


*Thinking about  
a Career in Law?*

*Supporting the next generation of Legal Professionals*



## The legal profession ... as it really is:

- You do not have to train as a Solicitor before you can qualify as a Barrister.
  - Law is not always as glamorous as the media might suggest.
  - Not all barristers wear wigs.
  - Solicitors do not spend all their time in Court. Indeed, some do not even see the inside of one in a professional sense.
  - You do not have to study law to qualify as a solicitor, but you do have to complete a conversion course known as the Graduate Diploma in Law.
  - Strong academics are a must, with most law firms and barristers' chambers requiring a 2:1 degree in a traditional subject.
  - Firms still favour 'red brick' universities, so it is important to start planning your career before you complete your UCAS form.
  - Law firms vary in size and the areas in which they specialise.
  - Not all lawyers make megabucks.
  - There are huge costs involved in breaking into the profession, but financial help is available from larger commercial firms and the Inns of Court.
  - Working in the commercial arena is not for the faint-hearted, as hours can be long and unpredictable.
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# What skills do you need to be a solicitor?

Certain personal skills are necessary to be a good Solicitor. These include:

- An analytical, enquiring mind – with the ability to draw out key issues from a mass of information;
- Clear verbal, listening and written communication skills to gather information and articulate it to others;
- The aptitude to solve problems in a practical way that helps your client;
- commercial awareness, to understand challenges that are to come;
- confidentiality, being honest and having integrity is key when dealing with client issues;
- Patience, close attention to detail and strong organisation skills;
- The ability to work under pressure to strict deadlines.

# What skills do you need to be a Barrister?

Certain personal skills are necessary to be a good Barrister. These include:

- A quick, decisive and analytical mind
  - Persuasiveness and the ability to construct an argument
  - Confidence and a skill for public speaking
  - The ability to build relationships with a wide range of people
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# Career Paths in Law

If you are interested in working in the legal profession, it is important that you understand the different roles which exist. Most people are aware of Solicitors and Barristers, but these are only two of the career options available within the legal profession:

## Solicitors

Solicitors mainly work in private practice, but can work in local and central government, law enforcement, the Courts, and private and public sector organisations. Traditionally, Solicitors would be the first port of call for people who needed legal advice, and they may refer cases on to a Barrister if necessary. As part of their role they will be expected to communicate with clients and produce necessary documents and paperwork to assist with the actions. This can include the creation of documents, contracts and letters to meet the needs of the client. They will also take the lead role in preparing papers for Court, and leading any legal secretaries or assistants who may be supporting the case.

Solicitors do cover a wide range of different legal areas, including family law, personal injuries claims, wills and probate, property law, and some aspects of criminal law. In many of these areas of law, one of their primary roles will be to act as a negotiator between their client and another party, with the view to securing agreed objectives for their client. Whilst Solicitors can appear in Court when necessary, they may require a Barrister to act on their behalf in some instances. In these cases, they will act to support the Barrister.

A good Solicitor is required to have a thorough understanding of the area of law that they practice in, and they must pay attention to detail, as even small mistakes can be costly. They should have good negotiation skills, but they must also have the ability to control their clients expectations, so that their client understands if their demands are unreasonable.



## Apprenticeships

It is possible to qualify as a Solicitor through completing an apprenticeship. An apprenticeship will need to meet the requirements of the Apprenticeship Standard for a solicitor (England) or the Level 7 Higher Apprenticeship in Legal Practice (Wales) including passing an assessment conducted by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) or approved by the SRA.

## Qualifying as a Solicitor

Generally there are two key stages to qualifying as a Solicitor:

- the academic stage
- the vocational stage


The academic stage is achieved by either a university degree in law or a university degree in a different subject and completing the Common Professional Examination (CPE) sometimes also referred to as the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL).

The vocational stage comprises

- the Legal Practice Course (LPC) soon to be changing to SQE
- a period of recognised training of two years (PRT), and
- the Professional Skills Course (PSC).

## Barristers

A Barrister is a type of lawyer who can represent individuals or organisations in court or via written legal advice. In general, Barristers are only involved in the legal process after court proceedings have commenced. However, they may also provide written opinions to clients (or their Solicitors) to advise them on the strength of their cases, and this may include advice on whether they believe that the case should go to court.



