

*Discover New Horizons*

# A GUIDE TO WORKING IN



THE UNITED KINGDOM

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# THE UNITED KINGDOM

## LONDON

London's historical background as the centre for common law and its pre-eminent position in the global financial markets has led it to be described as the "legal capital of the world". In recent years it has become an unrivalled center of business, politics and culture. It is now the most cosmopolitan city in the world with over 300 languages being spoken and is serviced by five international airports.

It draws lawyers from all over the globe who seek the experience of working in a global and dynamic environment with excellent career prospects and the chance to live in one of the worlds true "great" cities.

### KEY FIRMS

All the major international law firms are represented in London and can loosely be defined as follow:

The "**Magic Circle**" firms are seen as the elite UK law firms and consist of the following five firms:

- Allen & Overy
- Clifford Chance
- Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer
- Linklaters
- Slaughter & May

The "**Silver Circle**" firms are those considered the leading UK firms outside of the top five and are made up of the following:

- Ashurst
- Herbert Smith
- Lovells
- Macfarlanes
- Norton Rose
- Simmons & Simmons
- SJ Berwin
- Travers Smith



Capital:	London
Population:	60m
GDP:	\$1 384 823m
Currency:	£ (Pound Sterling)



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The UK leading law firms which have a strong national and in some cases international presence:

- Addleshaw Goddard
- Barlow Lyde & Gilbert
- Beachcroft
- Berwin Leighton Paisner
- Bird & Bird
- CMS Cameron Mckenna
- Clyde & Co
- Denton Wilde Sapte
- DLA Piper
- Eversheds
- Hammonds
- Nabarro
- Olswang
- Pinsent Masons
- Wragge & Co


## US FIRMS IN LONDON

The past year saw continued growth across the London offices of the US firms which is expected to increase. In particular, there is an ongoing trend of growth both in terms of size and also practice area coverage. Firms who were already operating full service offices in

London have, and will, continue to actively recruit into those existing practice areas.

Below are some of the leading US law firms in London:

- Baker & McKenzie
- Cadwalader Wickersham & Taft
- Cleary Gottlieb
- Dechert
- Dewey & LeBoeuf
- Debevoise & Plimpton
- Jones Day
- Kirkland & Ellis
- Kirkpatrick & Lockhart
- Latham & Watkins
- Mayer Brown
- McDermott Will & Emery
- Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe
- Reed Smith Richards Butler
- Shearman & Sterling
- Sidley Austin
- Simpson Thatcher Bartlett
- Skadden Arps
- Sullivan & Cromwell
- Weil Gotshal
- White & Case



There are an increasing number of US firms moving towards a full service presence by supplementing their existing corporate and finance practices with capabilities in areas such as Real Estate, Pensions, IP/ IT and Commercial Disputes. These trends mean the recent buoyancy in recruitment into US firms will continue to benefit strong candidates of all levels in the market.

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## REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS - UK Firms

Salaries in London are highly competitive with lawyers remunerated exceptionally well. The highest salaries are paid by the US firms in London paying New York rates (see page 5). The leading UK firms' salaries typically start at approximately £65,000 for the NQ level. The top rate of tax in the UK is currently 40%.

The standard annual leave allowance in the UK is 25 days and this can increase with service. New York firms do tend to offer less holiday at c.20 days. The leading firms generally always offer such benefits as health, pension and life assurance with some firms offering subsidized gym membership.

Please note South African lawyers can often expect their PQE to be reduced by approximately 6-12 months, depending on the law firm's assessment of the relevancy of their experience.

