



SOURCING ALTERNATIVE LEGAL OPPORTUNITIES

Links to the main opportunities on offer

[Abstract](#)

Provides an overview of the roles to which both law and non students with an interest in a legal career can apply other than training contracts and pupillages.

David Ainscough
daa21@cam.ac.uk

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Introduction

The experience in completing a Cambridge degree provides students with a well developed set of transferable skills which enhances their prospects of employment. Add to this the specific knowledge gained from a law degree, or the interest in law developed by any student, means a career as a solicitor or barrister are two obvious outcomes. Both law students and non law students who go on to do a subsequent law conversion course have clear pathways to follow in qualifying. However there are

a number of reasons why seeking alternative opportunities other than qualifying to practice immediately is valid. Namely,

The route to qualification and the nature of the work as a qualified practitioner is seen not to play to an individual's strengths and they wish to pursue alternative graduate outcomes for their future career.

Whilst still intending to qualify in due course graduates wish to spend some time experiencing other areas of work as short or long term activities informing their career choice.

Because sometimes its difficult to engage entirely efficiently with the timelines set down as part of qualifying as a solicitor or barrister graduates can find they have time to fill, and wish to do so profitably by enhancing their career profile. This makes for stronger applications when they subsequently do come to apply.

This guideline seeks to fill a gap that exists in information helping to source the range of alternative opportunities that typically exist. It cannot be entirely comprehensive because the nature of transferable skills coupled with an interest in law opens up a significantly large array of possible opportunities some of which won't be listed below. What are identified however are those alternatives which past experience has shown to be especially attractive and meaningful and which sometimes can be very difficult to uncover in a single source. They are all outside of acquiring a training contract or graduate apprenticeship in a firm of solicitors or pupillage in a set of chambers. Some may require their own path to professional qualifications be followed but by no means all and usually not as extensively as qualifying for private practice.

Finally for those looking for other suggestions of developing relevant experience in a legal context this guideline can be viewed in conjunction with the guideline "**Volunteering for a legal charity**" located in the [Graduate Digital Publications resource on Handshake](#) in the "Law" section.

Opportunities inside law firms

Law firm non trainee graduate programmes

As law firms have developed into global corporate businesses in their own right then a plethora of professional support activities and roles have become necessary. Some of these are open to graduate applicants and although some of the leading firms will have schemes which recruit annually many will simply have the need for "one off hiring" into a specific job description. Sometimes these roles will be located across any of the firm's offices and sometimes they will be in dedicated regionalised legal support centres outside London in other UK cities such as Manchester, Glasgow, Belfast and Birmingham. Here for example is [Allen & Overy's](#) in Northern Ireland and the other magic circle and some silver circle law firms have similar "support hubs"

elsewhere. Activities involved in these roles cover in house management and process consultancy, operations and project management and legal engineering. The helpful You Tube video from [Alayo Rosa](#) helps detail activities more deeply and careers stories outlining individual career pathways in law firms and service suppliers in these roles can be found on the [Legal Technologist](#) website.

In October 2021 six leading law firms combined to form a Consortium and working together with the University of Law provides a common foundation course and ongoing workshops and skills events to enhance the experience of graduates joining their own inhouse legal operations teams. The Consortium firms are CMS UK, Norton Rose Fulbright, Herbert Smith Freehills, Linklaters and Slaughter & May. They join the list of other law firms offering bespoke graduate programmes and opportunities.

[Allen & Overy LawTech Graduate Programme](#)

Rotations through various areas in Advanced Delivery & Solutions (Markets Innovation Group), Project Management, Legal Tech and Fuse or eDiscovery teams.

