



# **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS**

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## What is the Government Legal Service?

The Government Legal Service (GLS) is the term used to describe approximately 2000 lawyers working in the legal teams of 30 Departments of State, regulatory bodies and other Government organisations.

Whether the Government is creating new legislation, procuring goods and services, employing people or defending its decisions in court, it needs significant levels of legal advice. To carry out this work, the Government needs its own lawyers who understand its business.

The Government calls upon its lawyers to advise on any number of issues - complex, novel, politically sensitive and often in the public eye. The work of a GLS lawyer will be determined by the business in which their departments are engaged but will typically involve the widest possible range of public and private law matters.

The diversity of work reflects the wide range of activities within Government. These range across issues of national and international significance and across public and private law, embracing advisory and legislative work, litigation and prosecution and a wealth of

specialist areas. There is often considerable overlap between categories of work. A case before the UK courts, for example, might require lawyers to advise on public law issues, on European Union (EU) and human rights law and on changes needed to primary or secondary legislation.

GLS lawyers work not only with other lawyers but also as part of a wider team including policy makers and professionals from other specialist areas. They are involved in making the law as well as in interpreting it. They work with public law in its most potent form – and the advice lawyers in the GLS provide to government organisations and the litigation they conduct affects the lives of millions of people in the UK.

To enable it to continue to provide solutions to complex legal problems, the GLS requires a team of highly skilled, highly motivated lawyers. This document highlights the skills we look for in our lawyers and which applicants for GLS vacancies need to demonstrate throughout the recruitment process. If you require further information about any aspect of recruitment process, please contact the GLS recruitment team on the number provided on page 10.

## What are we looking for?

Your background is unimportant. What is important is that you can demonstrate strong intellectual ability and powerful communication skills, as we are looking for lawyers who will be able to work in a wide variety of legal fields and settings. You must also be able to demonstrate a commitment to working in the public sector.

All candidates should have obtained an upper second-class degree (in any subject). However some departments may consider candidates with a lower class degree where there is

evidence of equivalent high level academic and/or professional achievement (**for clarification, please check the vacancy notice**).

The list on the following page indicates the skills and competencies which are required for GLS roles. You should note that some departments may seek evidence of additional competencies beyond those set out here (e.g. where a Senior Civil Service (SCS) post is being advertised) and that these will be indicated in the vacancy notice.

## Qualified Lawyer Assessment Matrix

Competencies	App form / short listing	Written exercise	Interview
Legal Professional Skills	*	*	*
Making Effective Decisions	*	*	*
Delivering at Pace	*		*
Managing a Quality Service for Clients	*		*
Collaborating & Partnering	*		*
Motivational Fit	*		*

# GLS Qualified Lawyer Competency Framework

## Legal Professional Skills

Effectiveness in this area is about understanding and applying relevant features of the law – this includes having an understanding of the main features of public law; reliable legal judgement and an appreciation of legal risk; and being able to produce sound analysis, using secure legal research.

Please see the Vacancy Notice for the specific legal skills/experience relevant to the advertised role.

## Making Effective Decisions

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective; using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. It means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well reasoned justifiable decisions.

## Delivering at Pace

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. It's about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way.

## Managing a Quality Service for Clients

Effectiveness in this area is about being organised to deliver service objectives and striving to improve the quality of service, taking account of diverse customer needs and requirements, and having the ability to work well with clients and colleagues at all levels. In the legal context it is about working constructively with clients to achieve solutions which are legally sound while meeting client needs.

## Collaborating and Partnering

Effectiveness in this area is about creating and maintaining positive, professional and trusting working relationships with others (i.e. clients and colleagues at all levels within and outside the Civil Service) to help get business done; it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions. It is also about demonstrating self-awareness and the ability to use feedback to learn and develop.

## Motivational Fit

This is about how well the individual's aspirations match with the organisation's needs and offerings (as well as the team applied to).

This competency framework should be read in conjunction with the Vacancy Notice where the recruiting department will set out the essential/desirable criteria specific to the role/s being advertised.

## Other Information

### Salary

Each department has pay responsibility delegated to it. Salary ranges are shown in the vacancy notice and salaries will tend to start towards the bottom of the range.

### Terms of Employment

If your application is successful, you will receive a formal letter offering you an appointment that will explain your terms and conditions of service in detail.

