

# Careers Information Booklet for Law Students



# Careers Information Booklet for Law Students

This booklet answers common questions that you may have as a law student such as: what career options do I have with a law degree? How can I get work experience relevant to law? How should I put my CV together? How can I perform better in interviews?

The booklet has been compiled using Careers Centre information available at [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers) and a range of other sources which are mentioned later.

To get started, here are some key things that you should know as a law student:

**Not all law students become solicitors and barristers.** There are a range of career options where your law degree will be an asset.

**Plan early.** The earlier you start career planning the better, particularly if you want to become a solicitor or barrister: many solicitors firms recruit trainees 2 years in advance of their start date, meaning that you need to apply to firms in your 2nd year and therefore research career options, pathways and employers in your 1st year, if you want to start work as soon as possible.

**Be proactive.** Whilst your degree will enable you to develop a range of skills and knowledge necessary for working life, you will also need to gain work experience and take positions of responsibility to show employers that you are proactive and can operate in a work environment.

**Analyse your experiences.** It is not enough to simply list your experience and qualifications when applying for vacancies and postgraduate study. You will need to analyse these on your CV, applications and in interviews to show that you have the skills and personal qualities employers are looking for.

**Visit the Careers Centre.** We can help you to identify career and work experience options, research opportunities, write carefully targeted applications and perform well in interviews & assessment centre activities. Visit us at [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers) or on the MD concourse.

**Attend the Law Careers Fair and talks and workshops throughout the academic year.** These events will give you exposure to legal employers and practitioners to help you decide what areas of law may be of interest to you. Some of the events will have limited availability, so be sure to sign up early to avoid missing out. Sign up to the WOLF Topic 'Law Careers' and check this regularly for the latest events.

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# Section 1 - Career Options and Choices:

## What do Law Students Do?

Each year the University of Wolverhampton contacts all UK and EU graduates, 6 months after completing a course to find out what they are doing in terms of work and study.

Knowing what past students have done can alert you to career ideas you may not have considered and give you an insight into employment trends you may face.

The following is a selection of jobs that LLB students graduating in 10-11 said they were engaged in, 6 months after leaving university (this information is the most up-to-date available at the time of writing and is listed in alphabetical order):

### Employed as:

- Administrator in a fraud team within a bank
- Business Development Manager for a vehicle repair company
- Caseworker for the CPS
- Civil Servant
- Claim Handler in an insurance company
- Commissions Contractor in a local authority
- Customer Assistant with telecommunications company
- Customer Service Assistant in a supermarket
- Debt Recovery Clerk
- Emergency Response Officer
- Estate Agent Negotiator
- Human Resource Assistant
- Legal PA
- Legal secretary
- Marketing Executive
- Paralegal
- Probation Officer
- Property Paralegal
- Retail Manager
- Support Worker
- Teaching Assistant
- Trainee Accountant
- Trainee Financial Adviser
- Volunteer Legal Adviser
- Youth Worker

## Studying:

- Legal Practice Course (accounts for the majority that were studying)
- Bar Professional Training Course
- LLM
- ILEX fast track diploma
- PGCE (post compulsory education)
- MA in Human Resource Management

As we can see from the roles above, there are a wide range of jobs that you could realistically consider. Many of these link directly with law (eg Paralegal). For others, you would use the skills you've built through your degree rather than the specific legal knowledge you've gained, eg your commercial awareness, people skills and organisational skills would be useful as a Business Development Manager. For more ideas and options see the next section.

The information from University of Wolverhampton graduates is combined with information from other universities and published in the annual report 'What Do Graduates Do?' You can read it via the Higher Education Careers Service Unit at [www.hecsu.ac.uk](http://www.hecsu.ac.uk).

# Section 1 - Career Options and Choices:

## Options with Law

The options below list careers where having a law degree is particularly useful. It is not an exhaustive list, but may help you identify some roles that you may not have previously considered. Some of the roles listed require postgraduate study or further training. Some roles do not require an LLB, but can be a way to gain valuable experience.

To research any of these options more thoroughly and find out their entry requirements, see the next section: 'Researching your Options.'

### Legal Profession

**Solicitor** - provides expert legal support and advice to individuals or organisations on a broad range of matters.

**Barrister** – advocate on behalf of individuals or organisations in court and providing specialised advice in unusual scenarios.

**Paralegal** – assist solicitors in law firms. Duties may include: preparing legal documents, research, interviewing clients and witnesses, attending court, handling a caseload, providing legal information, typing, filing and other clerical tasks. This can be used as a pathway to becoming a solicitor.

**Legal Executive** – specialise in a particular area of law, performing similar tasks as solicitors. Must gain 5 years' qualifying employment (usually in a solicitors office) and ILEX (Institute of Legal Executives) qualifications. This can be used as a pathway to becoming a solicitor.

**Licensed Conveyancer** – specialist property lawyers who deal with the transaction of buying and selling property.

**Advocate** – engaged by solicitors to represent their clients in minor court proceedings. The role can include advocacy, negotiation and reporting to the instructing firm.

Read more about routes to becoming a solicitor or barrister in section 2.

### Legal administration

**Barristers' Clerks** - deal with the administration in chambers and organise the workload of the barristers working there.

**Court Administrative Officers** - help with the day-to-day running of the courts and their supporting offices.

**Court Reporters** – make verbatim records of court proceedings using shorthand. Also known as verbatim reporters or stenographers.

**Court Ushers** - make sure that everyone involved with a court case is in the right place and knows what they have to do during the hearing.

**Legal Cashiers** - work in solicitors' practices to keep financial records.

**Law Costs Draftsmen** - ensure a firm's clients are properly charged for legal services.

**Legal Secretaries** - provide administrative support for lawyers and help with the day-to-day tasks involved in running a legal firm.

**Outdoor Clerks** - work on a freelance basis for solicitors and assist in court related matters, eg: taking witness statements, legal research, translating and administration.

**Police Station Accredited Representatives** - employed by law firms undertaking publically funded criminal defence work. They are called in to provide advice to clients in police cells – often at unsocial hours.

## **Policy Development and Administration**

**Civil Service Administrators** - work within one of the 170 civil service departments contributing to political affairs and working closely with a team to ensure high quality services are delivered. Since the function of these departments varies greatly, so too will administration roles.

**Local Government Administrators** - organise and respond to the administrative needs of individual departments, assist in the development of policies and procedures, and help co-ordinate their implementation. They may also have responsibility for contracts, quality management and communications.

**Policy work in other organisations** - public bodies, think tanks, professional bodies, trade unions and charities are often involved in research and policy development. For example, Research Assistants at the Law Commission analyse the law to identify problems and develop solutions.

## **Law Enforcement**

**Bailiffs** - enforce court orders and take money or goods from people who owe debts.

**Credit Controllers** - recover unpaid money from businesses or individuals.

**Customs Officers** - collect a range of taxes and duties, control imported and exported goods, and prevent illegal items from entering or leaving the country. Often attend court as witnesses, and work closely with services and departments such as the Police and the Home Office.

**Environmental Health Officers** - develop, implement and enforce policies to protect public health, housing conditions, food safety, the environment and health and safety at work.

**Health and Safety Officers/ Inspectors** - work within a variety of industries to ensure that the company adheres to legislation by writing policies, conducting risk assessments and inspecting procedures.

**Immigration Officers** - examine documents and interview people to establish their eligibility for entry to the UK. Duties include casework, surveillance, forgery detection and evidence gathering.

**Police Officers** - work in partnership with the public to fight against crime. Priorities include: tackling antisocial behaviour, reducing theft, robbery and street-related crime, combating organised crime and terrorism, supporting victims and providing a reassuring community presence.

