

# Higher Rights of Audience

Updated 6 March 2025

## Changes to Higher Rights of Audience Assessment

We are consulting on [minor changes to our regulations](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/consultation-listing/changes-regulations-hra/?s=o) [<https://guidance.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/consultation-listing/changes-regulations-hra/?s=o>]. This is so we can appoint a single assessment provider, the University of Law, to deliver the Higher Rights of Audience criminal and civil assessments.

## Introduction

Solicitors and registered European lawyers (RELs) are granted rights of audience in some courts when they are admitted or registered. However, they cannot exercise those rights in the higher courts until they have complied with additional assessment requirements.

We set the competence standards solicitor and REL higher court advocates must meet and maintain. We also authorise assessment organisations to test people against those standards and 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.

## How does the 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.
- Assessments under the scheme are run by assessment organisations authorised by the SRA. We are currently consulting on minor changes to our regulations to enable us to appoint a single assessment provider.



- Barristers who transfer to the roll of solicitors take their existing higher rights with them.
- Solicitors 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](#)

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

#### [How do I apply for my rights of audience?](#)

If you have completed 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 receipt of all the 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/)

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

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

#### [When can I make an application for higher rights of audience?](#)

You can apply for your higher courts qualification once you have been admitted and can evidence that you have passed the advocacy assessments.

#### [I am a 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 in England and Wales.

### **Do I need to undertake any mandatory training?**

No. However, you may decide that you need to undertake some additional training which will be offered by [assessment organisations](https://guidance.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/accreditation/hra-course-assessment-providers/). 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/) 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 with an assessment organisation 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/>]