

# Preparing for after your postgraduate degree: Careers in law in the UK

**21 August 2025**

**Andreas Gaitzsch**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/andreasgaitzsch>

**KING'S CAREERS  
& EMPLOYABILITY**

## Agenda

- Routes into law
- The solicitor route
- The barrister route
- The paralegal / CILEX lawyer route
- Other considerations
  - Visas
  - The legal labour market
  - Tips for finding jobs other than training contracts or pupillage
  - How we support you
  - Resources

**KING'S CAREERS  
& EMPLOYABILITY**

**KING'S**  
*College*  
**LONDON**

# *Routes into law*

**[kcl.ac.uk/careers](https://kcl.ac.uk/careers)**

## Your journey from here



September  
2025



September  
2026  
(graduation ceremony  
Jan 27)



September  
2026 onwards

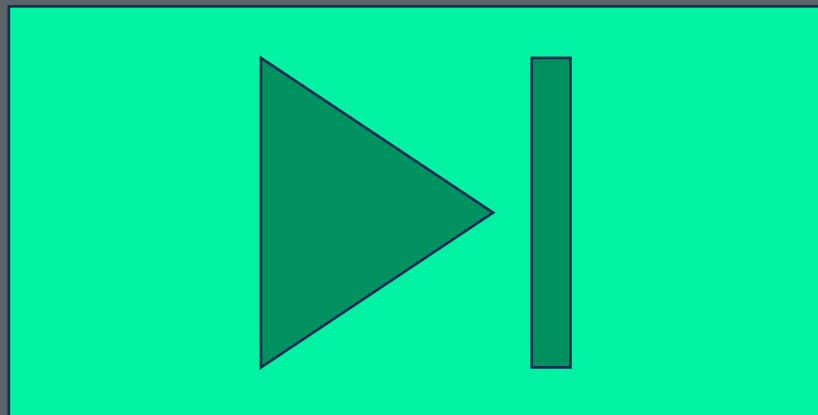
## Routes into law

- Solicitor pathway → Law firms, Government, In-house, Big 4, High Street, Organisations
- Barrister pathway → Chambers, Employed Bar (Government, In-House)
- CILEX pathway → Law firms, Government, In-house, Specialist practices
- Paralegal → Law firms, Chambers, Government agencies, Corporations

Solicitor	Barrister	CILEX specialist lawyer	Paralegal
Specialises in taking legal action against an individual or organisation or undertakes transactional work or non-contentious work.	Acts act as the client's representation in court. Helps convey their client's view of events into legal arguments to the opposition and makes persuasive representations to get the best possible result for their client.	Provides expert advice and support to individuals, businesses and organisations in one practice area only at the same level as a solicitor.	Assists solicitors and barristers in the delivery of legal services through tasks such as legal research, document drafting, case management, office administration, contract negotiation, compliance and due diligence, etc.

**KING'S CAREERS  
& EMPLOYABILITY**

**KING'S**  
*College*  
**LONDON**



# *The Solicitor Route*

**[kcl.ac.uk/careers](https://kcl.ac.uk/careers)**

## Solicitor Route

### How to become a solicitor

Have a degree-level qualification in any subject

Complete SQE1 and SQE2 exams

Two years of qualifying work experience (QWE)

Satisfy the SRA's character and suitability requirements

Completion of a degree-level qualification

For candidates with non-law degrees completion of a PGDip Law or other conversion course may be advisable

SQE1 preparation

SQE1 assessment

SQE2 preparation

SQE2 assessment

Training Contract

- Law firm placements undertaken during a Law degree.
- Working in a law clinic.
- Working as a paralegal.
- Volunteer work at a charity.

2 years qualifying work experience

### If you are a foreign qualified foreign lawyer

- A qualified lawyer is someone who holds a professional legal qualification which confers rights to practise in England and Wales or in another jurisdiction.
- Qualified lawyers do not need two years' qualifying work experience.
- You can apply for an exemption from either SQE1 and/or SQE2.
  - The SQE1 tests functional legal knowledge at the level of a Day 1 Solicitor.
  - The SQE2 tests legal skills at the level of a Day 1 Solicitor.
- The threshold for exemptions from SQE1 is very high
- For SQE2 exemptions the Solicitor Regulation Authority has a SQE2 Exemption Finder by jurisdiction on their website.