**Private Investigators** - carry out undercover enquiries for their clients including solicitors, insurance companies, councils, private companies and individuals. Enquiries could range from family divorce or adoption issues to supporting businesses experiencing internal shrinkage or theft.

**Trading Standards Officers** - protect consumers by promoting a safe and fair trading environment, advising on consumer law, investigating complaints and prosecuting traders.

**Trade Mark Attorneys** - are legal specialists who advise clients about registering and protecting trademarks.

## **Finance**

**Accountants** – a wide-ranging job which encompasses a variety of roles. It can include analysing complex information and applying logical arguments to provide advice to clients. There is a strong synergy between tax lawyers and tax accountants. Look at the recruitment webpages of one of the major accounting firms (Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG or PwC) for an idea of the range of careers opportunities.

**Bankers** - are responsible for establishing and maintaining positive customer relationships, planning and delivering effective sales strategies and monitoring the progress of new and existing financial products. Roles include investment, business and consumer banking.

**Insurance Claims Inspectors** - investigate insurance claims made by policy holders on behalf of insurance companies to determine the validity of claims and to establish who is liable. The role may also involve liaising with loss adjusters, solicitors and other legal/claims professionals

**Chartered Loss Adjusters** - work impartially on behalf of insurance companies to investigate that claims are genuine and not fraudulent. After investigation, they advise insurance companies how to proceed.

**Insurance Underwriters** - decide whether an applicant's request for insurance cover will be accepted or not and under which terms insurance will be granted. Liaise with legal professionals to draw up contracts.

**Pensions Advisers/ Scheme Managers** - Involves: defining the strategic development of pension schemes, overseeing day-to-day management of pension funds and providing advice to individuals/ companies.

**Tax Inspectors** - work for HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and make sure that businesses follow tax laws and pay the correct amount of tax.



## Social welfare and advice

**Advice Workers** - provide advice to the general public on issues, including: debt management, housing, immigration, employment, welfare and education. Employers may include: the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Law Centres, local authorities, trade unions, charities, professional bodies, colleges and universities.

**Guardians ad Litem** - work for Cafcas (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support), a public body promoting the welfare of children who are involved in legal proceedings (eg those involved in divorce proceedings or cases of abuse or neglect). Practitioners are usually qualified and experienced social workers.

**Family Mediators** - help divorcing or separating couples agree on arrangements for their children and finances without using the courts and are employed by publically funded family mediation services, a charity, a firm of solicitors or a private mediation company.

**Housing Managers/Officers** - manage housing and related services on behalf of housing associations, local authorities and other accommodation providers. Work with clients such as homeless people, minority groups or people with disabilities.

**Prison Officers** - work directly with prisoners, supervising and managing their activities. They promote pro-social behaviour, encourage prisoners to address their offending behaviour, ensure that all Prison Service rules are followed and contribute to an orderly and secure environment.

**Probation Officers** - assess the risk an offender poses to the community, reduces the risk of re-offending, ensures offenders carry out their punishment and helps offenders back into the community.

**Social Workers** - work with people who have been socially excluded or who are experiencing crisis, such as young people and families, young offenders, people with mental health problems, drug/alcohol users or the elderly.

**Welfare Rights Officers** - also known as welfare benefits advisers or advice workers, provide advice to the public about benefits and welfare entitlements.

## Employment

**Equalities Officers** - They make sure there is no discrimination regarding access to employment, education, training opportunities or services towards groups such as people with ethnic minority backgrounds, disabled people and women.

**Human Resources Officers** - deal with recruitment, induction, training, appraisals, job evaluation, complaints, dismissal, employment contracts, and employee benefits.

**Trade Union Officials** - work full-time for a trade union, representing the interests of union members in discussions with employers on issues such as health and safety, pay and redundancy.

## Teaching Law

**School Teacher** - Some schools teach A'Level or BTEC Law. Subjects such as Citizenship and PSHE also contain a large amount of law; you could also teach subjects such as politics, economics and sociology. When applying for secondary teacher training you need to choose a specialist subject. Law is not listed as a specialist subject, so choose a subject that closely relates, such as citizenship.

**Further Education Teacher** - Some colleges teach BTEC Law or short programmes such as 'Employment Law for Business.' Note that being accepted onto a teacher training course depends whether there are placements available for law trainee teachers with local colleges. Check with providers before applying.

**University Lecturer** - Generally, lecturers need at least a master's level qualification. Industry experience, prior teaching experience, a teaching qualification, a doctorate and publication of academic work may also be required.

## Section 2 – Researching Career Options and Making Choices

As you start figuring out a career direction it's likely that you will go through the following process:

- Analyse and identify skills, interests and motivations that will have a bearing on your career choice.
- Generate career ideas.
- Research your ideas to work out whether they would suit you and to find out entry requirements and levels of competition.
- Engage in self development activities to improve your employability.
- Apply for opportunities.

As you go through this process you may adapt your choices as you find out more about yourself and the work opportunities available. Below are some tips to help with your self analysis and career research.

### Self analysis and generating ideas

These interactive tools can provide an insight into your personality and skills:

- Prospects Career Planner provides career ideas based on how you answer questions about your skills, interests and motivations. [www.prospects.ac.uk/myprospects\\_planner\\_login.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/myprospects_planner_login.htm)
- The Skills Health Check on the National Careers Service site is similar: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>
- Prospects lists the skills you've develop through your degree at [www.prospects.ac.uk/options\\_with\\_your\\_subject.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/options_with_your_subject.htm)
- Windmills has a variety of online career development questionnaires and quizzes. [www.windmillsonline.co.uk/interactive/](http://www.windmillsonline.co.uk/interactive/)
- On the Keirsey site you can complete a personality assessment and receive a limited amount of feedback for free. [www.keirsey.com/](http://www.keirsey.com/)
- Also, you can see a Careers Adviser or attend one of the Careers Centre workshops or courses. See [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers)

## Researching your options

In the section 1 you saw some career options that link to law. For more options and for detailed information including the nature of the work, the qualifications needed and sources of vacancies, visit the sites below.

- [www.nationalcareersservice.org.uk](http://www.nationalcareersservice.org.uk) > browse job profiles (search 'legal services' and 'social services' in particular)
- [www.prospects.ac.uk/types\\_of\\_jobs.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm) (search: legal profession, social care and guidance, law enforcement, financial management and accountancy in particular)
- [www.lawcareers.net/](http://www.lawcareers.net/) (which provides information on both law and non-law related positions)
- <http://targetjobs.co.uk/law>
- <http://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk/>
- <http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/careers/> (see 'alternative careers')
- <http://icould.com/>
- [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers) > Careers Library Online. You may find the law, social science and politics pages particularly useful.
- Visit the Careers Centre in MD which provides free, take away magazines about careers in law.
- Visit the websites of legal recruitment firms, such as Totally Legal.
- Visit the websites of legal employers that you identify from your initial research.

As you are researching your options, ask yourself questions such as:

- What does the job involve? What would my typical day look like?
- What skills, qualities, interests and values would I need to be good at this job and happy in my work?
- What would the work environment be like?
- What are the entry requirements?
- How easy/ difficult is it to get in?
- When and how do I apply for these kinds of roles?
- How would my career progress in the future?

## Section 3 – Information about Popular Choices:

### Becoming a Solicitor

To become a solicitor you must typically complete:

- A qualifying law degree or a post-graduate law conversion course (Graduate Diploma in Law / Common Professional Examination)
- The Legal Practice Course (LPC)
- A training contract (normally over two years)

There are alternative routes to becoming a solicitor, although these are less common and are not a guaranteed route into the profession. More information can be provided on request.

N.B. There is a different process for becoming a solicitor in Scotland. If you are interested in becoming a solicitor in Scotland do ask for guidance.

