

Irish Students and UK Training Contracts

Applying to UK law firms can be confusing as the process and timings differ from how Irish law firms approach graduate recruitment. We spoke to all of our recent recruits from Irish universities to find out what they would have found useful when applying for UK positions and we hope that this leaflet dispels a few myths and provides you with the information you need to successfully apply for vacation placements and training contracts at UK firms.

When to apply?

Applications for training contracts are usually made in **the summer before your final year**, and for law students the start dates for these positions are usually two years in advance, allowing one year to complete your degree and one year to complete your post-graduate qualification, the Legal Practice Course. For example, Allen & Overy will be taking applications from law students who are about to enter their final year for September 2012 and March 2013 Training Contract positions from 1 June – 31 July 2010. Interviews will be held in September 2010. If you are already in your final year we will invite applications from 1 October 2009 to 17 January 2010 (usually this is the application window for non-law students), and candidates will be applying for September 2012 and March 2013 start dates.

Our Summer Vacation Programmes are for penultimate year undergraduates or for second year students who are spending the third year of their four-year degree overseas. The application period for 2010 Summer Vacation Programmes runs from 1 October 2009 to 17 January 2010.

Allen & Overy recruits 105 trainees and 65 vacation placement students annually.

Not all UK law firms follow these application periods, so it is worth checking this information on firms' websites and in law directories.

UK firms visit universities during the Autumn term each year to promote vacancies. These events are a great opportunity to find out more about specific firms, to show firms that you are interested in them and to meet lawyers, who are always happy to answer questions and talk about their careers to date. See the timetable below, which sets out when applications for training contracts are made.

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	Law students who will have studied all English pillars of law/ English land law, etc.	Law students who will have not studied all English pillars of law/ English land law, etc
1 June – 31 July 2010	Apply for training contract* before your final year	Apply for training contract* before your final year
Summer 2011	Graduate from university	Graduate from university
September 2011	Start LPC	Start GDL
September 2012/ March 2013	Start training contract	Start LPC
September 2013/ March 2014		Start training contract
September 2014/ March 2015	Qualify as a solicitor	
September 2015/ March 2016		Qualify as a solicitor

** If you are already in your final year of a law degree, you can apply before 17 January 2009 for September 2012/ March 2013 training contract positions.*

What are firms looking for?

At Allen & Overy we look for people who can demonstrate a strong academic performance – good Leaving Certificate grades and a 2(i) or higher in any degree. It's not just about academic achievements, however; just as important is evidence of teamwork, communication skills, planning and organisation, problem-solving and commercial awareness. Commitment to a career in law and to a career with Allen & Overy is, of course, also essential. You can build these skills through work experience (legal and non-legal), degree studies and extra-curricular activities. Many City firms will be looking for similar skills and discuss these on their websites and in their brochures. These skills will be tested both through the application process and at interview.

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The Recruitment Process

You should visit individual firms' websites to find out more about the type of selection process used for Training Contract and Vacation Placement opportunities. At Allen & Overy, candidates submit an on-line application form via our website www.allenoverly.com/careeruk and this application is reviewed by our Graduate Recruitment team. Candidates who are successful at this stage are invited to attend an assessment day comprising two interviews with a partner or senior associate. The first interview is based on the application form and assesses a candidate's skills and knowledge, as well as reasons for applying to Allen & Overy. Commercial awareness is also discussed at this interview. The second interview is based on a case study and candidates have 30 minutes to work through a brief and prepare a short presentation to deliver to the interviewer. Knowledge of the law is not essential to complete the case study and if you are not studying law, we will take this into account when assessing your performance. The presentation is followed by a discussion with the interviewer about key points from the case study. After the interviews, candidates meet one of our trainees for a coffee and a tour of our office. This process is exactly the same for Training Contract and Vacation Programme candidates. Travel expenses, including the cost of flights, are reimbursed after interviews.

The Training Contract

Allen & Overy is one of the world's leading commercial legal practices, with offices in 31 major financial centres around the globe. Our key practice areas are: Corporate, Banking, International Capital Markets, Litigation, Employment & Benefits, Tax and Real Estate.

