

Character and suitability

Updated 2 January 2024

We treat your character and suitability to be a solicitor as seriously as your knowledge and skills. If you do not meet our requirements for character and suitability we will not admit you as a solicitor.

When applying to be admitted as a solicitor or obtaining a practising certificate, you must disclose all matters relevant to our assessment of your character and suitability.

In assessing your suitability we will take into account any information which indicates you are not fit to practise as a solicitor for any reason. This includes anything that would adversely affect your ability to meet your regulatory obligations as a solicitor or to be subject to regulatory investigations or proceedings if required.

As set out in our Assessment of Character and Suitability Rules

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/>]

, such information may relate to issues including (but not limited to):

- Criminal conduct
- Behaviour which has a bearing on your integrity and independence
- Education assessment offences
- Financial conduct and events (see Table 2 in the Rules)
- Regulatory or disciplinary findings
- Health conditions.

Our rules provide more detail about the information that you must disclose to us.

Telling us about health conditions

If you have a health condition and you are not sure whether you need to report it to us, you will find our approach to health issues and medical evidence [<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/sra-investigations-health-issues-and-medical-evidence/>] helpful. It explains when health issues can be a regulatory concern and should be reported to us, and how we deal with those that arise during investigations.

You do not need to tell us about a health condition if you are satisfied that you, and where relevant, your employer are taking appropriate steps to address the condition. And any risks it may pose to your practice as a



solicitor or your ability to meet your regulatory obligations. This includes taking part in an investigation or disciplinary process.

If you are not certain that you can safely manage any risk that a health condition may pose, you should let us know by emailing us

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/home/contact-us/>] .

The need to meet our character and suitability requirements is ongoing. So you must [<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/enforcement/solicitors-reporting-themselves/>] if anything relevant to your suitability to be a solicitor happens after you have been admitted.

Our rules [<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/>] apply to anyone looking to qualify as a solicitor, whether it is through the Legal Practice Course route, Solicitors Qualifying Examination route or as a qualified lawyer.

Under these rules, you do not have to tell us about any character and suitability issues at the start of your studying or training/qualifying work experience. You only need do so when you apply to be a solicitor.

However, if you want to check any potential problems before then, you can complete an early character and suitability assessment at any time. We are not bound, in any subsequent application for admission, by any decision made at this stage.

Whenever you tell us about an issue, it is up to you to provide any evidence necessary so we can decide on your application. The nature of the issue will dictate what you need to give us.

You can check what information is needed by reading our rules

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/>]

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You should not submit your application until you are able to give us all the required information.

Get ready to apply for an early character and suitability assessment

Pre-admission applicant screening

Everyone applying for their character and suitability assessment will need to complete the screening process [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/screening/>] which involves a check by the Disclosure and Barring Service, before submitting their application. This costs £34.

What you can expect from us

Once we have all the information we need, we will consider your application.

We will look at it carefully, requesting any missing information and then preparing a report with our decision. You will be given the opportunity to respond to the draft report, if we are considering refusing your application.

We aim to decide on an application within six months.

We will usually decide within 30 days, once we have all the information we need.

You can withdraw your application at any time before we decide.

Consequences of failing to submit information with your application

If you do not submit the relevant information within the time limits provided by us, your application is likely to be refused.

If it is refused, you will have 28 days to apply for a review of the decision.

Please note that, if your application is refused, you may only make another one where there has been a material change in your circumstances relevant to your application.

To find out what information you need to submit with your application, please read our rules [<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/>] relating to the issue you are disclosing.

Appeals

You can apply for a review of our decision within 28 days of the date we notify you of the decision.

Under section 41(3) of the Solicitors Act 1974, you can appeal to the High Court if you are not satisfied with any appeal decision we take.

Publication

We publish application outcomes in line with our guidance on publishing regulatory and disciplinary decisions [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/decision-making/guidance/disciplinary-publishing-regulatory-disciplinary-decisions/>] .

Making your application

You will need to make sure you have a mySRA account. If you don't already have one go to get a mySRA account [<https://www.sra.org.uk/mysra/get-mysra->

account] .

You only need to complete this application if you have issues to disclose under our rules [<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/#rule-6>] .

You should complete the application at least six months before you need a decision.

Please make sure you have completed the pre-admission screening [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/screening/>] process before making your application.

You will need to upload evidence as part of your application – you will find more information about this in Part 6 of our rules [<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/assessment-character-suitability-rules/#rule-6>] .

There is no fee for the early character and suitability assessment.