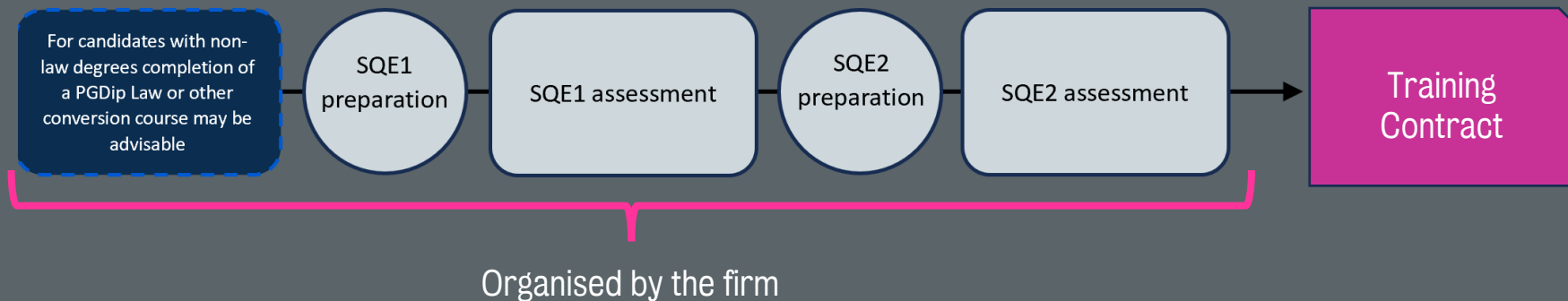


## Which LLM students can get a training contract?

- Anyone with a UK first degree not yet qualified as any type of lawyer.
- Those of you from abroad who are not yet qualified lawyers in your home countries.
- Those of you from abroad who are qualified lawyers but do not yet have 2 to 3 years of work experience.

Usually, law firms do not consider foreign qualified lawyers for a training contract if they have 3 or more years of work experience.

If that's you, you will need to look for normal job openings.





## Solicitor Route

### How to get a training contract (TC)

#### August – October

Applications for vacation schemes open and for TCs at some firms

#### January – March

Interview/assessment centres taking place

#### September – November

Closing dates for winter vacation schemes. Interviews and assessments follow.

#### February/March – July

Applications for TCs open at further firms

#### December

Winter vacation schemes run

#### April

Spring vacation schemes run

#### November – January

Closing dates for Spring/Summer vacation schemes and some Training Contracts

#### June/July

Summer vacation schemes run

## How to get a training contract (2)

- Law firms are hiring up to two (sometimes even three) years in advance.
- For example:

