

United Kingdom (UK) law qualifications are widely recognised and respected in many countries. But there are other reasons to consider legal studies in the UK. The skills you learn could be useful in other careers – many management consultants have a legal background. You would certainly not be restricted to one type of work unless you choose to specialise.

Checklist: Why study law in the United Kingdom?

- If your country recognises UK legal degrees (many do), you could have no better start for your career.
- Analytical skills, learning to present a reasoned and convincing argument, time management and good communication are built into UK law courses.
- You can study in any part of the United Kingdom (although there are three separate legal systems: England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)
- You can choose to do any level of study, from a one year career-based course to qualifying as a practising lawyer.
- You can take a course to combine law with another subject such as business studies, civil engineering, economics, politics and software engineering and you can also study it together with a foreign language.
- There is a broad range of taught and research-based postgraduate courses which allow you to specialise and gain international experience.

1 What can I study?

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The variety of courses, how you can study, the combination of courses you can take and the different institutions that offer pure law and combined courses make studying law in the UK extremely flexible. Many institutions have their own dedicated schools of law. You can take:

- career-based courses, such as the Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX) qualification
- a diploma in law, which would enable you to take an LLB (Bachelor of Laws) degree
- undergraduate degrees in pure law (LLB – Bachelor of Laws) or law with another subject (BA – Bachelor of Arts)
- taught or research master's degrees (LLM – Master of Laws) in specialist areas of law, including maritime, international and commercial
- a master's degree in English law, for graduates with experience of foreign legal jurisdictions



- research degrees (PhD – Doctor of Philosophy)
- sandwich courses enabling you to gain practical experience
- external degrees.

3 Entrance at degree level

What qualifications would I need to take a degree in law?

- law is a competitive subject to study, so required grades are likely to be high : ABB or BBB (or higher depending upon the university) at A-level, or five good-grade Scottish Highers, or the equivalent, are typical
- you do not need to have studied law to be accepted on to a degree course
- you would be expected to speak good English (IELTS 6.5 at undergraduate level, and IELTS 7 at postgraduate level, could be asked for).
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Checklist: Choosing the right course

- Does a UK legal qualification enable you to practise in your own country – check with your professional legal body. You may have to have more training.
- Check to see that options offered by UK law schools include subjects that are compulsory in your own country.

Would it be more useful to you to combine law with another subject?

What qualifications would I need to take a postgraduate course in law?

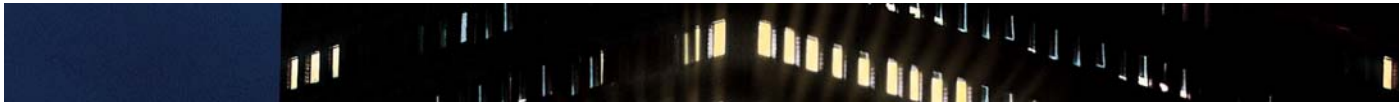
Most postgraduate courses in law are more specialised than first-degree courses. You can study many areas of law, including civil, commercial, copyright, employment, human rights, international, maritime, mineral and welfare law. You would usually be asked for a good-level (upper-second-class or above) degree in law or a subject relevant to your postgraduate studies.

4 Qualification as a Practising Lawyer

Routes to professional qualification

There are essentially three types of practising lawyer in the UK:

- **Solicitors**, who undertake a wide range of legal work, including for example, corporate transactions, transfer of property and litigation. They may or may not specialise. Those who specialise in litigation appear in only the lower courts (unless they have obtained an additional “higher rights” qualification enabling them to appear in the higher courts).
- **Barristers/advocates**, also known as counsel, who are specialist advocates with unlimited access to the courts.
- **Legal executives**, whose daily work is similar to that of solicitors, but usually work in a particular specialism, such as transferring property, litigation or probate. They work for solicitors in England and Wales, or in the legal departments of public or private organisations.



See the chart below for an outline of the normal routes to qualification as practising lawyers in the jurisdictions of England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. There are also possibilities for overseas qualified lawyers, referred to below in the **Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test** section.

The qualification process for solicitors in England & Wales is currently undergoing a review. The Training Framework Review (TFR) is intended to bring flexibility to the qualification process and improve access to the profession. In the course of the TFR the Law Society of England & Wales has issued three consultation papers, the latest in March 2005.

