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Law Graduates
Careers for Law





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Introduction

Hailed as the generalist degree of the 1990s, a law degree has now become a passport to work in a wide range of fields, only one of which is private legal practice. Law graduates are required to possess keen analytical and research skills, good retentive memory and a sound body of theoretical knowledge. Consequently they are sought by a range of employers and enjoy a high rate of employment uptake after graduation.

Australia's legal system is based on English common law. Lawyers are trained to understand the practical implications of the mass of complex written and unwritten laws on their clients. In recent times, efforts have been made to simplify and reduce the volume of laws. A law degree, however, does not necessarily lead to a career in private practice as a lawyer. Many other career options are available to individuals who have completed a law degree.

Why Do a Law Degree?

If you:

- enjoy working with people and their problems
- have a capacity for hard work
- don't mind working long hours
- are unafraid of intellectual challenge
- have excellent problem-solving skills
- have an ability to deal with complexity,

then a law degree might be for you. Employers who seek individuals with the skills listed above often look to law graduates in the first instance.

As a lawyer in private practice, you will become a member of an established and influential profession. You will represent people and businesses in challenging and new circumstances. However, as the number of universities offering law degrees has increased, and the number of law graduates skyrocketed, it has become necessary for graduating law students to look for employment outside the traditional private practice environment, either in areas with a connection to the law, or in non-legal areas. In the early twenty-first century, the incidence of this has increased exponentially.

Law graduates are sought after by government departments, large publicly-listed companies, medium-sized companies, trade unions, the media, legal publishers and other organisations.

Education and Training

High school students with good grades and clear career direction may go straight into a law degree upon completion of Year 12. However, be aware that few universities now allow school leavers to do a straight law degree. Law must usually be undertaken as a combined degree or a graduate degree. University students who are uncertain about their longer term career goals may first complete an undergraduate bachelor degree in, for example, arts or science, and only later decide to undertake a postgraduate degree in law.

To avoid undertaking two consecutive bachelor degrees, many students enroll in a combined degree program, for example a double undergraduate bachelor degree (5 years) in arts/law, or business/law. Combined degrees are now available at most universities. Prospective law students need to check with individual law faculties at the universities.

Becoming a lawyer in private practice is a three-step process:

- complete a Bachelor of Law or equivalent
- undergo a course of practical legal training: this could be either a period of articles (ie. on-the-job training with a law firm) or a structured course at an accredited institution with a specified period of experience
- apply for admission to the legal profession (note that requirements vary from state to state).

Summer clerkships or vacation work in a legal environment during the course of the degree are options available to only a small number of students, as few law firms are able to offer such opportunities. This type of experience, although valuable, is not a requirement to becoming a lawyer.

Once admitted, a legal practitioner must serve 'a period' (the length of time varies from state to state) as a 'restricted practitioner' before being permitted to practice independently.

Post admission as a legal practitioner may involve further legal education (perhaps a postgraduate qualification), and non-legal training (for example in management, information technology or economics). In most states, there is a scheme of Mandatory Continuing Legal Education. Further information about this is available on the Law Society websites for each state.





The Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training website at www.dest.gov.au/tenfields has a section entitled 'Which course? Which Uni?' The 29 universities listed below offer law and legal studies courses:

Australian National University
Bond University
Deakin University
Flinders University
Griffith University
James Cook University
La Trobe University
Macquarie University
Monash University
Murdoch University
Northern Territory University
(Charles Darwin University as of 1st January 2004)
Queensland University of Technology
Southern Cross University
The University of Melbourne
University of Adelaide
University of Canberra
University of New England
University of New South Wales
University of Newcastle
University of Notre Dame Australia
University of Queensland
University of South Australia
University of Sydney
University of Tasmania
University of Technology, Sydney
University of Western Australia
University of Western Sydney
University of Wollongong
Victoria University

The Australian Law Students' Association (ALSA) represents more than 20,000 law students. The ALSA website is a good source of information on career options for law graduates (www.alsa.asn.au).

Law courses can be divided into:

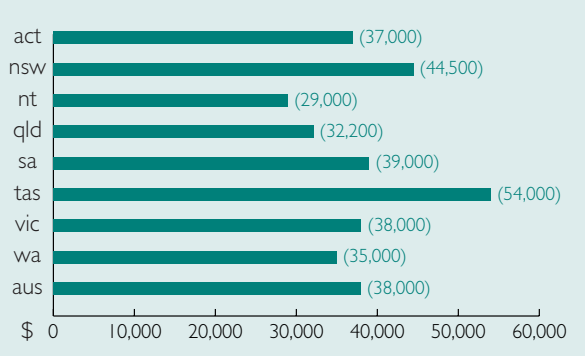
- Undergraduate bachelor degrees in law (prerequisite: Year 12)
- Postgraduate bachelor degrees in law (prerequisite: a Bachelor Degree in a non-legal area)
- Postgraduate courses in law (prerequisites vary from course to course):
 - Graduate Certificate (six months to 1 year)
 - Graduate Diploma (1 to 2 years)
 - Masters by course work (1 to 2 years)
 - Masters by research (1 to 2 years)
 - PhD/D Juridical Science (3 to 5 years)

Employment Trends

Employment growth for solicitors in Australia has been strong in the past five years and is expected to continue. However, competition for positions with law firms is high – in the current environment, law students need to consider alternatives as well. Anyone considering undertaking a law degree would be wise to start investigating the full range of career options well before the end of final year. It is also a good idea to seek out all vacation employment, internship and summer clerkship opportunities for law students.

