The Essentials

It is essential to find out about mini-pupillages, pupillages, tenancy, the Bar Course Aptitude Test (BCAT), the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC), the Graduate Diploma in Law (if you are a non-law student), The National Pupillage Fair that takes place in London every year, The Inns of Court (their Scholarships, Events and Student Officers) – and both the independent and employed Bar.

You should also familiarise yourself with Pupillage Gateway – the online system for applying for pupillage. Although not all pupillages are advertised through this system, the majority are and there are strict deadlines for applications.

Do compare the pros and cons of being a barrister against other careers in law, including solicitors who have Higher Rights of Audience and are therefore able to represent their clients in court.

Academically, you should aim to achieve a First or high 2:1. Get involved in mooting and debating – it is pointless to say how much you enjoy advocacy without having the evidence to back it up – if you love advocacy, do it and prove it!

If you are determined to become a barrister, you will need to maintain this determination over the long term as pupillages and tenancies are very limited in number. Speaking with barristers and looking at the profiles of tenants on chambers’ websites are the best ways of discovering the different journeys that have led to the same goal of becoming a barrister.

Essential student guides

These help you understand the processes and deadlines for applying successfully. Online versions are up-to-date, and easy-to-read paper copies are available from Careers in the autumn term.

LawCareers.net

www.lawcareers.net

News, advice, profiles of chambers and vacancies for those considering a career in law. The hardcopy equivalent is the Training Contract and Pupillage Handbook, available from your careers service library.

What we like: It has a search function for pupillages and mini-pupillages, and allows you to look at chambers and specialisms nationwide. Full of useful information and advice. Within ‘My LCN’, you may also set up a personal ‘locker’ to help you store your careers research, and manage deadlines and applications.

Target Pupillage Handbook

http://gtimedia.co.uk/work/products/targetjobs-pupillage-handbook

This guide is published in the Spring around the time of the National Pupillage Fair.

What we like: It lists all chambers offering pupillages including those not included in the Pupillage Gateway. It also shows whether chambers offer mini-pupillages and when to apply.

Becoming a Barrister

www.barcouncil.org.uk/careers

This is a good starting point for exploring the profession. It provides you with information on the ratios of candidates to successful applications at each step of the process. The Bar Council also produces an excellent introductory guide to the profession:
www.barcouncil.org.uk/media/193781/career_brochure_pages.pdf

What we like: It covers why and how to become a barrister and all the major issues such as funding, practice areas and barrister profiles.

Important News re Deadlines

The Pupillage Gateway www.pupillagegateway.com is the online application system for pupillage and is operated by The Bar Council. Usually all pupillage vacancies are advertised here with approximately 100 chambers also requiring you to apply through system. The Pupillage Gateway deadlines may move from April until January either in 2016 or, more likely, in a later year. You must check this regularly.

More student guides

You will find more information about the Bar in the following:

Chambers Student Guide: The Legal Profession in England and Wales
www.chambersstudent.co.uk

This is an excellent companion to LawCareers.net (above).

What we like: It provides readers with clear, concise and objective information about what they should know about each set of chambers AND the guide makes it very easy to search for chambers by specialist practice areas.
TARGETjobs Law
www.targetjobs.co.uk/law
Provides professional insight and advice for budding barristers.

What we like: provides practical tips on getting into the profession, how to get work experience, networking, applications and so on.

King’s Career Networks - Law
www.facebook.com/kingslawcareers
Our Facebook page specifically focuses on law careers, where we feature interesting opportunities, remind you of job-search essentials, and keep you up-to-date with news.

Bewigged and Bewildered.
Excellent, readable introduction to life at the Bar. Hardcopy only, available at King’s Careers & Employability (Strand campus).

Representation and Discipline
The Bar Council is the representative body for barristers while the Bar Standards Board (BSB) is the regulatory body for the profession. The Bar Council website is useful for information about training and qualifying, getting work experience, and support available to members of the Bar. The BSB website contains important information on the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC), including a Health Warning about the limited availability of pupillages and tenancies.
http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/
http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk

Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC)
This is the compulsory course taken after the law degree (non-law students must also pass the Graduate Diploma in Law). The official application process for the GDL is through Central Applications Board (‘lawcabs’) – see link below.
GDL applications: www.lawcabs.ac.uk
Apply for the BPTC: www.BarSAS.com This site also has a useful Application Guide.
Start applying for the BPTC in your final year at university. Note that you must also pass the Bar Course Aptitude Test prior to commencing the BPTC. Vital information about the BPTC including the application timetable, aptitude test information, and tips about choosing / joining an Inn of Court can be found at the BSB website:
https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister/bar-professional-training-course/

Careers Events
Attending events is crucial to enable you to understand the increasingly complex legal market. You also get to meet employers informally. Saying you have done so helps your credibility when it comes to applying. They will expect you to understand the whole range of legal careers.

