



**Law  
Commission**  
Reforming the law

## **Guide for Applicants - General**

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**Research Assistant Post 2026**

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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, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age or disability.**

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# Chapter 1: What is the Law Commission?

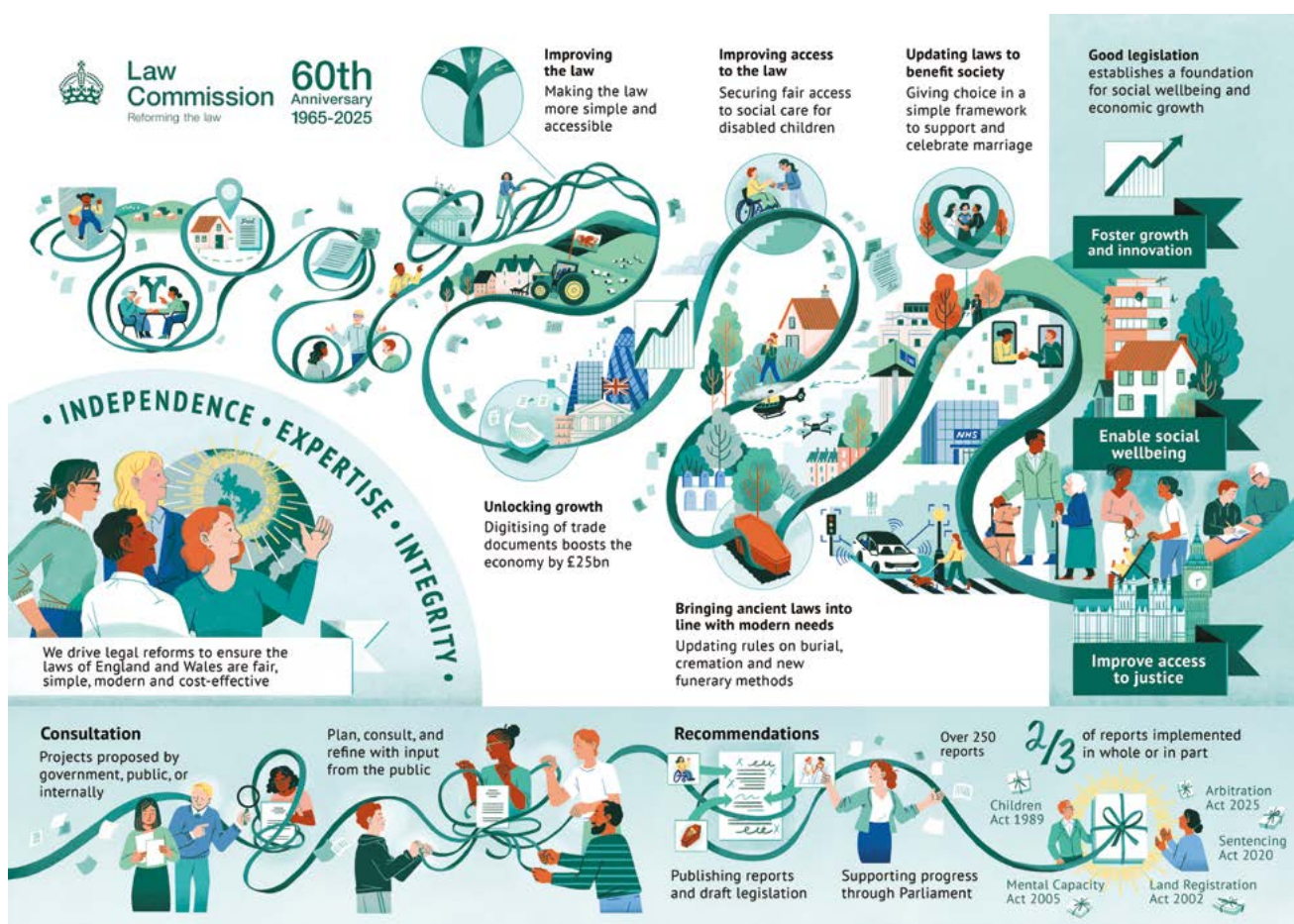
The Law Commission is the statutory body set up under the Law Commissions Act 1965 to:

- 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.



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

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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, team heads and senior lawyers, around 20 team lawyers, two Parliamentary Counsel, around 25 Research Assistants, an Economist, and a Corporate Services Team.

The team heads and lawyers come from a variety of backgrounds, including 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 recommending reform or simply identifying the problems and providing options for Government to consider.

We will usually:

- make a study of the area of law and identify potential areas of concern, opportunities to improve, looking at other systems of law to see how they deal with similar problems;
- publish a consultation paper, setting out in detail the existing law and the opportunities for improvement, 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



### **Joanna Otterburn and Stephanie Hack (Jo & Steph), joint Chief Executives**

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 enjoy grappling with difficult legal questions and policy developments. Issues range from the application of AI in various legal contexts to considering how to update the law in light of modern social attitudes and priorities, for example new funerary methods.

Above all, the Law Commission is a friendly and collegiate body. Our work is stimulating and there is a high premium placed upon the quality of our output. What we do 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.

### **The role**

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

### **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 papers for their projects. 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 responses to the consultation.

## **After consultation**

After consultation, the team develops final policy and prepares papers, seeking approval from Commissioners for their proposed final recommendations. Research Assistants will help to prepare the necessary documents 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 potential new project 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 but vital work such as minute-taking, organising meetings, proof-reading documents and organising hard copies of Law Commission publications to be printed and distributed. 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.](#)**



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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?

