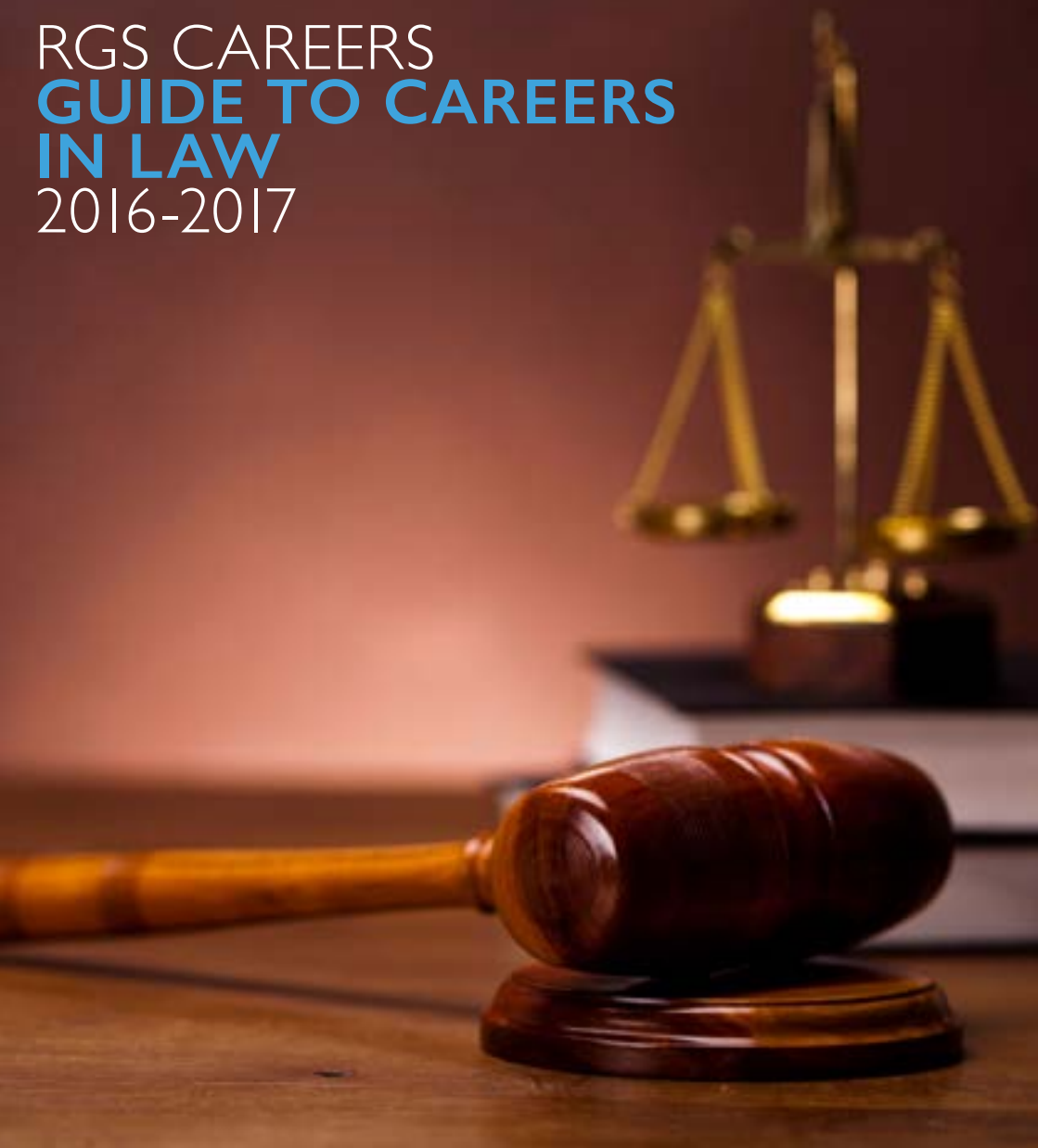


RGS CAREERS  
**GUIDE TO CAREERS  
IN LAW**  
2016-2017



REIGATE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# RGS GUIDE TO CAREERS IN LAW

The information in this guide is based on our experience over the last ten years in which we have had considerable success in helping students gain a place in Law School. Individual universities, however, have very different requirements. The best way to be absolutely certain of making the right choices is to research individual universities and refer to their websites.

