

AUT

A FUTURE IN
LAW





A LAW CAREER

For many people, the words 'law' and 'lawyers' conjure up images of popular television series like *Rake*, *The Good Wife*, *Silk*, or *Law and Order*. Often it is this kind of influence that gives us our first impression of law as a career. However, television shows are not always very accurate in their portrayal of law practice and do not depict the full range of options available for those with law qualifications.

Traditional legal practice areas include commercial/corporate law, property, banking and finance, litigation and tax, crime, family law and many specialisations within these. Alternatively, many graduates use their law degree to build careers outside of legal practice, in a wide variety of industries and employment sectors. Today, the law degree is increasingly regarded as much a generalist degree as a specific degree for legal practice.

Do you enjoy reading, listening and debating? Are you able to communicate arguments clearly and concisely using reason and logic? Are you interested in law, society and solving problems that arise in all forms of human interaction? Are you motivated by a sense of justice and a desire to help others? If so, a career in law could be just the thing for you.

OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

Employment in the legal profession in New Zealand is growing steadily. Growth of over 1% per annum is predicted to continue until at least 2021. However, competition for positions can be intense, particularly for new graduates.

Source: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

Lawyers with corporate and commercial experience are in demand for boutique, medium-sized and large firms. Experienced banking and finance solicitors are especially required in major law firms. There is also demand for solicitors with insurance litigation and construction experience.

Source: Hays Recruitment

A popular option for New Zealand graduates is to work for a few years locally and then head overseas for two or three years before returning. The majority go to the UK, however countries such as Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore and the Middle East (Dubai in particular) also provide good opportunities.

smaller suburban firm it is necessary to be more of a jack of all trades, encompassing areas such as family relationships, wills, family trusts, minor criminal law matters and road traffic offences.

- **Barrister chambers**
A barrister's work is more court-orientated than that of a solicitor. Barristers appear and conduct proceedings in court and write opinions about contested legal matters.
- **In-house counsel/legal departments**
Working in the legal section of a large corporate or commercial organisation (eg banking and finance, insurance, mining, accountancy, educational or government). Positions such as in-house counsel will entail general commercial work, contracts, and compliance with regulations.

Specialisations are possible in areas such as commercial, civil, family, criminal, resource management, international, public, environmental, intellectual property, labour, biotechnology, e-commerce, property, sports, insurance and taxation.

OUTSIDE OF PRIVATE LEGAL PRACTICE

There are a vast range of employment opportunities within other industries and employment sectors outside of private legal practice.

Public service employment in legal and law related areas

- **Law, justice and regulation**
Crown Law Office, Ministry of Justice, Attorney-General's Department, Ombudsman, Law Commission, Serious Fraud Office, Chief Censor's Office, Medical Disciplinary Tribunal, Coroner's Office.
- **Trade, industry, commerce**
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Treasury, Public Trust Office, Inland Revenue Department, Office of the Banking Ombudsman, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Labour, Ministry of Fisheries.
- **Society, people, environment**
Te Puni Kokiri, Human Rights Commission, Children's Commissioner, Health and Disability Commissioner, Office of Treaty Settlements, Ministry of Health, Department of Conservation, ACC.
- **Government and defence**
Local Government, Parliament, Ministry of Defence.

International public service employers in legal and law related areas

United Nations, War Claims Tribunals, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, International Labour Organisation, International Criminal Court, Humanitarian Organisations, and NGOs.

WORK SETTINGS

In New Zealand, a lawyer automatically qualifies to practise as both a barrister and solicitor and can switch between the roles and act in both capacities as required.

Initially graduates may gain roles as law clerks or, once they have completed the Professional Legal Studies Course, as graduate solicitors. Career progression in a law firm usually involves starting as a staff solicitor before progressing to associate and partnership roles.

Some smaller and medium sized law firms are reluctant to employ new graduates because of the resources involved in training them – such firms prefer to recruit people with about two years post-graduation experience and rely on the larger firms to do the training.

Graduates who miss out on positions in the larger major city firms are advised to seek positions in the provinces, where the firms sometimes struggle to find staff. After gaining experience in a provincial law firm it can be easier to find a job in the main centres.

CAREER OPTIONS IN PRIVATE LEGAL PRACTICE

- **Law firms**
In a large firm, solicitors are able to specialise and will usually be rotated around different departments (e.g. commercial, litigation, employment). In a medium or

Knowledge economy opportunities

Roles involving patent attorney work, law and scientific development and research, law in the Genome Project, environmental impact (GE and the law) work, cloning (legal implications)

Private commercial sector

Legal or non-legal (e.g. executive or management) roles in large companies involved in banking and finance, insurance, mining, and accountancy services.

