

## *WHTC University application subject guides*

# Law

This guide has been written to help support you in your application to university. It contains the following information relevant to your subject to help you decide where to apply and put together the best application that you possibly can:

1. Course links
2. Entrance requirements
3. Recommended A-levels
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### **1. Course links**

Below are links to some of the top courses for this subject in the UK (according to [The Complete University Guide](#)). Click on the links to find information about what the course is like, what you'll learn, and loads of information about things such as fees and accommodation. However, remember that there are loads of other great universities out there, so check out The Complete University Guide or just google studying your subject at university.

1. [University of Cambridge](#)
2. [University of Oxford](#)
3. [University College London](#)
9. [London School of Economics](#)
12. [University of Nottingham](#)
24. [University of Birmingham](#)



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## 2. Entrance requirements

Here are the grades that the university suggests you need to get in to that course, and the likely offer that they will give you. If you're concerned that your predicted grades aren't this high, don't worry – these are the universities with the highest requirements. There are plenty of other great universities out there with lower entrance requirements!

1. **Cambridge:** A\*AA
2. **Oxford:** AAA
3. **University College London:** A\*AA
4. **London School of Economics:** A\*AA
5. **University of Nottingham:** AAA
6. **University of Birmingham:** AAA

## 3. Recommended A-levels

Different universities may differ as to what A-levels they ask you for. Some might list one subject as 'essential', while another might list the same subject as just 'helpful', so make sure to check out the course page (under Section 1 of this document, or on the university website) to be sure what your chosen university expects!

There are no specific or essential A-levels required to study Law at university, although universities tend to require at least one essay-based subject. Most of them are looking for individuals with the ability to think critically, an awareness of the world around them, and the ability to get their ideas across clearly and concisely. Any subject that enables you to develop your research and debating skills is also beneficial.

Examples of subjects that would be helpful for studying Law are:

**English:** English is typically regarded as a good A-level to take if you want to study law. This is largely because it develops your essay writing, fluency and communication skills – all of which are essential for achieving highly over the course of your degree.

**History:** Similar to English, History is a great A-level for Law, as it helps to develop your essay writing skills. History also teaches you to read, think critically and develop logical arguments – all of which are key skills for a law student to learn early on.

**Maths:** Whilst not typically associated with developing the writing skills needed for a law degree, Maths can help with developing analytical skills and following a step-by-step logical process, which is welcomed when addressing statutes.

**RS:** While RS is typically viewed as a facilitating subject for studying Law, it can help you develop both your essay writing and debating skills.

## 4. Studying Law

What degree options are available? What does this degree typically entail? What are your career options once you've graduated?

### **What degree options are available?**

There are two types of qualifications available to students wishing to study Law at university: BA or LLB. It's important to be aware of this when you're applying for courses, as they both offer different options. It's also important to remember that studying a Law degree doesn't just involve criminal law and courtroom dramas and that you will be expected to develop knowledge around all key areas of law.

### LLB

The LLB, or Bachelor of Laws, is a three-year higher education qualifying law degree which **leads directly to the next stage in training to enter the legal profession as either a solicitor or barrister.**

Throughout this degree you will be required to complete seven compulsory modules to ensure that you have a thorough understanding of all aspects of the legal system. These are:

- Criminal Law
- Law of Torts (or civil law)
- The Law of Contract
- Property/Land Law
- Equity and Trusts
- Constitutional and Administrative Law
- EU Law

You will normally study these subjects in the first and second year of your degree before specialising in your third year.

### BA

A non-qualifying BA (Bachelor of Arts) law degree is another option if you're interested in studying law at university. It's a three or four year course which includes law modules but also includes study of wider topics outside of the law.

The Law BA is a great option for those interested in the intricacies of the legal sphere but do not necessarily want to follow the traditional legal training route.

**As it does not automatically lead into solicitor and barrister training, if you are interested in pursuing this route after your degree you will need to complete a one-year law conversion course.**

There are plenty of career options available to you if you decide to take a Law BA. If you decide not to train to become a solicitor or barrister, you can apply to other law-related jobs such as a paralegal or licensed conveyancer. If you change your mind about law completely, your degree will allow you to apply for jobs in most other sectors, as with any other traditional degree. However, this also applies to the LLB qualification.

### **Careers in Law**

Lawyer is a general term referring to anyone who is qualified to give legal advice as a licensed legal practitioner. This includes solicitors and barristers.