**FRESHFIELDS**

### Trainee Associate Programme commencing in 2028 or 2029

**Application window:** 30 September 2025 - 27 November 2025

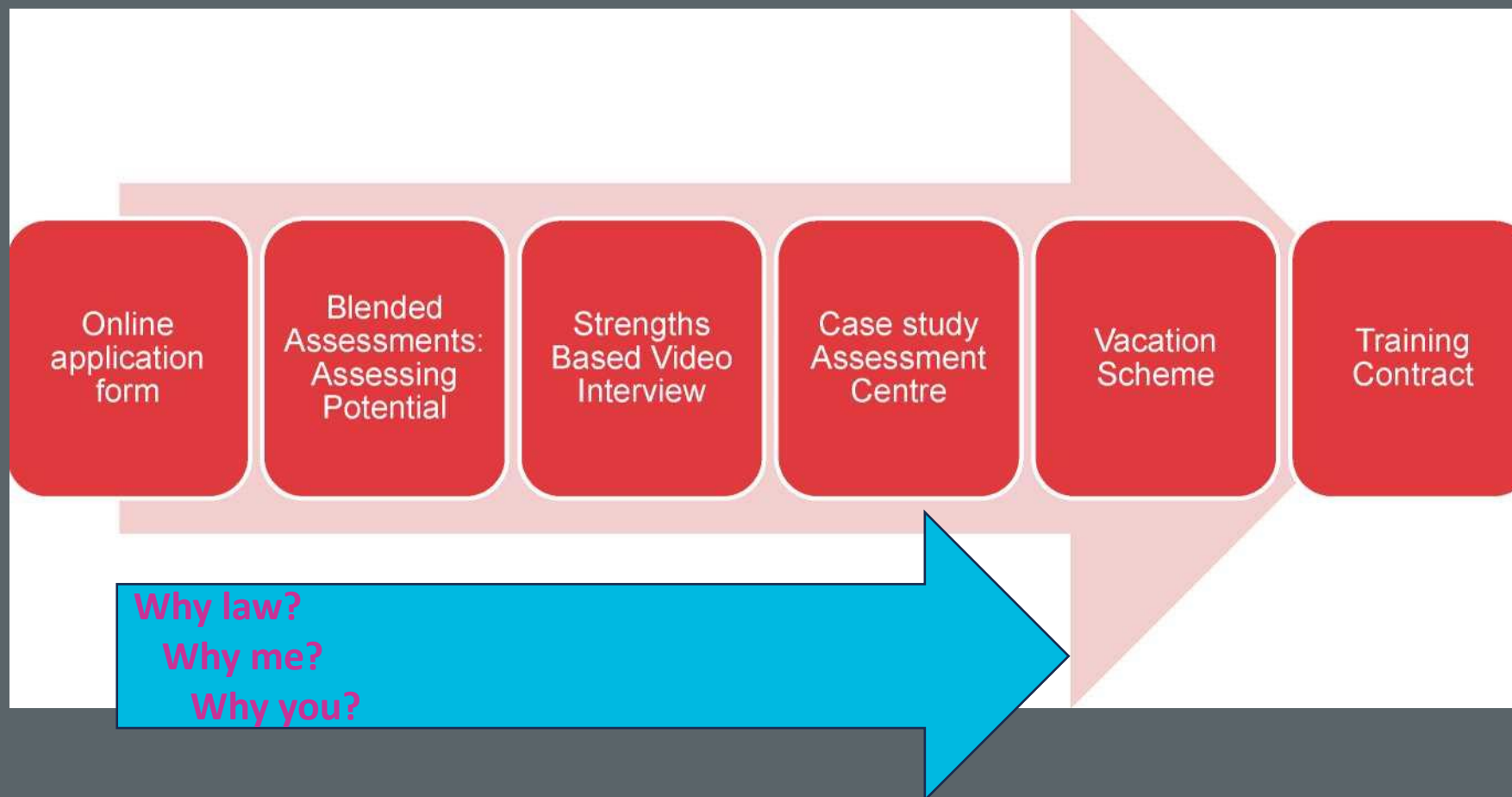
Note that we recruit on a rolling basis, so we encourage you to apply early. Roles may close before the advertised deadline if we receive a high volume of applications.

**Eligibility:** Penultimate- and final-year undergraduate students from any degree discipline and graduates. You must be eligible to start your Trainee Associate Programme in either 2028 or 2029. Your intake will be allocated by the Early Careers Team based on your current academic status.

- Their 2025 summer vacation scheme will lead to the same start date (if the vacation scheme concludes with a successful TC interview) and for Freshfields the application timeline is the same
  - BUT : It's most unlikely that as a PGT you can partake in a vacation scheme because of visa rules

