



**Law  
Commission**  
Reforming the law

## **Guide for Applicants - General**

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**Research Assistant Post 2025**

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# Introduction

Thank you for your interest in working at the Law Commission as a Research Assistant. This guide contains essential information about the post and how to apply for it.

Please read it carefully. If you do not follow the guidance, you may disadvantage your application or cause it to fail.

There is a separate recruitment campaign for each of our four legal teams. Please ensure you submit your application to the correct team. Please **only apply to one team** as it is not our practice to consider multiple applications.

**The Law Commission welcomes applications from all sections of the community and is committed to equality of opportunity in all our employment practices, policies and procedures. This means that all applicants and employees are treated fairly, irrespective of ethnic origin, race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age or disability.**

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## Chapter 1: What is the Law Commission?

The Law Commission is the statutory body set up under the Law Commissions Act 1965 to:

- keep the law of England and Wales under review, and
- recommend reform where it is needed.

The Commission's recommendations for law reform can have a profound effect on the lives of citizens: we seek to simplify the law and make it more accessible to everyone.

As a result of our work, large areas of the law have been the subject of systematic investigation and improvement.

The decision to implement our recommendations is a matter for Government and Parliament, rather than us. Nonetheless, more than two-thirds of our recommendations have been implemented. The [implementation table on our website](#) shows which projects have been accepted and which implemented.

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## Chapter 2: Who's who at the Law Commission?

There are five full-time Commissioners, all of whom are appointed by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice. Short biographies are [available on our website](#).

The Chair is a Court of Appeal judge.



### **Sir Peter Fraser, Chair**

The other four Commissioners are experienced judges, barristers, solicitors, or teachers of law.

The Commissioners are supported by the Chief Executives, a Head of Legal, four team heads, around 25 law reform lawyers, two Parliamentary Counsel, around 18 Research Assistants, an Economist, and a Corporate Services Team.

The team heads and lawyers come from a mixture of legal backgrounds and include solicitors, barristers, and university law lecturers. There is a mixture of permanent and fixed term staff, who are members of the Government Legal Profession. Fixed term staff are usually appointed for the duration of a project.

Our Parliamentary Counsel, who prepare the draft Bills that accompany our reports, are lawyers on secondment from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC).

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## Chapter 3: What are the stages of a project?

Once we have agreed to review an area of law, we will decide the remit of the law reform project in conjunction with the relevant Government department. The stages of the project will depend upon the subject and whether we will be proposing reform or identifying the problems and providing options for Government to consider.

We will usually:

- make a study of the area of law and identify its defects, looking at other systems of law to see how they deal with similar problems;
- issue a consultation paper, setting out in detail the existing law and its defects, giving arguments for and against possible solutions, and inviting views on our provisional proposals and the likely impact of reform;
- submit a final report to the relevant Government department, setting out our recommendations and the reasons for them (supported by the results of our consultation), providing an impact assessment of the practical effects of reform and, where necessary, including a draft Bill giving effect to our recommendations.

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## Chapter 4: The Research Assistant Role



The Research Assistant role involves a mix of legal research, policy analysis and administrative work.

The Law Commission is a small independent organisation which, nonetheless, plays a central role in Government. At any one time we have over twenty ongoing law reform projects covering a huge range of complex and important issues. We have a very high implementation rate which means that Government and Parliament appreciates the work that we do.

The Law Commission is its people, and we seek to recruit highly skilled Research

Assistants. Our reports are world class, and our Research Assistants have inquiring minds and rigorous standards. You will really enjoy grappling with difficult legal questions and policy developments. We are working on a range of cutting-edge issues ranging from the application of AI and cryptoassets in various policy fields to considering how modern understandings of the effects of domestic violence could be reflected in the criminal law .

Above all, the Law Commission is a friendly and collegiate body. Its work is stimulating and there is a high premium placed upon the quality of our output. What we do really matters, and we strive to do it very well indeed. Our Research Assistants are the engine room of this organisation and in that role, you would have a real chance to make a difference.

**Joanna Otterburn and Roshnee Patel (Jo & Rosh), joint-Chief Executives**

### Before consultation

In the early stages of a project, Research Assistants can expect to look into the present law and identify commentary from practitioners and academics on the problems with it and possible options for reform. They may be asked to conduct comparative research, considering both common law and civil law jurisdictions. They may be asked to look at current court practices or socio-economic research. They are likely to work with the Commission's economist to assess the practical impact of the current law and options for reform.