### MAGIC CIRCLE / LARGE CITY FIRMS

Newly Qualified	£65,000-£75,000
1 year	£75,000-£85,000
2 years	£80,000-£90,000
3 years	£85,000-£95,000
4 years	£92,000-£102,000
5 years	£87,000-£110,000

### MID-SIZED CITY FIRMS

Newly Qualified	£48,000-£60,000
1 year	£52,000-£64,000
2 years	£57,000-£68,000
3 years	£63,000-£71,000
4 years	£66,000-£76,000
5 years	£70,000-£84,000



### Further Benefits - UK Firms

- 95% of firms pay bonuses in London
- 86% of firms have a dress down day.
- 32% of firms are permanently dressed down.
- 90% of firms have a probationary period for new joiners, with 42% of firms this period is 3 months and for 58% of firms this period is 6 months.
- 88% of firms offer a relocation package for lawyers moving to London from abroad
- There are opportunities with 94% of firms to go on secondment to clients
- There are opportunities with 52% of firms to go on secondment to overseas offices



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## REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS - US Firms

Most US law firms in London either pay New York rates or 'Mid Atlantic' rates. The New York rates are expressed here in sterling but it should be noted that some firms fix their exchange rates and convert dollar salaries to pounds accordingly. Many of the US firms review salaries in January.

### NEW YORK RATES

Newly Qualified	£75,000-£95,000
1 year	£85,000-£105,000
2 years	£90,000-£115,000
3 years	£105,000-£130,000
4 years	£110,000-£140,000
5 years	£120,000-£150,000

### MID ATLANTIC RATES

Newly Qualified	£65,000-£80,000
1 year	£72,000-£85,000
2 years	£82,000-£90,000
3 years	£92,000-£94,000
4 years	£102,000-£104,000
5 years	£110,000-£120,000



### Further Benefits - US Firms

98% of firms pay bonuses in London  
 30% of firms have a dress down day.  
 34% of firms are permanently dressed down.  
 86% of firms have a probationary period for new joiners,  
 for 44% of firms this period is 3 months and for 56% of firms this period is 6 months.  
 90% of firms offer a relocation package for lawyers moving to London from Overseas.  
 There are opportunities with 88% of firms to go on secondment to clients.  
 There are opportunities with 82% of firms to go on secondment to overseas offices.

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## AREAS OF EXPERIENCE IN DEMAND

London is home to most of the major International Banks, Corporations and Multinationals and its growing international importance is reflected in the work that is the most complex, exciting and cutting edge deals conceivable.

## WORKING IN THE UK

The following options will enable you to work in the UK:

- European Passport
- Company Sponsorship
- Highly Skilled Migrant Visa

Currently, most top tier law firms in London are sponsoring South African lawyers to work for their firms and there are very few instances where sponsorship has been refused. Prior to arriving your prospective employer will apply for the work permit on your behalf to the Home Office. Once the application has been approved, a work permit is issued and sent to you. It must then be presented to the immigration authorities upon entry into the country and your passport stamped accordingly.



The areas that are currently in demand are as follows:

- Corporate/M&A
- Finance - Leveraged/Asset/Project
- Banking
- Capital Markets
- Construction
- Energy
- Property - Property Finance



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Alternatively, the Highly Skilled Migrant Visa is designed to allow skilled people to migrate to the United Kingdom to look for work or self-employment opportunities. The highly skilled migrant programme is different from the work permit scheme because a UK job offer is not required to apply.

The HSMP is a points-based immigration scheme. You will need to obtain a minimum of 75 points from the following five:

- Points for age if you are under 32 years of age
- Educational qualifications (including MBA Provision)
- UK degree level or professional level qualification
- Previous earnings
- UK work experience

Initially the HSMP visa will be granted for a period of two years. After the initial two years people on the scheme can apply to stay longer but must re-apply and meet the pass mark of 75 points. The visa will then be extended for a further three years. On completion of the total five years you can also make an application for indefinite leave to remain (permanent residency).

Please see the HSMV calculator at:

[http://www.workpermit.com/uk/highly\\_skilled\\_migrant\\_program.htm](http://www.workpermit.com/uk/highly_skilled_migrant_program.htm)



## Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test

In order for South African lawyers to qualify as Solicitors of England and Wales, they are required to successfully complete the QLTT. Typically, South African lawyers are required to sit 3 elements of the QLTT - Property; Professional Conduct & Accounts and Common Law. Most top tier law firms in London will sponsor newly hired South African lawyers to complete the QLTT.

[www.qltt.co.uk](http://www.qltt.co.uk)

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