

## Audio transcripts

### UNIT 1B THE LEGAL PROFESSION

#### UNIT LISTENING

**Trainee lawyer:** My name is Rob Jones and I'm a trainee with a law firm. I've always wanted to be a solicitor and I can't imagine doing any other job. I started working here at Taylor Wallis a year ago. Taylor Wallis is a global law firm with its headquarters in the City of London. I studied law at Manchester University but I wanted to do my training contract in London because I'm interested in insolvency law and banking and I think the best positions with the top law firms are here. I think my parents were disappointed that I didn't become a barrister and work in chambers and wear a wig in court, but I wasn't interested in that at all!

With this law firm the two-year training contract is divided into four periods. Each six-month period is called a 'seat'. My first seat was in the corporate department. That really just means dealing with companies and businesses. I was involved in meeting clients, drafting documents and took part in some very high value deals. Of course, I had lots of support from the experienced people working on my team, we call them the principals, but I was surprised at how much responsibility they gave me.

My second seat was in the property department. This involved acting for clients who were buying and selling domestic and commercial property, much of it office buildings here in London. I was able to get some experience of conveyancing as well as a little landlord and tenant law when we dealt with rentals.

Next I will be moving into the intellectual property department. I'm really pleased about that, as it covers quite a few different areas of law and can involve famous clients. At the moment the department is dealing with a breach of copyright case for a famous musician.

I hope to stay with Taylor Wallis when I qualify as a lawyer next year. In fact, I'm looking forward to being based in London for most of my legal career.

#### EXAM EXERCISE LISTENING

**L:** Good morning everyone. My name is Helen Reay and I'm a solicitor in a local law firm. I'm here today because I understand that some of you are interested in a career in law and would like to ask me some questions. I've been

working as a solicitor for over ten years now, so I'm probably in a good position to give you a bit of advice. Who would like to start?

**S1:** I'll start, if I may. I would like to ask about the training that you had to do to become a lawyer. I know that you have to go to university and do a law degree. But what happens next?

**L:** Well, let's make it clear. When you talk about training to become a lawyer you are talking about two different professions. If you want to work as a lawyer you must first of all choose whether you want to be a solicitor or a barrister. The training for each profession is different.

**S2:** Really? I thought that both branches of the profession were required to do a law degree and then barristers had to find a place in chambers and solicitors had to do some training with a law firm.

**L:** Not exactly. It might surprise you to know that it's not actually a requirement in the UK for a lawyer to have a law degree. My degree is in economics actually, although most of my colleagues in the office do have a degree in law. I studied economics for three years and then I took a one-year course at the same university, now called the Post-Graduate Diploma in law. It's a kind of conversion course to law for people with degrees in other subjects. It was a difficult year. It was very intensive but very enjoyable too. I learned a lot.

**S1:** So a law firm will be happy to employ me if I have a degree in psychology? That's the subject that I really would like to take but I didn't think it would be possible if I want a career in law.

**L:** Yes, that's right. So long as you take the conversion course you'll be OK. Law firms like diversity. It gives them people with a wide range of skills and knowledge.

**S2:** That's interesting. But I want to take a law degree and become a lawyer in the traditional way. If someone wants to be a barrister, is a law degree the best qualification for them?

**L:** The usual route for both solicitors and barristers is to start with a law degree. The law degree in the UK is known as the LLB. This is the Bachelor's degree in law. The Master's degree is called the LLM. The LLB takes three years and is ideal for both solicitors and barristers. After that the training and the exams are different for the two professions.

**S1:** What do solicitors do after their first degree? Solicitors don't speak in court, so I suppose they don't need

to learn how to do that, do they?

**L:** I'm not surprised that you have said that because it's a common misconception that only barristers speak in court. But it's actually not true. Solicitors are required to do a year of practical training after their degree and that training includes advocacy, which is the skill of speaking on behalf of a client in court. If you choose to be a solicitor you will have to do this extra year of training at university. It's called the Legal Practice Course.

**S1:** What skills do they teach on the course?

**L:** A whole range of things. As we've already said, advocacy. You need to be confident as a solicitor when speaking in court. You are taught how to draft documents correctly. Some negotiation skills. And of course, client interviewing. Being able to interview a client well is extremely important.

**S2:** That all sounds good. But I have a worry about something. I'm not very good at maths. Will that be a problem?

**L:** Not really. The Legal Practice Course does cover business management skills and you will be tested on your ability to keep accounts. But that's something that you'll just have to learn if you really want to be a solicitor. I'm not very good at that side of things either I'm afraid, but I soon got the hang of it.

**S1:** And after the Legal Practice Course, are you a qualified solicitor?

**L:** I'm afraid not. You still need to get a training contract with a law firm and for many students that's the difficult part. The truth is that our universities produce more law graduates than we need, so getting a training contract with a law firm is a competitive business. The training contract gives you two years of practical experience working as a solicitor. When the two years are completed you are a qualified solicitor and your name is added to the list of solicitors who are allowed to practise law – or, to give the list its correct name, the roll. The roll is kept at the headquarters of the Law Society of England and Wales, which is in London. And one more thing. Remember, qualifying as a solicitor or as a barrister is expensive. The Legal Practice Course currently costs around £7000 so you will have to pay that on top of the cost of your degree. But don't let me put you off a career in law. I found my training very hard and very expensive but I haven't regretted my choice of career at all.