[Allen & Overy Consulting Programme.](#)

New global practice specialising in regulatory and strategic consulting services. Work is with clients of all sectors and sizes, from agile start-ups to global firms, providing them with innovative, practical and sustainable solutions. Provides specialist insight into governance, corporate purpose and culture, regulatory strategy, and risk management

[Freshfields Manchester Hub careers](#)

Each year a number of graduates can become Legal Hub Associates having responsibilities in document automation and AI, due diligence, document review, regulatory surveys, contract production, and legal analysis and research

[Linklaters Legal Operations Graduate Scheme](#)

Based within one of four core teams developing the business, namely, Alternative Legal Services, Innovation & Efficiency, Knowledge & Learning and Pricing.

Slaughter & May

Initially recruiting two graduates. Here's the announcement of the Scheme in [Legal Cheek](#).

[Norton Rose Fulbright Business Legal and Operations Graduate Scheme](#)

The work encompasses improving operational efficiency, developing technology enabled solutions, consulting with clients, modernising and maintaining the success of the firm and its business, and commercialising what the firm offers including identifying and assessing new business opportunities.

[Ashurst Advance Pathways Programme](#)

Covers legal operations, legal project management, legal technology and legal process improvement

[Herbert Smith Freehills Global Legal Operations Graduate Programme.](#)

The scheme see five roles on offer, two in London, two in Australia and one in Asia. Taking place over 18 months there will be rotations in Pricing, Legal Automation and Technology, Project Management and Process Design.

CMS

The scheme offers four roles withing business development and marketing with four rotations in client management, pitching, communications and brand and practice and sector marketing. [Here's the article](#) in Legal Cheek announcing the scheme's introduction

MacFarlanes

A graduate scheme focussing on emerging legal technologies such as AI, document automation, robotics, with a dual focus on process support and ideas generation. [Here's the article](#) in Legal Cheek announcing the scheme's introduction.

Legal support roles

Entry level roles for legal support are open to both law and non law graduates. The job specification may state that an interest in the legal services marketplace is required but not a law degree. Often there may be a statement that the firm does not expect those hoping to acquire a training contract to be applying for these roles. The roles can cover administration, marketing, knowledge management, legal technical support, recruiting, and analytical activities. The best and quickest way to source these opportunities is to

search each law firm's LinkedIn web pages...a very straightforward exercise and one which allows those searching quick access to current job postings. Simply google "law firm name and LinkedIn" and from the company profile access the jobs tab to begin searching.

Paralegal

The paralegal role focusses on activities with a clearly defined remit within a law firm allowing individuals to become focussed, specialised and quick at executing procedures and processes thereby taking the load off associates and other practitioners. Paralegals also thereby become profitable in their own right within the law firms they typically work for. Their work will support the business of the firm or organisation so paralegals will work in a wide range of legal specialisms from crime, consumer law, personal injury, real estate, personal finance, corporate work and many more. Paralegals also work in organisations in the public sector such as government departments, in industry and charities. A lot of the work revolves around researching, preparing, drafting and completing the documentation required in a legal transaction or case or policy. Some legal knowledge/level of qualification is often required and so roles are often applied for after a course at law school. This is especially the case if your career goal is to qualify with a law firm involved in public interest law, civil liberties and human rights work. Invariably you will have one or more paralegal positions with a law firm in this sector to acquire the relevant level of skills and experience to progress to a training contract. To find opportunities go to [The National Association of Paralegals](#) which delivers qualifications and training courses and as a consequence maintains a register of qualified paralegals and a jobs board. [The Institute of Paralegals](#) also provides careers information and a register for qualified professionals.

Most law firms or other organisations providing opportunities for paralegals will post opportunities to their own websites. They may sometimes use an alternative job title such as contracts manager or case worker or case administrator so its worth delving into the job description details a little. Check the websites of firms you've identified by either geographical location or work specialisms. Paralegal roles are actively picked up by job boards such as [Indeed.com](#) and [totaljobs.com](#) and its worth registering with both to be alerted to opportunities meeting your requirements when they are posted.

Paralegal roles within government departments are sourced through the [Civil Service Jobs website](#) using the "Legal Services" categorisation for job role.