Academic

Universities, polytechnics and high schools – teaching and research.

Other possibilities

Many graduates complete a conjoint or double degree, opening up yet more career paths. Examples include journalism, legal publishing, banking, investment, accounting and finance, public relations, consultancy, diplomacy, and arts and creative technologies.

SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

Skills

- Think critically and apply problem solving skills to recognise, analyse, evaluate and resolve legal issues
- Apply logical reasoning, evidence-based and rational argument and outcome-orientated negotiation
- Communicate appropriately and accurately both orally and in writing
- Use current technologies and effective research strategies to retrieve, evaluate and apply legal information and other material
- Work effectively and productively alone and in a team.

Knowledge

- A detailed understanding of legal rules and principles and the mechanisms through which they evolve
- Ability to seek out answers to practical legal problems when presented
- Knowledge of New Zealand laws and the legal system and courthouse and tribunals procedure.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Sensitive to diverse people and work environments
- Possess a sense of community and professional responsibility
- Able to identify and offer appropriate solutions to ethical dilemmas
- Think logically and find appropriate solutions under pressure

SALARY GUIDE

	Salary (per year)
1 year after graduation	\$40,000 – \$70,000
2 years after	\$43,000 – \$80,000
5 years after	\$65,000 – \$120,000
Senior/partner roles	\$85,000 – \$150,000+

Sources: NZ Law Society Momentum Legal Salary Survey 2012; Robert Walters Global Salary Survey 2014; NZ Census 2013, MBIE.

Salary range is indicative of the New Zealand job market at the time of publication and should only be used as a guideline. For more detailed information, visit: www.nzlawyer magazine.co.nz/news/how-does-your-salary-compare-183768.aspx

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

To work as a lawyer in New Zealand, you need:

- An approved Bachelor of Laws degree (LLB)
- To complete the Professional Legal Studies Course
- A certificate of character from the New Zealand Law Society
- Admission to the roll of barristers and solicitors of the High Court of New Zealand
- A current practising certificate issued by the New Zealand Law Society.

THE AUT ADVANTAGE

AUT's law degree is based on student engagement and designed to develop student capabilities in communication, problem solving and interpersonal skills, as well as academic learning.

The practical application of law underpins the AUT LLB; students gain experience at putting theory into practice, eg preparing submissions, drafting legal opinions seeking to solve practically based legal problems, memoranda, and other commercial documents.

FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Further study in law is available at postgraduate level, including an honour's year, Postgraduate Certificate in Law, Master of Laws, Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy. Research areas include fraud, copyright, international law, taxation, cross lease and unit title issues etc.



CHARLIE PIHO

Solicitor, Kensington Swan

Bachelor of Laws (Honours)

“My work in the litigation team involves both general and health and safety litigation. This includes legal research, drafting opinions, drafting pleadings, and assisting clients through health and safety investigations and prosecutions.

I enjoy finding practical and/or novel solutions to complex legal issues. The challenge is having the persistence and perseverance throughout this process to consider all viable options, and do this in a timely fashion. I also get great satisfaction in advocating for others and helping people with their problems.

One of the main reasons I chose law for my career is the challenge and my goal is to be an exceptional litigator. I love competing and striving for the best result, which seems essential to success in this field.”

EMPLOYER COMMENT

“We look for young lawyers who have good academic records, live well-balanced lives, are prepared to work hard, and are determined to learn and improve. These characteristics are not quite enough though. Graduates also need to show the potential to interact well with clients and to develop client relationships.

Charlie is driven to succeed. He is always looking for opportunities to learn and to develop his skill set. He is curious, hard-working, and very able.

My tips for students and graduates? Work hard because a good academic record can help you to get a start in law. Be curious and interested and you will learn more and deliver a better quality of service to clients. Don't specialise too soon; learn as much as possible about the different areas of law and how they intersect.”

David Campbell

Partner, Kensington Swan, Auckland

USEFUL WEBSITES

New Zealand Law Society

www.lawsociety.org.nz

Auckland District Law Society

www.adls.org.nz

NZ Lawyer


www.nzlawyermagazine.co.nz

FURTHER INFORMATION

For the most up-to-date information on the study of law, visit our website: www.aut.ac.nz/law

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For other Future Career Sheets visit:


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For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through <https://elab.aut.ac.nz/>


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The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, August 2019.