As there are many different careers you can pursue after studying Law, perhaps it is useful to start this guide with a brief overview of what some of these are. Use the following in conjunction with the Beginners Guide from [www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net) that we have issued to you - this can be found at [www.lawcareers.net/Assets/BeginnersGuide15.pdf](http://www.lawcareers.net/Assets/BeginnersGuide15.pdf) This is not an exhaustive list:

## BARRISTERS

Barristers advise on specific legal issues and represent their clients in court. They receive their information through a solicitor and are self-employed. When not in court, they prepare their work in what are known as chambers.

Like solicitors, they can work in a variety of areas of law, but their work is likely to include advising clients on the law, meeting with them to discuss their case, representing them in court including cross-examining witnesses and negotiating settlements with the other side.



## SOLICITORS

Solicitors are the first point of contact for people and organisations seeking legal advice and/or representation. They can work in a variety of areas of law, but their work is likely to include meeting clients, researching relevant areas of law in order to advise on the best course of action, drafting contracts and other legal documents, acting on behalf of clients in negotiations and occasionally representing clients in court or at tribunals.

They usually work together in solicitor-owned law firms or in a legal department within a company or organisation.



## PARALEGALS

Paralegals work supporting solicitors in their legal work. Although there is no legal requirement for them to have any specific law qualifications, the reality is that many firms expect them to be fully qualified, and it is often those aspiring to be solicitors who perform these roles in order to gain experience. The legal profession is a changing one and this role is being increasingly professionalised by schemes such as the Legal Apprenticeship Programme, about which there is more in this guide.



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## CHARTERED LEGAL EXECUTIVE

Work is very similar to that of a solicitor; the main difference being with their training, in which they study fewer areas of law and hence specialise their practice earlier on. You can find more information at [www.lawcareers.net/MoreLaw/CILEx](http://www.lawcareers.net/MoreLaw/CILEx)



A LEVEL  
CHOICES



There are no essential A Level subjects or equivalent required to read Law at university. However:

- Many Law students take at least one 'facilitating' subject such as a foreign language, maths, sciences, English, history or geography, which are deemed as good choices for students who want to keep their degree options flexible. A subject such as economics could also be directly relevant to aspects of Law, while philosophy and ethics could be useful as a subject that demonstrates the ability to think. Essay-based subjects such as history or English will stand you in good stead for reading Law at degree level. That said, we had a student receive offers to study Law at two Russell Group universities this year, who studied no 'facilitating subjects' at A Level, so the crucial thing is to choose the subjects that you enjoy and are likely to do best in.
- Law A Level is not required and is, in fact, not even recommended by universities.

Be aware that Law courses are competitive and intellectually demanding and all good universities will expect high achievement at A Level, with the most sought-after courses demanding minimum requirements at GCSE level too. The requirements vary from institution to institution, and you will have to research each course carefully to find the one most suited to your interest and abilities, but to give you an idea, a typical offer from Cambridge, LSE or Durham is A\*AA, with some colleges, such as Churchill, making it explicit that they expect a minimum of 5 A\* at GCSE and that virtually everyone accepted in the last decade had at least 9 A\*. A typical offer from other universities, such as the University of East Anglia, Reading or Manchester is AAB.

## OTHER TESTS

Some universities (see below) require applicants to sit the National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT) in addition to the normal application procedure. With the loss of AS Levels it is likely that more institutions will use tests such as LNAT in the future. LNAT is a test of aptitude, rather than of educational achievement, and it will test:

- your verbal reasoning skills
- your ability to understand and interpret information
- your inductive and deductive reasoning abilities
- your ability to analyse information and draw conclusions

LNAT is not an intelligence test or a test of your knowledge of law.

The universities that require LNAT as part of their application process for 2017 are:

- Bristol
- Durham
- Glasgow
- King's College London
- Nottingham
- Oxford
- SOAS
- UCL

You have to book yourself onto LNAT yourself via the LNAT website from the start of August. Testing begins at the start of September. It costs £50 this year, so it is likely to cost around this amount next year. For more information on LNAT visit: [www.lnat.ac.uk](http://www.lnat.ac.uk)

Cambridge has its own Law test which is taken if you are invited to interview. More information about it and past papers can be found at: [www.ba.law.cam.ac.uk/applying/cambridge\\_law\\_test](http://www.ba.law.cam.ac.uk/applying/cambridge_law_test)

## CAN YOU PRACTISE FOR THESE TESTS?

Without a doubt, yes!

