Applying for a Legal Practice Position
Becoming a Solicitor: Period of Recognised Training and the Training Contract

You may well be familiar with the term “training contract”. This referred to a term of training to be a solicitor prior to the new Solicitors Regulation Authority Training Regulations, which came into force on 1 July 2014. The new term for training to be a solicitor will be a “Period of Recognised Training” (PRT) but many law firms & other organisations employing trainee solicitors will still call the period of training a “training contract” as this has been a commonly recognised term and they will continue to use it. Many large corporate/commercial law firms call it a “graduate trainee” position or a “graduate traineeship”.

A Period of Recognised Training (PRT) must meet the following requirements:

- Not less than 2 years of training that allows you to meet the SRA’s prescribed Practice Skills Standards.
- You must be trained in three distinct areas of English & Welsh law.
- You must pass the SRA’s Suitability Test before entering a Period of Recognised Training.
- A Period of Recognised Training can begin alongside the LPC, or after completion of the LPC.
- However, it is expected that most students who secure a PRT position will have completed the Legal Practice Course (LPC) and it is highly likely that law firms & other organisations offering PRT positions will expect completion of the LPC.
- In any case, you cannot qualify as a solicitor without completing the Legal Practice Course, unless you fall into the small category of people who are exempt from it.

There is more information on the technical rules & requirements around qualifying as a solicitor in the Careers & Employability Service guide “Becoming a Solicitor - A Period of Recognised Training” mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides. In this document we look at different areas of law, different types and sizes of law firms and organisations which employ law graduates and how to secure a position, including putting together an effective CV and covering letter.

Areas of Law

Legal practice is very broad and encompasses a wide variety of areas of law, including the following. The list below is not an exhaustive one, just an example of the breadth of legal practice areas.

Commercial Work

This is where the client is a company, business, partnership, charity or another organisation rather than an individual.
- Arbitration & Dispute Resolution
- Banking & Finance Law
- Corporate/Commercial Law
- Commercial Property/Real Estate
- Commercial Litigation
- Competition & EU Law
- Corporate Tax
- Defendant Insurance (acting for the insurance company defending a claim or investigating fraudulent claims)
- Employment Law (acting for the employer defending a claim)

**Sector/Industry-Based Practice Areas**

Some law firms offer a full or mixed range of legal services to different industries or work sectors. This means that the industry or work sector is the focus of the law firm’s work and the work may encompass different areas of legal practice. For example, acting on behalf of an organisation on its development and/or purchase of large-scale premises (Commercial Property), advising it on contractual issues & commercial disputes (Commercial Litigation) and advising it on the legal aspects of its recruitment & workplace policies, and contracts of employment (Employment Law.)

Examples include:
- Agriculture
- Aviation & Aerospace Law
- Charities
- Construction & Engineering
- Energy & Natural Resources
- Media & Entertainment Law
- Shipping Law
- Technology & Media

**Law for Individuals**

This is where the client is a “private client” e.g. an individual. Examples include:
- Clinical Negligence
- Criminal Defence
- Education Law
- Family Law
- Mental Health Law
- Personal Injury Law
- Prison Law
- Professional Negligence
- Professional Regulatory Work
- Residential Conveyancing/Property Work
- Wills/Probate

Of course, not all areas of legal work fit neatly into the above categories and some areas of law may be practised on behalf of organisations or individuals. It is worth remembering that wherever there is a legal dispute or contentious action then there are usually two sides, often an organisation on one side and a private client on the other.
Examples include:

- Criminal Law (Prosecutions brought against individuals by the Crown Prosecution Service).
- Judicial Review/Public Law (Actions may be brought by individuals or organisations and defended by public bodies).
- Childcare Law (bringing actions on behalf of local authorities or acting for parents or children).

There is a very good list of legal practice areas available on the Lawcareers.net website: lawcareers.net/Solicitors/SolicitorPracticeAreas. This is also available in hard copy form in the Training Contract & Pupillage Handbook.

