



Guidance

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Registered Swiss lawyers

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Status

If you are a Registered Swiss Lawyer (RSL), this guidance is to help you understand your obligations and how to comply with them. We will have regard to it when exercising our regulatory functions.

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for Swiss lawyers who are interested in qualifying as a solicitor by completing a three-year adaptation period as an RSL.

Purpose of this guidance

To enable Swiss lawyers to understand:

- who can become an RSL
- how to register as an RSL
- what rights and obligations they have when practising as an RSL.

What is an RSL?

From 1 January 2025, Swiss lawyers may apply to qualify as a solicitor of England and Wales either by passing an aptitude test, or by completing an adaptation period.

An RSL is a 'Swiss lawyer' who is registered for the purposes of qualifying as a solicitor by completing an adaptation period. We hold and publish a register which includes the names of all RSLs.

In order to be eligible to register as an RSL, you must hold a Swiss professional title of Avocat, Advokat, Rechtsanwalt, Anwalt, Fürsprecher, Fürsprech or Avvocato.

Regular and effective practice



You must be registered and undertaking a supervised adaptation period for three years to fulfil the requirements of this scheme.

Registration with a 'competent authority'

If you choose to qualify as a solicitor by completing an adaptation period, you will need to apply to have your qualifications recognised and register as an RSL with us (or another competent authority in the UK) before doing so.

Although the UK is a single state, it has three separate legal jurisdictions – England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In each jurisdiction, there are two branches of the profession applicable to Swiss lawyers – solicitors and barristers (or 'advocates' in Scotland).

The SRA and the Bar Standards Board are the competent authorities for the solicitor and barrister professions in England and Wales. The competent authorities in Scotland are the Law Society of Scotland and the Faculty of Advocates (Scotland); and, in Northern Ireland, the Law Society of Northern Ireland and the Bar Council of Northern Ireland.

You must register before you start practising in the UK, regardless of the way in which you intend to practise (ie whether you will be practising in-house or in private practice).

You may not register with more than one competent authority at a given time.

Choice of competent authority

You may decide with which competent authority you wish to register.

Whichever competent authority you choose, you will acquire the rights of practice and the restrictions similar to that legal profession (including the right to do the work reserved to the local profession in that jurisdiction, subject to certain restrictions in specified proceedings) and you will be subject to the rules, regulation and discipline of that competent authority.

In most cases, therefore, your choice is likely to depend on the jurisdiction in which you intend mainly to practise and the type of work you wish to undertake. If you will be based in England and Wales but choose to register with another competent authority in the UK, eg in Scotland or Northern Ireland, you would only be able to undertake work which the relevant competent authority permits you to do in England and Wales. If you intend to practise on a permanent basis in Scotland or Northern Ireland, you must register with one of the relevant competent authorities unless you are already registered with another competent authority in the UK.

Registration as an RSL with the SRA

Applying for registration

To apply to become an RSL with us, you must first [register an account on mySRA](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/mysra/) [https://guidance.sra.org.uk/mysra/]. You will then be able to access the application form online.

In order to register with us:

- you must be a Swiss lawyer as defined above
- you must intend to commence practice under your Swiss professional title on a permanent basis in England and Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland
- you must intend to complete the adaptation period, and be legally entitled to do so
- you must provide details of your employer and supervisor for the adaptation period
- you must provide the SRA with a certificate of good standing which is no more than three months old, confirming your registration with the competent authority in Switzerland under whose home professional title you intend to practise and
- we must be satisfied as to your character and suitability to be an RSL.

A certificate of attestation from your home bar(s) or law society must state:

- your date of admission
- an indication that you are entitled to practise, and
- that there are no disciplinary orders or pending proceedings against you (or if there are, the certificate should provide details).

In order to comply with our rules, you must disclose any information in relation to your disciplinary record, character or suitability that is relevant to your application.

Renewal of your registration

You must [renew your registration](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/pathways-qualification/swiss-lawyers/adaptation-period-route/) [https://guidance.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/pathways-qualification/swiss-lawyers/adaptation-period-route/] as an RSL each year by 31 October – you will be invited to do this at the beginning of October as part of our annual renewals. There is a fee payable for this. Read more about our [fees](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/mysra/fees/) [https://guidance.sra.org.uk/mysra/fees/].

You must also pay an annual contribution to the Compensation Fund.

Notifying us of any change to your employer



Your adaptation period must be completed in no more than four organisations. So, you can have up to three changes after initial registration. If you change employer, then you must [notify us](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/contactus) [<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/contactus>].