Pay and Conditions

The median starting salary for new law graduates is \$38,000[†], while more experienced solicitors can earn up to \$200,000 per year. Medium to large CBD commercial firms in some capital cities may offer higher salaries than smaller firms in rural and regional Australia. At present this disparity is great, and sole practitioners, perhaps working in rural areas (for example in conveyancing) are far more likely to be earning a modest salary at a more experienced level than their city counterparts.



Median annual salaries for Law graduates by State and Territory, including a national (Australian) figure.

Source: GradsOnline – www.gradsonline.edu.au (Graduate Careers Council of Australia 2003)

Lifetime earnings for legal professionals are considerably higher than for other professions.

Profession	Lifetime Earnings
Legal Professionals	\$3, 094, 027
Economists	\$2, 838, 880
Ministers of Religion	\$1, 193, 154
Social Workers	\$1, 544, 033
Visual Arts and Crafts Professionals	\$957, 817

Source: What Jobs Pay 2000-2001, New Hobsons Press



[†] 2002 Graduate Destination Survey, Graduate Careers Council of Australia



Job Options

The employment market for law graduates can be broken down as follows:

- legal careers in private practice
- legal careers in not-for-profit organisations, business and academia
- legal careers in government
- other areas of employment for law graduates
- non-legal career options in business or government

Employment opportunities for law graduates/combined degree graduates are excellent. However, competition for junior solicitor positions with the larger law firms is fierce.

Legal Careers in Private Practice

Solicitor

Lawyers provide advice, write documents and conduct negotiations on legal matters, and may represent clients in court and tribunal proceedings. Lawyers may specialise as a solicitor or barrister. Solicitors can work in areas such as property, probate, workers' compensation, family law, personal injuries, litigation, commercial or criminal law. Many solicitors practice in partnerships called 'firms', while others are employed by companies or by Commonwealth, State or Territory governments.

Law firms can be divided into large, medium or small-sized firms.

What are the benefits of working for a small law firm (fewer than 5 partners)?

Small firms offer graduates almost immediate responsibility for client briefs. Graduates are exposed to a variety of problems, and are encouraged to develop practical solutions for individuals and small business clients. New recruits learn to handle a file and display judgement in context, under the supervision of experienced lawyers. This is valuable experience, as more exposure is gained more quickly than in a larger firm, in a wide range of hands-on legal work and with a substantially greater level of responsibility.

What are the advantages of working for a medium-sized firm (between 5-20 partners)?

Medium-sized firms have a broader range of clients, from large corporations, to small businesses and individual clients. This enables graduates to work with a greater range of partners, senior associates and solicitors in the firm, and as a consequence be exposed to more areas of legal practice. Junior solicitors in medium-sized firms are often given more responsibility at the outset than those in large firms.

What are the benefits of working for a large law firm (more than 20 partners)?

Large law firms can offer law graduates exciting opportunities in specialised areas of law (eg. corporate/commercial, intellectual property, mergers and acquisitions). Large firms are also in a better position to offer structured training in specialised areas. Whilst working in a large firm means becoming part of a strict hierarchy, these firms are often better resourced in terms of office facilities, their library, and in-house legal training. Depending on the area, the level of responsibility for files can vary from running your own matters under supervision to assisting in larger matters.

City/suburbs versus country practice

All graduates looking for a legal career need to consider a career in a country legal practice, eventually perhaps as a sole practitioner or in partnership.

Becoming a partner in a law firm

A junior solicitor with a medium-sized or large law firm can expect to wait at least five, but more usually up to ten years, before being in a position to consider a partnership. The offer of a partnership is usually made to solicitors who have a proven track record in meeting the required selection criteria, including financial performance (in terms of the number of billable hours generated per month/year), business development activities, managing more junior solicitors and general contribution to the firm. In a medium-sized firm, a potential candidate for partnership may have to generate billings of up to half a million dollars a year.

Barrister

A barrister is a lawyer who takes briefs from other lawyers. The work of a barrister is specialised, and may involve criminal, civil and commercial matters. While it is usually wise for a solicitor to gain at least a few years' experience before seeking admission to the bar, it is possible to move straight from law school to the bar. To become a barrister requires undertaking a structured course 'readership' while working under the guidance of a Master.

The Master is an experienced barrister who will share chambers with his or her reader and allow the reader to accompany him or her to court. Barristers are self-employed.

Areas of law

After a period of time, lawyers usually specialise in one or more areas of law. Specialisations include:

Asian Pacific and International Trade

Banking and Finance

Building and Construction

Commercial

Corporate

Defamation

Employment and Industrial Relations

Energy and Resources

Entertainment

Environment

Health

Information Technology

Intellectual Property

Insurance

Litigation

Media and Broadcasting

Mergers and Acquisitions

Planning and Local Government

Property

Superannuation

Taxation

Telecommunications

Trade Practices

Source: *Information on the types of law*,
Sydney University Law Society
(www.suls.usyd.edu.au/careers.html)

If, during your undergraduate degree, you develop an interest in a particular area of law, then it would be helpful to seek work experience with a law firm which specialises in that field. This would give you practical exposure to the work involved, allow you to get to know lawyers practising in the field, and enable you to check if the practice area is in line with your expectations (ie. try it out).