Costs Work

Traditionally costs work was undertaken by specialist costs houses/companies but some law firms are taking it “in-house”. Law firms in addition to specialist costs companies are advertising paralegal roles within costs such as “costs paralegals” & “trainee law costs draftsman” and it is possible to complete PRT (training contract) in this area.

Where to Start?

Securing a position to train as a solicitor is very competitive. The latest figures from the Law Society’s annual statistical report show that in 2015-16 5, 728 training contracts were awarded nationally, whereas many more students will successfully complete the Legal Practice Course each year. From the point of view of the student, there can be a bewilderingly large number of law firms. Firms of solicitors can afford to be choosy and this underlines the importance of making a well-researched, highly targeted application.

Students should first consider the following:

- The type & size of firm/organisation that they would like to work for.
- Which areas of law they are interested in practising.
- The relevant application timetable.
- The different types of legal practice positions available.

In particular, students should consider whether a Period of Recognised Training to be a solicitor is their sole goal. Most LLB & LPC graduates who enter legal practice will initially enter paralegal positions. The term “paralegal” encompasses a wide variety of legal positions and it is expected that in future years, particularly with the liberalisation of the legal services market following implementation of the Legal Services Act, there will be many more paralegal positions available than there will be trainee solicitor positions.

Many senior & experienced paralegals earn medium-high salaries, may well manage or supervise teams and staff and deal with most aspects of a legal case or transaction from beginning to end.

Types of Firms

Large, Corporate/ Commercial Firms

These firms tend to fall into the following categories:
• International law firms with offices all over the world, including the UK.
• US law firms with offices in London & other cities within the UK.
• Large firms based in the City or West End of London.
• National or large regional law firms with offices in most or several major UK cities.

They will have a large number of partners and concentrate on Corporate/Commercial Law & commercial property deals. They could be dealing with mergers, take-overs & acquisitions, commercial litigation/disputes (e.g. breach of contract), and other commercial matters, such as intellectual property, banking & finance, commercial lending and the insurance sector.

Clients are likely to be large companies and the deals they are working on are potentially worth millions. They may offer a trainee solicitor the opportunity to work outside the UK, or alternatively spend some time on secondment with a client company. Some of these firms may also deal with some private client matters, for example in the areas of Family Law or Wills/Probate; but these are likely to be wealthy individuals, this work is unlikely to be a large part of the firm’s work and is unlikely to be an area the trainee solicitor will be trained in.

Application Timetable: Large, Corporate & Commercial Firms

Graduate Trainee/Trainee Solicitor positions. 2 years in advance, usual deadline is July 31, 2018 for entry in September 2020. Students should apply in the 2nd year of their LLB studies (or final year of a non-law degree for students intending to proceed straight to the Graduate Diploma in Law.) However, it is possible to apply “out of sync”, such as in the final year of an LLB or even on the LPC, as long as you realise that the training contract will usually commence 2 years hence.

As demand for trainee solicitor positions at these firms tends to be particularly high, most firms specify a minimum class 2:1 degree (predicted or obtained) and/or high A level grades e.g. minimum AAA-ABB, or equivalent.

Summer & Easter vacation placements are offered by many of these firms. Competition for these places is often more intense than for a training contract/graduate trainee position! Some firms assess vacation placement students for a training contract/graduate trainee position as part of the vacation placement and the majority of students who are awarded a training contract will have undertaken a vacation scheme. Strategically it is therefore often wise to apply for a place on the vacation scheme, although it is still eminently possible to apply for the training contract only. Please note that the closing dates for the vacation scheme are earlier and vary from firm to firm, typically between January-April 2018.

