

The image features a red circular graphic in the top left corner containing the text 'Origin LEGAL'. The background is a photograph of a cable-stayed bridge at dusk, with a prominent red arch on the left and a red diagonal beam on the right. The bridge's cables are visible against a dark blue sky with scattered clouds. The city lights and the bridge's reflection are visible in the water below.

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**Solicitors Qualifying in 2019**  
THE MARKET FOR NEWLY QUALIFIED SOLICITORS

# 2019 NQ Recruitment

## – knowledge provides opportunity

Are you an NQ solicitor or approaching qualification? If so, then this is an unmissable guide – shedding light on topics including the current legal market, qualifying and practicing offshore, Brexit, data protection, the recruitment process and more.

Read on for advice, tips and things you should consider to set yourself on the right path for your long term legal career.

### BACKGROUND AND BREXIT

On reflection 2018 was yet another year where the candidate was in the box seat. The 2018 cohort had a wide range of options alongside very high retention rates. Some law firms successfully retained 100% of their 2016 intake of trainees. If year on year trends follow then we should have between 6,000 and 7,000 more NQ solicitors admitted to the roll in 2019. We now have a record number of UK qualified solicitors at 146,000 and that figure is expected to reach almost 150,000 in 2019.

### “Wide range of options alongside very high retention rates”

2019 is the year of Brexit. No one can be certain of its impact on the legal profession. Keith Blakemore, Senior economist for the Law Society Research Unit\*, however, has suggested these main features in his most recent forecasts:

- “UK legal services look to have been relatively buoyant through 2017-18, due to a combination of Brexit-related work, steady demand from UK businesses and

an increase in work from non-UK clients taking advantage of the depreciation of the pound.

### “2019 is the year for Brexit”

- However, Brexit is likely to have a significant negative effect on the legal sector in the medium and longer term. This is largely due to the knock-on impact of Brexit on the wider economy as demand for legal services is mainly a derived demand.



\* <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/research-trends/legal-services-sector-forecasts/>

## BACKGROUND AND BREXIT (CONT.)

- Our econometric model predicts 2.2% average annual growth from 2019-2025 with a soft Brexit. This drops to just 1.5% with 'harder' Brexit such as a Canada-type free trade agreement".

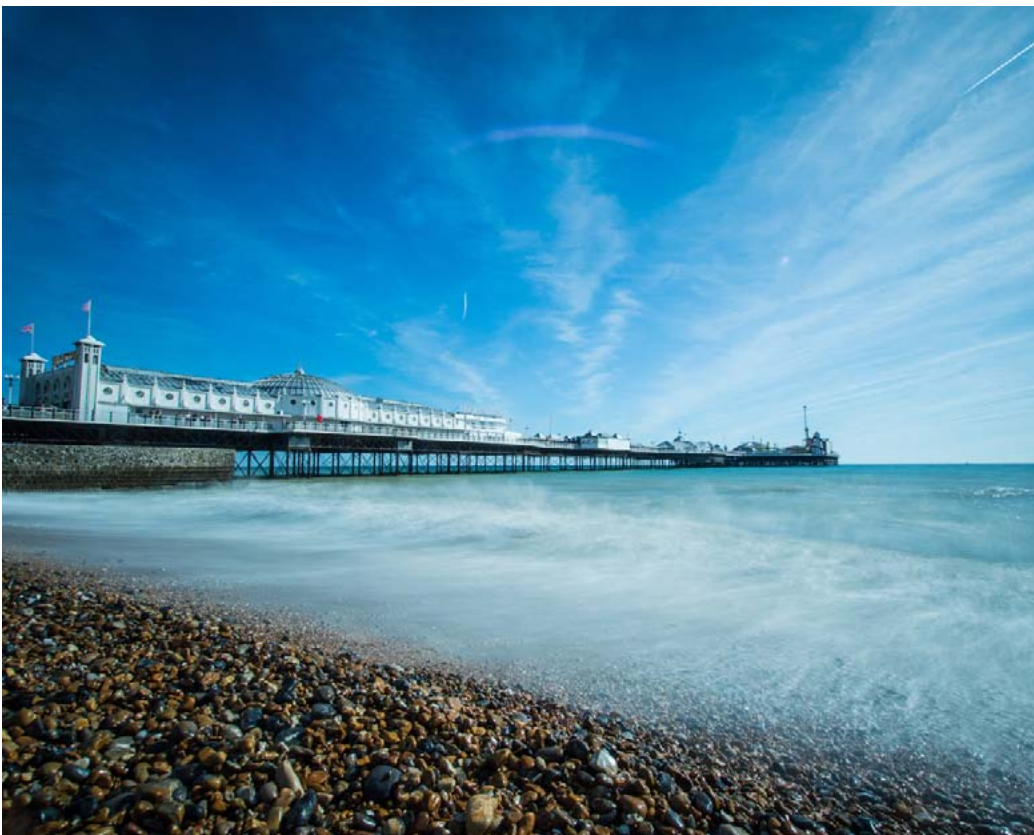
Translating this forecast into recruitment predictions for 2019 is complicated but we are expecting an increase in opportunity within areas such as Regulatory, Compliance, Data Protection, State aid and commercial contracts and agreements. 2018 has been very consistent for Corporate, Real Estate, and Commercial Litigation. Good candidates haven't struggled to secure the role they want in the City, regionally or Internationally.

