



Guide for Applicants - How to Apply

Research Assistant Post 2026

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in working at the Law Commission as a Research Assistant. This guide contains essential information about how to apply for the post. For a complete explanation of the Law Commission, legal teams and Research Assistant post, please see the “Guide for Applicants - General”.

Please read this document 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, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age or disability.

Law Commission
1st Floor, Tower
52 Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AG

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Chapter 1: Selection criteria

We select candidates on the basis of the following criteria, which are rigorously observed. It is **not** possible for us to consider requests to adjust our minimum criteria.

If you want us to make a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010, please indicate this in your application form.

Please note you must also meet the [**civil service requirements on nationality**](#) for this role.

Minimum requirements – Essential academic skills

You will be asked in your CV to detail your academic skills and to set out the basis on which you satisfy the minimum academic requirements. If you do not satisfy the minimum academic criteria and do not provide detail in your CV of how you satisfy the criteria, your application will automatically fail. Your CV should include your current and previous employment history and your individual module marks for any degrees or qualifications.

By your start date you should have completed a course/s involving two years' full-time substantive legal studies or the equivalent in part-time study. Your overall academic results must be at, or at the equivalent of, **first class or good 2:1 standard**, with at least some elements of first-class work, as detailed further below.

What counts as “two years’ legal studies”?

Most candidates will have a law degree or a combined degree, of which at least two-thirds is in law.

Some will be completing a law degree and will need to show that they will have obtained their degree by September 2025.

If you do not have an undergraduate degree in law, you may meet the minimum requirements if you have at least two years' post-graduate studies in law. This may be a single course (such as a two-year MPhil) or a combination of courses (such as the Graduate Diploma in Law and a one-year master's).

If your only legal training consists of either a completed GDL/CPE (a law conversion course) and a year's professional qualification such as the LPC or BPC (whether taken separately or combined into a two-year degree) or passing the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) 1 and 2 exams (whether or not you have also taken the SQE preparation courses), you should apply only if you can demonstrate **substantial additional skills or knowledge**. These should be relevant to the work of the Law Commission and achieved either by academic study or work. Working in a legal environment is unlikely to be sufficient unless you can show that it provided significant experience in areas core to the Research Assistant role, in particular, research on difficult and complex legal topics. If you think you fall into this category, please give details when you are asked during the online application to outline how you satisfy the minimum academic criteria.

What counts as a degree at “good 2:1 standard”?

If you have completed an undergraduate law degree or a combined degree with at least two years of legal study at a 2:1 standard, we will look at the marks of all the papers you have taken that count towards your final degree:

At least three-quarters of these marks must be at or above 60% (2:1 standard), with at least one of these marks at or above 70% (first class standard).

If you are currently undertaking a law degree or a combined degree, and have marks from at least four papers, we will look at those marks and apply the same test.

If you do not have marks from at least four papers we will look at your previous academic results, usually A-levels. We will expect you to have marks of at least one A* and two As. If you took your A-levels before the introduction of the A* grade, we require three As.

Other ways of showing academic ability equivalent to “first or good 2:1 standard”?

If you do not satisfy our minimum requirements on the basis of your undergraduate degree, you can demonstrate the academic standard through one or more of the following completed qualifications:

A GDL (or CPE) at distinction, or at commendation with at least one mark at distinction. (Please note that, however, a GDL or CPE will not – alone – satisfy the two years’ legal studies requirement above).

A completed master’s degree in law (LLM, BCL, MA, Mphil or MSc) at 2:1 (merit) or above. (Please note that, however, a one-year Master’s will not – alone – satisfy the two years’ legal studies requirement above).

A completed PhD or DPhil in law.

Some qualifications combine the GDL and professional qualifications into a two-year degree. For this you must have achieved a first or distinction. If this is the total of your legal study, you will still need to demonstrate relevant additional skills or knowledge as discussed above.

Two years legal studies	At least good 2.1 standard
Undergraduate law degree including a combined degree with at least two-thirds in law.	<p>On completion of a degree: Three-quarters of these marks must be above 60%, with at least one of these marks at or above 70%.</p> <p>If still completing a degree: have marks from at least four papers that match the standard above.</p> <p>If still completing a degree and you do not have marks from at least four papers at degree level, at least one A* and two As (or three As if before the introduction of A*'s).</p>
GDL/CPE + LPC/BPC/SQE prep course + substantial skills and knowledge e.g. relevant academic study and/or working on difficult and complex legal topics	A GDL (or CPE) at distinction, or commendation with at least one mark at distinction
Two-year MPhil in law, OR A GDL/CPE + a one-year master's (LLM/ BCL/MA/MPhil/ MSc) A masters course means that on successful completion of the programme your provider awards you with an LLM/BCL/ MA/MPhil/MSc.	A completed Masters in Law at 2:1/merit or above (this counts for academic standard, not for two-year legal studies if taken alone)
	A completed PhD or DPhil in Law
	If your qualification is a course that combines the GDL and a professional qualification you must have received a first or distinction in that course.

