as a one-day course, and others offer it on a modular basis. Solicitors should contact providers directly to determine what they will be offering.

Download a [list of Management Course Stage 1 providers](#).

Download [information on Management Course Stage 1 content](#).

Who is required to attend the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 2?

No one is required to attend the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 2. Any solicitor may attend the course. It is recommended that all solicitors who are required to attend the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 1 do so before they attend the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 2.

Download [information on Management Course Stage 2 content](#).

Download [information on Management Course Stage 2 providers](#).

Does the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 2 attract CPD credit?

Yes. The Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 2 can be undertaken in partial fulfilment of a solicitor's annual CPD requirement. The course provider will advise the amount of CPD credit attendees may claim.

Download a [list of Management Course Stage 2 providers](#).

What does undertaking a project to satisfy the requirements of the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 2 entail?

You will need to discuss this individually with your course provider, but individual projects may form part of the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course Stage 2.

Download a [list of course providers](#).

Download [information on the content of the Management Course Stage 2](#).

What are the topics included in the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course?

The topics included in the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course are as follows:

- Managing People
- Managing Finance
- Managing the Firm
- Managing Client Relationships
- Managing Information

Solicitors must undertake at least three of the topics during Stage 1.

Download [information on Management Course Stage 1 content](#).

Download [information on Management Course Stage 2 content](#).

I have already completed the Best Practice Course. Do I need to attend the Solicitors Regulation Authority Management Course?

If you have already attended the Best Practice Course, you do not need to attend the compulsory Management Course Stage 1. However, you may, if you wish, attend both the Management Course Stage 1 and the Management Course Stage 2; you can claim the hours towards your CPD requirement.

How many hours of CPD activities are solicitors required to complete?

The requirements of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's CPD scheme are as follows:

- newly admitted solicitors must complete one hour of CPD training for every complete month from their date of admission up to the following 31 October;
- all other solicitors must complete 16 hours of CPD training per year in their first full CPD year and in each subsequent year, plus compulsory courses as required.

Solicitors admitted on 1 November will immediately enter their first full CPD year.

What do the CPD questions on the practising certificate application form mean?

When making an application for a practising certificate, individuals are asked to confirm whether or not they have complied with the CPD requirements during the past full CPD year, eg when applying for a practising certificate in 2004, the question relates to the solicitor's CPD position as at 31st October 2003.

Therefore, please note the following:

- Newly qualified solicitors and Registered European Lawyers (RELs) who are making an application for the first time will not have completed a full CPD year, consequently, and cannot indicate their compliance or otherwise. The 'not applicable' box on the form should be ticked.
- Solicitors and RELs who are subject to the requirement and were out of practice during the whole of the CPD year, or at the end of the year, are entitled to a suspension of the requirements, and they should indicate that they suspended the requirements by ticking the 'not applicable' box on the form.

Are Registered European Lawyers (RELs) required to attend any compulsory CPD courses?

No. Registered European Lawyers are not required to attend any compulsory CPD courses.

Who is required to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) activities?

All solicitors admitted to the roll and all Registered European Lawyers (RELs) – whether or not they hold a current practising certificate – are required by the Solicitors Regulation Authority's CPD scheme to undertake CPD activities if they are in legal employment or practice in England and Wales.

Solicitors and RELs must maintain their own records of completed CPD activities, together with the amount of CPD credit claimed. Download a CPD training record – blank form.

Registered Foreign Lawyers are not subject to Solicitors Regulation Authority CPD requirements, although they may be subject to equivalent requirements in their home jurisdiction.

What is the CPD requirement for solicitors and Registered European Lawyers (RELs) who work part time?

The requirement is reduced to one hour of CPD training per year for each two hours worked per week, ie a solicitor or REL who works 20 hours per week is required to undertake 10 hours of CPD training per year.

Solicitors and RELs who, on average, work less than two hours per week may suspend the requirement to complete CPD training.

How many CPD hours are Registered European Lawyers (RELS) required to complete?

The requirements of the Solicitors Regulation Authority's CPD scheme are as follows:

- Registered European Lawyers (RELs) must complete one hour of CPD training for every complete month from their date of registration up to the following 31 October;
- RELs must complete 16 hours of CPD training per year in their first full CPD year and in each subsequent year.

RELs registered on 1 November will immediately enter their first full CPD year.

What are the CPD requirements for a solicitor or Registered European Lawyer who has returned to practice following a period in which they suspended the requirements?

The CPD requirements for individuals returning to practice following a suspension of the requirements depend upon a number of factors.

Download the [Complete guidelines for suspension of CPD requirements](#) or telephone Information Services, the Solicitors Regulation Authority, on 0870 606 2555.

To enable the Solicitors Regulation Authority to provide the information relevant to the individual's circumstances the following information will be requested:

- His/her date of admission
- Whether he/she worked prior to the suspension

- Whether he/she is returning to work part time or full time
- Whether he/she will be in permanent or temporary employment
- Details of CPD undertaken with dates
- Dates of period(s) of suspension of the CPD requirements

What are the CPD requirements for a solicitor who returns to part-time legal practice or employment following a period in which they suspended the requirements (eg having been out of legal practice or employment due to maternity / paternity leave)?

Solicitors and registered European lawyers (REs) who work part time are required to undertake one hour of continuing professional development (CPD) per year for every two hours worked per week. For example, a solicitor or RE who works 20 hours per week has an annual CPD requirement of 10 hours.

A solicitor or RE who works a variable number of hours each week should calculate the average number of hours worked per week during the CPD year and halve this amount to calculate their annual CPD requirement. Part hours should be rounded to the nearest whole hour.

A solicitor or RE who returns to legal practice or employment after 1 March should calculate their annual CPD requirement based on the number of hours worked per week, and undertake one-eighth of the annual requirement for each complete month from the date of their return to the following 31 October. On 1 November, their next CPD period would start.

Details of part-time working hours, with starting and finishing dates, should be entered in a solicitor's or RE's CPD training record.

What happens regarding CPD requirements if a solicitor or Registered European Lawyer (RE) is not in practice for a period of time?

Solicitors and REs who are not working in practice or legal employment within England and Wales due to illness, unemployment, maternity leave or working abroad may suspend the CPD requirements. An application to the Solicitors Regulation Authority is not required. The dates of and reason(s) for the suspension should be entered in the training record.

Download the complete [Complete guidelines for suspension of CPD requirements](#), or telephone Information Services, the Solicitors Regulation Authority, on 0870 606 2555.

Can trainee solicitors accrue CPD credit prior to admission?

Trainee solicitors may only count CPD credit for courses attended after their training as a solicitor has been satisfactorily completed and an application for admission lodged with the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

What CPD training records are solicitors and Registered European Lawyers required to keep?

It is the individual's responsibility to maintain a record of all training completed and the number of hours of CPD training accrued. Please note that the Solicitors Regulation Authority does not maintain CPD records for individual solicitors; the Solicitors Regulation Authority may request to see your CPD training record at any time.

It is advisable to enter into your CPD training record any calculations in respect of CPD requirements and employment details. Annual CPD training records should be kept on file for a period of up to six years.

Download a [CPD training record form](#).