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## Consultation

The Law Commission places great emphasis on consultation. Research Assistants will be closely involved in the researching, drafting and publication of the consultation paper. They may be asked to assist with the press or other communication work, and with consultation events. They will usually work on evaluating and analysing consultation responses.

## After consultation

At this stage of the project, the team prepares a policy paper seeking approval from Commissioners for their proposed final recommendations. Research Assistants will help to prepare this paper and may be involved in the process of instructing Parliamentary Counsel to draft a Bill. They will play an important role in the preparation and publication of the final report. If Government accepts our recommendations, Research Assistants may be involved in supporting Government's introduction of legislation into Parliament.

## At all times

Research Assistants at the Law Commission are required to respond flexibly to the varying demands that may be made upon them. This might include being asked to work on different projects at short notice, to research a new area of law or to deal with an enquiry from a member of the public. You may be asked to contribute to the wider work of the Commission, for example by assisting with corporate activities. The role also involves routine administrative work such as minute-taking, organising meetings, proof-reading documents and producing hard copies of Law Commission publications. In particular, Research Assistants play a leading role in the preparation of documents for publication.

Research Assistants are kept busy and are expected to work hard, but the atmosphere in the open-plan office is friendly, with sensible, flexible working hours. New staff are given a full induction on arrival.

More information on the work of a Research Assistant [can be found here](#).



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## Chapter 5: Where do our Research Assistants come from and what do they go on to do?

Our Research Assistants join us:

- immediately after graduation;
- after completing postgraduate studies or professional qualifications; or
- as fully qualified barristers or solicitors.



Working as a Research Assistant provides grounding in the formulation of legal policy and the preparation of legislation.



The unique insight that it gives into these matters provides excellent experience for a variety of careers in the legal world. All the evidence is that chambers, solicitors' firms, and universities regard time spent at the Law Commission extremely highly.



Our Research Assistants have gone on to successful careers in such highly competitive environments as the Bar and leading City firms of solicitors, the Government Legal Profession, academia, and legal publishing.

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## Chapter 6: Could you be one of our Research Assistants?

**Saiba Ahuja**

**Research Assistant in the Commercial and Common Law Team**

### **What is it like working for the Law Commission?**

I have found working at the Law Commission to be a highly stimulating experience with an array of opportunities available to develop professionally and intellectually. The Law Commission gives you the opportunity to be involved in every stage of its work, from conducting initial research and skimming relevant texts, to engaging with stakeholders on their views, and meeting with government departments to discuss guiding policies. This variety keeps the work exciting and gives you the chance to work alongside so many fascinating people, all while engaging in thought-provoking conversations about the law and the future of law reform. Importantly, all voices are respected at the Commission, meaning any contribution you give is considered and can help guide ongoing work.

### **Why become a Research Assistant?**

The Law Commission truly is a unique environment. The Commission holds a huge level of responsibility for guiding law reform, and everyone working at the Commission bears part of that responsibility. Working around so many knowledgeable individuals and being actively involved in shaping the direction of projects you work on has been a valuable learning experience, and there is a genuine sense of pride in knowing that your work can frame future reform. This is a truly unparalleled opportunity that is exciting for anyone passionate about law.

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## Georgina Withers-Boalch

Research Assistant in the Public Law and Law in Wales Team

### What is it like working for the Law Commission?

Joining the Law Commission was a hugely welcoming experience. I was taken aback by the supportive environment, both across the Commission and within my team. This made the transition into my first proper job far more manageable. The emphasis at the Commission on striking a good work-life balance means there are many opportunities to socialise with colleagues outside of work. I have quickly come to appreciate the Law Commission's run club – headed by the Chair, Sir Peter Fraser – which offers much relief from work in the office on Tuesdays!

### Why become a Research Assistant?

I have been afforded opportunities and responsibilities that I would have been unlikely to receive elsewhere. Outside of project work, I have had the privilege to engage with, and contribute to, discussions about the future of Welsh law. Attending the Legal Wales Conference gave me the opportunity to meet a host of practitioners, legal academics, and Supreme Court justices. As a Welsh Research Assistant, I gained invaluable insight into contemporary issues that are important to me, and working alongside likeminded individuals to further these ambitions is incredibly rewarding.