If you do not have two years substantive legal studies, or your only legal training consists of either a completed GDL/CPE (a law conversion course) and a professional qualification (such as the LPC or BPC, whether taken separately or combined with the GDL/CPE) or passing the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) 1 and 2 exams (whether or not you have also taken the SQE preparation courses), but believe you can show **substantial relevant additional skills or knowledge** in accordance with the “Selection criteria” set out above, please make this - and the relevant experience - clear in your CV.

Failure to clearly demonstrate how you meet the above criteria in your CV will result in your application being withdrawn from the process.

Other essential criteria

In addition to satisfying the essential academic skills minimum requirements, in your written application you will be asked to demonstrate the following:

Behaviours:

- Communicating and Influencing (with communication skills also being assessed throughout your application)

Experience:

- Legal Research
- Legal Skills
- CV

If a large number of applications are received, a sift based on the lead experience of Legal Research may be held. If a large number of applications remain after the initial sift, an additional sift of all the remaining criteria will be done on those applications which passed the initial sift:

Further details are provided below on how to complete the online questions designed to test your ability in these areas.

All the skills and behaviours tested at application will also be tested at interview, as well as the two additional technical skills:

Technical:

- Motivational Fit
- Ability to work with Complex Information

Further details are provided below on how to complete the online questions designed to test your ability in these areas. Later in this guide we will provide more details on how we assess at the interview stage if you are successful in the application stage.

The application process begins with an online form.

Those who meet the criteria for interview will be invited for an in-person interview and will be sent a written test to complete at home and submitted by email in advance of the interview. Standard-rate travelling expenses (rail, tube or bus) from within the UK to the in-person interview will be reimbursed. Please note that candidates will be **required** to bring with them documents to prove their identity, address, right to work and qualifications.

This guide provides detail of the criteria and skills that will be tested at each stage.

Chapter 2: Application procedure

To apply, please **follow the detailed instructions below**. These explain how to apply using the Ministry of Justice's (MOJ) online recruitment system.

There is a separate recruitment campaign for each of our four legal teams. Please ensure that you submit your application to the correct team. Please **only apply to one team**.

Please also take the time to review our useful tips relating to the recruitment process.

It is essential that you follow the instructions below. If you do not, your application is likely to fail.

Closing date

Please refer to the job advert for the closing date and time. If you experience difficulties when making your application, please contact us using the details at the end of this Guide. You are strongly advised to complete your application well before the closing date as it may not be possible to deal with last-minute enquiries or enquiries made outside of office hours. We will not accept late applications.

Overview

Applications are made using the MOJ Recruitment Portal system. During the application process you will be asked to answer behaviour and experience questions which require you to demonstrate the skills necessary for this role. You will be asked to input a name-blind and institution-blind CV, giving your qualifications and any relevant work experience. You will also be asked to demonstrate how you meet the essential academic skills set out at the start of this Guide.

If you require any reasonable adjustment at any stage of your application, please contact: recruitment@lawcommission.gov.uk as soon as possible. Every effort is taken to ensure fair and equal opportunity for all with regards to attendance at interview. The building is fully accessible.

Ministry of Justice is a Disability Confident Committed employer. We will consider applicants who meet the minimum criteria and have declared a disability under the Equality Act 2010 for interview, but this does not guarantee an interview for every eligible candidate: **(Level 1: Disability Confident Committed)**. Please note, you must still meet our **minimum requirements** to be passed to interview as above.

Standard-rate travelling expenses (rail, tube or bus) from within the UK will be reimbursed.

Please note that candidates will be **required** to bring with them documents to prove their identity, address, right to work and qualifications.

Stage 1 – Read this Guide

Please read this guide carefully. It will help you understand the role for which you are applying and the skills that we expect candidates to demonstrate in their applications.

Stage 2 – Navigate the online application system

Follow the online instructions, completing all the sections that you are asked to complete. The guidance below gives further details of what we are looking for and what you need to include in your application.

You must complete the behaviour, ability and experience questions within the specified word limit of 250 words.

You will be asked specific questions in your application form. You will be expected to describe one or more activities you have undertaken where you have demonstrated the relevant skill. If possible, please refer to examples in the context of law-related activities and be as specific as you can.

