

Career Tracks

Legal professions

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

WHAT SUBJECTS DO I NEED TO STUDY?

WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO BE PAID?

DEVELOPED IN
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ULAW
online

Why study law?

What skills will you gain?

Problem solving

People hire lawyers because they have a problem or are trying to avoid one. Creative thinking and finding solutions that aren't immediately obvious are sought-after skills in many careers.

Analytical ability

A legal education teaches you to think critically; you'll be taught to see information differently and bring a deeper perspective to arguments.

Communication

Effective writing, conversation and articulation are all skills that are valued by every employer. These skills are a pivotal part of the development of any legal student.

Diplomacy

When to speak and when not to. What to say to different kinds of people – and how to read a tricky situation. Trainee lawyers learn these life skills early – and use them whatever career they have.

Research skills

Investigating a subject with speed and accuracy and knowing where to look for information is a key skill in many careers.

Attention to detail

Noticing subtle differences can make the difference between winning and losing a case. A mind for detail is highly prized among employers.

Persuasiveness

Being able to put across your point and back up your argument is a skill that will set you up for life, no matter where you work.

Management skills

From time and project management, to working with people from many different backgrounds, learning how to manage will put you ahead of the competition – right from the start.



Course spotlight

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

NEC's interactive online **Critical Thinking** and **Problem Solving** courses, give students the chance to prepare for university admissions tests and the world of work. Critical thinking and problem solving skills are key to a successful legal career, no matter the route you choose.

Applying for Cambridge or Oxford? This course is designed to help students prepare for Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) (Section 1) and the Biomedical Admissions Test (BMAT) (Section 1).



What is the difference between a solicitor and a barrister?

Barrister

What does a barrister do?

- Goes to court to argue cases on behalf of clients.
- Gives specialised legal advice on specific and detailed points of law.
- Drafts and researches the law and assists with government policies.
- Is mainly self-employed and based in chambers

In the UK, the role of barristers is to be specialists in court advocacy and independent sources of legal advice to their clients. UK barristers are most likely to be self-employed and working in chambers.

However, you may find yourself working in government departments or agencies such as the Crown Prosecution Service or the Government Legal Profession. Employed barristers also work in private organisations such as in-house legal departments of charities and companies.

Barristers are often hired by solicitors to represent a case in court and only become involved when appearing before a court is needed. A barrister pleads the case on behalf of the client and the client's solicitor. Barristers might also be asked to advise in writing or in conference (which means in person) on a specific point of law or query. They do not tend to follow a case or transaction from start to finish like a solicitor will.

What are the day-to-day responsibilities of a barrister?

A barrister's day-to-day responsibilities can be varied and change from case to case. Daily tasks can include giving legal advice to solicitors and clients, translating client's issues into legal terms and representing them, researching cases, writing legal documents, general preparing of cases, liaising with other legal professionals, appearing in court, cross-examining witnesses, reviewing evidence and negotiating settlements or sentences for the client.

How much do barristers earn a year?

The hard work and long hours reflect the wage and salary for a barrister. An average barrister salary in London is anything from £100,000 to £300,000 based on five years' experience, but as there are many areas of law, this can vary. For those with over ten years' experience, earnings can range from £320,000 to £1,000,000. Those based in London and bigger cities will often earn more too. The potential for earning growth is huge if you choose a career as a barrister. Remember that you would start low and work your way up – you would also be self employed so a lot rests on your skill, performance and reputation.

What skills does a barrister need?

The role of a barrister can include the following:

- Excellent communications and interpersonal skills, alongside the ability to express arguments and ideas clearly
- An analytical mind and a logical approach
- Commercial and legal awareness
- Advocacy skills – the ability to be an advocate for someone else and act in their best interests
- Excellent time, project and people management skills
- The ability to remain calm under pressure and a flexible approach to working when situations change
- Problem solving skills
- A responsible attitude and integrity



Solicitor

What does a solicitor do?

- Works closely with clients and is usually their first point of contact.
- Regularly undertakes fundamental legal transactions on behalf of clients.
- Represents clients in police stations.
- Works in practice, in-house, in companies or local central government

In the UK, the role of a solicitor is to take instructions from clients, including individuals, groups, public sector organisations or private companies, and advise them on necessary courses of legal action.

As a solicitor, you would work closely with clients and are likely to be their first point of contact. The issues that solicitors advise on range from personal issues (such as wills and divorces) to commercial work (such as mergers and acquisitions). Once qualified, you could work in private practice, in-house for commercial or industrial organisations, in local or central government, or in the court service.