**Solicitors** provide legal support, advice and services to clients, who can be individuals, private companies, public sector organisations or other groups. Working in private practice, in-house for commercial organisations, in local or central government or in the court service, they may specialise in certain areas of law such as property, family or finance. Solicitors do not represent individuals in court – if a trial is held, then the solicitors help prepare the case for the barristers.

### Training to Become a Solicitor

1. Complete your LLB or a one-year conversion course following any

- undergraduate degree
2. Complete your **Legal Practice Course (LPC)**. This is a period of vocational training that helps you develop the necessary skills to work as a solicitor. It typically takes a year to complete.
  3. You will then move on to the final stage of qualifying as a solicitor. This is a period of recognised training also referred to as a **training contract**. It involves supervised working as a trainee solicitor, which will enable you to understand the practical implications of the law and develop the skills you'll need as a solicitor. This normally takes two years to complete, but can be reduced if you have relevant previous legal experience.
  4. As part of this training you will be required to take the **Professional Skills Course (PSC)** in order to qualify as a solicitor.
  5. When you successfully complete your training period and professional skills course, you'll be qualified. You can be admitted to the roll of solicitors and apply for your practicing certificate.

In England and Wales, **barristers** represent individuals or organisations in court, carry out research into points of law and advise clients on their case. Many are self-employed in chambers, while others work in government departments or agencies including the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Government Legal Service (GLS). They work closely with solicitors who will have worked on the case prior to involving a barrister.

#### Training to Become a Barrister

1. Complete your LLB or a one-year conversion course following any undergraduate degree.
2. In order to start the vocational component of your training, you'll need to pass the **Bar Course Aptitude Test (BCAT)**. You must also join one of the four Inns of Court which will provide you with educational and social support throughout your time as a barrister
3. After passing the BCAT you will move on the vocational component of your training. This will typically take around a year and is generally referred to as the **Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC)**
4. After the vocational component of training, intending barristers must complete a **pupillage** in order to practice. This will take a year and is divided into six non-practicing and six practicing months.
5. You will now be seen by your Inn as a 'intranant' or trainee advocate. This will be followed by a nine-month period of practical training with an

experienced advocate and finally a competency assessment. You will now be 'called to the bar' and become qualified as a barrister

Besides solicitors and barristers, other jobs include:

- **Chartered legal executives** are qualified lawyers who specialise in particular fields of law such as civil and criminal litigation, corporate law or public law. Only those who complete the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives' (CILEx) training programme can use this title.
  - **Paralegals** carry out legal work without being qualified as a solicitor or barrister. They support lawyers by, for instance, preparing briefing notes and interviewing clients and witnesses.
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## 6. Admissions tests

What admissions tests are you typically required to sit in addition to submitting your application? This also differs from uni to uni, so if your chosen university isn't on this list, make sure you check out the course page so you know exactly what you need to apply.

**Cambridge:** applicants for Law at Cambridge are required to take the [Cambridge Law Test](#) if invited to an interview. Some colleges may require you to submit one or two school essays as an example of written work prior to interview.

**Oxford:** all candidates for Law at Oxford are required to take the LNAT as part of their application.

### LNAT

The [National Admissions Test for Law \(LNAT\)](#) is a 2-hour 15-minute test divided in to two sections.

Section A is a computer-based, multiple-choice exam consisting of 42 questions. The questions are based on 12 passages, with 3 or 4 multiple choice questions on each. You are given 95 minutes to answer all of the questions. You'll be asked to read

passages of text and answer questions that test your comprehension of them. Your answers to the multiple-choice section are checked to create a mark out of 42. This is known as your LNAT score.

In Section B you will be given 40 minutes to write an essay from a list of three proposed subjects. This section is marked by the test centre (or college tutors if you're applying to Oxford). Although this section does not contribute to your LNAT score, it is your opportunity to show your ability to construct a compelling argument and reach a conclusion.

The LNAT doesn't test your knowledge of law or any other subject. Instead, it helps universities assess your aptitude for the skills required to study law and helps the universities select people for their undergraduate law courses.

The LNAT is required for students wishing to study Law at:

- University of Bristol
- Durham University
- University of Glasgow
- King's College London
- London School of Economics
- University of Nottingham
- University of Oxford
- SOAS
- University College London

**Students must register and make arrangements to sit the LNAT themselves.**

## 7. Recommended reading

Reading some relevant books or articles is a really great way to demonstrate your passion for your chosen subject in your personal statement, and show how you've gone beyond the curriculum. Plus, if you really want to spend three years or more studying this subject at university, it should be enjoyable! Try taking notes and jotting down your thoughts as you're reading so that you can share some of this in your personal statement

### Introductory Reading

***What About Law: Studying Law at University* by Catherine Barnard, Janet O'Sullivan and Graham Virgo:** This book provides a 'taster' for the study of law; a short, accessible presentation of law as an academic subject, designed to help 17- and 18-year old students

decide whether law is the right choice for them as a university subject, or, if they have already made the choice, what to expect when they start their degree. Using a case study approach, the book introduces prospective law students to the legal system, as well as to legal reasoning, critical thinking and argument.

