

Newly Qualified Solicitors

Your 2022 Survival Guide



If you are qualifying as a solicitor in 2022, then you are currently within touching distance of finishing your training contract and will soon be able to call yourself a qualified solicitor. After years of hard work, the end - or more excitingly the beginning of your career - is in sight.

Standing out to prospective employers over the next few months will be critical to your future success and likelihood of securing a qualified position. To help you with this task, we have put together this newly qualified solicitor's survival guide, which will support your transition to a qualified role, whether you are hoping to qualify with your principal training firm, or if you are still deciding which firm to join or legal area to specialise in. Here's everything you need to know to help you through the process.

Market update

The global Covid-19 pandemic has generated both uncertainty and rapid transformation across businesses of all sizes, but the legal sector in the UK has remained fairly stable throughout the last two years. Clearly some areas of law have been busier than others during the pandemic but, for many law firms, last year saw record growth.

Despite ongoing disruption, the legal market has seen increased demand in areas such as:

Real estate



Corporate



Commercial and employment



Some specialist contentious areas, such as property and construction disputes, are still busy and growth areas for many legal firms and certain sub-sectors such as private client, clinical negligence, family and residential property, have been in high demand - not in spite of, but because of, the pandemic. We have also seen some major positives around flexible working off the back of the pandemic, with many firms embracing and adopting new innovative ways of working. Some law firms have introduced new flexible working policies to allow staff to work when and where they want. There are even some firms who can offer positions that are 100% remote - although this does not appeal to every lawyer.

2021 saw **higher retention rates** for newly qualified solicitors than the previous year and naturally firms will always aim to retain their own trainees upon qualification if they have positions available. In the busier disciplines, firms did look to hire external candidates and we expect this to happen again in 2022.

Finally, the major talking point over the past few months in the legal sector has been about salaries. In 2021, as many firms' profits and vacancy lists increased, we saw firms **increasing NQ salaries in a bid to attract talent**. It doesn't look like this will slow down. In fact, some firms have already begun talking to us about the potential for increasing starting salaries again for newly-qualified solicitors in 2022!

For a comprehensive overview of salaries and skills in the legal sector, download our 2022 Legal Salary Guide [here](#).

Timeframes

Feb / March: By this point, we would encourage you to have a final draft of your CV completed. Though you will not have finished your training contract, this will stand you in good stead, especially if roles are released early. Your CV can always be updated when you finish your final seat.

Register with a reputable legal recruitment consultant. Some recruiters may claim that you should only register with one agent; but whether you should register with one or multiple agents depends entirely on your personal situation. If you are considering roles in a variety of locations, register with a national agent who covers and specialises in those locations. Your agent should be knowledgeable and able to provide insights into the market, their clients, and the types of roles likely to be on offer.

March / April: Unless you are going through the formal newly qualified process with your current firm, you will need to keep talking to the partners at your firm about possible options upon qualification. During this time, continue talking to your agent, asking for regular updates on the market and which law firms are releasing external roles..

April onwards: Internal and external roles will be released.

Note – In certain high-demand areas, newly-qualified roles can be released as early as Feb or March for September qualifiers. We would therefore always advise you be prepared as early as possible.

Top tips for interviewing

When interviewing for positions as a newly qualified solicitor, all the usual points clearly apply – be sure to practice and prepare, do your research about the role, company, and sector, and express enthusiasm.

The additional points below, however, will prove highly valuable to you during your interview:



Prepare to discuss your experience in detail.

Why did you choose the seats you did? During your seat, what exposure did you get in that practice area? Who were the clients? What did you enjoy? What were the challenges of working in this seat? Who did you report into? Did you get involved in other functions, such as marketing?

If you are able to give detailed answers to these sorts of questions, you will stand a far better chance of impressing your interviewers.



Emphasise your motivations.

Your interviewers will be far more receptive if they feel they have gotten to know you during the session.

Therefore, you should be ready to explain why you want to qualify into your chosen area, why are you interested in the law firm you are applying to, and what you want from your career in the next 5 years.



Ask questions!

The most important thing is to get to know them and the company! Moreover, asking questions in your interview is a great way to show initiative and energy.

Interrogate the job specification and ask the interviewer what they enjoy about working for their firm. Enquire as to their vision for the team moving forward. Find out how have they adapted during Covid. What is their advice to newly qualified solicitors joining the firm? Are there wider firm incentives you can get involved in?



Prepare for a virtual interview.

While in-person interviewing is likely to resume at some point, there is still a strong likelihood that your interview may be conducted virtually. With that said, you should prepare for this the format to avoid being caught out.

Try to conduct the interview against a plain, well-lit background in a quiet location, using a computer rather than a mobile phone or tablet for added stability. Prepare thoroughly by re-reading your CV and carefully assessing the job description and company. Finally, pay attention to your own presentation: don't assume you can 'dress down', and be sure appear enthusiastic and friendly.



Optimising your CV

- ✚ Maintain a strong focus on your legal experience.
- ✚ Place the legal area you wish to qualify into at the top of your experience section.
- ✚ Have a profile at the beginning of your CV summarising your qualifications, experience, and personal interests.
- ✚ If possible, include testimonials from clients and colleagues.

Why work with Michael Page Legal?

Michael Page have a dedicated legal team across the UK, as well as a dedicated team focusing on newly qualified solicitor recruitment. Many of our consultants worked in the legal industry before joining Michael Page, and they can support you finding your dream NQ role. Our team will work closely with you and provide the following services:

- ⚙️ Review your training contract and provide guidance and updates on the legal market.
- ⚙️ Provide template CVs and assist in drafting your reviewing your CV.
- ⚙️ Work proactively on your behalf and notify you of legal roles.
- ⚙️ Use our expert knowledge to prepare you for interviews.
- ⚙️ Help on offer management.
- ⚙️ Support you when you start your new role.
- ⚙️ Provide expert **career advice** and guidance.



Team



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Michael Page Legal Testimonials

Below, you can see some testimonials from newly qualified solicitors who have worked with Michael Page Legal:

“ I dealt with Mike at Michael Page Legal when I was qualifying in 2020. I trained with a firm in London and was looking to relocate to Leeds on qualification. I found Mike to be knowledgeable, responsive and easy to deal with throughout the process. I was new to the Leeds area and Mike was really good at talking me through the market and different options available, as well as helping with the interview process. The end result was that I secured a newly qualified role with Clarion in Leeds, which has been a great move for me. ”

“ I am so grateful for Jennifer at Michael Page for helping me navigate and secure a role amid the uncertainty posed by the pandemic for NQs. Jennifer was always helpful, reassuring, and very proactive – I obtained an interview and later secured a role at DWF. With her in-depth knowledge of the industry and the team I now work in, as well as her support with interview preparation, I would highly recommend registering with Jennifer and Michael Page when navigating the NQ job market. ”

“ I qualified as a Solicitor in 2020 during the pandemic, which was obviously a daunting time to qualify. I registered with Mike at Michael Page and within a short period of time he had secured me an interview with DAC Beachcroft, which I eventually accepted. I found Mike to be very helpful with interview preparation and throughout the whole recruitment process. Mike knew the Partners and was able to give a good insight into what to expect at my interview. I would highly recommend Mike and Michael Page to any trainees looking for a role on qualification. ”

Get in touch



See our advice section



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