Behaviour 1: Communicating and Influencing

Please give evidence demonstrating your ability to communicate complex information, in writing and orally, clearly, effectively and persuasively.

You should give examples of situations from your professional, academic or personal life of how you have used communicating and influencing skills. We want you to emphasise what you did and how you used these skills, rather than the content of your communication. We want to understand how your communication skills were effective. We will also be looking at your application form as an example of how you are able to communicate accurately and effectively, using good syntax and structure.

Behaviour 2: Working Together

Please give evidence demonstrating your ability to co-operate with others in a team environment and to work successfully independently.

Please give details of situations in which you have worked with others, explaining how you cooperated effectively, and where you have worked successfully independently. Please explain the context in which you gained that experience (for example, university, a vacation scheme, a holiday job, full-time employment).

Experience 1: Legal Research (lead experience)

Please give evidence demonstrating your ability to conduct detailed and reliable research, particularly into complex legal issues. We are particularly interested in how you did the research and the sources you used, rather than telling us in detail about what you found.

Please tell us about your legal research skills explaining what the task was, (your research methodology) and how that approach made your research successful. Give the context in which the research was undertaken (for example, undergraduate dissertation).

Mention non-legal research if you think that it is relevant. Tell us about any training you have received in conducting research.

Experience 2: Legal Skills

Please give evidence demonstrating your knowledge of some or all of the areas of law relevant to the work of your chosen team.

We want to hear about your knowledge and experience of areas of law relevant to the team you are applying to. Primarily, this means the general areas of law covered by the team (for example, criminal law). If you have specific knowledge of particular current team projects or any future work identified in the General Guide for Applicants, please give details. You should give details of the context in which you gained that knowledge (for example, the type of course you took, or current or past employment) and explain how recent your experience is. Where you do not have knowledge of the team's work, please give evidence of your capacity and willingness to acquire that knowledge quickly, for example, experience in similar areas or evidence of coming up to speed quickly with comparable issues.

Experience 3: CV

As part of the application process, you will be asked to provide a CV – please follow the structure outlined below. Applications are name-blind so please **do not** include any personal information such as your name, date of birth or contact information. It is very important that you do not include any personal information that could identify you, to ensure the recruitment process remains fair, open and properly monitored.

The CV will be assessed in two parts: Qualification Details and Employment History/Work Experience.

CV – education/qualification details

This section of your CV should be institution-blind, so please **do not** include names of universities, colleges, or institutions. If you attended an overseas institution, please state the country in which you studied to ensure we can account for variations in marking styles.

Postgraduate/professional qualifications (if applicable)

Please use the same format as your first degree (as set out below), giving marks for all subjects or modules.

If you have more than one subsequent qualification, please list them in reverse chronological order, with the most recent first.

Your degree

If you have more than one degree, please list them in reverse chronological order, with the most recent first.

Please use the format: name of degree / start date - end date / class grade or mark awarded. Then give details of each subject or module examined or assessed within your first degree, and the grade or mark obtained. Please use the format: subject name / grade or mark obtained expressed as a percentage / year of examination or assessment. For example:

LLB / 2018 - 2021 / 1st Class

Criminal Law / 70% / 2020

Public Law / 72% / 2020

Land Law / 69% / 2020

Intellectual Property Law / 64% / 2020

Equity and Trusts / 62% / 2021

Contract Law / 68% / 2021

If a mark did NOT count towards the overall result of your qualification, please add an asterisk – for example: Legal Systems / 70% / 2020*.

Please list the subject/modules in chronological order and, at the end, list any subjects or modules not yet examined or assessed in the same format, but replacing the mark obtained with a dash. For example: Property Law / –.

Your A / AS levels or equivalent

Please use the format: year of examination / type of examination / subject / grade or mark awarded. For example: 2011 / A level / Mathematics / A Grade.

Please provide details of any scholarships, awards or other distinctions awarded during your academic career.

CV – employment history and work experience

Please provide details of any employment, including internships and voluntary or casual jobs that you have had since age 18; and of any shorter-term employment that you think may be relevant to your application. For each, please give the following details:

Name and business of employer;

Job title and nature of duties;

Start date and end date;

If you have undertaken a pupillage or training contract, please enter the details here, specifying:

Barristers (pupillage): name and address of chambers; start date/end date; type of work undertaken; name of Inn; date of call to the Bar.

Solicitors (training contract): name and address of firm; start date/end date; type of work undertaken; date of admission as a solicitor.

