

# You and your training contract

## What you need to know

Education and Training Unit  
Version 1

The time you will spend working under the supervision of a solicitor will be crucial to your readiness to become a member of the profession yourself. This is a time to develop your understanding of legal practice and of the responsibilities you will take on when you are admitted to the roll of solicitors.

You will need to talk with your training principal and supervisor to understand how your learning during this time will be structured and supported. If you have any queries or problems relating to your training, you should discuss these with your training principal in the first instance.

This period of your professional development is regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) to ensure that there is a framework within which your learning should take place.

All the information you need to know about regulation of your training contract can be found in **Training trainee solicitors: the Solicitors Regulation Authority requirements** published on the SRA's website (go to [www.sra.org.uk](http://www.sra.org.uk)). The following is a summary of the key training requirements.

### The training contract

When you start your training, you should sign a standard SRA training contract (download training contract forms from the SRA's website). It is your training principal's responsibility to make sure that the contract is signed within three months of the start date, and is registered with the SRA.

The training contract registration form and fee should be submitted to the SRA within 28 days of the contract being signed. You will receive a letter from the SRA confirming the registration and the expiry date within 30 days. If you do not receive a letter, you should contact the SRA on 0870 606 2555 to confirm that the contract has been registered. Failure to register the training contract could mean that not all of the time will count, and your admission to the roll could be delayed.

## **Counting previous experience**

If you gained legal experience within the three-year period prior to starting your training contract that has enabled you to develop skills and understanding equivalent to that which you gain during a training contract, you can ask your training principal to consider it as 'time to count'. This could result in you being given a reduction in the period of your training contract.

If you wish to ask your training principal to consider such a request, you should complete a 'time to count' application form (the guidelines for considering time to count and the application form are available on the SRA's website) and submit it to your training principal. You will first need to approach the supervisor at the firm or organisation where you gained the experience and ask them to certify that you did gain equivalent experience.

The maximum reduction to your training contract that can be given is six months. But, in order to gain a six months reduction, you must have worked for 12 months, as time is counted at 'half equivalence'. For example, if you worked for six months, you can request a maximum of three months' time to count. Please note that it is entirely at the discretion of the firm that is offering you the training contract whether a reduction in the period of your training will be granted. The training principal must retain copies of the documentation you have submitted in support of your request – you are advised to keep copies, too. They may be requested during a monitoring visit.

## **Experience during the training contract**

During the training contract, you have to gain good experience of at least three different areas of English law. The SRA does not specify the amount of time that should be spent in each area, but does suggest that, to gain the appropriate experience, you would need to spend the equivalent of at least three months in any subject area. You must also develop your skills in both contentious and non-contentious areas of practice. Any experience you have been granted as time to count will also be included towards this requirement. In addition, there are nine skills standards that you must be given the opportunity to practice and/or observe. Further details can be found in **Training trainee solicitors: the Solicitors Regulation Authority requirements**.

## **The training contract record**

During your training contract, you should keep a record of the work you have done, the skills you have gained and what you have learnt. It is important that you maintain a record, as the SRA may ask to review it. There is not a prescribed format for the training contract record, but a sample form is available from the SRA's website.

## **Performance review**

You should have regular informal reviews of your performance with your training principal or supervisor. In addition, you should have at least three appraisals, during the two-year period, including at least one in the first year, one in the second year and one at the end of the contract. This is an opportunity for you to reflect upon your development and progress.

## **The Professional Skills Course**

During the training contract, you must attend and satisfactorily complete the Professional Skills Course (PSC). You cannot attend the PSC until you have satisfactorily completed the Legal Practice Course. Your firm must pay for the PSC and give you paid time off to attend the course as well as pay reasonable travel expenses.

## **Monitoring visits**

During your training contract you may be asked to complete an SRA questionnaire about your training and your firm may receive a visit from an SRA monitor. The purpose of monitoring is to focus on the overall adequacy of the training that your firm provides. It is not designed to assess your personal performance or knowledge of substantive areas of law.

## **Your responsibilities**

You have a responsibility to become familiar with the Training Regulations and to check that the firm is following them. You also should be proactive and take responsibility of your own self-development and the direction of your training. Details of the skills standards you are required to achieve and the training requirements are in **Training trainee solicitors: the Solicitors Regulation Authority requirements**.

## **Character and suitability**

During the period of your training contract you have a responsibility to report to the SRA any matters that may affect your suitability to be admitted as a solicitor in England and Wales. This will include criminal convictions, police cautions, reprimands and final warnings together with financial problems such as bankruptcy or entering into voluntary arrangements. Failure to do so will be regarded as a serious breach of the admission requirements and may result in your application for admission being refused.

## **Application for admission to the roll of solicitors, first practising certificate and membership of the Solicitors Regulation Authority**

Approximately 12 weeks before you are expected to complete your training contract, you will receive an application form and detailed guidance to apply for a standard disclosure from the [Criminal Records Bureau](#). You must complete the application form strictly according to the guidance given. Incomplete or incorrectly completed forms will be returned and delays to admission will result.

Approximately eight weeks before the expected completion of your training contract, you will receive an application for admission form. You can use this form to

- apply for admission as a solicitor
- apply to attend an admission ceremony
- apply for your first practising certificate
- apply for membership of the SRA

To apply for admission to the roll, you must have

- satisfactorily completed your training – and your training principal must confirm this
- satisfactorily completed the Professional Skills Course and
- obtained a satisfactory standard disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau

You and your training principal must also certify that there are no circumstances that may affect your character and suitability to become a solicitor, such as criminal convictions.

There are two admission dates each month, usually the 1st and the 15th, and applications must be received at least 28 days before the date on which you would be expected to be admitted. When the application has been processed, you will receive confirmation of the admission date, details of the admission ceremony, and the continuing professional development scheme.

### **The Junior Lawyers Division**

The Junior Lawyers Division (JLD) freephone helpline number is 08000 856 131, and the website address is [www.juniorlawyers.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.juniorlawyers.lawsociety.org.uk).

Any JLD member can call the freephone confidential helpline number for advice and support. It is operated by trained JLD volunteers.

If you have any queries about your training, information is available from the SRA's website or by phoning Information Services, at the SRA, on 0870 606 2555.