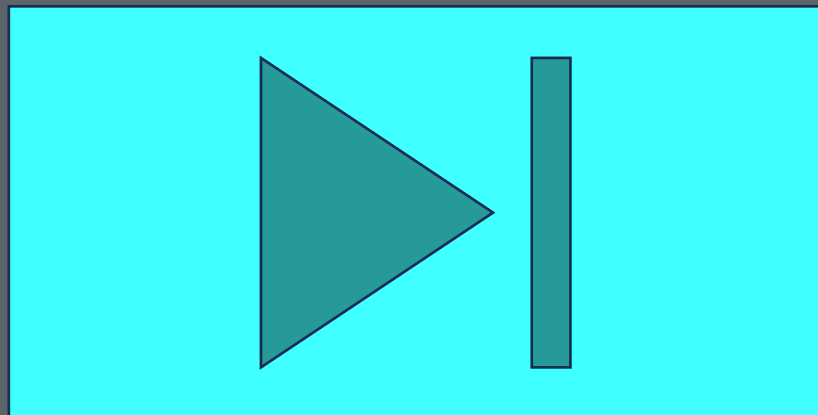
Solicitor Route

## A typical application process



**KING'S CAREERS  
& EMPLOYABILITY**

**KING'S**  
*College*  
**LONDON**

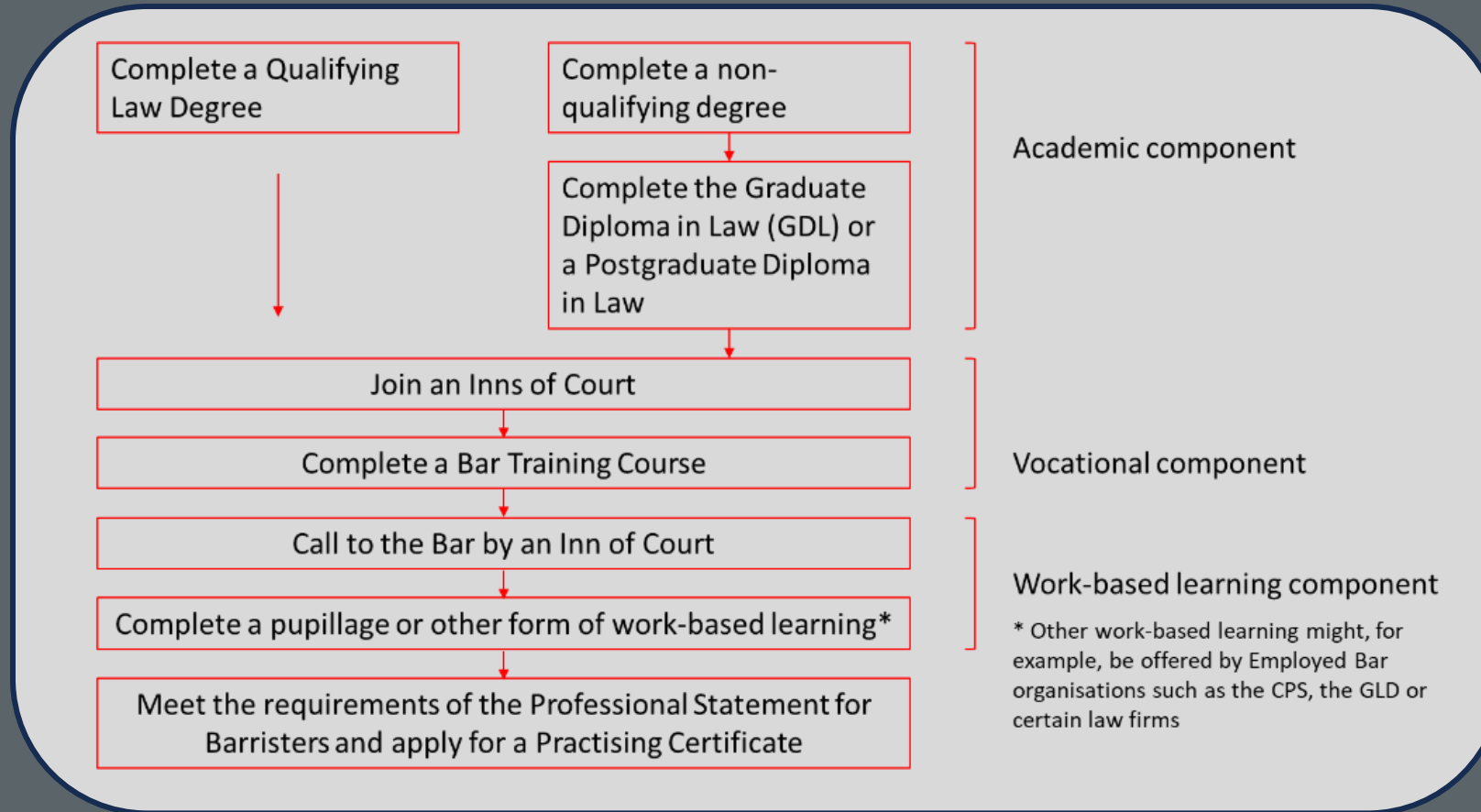


# *The Barrister Route*

**[kcl.ac.uk/careers](https://kcl.ac.uk/careers)**

## Barrister Route

### How to become a barrister



### If you are a foreign qualified lawyer

- If you want to be admitted to the Bar you will need to submit an application to the Bar Standards Board's Authorisations team.
- Depending on your qualifications and experience, you may be exempt from some or all of the requirements for training for the Bar.
- Where you cannot demonstrate that a requirement has been met from your studies, previous experience or alternative training, you may be required to take appropriate examinations and/or complete a period of pupillage.
  - Any outstanding academic requirements will have to be met by completing the relevant components of a Graduate Diploma in Law course.
  - The examinations which are part of the vocational component are the same as those taken by any other Bar Training students.
  - If you need to complete a period of pupillage you may be required to complete competence assessments in line with other pupils.



## How to become a barrister (continued)

### Timeline for students

*Penultimate year of LLB / final year of non-law degree*

**Throughout year**

**Law students:**

- Get relevant work experience
- Research chambers / mini-pupillages
- Prepare CV for applications

**By May**

**Non-Law students:**

- Get relevant work experience
- Apply for GDL Scholarship

*Final year of law degree / GDL year*

**By beginning of November**

- Apply for an Inn Bar Course Scholarship

**Timings Vary**

- Apply for Bar Course at a Bar Course Provider via their website.