At the time of writing, the 2019 market has yet to start but certainly clients are planning ahead and many are already interested in meeting with March / April NQs. We expect firms will want to see candidates early in the year again opening the possibility of transferring

training contracts. The consistency in predicted work levels should allow law firms to get their recruitment strategy in place, however we would expect these plans to be tweaked should Brexit have a sudden impact.

Law firms continue to structure their internal recruitment processes slightly earlier than in previous years. Some firms are better than others at running these processes but with some firms retaining 100% of trainees, interviews are taking place internally as early as March and April.

This in itself presents problems as it coincides with the time you should be starting your final seat. If your 4th seat is your chosen legal area this can present some issues at both internal and external interviews due to a lack of technical, sector knowledge, and a lack of training in the subject. At this time interview tips and technique are important to secure a position (check out our Resources on interview techniques).



## QUALIFYING TODAY – MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

As you approach qualification it is important not just to think about the role you want immediately in law but your long-term aspirations within the profession.

The final year of your training contract is a time to really analyse what you want. Some of the questions you should ask yourself:

- What type of law do I want to practice?
- Do I want to work in-house, offshore or progress to partnership in the UK?
- Do I want to start my career regionally and then move to London?
- Am I suited to a more client facing role?
- Does my current firm provide the training and quality of work I need to reach my goals?
- Do I have an interest in a particular sector?
- Can I relocate, do I want to relocate?
- Am I the type of person who is good at the marketing and business development side of a legal position?
- What type of law firm best suits my style of working?

Having assessed who you are and what you want from your career, it is a great idea to sharpen your focus on your options in order to start your career in a forward gear. We always recommend you try to secure double seats

during your training if you have decided on your area early. This will help give you greater experience in your chosen discipline.

NQ solicitor jobs both internally and externally are always very competitive. To give you the marginal gains to beat other candidates we encourage trainees to try and make a wider impact during their training.

Perhaps get involved in local young solicitors, business groups or even better create and become president of one. Look for ways to be innovative within the boundaries of your training firm. Make an effort to join marketing committees, chambers of commerce and local forums. Create a social media presence with a good LinkedIn profile and try to share and post as much good quality content as possible. Get involved in your final year as this will make an impact on your interview processes in 2019.

**“Look for ways to be innovative and stand out from the crowd”**



## INTERNATIONAL



Internationally, demand for NQ solicitors is highest in the Channel Islands offices of the global offshore law firms. A buoyant market combined with a relatively low level of internal trainees means there are plenty of opportunities for Corporate, Banking, Funds and Commercial Litigation NQ solicitors. This has led to firms beginning their hiring process earlier, with some of the larger ones expected to start interviews as early as February for September 2019 qualifiers.