#### Competition to become a solicitor

There are always many more aspiring trainee solicitors than training contracts, which makes entry into the profession extremely competitive. The Law Society's annual statistics report, published in May 2012 about the year 2010 - 11, stated that:

- There were 15,166 LPC places available in 2010 -11. 7,064 enrolled onto courses.
- In the year ending July 2011 there were 5,441 training contracts.

Read the report in full via the Law Society website. [www.lawsociety.org.uk/careers/becoming-a-solicitor/entry-trends/](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/careers/becoming-a-solicitor/entry-trends/)

This competition should not put you off pursuing your aim of becoming a solicitor; however you need to make sure that you give yourself the best chance of competing for these jobs. Read the rest of this leaflet to find out how.

#### The Legal Practice Course

The LPC is the vocational postgraduate course necessary to become a solicitor. You need to have completed a LLB or GDL to be accepted onto the course. Here are a few key facts:

- There are 2 stages. Stage 1 comprises: business law, property law, litigation & advocacy and core skills (writing, drafting, interviewing, advising, legal research, advocacy). Stage 2 is comprised of three elective modules, which differ according to provider.
- Search for and apply via Lawcabs for full-time courses. There is no official closing date, but courses can fill quickly so apply early (eg by the start of December for courses starting the following September). The form is available via [www.lawcabs.ac.uk](http://www.lawcabs.ac.uk) at the beginning of October.
- If you are interested in studying part-time (usually over two years) you apply directly to the institution running the course.

- Before starting the course you will need to be registered as a student member of the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA). Be sure to apply for membership as early as possible (at least three months before you intend to start the course). More information can be found at <http://www.sra.org.uk/enrol>.
- The cost is typically £9,000 - £12,500 full time and varies according to provider. Currently (Oct 2013) fees at the University of Wolverhampton are £9,010 full time for Home/EU students. Undergraduate UoW students are currently eligible for a 20% discount.
- Funding is limited - the Training Contract and Pupillages Handbook lists law firms which offer sponsorship. See the Junior Lawyers arm of the Law Society for other sources. <http://juniorlawyers.lawsociety.org.uk/funding-studies>

## **Training Contracts**

A training contract is a period of work in a legal setting where you complete training in at least three different legal areas (called seats). You work on both contentious and non-contentious projects and complete a professional skills course covering: financial and business skills, advocacy and communication, client care, professional standards and elective modules.

The training contract will usually last for two years, although this can sometimes be reduced by up to six months to reflect previous experience at the discretion of the training provider. At the end of the training contract you will be enrolled as a solicitor providing your employer is satisfied you are competent and you have successfully completed the professional skills course.

### **Which organisations offer training contracts?**

- Law firms of all sizes
- The Government Legal Service (GLS)
- Local Government
- The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- Law Centres
- In-house legal teams (often within commerce and industry)

## **Finding training contracts**

The method you use to find a training contract depends on the type of organisation you are interested in. Some search methods are listed below. You will then need to apply directly to companies as there is no central application system. The vast majority of training contracts are with private law firms.

### **Larger firms, The GLS and CPS**

See [www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net) and The Training Contracts and Pupillages Handbook (copies available in the Careers Centre).

## **In-house teams**

- The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) [www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/solicitors.page](http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/solicitors.page)
- The Commerce & Industry Group [www.cigroup.org.uk/](http://www.cigroup.org.uk/)
- Also check [lawcareers.net](http://lawcareers.net) and the Training Contracts and Pupillages Handbook.

## **Local Government**

There is no national list of training contracts. Check the following.

- [www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net)
- Law Society Gazette [www.lawgazette.co.uk/](http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/)
- Solicitors in Local Government [www.lawgazette.co.uk/](http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/)

The SRA also has a list of authorities with permission to recruit trainees.

## **High street firms**

These don't tend to advertise training contracts widely, but it's estimated that 2,000 exist. Often they recruit from their existing staff (eg those working as paralegals) or from those already known to the firm (eg those that have undertaken voluntary work experience). It is a good idea to check the website of these firms as they are unlikely to advertise nationally.

## **Law Centres**

The Legal Services Commission list those offering contracts (see [www.justice.gov.uk/legal-aid](http://www.justice.gov.uk/legal-aid)). However at the time of writing, funding has been cut so opportunities are limited.

## **When to apply for training contracts**

The largest and most prestigious law firms recruit 2 years in advance, which means LLB students should start applying for contracts in their penultimate degree year if they wish to start working as soon as possible following graduation and the LPC, without taking any time out. Applications normally close at the end of July, but this varies between firms.

A number of firms recruit via a vacation scheme held either in the spring or summer. These normally have an earlier application deadline, often towards the end of January.

Some smaller, regional firms tend to recruit over shorter periods, whereas high street firms often recruit when they have openings.

There is a list of training contract deadlines on [www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net).

## Choosing organisations to apply to

The type of work that you will undertake varies widely according to the organisation you work for. It is vital that you research organisations thoroughly so that you select those that suit your professional interests and personality, and so that you can compile carefully targeted applications. With so much competition, you need to investigate carefully what organisations look for and make sure your choices are realistic.

Learn more about types of organisations that employ solicitors at:

- [www.allaboutlaw.co.uk](http://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk) > types of law > solicitors > types of solicitors firms
- [www.lawcareers.net/Solicitors/TrainingContract](http://www.lawcareers.net/Solicitors/TrainingContract)
- <http://juniorlawyers.lawsociety.org.uk> > features > working in-house
- [www.lawcareers.net/Information/AlternativeCareers](http://www.lawcareers.net/Information/AlternativeCareers) (working in the CPS, GLS, in-house, Law Centres and Local Government)

Also, look at the organisations' own websites to understand the areas of practice in which they operate and how they view themselves.



## Section 3 – Information about Popular Choices:

### Becoming a Barrister

To become a barrister you must complete:

- A qualifying law degree or a post-graduate law conversion course (Graduate Diploma in Law or Common Professional Examination)
- The Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC)
- A Pupillage, leading to tenancy

#### Competition to become a Barrister

There are always many more BPTC students than pupillages available which makes entry into the profession extremely competitive. The Bar Council states that every year there are usually around:

- 2,500 applicants for the BPTC and 1,500 places
- 500 pupillages with slightly fewer tenancies

View the statistics via The Bar Standards Board. [www.barstandardsboard.org.uk](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk) > media centre > research and statistics

This competition should not put you off pursuing your aim of becoming a barrister; however you need to make sure that you give yourself the best chance of competing for these jobs. Read the rest of this leaflet to find out how.

#### The Bar Professional Training Course

This is the essential vocational training stage which lasts 1 year (or 2 years part time). Here are a few key facts:

- Apply for the first round via the central admission system run by the Bar Standards Board between early November and early January. Once you have submitted your application you cannot amend it. [www.barprofessionaltraining.org.uk](http://www.barprofessionaltraining.org.uk)
- You can choose three institutions for the first round and will be asked to give your reasons for choosing your institutions - so research each institution carefully.
- Institutions will see the order of preference in which you have placed their course, but not where else you have applied or your reasons for choosing those courses.
- There is also a clearing system for those who haven't been offered a place in the first round and for late applications.
- Fees are usually between £11,000 and £17,000. Funding is limited; see the [Bar Council](#) for details.
- You must pass the Bar Course Aptitude Test (BCAT) before your offer of a place can be confirmed. For more details and to access practice tests see [www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister)

- Before starting, you must join one of the four Inns of Court. These are professional associations which provide support and training.
- At the end of the BPTC, successful students are 'called to the bar' which is a ceremony held by the Inns of Court.
- Find out more about the content of a BPTC at
- Target Jobs <http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/law-barristers>
- The Bar Standards Board [www.barstandardsboard.org.uk](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk) (see qualifying as a barrister)

## **Pupillage**

Pupillages take place in chambers and lasts for one year. This is split into two six-month blocks, known as 'sixes'. In the first six you observe and receive mentoring from an experienced barrister; in the second six you take on your own caseloads. Here are a few facts:

- Search and apply to chambers that are part of the central admissions system via via [www.pupillageportal.com](http://www.pupillageportal.com).
- Apply direct to barristers' chambers that aren't part of the central system. A list of these can be found on the pupillage portal.
- They often recruit 1.5 years in advance, so start applying during your final LLB year if you want to start work as soon as possible after graduating.
- Submit your pupillage portal application for the first round between the end of March to end of April. Offers are made August to September. You can choose up to 12 chambers to apply to.
- You can also submit a clearing application by mid September. Chambers with vacancies begin looking at clearing pool applications in October.