Paralegal Positions Many large corporate/commercial law firms advertise paralegal positions, usually based in one specific department or specialising in one particular area of law. These will advertised on an “ad hoc” or “immediate vacancy” basis i.e. not far in advance but as and when a vacancy arises. Vacancies advertised via legal recruitment agencies will usually require 6-12 months experience but large law firms often advertise positions suitable for new graduates. This will usually be indicated in the job advert or title, so look for wording such as “graduate paralegal”, or “would suit law graduate”, or something along those lines.

It is rare at a large law firm that a paralegal position will lead directly to a trainee solicitor period. However, paralegals may apply for trainee solicitor positions as internal applicants and would compete with external applicants and may well succeed in their applications if
they are considered to be a strong internal performer and in particular if a partner encourages their application to be a trainee solicitor.

Experience as a paralegal at a large firm may also help with training contract applications at mid-sized or smaller law firms.

**How to apply:** Firms usually have their own on-line application forms. As demand for training contracts at these firms tends to be particularly high, most firms specify a minimum class 2:1 degree (expected or obtained) and/or high A level grades e.g. minimum AAA-ABB, or equivalent.

**Medium-Sized Firms**

There are many “city-centre” firms, which might better be described as “medium-sized”. As a rough guide, such a firm might have 5-15 partners, and whilst a mid-sized law firm is likely to practise commercial work, they are likely to offer a mix of both commercial and private client legal services.

Many medium-sized firms may also be based in satellite towns outside the city centre, or have offices spread across a few areas. Some medium-sized firms might also be described as “niche” or “specialist” firms” (see, below). The key here is what areas of law are practised, and in particular the seats that a trainee solicitor will spend time in.

**Application Timetable:**

**Training Contract/ Trainee Solicitor positions:** Again, this tends to vary. Some firms will look to compete with the larger, commercial firms and recruit 2 years in advance, more typically medium-sized firms may recruit 12-18 months in advance. Students should check closing dates carefully. Some firms may recruit as and when they have vacancies, typically advertising them on Lawcareers.Net jobs section or via the Careers & Employability Service.

Some firms do not advertise and will accept speculative applications.

Many mid-sized law firms do not accept training contract/trainee solicitor applications directly from external applicants and the way into qualifying as a solicitor with these firms is often via a paralegal position. Paralegal positions may be a direct “foot in the door” to a training contract/trainee solicitor position so, for example, if a paralegal is considered to have worked well they might be offered a trainee solicitor position directly, typically after 6 to 24 months with the firm.

Paralegal work can lead to time off the trainee solicitor period on a like-for-like basis, up to a maximum of 6 months. In other cases, paralegals will compete and apply for trainee solicitor positions internally.

**Paralegal Positions:** These will usually be advertised on an “ad hoc” or “immediate vacancy” basis, as and when positions arise. Depending upon the area of law paralegal job titles will vary, for example legal assistant, legal clerk, litigation assistant, litigation executive, file handler, claims handler, graduate paralegal or just plain old paralegal!
See the Careers & Employability Service guide “Work as a Paralegal” for further information and a description of typical paralegal work and job titles [mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides](http://mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides)

**How to apply:** CV & covering letter, unless otherwise specified, such as the firm’s own application form.

Students should also consider making speculative applications with a CV & covering letter for paralegal roles and/or work experience. Unpaid work experience can sometimes lead to the offer of a paid job.

**Niche Firms**

As the name suggests, these are firms that largely specialise in a particular area of law, for example Personal Injury or Family Law, Human Rights Law or Media Law. They can offer advice & representation to clients in cases within the firm’s particular niche that require particular specialism. For example, a PI niche firm might be able to offer advice & representation in complex areas such as Industrial Disease & Medical Negligence.

Some niche firms may not be able to offer trainee solicitor positions as they do not practise enough areas of law. The Solicitors Regulation Authority requires that trainee solicitors be trained in a minimum of 3 different areas of law. Some niche firms may second a trainee solicitor to another firm of solicitors for a short period so that they can gain the necessary experience in other areas of law.