The March 2005 consultation paper has proposed some radical changes to the existing qualification regime. The key proposals are as follows:

- An outcomes-based qualification process. Qualification as a solicitor will be determined by what individuals know and understand, their ability to apply knowledge and understanding, and their professional skills and behaviours - qualification will not be dependent upon undertaking any particular course of study (unlike the current position where, for example, satisfactory completion of the Legal Practice Course is a compulsory requirement).
- Qualification will be determined by a standard set of assessments set and monitored by the Law Society
- The Law Society will not *prescribe* how training providers design and deliver training courses aimed at enabling students to satisfy the required outcomes. Nor will the Law Society *regulate* how individuals are to study. It is hoped that this will facilitate innovation in training and and freedom of choice for students by allowing individuals to choose which programmes of study best suit their needs, their preferred way of study, their career aspirations and their personal circumstances.
- A period of work-based learning of at least 16 months (as compared to the existing 2 year training contract), during which trainees would be required to compile a portfolio, authenticated by their supervising solicitor. There would follow an external assessment of the trainee's readiness to practice.
- There would also be, following the period of work-based learning, an assessment of the trainee's understanding of the core values and skills that are common across the profession and of their ability to maintain those values and demonstrate those skills in practice.

The consultation process is on-going and the March 2005 paper has provoked significant reaction from the profession. One concern relates to the potential resourcing implications for law firms in relation to the perceived additional burden of supervising the period of work-based learning as compared to arrangements under the existing training contract.

Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test

If you are already qualified as a practising lawyer in your own country, you may be able to re-qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales, without undertaking the normal qualification process, by sitting the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test (QLTT) examinations. Qualification through the QLTT is dependent upon your primary legal practice qualification being from an eligible jurisdiction and your having undertaken two years legal practice (either in England and Wales or in your own jurisdiction)

More information on the QLTT can be found on the Law Society of England and Wales' website www.lawsoc.org.uk.

An aptitude test is also available for re-qualification by qualified EU lawyers in Scotland. Further information can be found on the Law Society of Scotland website at www.lawscot.org.uk .

Qualification under the Establishment directive

The Establishment of Lawyers Directive 98/5/EC entitles lawyers qualified in one member state of the European Union (their home state) to practise law on a permanent basis under their home title in another member state (the host state).



European lawyers are required to register with a competent authority in the host state (eg in England and Wales, the Law Society or the Bar Council) and to comply with the rules of conduct of the local profession.

The Directive also provides a more direct route to qualification as a solicitor. This applies if the European lawyer has been practising in the UK for three years and practising UK law (including EC law) for the whole of that time (or, under some circumstances, for a somewhat shorter period).

Young Lawyers Schemes

The British Council's European Young Lawyers Scheme (EYLS) offers the possibility for young lawyers (up to the age of thirty-six) from many countries in Europe who are already qualified in their own jurisdictions to spend six months in either Edinburgh or London undertaking academic training and placements in solicitors' and barristers'/advocates' offices. Those from countries in the European Union who successfully complete the full programme in London, and pass the relevant examinations, are exempted by the Law Society of England and Wales from parts of the QLTT. Many choose, in their own time and at their own expense, to sit the remaining parts of the test and qualify as solicitors in England and Wales.

More information about the European Young Lawyers Scheme is at www.college-of-law.co.uk/21654.html

Checklist: Your next steps

- 1 Check with your own country's professional legal body whether English/Scottish/Northern Irish law is relevant in your circumstances.
- 2 Check each prospectus carefully to see which options, and which examination methods, suit you best.
- 3 Undergraduates should apply through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). You can make six course choices (at six different institutions if preferred).
- 4 Postgraduates should apply direct to the institution.
- 5 Details about the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) are available from the Law Society or the General Council of the Bar.
- 6 The General Council of the Bar has lists of institutions offering the Bar Vocational Course. You can choose three, through a central clearing system.
- 7 To join an Inn of Court, contact the student office of the relevant Inn for details.

5 What else do I need to know?

You should bear in mind immigration requirements when considering whether to study in the UK. Requirements vary according to your nationality or citizenship and the length of time you want to study. You will not be allowed to extend your permission to stay in the UK for more than two years on courses that are below degree level and are of less than one year's duration. The UKCOSA website will give you further information on this topic – www.ukcosa.org.uk/pages/guidenote.htm

Note in particular that you will not be given permission to enter the UK as a student if the school, college or university that you want to study at does not appear on the UK Department for Education and Skills Register of Education and Training Providers. You can check the register by clicking on 'Browse the Register' at www.dfes.gov.uk/providersregister/

For practical advice on living in the UK download *Studying and living in the UK* from www.educationuk.org/bc_img/body/articles/pdfs/stud_live_uk.pdf