## **Choosing pupillages**

The Training Contracts and Pupillages Handbook lists chambers with details of their specialist areas and numbers of pupillages.

Research opportunities for pupillage via [www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net)

Read the guidance on selecting chambers and applying at Target Jobs <http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/law-barristers> and The Bar Council [www.barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-barrister](http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-barrister)

Also, look at the Chambers' own websites to understand the areas of practice in which they operate and how they view themselves.

## Section 3 – Information about Popular Choices:

### Legal Administration

This section provides information about working in as a Paralegal and Legal Executive within a solicitors' firm.

#### Paralegal job duties

Job titles and job duties vary depending on the firm, for instance some paralegals offer simple case support whereas other may manage their own case loads of clients. You may find that what would be described as a paralegal role in one firm may be described as a legal secretary role in another.

Generally speaking the work includes: preparing legal documents, research, interviewing clients and witnesses, attending court, handling a caseload, providing legal information, typing, filing and other clerical tasks.

See the following information about job duties:

- <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk> > job profiles > legal services
- <http://juniorlawyers.lawsociety.org.uk> > features > 'paralegalling' and 'the rise of the paralegal'
- <http://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk> > undergraduates > types of lawyer > paralegal

#### Qualifications for Paralegal roles

This depends on the level of job in which you are applying. Employers may ask for:

- GCSEs or equivalent in English and Maths.
- Secretarial or ICT qualifications.
- A paralegal qualification from the Institute of Legal Executives, the National Association of Licensed Paralegals or the Institute of Paralegals.
- A legal secretary qualification at level 2 or 3 from the Institute of Legal Executives.
- A BTEC, HNC/D in law.
- A law degree or ILEX level 6 qualification.

If you do not have the qualifications expected this does not mean that you shouldn't apply. Check the job description and specification. If you can demonstrate that you have gained the majority of the skills and knowledge necessary through your LLB and/or past employment then it is worth applying.

## **Legal Executive job duties**

Increasingly the role and standing of legal executives and solicitors are becoming more and more similar and legal executives are recognised as qualified lawyers. They specialise in a particular area of law, and will have been trained to a similar standard as a solicitor in that area. They have their own clients, undertake representation in court and, due to recent legislation, can now become judges and partners in some law firms.

## **Qualifications needed for Legal Executives**

You must undertake [CILEX](#) (Chartered Institute of Legal Executives) qualifications and then undertake qualifying employment. Here are some details:

### **ILEX qualifications**

- These can be studied part time or via distance learning.
- Those with a qualifying law degree are exempt from some qualifications and study the Fast Track Diploma which takes 9 months part-time.
- The Fast Track Diploma costs around £2,400.

### **Qualifying employment**

- You need 3 years of qualifying employment (work in a legal setting).
- You could do this before, during or after your studies.
- You do not need to complete a pupillage or training contract.
- It is possible to qualify as a solicitor after having completed the CILEX qualification, however this is not a straightforward route. If you would like to know more please ask the Careers Service.

## Searching for Paralegal and Legal Executive positions

There are a number of websites which advertise these positions. As well as via firms directly and legal recruiters, you may also want to try the following:

- Law and More [www.lawandmore.co.uk](http://www.lawandmore.co.uk)
- Law Society Gazette [www.lawgazette.co.uk](http://www.lawgazette.co.uk)
- The Lawyer [www.thelawyer.com](http://www.thelawyer.com)
- Legal Executive Journal [www.cilex.org.uk](http://www.cilex.org.uk)
- Legal Executive Recruitment [www.cilexrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.cilexrecruitment.org.uk)
- Legal Week [www.legalweek.com](http://www.legalweek.com)
- Opportunities: The Public Sector Media <http://opportunities.co.uk>
- Solicitors in Local Government [www.slgov.org.uk](http://www.slgov.org.uk)
- Simply Law Jobs [www.slgov.org.uk](http://www.slgov.org.uk)
- Totally Legal [www.totallylegal.com](http://www.totallylegal.com)
- LawCareers.Net [www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net)
- The Law Gazette [www.lawgazette.co.uk](http://www.lawgazette.co.uk)
- Totally Legal [www.totallylegal.com](http://www.totallylegal.com)
- Legal Prospects [www.legalprospects.com](http://www.legalprospects.com)
- Civil Service Jobs <https://jobsstatic.civilservice.gov.uk/csjobs.html/>
- Local and national newspapers.
- The Workplace also sometimes advertises law jobs. See [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers) jobs and events
- Also see advice about job hunting at the bottom of the following article: [www.prospects.ac.uk/features\\_working\\_as\\_a\\_paralegal.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/features_working_as_a_paralegal.htm)

# Section 4 – Researching the Legal Sector:

## Information Sources

The following information resources are useful if you wish to work in the legal sector. Ensure you use them to thoroughly research the roles you are interested in, the organisations you want to work for and legal sector in general. This will ensure that you can identify the type of work that you are interested in, know what legal employers are looking for, help you make career choices and enable you to speak knowledgeably in applications and interviews.

### General information about careers in the legal sector

The following sites provide comprehensive information and advice about careers in the legal sector:

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

A comprehensive graduate careers website with a designated legal section including opportunities in the legal profession, university law fairs and information on all postgraduate courses.

[www.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk)

See the 'Junior Lawyers Community' for careers information relevant to law students, in particular information about funding your studies.

[www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net)

Search for: placement schemes in law firms, mini pupillages, training contracts, pupillages, postgraduate study courses and law careers fairs. Also contains a wealth of careers information for law and an interactive system to enable you to keep track of your applications.

[www.allaboutlaw.co.uk](http://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk)

Contains a wealth of information about roles in law, areas of law, revision tips, applications and interviews.

[www.leadinglawyers.org.uk](http://www.leadinglawyers.org.uk)

Run by a panel of trainee solicitors, Leading Lawyers offers online mentoring for students going the process of applying for training contracts. Applicants are expected to pay a £25 donation.

Information on large law firms and training contracts. Lists barristers' chambers. Also contains useful careers articles such as 'Trends affecting the recruitment market.'

[www.legaeducation.org.uk](http://www.legaeducation.org.uk)

Information on training as a barrister.

[www.ilex.org.uk](http://www.ilex.org.uk)

Vacancies and information on qualifying as a Legal Executive.

[www.ilfm.org.uk](http://www.ilfm.org.uk)

The Institute of Legal Finance and Management is the professional body for finance and administrative staff working in the legal sector.

[www.alcd.org.uk](http://www.alcd.org.uk)

The Association of Costs Lawyers is the professional body for Law Costs Draftsmen.

## **Online directories of law firms and chambers**

Use these to find specific firms you'd like to work for.

[www.hq.org](http://www.hq.org)

Online directory of law firms throughout the world. Search by country or by practise area.

