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Banking and Financial Institutions – all the major Scottish banks and some merchant banks have legal departments employing in-house solicitors. Opportunities also exist for lawyers in the legal departments of Building Societies and other finance houses.

Central Government – those employed are involved in the provision of a wide range of legal services for the Scottish Parliament and other Government departments and bodies.

Construction Industry – several large construction, private house building and property development companies have their own in-house legal departments.

Insurance Companies – the large Scottish insurance companies employ an increasing number of in-house lawyers.

Lecturing and Tutoring – opportunities exist for solicitors to teach law in universities and colleges of further education on a full time or part-time basis.

Local Government – each authority is a big business in its own right and a major employer in its area affecting all aspects of life and with large business budgets.

Miscellaneous Bodies – organisations such as the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Legal Aid Board employ in-house solicitors. Opportunities also exist within the CBI, Scottish Consumer Council, Law Centres, Citizens Advice Bureaux and Law Publishers.

Oil Industry – multi-national oil companies with offices in Aberdeen or London employ lawyers in their legal or commercial services departments.

Procurator Fiscal Service – part of the Government Legal Service, the Crown Office in Edinburgh is the department responsible for the Procurator Fiscal Service. Procurators Fiscal are responsible for the investigation and prosecution of crime and the investigation of all sudden, unexplained and suspicious deaths.

Public Utilities – employ in-house solicitors to deal with the whole range of services required of a large utility.

The Armed Forces – opportunities exist for Scottish lawyers in the Armed Forces, notably the Army Legal Services, but most of these posts will be outwith Scotland.

How much does a solicitor earn?

There are no set rates of pay; how much you earn depends on where you work, what kind of work you do and whether you work with a private firm or a public company or a local authority.

It is important to realise that most solicitors in private practice are, in effect, partners in small businesses with their incomes entirely dependent on the profitability of the business which itself will depend on the amount of fee income generated by the practice and its level of overheads. There is no doubt that recent economic pressures have had a detrimental effect on the income of many solicitors.

Can I work outside Scotland after qualification?

Although Scots Law differs from that of England and other countries it is now very much easier for a fully qualified Scottish solicitor to transfer to England or to other countries within the European Union. Scottish solicitors wishing to re-qualify in England will be eligible to apply for admission as solicitors there after passing an Intra UK Transfer Test. A Scottish solicitor wishing to become admitted as a solicitor in any of the other European Union member states may apply for admission after passing the Transfer Test of the relevant country. Scottish solicitors are also making their mark even further afield, in the United States of America, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand for example.

THE INFORMATION IN THIS LEAFLET IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN LARGER PRINT FROM THE LAW SOCIETY IF REQUIRED.



The Law Society of Scotland

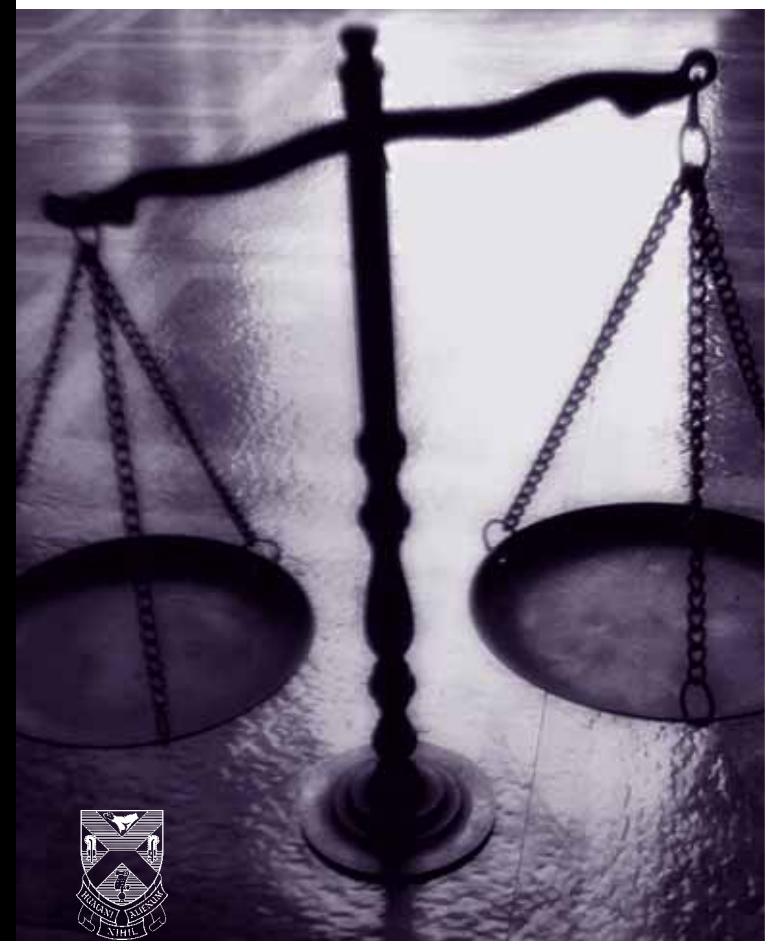
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Thinking of Becoming a Solicitor?