Essential academic skills – minimum requirements

In your CV you should outline the basis on which you believe you meet the minimum academic eligibility requirements.

You need to show that by September 2025 you will have completed the required two years of legal studies (“Requirement 1”) and that your academic results for at least one law course are at, or at the equivalent of first class or good 2:1 standard (“Requirement 2”), with at least some elements of first-class work.

For example:

Requirement 1: I will have completed a full-time degree course involving two or more years' full time substantive legal studies by September 2025: my undergraduate degree ran from September 2021 - September 2024.

Requirement 2: My results from my completed undergraduate law degree meets the minimum standard specified in the Guide for Applicants. The evidence for this is that I received a 2:1 degree with first class marks in two subjects.

If you do not have two years substantive legal studies, or your only legal training consists of either a completed GDL/CPE (a law conversion course) and a professional qualification (such as the LPC or BPC, whether taken separately or combined with the GDL/CPE) or passing the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) 1 and 2 exams (whether or not you have also taken the SQE preparation courses), but believe you can show **substantial relevant additional skills or knowledge** in accordance with the “Selection criteria” set out above, please make this - and the relevant experience - clear in your CV.

You must explain to us both how you meet these minimum requirements for essential academic skills and provide evidence (for example, by giving the marks of modules or courses as explained above). If you do not tell us how you meet the requirements, or fail to provide evidence, then your application is likely to fail.

Welsh Language Skills

If you have any Welsh language skills, please clearly state them in your CV.

The Law Commission represents both England and Wales, so we are keen to encourage applications from Welsh speakers to help us maintain and develop our relationship with the people of Wales. Please let us know if you can speak Welsh and your level of proficiency (written and spoken).

Any Welsh-speaking Research Assistant will play a key role in helping to support the Commission’s Welsh language policy. They will act as an ambassador on issues affecting Wales and the Welsh language, for example attending events in Wales, and provide oversight to help ensure the Commission’s Welsh language publications and communications are accurate and effective. The amount of work is variable and will be agreed with the Head of Team when the Research Assistant starts. As an indication this and other corporate work on the law in Wales can take up to 20% of an individual’s time.

Chapter 3: Selection procedure

The sift process

Applications will be considered in detail by a selection panel on a team-by-team basis. Applications that do not meet the minimum academic criteria will be rejected.

If we receive a high volume of applications, an initial sift may be carried out on your answers on:

(1) Legal Research. If your application passes this initial sift, and a large number of applications remain after the initial sift, an additional sift of all the remaining criteria will be done on those applications which passed the initial sift.

Interviews

Each team's selection panel will invite for interview those applicants whose applications appear to best meet the essential skills, taking into account the number of vacancies available in the team. The interview will involve questions on behaviours (Communicating and Influencing and Working Together), experiences (Legal Research and Legal Skills), the technical competencies (Motivational Fit) and ability (Working with Complex Information). As part of this, you will be asked questions about one or more relevant areas of law. You will be notified of the area(s) of law in your invitation to interview and sent any necessary material in advance. We have prepared a [**short video guide**](#) to help you prepare for the behaviours-based questions. This year we are not using strengths in the application process, but otherwise this video guide can help you prepare for the behaviour questions and interview process.

Below we provide further information about the competencies that will be assessed at interview that are not covered above in the application stage.

Technical: Motivational Fit

You will be asked at interview to explain why you want to work for the Law Commission and the reasons for selecting your chosen team. For example, why do you want to work in a technical legal environment? Why do you want to work in the public sector and with Government?

Please be clear about why you have a preference for your chosen team. Please describe your longer-term career plans and the way in which you believe working as a Research Assistant would contribute to them.

Ability: Ability to work with complex information

Please provide evidence which you believe demonstrates your ability to work with complex information.

Our assessment of this ability will be based on your responses to the legal analysis questions. At interview you will be asked a question to probe your ability to understand, analyse, and present information. You may also be asked to provide an example of your ability, so you should think about scenarios where you have successfully analysed and interpreted a topic that was particularly complex or challenging, and your approach to doing so.

Test

Applicants invited to interview will be emailed a written test to complete and return before interviews commence. You will receive an email from a member of the team with further instructions, including a list of potential dates to complete the test. On the day you select for your test, you will receive the test at 10am and will be expected to return it by 4pm. If you require reasonable adjustments to complete the written test, you must let us know in advance. The test will be assessing your Communicating and Influencing Skills, your Legal Skills, and your Ability to Work with Complex Information.