As part of their role in the courtroom, they may present evidence, examine and cross-examine witnesses and make strong statements to support their client's case. Barristers do not normally work directly with clients, but they are normally briefed by Solicitors to help them to understand the details of the case. A single Barrister may work with a large team of solicitors to develop a strong case for the client.

Many Barristers in the UK are self-employed, but maintain close links with different legal firms in the area. These Barristers may work in offices called 'chambers' with other practicing Barristers in the area. It is possible for two Barristers within a single chamber to be working against each other on opposite sides of a case. Some top Barristers work with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on behalf of the nation. Other Barristers work full-time with commercial clients, as part of their legal departments.

A limited number of senior Barristers receive 'silk' – becoming King's Counsel (KC) – as a mark of outstanding ability. They are normally instructed in very serious or complex cases. Most senior Judges once practiced as KCs.

Barristers normally specialise in one particular area of the law, so that they can offer the best possible representation in these areas. However, the 'cab rank' rule in England and Wales means that Barristers must accept a case if they are offered it, regardless of their personal convictions, unless they can prove that there is a conflict of interests.

## Qualifying as a Barrister

The steps typically taken to become a Barrister involve three main stages of training:

- the academic stage
- the vocational stage
- the pupillage stage





The academic stage is the first part of training for the Bar and consists of a Qualifying Law Degree or a degree in another subject supplemented by an approved Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) course.

The second stage of training to become a Barrister is the vocational stage. This takes the form of the Bar Professional Course (BPC).

The BPC aims to give students the skills required for a career at the Bar. It is primarily a practical course including plenty of advocacy and role-playing, as well as exercises in drafting legal documents and writing opinions.

As well as completing a law degree or equivalent qualifications, students must successfully pass the Bar Course Aptitude Test (BCAT) and join an Inn of Court before commencing the BPC.

The final stage of training to become a Barrister is pupillage. Pupillage usually last for 12 months, unless a reduction or extension is approved by the Bar Standards Board. Pupillage is usually undertaken in a set of Barristers' chambers, although it can be undertaken with certain other organisations. Being a pupil is similar to being an apprentice, as you will gain practical training under the supervision of an experienced Barrister or Barristers. At the end of the year you will be a fully qualified Barrister.

## Chartered Legal Executives

Practising Fellows of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives specialise in a particular area of law, which means the everyday work of a Chartered Legal Executive lawyer is similar to that of a Solicitor.

With extended rights of audience in civil, criminal and family proceedings, those Fellows who train and qualify as Legal Executive Advocates can represent their clients in the County Court, Family Proceedings Court, Magistrates' Court including the Youth Court, Coroners Court and in most Tribunals depending on the area of law in which they practice.



Chartered Legal Executive lawyers have the option to become Solicitors in one or two years after becoming Fellows and usually are exempt from the training contract graduates must complete to qualify as Solicitors.

## How to apply for CILEx Professional qualifications (CPQ)

Entry to CILEx is open to all and how you study with them does depend on the qualifications you already have:

If you don't hold a qualifying law degree, you will complete a CPQ foundation course, with 5 compulsory modules.

You will then move onto the CPQ advanced course which you can start from if you are a Law graduate or CILEX Paralegal. There are 4 compulsory modules with one optional module.


Finally you complete the CPQ professional course, that contains one optional module.

For more information go to <https://cpq.cilex.org.uk/>

## Licensed Conveyancer

A Licensed Conveyancer is a specialist legal professional who has been trained to deal with all aspects of property law. Their role is very similar to that of a solicitor dealing with a property transaction. However, rather than being qualified as a Solicitor, they will have completed all of the examinations and practical training provided by a regulatory body for Licensed Conveyancers.

Typically, their tasks might include taking instructions from a client in relation to the sale or purchase of a property, conducting searches in relation to the property with local authorities, advising clients of any incurred costs such as stamp duty land tax and legal fees, drafting contracts setting out the terms of the sale of a property, liaising with mortgage lenders (banks and building societies) to ensure





they have all the relevant information, and paying costs on behalf of the client such as stamp duty and estate agent fees.

Licensed conveyancers can work anywhere that deals with the transfer of a title to property or land in a legal department headed by a qualified person. The scope of employment is not limited to a law firm; it ranges from housing associations and local authorities, across banks and building societies to property development companies and even railways and airports.

