

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 such as business, management consultancy, banking, journalism or international human rights. 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 skills 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, accountancy, sociology, information technology, journalism, economics and politics. You can also study it together with a foreign language.
- There is a broad range of taught and research-based postgraduate courses (both academic and practice-based) which allow you to specialise and gain international experience.

1 What can I study?

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:

- 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



- research degrees (PhD – Doctor of Philosophy)
- sandwich courses enabling you to gain practical experience
- career-based courses, such as the Legal Practice Course, leading to qualification as a solicitor, or the Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX) qualification.

2 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 Scottish Highers (at least four A grades), 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, is likely to be required).

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 or 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.

Checklist: choosing the right course

- Check with relevant authorities (e.g. potential employers and relevant regulatory bodies) that your proposed course of study complements your chosen career. For example, if you want to practise law in your own country:
 - does a UK legal qualification enable you to do that? (check with your professional legal body; you may have to undertake more training).
 - do the 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?

3 Qualification as a practising lawyer

Routes to professional qualification

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

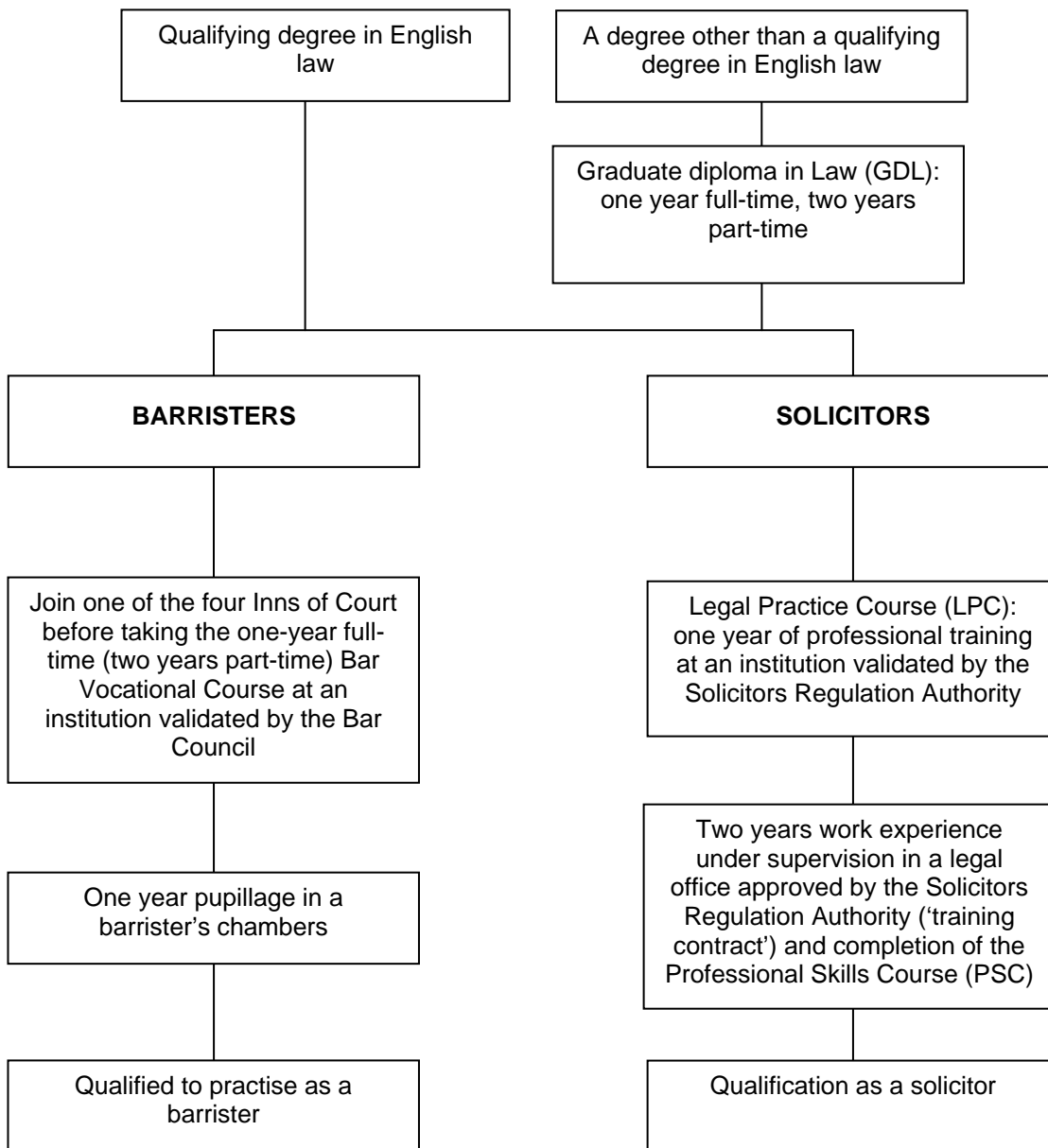
- **Solicitors**, who undertake a wide range of legal work including, for example, corporate transactions, transfer of property and litigation. They may or may not specialise. Those who specialise in litigation appear in only the lower courts (unless they have obtained an additional 'higher rights' qualification enabling them to appear in the higher courts). Many solicitors work in private practice, others work in the legal departments of public or private organisations.
- **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.