What are the day-to-day responsibilities of a solicitor?

A solicitor's day-to-day responsibilities can be varied and changes from case to case. Daily tasks can include giving legal advice to clients, translating client's issues into legal terms, researching cases, writing legal documents, general preparing of cases, liaising with other legal professionals, attending court and carrying out advocacy, and negotiating settlements.



How much do solicitors earn a year?

The hard work and long hours reflect the wage and salary for a solicitor. A newly qualified solicitor in a firm outside of the city or smaller commercial practice may expect to earn around £25,000 to £40,000. An average solicitor salary in London is anything from £60,000 to £150,000 based on five years' experience, but as there are many areas of law, this can vary. For those with over ten years' experience, earnings can range from £170,000 to £1,000,000. Those based in London and bigger cities will often earn more too. The potential for earning growth is huge if you choose a career as a solicitor.

What skills does a solicitor need?

- A professional approach to work, integrity and a respect for confidentiality
- Problem solving skills
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Accuracy and attention to detail
- Strong negotiating skills
- Interpersonal skills are needed to work as part of a wider team, as well as with your client and other organisations
- Time management skills and the ability to plan work and prioritise tasks
- Commercial awareness and flexibility when dealing with changing circumstances and scenarios
- Resilience and self-confidence

What qualifications do I need?

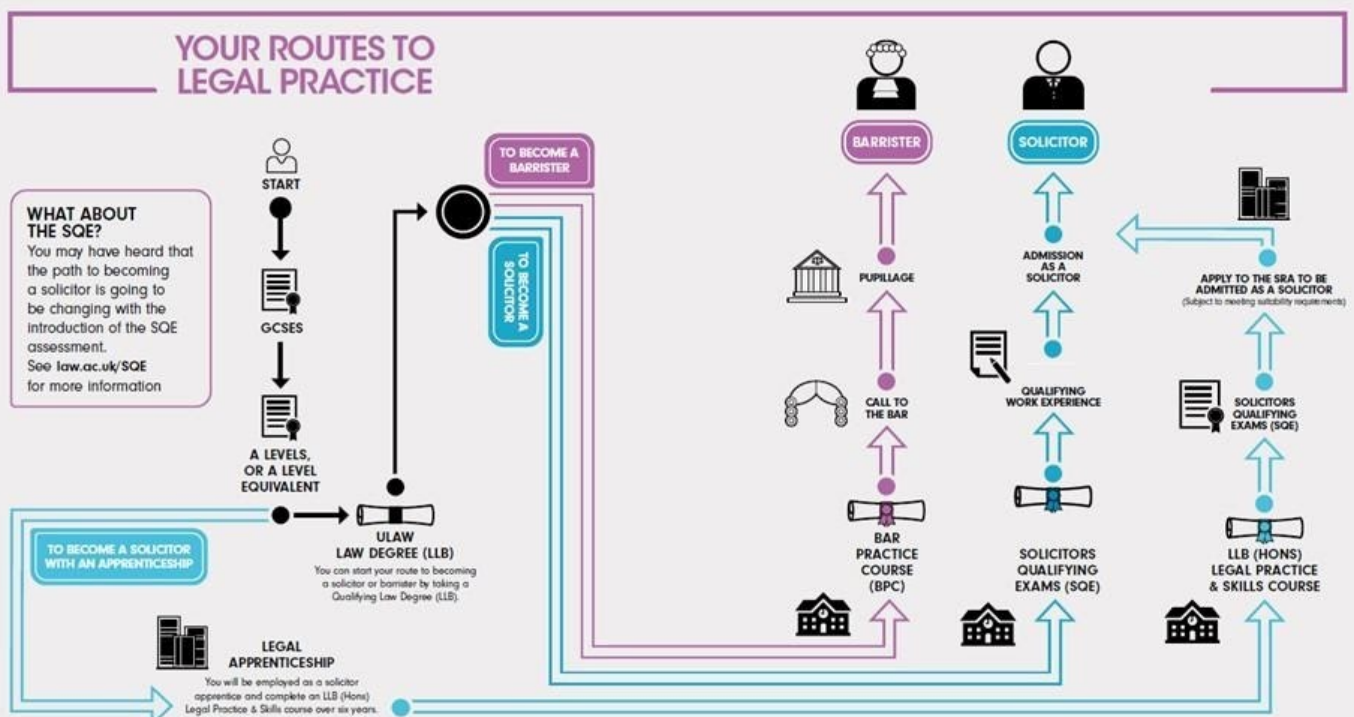
If you want to be a barrister or solicitor, after your GCSE level studies you would normally study A levels (or equivalents), then a degree followed by a year or two on a postgraduate law course. Finally, you would spend a year or two undertaking work-based training (period of recognised training/training contract or pupillage). There are alternative routes, but this is the path taken by the vast majority of lawyers.