***Letters to a Law Student: A Guide to Studying Law at University* by Nicholas McBride:**

Voted one of the top 6 books that all future law students should read by The Guardian, *Letters to a Law Student* is packed full of practical advice and helpful answers to the most common questions about studying law at University across every stage of taking, or thinking about taking, a law degree.

***How to Do Things with Rules* by William Twining and David Miers:** This popular and well-established textbook simplifies legal method by combining examples with an account of rules in general: the who, what, why and how of interpretation. Starting with standpoint and context, it identifies factors that give rise to doubts about the interpretation of a rule and recommends a systematic approach to analysing those factors.

***Law and Modern Society* by P.S Atiyah:** In this lucid, stimulating and completely updated survey which presupposes no specialist knowledge of the subject, P.S. Atiyah introduces the reader to a number of fundamental issues about the law, the legal profession, and the adjudicative process. Topics include the recent controversy over the independence of the judiciary, problems arising from the cost of legal services and legal aid, and the many miscarriages of justice which have disfigured the legal system in the past decade.

***Eve was Framed: Women and British Justice* by Helena Kennedy:** Helena Kennedy focuses on the treatment of women in our courts – at the prejudices of judges, the misconceptions of jurors, the labyrinths of court procedures and the influence of the media. But the inequalities she uncovers could apply equally to any disadvantaged group.

***Law: A Very Short Introduction* by Raymond Wacks:** In this short introduction, Wacks introduces the major branches of the law, describing what lawyers do, and how courts operate, and considers the philosophy of law and its pursuit of justice, freedom, and equality.

***Understanding Law* by J.N. Adams and Roger Brownsword:** This introduction to law presents a contextual overview of the English legal system while, at the same time, providing the groundwork for a critical understanding of legal institutions, processes and materials. It also places the study of law within a broader framework of inquiry focusing on the evaluation and explanation of legal decision-making at all levels.

## **Civil and Constitutional Law**

***Britain Unwrapped: Government and Constitution Explained* by Hilaire Barnett:** Provides a wide-ranging discussion of the contemporary system of government. It takes apart the constitutional framework, the current system and the workings of government, Parliament



and the legal system. The relationship between Britain and the EU, the domestic legal systems and the law of the EU are also covered.

***The Rule of Law by Tom Bingham:*** ‘The Rule of Law’ is a phrase much used but little examined. The idea of the rule of law as the foundation of modern states and civilisations has recently become even more talismanic than that of democracy, but what does it actually consist of? In this short book, Britain’s former senior law lord, and one of the world’s most acute legal minds, examines what the idea actually means.

## Criminal Law

***Criminal Law: Text, Cases, and Materials by Jonathan Herring:*** Offers comprehensive legal coverage and insightful analysis alongside expertly selected extracts from key cases and academic sources.

## 8. Interesting MOOCs

Another great way of learning more about your chosen subject and demonstrating your interest is to take a MOOC, or Massive Open Online Course. These are free courses delivered by universities that you can take online. If the ones below don’t take your fancy, try looking at [Class Central](#) - they have a huge list of different courses for every subject imaginable, and they’re all free!

[Introduction to English Common Law](#) (University of London) – This MOOC will give you an introduction to England and Wales’ influential legal system including its history, constitutional background, sources and institutions. You’ll learn about the different ways in which laws are made and interpreted, the English court system and the increasing importance of European Union and human rights law.

[How to Become a Lawyer](#) (The University of Law) – On this course, you’ll learn about the nature of the legal sector itself, and the different routes into law. You’ll identify the skills needed to succeed as a lawyer, and how you can upskill yourself accordingly. You’ll come away understanding the structures available to support your journey to becoming a lawyer – regardless of your educational background

[From Crime to Punishment: An Introduction to Criminal Justice](#) (University of York) – What happens when a crime is allegedly committed in England and Wales? Now’s your chance to find out. On this course you’ll follow a suspect through the journey of investigation, prosecution and adjudication. You’ll step inside the courtroom – discovering how criminal justice processes work – and learn about the criminal law and key institutions like the police and the courts.