Opportunities outside law firms

Training Contracts (and pupillage) outside law firms in other types of organisations.

There are organisations licensed by the SRA other than law firms that are able to oversee training contracts and qualify trainee lawyers, including in some instances sponsoring the costs of training and qualification. The best known of these is the [Government Legal Department](#) which annually sponsors a small number of both [solicitors and barristers](#) through their respective process. Trainees typically join HM Revenue and Customs, the Treasury, Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General's Office or other government departments. The National Crime Agency will sometimes take on trainees and here is the latest news about the [legal trainee scheme](#).

Equally well known is the [Crown Prosecution Service's Legal Trainee Scheme](#) for intending criminal solicitors and barristers. Intending solicitors will need to have completed the SQE (Solicitors Qualifying Exam) parts 1 & 2 and barristers their BTC (Bar Training Course)

Finding other training contract opportunities outside law firms is notoriously difficult as firms will review whether or not to sponsor in any given forthcoming year according to business needs and so their frequency is uncertain. They are also increasingly favouring the new Apprenticeship approach to qualifying their "in house lawyers to be". This makes more sense financially and embeds the future lawyer more deeply within the organisation via work experience. However a first starting place is [LawCareers.net](#) advanced training contract search engine using "in house" as your type of practice search criteria. Secondly there are also one or two organisations who are known to consistently recruit trainees such as British Telecom. Keep an eye on the job postings on the Careers Service Handshake platform to know when these "one off" roles are posted. You can also look at any large firm's annual graduate recruiting round to see whether "Legal" is listed as one of the departments recruiting and apply accordingly.

Local government lawyers, legal officers and trainees are sometimes recruited by City or County Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs or other local government bodies. LexisNexis has published an [introductory guide](#) to the work they do which usually concentrates on public procurement, social housing, children in social care, education and social care more generally. Although it is often difficult to source opportunities they frequently feature in the career news section of [LocalGovernmentLawyer](#)

The "Big Four" professional services companies ([Deloitte](#), [EY](#), [KPMG](#) and [PwC](#)) offer law training contracts and vac schemes for which students can apply in the usual way. However they also wish to attract those who are interested in legal careers to roles which do not require a qualification to practice but for which the transferable skills and interest in legal matters are seen as a distinct advantage. The first of these is graduate roles in tax advice which is often characterized by being a combination of knowledge of complex tax legislation with a familiarity and comfort with numerical analyses. All four firms have distinct entry routes into tax for which you apply through their website and which usually open for applications in July of each year. The

Careers Service has full details of their roles advertised on their website within Handshake but for a general introduction you can read the [Prospects website](#) and the careers material on the [Chartered Institute of Taxation](#).

The firms also offer roles within the Corporate Governance services they provide to clients. This is a relatively new entry route to the Big Four and in career terms places graduates, often from a legal background or with an interest in company law, on the path to becoming a [Company Secretary](#). The [Chartered Governance Institute](#) hosts a jobs board including trainee roles which covers all major organisations including the Big Four. Deloitte lists details of their scheme under [Legal Entity Management](#), and [KPMG](#) details the range of services covered by their governance practice.

[Policing](#)

Those interested in the law as a career can be attracted to the role of a [Police Officer](#). A full guide to entry level positions in the UK's regional police forces can be found on the Careers Service policing [website](#). Graduates can enter schemes leading to either roles as "beat officers" working within the community or as "Detectives" and the period of training typically takes two years.

[Opportunities in international law, NGOs and International organisations](#)

The organisations active in international legal activities cover a broad spectrum which includes legal services administered from within the national government of each country. In the UK this is the Government Legal Department. It also covers International Criminal Tribunals and Courts, Intergovernmental organisations such as the UN, NGOs such as JUSTICE and Amnesty International, and private law firms with public international practice areas. A possible differentiation of the mission of such a range of organisations is helpful and includes those which seek to create reciprocity and liaise over collective action; those which seek to establish and monitor interdependency in pursuing international action; those which seek to finance international cooperation; and those which seek to "name and shame" and prosecute international transgressors through the relevant courts.