## Qualifying as a Licensed Conveyancer


To qualify as a licensed conveyancer the Level 4 Diploma in Conveyancing Law and Practice (or equivalent if applying for exemptions) and the Level 6 Diploma in Conveyancing Law and Practice (or equivalent if applying for exemptions) must be completed. You will also need to complete 1200 hours of practical experience before you are able to apply for your first qualifying licence to practise as a CLC lawyer.

## Chartered Patent Attorneys

Patent attorneys are patent and intellectual property specialists, and they also deal in areas such as trademarks, design rights and copyright laws. Essentially, they are legal agents who act for clients like creators or companies to help them obtain a patent, deal with patent infringement or get legal advice on other areas related to intellectual property law. They also deal with renewing or enforcing existing trademarks, patents or copyright, and may also be involved in the transfer or sale of patents.

Patent attorneys are a select crew: there are only around 1500 patent attorneys in the UK, compared to 120,000 solicitors and 15,000 barristers.

A patent attorney may be employed in a specialist patent attorney firm, or in-house in the IP or patent departments of large companies.



## How to Become a Patent Attorney

To enter the profession, a degree in a science, engineering, technology or a mathematics based subject from a recognised institution is strongly preferred. A science / engineering background is required to enable you to understand a client's invention. This mix between science / engineering and law is one of the aspects that make the role of the patent attorney such an interesting career.

Naturally, it is a legal based role, so apart from a scientific brain, those who wish to become a patent attorney will need to demonstrate an aptitude for law. Some choose to show this through a postgraduate certificate or LLM in Intellectual Property Law, but this is by no means mandatory.


Language and communication skills (both written and oral) are hugely important. However, patents are no longer solely a national industry; most British patent attorneys are European patent attorneys too and act to secure patents in other countries, not just the UK, so being able to read German and French may be really helpful.

The training to become a patent attorney occurs largely on-the-job. This generally involves working for one or more fully qualified patent attorneys, and preparing for and sitting a series of examinations.

The examinations include those set by the Patent Examination Board (PEB), which must be taken in order to become a registered (UK) patent attorney. This is a two-tier system involving Foundation Examinations and Final Examinations.

Candidates must pass one of the Foundation Examinations before they are eligible to sit the final examinations. Examinations are also set by the European Patent Office, and these must be taken to become a European patent attorney.

In addition, many patent attorneys also handle trademarks, and may benefit from becoming a registered trade mark attorney (UK qualification) and a European trade mark attorney.



## Trade Mark Attorneys

A trade mark attorney is a legal professional who is qualified to act in matters involving trade mark law and practice, providing legal advice on a wide range of trade mark-related issues, and acting on behalf of clients in dealing with the registration authorities in the UK and EU and, through local associates where necessary, overseas, as well as with third parties.

A trade mark attorney will have a thorough grounding in UK and foreign trade mark law and practice. A working knowledge of related issues such as copyright, industrial designs, passing off, common law and unfair competition is also important.

Chartered Trade Mark Attorneys play a central role in the selection of new trademarks and are responsible for advising on and achieving appropriate registrations for their clients, and thereafter advising on the correct way to use trademarks, as well maintaining registrations in force.

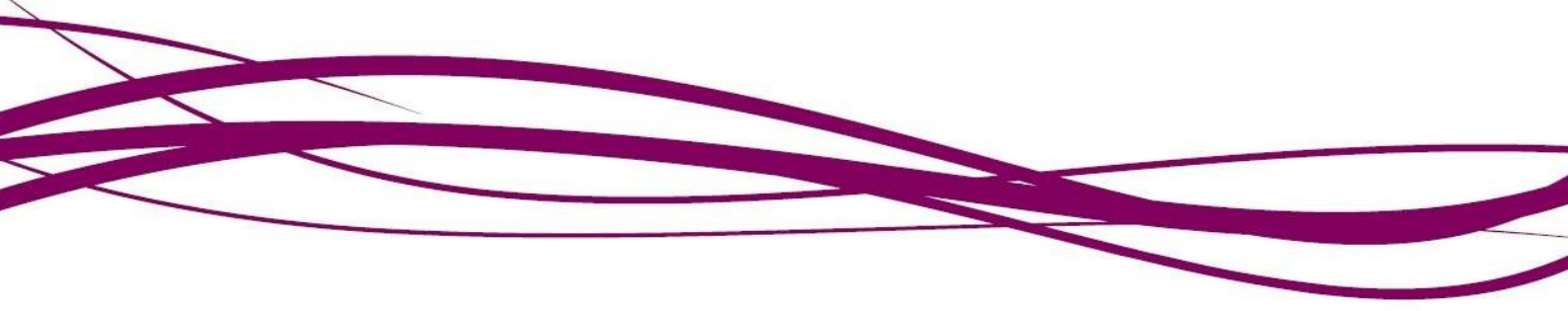
Chartered Trade Mark Attorneys also advise on portfolio management, including expansion of protection, transfers of ownership, licenses, and other developments affecting the client's trademarks.

