

Law: Information and Resources

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This document provides information and resources in the following areas:

- Routes to qualifying as a solicitor or barrister in N.I., Republic of Ireland, Great Britain
- Conversion courses for non-law graduates
- Options with a Law degree
- Key Skills required for successful legal professionals
- Work Experience and Internships
- Skills for your CV
- Further study
- Career Action points for each year of the Law degree

Routes to qualifying as a Solicitor or Barrister

Northern Ireland

Solicitor

If you intend to become a solicitor or barrister in Northern Ireland, this will involve applying for entry to the Institute of Professional Legal Studies (IPLS) at Queens University Belfast (www.qub.ac.uk/ipls).

Entry to the IPLS otherwise known as the 'The Institute' is by competitive examination and degree classification. You must apply for entry by 16th November of your final year of undergraduate study (further information at www.qub.ac.uk/ipls).

The IPLS entrance exam takes place on 18th December 2018 and the results are available in March or April. If you are offered a place at the IPLS you will then need to find a solicitor's firm to support your professional training with a training contract. If you cannot secure a training contract within the time, your offer of the place at the IPLS will be withdrawn and cannot be deferred.

Practical or professional training for solicitors (known as apprenticeship and served under a supervising solicitor known as a **master**), lasts for two years. The apprenticeship starts with a period of four months' in-office training, followed by one year studying for the Certificate in

Professional Legal Studies. It ends with a further eight months' in-office training before qualification.

Most Law firms in Northern Ireland are small and recruit trainee solicitors on an occasional basis. This means that competition is intense and requires a good deal of initiative on your part: you need to look for vacancies early, not wait for them to be advertised.

Barrister

Bar applicants sit the same entrance exam as solicitor applicants, and the decision to offer you a place is based upon the same criteria as those applying for the solicitors' course. See www.qub.ac.uk/ipls for more detail. Trainee barristers spend four weeks working with the Citizens Advice Bureau or Law Centre and one week shadowing a practising barrister, before commencing the Bar Course at the IPLS. A further period of in-practice training starts after completing the course, taking the form of a 12-month pupillage.

Young barristers in Northern Ireland are supported by the Young Bar Association, as well as the General Council of the Bar of Northern Ireland: visit www.barlibrary.com for information on the Bar. Make use of resources and contacts during your degree to help secure:

- Work-shadowing opportunities with barristers
- A pupillage.

After completing the Bar Course, intending barristers must complete a yearlong pupillage under the guidance of a senior barrister. For the first six months of the pupillage you cannot accept fees from any client, but during the second six months you may.

Republic of Ireland

GradIreland has produced a sector careers guide on law, GradIreland Law. This is available free from the Employability & Careers Hub, or to download from www.gradireland.com/publications. Further information on becoming a solicitor in the Republic of Ireland is available at www.lawsociety.ie and on becoming a barrister at www.kingsinns.ie

England, Wales and Scotland

Solicitor

In Great Britain, there are two legal jurisdictions: England & Wales, and Scotland. It will take at least two years to become a solicitor in England or Wales. This comprises a yearlong course of professional education: The Legal Practice Course (LPC). LPC is available part-time and through distance learning. This is then followed by a two-year training contract with an authorised firm of solicitors.

To qualify as a solicitor in Scotland see <https://targetjobs.co.uk/law>

Further information

- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/law>
- <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- www.chambersandpartners.com
- <http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/law-careers/becoming-a-solicitor/routes-to-qualifying>
- <http://www.law.ac.uk>

Barrister

Unlike Northern Ireland, barristers in England and Wales work out of chambers. All students intending to become barristers must join one of the Inns of Court. You must register by an Inn of Court by 31 May in the year you will commence the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) www.barcouncil.org.uk/about-the-bar/what-is-the-bar/inns-of-court/

Routes to qualification can be found at

- www.prospects.ac.uk
- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/law>
- <https://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk/law-courses/bptc/bptc-application-process>