Unlike in Ireland where trainees study during their training contract, UK training contracts are begun only once you have completed all of your post graduate law study. Our training contract runs for two years and includes three- or six-month rotations ("seats") in a number of departments or practice areas. In each seat, trainees share an office with a partner or an associate, who acts as their trainer.

On joining, trainees meet with their dedicated HR Manager to create a seat plan tailored to individual interests and aspirations, to discuss the length of each seat, and explore the possibilities of international or client secondments. Trainees also nominate a "priority seat" which guarantees experience in the chosen department. Seats are available in all our practice areas. Our core areas of expertise are Corporate, Banking and International Capital Markets and trainees are required to spend 12 months of their training contract gaining experience in at least two of these areas. All our trainees gain valuable contentious experience during their training contract. We also offer our trainees the option of completing a Litigation course as an alternative to gaining contentious experience through a seat in Litigation or Employment & Benefits.

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Becoming a solicitor – a comparison between Ireland and England & Wales

	IRELAND	ENGLAND & WALES
When to apply for training contracts	No set time – can be during final year or once some or all of the FE-1 examinations have been successfully completed	In the summer before your final year.
Entrance examination to the relevant law society?	Yes, FE-1 examinations cover European Union Law, Equity, Constitutional Law, Company Law, Criminal Law, Law of Contract, Law of Tort, Real Property	No
Post graduate study	FE-1, PPC I and PPC II	GDL and/or LPC
	<p>PPC I</p> <p>Course starts between August and November and runs until April-June (including examinations). Course includes: Foundation Course, Applied Land Law, Probate & Tax, Private Client, Business Law, Litigation and Key Skills</p>	<p>GDL (Graduate Diploma in Law)</p> <p>One-year conversion course covering the following: Contract Law, Criminal Law, Equity & Trusts, Land Law, European Union Law, Public Law, Tort</p>
	You must have a training contract in place and have passed the First Irish Examination and the FE-1 examinations before applying to do PPC I	You can start the GDL (or LPC) without having a training contract in place. We recommend applying for training contracts as early as possible, however, as many firms (including Allen & Overy) pay course fees

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	All future solicitors must complete PPC I	Non-law graduates must complete the GDL. Law graduates from Ireland can avoid having to complete the GDL if they have completed the relevant courses as part of their degree. Please check with the Solicitors Regulation Authority www.sra.org.uk for details. If you have not completed the relevant modules you will have to take some GDL modules. This will take a full year to complete, but you can do this via home study. You cannot study for your LPC and GDL at the same time. You must have completed your GDL before embarking on the LPC.
	<p>PPC II</p> <p>12-week course during which Professional Practice, Conduct and Management and a range of electives are taken under the headings of Business, Practice & Procedure and Private Client</p>	<p>LPC (Legal Practice Course)</p> <p>One-year course during which more practical experience is gained. Allen & Overy requires future A&O trainees to attend the College of Law in London, which provides a bespoke A&O LPC suitable to work in the City of London generally and at A&O in particular.</p>
	All future solicitors must complete PPC II	All future solicitors must complete the LPC before starting a training contract
Training contract	24-month training contract	24-month training contract
	PPC II counts as part of the 24-month training contract	Follows completion of LPC. The LPC does not count as part of the 24-month training contract

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	<i>Either:</i>		All in-office. At Allen & Overy, can include client secondment or secondment to one of our overseas offices
	In-office training post-PPC I:	11 months	
	Attendance on PPC II:	3 months	
	In-office training post-PPC II:	10 months	
	Total:	24 months	
	<i>Or:</i>		
	In-office training pre-PPC I:	4 months (maximum)	
	In-office training post-PPC I:	11 months	
	Attendance on PPC II:	3 months	
	In-office training post-PPC II:	6 months	
	Total:	24 months	

Find out more about a legal career in the UK

There are lots of helpful websites and publications to help with research into UK law firms. Here are some of our recommendations:

- www.chambersstudent.co.uk
- www.legalweek.com
- www.thelaywer.com
- www.lawyer2b.com
- www.sra.org.uk

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