Legal Careers in Not-for-profit Organisations, Business and Academia

Judge's Associate

Judge's Associates are usually lawyers, although a legal degree is not mandatory. Many judges take on law graduates for a one year position. How this operates depends on the individual judge. Generally speaking, a judge's associate is a personal assistant and research officer to the judge. In this role, the associate undertakes much of the administrative work, including listing cases, liaising with barristers and court staff and other members of the legal profession, and completing necessary paper work. Some roles can have a high research component including conducting legal research to provide assistance to the judge, researching/drafting speeches and even initial drafting of judgements. Many who work as judge's associates use this time to gain experience for a career as a barrister.

Community Lawyer

Community Legal Centres (CLCs) are community based, non-profit organisations which provide general and specialist legal advice to members of the public. Solicitors in CLCs provide legal information/advice and referrals, conduct casework, train and supervise volunteer solicitors and legal assistants, design and deliver community legal education programs, identify policy and law reform issues, and assist in the administration of the CLC.

Government Lawyer

Both State and Federal government departments employ lawyers, an option similar to an inhouse position. Working in government provides the opportunity to work in areas such as regulation, constitutional issues with the Australian Government Solicitor's Office, and criminal law with the Office of Public Prosecutions and Director of Public Prosecutions.

Corporate Lawyer

Working as a corporate lawyer (or inhouse counsel) is a popular alternative to private practice. Most of the large publicly listed companies, such as Esso, BHP and the banks, employ inhouse lawyers. Working inhouse allows close contact with the client. It is a good stepping stone towards management. The work tends to consist of broad commercial matters. Litigation is usually outsourced to private law firms. Lawyers from large firms with 3 to 5 years post admission and commercial/corporate experience fill the majority of inhouse vacancies.



University Lecturer in Law

A postgraduate research degree is expected for a career in academia. A PhD may not be essential, but a growing number of young academics have a doctorate when they join a Faculty. This is particularly important when applying for a position with a research university. A career as an academic may often begin with short-term, casual positions as a tutor. The next step is to apply for a position as a Lecturer A. With substantial teaching experience, and the beginnings of a research track record, it is then possible to advance to Lecturer B and C, and for the lucky few eventually to land a professorship.

Source: *I have a law degree – what are some of my options and opportunities?* Law Institute of Victoria (www.liv.asn.au)

Legal Careers in Government

The following government bodies recruit law graduates annually, either for legal or law-related positions:

Attorney General's Department

The Attorney General's Department is responsible for services such as guardianship, jury duty, human rights, registration of births, deaths and marriages, court management, and law reform. The Department recruits law graduates.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)

The ACCC seeks graduates with a minimum of a Bachelor degree in law, economics, commerce, business or accounting. Working with the ACCC as a graduate could involve investigating complaints from businesses or consumers about possible breaches of the Trade Practices Act 1974 (Commonwealth) analysing key market sectors, making inquiries into the effects of major mergers and other market conduct, assessing public benefit or examining prices of selected goods and services.

Australian Defence Forces

International law and employment law are areas of relevance to all the Defence Forces.

Legal Officer (Army)

Work as a legal officer involves disciplinary, administrative, operations, civil and commercial law as well as dealing with legal aid requirements.

Legal Officer (Air Force)

The main areas of practice are operations law, military justice and military administrative law. Legal officers also provide civil law advice and legal aid.

Legal Officer (Navy)

Anyone wanting to be appointed as a naval officer must be registered as a barrister or solicitor of the High Court of Australia, or of the Supreme Court of a State or Territory of Australia.

Australian Federal Police

The AFP offers law-specific positions such as legal counsel, senior legal adviser, commercial legal adviser and commercial civil litigation manager. The AFP also recruits law graduates into forensic and commercial investigation positions.

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC)

The ALRC provides advice to the federal Attorney-General in relation to particular areas of law. The focus of the Commission's work is on research and consultation to develop recommendations for law reform. Internships provide an opportunity for students to increase their awareness of law reform issues. State Law Reform Commissions also offer employment opportunities.

Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)

The ASIC is an independent Commonwealth government body. ASIC enforces company and financial services laws to protect consumers, investors and creditors.

Australian Taxation Office (ATO)

Law graduates are recruited for specialist taxation work.

Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)

DPP is a national organisation with a head office in Canberra and regional offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Townsville. The work of DPP falls into two categories: prosecutions and the recovery of criminal assets. The primary function of the DPP is to prosecute alleged criminal offences against Commonwealth laws (eg. drug importation, social security fraud, and corporate crime). The aim of the criminal assets function of the DPP is to strip the proceeds of crime from offenders and make them pay their taxes. State Offices of Public Prosecution also offer opportunities for graduates.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

DFAT offers a range of opportunities in areas of bilateral issues (ie. relations between Australia and particular countries), multi-lateral issues (ie. legal, trade, UN or disarmament issues) or management/administrative issues (ie. staffing and workplace relations, ministerial liaison, accounting for embassies). DFAT recruits graduates once a year. A significant proportion of successful applicants are law graduates, or graduates with a double degree in law and some other area (eg. arts/languages, business, international relations).