### Professional Qualifications

You must be fully entitled to practise in England and Wales under the rules of the Law Society or Bar Council or expect to be so shortly. You must have successfully completed all stages of your training contract (solicitors) or one year of pupillage (barristers) or expect to have done so by the time you are due to take up any appointment.

### Nationality and Immigration Status

Civil Service Nationality rules apply. Unless the job vacancy notice specifically states that the post is reserved for UK nationals only, GLS departments will accept applications from UK nationals, or, those who have dual nationality with one part being British, Commonwealth citizens and nationals of any of the member states of the European Economic Area (EEA). Please refer to the Civil Service Nationality Requirements on the Civil Service Website for more detailed information on the nationality rules.

When applying, you will be asked about your nationality at birth, whether you are subject to immigration control, and whether there are any restrictions on your continued residence or employment in the UK.

Document checks will be undertaken to verify both your nationality and immigration status before any appointment will be confirmed.

### Probation

If offered an appointment you will, in most cases, be on probation for one year. If your service is satisfactory in that time your appointment will be confirmed.

### Private Practice

If appointed you will not be allowed to undertake private practice.

### Holidays

There are slight variations between departments but normally you will receive 25 days paid leave each year, rising to 30 days after 5 years' service.

### Pension

As civil servants, lawyers in the GLS are eligible to join the Civil Service pension arrangements; usually either a defined benefit pension scheme or personal pension.

[Full details on the Civil Service Pension arrangements.](#)

## Equal Opportunities

The Civil Service is an equal opportunity employer. We welcome applications from all suitably qualified people irrespective of sex, marital status, colour, ethnic or national origin, age or sexual orientation. Opportunities for career development and promotion are open to everyone and are based on ability and personal performance alone.

## Guaranteed Interview Scheme

Some GLS Departments will guarantee an interview to any disabled applicant who meets the minimum criteria as defined by the recruiting department. Please see the vacancy notice for full details.

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who has ***a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and adverse long-term effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.***

## Frequently asked recruitment questions

### **Q. What is the recruitment process?**

**A.** After the closing date your application is sent to your department of choice. They sift the applications and successful applicants are invited to interview. The interview stage usually has two parts: the first is a written test which is about one hour long; the second part is an interview, which lasts about 45 minutes.

On occasion a post may be advertised at Senior Civil Service level for which there may be a requirement for candidates to attend a half-day assessment centre, prior to interview, in London. Where this applies, details will be provided in the job vacancy notice.

### **Q. What is the format of the written test and may I have a copy of a previous example?**

**A.** The written test is a short exercise designed to test your skills of analysis and legal awareness. You will normally be asked to write a piece of advice to a Minister and/or senior client based upon the information provided. It is not possible to provide examples of previous questions.

### **Q. Who carries out the interview?**

**A.** The interview panel will normally be made up of at least three people; usually an independent Assessor (typically a non-lawyer); a lawyer from the department to which you have applied; and a lawyer from another GLS team/department. The panel may also include a client representative.

### **Q. Can you tell me more about the interview?**

**A.** The interview will be competency based and is designed to enable the interview panel to

assess whether you possess the competencies and skills which the GLS is looking for (see section 2). As well as a discussion of your answer to the written test, you will be asked to provide examples from your past experience to help the panel to determine your suitability for the GLS. Interviews are generally held in London.

### **Q. How long will it take until I am in post?**

**A.** The length of time until you take up an offered post will depend upon a number of factors e.g. your notice period, the length of time to obtain references and any other eligibility and security clearance(s). We like candidates to be in post as soon as possible.

### **Q. I have not yet qualified as a solicitor. When should I apply?**

**A.** Trainee solicitors who are due to qualify in the next couple of months may normally apply now for a post in the GLS but please see the Vacancy Notice for details. If you are due to qualify later in the year then you should apply nearer the time.

### **Q. I have completed a part pupillage. May I apply?**

**A.** It is a GLS requirement that barristers should have completed the full training requirements to obtain their practising certificate from the Bar. If you are due to complete your full pupillage in the next couple of months then you may normally apply now for a GLS post but please see the Vacancy Notice for details.

### **Q. I will complete my LPC or BVC in a few months time. May I apply now?**



**A.** It is a requirement that applicants should have completed pupillage or a training contract to be eligible to enter the GLS as a qualified lawyer. A small number of training contracts/pupilages are available each year in various Government departments and you should refer to the [‘Graduate Opportunities’](#) pages on the GLS website for further details.