Expectations are high so the firms do look for strong training in a good commercial law firm but opportunities here are not limited to those with big-City credentials. Trainees at top national or regional firms are often successful in securing roles which offer a clear route to high salaries and international work without the drawbacks of life in the City.

Elsewhere, a limited number of NQ roles

come up with international firms in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. They do tend to be heavily sought after so typically, training with a City or International law firm will be expected, but for high-demand practice areas with less City bias such as TMT/IP or construction there may be room for compromise.

Vacancies in these locations are more ad-hoc and less predictable so it pays to register your interest early. They will typically come to the market later however, perhaps May/June for September qualifiers, since many firms will have to consider their own trainees before looking externally.

For more information on international opportunities for junior lawyers, ask us for a copy of our Guide to Building an International Legal Career or download a copy in the Resources section of our website [www.originlegal.co.uk](http://www.originlegal.co.uk)

**“Very much enjoying the firm...and the work is of great quality, so very happy here”**

Corporate NQ, Jersey (Ex-City Trainee)

## QUALIFYING TODAY – TIMELINE AND CHOOSING A RECRUITER

### January / February 2019

You will by now have engaged with recruiters through LinkedIn, social media, referrals from friends. Check their profile and see if their skills and experiences match the requirements for your career. Check your chosen recruiter's recommendations on LinkedIn and seek good personal recommendations from friends and fellow solicitors who have been through the NQ process.

It is okay to speak with previous year trainees to find out who they would recommend and choose a recruiter who has proven experience in advising NQs in your chosen area/location and sector.

It is very important to control your recruitment process. Limit the amount of places you send your CV and maintain a firm control on who has access to your CV.

Try to start discussions with your current firm about your final seat. Investigate if you can make that seat work for you and your chosen practice area on qualification. As mentioned earlier if you are really focused on a certain area of law try to create a situation where you can practice a double seat.

At this time work with your recruiter to produce a strong CV that is tailored to the positions that you are targeting. Consider including a profile that highlights your motivations and career ambitions. Also consider who you will use as referees and make sure that your academic certificates are accessible in case they are needed. Also ramp up your professional social media activity and raise your profile both online and within your local community.

### March / April / May

At this point start to investigate internal applications. Opportunities should start to be opened and discussed and your partner and principles should be in a position to identify 2019 vacancies. At this stage it is good to start making applications and attend interviews. Get some detailed interview coaching and support from your recruitment consultant. Try to think of ways to get marginal gains on other candidates to secure the position you want.

### June/July

If you have not secured a position in your chosen location / discipline continue to keep a watching eye on your local market. This is also the time to widen the search into different geographical areas or a second choice discipline.

### August

If you are still available in August widen your search with recruiters to ensure you are visible for when those final September positions are released. Open yourself to Opportunities on LinkedIn.

### September

Start your new position.

For a confidential conversation about the NQ market please contact the team at Origin Legal by telephone on +44 (0)1206 233500 or email us at [enquiries@originlegal.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@originlegal.co.uk).



## CURRENT VACANCIES

Origin Legal offers a comprehensive legal recruitment service to candidates and clients encompassing all levels across all disciplines. For details of current vacancies visit <http://www.originlegal.co.uk/jobs>

- Private Practice
- International
- Paralegal and Support Services
- Legal HR
- In House



## THE AUTHOR

Jason Nottage has been recruiting across the regions for 20 years and having joined Origin Legal as a Director shortly after its launch. An extremely loyal recruiter Jason has developed a strong client following particularly in the Midlands and Northern Home Counties. Jason has a strong passion for NQ recruitment and has a positive attitude to helping young solicitors find the best opportunities at the start of their career.

## CONTACT

Origin Legal is recognised as one of the UK's leading providers of legal jobs at all levels for lawyers, legal executives, solicitors and paralegals.

To find out more about the NQ Market, discuss your options or to register an interest, please contact the team at Origin Legal on +44 (0)1206 233500:

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All approaches are treated in the utmost confidence and no details are ever released to any of our clients without the candidates advance approval. You can view more resources via our website [www.originlegal.co.uk](http://www.originlegal.co.uk)

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