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA)

DIMIA offers policy, finance, management and legal careers. Graduates with degrees in arts/humanities/social science, accounting/finance, business/marketing, economics, law/administration and law/constitutional law are sought after.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)

The HREOC is a national independent statutory government body, with responsibility for inquiring into alleged infringements under three anti-discrimination laws: the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. The HREOC is also responsible for examining infringements of human rights under the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act 1986. The HREOC has a Legal Section responsible for litigation and other legal work on behalf of the Commission and Commissioners. The Legal Section also provides internal legal advice on discrimination, human rights and other laws relevant to the work of the Commission.

Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)

ICAC's principal functions are to expose and minimise corruption through investigation, corruption prevention, education and research activities. Employment opportunities include positions as investigator; surveillance officer; corruption prevention officer; education officer; intelligence analyst, assessment officer and lawyers.

National Crime Authority (NCA)

The majority of lawyers employed by the NCA work as investigative lawyers, in management positions, and as coordinators of national task forces into organised criminal activity. The primary role of NCA investigative lawyers is to provide legal advice and support to one or more investigation teams. NCA lawyers need to have a good knowledge of Federal criminal law and of their State's criminal law. Lawyers leaving the NCA tend

to transfer to State or Commonwealth government agencies, or go to the Bar.

Source: *Law Institute of Victoria: I have a law degree – what are some of my options and opportunities?*

Office of the Protective Commissioner

The Protective Commissioner is an independent public official legally appointed to protect and administer the financial affairs and property of people unable to make financial decisions for themselves, and where there is no other person suitable or able to assist.

Source: *SULS Alternative Careers Guide 2002*, Sydney University Law Society (www.suls.usyd.edu.au)

Other Areas of Employment for Law Graduates

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

ADR is a growth area in Australia, in that increasingly legislation requires the use of ADR processes as an alternative to, or an addition to, litigation. Consequently, more and more agencies are being established to use ADR processes. Career opportunities can be found in the area of the specialist dispute resolver. Equal opportunity, human rights and anti-discrimination bodies, both state and federal, provide employment opportunities. So do bodies dealing with consumer complaints, complaints in the areas of health, welfare, and the police. Positions in the area of dispute resolution go by job titles such as conciliator; investigator; or grievance/complaints manager. Sometimes, the job title gives nothing away and it is necessary to read the job description and selection criteria to work out whether the position involves dispute resolution. Legal practitioners can undertake a short course to become an accredited mediator or conciliator, which would enable them to undertake work for the courts and private litigants. The peak legal body is Lawyers Engaged in Alternative Dispute Resolution (LEADR).



Law Libraries and Law Publishing

A library or information studies qualification is required to work in law libraries. Full-time positions in law publishing usually require qualifications and experience in professional writing/editing and research. Obviously, a law degree (or a double degree) would be useful for a law library or publishing career.

Patent Attorney – Australia’s smallest profession

Australia has around 400 registered patent attorneys, one of the smallest and most specialised professions in the country. Patent attorneys assist clients to create, maintain, exploit and enforce ‘intellectual property’ such as patents, trademarks and registered designs. Patent attorney work combines technical and legal expertise. To be registered as a Patent attorney, one must be an Australian citizen, hold an approved engineering or science degree, pass a series of ten specialised examinations in intellectual property law, and have worked under the supervision of a registered Patent attorney for at least 12 months. Qualifications and general interest in science or engineering is required. A law degree is not a prerequisite, but would be an advantage. An ideal starting point for a career as a Patent attorney would be a science/law or engineering/law degree. It is possible to practice as an intellectual property lawyer without any special qualifications beyond a law degree.

United Nations

National Competitive Recruitment Examinations are held in countries inadequately represented among the staff of the UN secretariat. The examinations are administered in a number of occupational groups, including administration, economics, electronic data processing, finance, legal affairs, library, political affairs, public information, social development and statistics. You should check the United Nations website at www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm for details about the examinations.

Source: *SULS Alternative Careers Guide 2002*,
Sydney University Law Students
(www.suls.usyd.edu.au)

Non-Legal Career Options in Business or Government

There are many areas in which law graduates can pursue non-legal careers. For further information about graduate opportunities in the areas listed below, consult your university Career Service, or Graduate Careers Council of Australia information booklets on relevant topics (www.gradlink.edu.au).

Aboriginal issues
Accounting
Administration
Advertising
Banking
Education
Environmental work
Fashion industry
Film industry
Finance industry
Government
Human Resources
Industrial relations
Information Technology
Investment adviser
Journalism
Librarian
Management
Marketing
Museums and galleries
Police forces
Political or parliamentary adviser
Publishing
Research assistant
Small business
Strategic management consulting
Superannuation
Trade unions

Double Degrees

Business

Many undergraduates choose to combine a degree in business, commerce or economics with a law degree with a view to entering the business arena. A student with a major in accounting may see the pursuit of a career in chartered or commercial accounting as a desirable path. Similarly, a finance major could look at investment or merchant banking, and a marketing major at a career in marketing research or brand management. Some graduates will be able to use both components of their combined degree. An accounting/law graduate, for example, might go to work in the tax department of an accounting firm.