Advising on infringement is another important role.

## How to Become a Trade Mark Attorney

Most people begin their career by joining a law firm with a department specialising in trade mark work. Chartered Trade Mark Attorneys are also employed by large companies which have enough trade mark interests to need an in-house department to deal with their own matters.

A thorough grounding in UK and EU trade mark law and practice is essential and knowledge of overseas trade mark law and practice can be useful. Employers



usually provide extensive training, so you may not need this knowledge as a prerequisite.

Entry into the profession is at degree level, often a 2:1 or higher is needed, unless the prospective trainee has a number of years' work experience within the profession, for example as a paralegal.

A law degree can be advantageous but is not always essential. However an LLB can exempt candidates from a small number of the registered trade mark attorney qualification exams. Undergraduate degrees in modern languages, business or the arts are looked upon favourably by many firms.

Once you start as a trainee, you will learn on the job and also study for professional exams that will allow you to be entered on the register of trade mark attorneys.

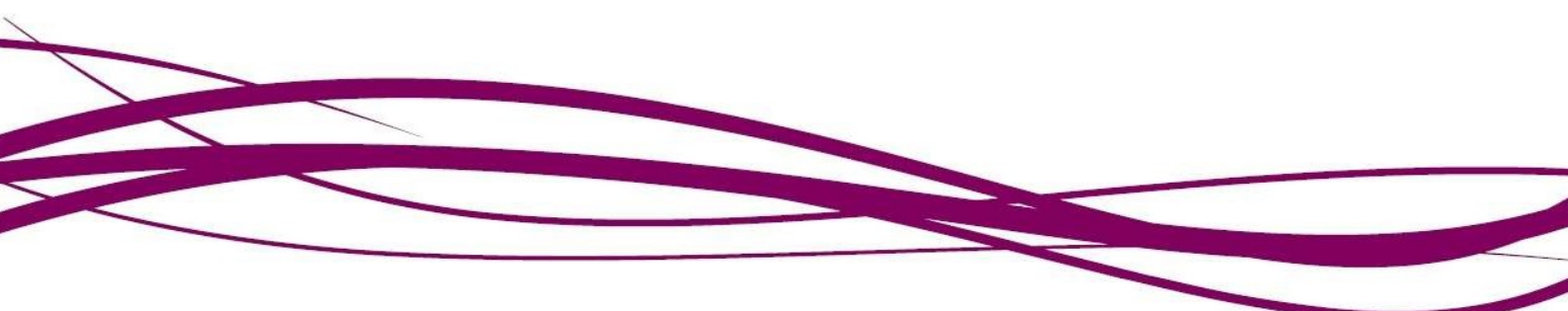
To qualify as a registered trade mark attorney you need to complete a minimum of two years' work, supervised by a qualified registered trade mark attorney or other suitably qualified person. There are also two courses you will need to complete, at Queen Mary or Bournemouth and Nottingham Law School, which are often done alongside the qualifying work.

## Costs Lawyers

A Costs Lawyer is a qualified and regulated legal professional who specialises in the law and practice of legal costs.

As a Costs Lawyer, your services would be predominantly sought by firms of solicitors, but instructions may also be obtained from members of the public including businesses.