**Saiba Ahuja and Georgina Withers-Boalch, Research Assistants**

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## Chapter 7: The Teams

Each Research Assistant is assigned to one of our four teams:

- Commercial and Common Law
- Criminal Law
- Property, Family and Trust Law
- Public Law and Law in Wales

Each team will be working on several different projects at any one time. Some projects are assigned one lawyer and one Research Assistant; others are assigned two lawyers and two Research Assistants. The assignment of staff to projects depends on resourcing needs.

Selection for interview is conducted on a team basis. Think carefully about which team you would most like to work for and which you think is most likely to select you, given your experience and achievements.

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## Chapter 8: Commercial and Common Law Team

### **Commissioner:**

Vacant (Interim Senior Counsel David Hertzell)

### **Head of team:**

Laura Burgoyne

### **Team lawyers:**

Amy Held

Nathan Tamblyn

Elsabé van der Sijde

The Commercial and Common Law (“CoCo”) team is working on, and has recently worked on, a range of tech-related projects including cryptoassets and other digital assets, electronic trade documents (resulting in the Electronic Trade Documents Act 2023), smart legal contracts and electronic signatures. Other current or recent areas include arbitration, consumer credit, intermediated securities, fiduciary duties of investment intermediaries, social investment by pension schemes, insurance contract law and consumer rights.

The projects below are ongoing, or anticipated, at the time of writing. Where there is a project underway, we have provided a link to the project page on our website with more information. Where a project is at an earlier stage (such as still under discussion with Government) and is not yet on our website, we have included a short paragraph about the potential work. We envisage that at least some of this work will be underway when the new cohort of Research Assistants starts in September 2025.

Whereas each Research Assistant is likely to be assigned to one of the team’s projects, it is not uncommon to be asked to contribute to other projects, whether as a longer-term arrangement or for more defined tasks.

### **Co-operatives and community benefit societies**

[Co-operatives and community benefit societies - Law Commission](#)

### **Friendly societies**

[Friendly Societies - Law Commission](#)

### **Digital assets and electronic trade documents in private international law: which law, which court?**

[Digital assets and ETDs in private international law: which court, which law? - Law Commission](#)

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## **Product liability**

The Consumer Protection Act 1987 concerns consumers harmed by defective tangible “products”. It was not designed to accommodate software and related technological developments such as machine learning or 3D printing. Gaps in the regime may leave affected persons without adequate protection, and manufacturers and insurers uncertain as to their liabilities. A project would review this area of law with a view to updating it to ensure it is fit to manage modern and emerging technologies.

## **Civil liability for harms caused by artificial intelligence**

Artificial intelligence eludes a single definition, but modern machine learning and neural network technologies have unique features that raise novel legal issues. In particular, the adaptability, autonomy, and opaqueness of these technologies raise concerns as to the allocation of civil liability for harms caused by AI. We envisage that this project would look at issues concerning common law civil liability for harms caused by AI such as negligence and negligent misrepresentation, economic torts and contract, strict liability and vicarious and joint liability.

## **Museum collections**

Museums face significant problems dealing with objects where, as result of poor or non-existent acquisition records, legal title is uncertain or the owners are unknown or cannot be found. Museums are concerned about dealing with such objects (for example transferring them to other museums) because of the risk of being found liable for a civil wrong (conversion) if they were not in fact entitled to do so. This project would review these problems with a view to providing clear legal rules as to how objects are held and can be dealt with.

## **Deeds**

Deeds are a type of legal document that have particular formality requirements for execution. In particular, a deed must be signed “in the presence of a witness” and “attested”. Certain documents require to be executed as deeds, including arrangements relating to property, and powers of attorney. The current law of deeds is arguably outdated, and a review would consider whether the current law is fit for purpose, taking into account the different types of parties using deeds, and reflecting technological developments.

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## Chapter 9: Criminal Law Team

### **Commissioner:**

Professor Penney Lewis

### **Head of team:**

David Connolly

### **Team lawyers:**

Nicholas Hoggard

Robert Kaye

Lawrence McNamara

Roseanna Peck

Jessica Skins

The Criminal team undertakes projects ranging from large-scale codification to shorter reviews of more pressing legal problems. When new Research Assistants join the Commission in 2025, we will be continuing to work on at least [four] projects which are already underway.

The projects below are ongoing, or anticipated, at the time of writing.

You are likely to work primarily on one of the team's projects. However, it is quite common for you to contribute to other projects, whether as a longer-term arrangement or for more defined tasks.