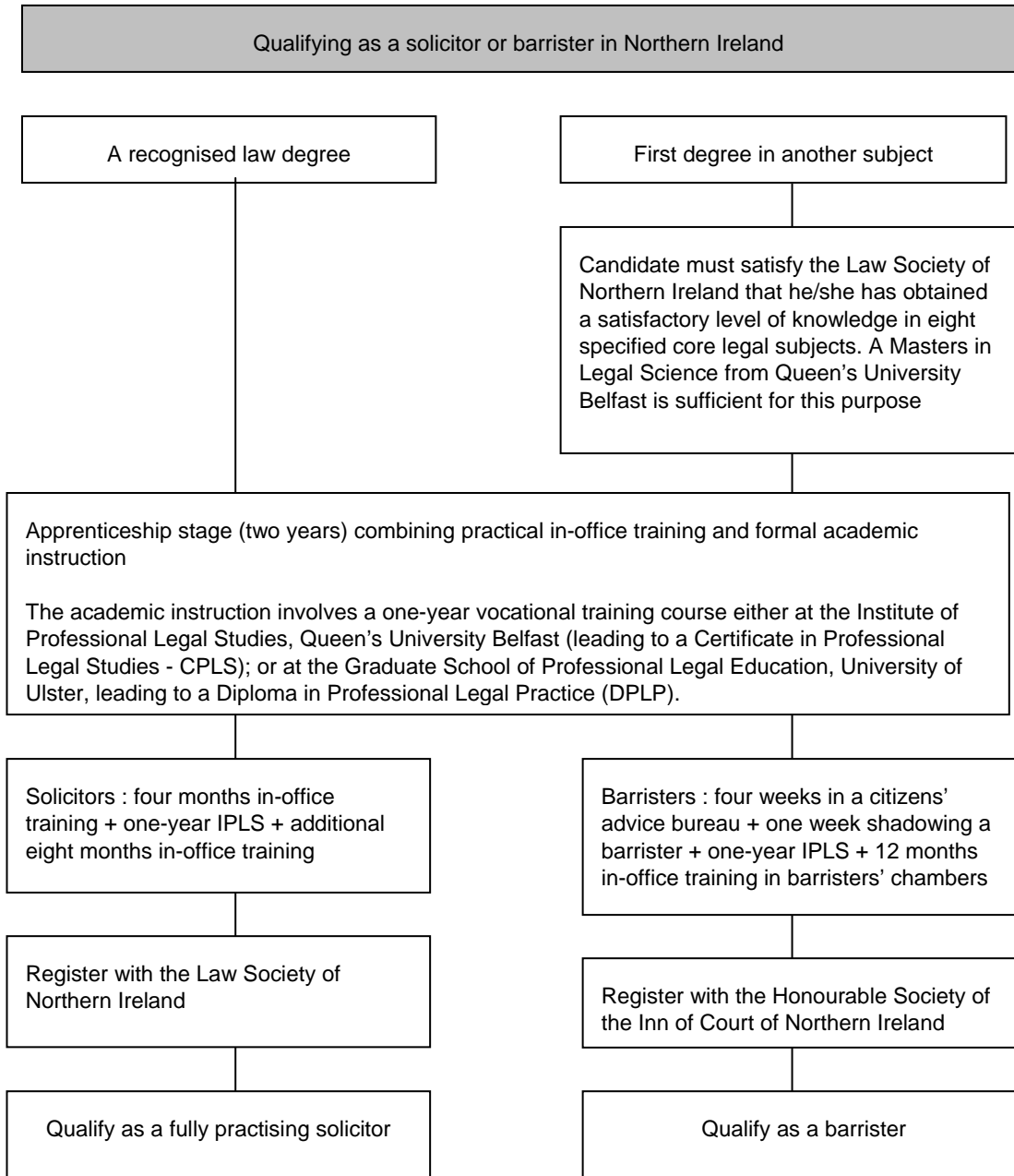
See the charts below for an outline of the normal routes to qualification as practising lawyers in the jurisdictions of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. If you are already qualified as a practising lawyer in your own jurisdiction alternative possibilities may exist for you to requalify as a lawyer, or to practise under your home title, in these jurisdictions (see under ‘Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test’ below).

