

## THE STUDY OF LAW

### Lead-in

The study of law differs from country to country, but most law degree programmes<sup>1</sup> include **core** (compulsory) subjects which all students must take. Which core courses are typical in your country? How long does it take to complete a law degree?

### Reading 1: A career in law

1 Read the text below and answer these questions.

- 1 Which courses do law students in the UK have to take?
- 2 Which optional courses might a student who wants to work in a big law firm take?

The study of law is intellectually stimulating and challenging, and can lead to a variety of interesting careers.

In the UK and the USA, law degree programmes usually take three years to complete. In the UK, these programmes typically include core subjects such as **criminal law**, contract law, tort law, **land law**, **equity and trusts**, **administrative law** and **constitutional law**. In addition, students are often required to take courses covering skills such as legal writing and legal research.

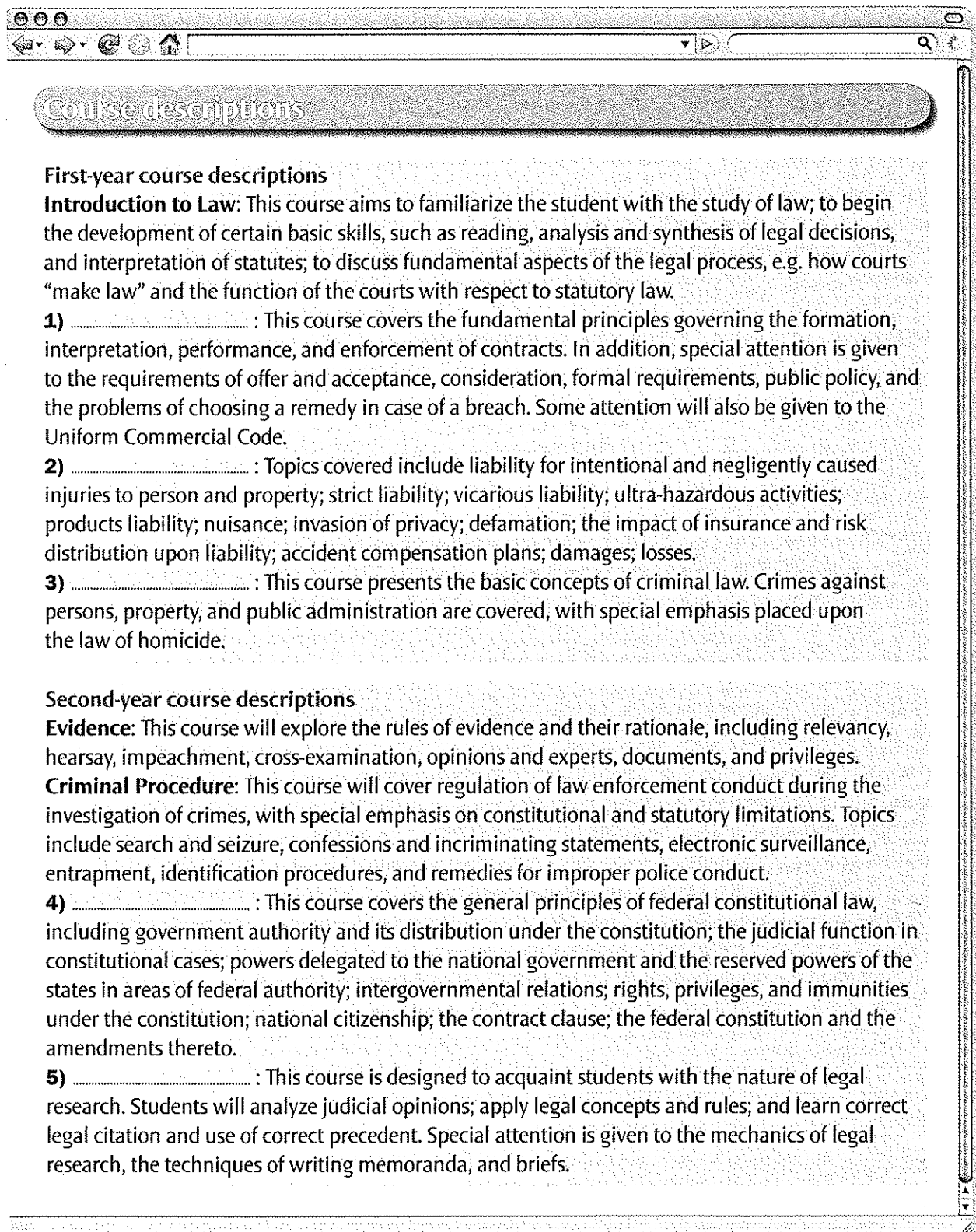
There is also a variety of optional (elective) courses available. Since many law students go on to become lawyers, students often take courses that will be useful to them during their future careers. Someone wishing to run a small **partnership** or to work alone as a **sole practitioner** in a small town may decide to take subjects such as **family law**, **employment law** and **housing law**. Those wishing to work in a large **law practice** will consider subjects such as **company law**, **commercial law** and **litigation and arbitration**.