**January/February**

- Apply for pupillage through the Pupillage Gateway

**Minimum of 12 weeks before starting Bar Course**

- Must have joined an Inn of Court

*Bar Course year*

**Throughout year**

- Apply for pupillage
- Get relevant work experience
- Attend Qualifying Sessions
- Sit exams

**January/February**

- Apply for pupillage through the Gateway

**Timings Vary**

- Finish the Bar Course

**July onwards**

- Call to the Bar

*Pupillage year*

**September / October**

- Start pupillage

**Summer**

- Tenancy application and decision
- Possibly, probationary tenancy (i.e. "Third Six" Pupillage)

**October**

- Start tenancy

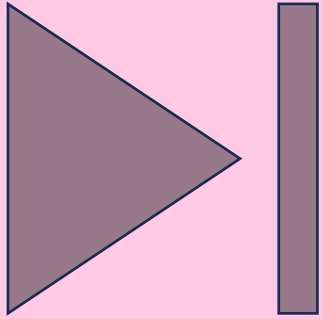


The Bar Council



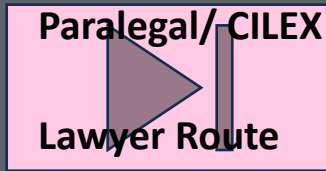
**KING'S CAREERS  
& EMPLOYABILITY**

**KING'S**  
*College*  
**LONDON**



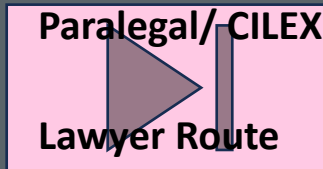
*Paralegal and  
CILEX lawyer*

**[kcl.ac.uk/careers](https://kcl.ac.uk/careers)**



## Becoming a paralegal

- No formal regulation, but most paralegals hold an undergraduate degree
  - Often in law, or via a conversion course (PGDL/GDL)
- Match qualifications to your area of interest
  - Career paralegals often specialise in niche legal fields
- Professional qualifications available:
  - NALP: Offers paralegal qualifications at various levels
  - CILEX: Provides routes to legal careers including CILEX Paralegal and Advanced Paralegal
- Considering paralegal work as QWE (Qualifying Work Experience)?
  - Paralegal qualifications may not be necessary
  - Most paralegal roles count as QWE
  - Ensure job descriptions align with long-term goals
- Top areas for paralegal roles:
  - Corporate, Family, Immigration, Criminal, Personal Injury, Intellectual Property
  - Criminal, Personal Injury & IP often require formal paralegal qualifications
  - Litigation roles span many legal sectors



## Becoming a CILEX Lawyer

- To become a CILEX Lawyer, you must:
  - Complete the CILEX Professional Qualification (CPQ) or CILEX Graduate Qualification if you have a law degree.
  - Complete 2,300 hours of qualifying experience doing work that contributes to the provision of legal services.
  - Evidence your growing competence via a Professional Experience portfolio at each training stage.
- If you are a qualified lawyer from abroad
  - You can apply to CILEX Regulation to have your qualification recognised.
  - CILEX Regulation will assess the level, content and scope of your professional qualification against the level, content and scope of the CILEX Regulation education standards knowledge requirements to determine whether they are comparable.

A CILEX Lawyer has the right to practice unsupervised in their specialist field and operate at the same level as a solicitor in their practice area. This means they provide expert advice and support to individuals, businesses and organisations in conveyancing, business and employment law, immigration law, dispute resolution, criminal law and litigation, family law, or probate. Their work is mainly client-based and can be contentious, non-contentious or transactional.