**Application Timetable:**

- **Training Contract/ Trainee Solicitor positions:** It is rare for niche firms to offer a trainee solicitor position directly for external application. The vast majority of trainee solicitor roles would come either after working internally as a paralegal, as a direct “foot in the door” or after making an internal application for a trainee solicitor position.

- **Paralegal positions:** These will usually be advertised on an “ad hoc” or “immediate vacancy” basis, as & when positions arise. Depending upon the area of law paralegal job titles will vary, for example legal assistant, legal clerk, litigation assistant, litigation executive, file handler, claims handler, graduate paralegal or just plain old paralegal!

See the Careers & Employability Service guide “Work as a Paralegal” for further information and a description of typical paralegal work and job titles [mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides](http://mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides)

**How to apply:** CV & covering letter, unless otherwise specified, such as the firm’s own application form.

Students should also consider making speculative applications with a CV & covering letter for paralegal roles and/or work experience. Unpaid work experience can sometimes lead to the offer of a paid job.
General Practice/ High Street

Although something of an over-generalisation, this description tends to apply to “high street” firms that tend to serve a local area or community, rather than being based in a city centre. They are found in suburbs & satellite towns and as the name suggests, tend to offer a general range of private client legal services e.g. Residential Conveyancing, Wills & Probate, Family Law, Criminal Defence, Personal Injury Law, Employment Law.

Application Timetable:

- **Training Contract/ Trainee Solicitor positions**: It is rare for general practice/high street firms to offer a trainee solicitor position directly for external application. The vast majority of trainee solicitor roles would come either after working internally as a paralegal, as a direct “foot in the door” or after making an internal application for a trainee solicitor position.

- **Paralegal positions**: These will usually be advertised on an “ad hoc” or “immediate vacancy” basis, as & when positions arise. Depending upon the area of law paralegal job titles will vary, for example legal assistant, legal clerk, litigation assistant, litigation executive, file handler, claims handler, graduate paralegal or just plain old paralegal!

See the Careers & Employability Service guide “Work as a Paralegal” for further information and a description of typical paralegal work and job titles: mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides

**How to apply**: CV & covering letter, unless otherwise specified, such as the firm’s own application form.

**Students should also consider making speculative applications with a CV & covering letter for paralegal roles and/or work experience. Unpaid work experience can sometimes lead to the offer of a paid job.**

Legal Aid Firms

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act received Royal Assent on 1 May 2012 and removed many areas of legal advice & representation that were previously available under the Legal Aid scheme.

Some firms specialise in providing a service to Legal Aid clients and often specialise in areas such as Criminal Defence, Childcare Law, Mental Health Law and Education Law pertaining to Special Educational Needs Disabilities. Some limited Legal Aid advice & representation remains in areas such as Family Law, Immigration & Asylum Law & Welfare Benefits.

Application timetable:

**Training Contract/ Trainee Solicitor positions**: Sometimes law firms undertaking Legal Aid work offer training contracts for direct external application 1 to 2 years in advance, sometimes on an ad hoc immediate vacancy basis i.e. as & when the job is ready to move into, advertised only a little in advance.

However, it is more common for them to recruit trainee solicitors internally via paralegal
positions, often called legal clerk or caseworker positions. Training contracts & paralegal roles are also sometimes offered via speculative applications.

Justice First Fellowship Scheme—This scheme funds trainee solicitors positions in areas of social welfare law, with organisations such as law centres, law firms and charities bidding to recruit a trainee solicitor via the scheme. Applications open in August, for a trainee solicitor role to commence the following January. Further information can be found at jff.thelegaleducationfoundation.org/

Paralegal positions: These can have a variety of names although “paralegal” & “legal clerk” tend to be the most common, as does “crown court clerk” or “magistrates court clerk” within criminal defence work.

In addition to firms of solicitors, there is also a network of public law centres that often advertise caseworker positions. A caseworker is another form of paralegal job title.