[www.chambersandpartners.com](http://www.chambersandpartners.com)

Directory of law firms and individual lawyers. They publish separate directories for the UK and for other parts of the world (eg Latin America and Hong Kong).

[www.solicitors-online.com](http://www.solicitors-online.com)

Official Law Society directory of solicitors' firms. Includes details of the type of work that all firms specialise in, the number of staff, solicitors and partners as well as office locations.

[www.legal500.com](http://www.legal500.com)

Information on the Legal 500 large UK law firms and lawyers worldwide.

[www.barcouncil.org.uk](http://www.barcouncil.org.uk)

Access to the Bar Council Directory online with details of different Chambers. Also contains background about the profession and advice on how to join it.

## **Online law magazines**

[www.lawgazette.co.uk](http://www.lawgazette.co.uk)

Official Law Society newspaper with vacancy section.

[www.thelawyer.com](http://www.thelawyer.com)

Online legal newspaper with latest developments and news in the sector, including a vacancy section.

## Further support

[www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

Information for students and graduates with disabilities.

[www.gsdnet.org.uk](http://www.gsdnet.org.uk)

Support for solicitors with disabilities. Although the group no longer seems active, there is useful information on the site.

[www.blacksolicitorsnetwork.co.uk](http://www.blacksolicitorsnetwork.co.uk)

Support for black solicitors.

[www.societyofasianlawyers.org](http://www.societyofasianlawyers.org)

Support for Asian solicitors.

## Magazines available in the Careers Centre (MD corridor)

\* Indicates we have take away copies of this publication (while stocks are available)

**Prospects Law\*** (published annually), Graduate Prospects

Information on training contracts, pupillages and law courses

**Targetjobs Law** (published annually), GTI Specialist Publishers

General information on the legal profession, training contracts and pupillages with special supplements on law courses and work experience.

**The Training Contract and Pupillage Handbook\*** (published annually), Globe Business Publishing Ltd

Information on training contracts, pupillages, courses and work of the Junior Lawyers Division.

**The Lex 100\*, Legalease**

A directory of leading law firms with information on training contracts.

**LawCareers.Net A Special guide to Best in Law\***, Globe Business Publishing Ltd

Publishes results of a survey of trainees and newly-qualified solicitors on how they felt their firms had performed in training and recruitment.

**A Beginners Guide to a Career in Law, LawCareers.net**

A short guide aimed at 1st years or those beginning to find out about careers in law. Covers the career paths of solicitors and barristers.

**Law Society Gazette**

Official Law Society newspaper with latest news and developments, including a vacancy section.



# Section 4 – Researching the Legal Sector:

## What to Research

### Information Sources

The organisation(s) you are interested in working for:

- What are their key business areas? Which areas of law do they specialise in?
- How is it funded or how do they make their money?
- How big are they? What is their structure? Where does the role you are interested in fit in this structure? How many people do they employ/ recruit
- What is their mission and what are their goals?
- What are their values? What is important to them?
- What challenges do they face?
- What is the organisation's place in the sector? Who are their competitors?
- How does the organisation market itself?
- What skills, knowledge and experience do they expect you to have?
- How do you apply to them and when?

Role(s) you are interested in:

- What would you be doing in this job?
- What is the typical route into this job?
- What skills, qualifications, qualities and experience are required?
- How much competition is there?
- What are the benefits; what are the drawbacks?
- How might this job progress?
- Does the salary meet your expectations

The legal sector:

- How has the legal sector developed? What is its future?
- What are the key trends in the legal sector?
- What challenges does the sector face (eg funding and financial issues)
- What are the professional bodies that offer support to practitioners and students in the law sector?

# Section 5 - Improving your Employability:

## What employers look for

Due to the intellectual rigour of the profession, academic success is a prerequisite. Studying law at university will give you a sound basis, but this won't make you stand out from the other hundreds of applicants. It is vital that you research the legal sector to gain a full appreciation of what employers want and proactively seek ways to develop yourself further.

Employers look for people with the right combination of:

- Qualifications
- Experience
- Skills and personal qualities
- Values that match theirs
- Knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, the organisation, job and sector

Skills that law employers commonly look for are listed in this section.

### Skills for law

It is not enough to be able to list the skills that employers look for. When you start applying for postgraduate training and/or vacancies you will need to provide in-depth examples of these and times when you used them as well as critically analysing your own abilities. Here are some common skills legal employers ask for, broken down into component parts to help you with your analysis:

#### Communication Skills

- Speaking and writing clearly and accurately.
- Explaining complex information to others.
- Adapting your communication to suit others, eg adapting language when dealing with non-lawyers.
- Communicating by different methods: eg phone, email, letter.
- Actively listening to others.
- Paraphrasing and questioning to check your own understanding.
- Presenting to a group.

#### Client Care

- Actively listening to clients.
- Understanding clients' aims and tailoring advice to this.
- Remaining objective.
- Being sensitive to your client's individual needs.
- Regularly contacting the client to update on progress.
- Managing a case load of clients effectively.
- Escalating issues to senior staff when necessary.

## **Interviewing and Advising**

- Questioning to clarify the client's issue and goal. Asking different types of questions as appropriate (probing, leading, open or closed)
- Negotiating and agreeing the purpose of the meeting and how you will work with the other person to resolve the issues to be addressed.
- Gathering information surrounding the issue.
- Identifying key legal and factual issues underpinning the issue.
- Providing accurate information using reputable sources.
- Identifying options to progress towards a solution.
- Agreeing a course of action and taking instructions from the client.
- Making accurate records of the meeting.

## **Advocacy**

- Clarifying the issue that the client is facing.
- Identifying scenarios where advocacy may be appropriate.
- Presenting the client's view, story or problem accurately.
- Negotiating in the interests of the client.

## **Negotiation**

- Identifying the parameters within which the negotiation can take place.
- Clarifying the position of each party.
- Understanding other people's perspectives.
- Finding areas of commonality.
- Identifying areas which can and cannot be compromised upon.
- Reaching an agreement.

## **People and networking skills**

- Building a rapport with people.
- Building a list of contacts and following up on them.
- Promoting the organisation you work for to others.
- Treating others with respect.

## **Analytical skills**

- Examining and comprehending large amounts of complex information.
- Synthesising information by organising data into categories.
- Separating the important points from the trivial.
- Working out implications arising from facts.
- Generating logical conclusions based on the data.

## **Drafting**

- Producing clear and precise documents that achieve their purpose and meet client needs.
- Demonstrate a high standard of English language: spelling and grammar need to be accurate.
- Using legal terminology correctly and at the right level for the purpose of the document and intended target.

## **Legal Writing**

- Dealing with complicated legal issues in an accurate manner.
- Writing concisely and clearly.
- Covering all of the issues relevant to the client.
- Demonstrate a high standard of English language: spelling and grammar need to be accurate.

## **Legal Research**

- Using hard copy and digital research tools and sources to investigate factual and legal issues.
- Finding practical solutions to the issue you are investigating.
- Communicating the results of your research in a clear and concise manner.

## **Organisation**

- Managing several activities or cases at the same time.
- Meeting deadlines.
- Planning a schedule to manage your own workload.
- Ensuring that you complete all tasks in a methodical, step by step way.

## **Commercial awareness/ commercial acumen**

- Spotting opportunities to save or make money.
- Improving efficiency.
- Keeping abreast of business trends in your sector and clients' sectors.
- Solving a business need.
- Developing knowledge of the commercial environment in which your clients work in and the challenges they face
- Identifying what clients want and meeting their needs within the legal parameters.

## **Commitment to professional development**

- Identifying skills/ knowledge gaps.
- Identifying and arranging opportunities for your own development.
- Staying abreast of changes in your field/ organisation/ job.

