

2024

Career Guide for Newly Qualified Lawyers

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Nicholas Scott Legal Services

Introduction

For many newly qualified lawyers the next obvious step would be to remain at the firm where they have spent two years training. However, a growing number of lawyers have decided to move upon qualification. There are many reasons why moving is an option many new lawyers opt for:

- There is no guarantee that you will be offered an associate position by your current firm as firms cannot always retain all their trainees.
- You may get offered a position within an alternative department which is not the area you want to specialise in. It would not be wise to remain at your current firm in a position you did not want as it can be difficult to change specialty at a later date.
- You personally may feel like it's time for a change, perhaps to move to a firm that has a better reputation for the practice area you want to specialise in.
- It may simply be that you are interested in a change of location and want to move either to a new part of the country or head abroad instead.



Options

This is an active market so there are many options available to a newly qualified lawyer including opportunities with a range of different sized law firms and in-house teams.

Choosing the area of specialisation is an important career decision, a way to help you make this decision is to think about where you want to be in the next 5 or 10 years. When you are clear on your specialty there are things to consider when deciding what your next career move is going to be:

- Reputation of the firm for your specialist area
- Location of the firm i.e. do you want to stay in London?
- Size of the firm
- US Firm? i.e. Offering flexible working with significant salary uplift and improved Partner prospects.
- Salary Package i.e. Many US firms do not train lawyers in their London offices and so hire at a Newly Qualified Level and offer a higher newly qualified salary plus a significant bonus.

Private practice:

Whether or not your firm is looking to offer you a position once qualified there is no harm in looking into your options at other firms within private practice. Perhaps you would like a step up in terms of salary or to look at available positions at firms with a first-class reputation in your interested area of practice.

International:

The legal market very much operates on a global scale which means there are more opportunities for newly qualified lawyers in offices around the world. Some jurisdictions do prefer some post qualification experience but the best way to get an understanding of the international market for newly qualified lawyers is to get in touch with the consultants at Nicholas Scott. New York firms, for example, like to hire at a Newly Qualified level (with the New York Bar Exam).

In House:

Although these opportunities are less frequent for new qualifiers there can be positions within banks, corporate and in industry. The move to in-house is becoming a popular choice among lawyers. However, at this stage in your career, the move would need to depend on the size of the in-house team and the availability of people there to train you. If not, it is best to wait 2-3 years before making the move as, in general, you will start to move away from the pure black letter law when you move in-house.

NQ Salaries

	Magic Circle Firms	US Firms
NQ	£150,000	£170,000 - £185,000
2 PQE	£160,000	£200,000

When to get in touch

Whatever the market conditions, it makes sense to consider your options early. We would suggest September qualifiers contact us from February before they qualify and March qualifiers from October the year before to get a good sense of the market at that time and consider all options available to you.

As many firms won't recruit until they have decided about retaining their own trainees this means the recruitment process can get delayed. However, it is still better to start early to explore all the available opportunities.

Nicholas Scott is in regular contact with partners at the biggest firms in London and internationally, so we are in the best position to help you find the ideal job upon qualification.

Your CV

Things to include:

- Personal details - include your name, address, email and telephone number.
- Academics - include where you studied, the dates of study, subjects and grades from A level and awards.
- Brief explanation of your legal employment history.
- Legal experience - include brief details of experience from each seat, focusing a more detailed experience on the seat you wish to specialise in.
- Include any additional experience that may be relevant to your application and extras such as languages and awards.
- Nicholas Scott consultants will prepare a CV in the Nicholas Scott 'house style' from your cv as they will know the key aspects to highlight.

Interviews



When offered an interview, preparation is essential. We have examples of the most popular legal interview questions on the Nicholas Scott website.



Nicholas Scott consultants will provide you with a mock interview to ensure you have thought through the most common interview questions. Most candidates, in our experience, tend to undersell themselves.

Speak to your Nicholas Scott consultant about the firm, department and job specification, have a look at the firm's website and check out what the legal press has been saying about the firm in recent months. Finally, it may sound cliché but enthusiasm for your chosen practice area and the job you are going for gets you a long way at interview.

Appear confident and try to relax. Listen to and understand a question before attempting to answer it. Answers should be concise, keeping to the subject without being too brief. If you consider answers to likely questions in advance you should be comfortable with most of those raised.

You will have the chance to ask interviewers questions at the end of the interview so have three or four prepared to put to them. Try not to get flustered - occasionally you will be asked extremely odd questions - remain calm and take time to think through your answer. Always try to construe your present or former employer in as positive a light as possible, however difficult your experience may have been.

After the interview you should contact your consultant as soon as possible after the interview and let them know how it went.

For more information about progressing your career please contact Patrick Cook Fowler on (+44) 203 475 3193

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For updated newly qualified positions and further interview guidance please visit www.nicholas-scott.com