Science

A combined degree in science/law offers many opportunities to graduates wishing to embark on a career in science. A chemistry/law graduate may wish to work in pharmaceutical processes or consider a career in quality control. Graduates with a sub-major in physics could consider a career as an instrumentation scientist or as a patent attorney, whereas a biology major may have options in toxicology, molecular biology and education.

Science/law graduates also have opportunities to combine both degrees in a role as a legal representative for laboratories or bodies such as the CSIRO. Opportunities also exist in biotechnology and forensics as a result of developments in DNA profiling and biochemical characterisation.

Arts

An arts/law degree equips graduates with the capacity to enter creative fields together with more traditional areas. English/communications/cultural studies majors can consider careers in publishing, media, journalism and education amongst others. Often graduates are able to combine an interest in these areas with their knowledge of law.

Management Consulting

Management consulting centres on using established analytical techniques to solve operational and competitive issues faced by large Australian and

multinational companies. Clearly, problem solving, analysis and research skills are key criteria here. The emphasis is on producing measurable results for clients by developing and implementing effective business strategies.

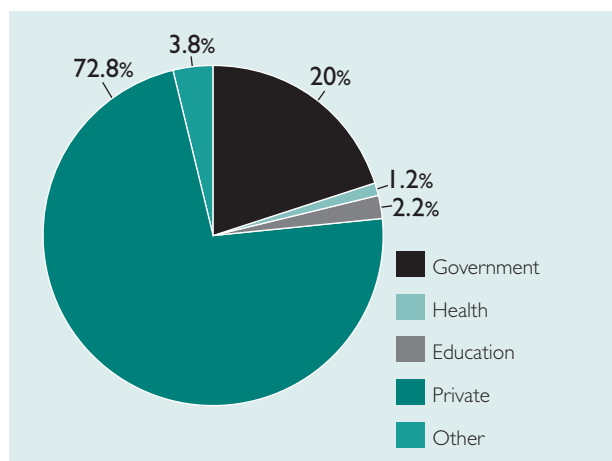
Often management consulting firms have a relatively flat structure, which allows for merit-driven promotion and achievement. Opportunities for travel exist as training with the larger management consulting firms usually takes place overseas.

Law graduates are attractive to management consulting firms in that they have well-developed problem solving, documenting and tax skills. Interpersonal skills are also considered important in this client-focused field.

Service-based Industries

Law graduates can consider careers in hospitality, retail, sales, computing, insurance and superannuation.

The insurance and superannuation industries see law graduates as ideal future employees, in that they may already have knowledge of Life Insurance Law and Trade Practices Law. The emphasis is on service in this field and the idea that no individual, family or business can exist without some level of financial planning, superannuation or some form of insurance. Key skills to succeed in this area include marketing initiative, motivation and discipline.



Industry sectors in which law graduates have obtained full-time employment (Graduate Careers Council of Australia 2003)

Source: www.gradsonline.edu.au



Graduate Profiles

Profile 1



Michael Ryan

completed a Bachelor of Commerce/LLB (Honours) at the University of Adelaide in 2002.

What is your current job title?

I am a lawyer (Articled Clerk) with Allens Arthur Robinson in Melbourne.

How did you get this position?

I applied as part of the Articles Application process after doing a vacation clerkship at the firm.

What does an Articled Clerkship involve?

Doing articles is like doing a 12-month apprenticeship. I get legal training organised by the firm in the form of seminars, as well as more practical on-the-job training. At the end of the year, you're admitted to the Supreme Court as a solicitor. The Articled Clerkship is unique to Victoria and a few other states. The admissions requirements differ from state to state.

Why did you choose this particular job option?

I think that I was most interested in corporate law and it fitted well with my commerce background.

What does your current position involve?

Various duties such as research, drafting internal memorandums, drafting letters of advice and commercial documents and contracts.

Is this your first 'professional' job after university?

Yes.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of doing a double degree, including honours, and wanting to work for a law firm?

Be committed to your study, find employment out of it in your own way, and live a balanced lifestyle.

Profile 2

Eloise Scotford completed a Bachelor of Science/Laws degree at the University of Sydney in 2001.

What is your current job title?

I am an Associate to the Chief Justice, High Court of Australia.

How did you get this position?

I sent out my curriculum vitae to the Chief Justice with a letter expressing my interest in working as his associate. He then interviewed me for the position a couple of years before my time with him was due to start.

Why did you choose this particular job option?

I wanted some experience in the court system, having found that I was lacking a practical understanding of the legal profession. I also wanted the opportunity to work with and learn from someone as experienced in the law, and knowledgeable of it, as the Chief Justice.

What does your current position involve?

I do research for cases that come before the High Court as well as for those matters for which special leave to appeal is sought. I draft catchwords and edit headnotes for cases handed down by the Court. I proof judgements and have a role coordinating judgement production. When court is sitting, I share the role of tipstaff to the Chief Justice in court. Being associate to the Chief Justice, I also have a considerable organisational role.

Is this your first 'professional' job after university?

Yes.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of doing a law degree/double degree?