How to Apply: CV & covering letter. However, law centres also offer training contracts and will generally not accept CVs, applications must be made by application form.

Trainee Solicitor/Paralegal Positions Outside of Firms of Solicitors

Firms of solicitors are not the only organisations to offer training contracts & paralegal positions. It is possible to complete a traineeship in a law centre, local government legal department, the Government Legal Service, the Crown Prosecution Service, magistrates’ courts & with the in-house legal department of a private company in industry or commerce, amongst others.

In addition, the implementation of the Legal Services Act has meant that a number of non-law firms have entered the legal services market and offer paralegal positions.

Targeted Research: Where to Look for Job Vacancies

Too many students adopt a “scattergun” approach to making training contract & paralegal job applications, sending out their CVs & covering letters to as many firms as possible, without considering whether or not it is the right type of firm for them and crucially the areas of law that the firm covers. For example, a partner at a small Legal Aid practice that specialises in Family & Childcare Law received scores of applications from LPC students who were not taking any family law-related elective and who were studying commercial law electives exclusively!

In addition to the Training Contract & Pupillage Handbook, the “Find a Solicitor” function on the homepage of the Law Society’s website (lawsociety.org.uk) can be a very useful resource for getting a list of firms together.

- Search by area of law from the drop down box and by geographical location.
- Gives number & location of offices, with full contact details.
- The number of lawyers there are, giving you an idea of the size of the firm.
- Areas of legal practice.
- Whether authorised to take on trainee solicitors.

There is often a direct link to the firm’s website. In a covering letter, you will need to explain why you are interested in applying to a particular firm. The law firm’s website can aid you in the following ways:
To ascertain whether a firm has a structured training contract recruitment scheme, or paralegal job vacancies, see if there is a section headed “Careers”, “Working For Us”, “Recruitment” or something similar. Sometimes this section is listed underneath “About Us.” There should then be a description of training contract vacancies and, crucially, the closing date and when the firm is recruiting for e.g. September 2018 or 2019. In addition, check which seats a trainee will be trained in.

View areas of legal practice offered by the firm - often comes with a good description of what each area of law involves. You will often see this information under “Our Services”, “What We Offer” or split into “Law For Businesses” and “Law For Individuals.”

View partner profiles - often gives details of important cases partners have been involved in.

Some sites also have a press section, with the latest news of high-profile cases & transactions. Or a section giving information on legal cases & developments available to the public.

Do not simply copy into a covering letter or application firm a general statement which is on the website and which is intended to advertise a firm to potential clients.

For example, “I am applying for a training contract with Bloggs & Bloggs because you are a dynamic, commercial law firm which understands the ever-changing & diverse markets within which your clients operate.” It will be obvious you have just copied it. Research the firm and put into your own words why they have attracted you!

lawcareers.net/

This website is particularly valuable. As well as having a Jobs section, it is possible to search for training contracts in the Solicitors section. Students should also register for LCN Weekly, a free regular e-mail bulletin that has articles on topical legal matters and profiling different firms of solicitors. If researching a particular firm, then students can enter the name into the search mechanism on the homepage, as it will produce archived articles on that firm. There is also the extremely useful My LCN feature, which allows you to save and store information on firms that you are interested in applying to.

Lawcareers.net’s Jobs section: lawcareers.net/Jobs

If a firm does not mention job vacancies specifically, it may well be that they recruit trainees (and often paralegal staff) directly from speculative applications, or that they advertise vacancies as & when they need staff. Some firms will identify & recruit future paralegals and/or trainee solicitors from students who have undertaken work experience with them.

If making a speculative application, it is a good idea to ascertain which member of staff deals directly with such applications. This could be a recruitment partner, practice manager or HR manager. Send your CV & covering directly to this person, as hopefully it will be read properly by the person who has a direct interest in recruiting trainees or paralegals!

