

## Preparing for my law career

### Finding Information about Careers in Law

#### Career information from Law Societies

Increasingly, the legal profession is taking an organised interest in its upcoming graduates. This has resulted in more material being released about how to prepare for your law career. For example, the Law Society of NSW, the peak solicitors' body, has a major part of its website menu devoted to law students. See <http://www.lawsociety.com.au/page.asp?partID=17731>

The Law Society of SA has a comprehensive guide to areas of law and admissions requirements in SA. See [http://www.lawsociety.sa.asn.au/community/careers\\_in\\_law.pdf](http://www.lawsociety.sa.asn.au/community/careers_in_law.pdf)

Many Law Societies, including the Tasmanian Law Society, the Queensland Law Society, the Law Society of WA and the Law Society of SA permit university or PLT students to take out student or associate memberships. If you can do this, it's a great way to learn about the way law is structured in your State or Territory, to learn about key figures in the profession, to attend seminars and meetings. This will stand you in good stead when you later seek legal employment.

#### Career information from Law Student Societies

There is the peak law student body, the Australian Law Students' Association (ALSA) <http://www.alsa.net.au/> Each law school usually has a law students' association or society, and these are listed at <http://www.alsa.net.au/about/member-associations>.

Law student societies have valuable information about matters that are specific to the geographical location of your law studies. Importantly they carry information about careers guides and clerkships guides. Some, like the Queensland Law Society have material catering to high schools: <http://sces.qls.com.au/>.

Law societies and bar associations have information about the formal means by which one can be admitted as a lawyer in that jurisdiction.

There is a nice summary of many of the above links at Graduate Careers Australia. Point your browser to <http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/content/view/full/3238>.

#### Other sources of information

*Australian Judges' Associates Handbook*

<http://www.alsa.asn.au/files/lsc/2004/JudgesHandbook2004.pdf>

Brogan & Spencer, *Surviving Law School, Second Edition*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, (2008)

*Lawyer 2 B* magazine, LexisNexis

### Interview Questions and Studying Law

#### Interview Questions/things to think about when doing law

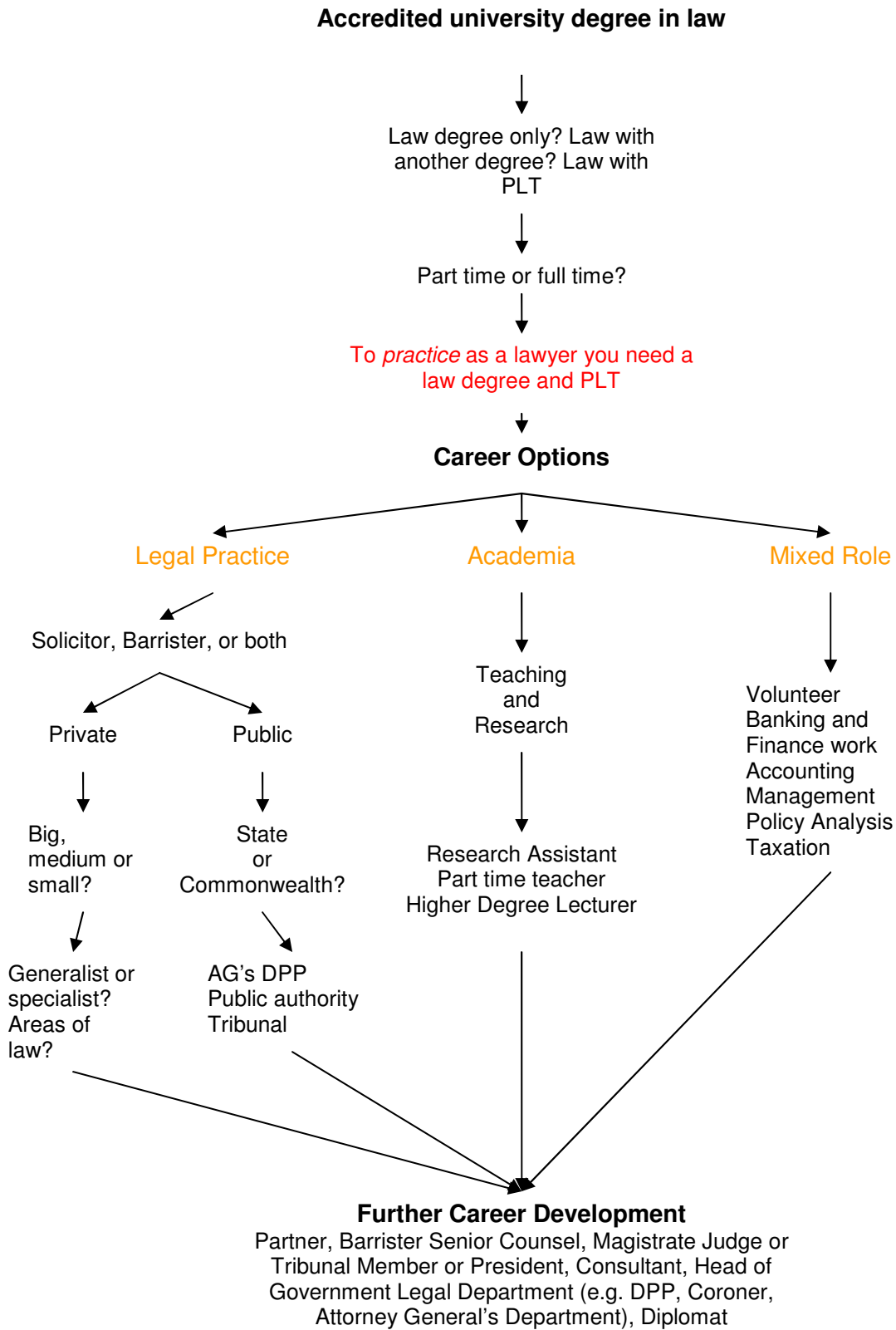
When you get an interview, you need to make a good impression, be yourself, and know your resume and work chronology very well. Be prepared for some of the following questions to be put to you. It helps to think about these while you are studying, and especially about how you can answer them with conviction and enthusiasm:

- why did you study law?
- what made you do the electives you chose?
- what area of law interests you most?
- what area of law in this firm interests you (research required)?
- how do you maintain a work/life balance? Or how do you handle stress? (you invariably must give a concrete example or two here)
- what experiences or training have prepared you for work here?
- where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
- how do you resolve conflict in the workplace?

Many more examples are available online, but these are key questions that you need to have good answers for.

## Law Career Options

Below is a flowchart that you can look at to observe some key career paths. It is by no means exhaustive.



## Key Skills

Most graduates want to work in private legal practice. The key skills reported as being required for this role are:

- Knowledge of substantive law (see *Connecting with Law* p264)
- Knowledge of legal practice, ethics and procedure
- Knowledge of professional and business issues
- Some knowledge of the social context of law (more likely to be required where working in the public sector)

Source: Sumitra Vignaendra, Australian Law Graduates' Career Destinations (May 1998) at Fig 4.1.1 accessible in print and also online at

[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher\\_education/publications\\_resources/profiles/archives/law\\_graduates\\_career\\_destinations.html](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/archives/law_graduates_career_destinations.html)

Below is a table of the most frequently used skills reported by junior lawyers. It is based on findings in part 4.2 of the Vignaendra report.

LEGAL SKILL	HOW LAW SCHOOL TEACHES THIS SKILL
<b>Written Legal Skills</b> -writing reports, letters of advice, drafting pleadings	Essays, written problems, PLT (practical legal training-drafting, letters of advice etc),
<b>Oral Communication</b> -speaking to clients -phone/teleconferencing skills -making presentations to judges/masters -appellate advocacy	PLT training exercises. Client Interviewing exercises, mooting, tutorial performance and participation, group presentations,
<b>Aural Communication</b> (i.e. listening) -active listening -letting the client tell their story	PLT exercises. Client interviewing, lectures (if you carefully listen and take notes).
<b>Negotiation</b> -how to negotiate with other lawyers -negotiating outcomes with the client.	PLT. Skills exercises throughout degree. Negotiation is taught as a topic. You can obtain further training and accreditation through <a href="http://www.leadr.com.au">www.leadr.com.au</a> or <a href="http://www.iama.org.au">www.iama.org.au</a>
<b>Life Management</b> -balancing work and life -time management -setting goals and monitoring their achievement	Time management is often your own responsibility. It is not strictly taught, but emphasised in topic guides and by the penalties for late work.
<b>Computers and IT</b> -desktop, laptop and networked computers -use software for time management and billing -the ability to use word processing and Internet -the ability to edit, save and transmit documents quickly and effectively	These skills are not strictly always taught, yet employers definitely seek employees with good computing and IT skills. Legal Method/Legal Research teaches the use of online databases and the searching of electronic materials. Universities often offer some training in basic use of a personal computer. Try to become familiar with word processing formatting and try to type as quickly as possible.
<b>Research</b> -finding case law/precedent	Legal Method/Legal Research topics, library exercises, research essays, research papers, honours degrees. PLT legal research refreshers.
<b>Giving Legal Advice</b>	Focus on problem-based learning, essays, exams and tutorial questions that ask you to 'advise X or Y'.

Bear in mind that getting a job requires some preliminaries: work experience, good interpersonal and communication skills, academic excellence and a decent CV. These are generally not taught at Law School but most universities have study skills units or learning and development units that can help with these skills. It is well worth taking the time to learn these skills because employers rarely employ people without them.

All the best with your law career.