6 Where can I find more information?

British Council

Website www.educationuk.org and
www.educationuk.org/scotland

Find details of your nearest office at
www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm which
includes links to all our country web pages and a worldwide
address book giving contact details for all offices

The Bar Council

289-293 High Holborn
London WC1V 7HZ

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7242 0082

Fax +44 (0) 20 7831 9217

Website www.barcouncil.org.uk

Or their education and training website at

www.legaleducation.org.uk

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

P O Box 28
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ

Telephone +44 (0) 870 1122211

Fax +44 (0) 1242 544961

Email enquiries@ucas.ac.uk

Website www.ucas.com

Law Society of Northern Ireland

98 Victoria Street
Belfast BT1 3JZ

Telephone +44 (0) 28 9023 1614

Fax +44 (0) 28 9023 2606

Email info@lawsoc-ni.org

Website www.lawsoc-ni.org/

Times Student Law website

Website www.timesonline.co.uk/section/0,,4003.00.html

Law Careers Advice Network (LCAN)

Website www.lcan.org.uk

College of Law

The College of Law
Braboeuf Manor
Portsmouth Road
Guildford
Surrey GU3 1HA
Telephone +44 (0) 1483 460 200
Fax +44 (0) 1483 460 305
Email info@lawcol.co.uk
Website www.college-of-law.co.uk

The Faculty of Advocates

Advocates Library
Parliament House
Parliament Square
Edinburgh

Telephone +44 (0) 131 226 5071

Website www.advocates.org.uk

Law Society of England and Wales

113 Chancery Lane
London WC2A 1PL
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7242 1222
Fax +44 (0) 20 7831 0344-
Email info.services@lawsociety.org.uk

Website www.lawsociety.org.uk

Law Society of Scotland

26 Drumsheugh Gardens
Edinburgh EH3 7YR

Telephone +44 (0) 131 226 7411

Fax +44 (0) 131 225 2934

Email lawscot@lawscot.org.uk

Website www.lawscot.org.uk

Trainee Solicitors' Group (TSG)

Website www.tsg.org

For lists of institutions in England and Wales
offering GDL (Graduate Diploma in Law)

www.lawcabs.ac.uk/cabonline/cpelist.html

For lists of institutions offering LPC (Legal
Practice Course)

www.lawcabs.ac.uk/cabonline/lplist.html



It is possible to take the exams for many of the qualifications listed here at your local British Council office. Contact your local office for more information or go to www.britishcouncil.org/learning-exams.htm.

Other useful resources

Getting into Law (Trotman, 2004, Edited by Justina Burnett, ISBN 0 8566 0948 X)