Keep a record of all the applications you have made. Do follow them up periodically-often firms will keep your details on file until a vacancy becomes available. You may also ask for unpaid work experience. However, firms will become antagonised if contact becomes too frequent, you do not want to come across as “hassling” too much.
In addition, the Careers & Employability Service guide “Useful Legal Websites and Blogs” contains a list of websites that list legal job vacancies mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides

Further Information on Paralegal Work

There is further information on paralegal work in the Careers & Employability Service guide “Work as a Paralegal” mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides

As discussed previously, it is worth bearing the following points in mind:

- Paralegal work is the usual entry point into the legal jobs market for law graduates.
- In many cases paralegal work is a prerequisite to being offered a trainee solicitor position.
- Paralegal work can lead to “time off” training to be a solicitor, on a like-for-like basis, up to a maximum of 6 months.
- Paralegal work can be an end in itself, leading to a senior paralegal career. It should not solely be viewed as a way into a trainee solicitor position. There are likely to be many more paralegal jobs available than there are trainee solicitor positions.
- Paralegal work means any job which involves substantive legal work, but which is not a trainee solicitor position or a pupillage, and not a qualified solicitor or barrister role.
- Paralegal is a catch-all generic term. Paralegal work comes under many different job titles.
- Paralegal work is not solely available within law firms; it is available in other organisations too.

Careers & Employability Support

The Careers & Employability Service offers range of support to Manchester Met students and graduates:

- **Find Opportunities**: We advertise hundreds of part time, graduate and internship roles through My Career Hub www.mmu.ac.uk/mycareerhub
- **JobsHub drop in**: Every afternoon from 1pm-4pm. Review your CVs, covering letters and application forms with our team of Careers and Employment Assistants.
- **Ask a Careers Question Online**: Get online advice through My Career Hub. This service allows you to ask your question at any time and receive support via email. www.mmu.ac.uk/careersquestion
- **Careers Consultant Appointments**: Book a 30 minute appointment to discuss any career query you may have.

For more information visit mmu.ac.uk/careers
The Curriculum Vitae

There is an example CV on the following page and some key hints and tips both below and on the example CV to support you in producing a high quality CV. In addition, refer to the ‘CV and Covering Letter Guide for further advice mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides

- Ensure personal details are accurate and appropriate (details such as marital status, gender, date of birth are not required.)

- Check spelling punctuation and grammar.

- Your CV should be clear and easy to read. Visually a potential employer should be able to pick out key information easily.

- Use clear headings and subheadings and be consistent with layout, presentation and font.

- A ‘Personal Profile’ is not required on a Law CV. Many law firms do not like these, it is better to demonstrate the development of skills, abilities & personal qualities in the relevant section where they were acquired so that they are evidenced.

- When describing legal work experience, try to think in terms of key legal skills e.g. interviewing and advising, drafting, legal research, advocacy & negotiation. In addition, try to be specific about what experience you gained of legal cases, transactions, processes, procedures or documentation. Interviewing & advisory skills gained in volunteer positions can be particularly valuable.

- Law firms and other legal employers tend to value a range of transferable skills & qualities, for example strong communication skills, good written skills, the ability to present oneself professionally and effectively to clients, customer service, negotiation skills, problem-solving capabilities, being a good team player, commercial awareness, the ability to network and market oneself effectively, presentation skills, the ability to demonstrate initiative and handle responsibility, flexibility & adaptability, organisational skills, the ability to plan and manage one’s own work well and the ability to show attention to detail and work carefully and accurately.

- There is no need to provide an exhaustive list of all your duties & responsibilities for non-legal roles, focus on the transferrable skills/ qualities that you have gained or developed, giving just enough detail about those duties & responsibilities, and any particular achievements, to illustrate those transferable skills/qualities.

- If you have supervised a team or organised an event, mention the actual number of staff or event attendees, as this can impress.

- If you have had many different positions of responsibility then you might consider listing them in a separate section above Interests & Achievements. Do mention if you were elected or chosen, as it shows that people entrusted you with responsibility.