Events at King’s
King’s Careers Legal Week  in October includes sessions on the Bar and Working in Dispute Resolution https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/student/careers/Events/Events.aspx

KCL Bar Society and KCL Mooting Society
Take a look at what these groups have to offer as you may be eligible to attend even if you are a non-law student.

Other legal events
You can attend numerous events related to careers in law (and other sectors), both at King’s and in chambers. Find details of these on our site at www.kcl.ac.uk/careers/events

Don’t forget:
Legal Week & the Law Fair are both held in October. Keep an eye on our events page for details.
www.kcl.ac.uk/career/events

Off Campus
Mainly occurring in the autumn term and early spring term, these include:
- Presentations and networking evenings
- Workshops
- Open Days at the Inns of Court
- National Pupillage Fair at the Inns of Court http://targetjobs.co.uk/events/146633

Listings: www.kcl.ac.uk/careers/events and also on our Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/kingslawcareers

Networking and Specialist Bar Associations
King’s Law Alumni Mentoring Scheme and King’s Connect
Join the online community, King’s Connect, to meet the King’s global network of Law alumni and find a mentor. Access exclusive events and skills workshops and get ahead in your career!. Please email mentoring@kcl.ac.uk for further information and to request an application form. After you submit an application, you will be invited to attend an interview session.

You can also explore the activities of specialist Bar Associations such as these:
Commercial Bar: www.combar.com
Criminal Bar: www.criminalbar.com
Bar Council Specialist Bar Information: www.barcouncil.org.uk/about-the-bar/what-is-the-bar/specialist-bar-associations/

Funding
Inns of Court
The four Inns of Court are historically responsible for the training and education of barristers, and for the exercise of discipline over the profession.
You must join an Inn of Court by 31 May in the year you start the BPTC. However, it is a good idea to join earlier as you can then apply for funding to help with the costs of training.
The Inns of Court offer a range of scholarships, bursaries and other financial awards for the GDL, BPTC and pupillage. Do
note that there are strict deadlines for all applications usually 1st November the year before the BPTC.

• The Honourable Society of Gray’s Inn
  www.graysinn.info/index.php

• The Honourable Society of Inner Temple
  www.innertemple.org.uk

• The Honourable Society of Middle Temple
  www.middletemple.org.uk

• The Honourable Society of Lincoln’s Inn
  www.lincolnsinn.org.uk

Professional and Career Development Loans
These are bank loans for education or training that help with your career or get you into work:
https://www.gov.uk/career-development-loans

British Council funding for international students
http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-funding-your-studies.htm

BPTC training providers
Check with your training course provider as many of them have scholarships and bursaries. The following is an example from BPP Law School but make sure you check all BPTC providers:

Diversity
There are an increasing number of programmes or associations that promote diversity within the profession. Some of them are listed below:

Pegasus
www.pegasus.me/

The Pegasus Access & Support Scheme (PASS) is a coordinated work experience programme that aims to support those from diverse backgrounds to consider a career at the Bar.

Reach
http://reach.thecareersgroup.co.uk/

Portal for news which often features schemes such as those run by SEO, City Disabilities, Employ-Ability, Aspiring Solicitors and Rare Recruitment.

Black Lawyers Directory
www.onlinebld.com

Listings of UK individual black minority ethnic (BME) lawyers.

Getting Work Experience
Your work experience should, ideally, include solicitors’ firms and chambers. How much work experience is enough depends on several factors – what you have done, how good a candidate you already are and more. Talk to us for specific advice. You should try to include marshalling, mini-pupillages and some form of advocacy.

Marshalling
Involves accompanying a judge for a week to observe proceedings in court and watch barristers in action. Contact your Inn of Court to arrange this.

Mini-pupillages
Work experience, usually for a week, in a set of chambers. Use the lawcareers.net search function or apply to individual chambers for a mini-pupillage. Some mini-pupillages are assessed. It is usual to do more than one mini-pupillage in addition to other work experience.
http://www.lawcareers.net/barristers/minipupillages

Pro Bono Community
http://www.probonocommunity.org.uk/

This is a charitable initiative that provides a centralised and structured training and accreditation programme for volunteers to work in Law Centres.