Routes to professional qualifications England and Wales

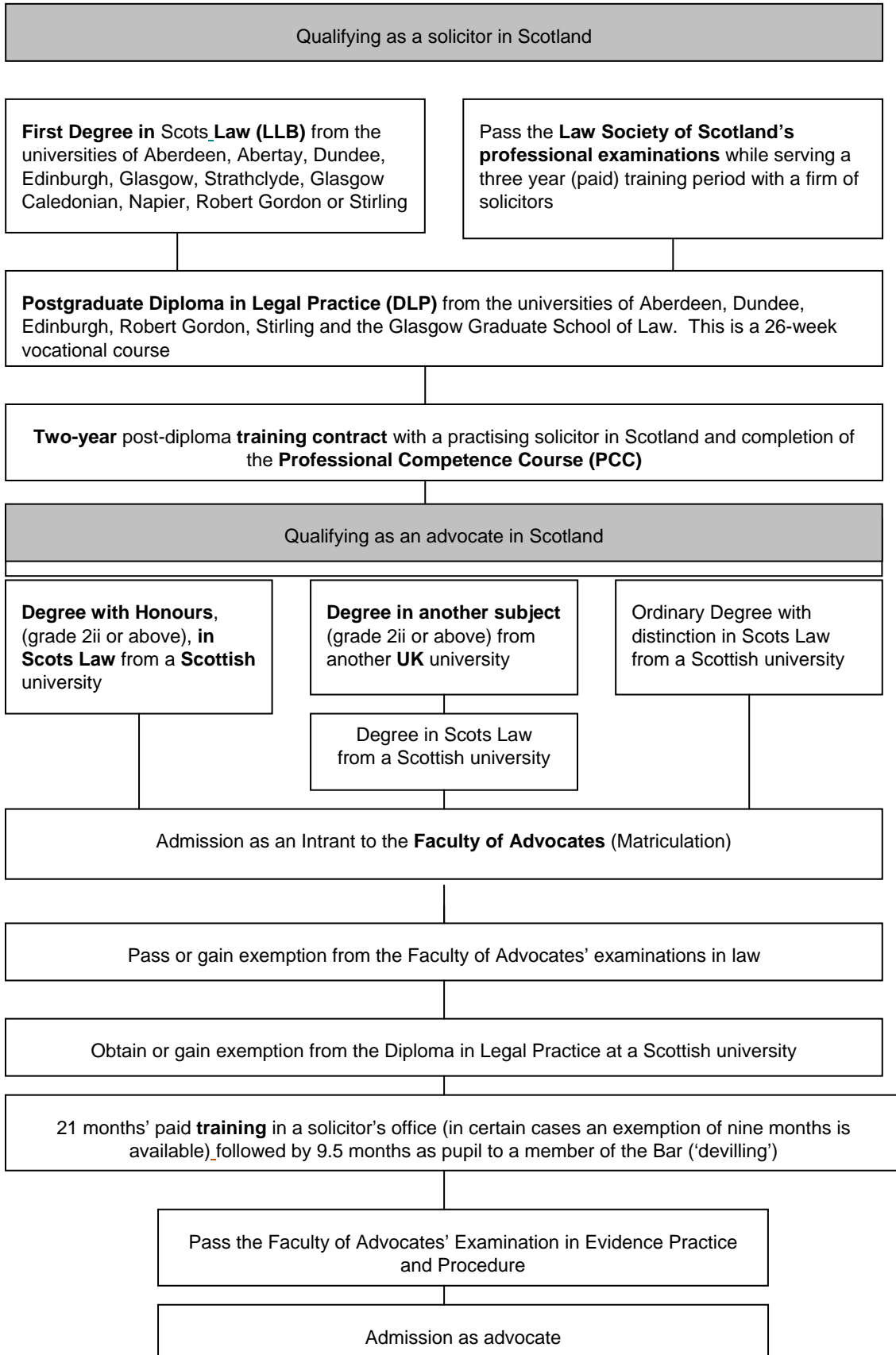




Routes to professional qualifications in Northern Ireland



Routes to professional qualifications in Scotland





Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test

If you are already qualified as a practising lawyer in your own country, you may be able to requalify 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 you having undertaken two years' legal practice (either in England and Wales or in your own jurisdiction), of which at least one year must have been under the supervision of a Solicitor of England and Wales. The current regulations governing the QLTT are under review and we expect the publication of this review in 2010. More information on the QLTT can be found on the Solicitors Regulation Authority website (www.sra.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) as a Registered European Lawyer.

European lawyers are required to register with a competent authority in the host state (e.g. in England and Wales, the Solicitors Regulation Authority or the Bar Council) and to comply with the rules of conduct of the local profession.

In Scotland EU qualified lawyers must sit an Aptitude Test in order to be registered to practise in Scotland. Further information can be found on the Law Society of Scotland's website, which includes past papers for the examinations which are now held in May and November of each year. See www.lawscot.org.uk/training/requalifying/aptitude.aspx

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 local law (including EC law) for the whole of that time (or, under some circumstances, for a somewhat shorter period).

4 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 potential employers and/or 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.

Checklist: your next steps

- Check with your own country's professional legal body whether English/Scottish/Northern Irish law is relevant in your circumstances.
- Check each prospectus carefully to see which options, and which examination methods, suit you best.
- Undergraduates should apply through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). You can make five course choices (at five different institutions if preferred).
- Postgraduates should apply direct to the institution.
- Details concerning the professional qualification courses highlighted above, including, where relevant, details of institutions providing the relevant courses, are available from the professional institutions concerned - for example, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (GDL, LPC and PSC); the Bar Council of England and Wales (GDL and BVC); the Law Society of Northern Ireland (CPLS and DPLP); the Law Society of Scotland (DLP); and the Faculty of Advocates. See contact details overleaf.

You should bear in mind immigration requirements when considering whether to study in the UK, as the regulations for entry into the UK have changed recently.