Many universities also offer courses on legal practice. Courses like this give students the opportunity to experience the work of a lawyer before deciding on a career in the law. Another way of finding out more about law in practice is to get involved with a voluntary advice centre or **law clinic**. These clinics offer free **legal assistance** to the local community and provide a useful introduction to some of the day-to-day work of a lawyer.

For students wishing to work in a commercial practice, knowledge of foreign languages is essential. When **law firms** hire new recruits, they generally look at four things: education, personality, work experience and language ability. Since English is the language of the international legal community, law firms increasingly expect graduates to have a good command of English.

<sup>1</sup> (US) programs

- 6 Quickly read the law course descriptions taken from a university website. Ignore the gaps for now. Do you think this university is in the UK? Why (not)?



The image shows a screenshot of a web browser window. The browser's address bar is empty, and the page title is "Course descriptions". The page content is organized into two main sections: "First-year course descriptions" and "Second-year course descriptions".

**First-year course descriptions**

**Introduction to Law:** This course aims to familiarize the student with the study of law; to begin the development of certain basic skills, such as reading, analysis and synthesis of legal decisions, and interpretation of statutes; to discuss fundamental aspects of the legal process, e.g. how courts "make law" and the function of the courts with respect to statutory law.

**1)** ..... : This course covers the fundamental principles governing the formation, interpretation, performance, and enforcement of contracts. In addition, special attention is given to the requirements of offer and acceptance, consideration, formal requirements, public policy, and the problems of choosing a remedy in case of a breach. Some attention will also be given to the Uniform Commercial Code.

**2)** ..... : Topics covered include liability for intentional and negligently caused injuries to person and property; strict liability; vicarious liability; ultra-hazardous activities; products liability; nuisance; invasion of privacy; defamation; the impact of insurance and risk distribution upon liability; accident compensation plans; damages; losses.

**3)** ..... : This course presents the basic concepts of criminal law. Crimes against persons, property, and public administration are covered, with special emphasis placed upon the law of homicide.

**Second-year course descriptions**

**Evidence:** This course will explore the rules of evidence and their rationale, including relevancy, hearsay, impeachment, cross-examination, opinions and experts, documents, and privileges.

**Criminal Procedure:** This course will cover regulation of law enforcement conduct during the investigation of crimes, with special emphasis on constitutional and statutory limitations. Topics include search and seizure, confessions and incriminating statements, electronic surveillance, entrapment, identification procedures, and remedies for improper police conduct.

**4)** ..... : This course covers the general principles of federal constitutional law, including government authority and its distribution under the constitution; the judicial function in constitutional cases; powers delegated to the national government and the reserved powers of the states in areas of federal authority; intergovernmental relations; rights, privileges, and immunities under the constitution; national citizenship; the contract clause; the federal constitution and the amendments thereto.

**5)** ..... : This course is designed to acquaint students with the nature of legal research. Students will analyze judicial opinions; apply legal concepts and rules; and learn correct legal citation and use of correct precedent. Special attention is given to the mechanics of legal research, the techniques of writing memoranda, and briefs.

## Language use: Comparative and superlative forms

**13** The two law students in Listening 1, Heidi and Marc, compared the legal English courses they took at their universities. Look at these sentences from the dialogue (1–9) and match them with the rules regarding the use of comparative and superlative forms (a–h). Some examples may match with more than one rule.

- 1 People here speak very quickly, which makes it *harder* to understand.
- 2 But now it's much *easier* – I can understand almost everything.
- 3 That's *more difficult for me than* understanding what people say.
- 4 Yes, I think writing's *the hardest* thing to do in English.
- 5 Our course was *more practical* – we worked on the language skills that lawyers need.
- 6 We didn't really work on speaking skills, though; it was *more important* to present the terminology.
- 7 That was definitely *the most useful* thing we did.
- 8 It sounds like your course was *better than* mine.
- 9 I don't know if it was better, but it was certainly *more language-based* and *more skills-based*.

- a Adjectives with one syllable form their superlative by adding *-est*.
- b Adjectives with one syllable form their comparative by adding *-er*.
- c Short adjectives ending in *-y* form their comparative by removing *-y* and adding *-ier*.
- d Multi-syllable adjectives form their comparative with *more*.
- e Compound adjectives form their comparative with *more*.
- f Multi-syllable adjectives form their superlative with *most*.
- g Some very frequent adjectives have irregular comparative forms.
- h *Than* is used to introduce the second element in a comparative structure.

**14** Complete this excerpt from an introductory talk given in the first session of a legal English course. Use the correct comparative or superlative form of the adjectives given.

You might be expecting to learn a lot of detail about Anglo-American legal systems and their foundations, but our focus this semester will be **1** ..... (practical) than theoretical. We will mainly be working on language skills, such as writing letters or speaking with clients. I am convinced this is the **2** ..... (good) way to prepare for using English for law. You may find this course **3** ..... (challenging) and **4** ..... (time-consuming) than you expected, but you may also find it one of the **5** ..... (useful) courses you take at university, as many students have told me in the past. To make it **6** ..... (easy) for you to plan your time, I'll be handing out a list of the readings and the assignments you'll be working on this term.