Roles within such organisations extends from entry level positions which can be described as paralegal, intern or research assistant and which require a familiarity of relevant legal knowledge but perhaps not a full qualification right through to a fully qualified lawyer in a relevant jurisdiction. Language skills and post qualified work experience will probably be required in the latter roles.

There is no easy and singularly identifiable way of sourcing relevant opportunities across such a wide diversity but a systematic review of the

following is a useful investment of time. Each organisation listed will have its own website or LinkedIn pages detailing current vacancies and often a classification scheme facilitating keyword searching.

This is a list of [Intergovernmental organisations](#) (including UN organisations, sector specific, regional, law enforcement, humanitarian. Environmental, energy and cultural organisations – from Wikipedia). To search for legal opportunities at the United Nations use the relevant keyword search and classification scheme at the [UN Careers website](#). For those interested in becoming an international civil servant with the UN there is a [Young Professional Programme website](#) and applications typically open in July.

This is a list of [Human Rights NGOs in London](#) (inc. Amnesty, REDRESS, Human Rights Watch, JUSTICE, REPRIEVE, and the Refugee Council)

[International Development NGOs in London](#) (inc. The International Rescue Committee, UNICEF, ActionAid, and CAFOD)

EU institutions and law firms operating in Brussels plus NGOs and European Think Tanks are listed on [EuroBrussels](#)

Entry programmes to the EU as a lawyer are highlighted on its [Law website](#) whilst those looking to apply to [paid traineeships](#) within the EU can access the [EPSO website](#) (ie the European Personnel Selection Office). Opportunities exist in the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, Court of Justice, and the office of the European Ombudsman.

Navigating an approach, application and successful assessment by any of the above organisations can be a highly complex and specific process. Don't forget to research the Cambridge alumni who have been or are currently employed by any of these organisations using LinkedIn. Not only will you perhaps be able to contact them for advice and guidance but by consulting their career trajectories you'll identify a fund of suggestions for possible additional and relevant work experience for yourself.

Private law firms with significant public international law practice areas can be searched for via the UK rankings guide on [Chambers and Partners](#). They include: Clifford Chance, Fietta, Volterra Fietta, Debevoise & Plimpton, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Herbert Smith Freehills, Latham & Watkins, Skadden Arps, Quinn Emanuel, Three Crowns, Baker Botts, Cooley, Hogan Lovells, and Wilmer Hale. and their websites or LinkedIn pages can be searched for relevant six month internships.

Opportunities in service suppliers to law firms

Legal product start ups

As the legal services business becomes ever more competitive and dependant for its cost advantages on intelligent workflow management on behalf of clients a plethora of legal start ups have been created. Some of

these are now well known, others less so. Here's one [list of the leading ones](#) but there are others easy to find. There are a number of websites that cater for those seeking opportunities to use their interest in law and legal knowledge in an exciting and fast growing sector. Websites such as [Start Up jobs](#) are worth a visit but use the search filters intelligently for your role and location preferences and start by using the term "Legal" in the main search box. Other job sites such as [Otta](#) and [Talentpool](#) are worth a look.

Legal recruitment

There are several reasons why law firms, the "in house" legal departments of major corporates or public and private sector organisations can turn to a specialist external recruitment agency in order to help them hire lawyers. For example:

confidentiality. Organisations may want to limit the visibility of personnel changes within their organisation

speed and cost. Its often more effective to outsource recruiting leaving staff from within the firm to focus on clients and fee earning.

persuasion. A large part of a recruitment agent or consultants role may be in drawing to the attention an opportunity which otherwise would go unnoticed by potential applicants.

