

# Legal Services And Intellectual Property

## **Overview**

The legal sector in the UK is open to both Law and non-Law students. It’s worth thinking about and planning your route as early as possible, to get plenty of work experience under your belt. Various roles within the legal sector operate within different areas of law, and it depends how you specialise as to which career path you will take.

## **Roles**

[**Solicitors**](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/law-careers#solicitor)provide advice and assistance on matters of law. Currently, to become a solicitor you first need a qualifying law degree (QLD). This is either an undergraduate law degree or, if you didn’t study Law at undergraduate level, the one-year Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL). After your QLD, you need to do a one-year Legal Practice Course (LPC), and then a two-year training contract (during which you’re employed at a firm and paid a salary).

**IMPORTANT**: In 2021, a new qualification scheme for solicitors replaced the GDL and LPC. If you started your QLD or LPC before September 2021 you’ll still be able to qualify under the previous route until 2032. Read more about the new [Solicitor Qualifying Examination](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/solicitors-qualifying-examination-sqe).

[**Barristers**](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/law-careers#barrister)advise on specific legal issues and represent clients in court. To become a barrister, you need a qualifying law degree (QLD): as for solicitors this is either the undergraduate law degree or the GDL. After this you study a one-year Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC), and then a year of on-the-job training called a ‘pupillage’. It is highly competitive to attain a pupillage, with far more students completing the BPTC each year than are accepted as pupils. Success in this route requires impressive academic qualifications.

[**Patent Attorneys**](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/law-careers#patent-attorney)are specifically trained to support clients who wish to patent inventions, draft patents and act to enforce inventors’ rights if patents are infringed. Due to the technical nature of many inventions, you’ll usually need to be studying a scientific, engineering, technical or mathematical subject to get a job as a trainee patent attorney. Further degrees, including PhDs, are advantageous. As a trainee patent attorney, you’ll train on the job while being paid, and take professional examinations to qualify.

[**Paralegals**](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/law-careers#paralegal)work alongside solicitors and barristers and take on similar work to trainee solicitors, supporting administration, analysing information and writing document drafts and reports. Due to competition for work in this area, many employers prefer applicants to have a law degree.

[**Legal Executives**](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/chartered-legal-executive-england-and-wales)are ‘fee earners’ (like solicitors), and work in particular areas of law, and have many of the same rights as solicitors. Qualification to be a chartered legal executive can be undertaken flexibly while working (usually as a paralegal).

The [Prospects’ overview of law careers](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/law-careers) has more detailed information on all these areas, as well as a range of other legal roles (including licensed conveyancer, legal secretary, barristers’ clerk, a solicitor in Scotland, trademark attorney, company secretary and mediator).

## **Building Experience**

Formal and competitive work experience opportunities offered by firms are known as ‘vacation schemes’ (sometimes ‘insight schemes’ for first years). It’s a good idea to apply for them: they can make a big difference to the strength of your application for a training contract. It’s possible to apply for a training contract which includes a funded GDL (if needed) and LPC; these are among the most competitive opportunities.

During the pandemic, virtual law work experience gained in popularity, and some firms have continued to offer these programmes, which can range from insight days to internships. Often free of charge and open to undergraduates and graduates of any subject, these programmes are beneficial as they fit around your schedule, whilst allowing you insight into the current projects within the organisation.

For barristers, mini pupillage is a good option. These are often highly competitive, however, the two-week work placements allow you the chance to confirm if the path of a barrister or solicitor is right for you. Aside from work experience in law firms, at university, joining the [law society](https://www.uorlawsociety.com/) will aid in boosting your skills required for the profession in moots, court visits and networking sessions. Likewise, attending [University Careers fairs](https://www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/Careers/Events) and speaking with prospective employers in the legal profession can also open up opportunities.

## **Finding Opportunities**

Check [My Jobs Online](https://reading.targetconnect.net/student/login.html?remote=true) for vacancies and visit campus career fairs and employer presentations to find out more about which employers are advertising vacancies and coming onto campus.

Becoming a student member of one of the professional bodies, such as [The Law Society](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/membership/) can offer member benefits, talks, events and volunteering and campus ambassador opportunities, with the chance to meet industry professionals.

### Sector Advice

[Target Jobs](https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/information-technology) | [Allaboutlaw](https://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk/).co.uk | [thelawyer.com/lawyer2b](https://www.thelawyer.com/lawyer2b/) | [Barstandardsboard](https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/becoming-a-barrister/).org.uk

### Industry Jobs

[LawCareers.net](https://www.lawcareers.net/) | [ipcareers](https://www.ipcareers.co.uk/).co.uk | [Lawcabs](https://www.lawcabs.ac.uk/).ac.uk

### Further Study/Research

[University of Reading](https://www.reading.ac.uk/ready-to-study/study/postgraduate-study.aspx) | [Find a Masters](https://www.findamasters.com/) | [Find a PhD](https://www.findaphd.com/)

### Graduate Jobs

[prospects](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/).ac.uk | [targetjobs](https://targetjobs.co.uk/).co.uk | [milkround](https://www.milkround.com/).com | [ratemyplacement](https://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/).co.uk | [gradcracker](https://www.gradcracker.com/search/civil-building/environment-and-sustainability-jobs).com

## **Exploring Further**

[Chambers and Partners](https://chambers.com/) (chambers.com) – key resource for researching law firm, chose a country and search by practice area to see ranked firms – useful when researching who to apply to

[Government Legal Service](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-legal-service-gls-legal-trainee-scheme-how-to-apply) (gov.uk) trainee and pupillage schemes – working as in-house lawyers and barristers for the national government

[Totallylegal.com/jobs](https://www.totallylegal.com/jobs/), [jobs.thelawyer.com](https://jobs.thelawyer.com/) and [jobs.lawgazette.co.uk](https://jobs.lawgazette.co.uk/) – all good job boards for law jobs, with plenty of paralegal roles and useful filters

[legalweekjobs.com](https://www.legalweekjobs.com/) – mainly qualified lawyer jobs (search by years of post-qualification experience – PQE or choose the graduate/trainee filter)

The skills and knowledge you’ve developed in your degree will be valuable in a wide range of roles and sectors. If you’re thinking of looking further afield but aren’t sure where to start, why not [book an appointment](https://www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/Careers/Advice-and-development/MyJobsOnline) with one of our Careers Consultants? Remember, graduates can use the Careers Centre for up to two years after they graduate.

Explore our [Careers Blog](https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/careers/) for more industry guidance and useful careers advice!