



# Police Station Representatives Accreditation Scheme external examiner's annual report summary 2022-2023

17 December 2024

The Police Station Representatives Accreditation Scheme (PSRAS) is a compulsory qualification for solicitors and non-solicitors providing legal advice at the police station on a legally aided basis.

We are responsible for monitoring how the PSRAS qualification is assessed, including oversight of two assessment providers, Cardiff University via Cardiff Professional Legal Studies and Datalaw. We appoint an independent external examiner to help us do this.

## The report

This summarises the findings of the independent external examiner's review into the assessment delivery arrangements during 2022 – 2023.

It also updates on progress against recommendations made by the external examiner in the [2021 external examiners report](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/police-station-representatives-accreditation-scheme-external-examiner-annual-report/) [<https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/police-station-representatives-accreditation-scheme-external-examiner-annual-report/>].

## The scheme

PSRAS is a compulsory qualification for solicitors and non-solicitors who provide legal advice at the police station on a legally aided basis.

There are three parts to the assessment:

- [Portfolio](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/accreditation/police-station-representative-accreditation-scheme/#portfolio) [<https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/accreditation/police-station-representative-accreditation-scheme/#portfolio>]
- [Critical Incidents Test](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/accreditation/police-station-representative-accreditation-scheme/#critical-incidents-test) [<https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/accreditation/police-station-representative-accreditation-scheme/#critical-incidents-test>]. (CIT)
- [Written examination](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/accreditation/police-station-representative-accreditation-scheme/#written-examination) [<https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/continuing-competence/cpd/accreditation/police-station-representative-accreditation-scheme/#written-examination>].

Solicitors may, as an alternative, complete the Police Station Qualification as part of the Criminal Litigation Accreditation Scheme (CLAS) to be included on local duty solicitor rotas. CLAS is managed by [the Law Society](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/career-advice/individual-accreditations/criminal-litigation-accreditation/) [<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/career-advice/individual-accreditations/criminal-litigation-accreditation/>] and therefore is not covered in this report.

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## **External examiner's report summary - Diana Kirsch**

As the external examiner, I provide independent scrutiny to check that delivery of the assessment is robust and consistently delivered across the two assessment organisations. I also check that there are appropriate quality assurance arrangements in place.

To do this, I review operational and delivery processes and review samples of assessments delivered by Cardiff University and Datalaw.

This is an overview of my findings from my work to review the assessments delivered by the assessment providers during 2022 - 2023. This period is one in which new assessment standards and guidelines were agreed and implemented. This summary includes several recommendations to further improve assessment delivery and oversight.

In my last report, covering 2021, I found that the assessments delivered were sufficiently robust, there was evidence of good practice and appropriate quality assurance processes were in place. I made recommendations, and this summary also provides an update on progress against these.

I would like to thank all those that supported my review for their time and making documents available to review.

### **Key findings from assessments delivered during 2022 - 2023**

I am pleased to confirm that the quality assurance processes in both organisations remain effective and that the marking and moderation of assessments is robust.

I also found that:

- Some improvements have been made to enhance diversity in the assessments, for example, a broader range of ethnicities represented in the CIT assessments.
- Good practice was demonstrated in the induction and ongoing support of new assessors.
- Marking guides were applied correctly and consistently and fail and pass feedback was provided to candidates.
- Written and CIT assessments delivered online were robust and secure.
- The pass rates for the CITs and portfolios are similar at both assessment organisations for the period 2022 - 2023. However, there is a variation in the written assessment pass rate between the two assessment organisations over the same period.



- The total number of individuals taking the PSRAS assessments increased from 314 in 2021 to 472 in 2023.

### **Progress against recommendations in my 2021 report:**

- I am pleased that the assessment organisations have made some progress to improve the collection of data of individuals taking the assessments and monitoring performance by protected characteristics.
- Both assessment organisations have introduced changes to improve the standardisation of annual reporting.
- Some progress has been made to enhance the equality, diversity and inclusion training of assessors.
- I also note that the SRA consulted on new assessment standards, assessment guidelines and rules to oversee PSRAS assessment organisations. The rules are in effect and the assessment standards and guidelines have been adopted by the assessment organisations.

### **Key recommendations**

Based on reviewing progress against my 2021 recommendations and latest findings, I have recommended the following actions are implemented to improve the robustness and standardisation of delivery:

- There is still more that can be done to improve the quantity and quality of data collected and reported by assessment organisations. In particular, assessment organisations should consider what further steps, if any, they can take to encourage candidates to provide as much information as possible at registration.
- They should continue to explore how they can improve the diversity of their assessors.
- They should regularly review their training and assessment materials to ensure that they continue to remain as inclusive as possible.
- They should take steps to make candidate policies about the assessment more widely available, for example, outside of any candidate portal.

In addition, further work is required to understand in more detail the variation in pass rates for the written assessment. I recommend that a regular calibration meeting is set up between the assessment organisations to explore this. Better quality data will help facilitate this discussion.

### **[A response by the Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)**

We welcome this report, and it provides assurances that the delivery of the PSRAS assessment by Cardiff University and Datalaw continues to be robust.

We have already taken steps to address several recommendations made by the external examiner. Regular meetings between the assessment providers already happen but we will introduce further calibration meetings from 2025. These will make sure that there is a consistent standard and approach between the two providers. We have also agreed with the assessment organisations the candidate data we expect them to collect and report to us and the external examiner.

We agree with the external examiner's recommendations that further work is required to understand in more detail the variation in pass rates for the written assessment. We will work with the assessment providers through the calibration meetings during 2025 to understand the potential causes and how any variation can be addressed if necessary.

We have also agreed with each assessment organisation a timetable for implementing the remaining recommendations. We will monitor progress through our continuing oversight, regular meetings, and the work of the external examiner. Our [PSRAS provider regulation \[https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/education-training-assessment-provider-regulations/\]](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations/education-training-assessment-provider-regulations/)s allow us to take action if progress fails to meet the agreed timetable, for example, we can revoke a provider's approval.