[The Modern Judiciary](#) (King’s College London) – On this course, you’ll be introduced to the role of judges in the legal system of England and Wales through an array of articles, cases

and interviews with judges. You'll explore how judgement works and engage with the work of the judiciary through the study of a recent decision of your chosen court. You'll also consider how judges are portrayed in the media and learn how working practices changed over time

## 9. Useful additional resources

There are loads of other great things out there that you might want to look at to develop your interest and strengthen your application, from videos to podcasts, to websites. Here are a few suggestions:

[Visit a Court](#) – you might perhaps like to get some feel for the law in action, for example by observing a local court in session. You could visit your local Magistrates' and/or County Court. Even the very highest and grandest courts, such as the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand and the Supreme Court (Parliament Square), are open to the public. There is no need to book ahead, simply turn up on the day and explore!

[The Guardian's Law pages](#) and the [Financial Time's Law reports](#) both provide an up-to-date and in-depth look at events taking place within the British legal system. Both The Telegraph and The Times have their own version of these pages

[Counsel Magazine](#) – a monthly journal and the Bar Council's own magazine. Largely written by and for barristers

[Law in Action Podcast](#) – Radio 4's long-running legal magazine programme, featuring reports and discussion on matters relating to law

[Law Pod UK](#) – covers developments across all aspects of civil and public law in the UK

[Lawyer 2 Lawyer](#) – an award-winning podcast covering relevant, contemporary news from a legal perspective

[Cambridge Faculty of Law Collections](#) – online collection of recordings from lectures and seminars that took place at the University of Cambridge

Blogs – there are a range of legal blogs from a range of institutions, academics and leading lawyers. Some recommendations are [UK Human Rights Blog](#), [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#), [Sir Henry Brooke's](#) blog and [Barrister Blogger](#)

[The Supreme Court](#) – provides video footage of current and previous cases if you're unable to visit a court in person



## 10. Related courses

At university, there are loads of different combinations of subjects that you can do. Maybe you might find one of these alternatives more interesting? A few ideas are listed below with a sample link, but in most cases there are lots of universities that offer these different combinations so make sure to have a good look around!

Most universities will offer Law with a foreign language. As with a regular law degree, there are two different types of this degree and it's important to be aware of the difference.

- **LLB Law with a foreign language:** this may also be described as 'Law with Spanish Law', for example. This will involve you completing all the necessary modules for your LLB qualification as well as spending a year in another country studying their legal system.
- **BA Law with a foreign language:** this will involve you taking language modules alongside your law modules. You will also spend a year abroad in a country of your choice, but there will be less of a focus on learning certain aspects of their legal system.

This will require you to be taking your choice of language at A-level. By studying Law with a foreign language you will be given the opportunity to spend a year studying abroad and will learn about that country's legal system alongside the UK's.

BA Law is also a popular choice to combine with other subjects. Examples of subjects that you can study alongside law include:

[Law with Business Studies](#) e.g. University of Birmingham

[Politics, Philosophy and Law](#) e.g. University of Warwick

[Criminology and Law](#) e.g. Lancaster University

[Anthropology and Law](#) e.g. LSE

[Law and Sociology](#) e.g. University of Warwick

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## 11. Oxbridge example interview questions

As you will know, applicants to Oxford and Cambridge have to take an interview in order to get a place. It is normal to get open-ended questions, as well as being given charts or pieces of writing to analyse. Here is a sample of the kind of questions you might get asked. Remember, you're supposed to not know the answer! They often deliberately choose topics that they think no one will have studied in order to make the questions fair. What they're looking for is to see how you think under pressure, and how you can present your ideas and your logic.

*Interviewer: Ben McFarlane, Faculty of Law*

### **What does it mean for someone to 'take' another's car?**

There is no right answer to this question. For example, can you take a car without driving it, or even without moving it? Our focus is on the candidate's reasoning – how he or she formulates an initial definition, and how he or she then applies and refines that initial definition in response to hypothetical examples provided by the interviewers. One example might be: 'I am walking along the street when it starts to rain. I open the door of an unlocked car and sit there for 15 minutes until the rain passes. Have I 'taken' the car?' The aim of the interview is to give the candidate a chance to show his or her application, reasoning ability, and communication skills.

*Interviewer: Liora Lazarus, St Anne's College*

### **If the punishment for parking on double yellow lines were death, and therefore nobody did it, would that be a just and effective law?**

Candidates are not meant to give a right or wrong answer to this question. They need to demonstrate that they have recognised the various issues that arise. The candidate who distinguishes between 'just' and 'effective' does best. The issues are different once that distinction is made. A just law might not be effective, or vice versa. The issues of how proportionate the punishment is to the crime refer to the justness of the law. The answer to its effectiveness is already in the question: 'and therefore nobody did it.'