- Personalise and be individual about extra-curricular interests & achievements, so if you enjoy music or reading for example, be specific about what type of music or artists that you like listening to, or the type of fiction or authors that you like to read.
Joseph Kaplinsky

PERSONAL DETAILS
Address: 19 Woodcock Avenue, Whalley Range, Manchester M16 7PF
Telephone: 0161 258 6199 Mobile: 07945 612557
E-mail: j.kaplinsky@gmail.com

EDUCATION

2017-2018 Manchester Metropolitan University
Legal Practice Course
Electives: Corporate Practice, Commercial Litigation, Employment Law and Practice

2014-2017 Manchester Metropolitan University
LLB (Hons) Law- Class 2:2
Modules included Commercial Law (63%), Employment Law (62%) & Contract (65%).
Final year dissertation: “Recent Developments in Marine Insurance Law” (62%), presented to Baker and Dunn Solicitors in a lunchtime seminar October 2016.
Mooting: Represented the University in the National Mooting Competition, achieving a quarter-final placing. This developed strong advocacy & presentational skills, in addition to the ability to undertake practical legal research & case analysis.

2012-2014 Oadby Sixth Form College, Oadby, Leics.
A Levels: French (B), German (B), History (C)

2007-2012 King’s High School, Oadby, Leics.
Achieved 8 GCSEs grades A-C including English Language (A) & Mathematics (B).

LEGAL WORK EXPERIENCE

July-August 2017 Leicester Law Centre
Voluntary Legal Advisor- 1 Month

- Advised a wide range of clients on a diverse range of legal matters, this placement allowed me to develop advisory & client interviewing skills, in addition to drafting skills
- Interviewed clients to elicit key information in housing & welfare law matters, then prepared briefing notes for solicitors (e.g. repossession, disrepair, DLA and ESA appeals)
- Attended at tribunal – DLA and ESA appeals
- Drafted particulars of claim in a housing law matter and completed appropriate court documentation

Ensure accurate personal details.
Use clear, easy to define headings and sub-headings to illustrate information.
Be consistent in style through-out.
Use reverse chronological order (most recent first) for each section.
When describing legal work experience highlight key legal skills such as interviewing, drafting, advocacy, etc.
Use specific examples to demonstrate key legal skills to an employer.
July-August 2016    Cook & Co. Solicitors, Leicester

Work Experience Placement- 1 Month

- During this placement I worked alongside the property law partner and developed practical legal research skills, in addition to the ability to analyse & examine legal documentation
- Conducted legal research into property matters on behalf of partners and drafted lease documents
- Checked proof of title and undertook Land Registry searches in residential conveyancing transactions
- Inspected title searches and analysed enquiry & reply documents

EMPLOYMENT

October 2014-present    River Island, Manchester

Team Supervisor- Part-Time

- Responsible for managing & motivating a team of 7 sales staff, this role has developed my ability to handle responsibility, in addition to strong customer service, negotiation and problem-solving capabilities
- Thrive successfully within a competitive business environment, ensuring that team sales targets are regularly exceeded, thus developing strong business acumen & commercial awareness
- Negotiate annual individual performance plans with my team members and delivery of stock with suppliers

INTERESTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Badminton Represented Leicestershire U-18 at badminton and represented Manchester Metropolitan University in the national BUCS competition. I have recently joined Chorlton & District Badminton Club and am now part of the planning committee that is organising the Christmas Bash, a social event at which about 100 people are expected to attend, proceeds of which will go to charity.

Debating I am a keen debater and regularly attend and take a part in debates organised by the University Debating Society. I am also a member of the Student Law Society and, alongside another student, presented an argument opposing the viewpoint “The Legal Services Act: The End of the Legal Profession as We Know It?” at a recent meeting.

