Timetable for Aspiring Lawyers

The main types of qualified lawyers in England and Wales are solicitors and barristers (Northern Ireland, Scotland and the offshore islands have different legal systems). The training and qualification routes to becoming a lawyer are currently changing, with new reforms being introduced.

How do I become a solicitor?

With 146,092 practising solicitors in England and Wales in December 2019 (around 90% of all lawyers), it is one of the most popular roles within the sector.

Solicitors mainly provide legal services directly to the client, and the majority of work is office-based and in a private practice. Some solicitors may work ‘in-house’ in the legal department of a company.

The route to becoming a solicitor will change in autumn 2021:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most common route pre-autumn 2021</th>
<th>New route (from autumn 2021)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK qualifying law degree OR non-law degree followed by the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL)</td>
<td>Degree in any subject</td>
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<td>Legal Practice Course (LPC) (1 year)</td>
<td>Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE) – two sets of exams:</td>
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<td>Training contract (2 years)</td>
<td>SQE 1 (knowledge based)</td>
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<td>SQE 2 (skills based)</td>
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<td>Qualifying work experience (2 years) – either a training contract</td>
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<td>with a law firm or through up to 4 placements at different</td>
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<td>organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualified solicitor</td>
<td>Qualified solicitor</td>
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It is expected that those who have started a qualifying law degree, GDL, LPC or period of recognised training (e.g. training contract) at the date the SQE is introduced in autumn 2021 will be able to choose whether or not to qualify under the old route (subject to availability) or take the SQE. If they take the SQE, they must meet all the requirements. The Solicitors Regulation Authority is in charge of overseeing the process of qualifying as a solicitor, and has the most up-to-date information on SQE developments: www.sra.org.uk/sra/policy/sqe/solicitor-persona/

You can also complete solicitor or barrister training with the Government Legal Profession in a number of different government departments. For more information, see www.gov.uk/guidance/government-legal-service-gls-legal-trainee-scheme-how-to-apply
**How do I become a barrister?**

There were around 17,000 registered barristers at the end of 2019, and it is one of the most competitive and popular legal careers. Barristers work primarily in courts or tribunals, and predominately provide one-off advocacy. They are normally self-employed as part of a ‘set’ and work from the same ‘chambers’ such as an Inn of Court) as other barristers (whilst also working very closely with solicitors. A minority of barristers also work at the ‘Employed Bar’, which is seen as the in-house equivalent to solicitors who are employed by companies.

From September 2020, the BPTC will be replaced by a number of courses, with its various replacements known as ‘training pathways’. Pupillages are likely to continue to be the main way of undertaking the work-related element of bar training, but more organisations may offer training for the Employed Bar. The Bar Standards Board (BSB) is in charge of overseeing the process of qualifying as a barrister, and has the most up-to-date information on these developments. [www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/training-qualification/becoming-a-barrister.html](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/training-qualification/becoming-a-barrister.html)

**How can my training be funded?**

Training to become any type of lawyer is very expensive. Course fees for the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) can cost £7,000 - £11,650. The Legal Practice Course (LPC) can range from £8,500 - £15,000 and the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) can cost up to £19,000 depending on where you complete it.

**Sponsorship of Solicitor Training – Training Contracts**

Some law firms, especially international, city or large regional ones, often sponsor GDL and LPC courses as part of securing a training contract with them. Sponsorship may also be available from other bodies such as the Government Legal Profession. Visit [www.lawcareers.net/Solicitors/AdvancedSearch](http://www.lawcareers.net/Solicitors/AdvancedSearch) to find out about training contract opportunities.
**Sponsorship of Barrister Training - Pupillage**
You can apply for a pupillage award from your set of chambers, which effectively covers your costs during the work-related learning part of your training. These are highly competitive and the amount will vary from set to set (chamber) depending on the size of the set and practise area of law. Visit [www.pupillagegateway.com/applicant-home/](http://www.pupillagegateway.com/applicant-home/) to find out about the online application system for applying for pupillage.