The work historically derives from the following three key areas:



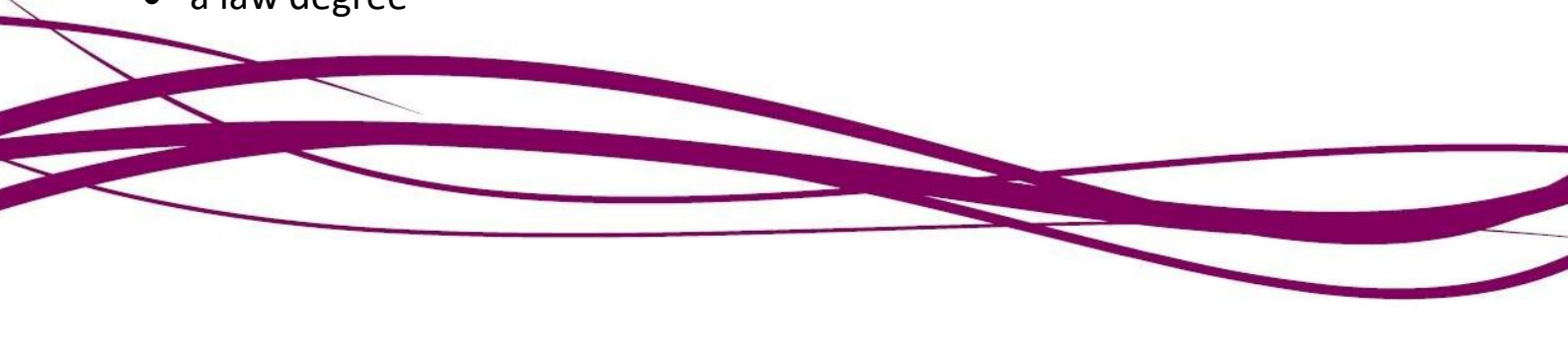
- Costs between the parties
- Solicitor and client costs
- Legal aid / public funding

Until recently, most of the work you would undertake as a Costs Lawyer would be carried out after the settlement of a matter. However, in very recent years, with the introduction of costs budgeting, Costs Lawyers are an integral part of a case (whichever party is giving the instructions) and, as a Costs Lawyer, you may be heavily involved in the management of a claim from a very early stage right through to settlement of the claim and to the conclusion of matters in relation to costs.

As a Costs Lawyer, what work you would undertake would depend upon where you work – this may be in-house in a solicitor’s firm, within a firm dealing solely with legal costs or you could work independently. Some Costs Lawyers deal with a particular specialism (i.e. work solely on behalf of claimants or defendants or only take on legal aid work) whilst others may deal with a broad spectrum of work.

## Qualifying as a Paralegal

There are no specific rules about what qualifications and training you must have. However, you will be expected to have a good standard of general education, a good understanding of the law and legal system, and good administration skills. In addition, some employers may ask for qualifications such as:

- a paralegal practice award, certificate, diploma or higher diploma
  - a legal secretary certificate or diploma
  - an award in legal studies
  - an HNC / HND or foundation degree in law, legal studies or paralegal practice
  - a law degree
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Depending on the job you are applying for, these qualifications may not always be necessary. Relevant work experience in a legal setting would also help you when looking for work.





## Want to know more?

### Check out the following websites:

Solicitors

<https://www.sra.org.uk>

Barristers

<https://www.barcouncil.org.uk>

Chartered Legal Executives

<https://www.cpq.cilex.org.uk>

Licensed Conveyancers

<https://www.clc-uk.org>

Chartered Patent Attorneys

<http://www.cipa.org.uk/>

Trade Mark Attorneys

<https://www.citma.org.uk/>

Costs Lawyers

<http://www.associationofcostslawyers.co.uk/>

Paralegals

<https://www.clt.law.ac.uk>

<https://www.findcourses.co.uk/training/clt-paralegal/>



## Grimsby

Lauriston House  
Town Hall Square  
Grimsby  
N E Lincolnshire  
DN31 1JB  
T: 01472 240 251  
F: 01472 241728

## Scunthorpe

8-18 Frances Street  
Scunthorpe  
N Lincolnshire  
DN15 6NS  
T: 01724 847 888  
F: 01724 280 933

## Barton

Market Place  
Barton-upon-Humber  
N Lincolnshire  
DN18 5DD  
T: 01652 632 215

## Louth

25a Northgate  
Louth  
Lincolnshire  
LN11 0LT  
T: 01507 600 610  
F: 01507 600 932

## Hessle

Suite 2, Stable Court  
Hesslewood Country Business Park  
Ferriby Road  
Hessle  
HU13 0LH  
T: 01482 212077



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