

Higher Rights of Audience

Updated 1 October 2025

Introduction

Solicitors and registered European lawyers (RELs) are granted rights of audience in some courts when they are admitted or registered. To represent clients in the higher courts in criminal or civil matters, they must pass either the criminal or civil Higher Rights of Audience (HRA) qualification.

What we do

- We set the competence standards that solicitor and REL higher court advocates must meet and maintain.
- We authorise an assessment provider to assess people against these standards.
- We set the regulations under which this scheme operates.

The [SRA Authorisation of Individuals Regulations](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/) [https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/authorisation-individuals-regulations/] sets out the education and training requirements for those seeking to exercise higher rights of audience in the higher courts of England and Wales.

HRA assessment provider

As of 1 October 2025, there is a single provider of these assessments, [The University of Law](https://www.law.ac.uk/study/higher-rights-of-audience-assessment/) [https://www.law.ac.uk/study/higher-rights-of-audience-assessment/]. Information on the assessment, including assessment dates and the booking process is available on their website.

We do not prescribe how solicitors prepare for the HRA assessments and we do not authorise organisations providing preparatory training. However, we will publish details of organisations who have told us they offer training shortly.

How does our scheme work?

- Only solicitors and RELs can take the criminal and civil HRA assessments.
- There is only one route to qualification in either civil or criminal proceedings.
- The scheme requires all applicants to pass an advocacy assessment based on the [SRA's higher rights of audience competence standards](#)



[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/specific-areas-of-practice/statement-of-standards-for-solicitor-higher-court-advocates/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/specific-areas-of-practice/statement-of-standards-for-solicitor-higher-court-advocates/).

- There are separate assessments for criminal and civil procedures.
- There is no mandatory training or experience requirement.
- We authorise The University of Law to deliver the assessments on our behalf.
- Barristers who transfer to the roll of solicitors take their existing higher rights with them.
- Those who gained rights of audience qualifications under previous regulations were automatically passported onto the scheme in 2010 and retained their existing rights.

How to apply for higher rights of audience

Once you have passed the advocacy assessment(s), you will need to complete the Higher Rights of Audience application in [mySRA](#)

[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/mysra/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/mysra/).

Your application will normally be dealt with within 30 days of receiving all necessary information.

[How to apply for higher rights of audience](#)

[\[https://guidance.sra.org.uk/mysra/manage-account/individual-account/step-by-step-guides/higher-rights-audience/\]](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/mysra/manage-account/individual-account/step-by-step-guides/higher-rights-audience/)

Frequently asked questions

General questions on eligibility and application procedure

[Open all \[#\]](#)

[What type of award is available?](#)

There are separate awards and assessments for rights of audience for criminal and civil advocacy.

[When can I apply for higher rights of audience?](#)

You can apply once you have been admitted to the roll of solicitors and can evidence that you have passed the advocacy assessments.

[I am an aspiring/trainee solicitor - can I take the assessments?](#)



No. You need to be admitted as a solicitor before you can take the assessments.

I am an EU national. Am I eligible to apply to exercise higher rights of audience?

If you are an EU/EEA or Swiss national who has qualified in an EU jurisdiction.

You meet the requirements of [Directive 2005/36 \(Recognition of Professional Qualifications\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32005L00361) and are eligible to apply under Regulation 9.10(a). Please complete an [Assessment Table](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/solicitors/accreditation/higher-rights/hra-assessment-table.docx?version=4a089a1).

This information will enable us to assess which (if any) assessments you will need to take to be able to gain higher rights of audience as an REL or (once admitted) as a solicitor of England and Wales.

Do I need to undertake any mandatory training?

No. However, you may decide that you need to undertake some additional training. A number of organisations provide additional preparatory training for the assessments. We do not monitor the courses offered by these providers so you should make your own decision on whether you want to take a course with a particular provider. Training providers who have asked to be included will appear on a list on our website.

Alternatively, you may feel that you have gained sufficient experience to be able to pass the advocacy assessment. This will be for you to decide.

What is included in the assessments?

The assessment tests all parts of the [standards](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/accreditation/higher-rights-of-audience/statement-of-standards-for-solicitor-higher-court-advocates/1) for either the criminal or civil award. This will include procedure, evidence and ethics and an advocacy assessment by way of a case study or simulation. Candidates will be assessed separately for the civil award or the criminal award.

Is there an experience requirement?

No. Provided you are admitted as a solicitor and have passed the advocacy assessment, you can make an application.



Do I need a certificate of eligibility from the SRA to take the assessment?

No. You can register to take the assessment. Once you have passed the assessment, you may submit your application for your award.

Useful links

[Bar Council](http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/) [<http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/>]

The General Council of the Bar is the representative body for barristers in England and Wales.

[BSB](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/) [<http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/>]

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) is the regulatory body for barristers in England and Wales.

[<http://www.sahca.org.uk/>]