Solicitor Route

Barrister Route

Paralegal/CILEX

Lawyer Route

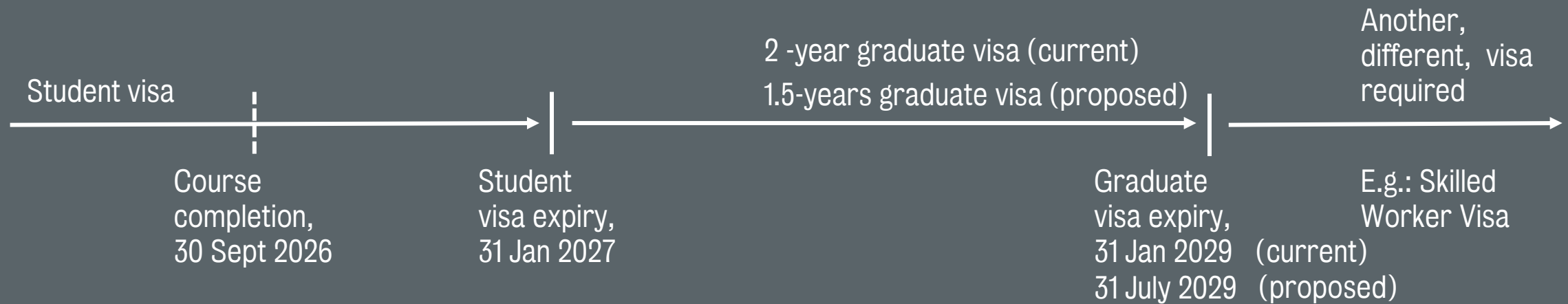
**KING'S**  
*College*  
**LONDON**

### Build your experience; demonstrate your motivation

- Go to firm insights days, workshops or university events that speak to your interests.
- Participate in DPSoL student societies.
- Do legal volunteering.
- Go to court and follow cases – The Royal Courts of Justice and the Old Bailey are only a 5-minute walk from us.
- Complete virtual work experience.
- Stay ahead of what's happening in the legal world and the world at large:
  - To start with subscribe to the [LittleLaw](#) newsletter.
  - Once you are a King's student you will have free access to the Financial Times.

# *Other Considerations*

## A word about visas



## A word about the legal labour market in the UK

- Very competitive.
- GCs increasingly focused on cost control.
- Corporate legal teams are increasing their engagement with ALSPs
- In-house market had weakened, now recovering
- Law firm recruitment is active but selective.
- US firms play an ever-increasing role in London with evolving client preferences for larger and more internationally focused players.
- Practice area hot spots
  - Private capital, infrastructure, energy
  - Disputes and restructuring
  - Employment
  - Regulatory / investigations / FS conduct & competition
  - Data/privacy & AI governance
  - Planning / environment / land & regen

Great firms or chambers are always looking for great people.

### **Tips for finding a job other than a training contract or pupillage**

- Recruitment timelines are typically around 3 months.
- Familiarise yourself with job sites other than LinkedIn and Indeed.
- Curate your LinkedIn profile towards your needs and interests – both in terms of organisations and the people you follow.
- Understand what a UK CV and cover letter looks like and be prepared to tailor it for every job you apply for.
  - Once you are here, we have plenty of resources to help with this including in-person and online appointments.
- Reach out to King's alumni, either through LinkedIn or King's Connect.
- Participate in activities or part-time work that demonstrate transferable skills.
- Go to firm insights days, workshops or university events that speak to your interests and make connections.



## How we support you

### We help you

- Gain insights
- Navigate the employment market
- Make choices

### We do not

- Find work experience or jobs for you
- Write your applications
- Tell you what to do

Individual Career Support	Digital resources	Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career coaching</li> <li>• CV and application support</li> <li>• Practice interviews</li> <li>• Assessment centre prep</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King's Career &amp; Employability site</li> <li>• DPSoL Careers &amp; Employability site</li> <li>• AI driven CV checker</li> <li>• Online interview practice</li> <li>• Psychometric testing</li> <li>• Virtual work experience programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers workshops</li> <li>• Sector and topic specific alumni talks</li> <li>• 2-day Law Careers Fair</li> <li>• Other employer events</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p style="text-align: center;">all King's-wide events</p>

## Resources you can look at now

### Regulating bodies

[The Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)

[The Bar Standards Board](#)

### Virtual work experience

[Forage | Virtual work experience](#)

### Post-study visa options

[KA-02087 · Student Services Online \(kcl.ac.uk\)](#)

### Educational websites

[The Lawyer Portal | The Resource for Aspiring Legal Professionals](#)

[LawCareers.Net | One stop resource for future lawyers](#)

### Legal job sites

[Search and Apply for Legal Jobs | The Legists®](#)

[Search and apply for top legal jobs today | The Lawyer Jobs](#)

[Search Legal Jobs & Vacancies | Law Careers | TotallyLegal](#)

[Law Gazette Jobs | Jobs | Choose from 4,755 live vacancies](#)

<https://thestudentlawyer.com/tsl-job-board/>

### To research firms and chambers

[The Legal 500 | The Clients Guide to the best Law firms, top Lawyers, Attorneys, Advocates, Solicitors and Barristers.](#)

[Chambers and Partners](#)

[Chambers Student | The definitive guide to the legal profession](#)

*Thank you! Any questions?*