Because the legal labour market is so extensive it means that there is a continuing demand for those interested in it to become researchers and consultants in third part recruiting organisations. And because there is no barrier to entering such roles it is easy to apply and enter...and equally easy to move on to other roles when appropriate. Whether you aim to work in a third party agency which is solely based around executive search (often known colloquially as "head hunting" or search and select where an agent will run a visible advertising campaign the two roles you will see advertised principally are "researcher" and "recruitment consultant". Here's a [full description](#) of a generic, non sector specific recruitment consultant's role. To listen to a recording of how lawyers use recruitment agents access the video recording with [Ben Quarry](#) who is a legal recruitment consultant and a Cambridge law graduate.

The usual point of entry for a recent graduate is as a "researcher" within a recruitment agency. Responsibilities would include initial stage contacting of candidates, running recruitment campaigns and in the area of executive search usually the compiling and contacting of initial target lists. There are many recruitment agencies which may be advertising and hiring graduates and you will see them frequently on graduate jobs boards. However for a good initial insight into the range of agencies consult the jobs page at [TheLawyer.com](#) and you'll see the names of agencies running recruitment campaigns. For a quick snapshot see [Law Absolute](#), [Robert Walters](#), [Michael Page](#), and [Chadwick Nott](#).

Legal publishing research

Each year the major publishers of professional legal material update their website and hardcopy publications. Behind each will be many “researchers” for whom an understating of legal knowledge and terminology is an advantage. Research roles can become either become careers in their own right or short to medium term appointments solely whilst graduates continue looking for their main career outcomes. Research roles may be advertised on legal publishers’ websites or an interest can be expressed by writing an unsolicited application to the editor of the respective publication. Editors’ details are contained within the front pages of the hardcopy publication or on the respective websites. Working on guides such as directories of leading law firms by country and practice area provides the benefit of an excellent insight into the leading firms and practitioners within the profession. Look for example at:

Chambers and Partners – [Vacancies](#) and their jobs advertised on [LinkedIn](#)

Legal 500 – [Editorial and Research team](#) with contact details and jobs advertised on their [LinkedIn site](#)

Sweet & Maxwell (Thomson Reuters) [Vacancies page](#) and [LinkedIn site](#) (search for “Legal”)

Litigation Support Firms

There are some law firms that focus exclusively on supporting other law firms with managing a process or providing expertise in areas such as disputes, investigations, fraud and misconduct. Rather than have clients of their own they help other law firms provide a better set of outcomes for their clients. They often have a demand for law graduates in Research Analyst positions that don’t lead to qualification but which offer a short and medium term area of relevant work experience for those who are delaying the next step in their qualification process. Demand for analysts (and in some cases summer analysts) will vary by office location and from year to year. Some of these firms are well worth reviewing for opportunities eg [Kobre & Kim](#), [Saunders, Oliver Fisher](#) Unfortunately there is no convenient list to finding these roles in one place but vacancies do often appear on [Total Jobs](#) where you can use search terms such as “dispute resolution” or “litigation support”

[Legal Design Consultancies](#)

Legal design consultancies are at the cutting edge of making complex processes more accessible and therefore efficient and effective to “consumers of law” (either lawyers and their clients in law firms or members of the public managing legal affairs for themselves). As well as developing improved processes such consultancies often design clear accompanying documentation and materials. A combination of design thinking, legal expertise and awareness of new technologies is required in the roles on offer. The objective of the service is to enhance the “user experience”. There is no easy way to locate these companies but google searching with “legal design

consultancy” does provide adequate leads and often as a company they will accept unsolicited applications rather than have a list of current jobs being advertised.

Alternative legal careers requiring additional professional qualifications

Trade Mark Attorney

The [Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys](#) has provided a helpful [short guide](#) explaining the differences in intellectual property between a trade mark, a protected design, a patent and copyright, all of which can occupy the substance of a Trade Mark Attorney’s work.. Trade Mark Attorneys help their clients protect the integrity and identity of their brands whether encapsulated by logos, shapes, company names, or sounds/music. Both law and non law graduates can apply to firms which have intellectual property departments and advertise to take on trainees where you will likely work for two years whilst being supervised and taking exams. Employers include firms of Trade Mark Attorneys, large manufacturing companies, and some firms of solicitors. The Prospects website hosts a list of [where to source job vacancies](#).