Although you cannot really revise for LNAT, you should practise for it by reading a quality newspaper regularly and considering the main arguments for and against the views that are expressed in the articles. You should also do practice questions so that you familiarise yourself with the format and the time pressures of the exam. There are practice books in the Careers Library, but there are also on-line practice tests on the LNAT web-site. If you decide to go ahead and apply, contact Mr Chevalier and he will be able to help with preparation for these tests. [www.lnat.ac.uk/how-to-prepare](http://www.lnat.ac.uk/how-to-prepare)

### Tips:

- You should not be paying any attention to LNAT until the end of your Lower Sixth year. Your performance in your summer examinations will be far more important than LNAT.
- Don't apply to more than 2 LNAT universities. You do not want too many of your applications to hinge on one test.

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

What characteristics do you need to work in Law?

Most universities highlight the following skills as a must, but also be aware of the need to be resilient, hard-working and to enjoy intellectual challenge:

## INTELLECTUAL ABILITY

The study of law is hard work, but it is also intellectually challenging and highly rewarding. It involves large quantities of written material, which you will need to read, comprehend, synthesise and analyse. You will need the ability to read and digest information quickly and to take good and accurate notes. Lawyers need to be able to accurately recall legal provisions and use the relevant law in new situations. You should be able to take a logical approach and apply knowledge to factual situations. You must be willing to apply critical reasoning to issues, and to appreciate the ethical and moral dimensions of any cases you encounter.



## COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication is very important to the study of Law. You must have an enthusiasm for discussion and an ability to present ideas and argue a case. Your written work has to be of a very high standard, as you will be assessed by timed examinations and extended essay projects. Accurate and precise use of language is a prerequisite of legal scholarship.



## ABILITY TO THINK AND WORK UNDER PRESSURE

Law students (and lawyers) often have to work and think under considerable pressure, and the ability to respond well to the demands of the course (and legal work) is crucial.



## STUDY SKILLS

You must be able to motivate yourself to study when not constantly supervised, to take the initiative, to identify and search for material independently, to plan your studying, manage your time and meet deadlines.



# PERSONAL STATEMENT

The following advice is given by a highly ranked university (LSE):

- For Law, an original and interesting personal statement which outlines your enthusiasm and motivation for the study of Law is expected. The selectors want to see evidence of your ability to produce clear and concise text; thus you may wish to include your views on current legal issues. They also want to be convinced that you understand what is involved in studying Law at an institution like LSE.
- The main focus of your statement should be course specific, as less importance is attached to extra-curricular activities than your academic strengths. The selectors are keen to know why you wish to study Law, whether there are any aspects of particular interest to you, how it relates to your current academic programme and what additional reading or relevant experiences (e.g. attending court hearings) you have had, which have led you to commit to this challenging degree programme.
- If you include details of extra-curricular activities such as music, drama, art, work experience, charitable or sporting involvement, the selectors are particularly interested to know what relevant skills you have developed from these experiences.

Personal characteristics and skills that will be useful to students in their study of Law will be those such as the ability to apply logic and follow complex lines of reasoning, high levels of accuracy and attention to detail, good communication skills and the ability to ask questions and think independently. In addition you should possess intellectual curiosity and have the motivation and capacity for hard work.

To aid you when drafting your Personal Statement for Law, we have some key texts in the library, some of which you ought to have read by the time you sit down to write your Personal Statement. Titles you might want to read include:

1. The Rule of Law by Tom Bingham
2. Letters to a Law Student by Nicholas McBride
3. What About Law? by Catherine Barnard et al.
4. Eve Was Framed by Helena Kennedy
5. The Law by Jeremy Waldron
6. Criminal Law by Jonathan Herring

Feel free to read these (or some of them!) and then find Mr Chevalier for a discussion about them and how to best focus your ideas around these and other legal issues in your application.