## Speaking 2: Learning approaches

**15** Discuss these questions with a partner.

- 1 Which of the four skills – reading, writing, listening or speaking – do you find the most difficult?
- 2 When it comes to learning legal English, which of the two courses discussed by Heidi and Marc do you think offers the better approach? Explain the reasons for your choice, using comparatives and superlatives if possible.

# LAW IN PRACTICE

## Lead-in

Lawyers in smaller firms often advise clients on general legal issues, contacting colleagues for assistance when necessary. Lawyers in larger firms tend to specialise in specific areas, such as advising on tax matters, dealing with commercial transactions or registering patents. Which areas of law do you find most interesting and why?

## Reading 3: Graduate recruitment programme

**16** Read the advertisement for the Barker Rose Graduate Recruitment Programme and answer these questions.

- 1 Do you need to have a law degree to qualify for the programme?
- 2 How will Barker Rose help graduate students qualify to become solicitors?

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following content:

**>> The Barker Rose Graduate Recruitment Programme**

For the ambitious graduate wishing to train as a commercial lawyer, we offer trainees first-rate work in an informative, challenging and busy atmosphere, where your contribution counts from day one.

We require approximately 15 exceptional trainee solicitors each year to contribute to our future growth, in both our London and Manchester offices.

**>> Training programme**

We handle only commercial matters, offering training in company, commercial and finance, commercial litigation, employment, media, energy, trade and commodities, shipping and property law, and in the business skills essential to success as a solicitor.

**>> Minimum qualifications**

Strong academic qualifications, including a 2.1 degree<sup>1</sup> (any discipline). We take a flexible approach and are willing to progress candidates whose application otherwise demonstrates first-rate personal qualities and experience.

**>> When and how to apply**

Apply by 31st July two years before the start of the training contract.

To apply online, please click on this link:  
<http://www.barkerrose.co.uk>

**>> Sponsorship**

We will pay your full course fees for both the GDL and LPC, plus maintenance of £6,000 during your GDL and £7,000 through your LPC study year.<sup>2</sup>

**>> Further information**

If you would like further information, please contact Graham Matthews, our Graduate Recruitment and Trainee Manager, on 0650 581 8967 or by email at [graduate.recruitment@barkerrose.co.uk](mailto:graduate.recruitment@barkerrose.co.uk).

Barker Rose will be presenting its Graduate Recruitment Programme at the University of London Law Fair on 15 May at 2.30 p.m. in the John Adams lecture theatre.

<sup>1</sup> In the UK, different-class degrees are awarded as follows: 1 (*a first*), 2.1 (*a two-one*), 2.2 (*a two-two*), 3 (*a third*).

<sup>2</sup> The Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) is a conversion course allowing those holding non-law degrees in any subject to convert to a career in law. After completing the GDL, students who want to become barristers take the Bar Vocational Course (BVC) before entering the profession as pupil barristers. Students who want to become solicitors take the Legal Practice Course (LPC) before becoming trainee solicitors.

# Language Focus

**1 Vocabulary: types of law firm** Match the halves of these sentences about the different types of law firm mentioned in Reading 1.

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>1 A commercial practice</b> | <b>a</b> is managed by partners who share profits and responsibility equally.   |
| <b>2 A large law firm</b>      | <b>b</b> works on his or her own, has no partners and usually handles smaller cases.  |
| <b>3 A law clinic</b>          | <b>c</b> advises clients on corporate and commercial matters and may also negotiate transactions and solve business problems. |
| <b>4 A partnership</b>         | <b>d</b> can have 50 or more lawyers working on complex matters for large organisations.                                      |
| <b>5 A sole practitioner</b>   | <b>e</b> gives students an opportunity to deal with real clients and to develop their legal skills.                           |

**2 Vocabulary: law vs legal** Complete these sentences by inserting either *law* or *legal*.

- 1 Instruction in legal English is becoming compulsory in a growing number of law faculties all over the world.
- 2 After university, my work as a trainee solicitor gave me useful experience in commercial litigation, and I was offered a good position in a large law firm.
- 3 During my studies, I volunteered at a local law clinic, where I provided free legal assistance to people who could not afford to pay for a lawyer.
- 4 Some of the most important courses a student completes during his or her studies of the law are skills courses, such as courses in legal writing and legal research.

**3 Prepositions** Complete these phrases from the lawyer's talk in Listening 2 with the prepositions in the box.

about about about at by by for for from of on to to to with

- a First, I'll start by giving you a little information about Barker Rose.
  - b Our Graduate Recruitment Programme includes an excellent set of benefits for students prepared to commit themselves fully.
  - c I'll then go on to outline what we have to offer to new associates.
  - d OK, let me just start by introducing myself.
  - e Finally, I'll also talk a little about what we expect of our potential graduate recruits.
  - f Hello, everyone, and thanks for coming along.
  - g Finally, I'd like to remind you of what I said at the beginning of my talk today.
  - h So, to start with, who are Barker Rose?
  - i This brings me to my next point: what benefits can successful applicants expect our Graduate Recruitment Programme expect?
- 4 Ordering** Number the statements in Exercise 3 in the order in which they most likely occurred. You may want to listen to the talk again to check if your answers are correct.
- 1 f ...