



# Qualifying as an advocate - short guide



# Starting points, university, training and the Manx Bar

## 1. A Levels

Three good A levels are the basic requirement for entry to university. Some universities stipulate particular A levels as entry requirements but it is worth noting that in order to qualify as an Advocate it is not necessary to study A level law. The best advice is to study those subjects you enjoy. That way you are more likely to work hard, get good grades and have a better chance of getting into your first choice university.

## 2. University

### 2.1 Law Degree

Many institutions offer law degrees, some in combination with other subjects such as languages or business subjects. Law degrees can cover a wide range of law related subjects such as jurisprudence, ethics, and criminology. If you choose to study for a degree in law, check that it is a qualifying course covering the seven core law subjects and legal research skills. The Law Society of England and Wales can offer detailed guidance on qualifying degrees ([www.lawsoc.org](http://www.lawsoc.org)).

### 2.2 Non-law Degree

You cannot qualify as a Manx advocate without an honours degree, however, it is not necessary to study law at university in order to qualify as an Advocate. It is possible to study any honours degree from Anthropology to Zoology and then complete a conversion course. Your final degree classification is more important than its subject matter, so it is worth considering your personal strengths and interests before embarking upon your degree. Many firms actively recruit individuals with diverse educational backgrounds who can utilise their scientific, business or linguistic skills. This route will, however, involve extra study and extra time.

### 2.3 Minimum Requirements?

The Isle of Man Law Society's minimum entry requirement is a Second Class Honours degree. However, you may have a particular law firm with whom you would like to work and they may require a higher qualification so you should check this out before hand.

### 3. Work Experience

It is recommended that whilst at university you should apply for a short period of work experience with a firm of Advocates. This will give you a good idea of what the work actually involves and can be invaluable in helping you decide your future career. Applications should usually be made during your first year of university, and continue throughout your degree and should be made to a wide range of firms with different specialities. Many universities also provide pro bono work schemes which provide invaluable experience in dealing with clients and allow students a unique insight into legal matters.

### 4. Non-law Degree Conversion course

A Graduate Diploma in Law (“GDL”) (also known as a common professional examination) is a conversion course for students with an honours degree in any non-law subject. This course is very intensive and students will need to work hard to cover the seven core law subjects in 9 months. Some institutions offer part-time and distance learning options. Applications and information about the CPE are available from the Central Applications Board (PO Box 84, Guildford, Surrey, GU3 1YX - Tel 01483 451080 - [www.lawcab.ac.uk](http://www.lawcab.ac.uk)). Applications are normally available around November and the closing date is February.

The Isle of Man Government may provide funding for both course fees and maintenance grants subject to status and residency requirements. Further information is available from the Isle of Man Government Department of Education, (Murray House, Mount Havelock, Douglas, IM1 2QG Tel - 01624 685822).

### 5. Professional training

Before entering articles with a firm of Advocates, students must undertake a legal vocational course. Most students either undertake the Legal Practice Course, which is compulsory for all English Solicitors, or alternatively the Bar Vocational Course, the training necessary to become an English Barrister. This choice of routes reflects the fused nature of the profession on the Isle of Man. The courses have different areas of focus but both last one academic year. It is possible, however, to study the Legal Practice Course on a part-time basis over a longer period. The Bar Course naturally concentrates upon Advocacy and Drafting skills. The Legal Practice Course is more commercially focused and comprises three areas, compulsory subjects (conveyancing, civil and criminal litigation, and business), elective modules and professional skills. Details about the Legal Practice Course are available from the Law Society of England and Wales - [www.lawsoc.org](http://www.lawsoc.org). The Bar Council of England and Wales can supply information about the Bar Course- [www.barcouncil.org](http://www.barcouncil.org).

The Isle of Man Government Department of Education may provide funding for this course for both course fees and maintenance grants, subject to status and residency requirements. If a student has already secured a training contract or articles with an Isle of Man firm, the firm may also be willing to provide some financial assistance.

Students who intend to undertake a legal vocational course in a jurisdiction other than England and Wales are advised to contact the Law Society to obtain confirmation from the

Council of the Law Society that such course will be an approved course for the purpose of entering articles.

## 6. Articles and Manx Bar Examinations

### 6.1 Training Period

In order to qualify as a Manx advocate it is necessary to undertake two years of training known as 'articles' with an Advocate. This period of articles is equivalent to a training contract for Solicitors in England and Wales or pupillage for Barristers.

### 6.2 Isle of Man Bar Exams

During your two years of articles it is necessary to pass the Manx Bar examinations. These examinations cover 5 subjects, namely:

- (a) Civil practice
- (b) Criminal practice
- (c) Constitutional and land law
- (d) Company law, financial services law and taxation
- (e) Accounts (an exemption from this is available for students who have studied the legal practice course)

The examinations are held biannually in May and November and trainees have a maximum of three attempts in which to pass the exams.

### 6.3 Application for Articles

It is advisable to apply early for articles as places are in demand. Applications to individual firms should be made well in advance, normally during your penultimate year (before Christmas time) at university. If you have not studied a law degree it is not necessary for you to have commenced the GDL before applying. If you have not already had work experience in a firm of advocates then this is recommended before applying in order to give you an understanding of the work involved. It is possible to obtain articles after the Legal Practice Course or Bar Course however there will be few places available and competition is usually intense.

## 7. Law Practitioners qualified in other Jurisdictions

Solicitors of the Supreme Court of England and Wales and members of the Bar of England and Wales who have been practising or admitted for three years may qualify as an Advocate after a period of articles of only one year. They are not exempt from the Manx Bar examinations.