Conversion Courses for non-law graduates

The Masters in Law (MLaw) is a two-year postgraduate taught programme designed for non-law graduates who wish to obtain a Qualifying Law degree for entry to vocational legal training in Northern Ireland, England and Wales. See www.qub.ac.uk for further details. See links for further information:

- All About Law for non-law students <http://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk/stage/law-conversion-course>
- Qualification checklist for non-law graduates <http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/law-careers/becoming-a-solicitor/qualifying-as-a-solicitor/qualifying-without-a-law-degree/>

Options with a Law degree

If you are a Law student who does not want to pursue a career in law, or if you are frustrated at not getting a training contract, or if you are unsure of your career options and what you have to offer, there are many other alternative routes available.

Prospects Planner is one of many tools and approaches, which can help you with career planning and clarifying your ideas. This resource is available on <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/planner> you are required to answer questions about your skills and what you want from a job and *Prospects Planner* suggests what might suit you.

For those wishing to move into fields outside the legal profession there are many jobs that make good use of a legal education. A Law degree provides you with a vast array of transferable skills in the areas of research, analysis, problem solving, criticism and communication.

Law graduates have traditionally progressed into areas such as accountancy, business, criminology, education, finance, human resources, international relations, journalism and social work. The Employability & Careers Hub can provide details on where graduates from your course have gone.

If you want to remain within the legal sector and still have the opportunity to practice law later then working as a paralegal or a legal executive may suit you. Professional qualifications are available through the Institute of Legal Executives www.cilex.org.uk. A law graduate may be exempt from the academic part of the CILEX qualification.

Other areas directly related to law are conveyance, Crown Prosecution Service, Law Commission, www.lawcom.gov.uk and working in the courts.

The following links will provide further details of options available with a Law degree:

- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/law-solicitors/420106-twelve-jobs-you-can-do-with-a-law-degree>
- <http://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk/stage/what-can-i-do-with-a-law-degree/non-law-careers-for-law-graduates>
- <http://www.lawcareers.net/MoreLaw/AlternativeCareers>
- Northern Ireland Civil Service Fast Stream www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk
- Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland Training Schemes <http://mts.hscni.net/>
- <https://gradireland.com/career-sectors/law-legal-services-and-patents/alternative-jobs-for-law-graduates>

Key Skills required for successful legal professionals

Legal positions vary greatly in scope and responsibility, there are certain core legal skills that are required in most legal positions. The following links will provide a clear overview of the key skills you need to demonstrate:

- <http://www.lawcareers.net/Information/Key-skills-for-successful-legal-professionals>
- <http://www.lawcareers.net/Information/Features/19052015-Do-you-have-the-key-skills-every-recruiter-wants>
- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/law-solicitors/291203-what-skills-do-law-firms-look-for-when-recruiting-graduates-for-trainee-solicitor-jobs>

Work Experience and Internships

Legal work experience is important for many reasons. The skills you gain will give you examples to use on an application form and to discuss at interview. It can also make you stand out from the crowd and it demonstrates a commitment to a legal career.

Any commercial awareness gained from your part-time job or voluntary work is useful for your CV. See the Work Experience section on the Employability Portal for finding internships, part-time jobs and volunteering opportunities <https://employability.ulster.ac.uk/>.

You may want to try and get some experience in a law firm over the summer. To find solicitors near you go to <http://www.lawsoc-ni.org/solicitors-directory/> or <https://www.yell.com/>.

You can make speculative applications this involves proactively approaching an employer to seek opportunities that have not been advertised. This may be necessary for: vacancies that are rarely advertised, vacation work and unpaid work or work shadowing.