Course spotlight

A level Law

NEC's A level Law online course explores the English legal system and substantive law, including criminal and civil law. With tutor-marked assignments, you'll consider different scenarios, applying legal rules, constructing arguments and evaluating key legal issues and concepts as you progress.

If you're planning to study law at university, A level Law provides a strong head-start in fundamental areas of this complex subject. A level Law will also develop your essay writing, research and debating skills, problem-solving and analytical thinking – preparing you for a diverse range of future career paths.



Routes to becoming a solicitor or barrister

Study a Law degree...

You may have heard of the term Qualifying Law Degree (QLD). In the past a QLD was required for both the solicitor and barrister route. However, if you have yet to start your legal education this is no longer required for the solicitor route due to the introduction of the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE). At the time of writing, a qualifying law degree is still required to become a barrister. This means that you will have covered the seven core modules required by the BSB which include: Administrative Law, Contract Law, Criminal Law, European Union (EU) Law, Equity and Trusts, Land (sometimes called Property) Law, and Tort Law. All of these subjects can be studied on a University of Law LLB. You will also have the opportunity to study option modules in subjects such as Mental Health and Mental Capacity Law, Family Law and Employment Law.

...or a non-Law degree followed by a suitable conversion course

If you're not sure what you'd like to study at university, you can still keep your options open! After graduating from a different discipline, it is possible to then study a law conversion course. These are specially designed conversion courses for non-law graduates to move into the legal sector.

Becoming a barrister with the BPC

The Bar Practice Course (BPC) is one of the qualifying postgraduate courses allowing graduates to prepare and practise as barristers in England and Wales. It is the vocational stage of training, which you're required to pass before you can go on to complete the final, practical stage of training; pupillage. Different providers have slightly different names for this vocational period of training but at The University of Law we refer to it as the BPC.

Becoming a solicitor with the SQE

If you want to be a solicitor, you will need to take the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE). This is split into both the SQE 1 and SQE 2. The first section of the SQE tests your knowledge of the 'black letter law' whilst the second part tests many of the skills that you would be required to master in order to be a solicitor.

To qualify through the SQE route, you will need:

- a degree (or equivalent) in any subject
- pass both stages of the SQE assessment
- two years' full-time (or equivalent) qualifying work experience
- pass character and suitability requirements as set by the SRA



Can you be a solicitor without a degree?

It is possible to become a solicitor without a degree if you gain work experience equivalent to a degree. This is considered on a case by case basis by the SRA (Solicitors Regulatory Authority).

Alternatively you can become a solicitor via the Legal Apprenticeship route.

You will work in a law firm for six to seven years on a programme that focuses 80% on work and 20% on study and training. This is a chance to 'earn while you learn' and come out with a degree at the end of the programme. You can discover more about legal apprenticeships through ULaw: <https://www.law.ac.uk/study/apprenticeships/>

Another method of qualifying as a solicitor without a degree is to become a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives, and then undertaking the SQE. You can find more information here: <https://www.cilex.org.uk/study>

Hear from our students:

The flexibility of online learning: An interview with Charlotte Fagan, ULaw Online LLB student



I made the decision to study online, as I was working as a Project Manager at the time and couldn't see myself leaving to complete my studies at university in person. I wanted to make sure that I had the right qualifications to get me where I wanted to be, so studying online seemed like the best option.



The flexibility of an online course has helped me in so many ways. Being able to work whilst studying has given me invaluable experience within the legal sector and has enabled me to grow my network. I won't pretend that it hasn't been difficult, because it has, but you learn how to balance it and I can honestly say it has been 100% worth it. It gives you such a huge sense of achievement and really makes you think you can do anything that you put your mind to.

My top reason to study online would definitely be the flexibility that it gives you. If you want to pursue further education, but cannot or do not want to study full-time or attend university in person, then I encourage you to look into it further. Find out more about the LLB Online here:

<https://www.law.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/law/llb-hons-law/online/>

Natalia chose NEC when she started struggling at school. She found success in online learning and has learnt skills that will last a lifetime.