Appointment process

Candidates will be notified of the outcome of the interview process through the MOJ Recruitment Portal system. Candidates may also receive an earlier phone call from a member of the team if they have been successful at interview. We expect candidates who are notified of success to give a firm indication of whether they will accept our offer of employment. It is essential that successful candidates do not indicate acceptance and take up alternative options at a later stage; this can make it difficult for the Commission to appoint a suitable replacement and is unfair on other applicants. If your acceptance is contingent on the outcome of other applications, please let us know and we can discuss options. Many chambers, law firms and universities are sympathetic to requests to defer professional training or post-graduate study.

Necessary pre-employment checks will be undertaken for successful applicants. If the results of these checks are satisfactory, a formal offer of appointment will be made by the Ministry of Justice usually around the beginning of August, depending on completion of the vetting process.

Further details about pre-employment checks will be provided in a letter confirming success at interview. Please note, however, that if at any stage during the application process you are asked to complete forms you should do so accurately and in a timely manner, providing all necessary supporting materials. Failure to do so can result in a delay to your start dates, problems with pay or the withdrawal of your application. If you experience or anticipate any problems in this regard, please contact us in advance so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Please note that if you have lived outside of the UK for more than six months you will need to provide a certificate of good conduct or an overseas police check translated into English from the countries resided in or visited for your pre-employment checks – for guidance and contacts about how to do this visit [**criminal records checks for overseas applicants**](#). The cost of this application will be met by you.

You must also meet the [**civil service requirements on nationality**](#).

Reserves

If the number of successful applicants at interview exceeds the number of posts available, some will be treated as reserves and contacted if posts become available.

Chapter 4: Timetable of key events*

Dates	Events
Late December 2025	2026 RA application guidance live on website to enable preparation
Start of January 2026	Opening date
End of January 2026	Closing date
February 2026	Sifting of applications
Early to mid-March 2026	Invitations to interview sent
Mid-March 2026	Test to be taken before interview
End of April and beginning of May 2026	Expected dates for interviews
May 2026	Conditional offer of appointment notification sent
31st August 2026	Expected start date
31st August – 4th September 2026	Induction will take place for all RAs (including those who join early) during this one week period. New RAs are expected to attend the office during this time.

*These dates are provisional and may be subject to change.

Chapter 5: Main terms of appointment

These are the main terms but should not be regarded as a contract of employment, as the formal terms and conditions will be notified upon completion of pre-appointment checks.

Annual leave

The annual leave allowance will be 25 days a year with pay, plus paid time off for public holidays and 1 paid privilege day.

Hours of work

All posts are full time at 37 hours per week excluding meal breaks. The Law Commission operates a flexi-time scheme enabling staff to adjust their hours of work subject to business needs and attendance within core hours. We may also consider part-time working.

Notice

Details of submitting notice will be set out in your letter of appointment. This will only be relevant to those currently in employment.

Outside activities

Employees of the Ministry of Justice, including the Law Commission, are subject to a number of rules affecting the ability to undertake specified outside activities. If, for example, you wish to publish material (in any form), teach, or engage in political activities during your time at the Law Commission, you will need to consider whether these activities are consistent with the duties of civil servants. In some cases, activities can only be undertaken with prior authorisation. We are happy to provide you with the Law Commission's guidance on outside activities in advance of your application.

Pay

The salary will be paid monthly in arrears by credit transfer to your bank or building society. New joiners will start on the minimum starting salary of £40,014. Details will be included in your letter of appointment.

Pension

The employment will be pensionable under the Civil Service pension arrangements, subject to certain health checks. Information on the scheme and the options available to you will be sent to you shortly after your arrival. You will have three months from your start date to make a choice.

Period of employment

Research Assistant contracts will be offered from September 2026 to August 2028, with the option of a one-year contract if preferred by the candidate.

Probation

The probation period is four months for year-long contracts, and six months for two years. The appointment will be confirmed provided the normal requirements of the post, attendance and conduct have been satisfactorily met during the probation period.

Chapter 6: For more information

If you have a technical question about the online application process or have trouble submitting your application, please call the MoJ Recruitment Team on 0345 241 5359 (Option 1) (Mon-Fri 8am-6pm) or email MOJ-Recruitment-Vetting-Enquiries@gov.sscl.com quoting the job vacancy reference (reference numbers will be included once the vacancies go live in January 2026):

13037 - Commercial and Common Law Team

13003 – Property, Family and Trust Law Team

13041 – Public Law Team

13040 - Criminal Law Team

If you require any assistance in relation to any other matter, such as your academic eligibility for the post, please email recruitment@lawcommission.gov.uk. If you do have any questions, please contact us as soon as you can

