



FUNDING THE LEGAL PRACTICE COURSE ADVICE SHEET

The GDL and LPC are very expensive courses. It may be that you have to spend around £14,000 in course fees alone just to embark on your chosen career. Unless you have very generous parents or a loving partner, then the first question becomes where you are going to find this kind of money.

This advice sheet is compiled from advice given to callers contacting the **TSG Helpline** for assistance. Should you require any further information on this or any other concern, please contact the Helpline on **08000 856 131**. Calls are confidential and anonymous.

1. SPONSORSHIP

Please be aware that most firms do NOT sponsor their trainees whilst they undertake the LPC. This is the exception rather than the rule. Most trainees in Regional, High Street or smaller London practices have to find alternative ways to fund their training, as they will receive no support from their intended firm.

- A number of firms will sponsor students, mainly those applying for the LPC and those intending to take the GDL. These are mainly International or City firms or large Regional practices (think "multi-centre").
- If you are successful in gaining sponsorship, you would normally expect to serve your training contract with the firm. Occasionally commitment to the firm over a longer period is required and the employer may insert a covenant in this respect into the training contract. You should also bear in mind that it is common practice to insert a covenant into the training contract so that the firm may claw back any monies in respect of LPC fees should you choose to leave the firm within a stated period of time.
- Sponsorship information can be found in a variety of publications and from a number of different sources. Please refer to the Training Contract and Pupillage Handbook or LawCareers.net. If you are still a student, your university or college careers service will have a list of firms which are recruiting and information about sponsorship from them.
- If you are a graduate you will find that there is an arrangement where by you can seek help from the careers service of your nearest university or college of higher education. You will find sponsorship information in the legal publication – Prospects: Focus on Law – which is again available from your university or careers service.
- In addition, the publication "The Lawyer" (this is available online at www.thelawyer.com) publishes a student special supplement twice a year in which there is a list of firms willing to sponsor students. Hardcopies are usually kept in the university career services and you can consult the list there.

2. LOCAL AUTHORITY GRANTS

Another harsh reality – the LPC and GDL are NOT funded under the normal grant and student loan arrangements. They are not usually eligible for local authority funding. However, your own personal

circumstances may make you able to qualify for assistance. Please contact your local authority for more information.

- Your local authority will issue a leaflet or booklet providing details of mandatory and discretionary award policies. This will include reference to courses which the authority will consider suitable for the purposes of financial support.
- Discretionary funds, where available, are very limited and you should apply immediately after the first date published for the receipt of applications.
- More general guidance on grants is provided in the Department for Education booklet "Grants to Students - A Brief Guide" which can be obtained from careers and appointment libraries of higher education institutions, large reference libraries and the Department for Education.

3. LOAN SCHEMES - THE HIGH STREET BANKS

This is the standard way of funding your LPC or GDL. Banks will lend to you; you are not seen as a risk as the bank will expect that your earnings after qualification will allow you to easily pay back the loan. As a "professional" you are seen as an investment. That said, remember that you will only get a short payment holiday whilst you study. The bank will expect for you to start paying that loan back as soon as the course is over (or a max of 6 months afterwards). the loan will take you around 3 - 5 years to pay off, and you HAVE to pay this back - no matter what you are earning. This means that you should be relatively assured that you will be earning sufficient to cover the repayments in the future.

- Historically loans at favourable rates are available for the GDL and LPC from the following banks - Midland Bank - Barclays Bank - Royal Bank of Scotland.

4. CAREER DEVELOPMENT LOANS

These loans are only available to those who cannot get funding elsewhere. This includes the bank loan, above.

- These loans are operated on behalf of the Department of Employment. They are available to pay for vocational courses (up to 80% of the course fees) and they also include payments for living expenses where the course is full time. The minimum age is 18 and the maximum 65.
- If maintenance support is required, the course must involve 21 hours training per week. In addition the applicant must provide evidence of intention to use the resulting qualification for the purposes of finding employment in the UK or the European Community.
- Applicants must also show that they are unable to fund the course from other sources.
- The minimum loan is £300 and the maximum is £8000. The interest on the loan is paid by the government during the course then up to 3 months afterwards.
- An information booklet including an application form may be obtained from Job Centres and participating bank branches.

These loans are particularly useful for part time students.

5. CHARITIES AND GRANT MAKING TRUSTS

These are very limited, and eligibility varies. Ensure that you can obtain alternative funding should you not be successful in obtaining assistance from a charity or trust.

- Your local authority awards officer will also have information about local charities and any grant making trusts for which you may qualify. There will be a charities register which can be consulted in order to advise you which should be available in the local reference library.
- Qualifications for these awards vary enormously that they are often so specific that your eligibility will be limited to a very few.
- The Law Society has a bursary scheme limited to awards for GDL and LPC. The fund in total is very limited and there are both competitive elements and hardship criteria which must be met. A candidate needs to be both outstanding in achievement or dedication, and generally in need of support, with no other access to funding via own, parents or spouses income or a local authority award, in order to be considered.
- Further information can be obtained from the Law Society's Regulation Directorate by calling their 24 hour application pack ordering service on 01527 504455 and requesting a bursary application pack.

6. COLLEGE ACCESS FUNDS

These are similar to "hardship funds", and are not intended to be a first port of call.

- These funds are available to post graduate students at universities and publicly funded colleges mainly to provide additional assistance to meet living costs. Students should contact the student support or student services officer of their institution for further details.