What we like: Gives volunteers the training and confidence they need to work at a Law Centre; helps Law Centres maintain a high quality and sustainable volunteering programme.

I-probono
http://i-probono.com/

The first online network to connect organisations in need of legal assistance with lawyers and students who want to use their legal skills for the public good.

KCL Pro Bono
http://kclprobono.org.uk/

KCL’s Pro Bono society provides support and advocacy for those in need, around London.

What we like: The excellent practical experience the projects offer.

LawWorks
http://lawworks.org.uk

Brokers free legal help for individuals and communities.

What we like: One page shows work opportunities either at Law Works or other organisations.

Free Representation Unit
http://www.thefru.org.uk/

Volunteer with the FRU if you would like to represent real clients in front of the Social Security or Employment tribunals. FRU will train you before you handle a case. You can meet them at King’s Law Fair in October.

Bar Pro Bono Unit
http://www.barprobono.org.uk/student-area.html

Although this is a charity that matches barristers with individuals and groups in need of free legal assistance, there are opportunities for students to get involved through internships and other voluntary roles.

The International Bar Association
www.ibanet.org

Look at their internships which are often research-based.

Advocates for International Development
http://www.a4id.org/

A charity that empowers lawyers to use their skills to fight world poverty.

Totally Legal
www.totallylegal.com
This is a portal for legal recruitment agencies who offer vacancies for those with experience.

What we like: Can be very useful for LLM students. Sometimes has vacancies for experienced paralegals too.

King’s CareerConnect
www.kcl.ac.uk/careerconnect

King’s CareerConnect is our exclusive online career portal enabling students and recent alumni to engage with our services. Once logged in, you can access our vacancy board and search hundreds of part-time roles, placements, internships and graduate-level opportunities, book one-to-one careers or application guidance appointments, apply for exclusive King’s Internships and view our full events calendar to book attendance at our many events throughout the year.

News & Commercial Awareness
Professional journals are an essential means of developing commercial awareness and understanding the sector, as opposed to just gaining a theoretical, academic understanding of law. Make a habit of reading these regularly.

www.barristermagazine.com
www.barcouncil.org.uk/media-centre/counsel-magazine/
Lawyer 2B and The Lawyer
The former is the student version so a great place to start.

What we like: The Lawyer provides easy-to-read market information, enabling you to keep up-to-date with latest news about the legal sector. Lawyer2B also manages to be an entertaining read – a rare achievement in legal publishing!

Legal Week
www.legalweek.com
Timely news about the legal world. Has a section for students, including useful advice.

Legal Cheek
www.legalcheek.com/
This irreverent site is a little lighter than some of the other sources of current awareness. Quick daily digest of legal stories, interesting lists (highest paying pupillages, most female/BME QCs etc) and application tips from chambers.

Other Resources
All About Law
www.allaboutlaw.co.uk
Another excellent and comprehensive site, with details of deadlines, law schools, alternative careers and much more.

The Bar Directory
www.legalhub.co.uk
Provides the official listing of chambers and individual barristers.

Legal Aid Practitioners Group
www.lapg.co.uk/
Association of legal aid service providers.

What we like: News and information about firms that can be hard to find. No list of trainee vacancies but a good starting point

Young Legal Aid Lawyers
www.younglegalaidlawyers.org/jobs
A very useful website for finding qualified and non-qualified roles in non-commercial practice areas such as criminal law, human rights, immigration, and mental health.

Government Legal Service
www.gls.gov.uk
Employs lawyers – solicitors and barristers - who work in a wide variety of government departments such as the treasury and the foreign office. You will have opportunities to meet their alumni on campus throughout the year.

Her Majesty’s Courts Service
www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/
An agency of the Ministry of Justice, it provides administration and support for the Court of Appeal, the High Court, the Crown Court and others.

The Crown Prosecution Service
www.cps.gov.uk/careers/
The Crown Prosecution Service may recruit to more permanent prosecutor posts via their paralegal or case worker routes.

Foreign qualified lawyers and the Bar
“If you are a ‘foreign qualified lawyer’ ie a member of a legal profession regulated in a jurisdiction outside England and Wales and entitled to practise as such, or a European Lawyer, there are various ways in which you may be admitted to the Bar in England and Wales. Refer to the ‘transferring lawyers’ section of the Bar Standards Board website in the first instance.”

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