

# Coronavirus – information about Education and Training requirements for 2021/22

20 October 2021

We recognise that students, trainees and employers are concerned about the impact of the pandemic on their training and assessments.

We have aimed to be as flexible as possible in this area, while still making sure solicitors who qualify have met the required standard. But as the response to the pandemic moves to a new phase, we expect education and training providers to move away from emergency arrangements.

## *Trainees / period of recognised training*

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### *My employer put me on furlough. How does this affect my period of recognised training?*

In the exceptional circumstances of the Covid-19 outbreak, we will accept a period of furlough of up to three months (on a full-time equivalent basis) as counting towards completion of the period of recognised training. This is provided that your training principal is satisfied that you have met our requirements for a period of recognised training.

We would usually expect a period of furlough lasting longer than three months (on a full-time equivalent basis) to lead to an extension of your training period. There will be a range of individual circumstances that may impact on this, for example whether you have had any previous relevant work-based experience that would, under our regulations, count towards a period of recognised training. Find out more about this on our trainee information page.

If your period of recognised training needs to be extended, your employer will need to tell us. Your training principal can do this through their mySRA, in the managing trainees section, by amending the end date of your training. There is no need to tell us in writing.

### *Can trainee solicitors work from home? Can trainees be supervised online?*

Our regulations require trainees must be ‘appropriately supervised’. Therefore, we would accept organisations putting sensible arrangements in place for supervisors to review trainees’ work remotely.

*Is there a maximum amount of time for which a trainee can be supervised remotely?*

No, there is no maximum amount of time a trainee can be supervised remotely. As long as sensible arrangements are in place for supervisors to review trainees' work remotely, we would not expect this to impact on the duration of a period of recognised training.

*If a trainee must self-isolate due to Covid-19, will this impact on the duration of their period of recognised training?*

Trainees may need to self-isolate due to Covid-19, in line with Government advice. If a trainee can work, then firms may put in place sensible arrangements for appropriate supervision of trainees self-isolating. We would not expect this to impact on the duration of a period of recognised training. If a trainee becomes sick during their period of self-isolation, they should be treated in line with any arrangements for sickness leave covered by their terms and conditions of employment (see below).

*If a trainee must take sickness leave due to Covid-19, does this mean that their period of recognised training will have to be extended?*

We would expect employers to treat any period of sickness leave due to Covid-19 the same as any other period of sickness leave. Any arrangements for sickness leave should already be covered under the terms and conditions of employment.

The approach for any long-term sick leave related to Covid-19 is also the same as for any other period of long-term sick leave. In these circumstances, a training period may be extended where a trainee is unable to meet the requirements of the Practice Skills Standards.

The duration of the extension is at the discretion of the training principal. If it needs to be extended, the training principal can tell us through their mySRA account, in the managing trainees section, by amending the end date of the training.

*Can pre-admission ID checks be completed electronically/via video link?*

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has announced a temporary relaxation in the requirements for a face to face ID check for standard applications. This change started on 24 March 2020.



The nominated solicitor can now complete the ID verification process via video using either scanned images of the ID documents or the applicant can present/show them to the nominated solicitor during the video call. View the DBS announcement [<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-changes-to-dbs-id-checking-guidelines>] .

*What should I do if my employer closes towards the end of my period of recognised training?*

We recognise the difficulty this presents for any trainee in this unfortunate position. We will consider requests for waivers from trainees who are reaching the end of their period of recognised training when their employer closes on a case by case basis. Anyone who is in this situation should *contact us* [<https://www.sra.org.uk/contact-us>] to discuss their options.

We will be as flexible as we can, for example, we may consider previous relevant work-based experience as counting towards a period of recognised training, but we will still need to make sure that solicitors who qualify have met our requirements.

*I am a training principal with trainees due to qualify in 2021 who are unable to gain experience in three distinct areas of law due to Covid-19. Can these trainees still be admitted?*

If you are in this situation, you can apply for a waiver [<https://www.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/solicitors/innovate/waivers-application.pdf?version=4917b0>] of our requirements for:

- you to provide trainees with experience of three distinct areas of English and Welsh practice (regulation 12.1(b) of the SRA Training Regulations 2014 - Qualification and Provider Regulations [<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/handbook/introAuthPrac/trainingregs2014/part1/>] )
- those trainees to meet the requirement to complete a period of recognised training (regulation 5.1).

We would expect you to complete one application that covers all affected trainees (rather than one per trainee). This needs to include all relevant trainees' names and SRA numbers (where available).

You will need to confirm in your application that these trainees will still meet the Practice Skills Standards, despite not completing three distinct seats.

If you cannot confirm this, you should discuss this with the individual(s) and consider whether their training needs to be extended. If you do extend a trainee's period of recognised training, you must *email us* [<https://www.sra.org.uk/contact-us>] to confirm the new end date.

Trainees who started their period of recognised training after 25 November 2019, when our new regulations came into force, are no longer required to gain experience in three distinct areas of English and Welsh practice.

*My training provider is extending my period of recognised training for business reasons due to the Covid-19 outbreak. But I have completed my period of recognised training and wish to be admitted. What should I do?*

Under the SRA Training Regulations 2014 - Qualification and Provider Regulations

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/handbook/introAuthPrac/trainingregs2014/part1/>] (2014 regulations) a trainee should be able to apply for admission when they are able to do so. They should not be delayed if they have met our requirements for admission. If necessary, we have the power to recognise the period of training under regulation 5.6 in these circumstances.

We can't comment on the terms and conditions of a trainee's contract of employment and we would suggest seeking employment legal advice.