*Interviewer: Imogen Goold, St Anne's College*

### **Should it be illegal to run a red light in the middle of the night on an empty road?**

Studying law requires that students understand what the law is, and also about what it should be, that is to think normatively. We are particularly interested in their capacity to justify their views and interpretations. This involves being able to analyse concepts and to critically appraise arguments and the reasoning behind a position, as well as to consider objections and to offer rebuttals to those objections. There isn't a right or wrong answer to this question; we would be using the example to see how



well the candidate could justify their stance. For example, a candidate might say that if no one was harmed by running the light, then it wouldn't hurt to run it so it shouldn't be illegal. This would be suggesting that the law is based on preventing harm. We might then explore whether this is the only purpose or the dominant purpose of the law, and how that might shape how legal rules need to be constructed, whether there are any circumstances in which exceptions might be valid and how effective exceptions could be created. Here, we would be looking to see how well they can see the problems with their approach and the difficulties inherent in drafting a rule that works in every situation without being too broad. This line of discussion would draw out their capacity to respond to challenges to their position, their ability to amend their initial answer when it no longer seems sustainable, and their ability to think precisely. Another candidate might suggest that even if no one is harmed, it is important that laws are respected and we could examine why this is the case. For example, if running lights was only illegal when it was dangerous, this would leave it to each person's assessment of 'dangerous', so we could never be sure when someone would run a light, leading to chaotic traffic.

This question also picks up on ideas about what it means for something to be illegal and citizen's relationship with the law, whether it can ever be justified to break the law and what might be a sufficient justification. This could lead into more philosophical discussions of what it means for a law to be binding and how legal rules might differ from moral rules or guidelines. A candidate might begin to consider whether there is something special about legal rules – are they different from other kinds of rules, such as those of a game, moral rules, social rules, club rules and so on. We could use this as a way into exploring with them whether the fact that something is illegal is itself a reason not to do something, over and above, perhaps, the harm the rule is aiming to prevent. Candidates might then think about how law makes other people's behaviour more predictable so that we can plan our own actions, or how the law might serve functions like punishing wrongdoing. An example might be that because the law makes murder illegal and those who kill are punished, I can expect that I can leave my house and generally not expect to be killed, so this allows me to decide it's safe to go outside.

### **Concocting evidence**

"You are the sheriff of a small town on the American frontier 150 years ago. A young woman from a prominent white family in your town has been killed. She was white, and a rumour is spreading that the killer was a young black man, even though no evidence of this has been brought forward. There is increasing disquiet in the community. Some people are scared for their female relations, while the family and their friends are desperate to avenge her death.

You are worried that if you don't find the killer soon, the townspeople will take matters into their own hands and mete out vigilante justice. You are particularly



concerned that there will be violence amongst the townspeople, and possibly racially-motivated killings, if nothing is done. You have no idea who the real killer is.

A homeless man comes to town. He has no friends or family in the town; no-one has seen him before as far as you know. You do not suspect he committed the murder. However, you do think you would be able to concoct enough false evidence to convince a jury that he killed the young woman and sentence him to death.

Do you concoct the evidence to save the town from violence and potentially prevent the deaths of numerous people?

Would your answer be different if:

- 1) You discovered that the real murderer was the son of another prominent local family, and you believed it highly likely revealing the killer's identity would lead to violence between the two families which could well result in numerous deaths?
- 2) You knew that the homeless man had been convicted of *another* murder and was on the run from a death sentence from another town?
- 3) You *did* have evidence of the homeless man's guilt in the murder of the young woman, but you knew it would be rejected by the court on a 'technicality' of evidence rules? Would you concoct new evidence?"

This is a complicated question and we would take the candidate through the scenario slowly and discuss their reasoning to the first part before moving on to each variation in turn. This question delves into the role of the law in society and what is meant by justice. There are many ways to answer it. What we would want to see is the candidate reasoning about issues like whether the sheriff should be purely utilitarian and act so as to prevent violence, or whether other considerations like justice should override this, even if it means loss of innocent life. Strong responses would include lots of explanation of their thinking about why there might be good reasons for the law to be committed to only punishing the guilty; the goals of punishment and its justifications; and why we need to promote trust in law enforcement institutions and the law. Really great answers might think about how rules of evidence aim to promote justice, and might consider how something could be a technicality (or not).

Candidates could also think about what a purely utilitarian legal system might look like and the problems it might pose, and why even if the law must be utilitarian in many ways, this needs to be tempered with other considerations.