Jazz Music I also enjoy listening to jazz music and collecting jazz records, as well as reading books on the history & development of jazz music from its early days to modern times.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

- Substantial experience of conducting internet legal research, including use of packages such as LexisNexis & Westlaw
- Strong IT capabilities, fully conversant with Microsoft Word, Excel & PowerPoint
- Strong conversational ability in French & German
- Full, clean UK driving licence + own transport

REFERENCES

References available on request.
8) The Covering Letter

There is an example covering letter on the following page and some key hints and tips both below and on the example covering letter to support you in producing an excellent covering letter. Also refer to the ‘CV and Covering Letter Guide for more advice www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides

The covering letter introduces the CV, gives you the opportunity to sell yourself, bringing in aspects of the CV that you feel are impressive and which back up the points that you want to make. It also gives you the chance to discuss your skills & personal qualities. As far as possible, it should be tailored to the individual firm that you are applying to. You should try to cover the following points:

- interest in law & motivation to become a solicitor and/or why you are applying for this particular position
- interest in particular areas of law you wish to practise
- what attracts you to the firm that you are applying to
- particular skills and qualities that make you look attractive to the firm.

In order to illustrate these points, you may wish to discuss your studies at degree and/or LPC level, your final year dissertation and in particular, any legally-related work experience that you may have. This could also include volunteer work done at a Citizen’s Advice Bureau or a law centre, or volunteering for a charity. Mature students may have previous work experience that is not necessarily legal, but could be helpful in a future legal career. For example, someone who has worked as a social worker may have a thorough knowledge of social services and the legal framework within which Criminal Law operates, and may have already prepared cases for court proceedings.

When discussing skills & personal qualities, always back up what you say with evidence. For example, a student wanted to talk about her ability to rise to a challenge and her problem-solving abilities. She gave an excellent example of having been on a canoeing trek where she had to work in a team to navigate across various rivers & streams!

Emphasise any particular achievements that you are proud of and also the skills that you feel you have developed. If you have any interests which are a bit different, it may be worth mentioning them. Firms are currently inundated with applications from hopeful law students; impressive achievements & unusual interests may just help your application to stick in the mind of the person reading it and thus help you to get an interview. It can also provide a good point for discussion at the interview.

Finally, don’t waffle. Concentrate on writing “bite-sized” paragraphs and you should try to make your points concisely. You are writing a covering letter, not an essay or dissertation!

Have a look at the example, below. It relates to the Joseph Kaplinsky CV.
Mr Robert Grimble
Grimble & Grimble Solicitors
247 High Street
Oldfield
OL7 5AP

Dear Mr Grimble,

Training contract position commencing September 2018

I am writing to you to apply for a training contract commencing in September 2018. I am currently studying for the Legal Practice Course at Manchester Metropolitan University, which I will complete in June 2018.

I believe that I am a good candidate for this position as I have work experience (both legal and commercial) which has given me the skills and experience to effectively deal with clients and other professionals and to manage files.

I am particularly attracted to Grimble & Grimble because of the variety of litigation work that you undertake and the range of clients that you clearly attract and my areas of chosen academic study align with the key areas delivered by your firm. My success in reaching the quarter-finals of the National Mooting Competition, allied to my experience of participating in university debates, indicates that I would enjoy success as a solicitor-advocate. The fact that your firm regularly represents clients at employment tribunals and encourages fee-earners to do their own advocacy is another reason why I feel that I would be able to make a successful contribution to Grimble & Grimble.

The challenge of manoeuvring a client through the litigation process is one that particularly appeals to me. Furthermore, I believe that I possess the ability to think strategically and commercially, a vital quality when attempting to achieve a practical outcome for a client. My understanding of commercial imperatives is evidenced by my continued success as a team supervisor at River Island, operating as I do within a highly competitive and target-driven sales environment.

In addition to the above, I feel that my non-academic achievements, particularly in the field of badminton, are evidence of my energy, commitment and determination to succeed.

I enclose my CV for your consideration. I am available for interview at any time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Kaplinsky