Patent Attorney

Because the role of a Patent Attorney is to assess whether inventions are new and innovative and therefore eligible to be patented a high degree of scientific or technical knowledge is often a distinct advantage as is a way of thinking technically about a concept. For this reason its a career outcome pursued by STEM students and especially those with higher degrees such as a PhD. The qualification process whilst being supervised by someone who is qualified can take several years. Patent Attorneys are usually employed by firms in private practice, large companies or government departments. A [list to source job vacancies](#) can be found on the Prospects website. [Intellectual Property Careers](#) has several useful resources on how to find the right job as well as employer profiles and a job alert service including internships and insight days.

Notaries Public

Public Notaries are qualified lawyers and although most are also qualified solicitors it is possible to complete the vocational stage of qualification after a law degree from a UK university. The [Notaries Society](#) has a careers section outlining the route to qualification. The role of a public notary is essentially to authenticate the use of documents abroad including validating signatures such as deeds, estates, financial transactions, and powers of attorney. Fluency in languages in addition to English can therefore be very useful and important to have.

Legal Executive

The [Chartered Institute of Legal Executives](#) offers a [CILEX Professional Qualification \(CPQ\)](#) over two years to those who have completed a UK law degree but who do not wish to qualify as a solicitor or barrister via a training contract or pupillage. Legal Executives are the third branch of the qualified legal profession and they tend to specialise in their practice area from the start of the process and also qualify whilst earning on the job, conveyancing and probate work being typical examples. They can subsequently qualify as a solicitor, become a judge, work as a sole legal practitioner and act as a commissioner for oaths. They work within law firms alongside solicitors, within government or as in-house lawyers in large corporations. CILEX operates a jobs board for its members and many job opportunities can be found on national jobs boards such as [Indeed](#), [Reed](#), or [Total jobs](#). Future legal executives start with law firms as paralegals or legal secretaries and progress by working and studying over the course of several years. CILEX hosts regular webinars on becoming a legal executive the first Tuesday of each month and has a [comprehensive FAQ page](#).

Legal careers without professional qualifications

Law Commission

The [Law Commission](#), a statutory, independent body, runs an annual recruitment round in January to hire [research assistants](#) who are allocated to help shape legal reform in commercial and common law, criminal law, property, family and trust law, or public law. Research assistants work alongside courts of appeal judges, senior barristers and solicitors and leading academics to revise how current law operates and how it should be reformed. They are called upon to help draft legislation or make recommendations to Government. Candidates typically will be aiming for a first class law degree and/or LLM/PhD and will look towards a career at the Bar or within academia or government policy after completing one or possibly two years with the Commission. The nationality requirements for applicants conform to [Civil Service rules](#).

Barristers Clerk

Barristers Clerks are responsible for managing the practice and business activities of the barristers within a set of Chambers by providing administrative and business support. The [Institute of Barristers' Clerks](#) has a jobs board for entry level positions. Sets of Chambers are located in several major cities as well as London inc. Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle. A specialist recruitment agency, [ABC Chambers Solutions](#), handles many entry level roles.

Law Centre administration and management

Law Centres exist to protect the legal interests of the communities in which they are situated and serve and focus mainly on social welfare law,

immigration, employment, housing, asylum and civil liberties. To find a complete listing of all those in the UK access [The Law Centres Network](#) website which also carries a [jobs board of vacancies](#). It's a good idea to volunteer with a centre before you apply for a permanent role to demonstrate your own commitment to local communities and its something which helps develop transferrable skills for a multitude of other graduate roles.

David Ainscough

March 2022