Remember, to remain on the register as an RSL, you must at all times remain registered under your professional title in your home state. If you fail to do so, your registration may be revoked (regulation 6.5(b) of the SRA Authorisation of Individuals Regulations).

This is likely to mean that you must remain on the register and continue to pay any fees required in your home state.

Practice rights and restrictions

Subject to the restrictions below, registration with us as an RSL gives you the following rights as long as you are supervised under your adaptation period, and subject to compliance with our Standards and Regulations:

- to practise anywhere in the UK with practice rights similar to those of a solicitor of England and Wales
- to provide reserved instrument activities
- to provide reserved probate services
- to provide litigation and advocacy services
- to do immigration work as permitted by our Standards and Regulations
- to do publicly funded work in England and Wales, subject to securing a legal aid contract and
- to provide financial services in the UK as part of your legal practice in an SRA-regulated entity, to the extent permitted under our Standards and Regulations.

It is a criminal offence to carry on reserved legal activities if you are not entitled to do so.

Restrictions on practice: reserved legal activities

Although you are permitted to carry on the reserved legal activities referred to above, these are subject to the following restrictions:

- Litigation – When providing litigation and advocacy services before courts and tribunals in England and Wales (other than before the higher courts) but in each case you must be instructed together with a solicitor or barrister who is entitled to undertake that activity. The solicitor or barrister may be a member of your own firm.
- Conveyancing – When preparing instruments or lodging documents relating to the transfer or charge of land in England and Wales, you must be under the direction and supervision of your supervisor, who is entitled to undertake that activity.



- Probate – When preparing papers on which to found or oppose a grant of probate or letters of administration, you must be under the direction and supervision of your supervisor, who is entitled to undertake that activity.
- Holding client funds - You are not entitled to hold client funds.

SRA regulation of RSLs

What authorisation entitles you to do

Regulations 9 and 10 of the Authorisation of Individuals Regulations set out what authorisation as an RSL entitles you to do and the limitations on the ways in which you are permitted to practise certain types of work; reserved legal activities, immigration, claims management and financial services.

As an RSL there are few limitations on the ways in which you may practise.

Regardless of the way in which you practise, you must be supervised by an SRA authorised solicitor. The following are examples of the ways in which you may practise:

- As an in-house lawyer employed by a non-authorized individual, business, or organisation.
- In an authorised body – ie a law firm which has been authorised by us as an authorised body. You may practise in an authorised body as an employee.
- In an authorised non-SRA firm – ie a law firm which is authorised by one of the other approved regulators. You may practise in an authorised non-SRA firm as an employee.

Compliance with the SRA Standards and Regulations

Once you are registered with us as an RSL, you must comply with our Standards and Regulations which apply to your practice as an RSL. It is important to familiarise yourself with our Standards and Regulations. Many of the Standards and Regulations will apply to you however you practise as an RSL but, in particular:

The [SRA Principles](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/principles/) [https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/principles/], which set out the ethical standards we expect of regulated individuals, apply to you at all times.

The SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs, RFLs and RSLs will apply to you in full.

As an employee of a firm that we regulate, you may also be subject to regulatory action if you are responsible for a serious breach of any of the

rules and regulations which apply to your employer.

If you breach our rules you will be investigated in the same way as we investigate solicitors - by applying our [Enforcement Strategy](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/corporate-strategy/sra-enforcement-strategy/) [https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/corporate-strategy/sra-enforcement-strategy/] and relevant rules. You may be subject to a range of sanctions and could be referred to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal.

You must also continue to comply with the rules applicable to your Swiss professional title. If there is a conflict between those rules and our Standards and Regulations, our Standards and Regulations will take precedence in relation to your practise in England and Wales.

Applying for admission as a solicitor

If you have successfully completed the adaptation period, you can [apply for admission](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/pathways-qualification/swiss-lawyers/adaptation-period-route/) [https://guidance.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/pathways-qualification/swiss-lawyers/adaptation-period-route/] as a solicitor. You will be eligible to apply if you are a Swiss lawyer registered with us as an RSL at the time of your application and you have been:

- effectively and regularly practising the law of England and Wales law under your Swiss professional title for three years or
- effectively and regularly practising in the laws of Switzerland and England and Wales under your Swiss professional title for three years in that time.

'Effectively and regularly' means without any interruption other than that resulting from the events of everyday life.

Post-admission

Your registration as an RSL will be cancelled upon being admitted as a solicitor.

Notwithstanding your admission as a solicitor, you may, if you wish, have a separate practice in the UK under your home professional title. However, you must have a current practising certificate and comply with our Standards and Regulations, as well as your home state rules, when doing so.