Skills for your CV

Apart from understanding the principles of the Law, Law students and graduates develop the following skills:

Communication skills	Write clearly and effectively, using appropriate language, and able to create a variety of written reports. Pay close attention to detail and draft formal documents with precision. Communicate effectively and appropriately one to one or to an audience through a presentation.
Critical analysis	Critically evaluate texts, information and argument to offer informed and reasoned arguments of their own.
Flexibility	Confident in exploring different approaches and exercising personal responsibility and initiative.
ICT Skills	Have computer and IT skills required for the handling of textual and graphical information, including the use of the Internet for research.
Problem solving	Solve problems by analysing complex fact situations to identify the legal issues raised and applying legal rules and principles to them.
Self-management	Work effectively without direction; organise work and manage time effectively. Able to work independently and collaboratively.
Teamwork	Able to participate in group activities and seminars and to use material derived from these to inform written assessments

The skills gained through your degree explain why many employers have a positive view of Law students as high level skills are in demand in many roles and settings. But remember that potential employers look for evidence of these skills in action in both academic and other activities and will not make decisions in your favour on an assumption of your abilities.

Check the following links for guidance in producing a legal CV and covering letter:

- 📄 <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters>
- 📄 <https://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/law-solicitors/300016-how-to-write-winning-covering-letters-for-law-firms>
- 📄 <http://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk/law-careers/application-tips/how-to-write-a-covering-letter-for-law>
- 📄 <https://www.aspiringsolicitors.co.uk/advice/careers/legal-cover-letters/>

Further Study

The following websites have search functions for finding courses in the UK and Republic of Ireland

www.prospects.ac.uk

www.gradireland.com

If you would like to consider further study by research, i.e. a doctorate, you may want to discuss this with a member of the academic team.

Career Action points for each year of the law degree:

First Year LLB

- Attend Fresher's Fayre to find out about joining University clubs and societies
- See professionals at work by visiting the courts
- See the Work Experience section on the Employability Portal for finding internships, part-time jobs and volunteering opportunities <https://advice.employability.ulster.ac.uk/>
- Learn about the legal sector - go to www.prospects.ac.uk
- Register for the Ulster EDGE Award <https://advice.employability.ulster.ac.uk/>
- Arrange work shadowing, for example solicitors or barristers
- Call in to the Employability & Careers Hub for information and advice

Second Year LLB

- Write a CV and covering letter, check links above for producing a legal CV and covering letter and run it through the VMock System <https://employability.ulster.ac.uk>
- Attend the range of Careers Fairs and events on your campus to help you decide between law or non-law careers <https://employability.ulster.ac.uk/>
- Apply for voluntary work e.g. www.citizensadvice.co.uk, www.adviceni.net
- Attend employer presentations on solicitor training contracts
- Apply for Study USA <https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/opportunities/study-usa>
- Apply for part-time or voluntary work experience <https://employability.ulster.ac.uk/>
- Visit the Law Fair in Queens <http://www.qub.ac.uk/>
- Complete an activity or two towards the EDGE Award

Final Year LLB

- Update your CV and covering letter, check links above for producing a legal CV and covering letter

- ✎ Attend the range of Careers Fairs and events on your campus to help you decide between law or non-law careers <http://advice.employability.ulster.ac.uk/> Visit the Law Fair in Queens <http://www.qub.ac.uk/>
- ✎ Attend employer presentations, on and off campus, for both legal and non-legal fields
- ✎ Apply for entry to the Institute of Professional Legal Studies <http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/InstituteofProfessionalLegalStudies/>
- ✎ Apply to trainee solicitor vacancies in the Republic of Ireland www.legal-island.com
- ✎ Apply for Legal Practice Course or Bar Vocational courses in England and Wales www.lawcabs.ac.uk
- ✎ Apply for trainee solicitor vacancies immediately after your IPLS place is confirmed
- ✎ Apply for postgraduate courses with early closing dates www.prospects.ac.uk and www.postgradireland.com
- ✎ Check weekly for graduate vacancies and local training contracts <https://employability.ulster.ac.uk/>
- ✎ Attend summer recruitment Fair in June
- ✎ Make an appointment with your Employability Adviser if required
- ✎ Complete Ulster EDGE Award

For further advice and guidance, contact the Employability Advisers on campus. You can also access advice through **online chat**, email (careers@ulster.ac.uk) or via telephone (028 9536 7066)
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