For advice and guidance about the new points-based system and to download application forms for students visit the UK Border and Immigration Agency website: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk

The college or university to which you are applying has to be officially registered with the UK government as an Education and Training Provider under Tier 4 of the points-based system. Note the fact that the name 'Register of Sponsors' does not indicate any financial support. You can check your institution on: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/employersandsponsors/pointsbasedsystem/registerofsponsored ucation

A good source of up-to-date information on immigration requirements is the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) (www.ukcisa.org.uk), which also includes advice on fees and funding, the cost of living, study methods, and working in the UK during and after your studies. The International Student Calculator will help you to plan and manage your money for your studies in the UK - www.studentcalculator.org.uk/international.

5 Where can I find more information?

The British Council has produced the Education UK portfolio to provide international students with a wide range of information and guidance that will help them find out more about studying a UK course and other important issues, such as applying to study, entry clearance and living in the UK. The portfolio includes:

- The Education UK website and a number of country websites containing locally relevant information – www.educationuk.org
- The essential guides to education in the UK: Undergraduate and pre-university; Postgraduate and MBA*
- Universities, Colleges and Schools Handbook*
- Postgraduate UK magazine*

* The publications are available at a selected number of British Council offices for students to use.

The Education UK websites are a valuable source of information, with a database of over 450,000 courses and profiles of institutions that contain details of entry requirements and course fees; some offer a virtual tour of their campus.

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.

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Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

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Times Student Law website

<http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/law/student>

Other useful resources

Progression to Law 2010 entry (UCAS, 2010 ISBN: 978 1 84361 108 0)

Getting into Law, 7th Edition (Trotman, 2008, edited by Carl Lygo, ISBN: 978 1 84455 149 1)

Companion website www.mpw.co.uk/getintolaw

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct and up to date, the British Council accepts no legal liability for its accuracy, currency or completeness.

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