

### HOT TIPS - Law Work Experience

For students considering a career in the legal profession, there is no real substitute for relevant work experience. It will be invaluable in helping you to decide:

- Are you suited for the legal profession - do you have the skills, personality and commitment needed?
- What type of legal work would suit you - solicitor, barrister, paralegal?
- What areas of law would you enjoy?
- What kind of organisation would you want to work for?

Work experience helps to answer these questions, but it also allows you to prove to employers that you have made an informed and appropriate career choice. It can be difficult to convince a potential employer that you are committed to a legal career without evidence of related work experience. Many law firms recruit a substantial number of their trainees through their work experience schemes. Some Chambers will only accept pupillage applications from candidates who have already undertaken a mini-pupillage with them.

Formal work experience schemes with law firms are usually for second year law students or non-law graduates prior to the Graduate Diploma in Law. Informal arrangements can be undertaken at any stage - the sooner the better.

Vacation placements with solicitors could include

- Court visits
- Visiting companies
- Familiarisation with cases and transactions
- Observing interviews
- Attending workshops

Typically, only larger firms provide paid placements. These larger firms will have a very clear structure to their placement and if you perform well your application for a training contract may be put through to interview automatically.

Time in smaller firms will be shaped by your supervisor - use your initiative to suggest work you could do and ensure exposure to a range of legal areas. Students who have had successful work experience in such firms sometimes have training contracts offered or are recommended to other firms.

### **Making applications**

Placements are increasingly competitive - especially the structured, paid schemes with larger firms. City/commercial may require a specific tariff at A2 level and certain results in Year 1 of your degree. For such firms you should **Enquire early** - September onwards for Easter, December onwards for the summer. **Check closing dates** - may be Nov/Dec for Easter and Jan/Feb for the summer. Some firms' closing dates may be different for non-law students. Spend time preparing your CV or online/paper application form. Apply both to advertised schemes and on a speculative basis.

Smaller firms or organisations with a small legal team may recruit up to Easter but it is best to make enquiries from the New Year onwards to ensure you don't miss anything.

### **Identifying firms**

Some larger firms or organisations advertise their placements. Some of these opportunities are available on the [Prospects Legal](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Law/p!ejmLL) ([http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/Law/p!ejmLL](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Law/p!ejmLL)) website. The Law Society's [Directory of Solicitors and Barristers](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/choosingandusing/findasolicitor.law) (<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/choosingandusing/findasolicitor.law>) is useful if you want to make a speculative application.

The Training Contract and Pupillage Handbook at [www.lawcareers.net](http://www.lawcareers.net) lists selected firms/chambers offering vacation opportunities.

[Chambers Guide to the Legal Profession](http://www.chambersandpartners.com/) (<http://www.chambersandpartners.com/>) gives details of highly rated firms and chambers in specialist fields. The student edition includes a vacation work listing and timetable.

[The Legal 500](http://www.legal500.com/index.php) (<http://www.legal500.com/index.php>) provides a listing of high profile, specialist practitioners and details the firms for which they work.

### **Mini-pupillages with barristers**

Mini-pupillages are periods of work experience spent with barristers. You can undertake them at any point during your degree, they could incorporate:

- Helping to prepare papers
- Observing in court
- Researching acts
- Sitting in on conferences with clients

Mini-pupillages can be assessed or un-assessed. Assessed mini-pupillages are becoming more popular. The purpose of the placement is to allow the chambers to assess the student over the week as a means of selecting candidates for pupillages. Un-assessed places are available at most chambers. This is not to say, however, that your behaviour and performance is not informally noted. Students find it valuable to have a reference or develop contacts through a mini-pupillage. Mini-pupillages are usually unpaid.

The Prospects website has a [mini-pupillage search facility](#).

Chambers can also be identified via a number of sources including:

[The Chambers Guide to the Legal Profession](http://www.chambersandpartners.com/) (<http://www.chambersandpartners.com/>) [www.lawcareers.net/Barristers/](http://www.lawcareers.net/Barristers/) - a list of Chambers offering mini-pupillages.

[The Bar Directory](http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/) (<http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/>) lists all Chambers in England and Wales.

Applications are usually via CV. Given the importance of the written word and presentation to the role of barrister, CVs must be selective and effective. The Careers Service can provide information and guidance to help with CVs, application forms and interviews.