The DVD 'Barristers' which we also have in the Careers Library, is an entertaining insight into the lives of young barristers.

In this very competitive field, any work experience in a legal field that you have carried out will be most valuable to show that you understand the requirements of a legal profession and that you are truly interested in pursuing it.

Finally, there are a number of useful law websites that you may wish to explore:

Explaining criminal law in the news - [www.ukcriminallawblog.com/category/in-the-news](http://www.ukcriminallawblog.com/category/in-the-news)

BBC Law in Action - [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006tgy1/episodes/player](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006tgy1/episodes/player)

Gresham College Law lectures - [www.gresham.ac.uk/watch/?subject=law](http://www.gresham.ac.uk/watch/?subject=law)

# BEYOND UNIVERSITY

A career in Law does not require you to have a Law degree, as there are other routes to become a solicitor; barrister; legal chartered executive etc. What follows is a summary of some of the post-university options that you need to be aware of. Please refer to pages eight and nine of the Beginner's Guide too at [www.lawcareers.net/Assets/BeginnersGuide15.pdf](http://www.lawcareers.net/Assets/BeginnersGuide15.pdf)

You do not need a degree to become a paralegal or a chartered legal executive, but remember this is a very competitive field. There are apprenticeship options that will allow you to become a paralegal and through CILEx (Chartered Institute of Legal Executives) courses and three years employment you can become a chartered legal executive. For more information visit: [www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net)

If you decide not to do a Law degree but want to work as a solicitor or barrister; you have to complete a **GDL (Graduate Diploma in Law)**. This one-year course, combined with a non-Law degree, is equivalent to a Law degree. You should try very hard to secure sponsorship from a Law firm before embarking on this course; this is something that you should start to investigate during your second year at university. Many institutions now offer a part-time course that you can combine with paid work, as a full time GDL is an expensive option (at least £9,000 depending on the institution).

Whatever degree you complete, in order to qualify as a solicitor or barrister; you will also need:

- **LPC (Legal Practice Course):** this is the course you need if you want to become a solicitor. It would be advisable to have a training contract with a Law firm before enrolling on an LPC as there is no guarantee that you will be employed a solicitor on completion. Law firms tend to sponsor students for the LPC. This is something that you will need to investigate during your second year at university;
- **BPTC (Bar Professional Training Course):** this is the course you need if you want to become a barrister. On completion you need to be taken by a chamber for a pupillage with only a third who start the BPTC obtaining a pupillage. This is a highly competitive option and just to give you an idea, have a look at the following numbers (from 2013-2014):
  - 2,941 students applied for the BPTC
  - 1,071 passed the BPTC
  - 1,565 received a place
  - 845 received pupillage

After the LPC, solicitors need to undertake a two year training programme with a Law firm before qualification. You will get paid during these two years, although the amount varies dramatically depending on whether you are with a big city firm or smaller high street one.

## LAW DEGREE OR 'OTHER DEGREE SUBJECT' FOLLOWED BY GDL

We asked some former RGS students for their views on this:

**Nikesh Mistry** (RGS Head Boy 2009-2010). Nikesh studied Law at LSE.

The benefits of studying Law:

- Shows a clear interest in the legal sector for potential legal employers and it gives a good grounding for applying for a training contract;
- Reduces the amount of studying before starting your training contract by one year i.e. you'll be earning one year earlier than people on the GDL;
- The GDL largely focuses on the core modules of law. By undertaking a Law degree you can do a variety of different modules, which are a lot more relevant and engaging.

Negative aspects of studying Law:

- You have to commit to a three year course without having studied Law before, so there is quite a lot of uncertainty as to whether you will actually enjoy a Law degree;
- Some law firms prefer non-law candidates as they have greater experiences and knowledge, for example, certain Intellectual Property firms tend to prefer candidates from a science background.;
- If essay writing and case reading are not appealing then another degree would be advisable, as one of the key criteria for a training contract is gaining a 2:1.

Don't just undertake a Law degree as you believe it to be the best route into Law. From experience, most Law firms are open to candidates regardless of the route that they have decided to take. It ultimately comes down to each individual and how they want to approach a career in Law. As long as you can show passion for your course, attain a 2:1, and show essential skills relevant to being a solicitor then every candidate has the potential to attain a training contract.