Companion website www.mpw.co.uk/getintolaw

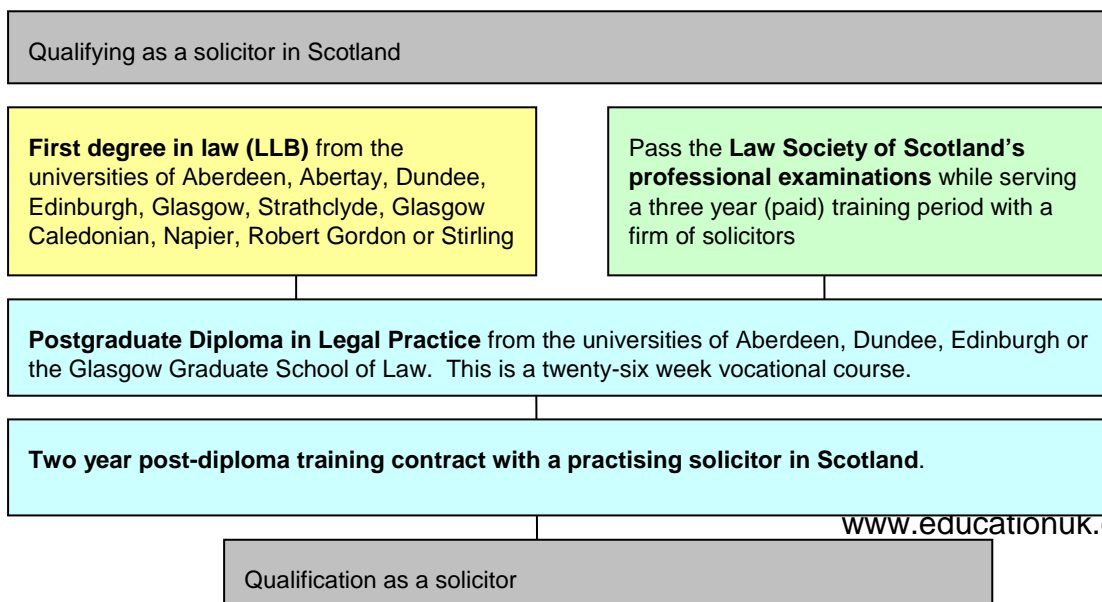
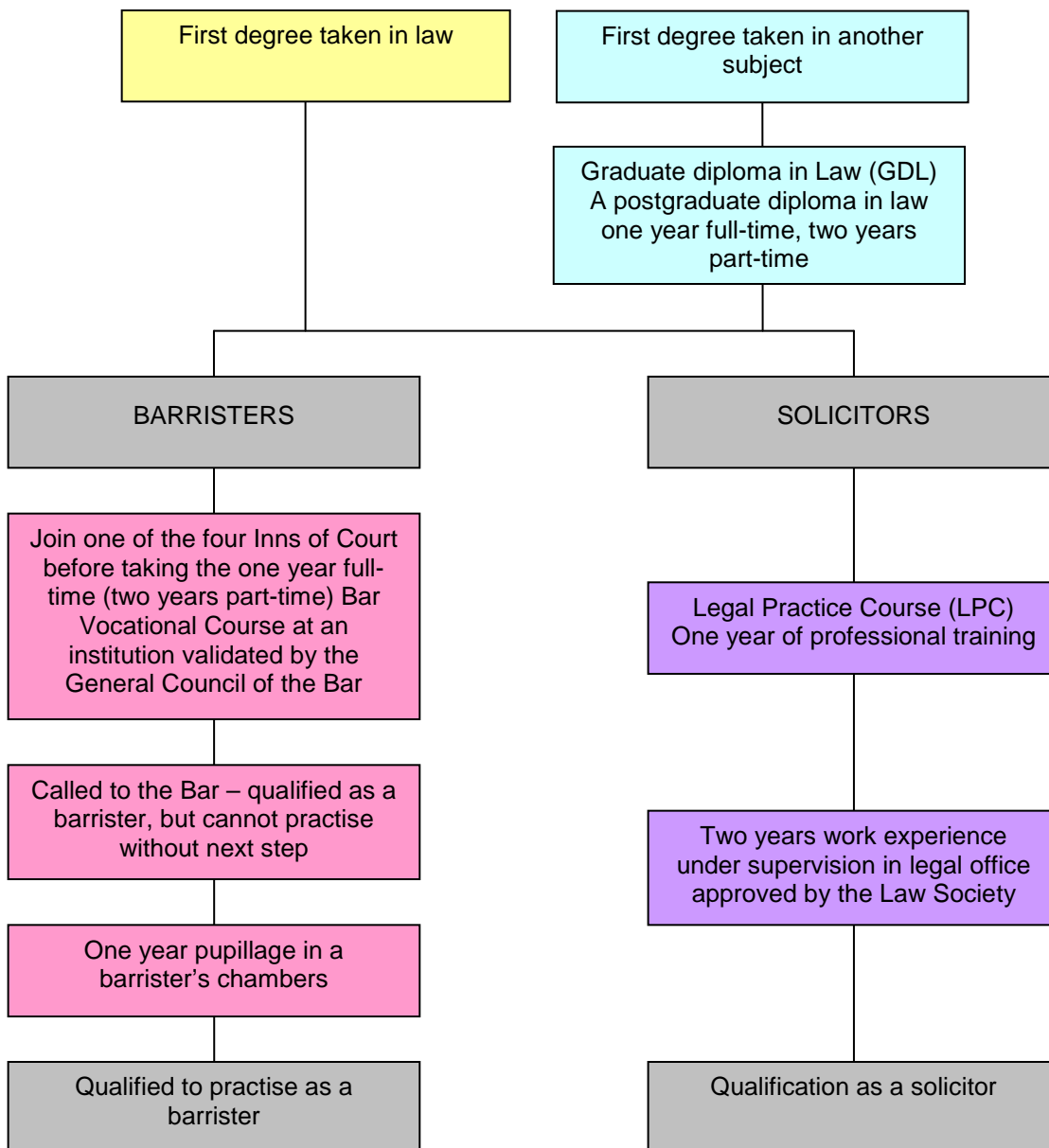
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sional qualification in Scotland

Qualifying as an advocate in Scotland

Degree with Honours, second class (division 2) or above, **in Scottish Law** from a **Scottish** university

Degree in another subject (grade 2ii or above) from another **British** university

Ordinary Degree with distinction in Scottish Law from a Scottish university

Degree in Scottish Law from a Scottish university

Admission as an Intransit to the **Faculty of Advocates** (Matriculation)

