



Learning in England ∞ Training to be a lawyer

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In England you may be a **Solicitor** – overseen by the Law Society. You have direct relationship with clients who may be individuals or businesses, companies or charities. The work is divided into categories such as property, family [divorce], wills and trusts, commercial, company, employment, criminal etc. While you can be a **sole practitioner** it is much more common to work in a **partnership or firm** / or as an **in-house lawyer for a large business**.

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/after-gcses/find-career-ideas/explore-jobs/job-profile/Solicitor>

You may prefer to be a **Barrister** – overseen by the Bar Council. Your client is the Solicitor. You work from **Chambers** – a group of offices like a partnership where the Barristers will all specialise.

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/after-gcses/find-career-ideas/explore-jobs/job-profile/Barrister>.

In civil cases you will be dealing mainly with contentious issues, resolving problems, mediating and negotiating deals. If you are unsuccessful in settling, you must go to court, then the Barrister acts for the Solicitor's client. In criminal cases prosecutions are normally brought by the Crown Prosecution Service. Barristers may act for the prosecution or the defence.

“My first degree was in International Politics. So, my first step on the ladder to becoming a Solicitor was to go to the University of Law for a year to undertake the Common Professional Examination and then a second year to do the Legal Practice Course. Though I was applying for a training contract through my time at the University of Law, I was not successful until after graduation. I will be joining a City practice in September 2021, in two years’



time. It is very exciting as it has a very good reputation and I will be trained in those fields in which I want to practise.

You may ask, “what will you do in the two years before you start your training contract?” In the summer vacations for the last three years I have worked at a local NHS Trust, in administration. I have developed very useful soft skills. I asked if I might be able to have a permanent contract and the Trust has agreed to take me on for two years. I will be doing contract work which will be very useful for my training as a Solicitor, and I am paid very well!”¹

As it happens both men and women are in both parts of the profession, in equal numbers. We suspect that it may be easier for a woman to be a Solicitor, as she can more easily take breaks to have children, without them disrupting her career path. A female Barrister will have a more challenging time, and while having the legal right to have breaks, may feel the pressure to return to work to sustain her reputation.

Whether as a Solicitor or Barrister, the training takes **six years**: a 3-year Law degree followed by one year at a postgraduate law school to focus on the application of the law [The Legal Practice Course - LPC]. Then there must be two years in practice with a **training contract** in a **firm** [if a Solicitor] or as a **pupil** in Chambers [if a Barrister] Pupils are **called to the bar** after two years. They must go to dinners at one of the Inns of Court, which they join as a member, of which there are four, all in London: Inner Temple, Middle Temple Lincoln’s Inn and Gray’s Inn;

Or

1. undertaking a **3-year** non-Law degree eg French/Spanish/Mandarin/Arabic/History/Geography/Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)
2. followed by the Common Professional Examination [the equivalent of a Law degree in **one year**. Common because it is the same/in common for both Solicitors and Barristers.
3. then another **one year** on the LPC and
4. there must be **two years** in practice with a **training contract** in a **firm** [if a Solicitor] or Chambers [if a Barrister]. This is **seven years altogether**;

[Or training as a **Legal Executive** – Legal executives are specialists who practice within a Solicitors’ firm. Some legal executives use this route to go on to become Solicitors.

¹ Charlotte



<https://www.cilexlawschool.ac.uk/study-with-us/cilex-training/qualify-chartered-legal-executive/>

Getting into an English **University** is tough! [Don't 'go Scottish' - their system is different!]

English and History are recommended for A Levels though other essay subjects such as Religious Studies with Philosophy and Ethics work well. It is not necessary to do A level Law. You may consider doing a non-Law degree if you can afford to. Several reasons we suggest this:

- studying Law is a long haul - six years solid. So, while doing a non-law degree and working in the holidays gaining valuable work experience takes longer, it is more fun, and gives a broader, perhaps even more mature, approach to legal work in the long term.
- finding a training contract is incredibly hard, in England. There are currently five times more graduates from the University of Law, than places for a training contract. If you can offer 'something-extra' that is most helpful. You should gain experience in developing soft skills, through work experience in the summer vacations while an undergraduate or on an internship. We heard of a young man recently, who graduated in English, then trained as a Solicitor, and became a Media Lawyer; and another adored sailing and was in the Olympic team. He had no difficulty getting a training contract in one of the top Shipping firms, in London. You may find it is worth doing something you really enjoy, developing some tangential interest [in property and buildings or the environment and conservation or human rights] which then leads you more easily into a firm that has a specialist focus such as mentioned above.

HOW TO APPLY TO READ LAW AT UNIVERSITY

To get into University, an application has to be made through **UCAS**. You need to register well in



What are 'soft skills'?



The sort of skills which are essential to good practice are:

- > Understanding business
- > Team work
- > Listening and reading carefully, writing and speaking accurately and simply – that is to say communicating effectively, sometimes with clients or colleagues who find communication difficult
- > Dealing with complexity: research, analysis and grappling with detail
- > Problem solving



advance – even now! It is an incredible source of online information too. The deadline for applying to read Law from September 2021 is 15 October 2020. [NB it is too late to apply to read Law at an English University for September 2020].

You have to pass A Levels, have a reference from your school, write a personal statement and pass the LNAT:

<https://lnat.ac.uk/>

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/admissions-tests>

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/ucas-undergraduate-when-apply>

<https://www.studying-in-uk.org/best-law-universities-in-uk/> don't go to Scotland!

<https://www.studying-in-uk.org/how-to-apply-for-college-uk/>

THE COST OF DOING A LAW DEGREE

Studying in UK, as an international, is phenomenally expensive. You are probably looking at £30,000-40,000 pa for fees and living expenses. It will be cheaper to live somewhere like Bristol, Exeter or Southampton and still have a prestigious degree. Though if you were in London, Oxford or Cambridge and paying perhaps £5,000 extra per year the cache of the name may help in getting a job in a 'top' firm or chambers ...

<https://www.ucas.com/connect/blogs/top-ten-student-money-tips>

<https://www.studying-in-uk.org/uk-scholarships/>

Contact us at Paths to Learning by emailing or Skyping felicity.gunn@pathstolearning.com or by booking a call through our website at www.pathstolearning.com.