That it is a very valuable education. Whether or not one wants to work as a legal professional, it is a degree that helps to broaden one's perspective enough to assist in deciding on a suitable career path. The only warning I would give is that it is very easy to be caught up in pursuing a legal career when that is not the right direction for everyone.

What advice would you give to people wanting work for a law firm?

It is a good idea to look for a firm that you feel happy working for, not just one that has a big name or reputation. Working in a firm will take up a lot of your life, so it is important to make sure that you are surrounded by people that you get on with.

What advice would you give to people wanting to work in a law-related field?

I do not have much experience in law-related fields. However, I would say that it is a good idea to look to other fields to exhaust the career opportunities that a law degree opens up.

What advice would you give to people wanting to work in a non legal area?

Again, I don't have any experience in non-legal areas. Personally, I intend to explore opportunities to work in non-legal areas in the future, and it is a huge advantage that my law degree and practical experience in law will put me in good stead to do that.

Profile 3



Kelly Phelan completed a double degree in Arts/Law at the University of Adelaide in 2002. She now lives in Dubbo, NSW.

What is your current job title?

I am an Employment Advisor with Western NSW Community Legal Centre in Dubbo.

How did you get this position?

I sent out my CV to Community Legal Centres in the ACT, Victoria and New South Wales. This Centre had just advertised for two positions. I applied for the position of Women's Outreach Solicitor, but was offered the position of Employment Advisor as a more experienced solicitor was hired as Women's Solicitor.

Why did you choose this particular job option?

I had been sending out my CV since 2002, particularly to family law firms, but had not found a position until this job came up in November.

What does your current position involve?

I advise disadvantaged workers in the Western New South Wales region via phone and face-to-face appointments about workplace issues, such as Australian Workplace Agreements, employment contracts, awards and unfair dismissal.

Is this your first 'professional' job after university?

Yes.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of doing a law degree/double degree?

Check the elective subjects offered at particular universities to ensure they are of interest. I went on an exchange to the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, to study topics of interest such as international criminal law, advanced criminal law and family law. It was a one year exchange from January to December through the University of Adelaide's Study Abroad Office. I would highly recommend time overseas. Most students apply through their Law Faculty and don't realise they can also apply through the University's Study Abroad program.

What are your longer term career plans?

I'm thinking of going into private practice but working to achieve billable hours doesn't appeal. In my current position, there is more emphasis on the client.



Profile 4

Anh Mai completed a double degree in Law/Economics at La Trobe University (Victoria) 2002. She started with a Commerce/Law combination, but discovered she did not enjoy accounting. She then switched to economics.

What is your current job title?

I am a Policy Adviser with the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Melbourne.

How did you get this position?

I got this position through the Victorian Public Service Graduate Recruitment Scheme. Around 3000 graduates applied to the VPS, of which approximately 100 were accepted to various departments. The Department of Premier and Cabinet took 12 graduates.

What was the selection process like?

The first step was to respond to the VPS selection criteria with a formal application. Then I was called in for testing. The third step was an interview with the consulting company responsible for the recruitment process. We then went through an assessment with various activities, during which our performance was observed by people from the VPS. Step 5 involved a presentation to two public servants. The final step was to attend two interviews with representatives of two different departments who were thinking of selecting me. I then accepted a position with the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The whole process took three months.

Why did you choose this particular job option?

I am interested in public policy.

What does your current position involve?

I do policy analysis, undertake research, participate in competency based training, write briefs, do the research and prepare answers to questions the Premier anticipates will be raised by the Opposition during Parliamentary Question time, and provide advice on strategic policy and projects.

Is this your first 'professional' job after university?

Yes.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of doing a law degree/double degree?

Enjoy the course but do not assume you will practice law.

What advice would you give to people wanting work for a law firm?

It's super-competitive and fits a certain type of lifestyle. Make alternative plans, or be persistent if you don't.

What advice would you give to people wanting to work in a law-related field?

Go for it!

What advice would you give to people wanting to work in a non-legal area?

Go for it. The rewards are just as great.

Profile 5

Joseph Tesvic completed a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws at the University of Sydney 2000.

What is your current job title?

I am a Business Analyst with McKinsey & Co in Sydney. They have 85 offices around the world, several thousand consultants worldwide, and around 100 Business Analysts in Australia.

How did you get this position?

I applied through the firm's yearly graduate intake. There were three rounds of two interviews apiece with increasingly senior people in the firm. Some of the questions were about me, while others were case-based business problems I had to think about in a structured manner.

How competitive was the application process?

McKinsey is the top consulting firm in the world. Australia-wide, several hundred to a thousand graduates from all disciplines apply each year. They took around 10 graduates across Australia, with four or five for the Sydney office.

Why did you choose this particular job option?

I found the commercial aspects of my law degree most interesting, and wanted to pursue a career which would take me closer to that path.

What does your current position involve?

We conduct strategic, operational and organisational engagements in the private and public sector. We work directly with client teams to solve their most difficult problems. My typical responsibilities include the management of one or two client team members, conducting part of the team's business analysis, preparing recommendations for CEOs and senior executives, and implementing initiatives.

Is there any travel or on the job training?

We had two weeks of training up-front in Sydney, one week-long induction, and a one-week crash course in how to be a management consultant. After a year with the firm, we do International Business Analyst training for one week somewhere in the world. I did mine in Singapore.