Some questions answered

www.lawscot.org.uk

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The Law Society of Scotland



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those considering a career in law often have many questions

What is the difference between a lawyer and a solicitor?

“Lawyer” is a general term covering both solicitors and advocates. A solicitor deals with a range of work, both in an office and in the courts. An advocate appears in the courts and gives opinions on matters of complicated law. Advice about how to qualify as an advocate can be obtained from The Faculty of Advocates, Advocates Library, Parliament House, Parliament Square, Edinburgh. www.advocates.org.uk

What does a solicitor do?

The easiest description of a solicitor's work is that he/she solves legal problems and then gives the client the answer. A solicitor in private practice can be described as a general practitioner in law. However, as law has become more complex, specialisation has become more prevalent. A solicitor's work may fall broadly into one or perhaps a number of the following categories:

Advising Private Clients – covering the whole range of personal and business life and including such matters as marital problems, consumer complaints, disputes with neighbours, planning enquiries and many more matters.

Commercial – the business world of trade and commerce, companies, contracts, insurance and banking. Solicitors act for a full range of business interests from the owner of the corner shop to the boards of major public companies, advising businesses on the numerous and detailed provisions of company, partnership and insolvency law.

Litigation – raising or defending actions in the civil courts or by reference to arbitration or settling such claims or disputes “out of court”. Solicitors can appear in the Sheriff Courts in Scotland and also appear at Tribunals.

common questions

Conveyancing – the buying and selling of property and the arranging of loans, the preparation of Title Deeds, leases and other legal documents. In addition, some solicitors specialise in the buying and leasing of commercial properties such as factories, shops and hotels.

Criminal Law – for solicitors in private practice this involves advising and appearing on behalf of accused persons in the courts across the complete range of criminal law, from minor motoring offences to serious crime. Procurators Fiscal investigate and prosecute crime.

Estate Work – the management of landed estates in rural areas.

Financial Services – advising on mortgages and investments.

Wills, Executries and Trusts – advising on and preparing wills, the administration and distribution of funds passing on death, or contained in a trust and the settlement of tax liabilities.

What sort of day does a solicitor have?

A solicitor can be in the office, answering the telephone, seeing clients, drafting letters and technical documents, conducting negotiations, going out to court to defend clients,

inspecting properties and visiting other solicitors for meetings.

What type of person should a solicitor be?

Solicitors should be:

- ◆ Responsible and trustworthy as they are often entrusted with very confidential information and with clients' funds.
- ◆ Able to think clearly, get to the root of a problem and quickly recognise what is important as well as being able to express themselves accurately and clearly in writing and in speech.
- ◆ Able to deal with several matters at once. There will be deadlines to meet, telephone calls to answer and clients arriving in the office unexpectedly.
- ◆ Able to think quickly and clearly to answer, for example, points being raised by the opposing solicitor or the judge in court.
- ◆ Interested in people as those who come to them will often have problems and difficulties. Clients may be under great stress and solicitors have to listen patiently and bring matters to a sympathetic conclusion. They need a wide range of knowledge and understanding of people.

Do I need any additional skills?

In addition to legal knowledge, you must remember that a solicitor in private practice is essentially self-employed and faces responsibilities attached to running a business. It will be helpful in dealing with matters such as staff, premises, accounts, equipment and office systems if you are a good manager. In very large firms of solicitors there is often an office manager or a managing partner, but for most solicitors the responsibility of managing the practice and ensuring it complies with Law Society rules falls on their own shoulders.

What can I do if I don't wish to enter private practice?

There has been a growing trend over the last twenty years for large corporations, companies and public bodies to employ “in-house” solicitors or legal advisors. Good career opportunities exist for solicitors who wish to enter this field.

The ability to work as part of a multi-disciplinary team and to judge what is best done in or out of house is very important.

The scope for working in a variety of organisations is immense as can be seen from the opportunities listed overleaf.