### Ethan George

Research Assistant in the Public Law and Law in Wales Team

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

It has been a privilege to work at the Law Commission. Whilst there are other organisations that think about law reform, the Commission's relationship with Government as an arm's length body means our ideas uniquely have a strong prospect of becoming law. This means our work has a real impact on wider society and because of this, people at the Commission are deeply passionate about what they do.

In my two years at the Commission, I have found it to be a collaborative and friendly environment. People at the Commission are always happy to help one other and this applies across teams and seniority. The Commission is also very social and there are lots of things to get involved with away from your desk, such as book club, running club, bowling excursions and so much more.



#### Why become a Research Assistant?

There are three main reasons I would recommend becoming a research assistant to anyone interested in law reform.

First, being a research assistant provides an opportunity to potentially gain new skills such as how to effectively consult with stakeholders, whilst also improving your abilities as a legal researcher. Whatever career you go onto next, being an RA is a valuable learning experience.

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Second, despite being the most junior member of the team, the input of research assistants is genuinely valued. It may very well be your idea which features in a Law Commission report and potentially becomes law.

Finally, working on a law reform project exposes you to so many interesting experiences. Highlights from my time working on a project looking at reforming aviation law have included attending the Farnborough Air show, meeting a team from NASA testing drone technology, and delivering a talk at the Royal Aeronautical Society's historic headquarters in Mayfair.

## **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.

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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. Some projects will also have a Legal Assistant. The assignment of staff to projects depends on the resourcing needs of each individual project.

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.

Please note that we cannot guarantee there will be opportunities to work on particular projects. Other projects may emerge, or priorities and timings of existing projects might change, and some of the current Research Assistants may be retained, meaning that a vacancy to work on a particular project does not arise.

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## Chapter 8: Commercial and Common Law Team

### **Commissioner:**

Professor Solène Rowan

### **Head of team:**

Laura Burgoyne

### **Senior lawyer:**

Elizabeth Welch

### **Team lawyers:**

Elsabé van der Sijde

David Roberts

Yan Lai

The work of the Commercial and Common Law (“CoCo”) team spans a wide range of topics including commercial and consumer law and other areas of private law. Our recent work on tech-related projects resulted in the Property (Digital Assets etc) Bill and the Electronic Trade Documents Act 2023, and our review of arbitration law led to the Arbitration Act 2025. At the time of writing, we are working on two projects relating to the law of business organisations: friendly societies, and co-operative and community benefit societies. The projects below will be ongoing, or anticipated, at September 2026. We are also considering other possible work including in the context of consumer rights.

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.

### **Digital assets: which law, which court?**

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

### **Product liability**

[Product liability](#)

### **Deeds**

See page 14 in the [14th Programme of Law Reform](#)

### **Museum collections**

[Museum collections](#)

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## **Trust law arbitration**

See page 29 of the [14th Programme of Law Reform](#)

## **Modernising trust law (potential project)**

[Modernising Trust Law for a Global Britain](#)

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## Chapter 9: Criminal Law Team

### **Commissioner:**

Professor Penney Lewis

### **Head of team:**

David Connolly

### **Senior lawyer:**

Roseanna Peck

### **Team lawyers:**

Nicholas Hoggard

Robert Kaye

Lawrence McNamara

Jessica Skins

Andrea Preziosi

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 three 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](#)

### **Criminal appeals**

[Criminal appeals](#)

### **Homicide**

[Law of homicide](#)

### **Consent in the criminal law**

[Consent in the criminal law](#)

### **Offences against dead bodies**

[Offences against dead bodies](#)

### **The defence of insanity**

[The defence of insanity](#)



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

### Commissioner:

Professor Lisa Webley

### Head of team:

Colin Oakley

### Senior lawyer:

Spencer Clarke

### Team lawyers:

Andrew Bazeley

Charlotte Black

Thérèse Callus

Christine Gentry

Thomas Nicholls

Christopher Pulman

Daniel Robinson

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 'Legal Skills' 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. 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.

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

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## **Burial and cremation**

[Burial and cremation](#)

## **Rights and obligations relating to funerary methods, funerals and remains**

[Rights and obligations relating to funerary methods, funerals and remains](#)

## **Kinship care**

[Kinship care](#)

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

[Business tenancies: the right to renew](#)

## **Commercial leasehold**

[Commercial leasehold](#)

## **Ownerless land**

[Ownerless land](#)

## **Managing housing estates**

[Management of housing estates](#)

## **Chancel repair liability and registration**

[Chancel repair liability and registration](#)

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

### **Commissioner:**

Professor Alison Young

### **Head of team:**

Henni Ouahes

### **Senior lawyer:**

Connor Johnston

### **Team lawyers:**

Connor Champ

Fiona Couzens

Ben Godfrey

Laura Jones

Rebecca Mandal

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 tell us about their aptitude for the Welsh language. . If you have any Welsh language skills, please clearly state them in your CV. We describe the importance of Welsh language skills in the "Guide for Applicants- How to apply".

### **Agricultural law in Wales**

[Agricultural Law in Wales](#)

### **Autonomy in aviation**

[Aviation autonomy](#)

### **Compulsory purchase**

[Compulsory purchase](#)

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## **New funerary methods**

[New funerary methods](#)

## **Public sector automated decision making**

See page 18 of the [14th Programme of Law Reform](#)