Is this your first 'professional' job after university?
Yes.

What other jobs have you had?

I worked part-time over three years in law firms, two years as a paralegal, and one year as a research clerk. I also completed an international summer clerkship with a firm, where we spent six weeks in Sydney and six weeks in London. I then decided not to go into law.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of doing a law degree/double degree?

Do it, work hard at both the content and the other skills (eg. structuring arguments), and if you do a double degree, combine it with something that complements law, rather than something that is 'more of the same'.

A Business/Law, Commerce/Law or Economics/Law degree would not be a bad combination. Those degrees are very complementary in content. But I feel that you learn as much as you need to know about the commercial side working in a law firm for six months. In my opinion the most valuable thing you can do is something where the skills are complementary to a career in law. Subjects like arts, or social science, teach you a different way of thinking from law, while economics, finance and business are quite similar to law.

What advice would you give to people wanting work for a law firm?

Few people I know actually enjoy this path; those that do, do for one reason – they choose very, very carefully to find a firm that matches their professional development needs as well as their personal style.

What advice would you give to people wanting to work in management consulting?

Go for it, and when you apply, don't emphasise what subjects you studied. Emphasise the skills the study of law has given you, for example attention to detail, critical reasoning and communication skills.

What is the next step in your career?

I have been accepted to do a Master of Business Administration at Harvard University in Boston.



Profile 6

Emma Garrett completed a Bachelor of Arts/Law at the University of Adelaide in 2002.

What is your current job title?

I am a Graduate Taxation Officer at the Australian Tax Office.

How did you get this position?

I got my current position during the annual Public Service recruitment drive through a newspaper article.

Why did you choose this particular job option?

It was a government job that provided on-the-job training, two work placements in the initial year and ongoing support. It also provides accreditation at the end of the program and a permanent job if successfully completed.

What does your current position involve?

My job involves participating in the graduate program with two six-month work rotations in different areas relating to my degree, and undertaking corporate/technical skilling at the same time.

Is this your first 'professional' job after university?

Yes.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of doing a law degree?

A law degree provides you with a qualification which allows you to move into a variety of professions, as well as conferring a degree of prestige within the community.

What advice would you give to people wanting work for a law firm?

Don't just take a job because it is a job, if you have the opportunity to work out what you want first.

What advice would you give to people wanting work in a non-legal area?

Your law degree can always be utilised in a government job and provides an excellent foundation/set of skills. It is highly regarded in both business and government as it shows that you can think laterally, grasp difficult concepts and apply them in practical situations.



Further Information on Legal Careers

Law Council of Australia

www.lawcouncil.asn.au

This site has information on Scholarships and Awards, Traineeships and Australian Young Lawyers Awards.

State and Territory Law Societies

For information on career options, employment opportunities, salaries and awards, and tips for recently qualified lawyers, check these websites. Individual Law Societies usually provide a link to the Young Lawyers site in their state.

Australian Capital Territory

Law Society of the Australian Capital Territory
www.lawsocact.asn.au

New South Wales

Law Society of New South Wales
www.lawsociety.com.au

Northern Territory

Law Society of Northern Territory
www.lawsocnt.asn.au

Queensland

Queensland Law Society Inc.
www.qls.com.au

South Australia

Law Society of South Australia
www.lssa.asn.au

Tasmania

Law Society of Tasmania
www.taslawsociety.asn.au

Victoria

Law Institute of Victoria
www.liv.asn.au

Western Australia

Law Society of Western Australia
www.lawsocietywa.asn.au

Student Law Societies

The Australian Law Students Association

www.alsa.asn.au

Click on the Publications link, and then go to the Law Students' Directory and/or the Alternative Careers Guide.

Individual university student law societies can be found by searching under the relevant Faculty of Law.

Overseas Law Associations and Societies

For a list of Internet links to Law Associations and Societies overseas, see the Law Institute of Victoria's site www.liv.asn.au/research/links/11.html

The European Law Students' Association (www.elsa.com) provides information about studying and working anywhere in Europe.





Legal Publishers

If you are considering a career in legal publishing, try this list of publishers:

LexisNexis Butterworths Australia

www.lexisnexis.com.au

One of the largest legal publishers in Australia (established in 1910)

CCH Australia Ltd

www.cch.com.au

Leading publisher of Tax, Law, Accounting, Human Resources and Industrial Relations, Occupational Health and Safety, Financial Planning, Business management and Superannuation publications
North Ryde, NSW
Email: support@cch.com.au

Federation Press

www.fedpress.aust.com

Publishing company specialising in legal, social and academic books.
Leichardt, NSW
Email: info@federationpress.com.au

Government Information Access Network, The National Office for the Information Economy

www.noie.gov.au

Canberra, ACT

Telephone: (02) 6293 8333

Thomson Law Book Company

www.lbc.com.au

This is an American company with offices in all states and territories of Australia.

The Australian Head Office is in Pyrmont, NSW.

Telephone: (02) 8587 7000

Other Sources of Course and Career Information

The careers service or your careers adviser at school or university will have many of the resources listed below. The Law Society and Careers Reference Centre in your state will also have information on legal careers.