**Inns of Court Scholarships (Barrister Training)**
The four Inns of Court have scholarships, bursaries and awards. Each Inn has different rules, amounts vary from £100 - £22,000 and you can only apply for a scholarship from one Inn. Applications for scholarships are often made in the final year of your degree or in the year before starting the GDL or BPTC. You can visit the LawCareers.Net information page on scholarships available at each of the four Inns [www.lawcareers.net/Barristers/Inns-of-Court-Scholarships](http://www.lawcareers.net/Barristers/Inns-of-Court-Scholarships).

**Academic Scholarships, Awards and Bursaries**
All universities and law schools offer a limited amount of scholarships, awards and bursaries, either based on exceptional ability or your financial situation. Make sure to research what is available on the firm, university or law school’s website or by contacting the scholarships or graduate recruitment team directly.

**Other Financial Support**
Some charities and grant-making trusts may provide financial support for aspiring barristers. Visit your local education authority awards officer for information on grants, loans and other funding.

**Postgraduate Loans**
Postgraduate loans from the government are only available for courses that include an LLM component, as only master’s courses (not diplomas or professional certificates) are eligible for government funding.

You can read more about course fees and funding support available at: [www.lawcareers.net/Explore/Features/19112019-Law-course-fees-a-guide-for-students](http://www.lawcareers.net/Explore/Features/19112019-Law-course-fees-a-guide-for-students)

**Timeline for aspiring lawyers**
Many solicitors' firms (and some barrister’s chambers) recruit 2 years ahead of you starting your training with them.

It is often the large corporate/commercial solicitors' firms that tend to work to the below deadlines. A high street firm or a niche solicitors' practice may recruit much closer to the start date of the training contract or vacation scheme - it is important to check all deadlines with the individual firms on their websites. If in doubt, contact them directly.

**First Year**
- Get involved in debating, mooting, pro bono and voluntary law related activities (such as legal advice clinics).
- Get involved in other student societies (preferably in a position of responsibility).
- Look into summer work experience opportunities – local law firms, Citizens Advice Bureau and legal advice centres are good starting points.
- Apply for first year programmes (these may be mainly for law students, so check first), insight events and open days during the autumn and spring terms.
- Over the summer vacation, do your research on a variety of law firms and chambers to understand what/who they are looking for, the work experience opportunities they offer and their application deadlines - [lawcareers.net](http://lawcareers.net) and [chambersstudent.co.uk](http://chambersstudent.co.uk) are excellent resources.
Second or Penultimate Year (or Final Year for Non-Law Students)

**Autumn Term**
- Continue to research firms and chambers and attend employer events on and off campus.
- Start applying for work experience such as vacation schemes (solicitor) and mini-pupillages (barrister).
- The larger solicitor firms generally open their vacation scheme applications from 1st October, but the deadlines are different for winter, spring and summer schemes. Make sure to apply before the deadlines, ensuring that your applications are of a very high standard; the Careers and Enterprise team can support you with applications and have very useful guidance sheets.

**Spring Term**
- Complete applications for work experience with later deadlines and attend interviews.

**Summer Term**
- Participate in vacation schemes over the summer, and attend interviews for training contracts in August and September.
- Apply speculatively for work experience if you haven’t managed to secure a placement.
- Try to gain as much professional experience as possible to improve your CV and applications.
- Apply for training contracts - many firms now close their applications before the 31st July deadline, so check each deadline for the firms you are interested in applying to.

Final Year
- Participate in vacation schemes (preferably winter or spring) and attend interviews for training contracts.
- Explore funding options for your vocational training (e.g. LPC, SQE or bar training course.
- Visit (or meet at the October Law Fair if attending) the vocational training institutions you are interested in applying to by attending their open days or arranging a visit yourself.
- Check the preferred vocational training provider of the firm or chamber you plan to apply to.
- Start applying for vocational training (you do not need to have secured a training contract or pupillage first).
- Apply for your vocational training (see the ‘Law schools’ section on chambersstudent.co.uk and the ‘Education/Courses’ section on lawcareers.net).
- Continue to apply for training contracts - many firms now close their applications before 31st July, so you must check deadline dates directly with firms.

**Remember**
- Law is a competitive field so manage your study schedule to ensure you get a 2:1.
- You can also attend the QM Law Fair to meet a wide range of firms and organisations.

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