Pass or gain exemption from the faculty's examinations in law

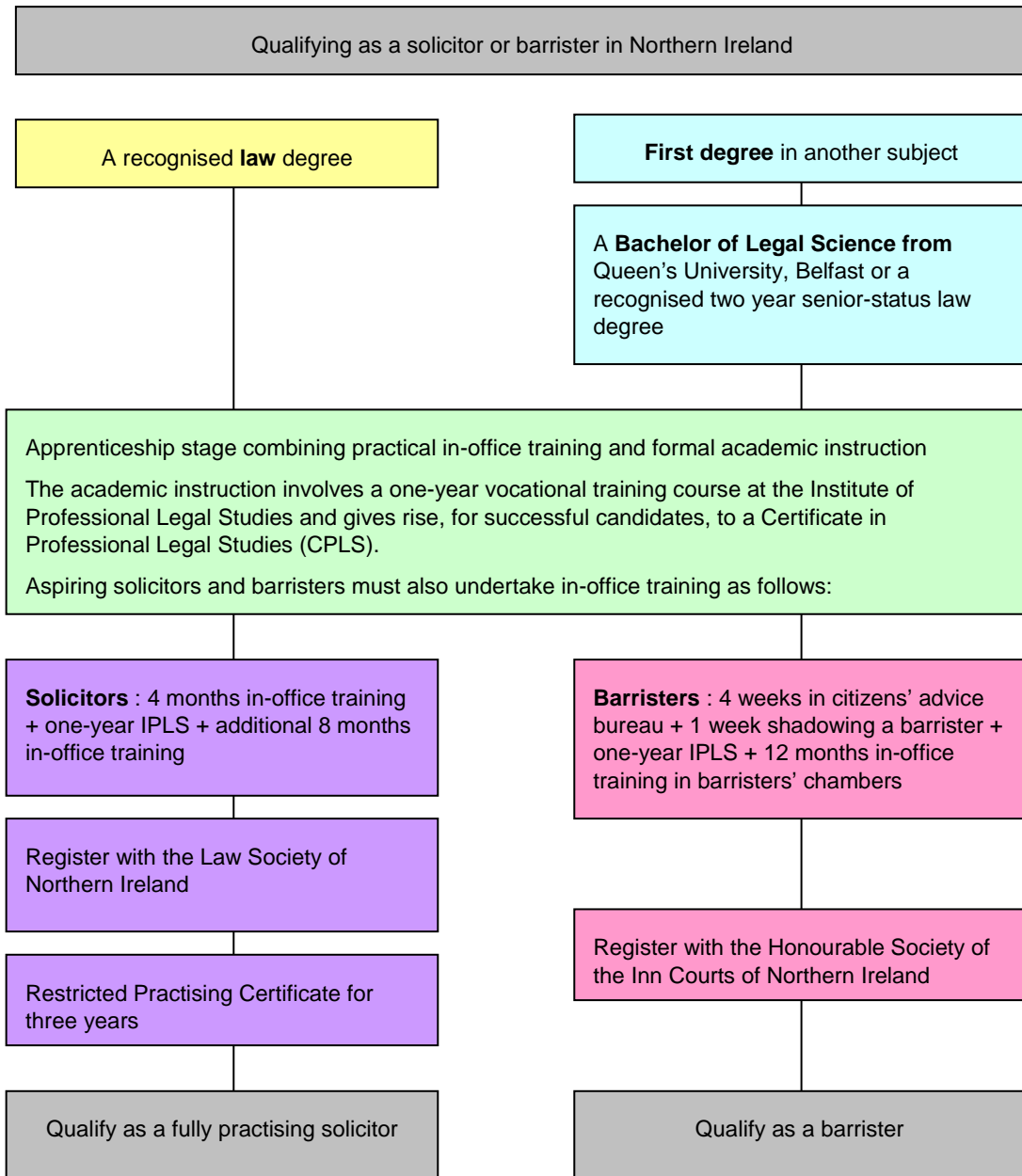
Obtain or gain exemption from the Diploma in Legal Practice at a Scottish university

21 months' paid **training** in a solicitor's office (in certain cases an exemption of 9 months is available)

9.5 months as **pupil** to a member of the **Bar** ('**devilling**')

Admission as advocate

Routes to professional qualifications in Northern Ireland



What issues should I consider as an international student?

The most important issue is whether UK legal qualifications are relevant and usable in your own country. It cannot be overstated how important it is that you check this with your professional association at home.

Non-EU students who want to qualify to practise in the United Kingdom must obtain the right of permanent residence from the Home Office.