I first started homeschooling because I found my grades and morale slipping in mainstream school. This, however, did not mean I hated learning. On the contrary, I loved learning and the extra curricular school activities such as debate and choir, but the school environment and people in it really put me off learning. I was on a constant path to burnout every day which negatively affected my mental health. Choosing NEC was a fantastic experience.

Self study also made me realise that learning never stops. It's not a race, not a sprint, not even a marathon, but a lifelong journey and you need to pace yourself. The path isn't necessarily linear. You'll have to sprint sometimes, maybe near exam season, and you can walk when you need a breather. [Read more.](#)

Course spotlight

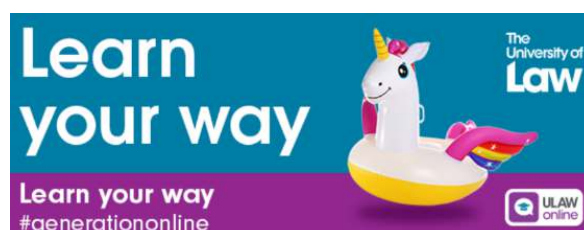
ULaw Online – LLB Law



ULaw's online law degree, known as an LLB or Bachelor of Laws, is equivalent to a BA or BSc. If your career aspiration is to be a solicitor or barrister in the UK, this degree is perfect for you. And if you have set your sights on a career in politics, business, or journalism, this Law Degree, with the transferrable skills it gives you, is an excellent launch pad for these ambitions and more. With this professionally focused qualification, you can expect to learn practical skills coupled with a focus on your future employability. Choose to study this course online and you can enjoy the flexibility of studying when, where and how you like while still receiving the same level of expert guidance and support.

If you have an interest in other areas, ULaw also offer options which allow you to complement your studies with elective modules while providing you with everything you need to progress to the next stage of legal training.

- [LLB Law with International Business](#)
- [LLB Law with Business](#)
- [LLB Law with Government and Politics](#)
- [LLB Law with Criminology](#)



FAQs

I'm looking at a career change and have training/qualifications in a different sector. Are there any advantages to being a mature student?

We have many mature students studying with us and depending on what you have done before your change to law, you can even be better placed than your younger counterparts when it comes to obtaining a training contract or pupillage. If you've worked in a relevant related sector (you've worked in insurance and you're seeking to go into insurance litigation) you may have relevant experience and possibly contacts, which are likely to be of interest for recruiters with specialisms in your area of expertise.

What do recruiters look for?

Strong academic ability: Law is an academically challenging profession and employers want to know that you will be able to handle the work. Your most recent grades will carry the most weight when applying for vacation placements or training contracts early on in your degree. However GCSEs, A Levels, academic awards and first year university grades will all count.

Work experience: Work experience is essential in order to gain an insight into the legal profession. Obtaining work experience is important as it tells a prospective employer that you are committed to a career in law and that you are a person they should seriously consider. We strongly advise you to apply for vacation schemes (solicitor) or mini-pupillages (barrister). Many firms are prepared to offer informal work experience or shadowing opportunities if you ask them. Other experience opportunities include voluntary work, pro bono work, firm open days and observing court proceedings from the public gallery.

Where can I find more information about becoming a barrister?

You can find out more information about the qualifications you can take with The University of Law to become a barrister here: <https://www.law.ac.uk/study/>

Pupillage Gateway is the pupillage recruitment portal operated by the Bar Council to help prospective candidates prepare their application: <https://www.pupillagegateway.com/>

The Bar Council offers helpful information for students who are interested in a career as a barrister: <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/>

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) is the regulator for barristers in England and Wales: <https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/>

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LawCareers.Net is a comprehensive, one-stop online resource created for future lawyers and those who recruit them: <https://www.lawcareers.net/>

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) is the regulator for solicitors in England and Wales. They offer helpful information for students who are interested in a career as a solicitor: <https://www.sra.org.uk/>

How many solicitors and barristers are in the UK?

According to the [BSB](#) as of 2020 there were approximately 17,000 barristers.

Meanwhile the [SRA](#) states that in 2020 there were approximately 150,000 practising solicitors.

The difference in numbers of the two shows how barristers are more specialist in nature and this is reflected in the competition in obtaining pupillage to join the profession.