

Supervising trainees

September 2021

Candidates can only qualify through this route if they meet our transitional requirements.

If they do not meet these, they will need to qualify under the SQE.

On a day-to-day basis, trainees may be supervised by several different people within your organisation:

- partners
- managers
- solicitors
- experienced legal executives.

Most organisations employ trainees anticipating that they will contribute to the future development of the business. Good training demands significant time and resources, and good supervision is vital to making sure that trainees make a worthwhile contribution and remain motivated and committed to your organisation.

Supervisors are responsible for providing practical day-to-day training and for giving trainees appropriate opportunities to develop their legal skills and knowledge. They should have a sound understanding of the training requirements and of what is expected of them as supervisors. It is therefore a good idea to allow supervisors adequate time and resources.

Supervisors' responsibilities

Typical responsibilities are to:

- allocate work and tasks of an appropriate level, gradually increasing the level and the complexity of the work over time, while encouraging the trainee to suggest solutions independently
- provide a balance between substantive and procedural tasks that demands the use of a broad range of skills
- provide clear instructions and make sure that they have been understood
- offer advice and guidance on appropriate research methods and materials along with sufficient information and factual background about a case or matter
- set a realistic timescale for work to be completed and answer questions as they arise, within a supportive environment that does not deter the trainee from asking questions in the future



- monitor the trainee's workload to make sure they have a sufficient but not excessive amount of work
- help make sure that the trainee maintains an up-to-date training record that identifies the work they have performed and the skills they have deployed
- review the training record regularly to ensure that an appropriate balance of work and skills is struck
- give regular feedback to the trainee regarding their performance, recognising achievements and improvements, and constructively addressing areas that require further effort
- conduct or participate in formal appraisals of the trainee
- provide an environment that encourages the trainee to take responsibility for their own development.

Information on the type of work that can be given to trainees to help them develop their skills is included in the [Practice Skills Standards](https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/period-recognised-training/managing-trainees/practice-skills-standards/1) (<https://news.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/legal-practice-course-route/period-recognised-training/managing-trainees/practice-skills-standards/1>).

Reviewing trainees

An important part of making sure that the appropriate standards are being achieved and developed is regular review of the trainee's performance.

You are advised to undertake frequent, informal reviews of the trainee's training record. This will help supervisors and trainees to:

- review progress toward agreed objectives deal with any difficulties close to the event
- compare the breadth and depth of work being performed by the trainee with the requirements of the Practice Skills Standards
- address any professional conduct or ethical issues that may have arisen and discuss future training.

Appraisals

The purpose of a formal appraisal is to review the trainee's overall performance, assess the development of their skills, identify areas of strength and weakness, agree new objectives and plan future training.

We advise that trainees be appraised formally every six months. As a minimum, we advise that three formal appraisals should be conducted during the two-year training period: one in the first year, one in the second year, and one at the end.

Appraisals are normally conducted face-to-face, and the discussions recorded and documented. During the discussion, the trainee should



have an opportunity to ask questions and to raise any concerns they may have.

We do not prescribe the form of the appraisal documentation. However, this [sample appraisal document](https://news.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/training-contract/sampleappraisalform.pdf) [https://news.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/training-contract/sampleappraisalform.pdf] can be used, or adapted, to suit your requirements.

Training record

Trainees are responsible for maintaining a training record showing their work experience, skills developed and how they have reflected on their learning.

The trainee should use this record as an opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt and where there may be gaps in their experience and skills.

We do not prescribe the format of the record, but we recommend it includes:

- details of work performed
- skills used (with reference to the Practice Skills Standards)
- the trainee's observations and reflections on their performance
- any other training or professional development
- any professional conduct issues that may have arisen.

View our sample template for a [training record](https://news.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/training-contract/recordform.pdf?version=48de4f) [https://news.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/students/training-contract/recordform.pdf?version=48de4f].

Supervisors should review the training record regularly to make sure that the trainee is undertaking work of a breadth and depth sufficient to meet our requirements. The training record can also be used as part of appraisal and performance review.

Extending training

The period of recognised training may be extended if required, for example if the trainee has not yet completed their training. This should be completed in the 'Manage Trainees' section of your mySRA account.