## **Integrity and honesty**

- Looking after your client's interests generally even when it is uncomfortable or to your disadvantage.
- Disclosing when you've made an error so it can be corrected.
- Admitting when you do not understand something.
- Acting to a high standard of behaviour, conduct, probity, competency, client care and general ethics.

For more information see:

- [www.lawcareers.net/Information/Features/13072010-The-hard-task-of-developing-soft-skills](http://www.lawcareers.net/Information/Features/13072010-The-hard-task-of-developing-soft-skills)
- <http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/careers/becoming-a-solicitor/career-options/>
- <http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/law-solicitors/291163-commercial-awareness-and-how-to-achieve-it-by-trainee-solicitors-and-law-recruiters>

# Section 5 - Improving your Employability:

## Gaining work experience

Below are some suggestions about how to gain work experience relevant to law, both to give you an insight to the profession and to enhance your CV.

### Opportunities via the University of Wolverhampton

**Legal Advice Centre** – This is run by law students and provides free legal advice for the local community. It gives students the opportunity to gain valuable experience of advising clients on legal issues under the supervision of academic staff, some of whom are qualified solicitors or barristers. Local law firms also support the centre.

Read more about the Legal Advice Centre at [www.wlv.ac.uk/lssc](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/lssc) > law.

**The Bar and Mooting Society** - Organises activities to help you develop your advocacy, research, presenting and debating skills. Also arranges trips to places relevant to your law career, such as the Inns of Court and successfully takes part in a number of national competitions. See [www.wolvesunion.org](http://www.wolvesunion.org)

**Active Volunteers** - offers voluntary experience in charitable organisations such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau, local advocacy centres, young offenders institutions and the Witness Service. See [www.wlv.ac.uk/activevol](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/activevol) for details.

**More options** – See [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers) > employability for details of placement schemes, exchange programmes, business start-up support and more.

### Placement schemes

**Formal schemes in law firms** - Many law firms, including international, city, national and some regional firms operate formal placements schemes (often known as vacation schemes). These tend to take place during the summer vacation and sometimes in spring. These schemes operate both as an opportunity for you to experience the work of a solicitor and also for the firms to consider your suitability as a future employee.

Schemes are listed online at [www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net) (select 'solicitor' then 'vacation scheme deadlines') or via The Training Contract and Pupillage Handbook.

Deadlines are usually the end of January, but apply early.

Some vacation schemes are aimed at ethnic minority students. See [www.seo-london.com/](http://www.seo-london.com/)

## Apply speculatively to law firms

Many regional and high street firms do not run formal placement schemes, but may offer work experience or work shadowing to those who contact them speculatively.

For guidance about speculative applications see [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers) > job seeking skills > speculative applications.

Search for firms via:

- The Law Society website [www.lawsociety.org.uk/home.law](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/home.law) (select 'for the public > find a solicitor').
- Lawcareers.net (select 'solicitors > training contract search' for details of firms recruiting trainee solicitors that may offer work experience).
- [www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk/](http://www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk/) (select 'find a legal adviser') for solicitor firms and voluntary organisations offering legal aid.
- Standard business directories such as the Yellow Pages [www.yell.com](http://www.yell.com)

## Mini Pupillages

During a mini pupillage you would visit a Barristers' Chambers, usually for 2 days to a week. A mini pupillage may involve court visits, attending client meetings, reading papers, discussing cases and generally shadowing a Barrister. Some chambers may only take people who wish to apply for a full pupillage and part of the mini pupillage may involve assessment activities. Many chambers will only offer formal mini pupillage to those in their final law degree year or on the GDL.

There is a list of chambers that offer mini pupillages in the Training Contract & Pupillage Handbook. Alternatively visit [www.lawcareers.net/Barristers](http://www.lawcareers.net/Barristers)

## Volunteer for organisations offering free legal advice

Some organisations and charities offer legal advice to those who can not afford solicitors' fees. Although some employ qualified legal professionals, they also require teams of volunteers with legal knowledge. In addition to the Legal Advice Centre at the University of Wolverhampton see:

**The Citizens' Advice Bureau** - [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/)

**Law Centres** - the most local are Derby and Coventry. Search for centres via [www.lawcentres.org.uk](http://www.lawcentres.org.uk)

**Advice Centres** - Advice UK lists organisations which offer advice in a wide range of areas including legal advice. [www.adviceuk.org.uk/](http://www.adviceuk.org.uk/) (select 'for the public' for a directory).

**Immigration Advisory Committee** - This charity provides representation and advice in immigration and asylum law. They have offices throughout the UK, including Birmingham. [www.iasuk.org](http://www.iasuk.org)

**The Solicitors Pro Bono Group** - provides information and support to all parties involved in pro bono work. The website offers work experience suggestions for law students and graduates. See [www.lawworks.org.uk](http://www.lawworks.org.uk)

**Volunteering as 'An Appropriate Adult'** - for young offenders who have been arrested and who are being held at a police station. See [www.appropriateadult.org.uk/](http://www.appropriateadult.org.uk/)

**The Free Representation Unit in London** - provides legal advice, case preparation and advocacy in tribunal cases for those who could not otherwise obtain legal support [www.thefru.org.uk](http://www.thefru.org.uk)

**More volunteering opportunities** - You can also find out about a wide range of volunteering opportunities through [www.wlv.ac.uk/activevol](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/activevol) or [www.do.it.org.uk](http://www.do.it.org.uk).

## **Organisations to apply to speculatively**

You could consider seeking part-time or vacation work with a number of employers connected to the legal profession, including the following:

**The Criminal Case Review Commission** - an independent public body that investigates miscarriages of justice and assesses whether sentences or convictions should be referred to a court of appeal. Their main office is in Birmingham and opportunities may potentially exist for case workers and for administrative work. [www.justice.gov.uk/about/criminal-cases-review-commission](http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/criminal-cases-review-commission)

**CPS Crown Prosecution Service** - Government department responsible for preparing cases before they are brought to trial in the Crown Court or Magistrates Court. As well as Crown Prosecutors and Advocates, the CPS employs case workers, administrators and professionals do deal with witness care. [www.cps.gov.uk/](http://www.cps.gov.uk/)

**Legal Services Commission** - looks after the legal aid scheme and has an office in Birmingham. The regional offices manage the contractual arrangements with solicitors and not for profit agencies to enable them to provide legal aid. [www.legalservices.gov.uk/](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/)

**The Insolvency Service** - Government department that performs a number of key functions including: regulating the insolvency profession, investigating personal and corporate insolvencies and advising the government of law reform. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/insolvency>

**In-house legal teams in Local Authorities** - Search local council websites for details of their in house legal teams.

**Courts** - see <http://hmctscourtfinder.justice.gov.uk/HMCTS/> for contact details of local courts.

**Law Society** - [www.lawsociety.org.uk/home.law](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/home.law)

**The Independent** - Custody Visiting Association relies on volunteers to check on the standards on which people are kept who are in custody. See [www.icva.org.uk](http://www.icva.org.uk)

## More important ways to improve your prospects

As a Solicitor or Barrister you would need the intellectual dexterity to comprehend, analyse and remember huge amounts of complex information. This is why many law firms (especially commercial firms with a high number of applicants) look for candidates with an impeccable academic record.

However, it is equally important to develop the skills you'd use on a daily basis in a legal role including: writing, drafting, interviewing, advising, legal research and advocacy. It is also crucial to develop interpersonal skills, a proactive attitude and commercial awareness so that you can deal with complex caseloads and a diverse range of clients.