**Q. I am looking for a training contract / pupillage. May I apply through this scheme?**

**A.** No, you cannot apply for a post in the qualified lawyer competition. However, the GLS offers a small number of training positions and pupilages each year. Please contact the GLS Recruitment Team on 0845 300 0793 or e-mail [glstrainees@tmpw.co.uk](mailto:glstrainees@tmpw.co.uk) for your name to be placed on the mailing list.

**Q. Are there vacancies for paralegals or for legal secretaries in the GLS?**

**A.** The GLS competition is for the recruitment of qualified lawyers only. Departments are responsible for making their own arrangements for the recruitment of paralegals and/or legal secretaries and should be approached directly. Contact details can be found on the [Civil Service website](#).

**Q. I do not have a practising certificate. Would this affect my application to the GLS?**

**A.** Solicitors in the GLS are generally exempt under the Solicitors Act 1974 from the requirements to hold a practising certificate. However, you must be on the Roll of Solicitors and eligible to practise in England and Wales before applying. Barristers are required to have a practising certificate.

**Q. I am qualified as a solicitor overseas. May I still apply?**

**A.** To apply to become a lawyer in the GLS you must fulfil the nationality requirements and be eligible to practise in England and Wales. Where the vacancy notice specifies that applications will be accepted from those who have qualified in other jurisdictions, there will be a requirement to successfully complete the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (within a given period as specified by the recruiting Department). Information about the QLTS can be obtained from the SRA [www.sra.org.uk](http://www.sra.org.uk).

**Q. The application pack states that the vacancies are for Grade 7 and Legal Officers. What does this mean?**

**A.** Terminology varies across Government organisations but, in general terms, lawyers fall into three distinct levels of responsibility which are often referred to as Legal Officer/Grade 7, Grade 6 and Senior Civil Servant. The level of entry into the GLS will generally be dependent on your level of experience. Lawyers who are newly qualified should expect to be appointed as Legal Officers. Subject to satisfactory performance, Legal Officers may be re-graded to Grade 7 after 12-24 months. The majority of new appointees are appointed as Grade 7 lawyers although some departments will, exceptionally, consider applicants with extensive relevant experience for appointment at Grade 6 level.

**Q. What opportunities are available outside London?**

**A.** About 80% of GLS jobs are in London and so that is where most opportunities usually arise. But a small number of GLS lawyers work in offices around the country. Those departments with regional offices include HM Revenue and Customs, Department for Work and Pensions, the Charity Commission and the Office of Water Services. The website and application pack will

provide information on any places available in the regional offices.

**Q. I am currently employed as a Civil Servant (non lawyer) and am a qualified solicitor/barrister. Do I still apply to the GLS in this way?**

**A.** Any person qualified as a solicitor or barrister in England and Wales is eligible to apply for a post in the GLS. The interview process is designed to be a test of legal skill, knowledge and core competencies required in the GLS and across the wider Civil Service. As a serving Civil Servant, you can apply through the internal trawling system. Details can be found on LION, the GLS' intranet site.

**Q. What opportunities are available to work part-time?**

**A.** Most departments have posts suitable for alternative working arrangements, and they will be identified in the recruitment pack.

**Q. May I apply to more than one department?**

**A.** Yes.

**Q. How does the reserve list operate?**

**A.** If, at interview, you are considered to meet the requirements of the role but are not made an offer – due, for example, to the number of other successful candidates – you may have the option of having your details placed on a reserve list. The reserve list can be made available to other GLS Departments where similar vacancies arise.

**Q. Which departments are recruiting?**

**A.** Departments will advertise as vacancies occur. All vacancies are advertised on the GLS website ([www.gls.gov.uk](http://www.gls.gov.uk)).

## Next Steps

1. Look at the information provided about the department seeking to recruit in this competition and ensure that you meet the criteria set out in the Vacancy Notice.
2. Check the closing date and ensure that you meet this deadline. Unfortunately, we cannot accept late applications.
3. Please complete and submit the online application form.
4. If you have any questions about the recruitment process, please contact:

GLS Recruitment Team (TMP Worldwide)  
11th Floor  
Castlemead  
Lower Castle Street  
Bristol BS1 3AG  
Telephone: 0845 300 0793  
Email: [glqualified@tmpw.co.uk](mailto:glqualified@tmpw.co.uk)