**Melanie Howard** (left RGS 2008) Studied Law at UCL.

Advantages of studying Law:

- The main one is probably that it saves time and money because you do not need to do the GDL.

**TIP: If you do a different subject, make sure that you work hard in your first and second years at uni. If you can secure at least a 2:1 it does hugely increase your chances of getting a training contract with a firm that will sponsor you through your GDL.**

- It is easier to show your commitment to the industry because you chose it at 18. I knew that I wanted to be a lawyer, and I was genuinely interested in Law, so it was the obvious choice;
- You get to study a much wider range of topics on a Law degree than on the GDL, on which you do little more than the compulsory topics, which are, in my opinion, often the most dry;
- The GDL can feel quite tough because you are essentially fitting three years of Law into one year.

**Why might you not study Law at university?** The main reason would be that you are not certain that you want to be a lawyer when you start university! I really don't think firms have any sort of preference towards people who have done Law degrees; some even prefer people who haven't so that they have a broader background.

**Tip: If you study something else but decide that Law is for you, get involved with any Law societies or Law-related activities that are available to you at university such as debating, mooting or Law clinics.**

**Antony Dean** (left RGS 2010. Read History at Warwick. Antony then completed the GDL with BPP, sponsored by Allen and Overy).

Advantages of the GDL:

- It provides flexibility in your post-18 education. It allows you to study a subject that you really enjoy for its own sake at university;
- The broader learning experience of studying a different subject at university can be advantageous when you start working;
- There are no obvious disadvantages to applying to Law firms or in actually practising Law from qualifying through the GDL route;
- The extra year that it takes to qualify this way is very slight in the grand scheme of things.

Disadvantages of qualifying through the GDL:

- It is expensive if you do not manage to secure a training contract before embarking upon it;
- Limited scope of study: The GDL gives little option to choose your study options; you have to cover the core subjects and there will be little or no opportunity to study beyond this. If the academic law is something that really interests you, you will not be able to take on topics at greater depth or wider scope when compared with a three year law degree;
- Due to time constraints, the learning is quite formulaic.

**Tips from Antony:**

- APPLY FOR TRAINING CONTRACTS EARLY – Some vacation schemes open up in your penultimate year of university and are really good ways of finding a firm that you like and making an impression; if you do well, firms will offer you a training contract on the back of this;
- Your applications and interview technique will get better the more you do it. Don't be afraid of rejection; jobs are competitive and you may be rejected from one firm and accepted by another with almost identical CVs!;
- If you get a training contract the firm will usually pay your training fees and provide you with a grant;
- Work Experience: if Law is a career that interests you, try to get some work experience. This does not have to be with a large corporate firm; something as simple as shadowing a local high street solicitor for a couple of days will look good to recruitment and will demonstrate your motivation for a career in Law. Even if Law turns out to not be the career for you this experience will also look good in applying for other jobs. Employers want to see that people have put thought and time into choosing their careers.

## USEFUL WEB-SITES

[www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk) for details on all Law courses and links to individual university web-sites

[www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com) to help you to compare courses based on data such as student satisfaction, cost of living, contact time and employability prospects

[www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide](http://www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide) for league tables and comparisons between courses

[www.rgsinfo.net](http://www.rgsinfo.net) then hit the 'Taster Courses' link to find university preparation courses. Do not spend a lot of money on these; lots are free. However, it is a very good idea to go on at least one.

[www.london.ac.uk/TASTERS](http://www.london.ac.uk/TASTERS) gives details of free London university taster days. These book up fast after January 15th so get straight onto it!

[www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net) is a very useful web-site. In particular, the Beginner's Guide on this web-site, does exactly what it claims! It is a very clear guide to the various career areas within Law and to the paths into those career areas. You can also apply to get their newsletter by emailing [lcnewsletter@lawcareers.net](mailto:lcnewsletter@lawcareers.net)

[www.law.ac.uk/futurelawyers](http://www.law.ac.uk/futurelawyers) provides useful tips and careers guidance from the College of Law. In particular it gives a useful ten step guide towards your career in Law. The College of Law also run free courses for prospective lawyers, which are well worth attending.

The Book 'Working in Law 2014', which is in the Careers Library also gives a very useful overview.





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