

# Reflecting and identifying your competence requirements

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Reflecting on your practice helps you keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date. It will also help keep your understanding of your legal, ethical and regulatory obligations current.

## What reflection means and why it is important

Reflection involves thinking about your actions, identifying your strengths, and considering areas for improvement. You probably already reflect in your daily practice, whether you are aware of it or not.

Think about all the times you have considered how well a meeting with a client went or discussed an experience at work with a colleague. On the other hand, it could be a 'lightbulb moment' about how you might approach something differently next time. This is reflection and you should record these thoughts, for example, in a training record.

It is also important to regularly set aside dedicated time to reflect consciously and systematically with the goal of improving your legal practice. This will help you to meet your competence requirements by:

- evaluating your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the demands of your work, and
- identifying the learning and development needs you need to address to maintain your competence.

There is a strong public interest in reflecting on your practice – it helps you maintain your competence and provide good quality legal services.

We regularly carry out thematic inspections and training record reviews to understand whether solicitors are maintaining their competence. It is not a regulatory requirement to keep a training record or document reflection. However, doing so demonstrates to us that you have taken the necessary steps to keep your knowledge and skills up to date.

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## **When to reflect**

Reflection should be completed on an ongoing basis so that you can identify learning and development needs as they arise.

You can schedule time to reflect on your practice, for example:



- before or after meetings with your team, manager or supervisor
- before or after an interaction with a client (especially if that client has a vulnerability that you haven't dealt with before)
- after engaging, completing, or [reviewing](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/record-evaluate/) any learning and development
- after a change to the law
- as part of a formal appraisal or performance management process
- at other regular intervals (eg monthly)
- when we issue guidance or warning notices that are relevant to your work.

You can also reflect on your practice after completing a case or when you finish working for a specific client. This will enable you to identify what went well and what you might do differently next time. There's no one way to do this, but these questions could help guide your reflection:

- What worked well?
- What could have worked better?
- Was the client happy or unhappy, and why?
- Were there any gaps in my knowledge?
- What did I learn, and what can I do to address the gaps identified above?

## **How to reflect**

We all reflect in different ways, and there is no one way to do it. Your employer may have specific requirements around reflection that you need to follow. For example, they may build it into their own internal processes, such as case reviews and performance development reviews (PDRs).

Staying up to date with your ethical and regulatory obligations is crucial to being a competent solicitor and meeting your regulatory obligations. You should reflect on whether you are aware of any developments, including if we have issued any new warning notices or guidance, and apply them to your work. You will be asked to confirm that you have done this when you renew your practising certificate.

You should also reflect on the wider skills and knowledge required to perform your role, such as skills in communication, client relationships, and business practice. Reading our [Statement of solicitor competence](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/competence-statement/) and comparing it to your own practice will help you to reflect on these wider skills. You should address any learning and development needs you identify.

We have created resources to help you reflect in a systematic and conscious way. These are for guidance purposes only - you are not required to use them.



## Structuring your reflection

To get the most out of reflection, it can be useful to structure your thoughts. There are many ways to do this, but one way is to use the ['what? so what? now what?' framework](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1) [\[https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1\]](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1). This involves:

- identifying a situation to reflect on
- understanding its broader significance and consequences
- identifying actions to achieve a better outcome next time.

We have a [template](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1) [\[https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1\]](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1) to help you structure your reflections.

## **Identifying your learning and development needs**

Reflecting on the quality of your practice should help identify what learning and development needs you need to address to maintain your competence to carry out your role.

We have created a [document to help you use reflection to identify](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1) [\[https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1\]](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1) and prioritise your learning and development efficiently and systematically.

It's important to remember that your learning and development can be about building strengths and meeting goals as well as addressing weaknesses. An example could be identifying an opportunity to train for the higher rights of audience qualification because you received positive feedback about the quality of your advocacy and want to focus on that area of your practice.

## **Recording your reflections**

It's important to keep a record of your reflections so you can track your learning and development over time. Again, there is no single way to do this, and you should use whatever method works best for you. When keeping a record, any information about clients should be anonymised.

### **Our learning and development template**

[\[https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1\]](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/templates/1) may help you to keep a record of your reflections. You can use it to note down:

- how you have reflected on your practice,
- the learning and development needs you identify as a result of your reflection, and
- how those needs relate to your practice.

The template also includes an example of how you might keep a record of these things.



## **Additional resources for reflection**

The following resources may also help with reflection:

- Our [Competence Statement](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/threshold-standard/) [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/cpd/competence-statement/threshold-standard/>].
- Information about developments in your area(s) of practice (eg journals, blogs, and newsletters).
- Procedural rules and practice directions for your area(s) of practice (including [warning notices and guidance](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/) [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/>] we have issued).
- Competences or good practice guidance for specific areas of practice. Examples include our resources for solicitors who practise in the [Coroners' Courts](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/practising-coroners-court/) [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/practising-coroners-court/>] or the [youth court](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/cpd/youth-court-advocacy/) [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/continuing-competence/cpd/youth-court-advocacy/>].
- Resources about specific skills or issues, such as advocacy and engaging with vulnerable people.
- Guidance or requirements issued by your employer if you have one.
- The findings of any file or case reviews.
- Your own notes about your work and performance.
- Formal or informal feedback about your work which could come from clients, judges, lawyers you have worked with on a case, members of your department, a mentor, a manager or a supervisor.

## **Questions to consider when reflecting**

These questions may help you to reflect in a more systematic and conscious way and identify learning and development needs:

- What are my strengths and weaknesses? How can I build on my strengths and address my weakness?
- Has my area of law or practice changed?
- Have I received any feedback on my work recently? Is there anything I can do to address this feedback? Would it be beneficial to actively seek feedback on a particular aspect of my work?

Other questions that may assist with aspects of your reflection include the following.

## **Setting and reflecting on goals and objectives:**

- What steps have I taken to meet my professional goals and obligations for the past (eg six months to a year) and how effective have they been?
- What are my professional goals for the next (eg six months to a year) and what can I do to help meet them?



**Reflecting on performance and behaviours:**

- When did I perform well in the last (eg six months) and is there anything I can learn from that and apply to other areas of my practice?
- When could I have performed better in the last (eg six months) and is there anything I can do to improve my knowledge, skills or attributes?
- Could my behaviours be improved in any way, for example, by learning about a specific area of equality, diversity and inclusion?

**Assessing your learning and development needs:**

- What are the most significant challenges of my role?
- Do I need to develop or refresh a particular skill, for example, because I haven't used it for a while and need to demonstrate it in an upcoming case? This could be a technical skill (eg legal research) or another type of skill (eg making your clients feel comfortable and understood).