Your academic studies and work experience will help you develop these skills. You should also take every other opportunity to practise, learn and develop your skills and knowledge of the legal sector. For example:

- Attend careers events organised by the University throughout the academic year, including the Law Careers Fair. Join the Careers topic of WOLF for more information.
- Join debating and mooting societies
- Visit different courts and tribunals, observing different types of hearing.
- Join professional organisations like the junior lawyers branch of the Law Society or the Birmingham Trainee Solicitors group.
- Take part in law or business simulation events run by legal firms.
- Attend law career fairs and events run by professional organisations such as the Law Society to meet employers [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) > careers advice > career fairs.
- Keep abreast of current affairs, for example by reading the Financial Times or trade press.
- Gain work experience in non-legal fields which will develop core skills such as communication and client service.
- If you are interested in advocacy, consider acting and amateur dramatics to enhance key non-legal skills.

Sign up for our careers news blog which keeps you up to date with events, news and competitions of interest via [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers) > follow us.



# Section 6 - Applying for jobs and work experience:

## CVs

Your CV should demonstrate your self-awareness, articulate your career aims, and market your skills, experiences and knowledge. Target your CV individually to each application and update it continually throughout your career.

### Top tips

- Be concise; employers typically spend less than a minute looking at your CV.
- A graduate CV should normally be 2 single-sided pages of A4 – avoid printing it double-sided.
- Use good quality white paper and a single, business-like font (eg Arial).
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation are of great importance; mistakes show carelessness, a lack of motivation and make you look unprofessional. Don't rely solely on a spellchecker on your PC.
- Layout should be neat, organised and consistent, with clear bold headings. Use bullet points to list information about what your jobs/courses involve and to demonstrate your skills profile. Start the points with active verbs where possible. It is easier and quicker for employers to assimilate the main information about you in this form than in paragraphs.
- Be selective and highlight your best qualities relevant to the job you are applying for.
- Send with a covering letter on the same paper and in the same font.

**Although there is no standard format for a CV, there are some elements which are usually included:**

- Name - use the name you would expect the employer to call you (ie no need for middle name) as the title of your CV.
- Personal details – address, landline and mobile phone number, email address. Use a business-like email address. No need for age, marital status or gender (unless your gender is not clear from your name).
- Career aim – it is useful to write a brief statement of your career aim and brief summary of related qualifications, experience and skills (3 or 4 lines only). Avoid long 'Personal Statements' that claim lots of exemplary characteristics without any evidence.
- Education – most recent first, with more detail on the most recent. Give some detail about your degree, not just its name, eg three or four of the most relevant modules (especially any electives relevant to the job you are applying for), special areas of study, skills you've developed.
- Legal work experience – give details of any previous legal work experience, giving the name of the provider, what you did, for how long and the skills you learned.
- Employment – most recent first. List skills you demonstrated in each job (especially skills that are relevant to the job you are applying for). Include unpaid work.
- Skills and achievements – include activities and experiences that are relevant to an employer because they demonstrate your skills, qualities and interests. These can be gained through education, employment and interests. Employers will be keen to see what you have done outside of education and employment. Match your skills to skills employers want. If you are not sure whether to include something or not, ask yourself why it might be relevant to an employer. If you can't think of a reason, leave it out.

- References – give names and contact details of two people, preferably a tutor and an employer. Make sure you ask their permission first and keep in touch with your referees about the applications you are making so that they can provide prompt and relevant references.

Avoid simply listing (in any section) skills or qualities without giving any evidence for your claims.

# Section 6 - Applying for jobs and work experience:

## Application Forms

An application form is often the first way in which you make contact with an employer or course tutor. Every form you complete must be accurate, well presented and targeted to the particular vacancy or course.

Many employers, especially large organisations, ask for an application form rather than a CV when they advertise vacancies. Most application forms combine fairly rigidly structured boxes where you fill in your personal information (sometimes called biodata) and factual details of your employment/ education, with more flexible spaces with much more open questions where you can be more selective about the skills and experiences you include.

### Top tips

- Use your up-to-date CV to remind you of the facts you want to focus on.
- Always follow instructions and read questions carefully.
- Check spelling, grammar and punctuation thoroughly; mistakes indicate a careless attitude, poor communication skills and lack of commitment – not likely to impress an employer!
- Use positive and assertive language.
- Many applications are online; this does not mean they should be completed less formally. Make a note of the questions and prepare your responses off-line first.
- Photocopy printed forms and complete in rough first.
- For open questions asking you to give evidence of competences draw examples from education, employment and other experiences and ensure that your answers highlight the skills and qualities you used in the situation described. Don't just tell a story!
- You normally have chance to write a personal statement of why you want the job (this job, not just any job!) and why you are suitable. Show that you have researched the job and the company, ensure you cover the skills asked for in the job description and demonstrate that you have a clear career plan.
- Always keep a copy of your form – this will be invaluable when preparing for any subsequent interview.
- Avoid submitting your application on the last day – try to be organised and submit a few days early.

# Section 6 - Applying for jobs and work experience:

## Interviews

Interviews can take many forms – one-to-one, panel, assessment centres and telephone, but the basic rules are the same for all. Almost everyone is nervous about interviews, but careful preparation can help you feel more confident and in control.

### Top tips

- Find out as much as you can about the interview format and what you will be expected to do. If it doesn't say in the invitation letter, ring and ask.
- Plan your journey well in advance and allow plenty of time.
- Personal presentation is very important; you can't be too smart. Avoid too much jewellery, perfume or make-up. For some employers you can check pictures in recruitment literature to see what their ideal employees look like or alternatively look at current staff profiles.
- Recent research has suggested that visible tattoos are viewed negatively by some employers. Consider keeping any tattoos covered in an interview.
- Don't take too much with you; remember you will be shaking hands which can be awkward if you're carrying several things. Put necessary documents such as your CV and interview letter in a neat (not necessarily expensive!) folder/briefcase and take only essential items in your handbag/suit pocket.
- Practise talking about your skills and qualities, giving examples in evidence.
- Be clear about how this job fits into your career plan.
- Research the organisation, sector and the job itself.
- Prepare questions to ask that will make you look keen and committed (ie not about holidays, money or perks).
- Don't ask questions you should know from published literature – ask questions that show you've read this and listened to briefings on the day.
- Don't feel you need to rush into giving an answer – take a moment to give a considered response if necessary.
- Switch off your mobile phone.
- Smile!

## Sample questions for law interviews

### Questions about you and your strengths/ weaknesses

- Why do you want to be a solicitor/ barrister?
- Why have you applied for this role?
- What skills and qualities could you contribute to this firm?
- All our work is done in teams. Are you a leader or a follower?
- What makes you different from other candidates?
- How would your best friend describe you?
- What are your 3 best or worst qualities?
- Describe a challenge you have faced. Why was it a challenge and how did you overcome it?
- What is your proudest achievement? Why?
- How did you become particularly interested in family law?
- What do you do in your spare time?

### Motivation and ambitions

- Why law?
- Why a solicitor and not a barrister?
- What area of law do you want to practise in and why?
- What do you hope to gain from training at this firm?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

### Competencies

You may be asked to give examples of a time when you've demonstrated any of the transferable skills needed to work as a solicitor or barrister. Skills can include:

- Communication skills
- Negotiation skills
- Persuasion skills
- Advocacy skills
- Interviewing and advising
- Presentation skills
- Leadership skills
- Team work skills
- Networking skills
- Client handling skills
- Customer care skills
- Problem solving skills
- Creative skills
- Organisational skills
- Time management skills
- Ability to meet targets
- Project management skills
- Attention to detail
- Business or commercial awareness
- Ability to work using your own initiative

- Writing, drafting and research

Also ensure that you can define the above skills and you know how you will use them in the role you're being interviewed for – ie 'what is your understanding of team work? Why is being a team player important as a trainee?'

