



Writing a CV – Advice for NQ Lawyers seeking an international move.

Writing a CV.

ADVICE FOR NQ LAWYERS SEEKING AN INTERNATIONAL MOVE

Good CV's, and bad, come in all shapes and sizes, and if you ask ten people for advice, they will likely give you ten different answers. One thing is certain though, having a great CV can make the difference in a competitive market, whilst getting it wrong may mean you never get the opportunity to dazzle in person.

There is no right or wrong format for a CV but it should follow a consistent pattern and use a layout that gives maximum exposure to your strengths and promotes the most relevant aspects of your CV. Below we outline some key tips and provide a template which we find works well for NQ's who are seeking an international or offshore move.

BASICS

Use a standard font. The legal world is not noted for being at the cutting edge of graphic design so keep it simple - Arial, Times New Roman, Verdana, Calibri are all safe bets.

Attention to detail. Make sure that the font, font size, paragraph spacing, use of bolds, underlines and italics and bullet points are all used consistently throughout your CV.

Length. Two or three pages should usually suffice for an NQ/junior lawyer but if your experience really merits more, include it. One page is almost always too short though.

Protect the white space. Avoid the temptation to 'shorten' a CV by reducing the font size or spacing. 'Readability' is vital when a Partner may be viewing many applications alongside yours.

Contact Details. Include your mobile and email address on your CV. You don't want a busy HR, dealing with multiple applicants, having to search their inbox for your message in order to call you.

TAILORING YOUR CV TO AN INTERNATIONAL MOVE

Reference overseas experience. A big part of the interview process for an offshore or international role will surround the 'personal fit'. How are you going to adapt to living away from home? Will you miss your family and friends too much? Are you able to assimilate into a different community or culture? Previous experience of living or working overseas, even if it was an extended period of travelling, is well worth including on your CV.

Adaptability. On a professional level, many international roles involve working in a smaller team and taking on more responsibility across a broader range of work. International and offshore firms value people who cope well with things outside of their comfort zone and who thrive on responsibility. Think of examples of this in your training contract and be sure to highlight them in your CV.

Communication skills. Similarly, few international or offshore firms look for 'backroom' lawyers. You will almost certainly be dealing with clients in your new role and a confident personality will serve you well. Reference any client facing or business development experience that you have had as a trainee.

Commitment. Naturally you will want to keep your options open on qualification so nobody would be surprised to hear that you are also looking at roles closer to home. However, an international move is a big commitment and firms want to see this reflected in your application so perhaps draft a different CV for your domestic applications.

TEMPLATE

CV of

Email:

Mobile:

LinkedIn Profile:

Profile

Summarise (a third to half page) your experience and show how it fits the role. Consider referencing:

- Your chosen practice area and drawing attention to relevant experience as a trainee;
- Any stand-out Commercial, Business Development and Client facing skills/experience;
- Previous experience of living or working overseas; any prior exposure to the target market;
- Only exceptional academic or extracurricular achievements;
- What you are looking for in a new role and why an offshore/international move attracts you;
- Avoid excessive repetition of detail from the following CV.

Education and Qualifications

- Legal admission(s) including month, year and jurisdiction;
- Academic and professional studies in reverse order, most recent first back to GCSE/equivalent;
- Include dates (month and year), institution, location, studies and overall results;
- Where relevant, indicate 'equivalent grades' (e.g. GPA 63% equivalent to a UK 2.1);
- Keep detail of individual modules to a minimum;
- Brief mention of awards, prizes, scholarships;
- Include fluent or near fluent languages (if multilingual this may merit a dedicated section).

Legal Employment

Training Contract

- Detail your training contract including dates (month and year), firm, location(s) and seats;
- Seats should be listed in order of relevance not chronologically;
- Devote space according to relevance. E.g. ten bullet points for the directly relevant seat, five bullet points for a partially relevant seat and a couple for an irrelevant seat;
- Avoid repetition of duties; a summary of your duties and then a list of matters works better;
- Outline areas where your experience has been exceptional such as large amounts of responsibility or active involvement in business development;
- Consider using any short, positive quotes from your appraisals or supervising partners.

Paralegal

- For lengthy periods of time in particularly relevant paralegal roles, include a similar level of detail to that for a relevant training seat.
- For short term roles or less relevant practice areas a short description should suffice.
- Outline any particularly strong transferable skills that have subsequently served you well.

Internships/Work experience:

- Bullet point list should suffice – you need only include dates, firm, location and practice area.

Additional Information

Adapt as required, the following headings are optional and should only be included if relevant.

Non-Legal Work experience

- For relevant or lengthy roles, include a summary, otherwise a bullet point list will suffice;
- Where including non-legal experience, draw on relevant transferable skills;
- Part-time jobs whilst studying, unless making a material difference, need not be included.

Voluntary Work

- Particularly emphasising pro-bono legal work.

Published Articles; Public Speaking/Seminars

- Title, date, relevant chapter etc.;
- Event, date, contribution.

Memberships

- Industry or legal group memberships for example.

Awards

- Academic and/or professional awards; scholarships; recommendations.

Interests

- Keep it short and consider whether relevant.

CV gaps

- If you have taken time out to travel for example, it can be useful to reference it here.

FAQ'S

- **Should I include references?** If you have a brilliant written reference, include an excerpt in your profile or attach it to your CV as an appendix, but we wouldn't provide a list of referees unless you want them to be contacted.
- **Should I name clients I have worked for?** Where you can, if they are household names, then yes. If the matters are confidential just describe them instead – e.g. *'Advised a global financial services institution on...'*
- **How do I ensure my CV is not distributed without my approval?** At Origin Legal we never distribute anybody's details without their advance approval. If approaching other agencies, specify clearly at the outset something along the lines of: *'Please note that I do not consent for my CV to be released without my written approval'*.
- **Should I include details of my gap year?** Any gap on your CV is likely to raise questions so yes, we would recommend including it in the *Other Information* section. Some detail is good but avoid a full itinerary!
- **I'm not sure which practice area I want, how should I reflect this on my CV?** Quite simply, don't. Draft multiple CV's to cover all the different practice areas that you are open to considering.
- **Should I reference NQ offers with my current firm?** If you have been offered a role on qualification, mention it. If there weren't any suitable roles you could address that in your profile. Otherwise, no, address it on interview.

OTHER RESOURCES

We produce a comprehensive suite of resources to assist you in your international move. Check the resources page of our website for more advice on your CV (including a template), interviews and guides to many of the key markets where opportunities exist.

CONTACT

For more advice on CV preparation or to discuss any aspect of your international job search, please get in touch:

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