Australian Law Students Association Law Students' Directory Online 2002

www.alsa.asn.au

This publication is also available on CD – contact your Law Students Society for details.

Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) Job Guide

<http://jobguide.dest.gov.au>

Search the Job Guide for information about occupations and specialisations, by Industry Grouping, Interest or Alphabetically (for example Law)

Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)

www.dest.gov.au/tenfields

'Which Course? Which Uni?'

This site lists all 29 universities offering law and legal studies courses.

MyFuture

www.myfuture.edu.au

An interactive online career exploration service aimed at 16 to 24-year old students. Note that you need to create an account before you can log in.

Curriculum Corporation

www.curriculum.edu.au

For links to Australian University and TAFE web sites, go to www.curriculum.edu.au/ozjac/tafeuni.htm

The Good Universities Guide

www.thegoodguides.com.au

Faculties of Law at the various universities.

Scholarships

Undergraduate and postgraduate scholarship information can be obtained from individual universities' Admissions Office, Scholarship Officer, Faculty Office and/or Head of Department.

Information about postgraduate scholarships is available at www.jason.unimelb.edu.au (Joint Academic Scholarship Online Network). This search engine contains scholarship information for Australian students wishing to study at home or abroad, and for international students wishing to study in Australia.

The Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training also provides postgraduate scholarship information (Research Fellowships, Australian Postgraduate Awards, International Postgraduate Research Scholarships, and Indigenous Researchers Development Scheme) at <http://dest.gov.au/highered/scholarships.htm>

Job Search

Ask your university's Faculty of Law, and Law Students' Society, for information about legal positions and recruitment deadlines.

Visit your university's Career Centre for information about law-related and other graduate positions, recruitment timetables, and assistance with résumé preparation and honing of interview skills.

The 'Search For Work' section on the *gradlink* website allows you to search for jobs and graduate programs in the SEEK and Graduate Opportunities databases simultaneously. Click on the 'Search For Work' tile on the front page of www.gradlink.edu.au.

SEEK is Australia's largest Internet Job Board – www.seek.com.au; Graduate Opportunities is the GCCA's directory of graduate employers in Australia – www.graduateopportunities.com.





Other Sources

Have a Law Degree – What are some of my Options and Opportunities?

Law Institute of Victoria
www.liv.asn.au

Alternative Careers Guide 2001

Australian Law Students Association (ALSA)
www.alsa.asn.au

Information on Types of Law

Sydney University Law Society (SULS)
www.suls.usyd.edu.au/careers.html

Alternative Careers Guide 2002

Sydney University Law Society (SULS)
www.suls.usyd.edu.au

Alternative Careers Guide Book

University of Melbourne Law Students Society (LSS)
www.lss.unimelb.edu.au

Graduate Opportunities in Australia and New Zealand

Published on behalf of the Graduate Careers Council of Australia by The Good Guides Group, Melbourne
Industry Profile: Law
www.graduateopportunities.com

Graduate Futures

Published by The Good Guides Group, Melbourne, in partnership with the Graduate Careers Council of Australia 2002
Industry Profile: Law
www.graduateopportunities.com

What Jobs Pay 2000 – 2001

New Hobsons Press, North Sydney 2060
www.nhpress.com.au

Graduate Outlook 2002

New Hobsons Press, North Sydney
Part 5: Industry Outlook: Law (pp 120-121)

2002 Directory of Higher Education Courses (undergraduate and postgraduate)

New Hobsons Press, North Sydney

Good Universities Guide 2003

The Good Guides Group
www.thegoodguides.com.au

Good Universities Guide to Postgraduate and Career Upgrade Courses 2003 edition

The Good Guides Group
www.thegoodguides.com.au

Directory of Australian Associations

Information Australia

Lists all law societies, bar associations, and other organisations representing specialised legal areas.

Graduate Destination Survey

Graduate Careers Council of Australia
www.gradlink.edu.au



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Additional Reading

gradlink, the publishing arm of the Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA), produces a range of publications including the *Graduate Destination Survey*, *Graduate Starting Salaries*, the *Course Experience Questionnaire* and *Your Career and You*. These publications can be sourced from your university careers service and the GCCA, or can in many cases be downloaded for free from the *gradlink* website: www.gradlink.edu.au.

This booklet is one of a series intended for use by careers services in Higher Education in Australia. The booklets will also be of use to secondary school students and others considering further study. A full list of titles is available from www.gradlink.edu.au, or on request from the *gradlink* Helpdesk on 03 9349 4300.

The Australian Law Students Association is an association comprising all Law Student Societies and Law Students Associations nationally and represents approximately 25,000 law students. The core function of ALSA is to represent and promote the interests and concerns of Australian law students as well as facilitating interaction and activities of a social, intellectual, and competitive nature among law students generally.

ALSA is strongly committed to providing law students with valuable career resources. It is for this reason ALSA strongly supports this publication.



More information about ALSA can be obtained from www.alsa.asn.au

Author: Margareta Olsson

Editor: Dugald McNaughtan, *gradlink*

Series Editor: Jacqueline Vidot, Manager – *gradlink*

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PO Box 28, Parkville
Victoria 3052 Australia

gradlink Helpdesk: 03 9349 4300

Facsimile: 03 9347 7298

Email: info@gradlink.edu.au

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