### **Contempt of Court**

[Contempt of Court - Law Commission](#)

### **Evidence in Sexual Offence Prosecutions**

[Evidence in Sexual Offence Prosecutions - Law Commission](#)

### **Criminal Appeals**

[Criminal appeals - Law Commission](#)

### **Review of Homicide**

[Reviewing the law of homicide - Law Commission](#)



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## Chapter 10: Property, Family and Trust Law Team

### Commissioner:

Professor Nicholas Hopkins

### Head of team:

Colin Oakley (permanent) and Spencer Clarke (interim)

### Team lawyers:

Andrew Bazeley

Charlotte Black

Christine Gentry

Thomas Nicholls

Christopher Pulman

Daniel Robinson

Elizabeth Welch

The Property, Family and Trust Law team deals with a range of different subject areas. Research Assistants in the team usually focus on one of the team's projects, though at times there may be the opportunity to become involved in other areas.

### Important note for applicants to the Property, Family and Trust Law team

The Property, Family and Trust Law team deals with a wide range of law, and we appreciate that some candidates will only be interested in working in particular areas. For example, prospective family lawyers may be uninterested in property or trust law, and vice versa. We would therefore be grateful if candidates could indicate in the 'Relevant Legal Knowledge' section of their application whether:

- they are **Equally** interested in all of the team's areas of work; or
- they are **Predominantly** interested in one or more areas of work; or
- they are **Only** interested in one or more areas of work.

We will select candidates for interview based on their preferences. Please note that we cannot guarantee there will be opportunities to work on particular projects, including those listed below. Other projects may emerge, or priorities and timings of existing projects might change. We recommend that you keep an eye on the latest news on our website for announcements about what the Property, Family and Trust Law team are doing. Please bear in mind if you plan to indicate that you are only interested in a narrow area of work that this may restrict your chances of securing a post.



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The projects below are ongoing, or anticipated, at the time of writing.

## **Wills**

[Wills - Law Commission](#)

## **Burial and Cremation**

[Burial and Cremation - Law Commission](#)

## **Rights and Obligations Relating to Funerary Methods, Funerals and Remains**

[Rights and Obligations Relating to Funerary Methods, Funerals and Remains - Law Commission](#)

## **Business Tenancies: the right to renew**

[Business Tenancies: the right to renew - Law Commission](#)

## **Kinship Care**

[Kinship Care \(Kinship Care - Law Commission\)](#)

## **Chancel Repair Liability and Registration**

[Chancel Repair Liability and Registration](#)

## **Other possible projects**

In addition to the projects mentioned above, the team may also commence projects in other areas of property, family and trust law. These might include Modernising Trust Law and those that feature as part of our anticipated [14th Programme of Law Reform](#).

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## Chapter 11: Public Law and Law in Wales Team

### **Commissioner:**

Professor Alison Young

### **Head of team:**

Henni Ouahes

### **Team lawyers:**

Connor Champ

Fiona Couzens

Ben Godfrey

Connor Johnston

Laura Jones

Rebecca Mandal

Alexander Ruck Keene

The Public Law and Law in Wales team's work extends to public law and regulation in England and Wales. The team has also undertaken a number of projects for the Welsh Government on matters of devolved law in Wales.

### **Important note on devolved Welsh law and Welsh speakers**

The Public Law and Law in Wales team regularly engages and works on devolved law in Wales, either as part of a project for the Welsh Government, or because one of our England and Wales projects touches upon issues which are devolved to the Senedd or Welsh Ministers.

An interest in and any experience of the law of devolution, particularly the Welsh devolution settlement, is desirable and we encourage applicants to indicate their interest and experience in the "Relevant Legal Knowledge" section of their application.

Similarly, we strongly encourage Welsh speakers to describe their aptitude for the Welsh language in the "Communication" section of the application form. We describe the importance of Welsh language skills in the "Guide for Applicants - How to apply".

### **Autonomy in Aviation**

[Aviation autonomy - Law Commission](#)

### **Compulsory Purchase**

[Compulsory purchase - Law Commission](#)

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## **Disabled Children's Social Care**

[Disabled Children's Social Care - Law Commission](#)

## **Agricultural law in Wales**

[Agricultural Law in Wales - Law Commission](#)

## **New Funerary Methods**

[New Funerary Methods – Law Commission](#)

## **Administrative Review (paused – will resume when resources available)**

[Administrative Review – Law Commission](#)