### **The firm and the role**

- Why do you think you'd be suited to this firm?
- Why this firm? Your previous work experience was with a high street criminal law firm, so why do you want to work in commercial law?
- You say that you know this firm well – who is our biggest client?
- Do you know who our major competitors are? What differentiates us from them?
- Tell us about one of the deals our firm has been involved in.
- What are the biggest challenges facing barristers/ law firms like ours at the moment?
- What kind of work do you think a trainee does?
- What makes a good or bad lawyer? How can you prove you have these qualities?

### **Education**

- What have you found most interesting in your studies?
- What have you found most difficult?
- Why have you applied to study the LPC/BPTC at --- law school?
- Questions about modules where you performed badly, eg why is your contract law exam mark lower than the rest of your marks?

### **Work experience**

- Tell me about your last legal placement
- Tell us about one of your moots
- What have you learnt from work experience?
- What is your best achievement at work?
- What is the best and worst thing about your present/recent job?

## **Current affairs**

- Describe something you've read about in the press recently. Tell us about it. Why did it interest you?
- How do you keep up with current affairs?
- What do you think is the most serious issue this country faces? Why? What could be done about it?

## **Technical questions**

Prepare to talk about the area of law you'd be specialising in (eg for commercial law be prepared to talk about M&A, IPO, recent commercial transactions – ie 'How is a merger/acquisition structured?')

## **Scenario questions**

- A client calls you and demands to speak to your supervisor. Your supervisor is out of the office and tells you he cannot take calls all day. What do you do?
- A document arrives in your inbox. It is clearly sent in error and not intended for your eyes. It contains all the arguments the other side intend to use and will help your side win the case. What do you do?
- How would you go about enforcing a contract that you were party to?

## **Questions to test your opinion/ judgement and ability to cope under pressure**

- You've just won £10 million – how would you invest your money?
- Imagine I am an alien who has just arrived on planet earth. How would you explain the stock market to me in terms I can understand?
- Should we abolish the monarchy in this country?
- Is the current 28-day limit for detention without charge in terrorism cases sufficiently long?
- Should defendants in criminal cases have the right to know the identity of witnesses giving evidence against them?
- If you were senior partner in this firm and the BNP came to you for representation what would you do?
- If a Client wanted to pay £750,000 for a house in CASH what would you do?
- What advice would you give to a friend who wants to set up a restaurant?
- If you were a biscuit, what kind would you be and why?

# Section 6 - Applying for jobs and work experience:

## Assessment Centres

An employer may invite you to an assessment centre where they will test out your skills, aptitude and potential. It is important to know what sort of activities you are likely to encounter so that you can practise and prepare.

Assessment centres are mainly used by large employers who are recruiting several graduates, and last for a whole day or sometimes two days. Normally assessment centres are used to shortlist for the next stage of interviews.

### Typical activities

- Information session on the firm or company – you may need to use information from this in the other selection activities
- Psychometric and aptitude tests
- In-tray exercise – a simulation where you are given various messages, reports, memos, etc, which you have to prioritise and decide how to deal with in a set time
- Presentation – a short talk to the other candidates and/or selectors
- Group exercise – a discussion or practical task designed to test how you interact with other people in a team. Examples are provided in our assessment centre exercises booklet.
- Case study – simulation where you analyse information and write a brief report
- Interview
- Social events, such as meals with the selectors and other candidates – beware, this is still part of the assessment!

### Top tips

- Throughout every exercise, employers will be assessing your skills. Ensure you know what skills they are looking for and the behaviour you'd be displaying if you were using that skill.
- Cultivate a calm state of mind, before and during the assessment centre so that you can fully concentrate on the tasks you have been given.
- Do not allow other candidates to psych you out: the recruiters wouldn't have selected you to attend if they didn't think you had potential.
- Be aware of time passing: assessment centre exercises have strict deadlines and you will be assessed on your time management skills.
- Remain professional during social events. Choose food that isn't difficult to eat and limit alcoholic drinks.
- Do not dominate conversations: employers are assessing your team work skills and looking for candidates who can listen and support others as well as put forward their own ideas.
- During problem solving activities take time to work out how you will approach the task rather than diving straight in.



- Include quieter members of the group during group activities. This shows that you are aware of group dynamics and sensitive to the others.
- Participate fully in group work by giving your thoughts, suggestions and ideas - recruiters are not mind readers and can only give you points for what you actually say.
- Attend Assessment Centre workshops run by the Careers Centre. These happen every term and allow you to practise typical activities.

# Section 6 - Applying for jobs and work experience:

## Psychometric Tests

Employers use psychometric tests to check you have the ability and personal qualities necessary to do a job. Practising the kinds of test you are likely to face is the best way to increase your confidence and to improve your performance.

There are two main types of psychometric tests. Aptitude tests measure your ability in areas such as literacy, numeracy and diagrammatic reasoning whereas personality assessments analyse how well you would fit with the organisation and role. Some personality tests can help you to identify your skills, interests and values, which can help when making career decisions.

The BCAT (Bar Course Aptitude Test) is a psychometric test that you need to pass if you apply for the BPTC (Bar Professional Training Course).

### Top tips

Always follow instructions carefully.

- In aptitude tests accuracy is more important than speed – most people don't answer all questions in the time allowed. Practising tests can give you more confidence and help you use the limited time you have better.
- Before a numeracy test refresh your memory of basic maths, eg percentages, interpreting graphs, calculations by looking at a GCSE revision book.
- There are no right answers in personality tests, be truthful or the feedback will be meaningless.
- Attend a Careers Centre workshop on psychometric test. These take place every term and will give you a chance to practise some sample tests and to discuss text technique.
- See the Careers Centre guide to psychometric testing for more information and sample questions. See [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers) > online publications.

### Free practice tests

- [www.talentlens.co.uk/BCAT](http://www.talentlens.co.uk/BCAT) - Talent Lens administers the BCAT. Here you can complete a free practice test which covers the 5 main areas of the BCAT: inference, assumptions, deductions, interpretation, evaluation of arguments.
- [www.shldirect.com/en/](http://www.shldirect.com/en/) -.Saville and Holdsworth provides practice verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning, inductive reasoning, personality and motivational questionnaires.
- [www.morrisby.com/](http://www.morrisby.com/) -.Morrisby Organisation gives advice on taking psychometric tests, sample questions and links to other tests on the web.
- [www.psychometric-success.com/](http://www.psychometric-success.com/).- Psychometric Success provides 16 free downloadable aptitude tests in numeracy, literacy, abstract reasoning and special, technical and clerical ability.
- <http://practicetests.cubiks.com/> -.Cubiks provides free verbal and numerical practice tests with instant feedback. Also provides a diagrammatical reasoning practice leaflet.

## Section 7 - Further Help

The Careers Centre provides support on: options, choosing careers, work experience opportunities, job seeking, applications and CVs, interviews and assessment centers. We offer:

- One to one appointments – these are available Mon – Fri, 11 – 4 in the Careers Centre, MD corridor. Ring 01902 321414 to book an appointment for the same day or pop in.
- Career Lab – this is our termly programme of 1 hour, lunchtime careers workshops. Book via [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers) > jobs and events
- Courses – we run longer courses, such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Enterprise and Employability and a range of 3 day summer courses. See [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers).
- The Wolverhampton Employability Award – this is an extra certificate that you can gain to accredit your work experience and career development activities.
- Take away careers magazines in the Careers Centre and careers information via [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers)
- Vacancies for students and graduates in a wide range of sectors. See [www.wlv.ac.uk/careers](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/careers) > jobs and work.
- Work Your Brand – an interactive course enabling you to evaluate and improve the first impression you make with employers.
- Volunteering opportunities. See [www.wlv.ac.uk/activevol](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/activevol).
- The SPEED Project which provides support to set up a business. See <http://www.speed-plus.org/>.