

LAW

The rule of law is a cornerstone of western democracy, and much of the freedom and security we enjoy in our daily lives is built upon it. It ensures that we are all subject to the law and equal under it, regardless of status or position. It raises a concept of justice which refers to the rights and responsibilities of individuals and emphasises legal procedure, rather than gun fights, as the means of resolving issues. It allows for laws to be changed through Acts of Parliament as well as through judicial decisions which create precedents. Both processes mean that laws, while remaining essentially stable and predictable, can be adapted to changing social values. In general, the rule of law tells us what we can and can't do and provides systems of redress if we are subject to the unlawful actions of others. It's a complex business and not always perfect but as long as talented, knowledgeable, and hard-working members of the legal profession are around to keep everything in order, it serves us very well.

WHY STUDY LAW?

The study of Law is intellectually and academically challenging. It is also extremely satisfying and can open up a world of career opportunities. Since just about every area of life has legal underpinnings, it's possible to focus your legal studies on what really interests you. You may be interested in court work and the justice system, so elect to take courses that involve the legislative process, jurisprudence, rules of evidence, civil procedure, the law of torts, and criminal law. If your interests lie in the business world, you can concentrate on courses which deal with tax, banking, insurance, industrial, and commercial law. If it's the environment, there are courses on natural resources, property, and resource management. If it's social issues, there's family law and welfare law. And so on.

In addition, the study of Law complements other disciplines, particularly in commerce, science, and the humanities. For example, graduates with a double degree in Law and Commerce are sought after by both law and accounting firms. A science or engineering degree coupled with a law degree is an ideal combination for patent attorney work. An LLB and a BA in Film and Theatre could lead to a career in entertainment law. There are many options and combinations. All are good.

The **versatility** of a Law degree ensures that your career path can take you in many interesting directions. The **integrity** of a Law degree ensures that your skills and academic credentials are valued and respected wherever you go.

Being a Lawyer

If you want to practise law, you need to do these things in the following order:

- Complete your Bachelor of Laws degree;
- Complete a practical professional legal studies course. The course varies from 13 weeks to 19 weeks, depending on the balance of face-to-face and distance delivery offered by the course provider;
- Be admitted to the High Court of New Zealand as a barrister and solicitor;
- Apply for and hold a current practising certificate issued by a district law society. This is renewed annually.

Once admitted, a Lawyer can work as a barrister or a solicitor. **Barristers** work mainly in courts or tribunals presenting evidence, making submissions on behalf of their clients, and otherwise representing their interests in, for example, criminal trials, or Family Court proceedings. **Solicitors** provide general legal advice over a range of specialised areas, including the buying and selling of property, drafting wills, arranging finance, tax and company legalities, and custody and property matters in the event of relationship breakdown.

Topical coverage of career related issues brought to you by Victoria University Career Development and Employment.

Areas covered include how degrees and courses relate to employment opportunities, to life/work planning, graduate destination information and current issues or material relevant to the employment scene. Your comments and suggestions always welcomed.

WHERE DO LAW GRADUATES WORK?

Law graduates have many career options, both within the legal profession and outside it. These include:

Private Practice: Law graduates entering the profession often start out working for an established firm or legal practice. Most large law firms, such as Buddle Findlay or Kensington Swan, participate in an annual recruitment programme organised through universities' career services. These firms offer considerable opportunities for educational and professional development and a clear career path. Internship programmes and summer clerk positions are offered by some large firms as well. Selection procedures are fairly rigorous and the number of positions offered varies from year to year. Check with your careers office for further information.

Medium and smaller firms recruit as they need to through advertisement and word of mouth. For job seekers, good networking and interview skills count for a lot. Positions are often specialised: commercial and corporate, litigation, property, resource management, commercial and rural, criminal law, competition law, family law, relationship property, constitutional law, and media law are some of the specialisations that have appeared in recent job ads.

Government Agencies and Local Authorities:

Parliament: A large proportion of parliamentary business is about the making and amending of laws. A bill (proposed law) passes through a sequence of defined stages before it becomes law and is subject to legal scrutiny throughout this process. The *Office of the Clerk, Legal Services* provides general and specialised legal support to a range of parliamentary bodies, including select committees. Law graduates are employed to provide support to the House Office and the Select Committee Office. Lawyers are only recruited with several years experience.

The **Parliamentary Counsel Office** provides a legislative drafting service to a number of government departments and agencies in relation to Bills and Statutory Regulations. The work involves undertaking drafting assignments and providing drafting advice to Ministers, Cabinet Committees and Select Committees. It is a role to aspire to after several years' experience.

The **Crown Law Office** provides legal advice and representation for the government and its departments as well as appearing in court on behalf of the Crown. They

recruit annually for summer clerk positions. Competition is high, but the experience and exposure is very valuable. They also recruit at the graduate level.

The **Law Commission** reviews and advises on the reform and development of the law. They usually participate in the annual Law Recruitment Programme. As with all such recruitment programmes selection is rigorous and applicants need to prepare carefully.

The **Ministry of Justice** provides policy advice to the government on criminal justice or public law issues. A Law degree is a relevant qualification for a policy adviser role, particularly if it contains an emphasis on criminal or public law. A conjoint degree can also be valuable. For example, a Law degree coupled with History is a desirable combination for *The Office of Treaty Settlements*, as the historical component of Treaty settlements involves legal contracts and assessing precedent risks for the Crown. Other combinations, such as Law and Public Policy, could also be appropriate for a policy analyst role within other business units of the Ministry of Justice.

The **Waitangi Tribunal** considers Law graduates with a Masters degree and appropriate research and writing skills for its Research and Report Writing Services.

New Zealand Police contains a Legal section, which provides legal advice and opinions, and the Police Prosecutions Service. Legal experience is generally required for both sections, but a clerk's position suitable for a graduate may be a possibility.

The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade** recruits annually for foreign policy officer roles. A good postgraduate degree (Honours or Masters) or a conjoint degree which includes Law is required at the graduate level of recruitment. Law graduates are particularly valued for their ability to work on the legal aspects of foreign policy and trade policy.

Other Ministries and Departments which conduct legal business or otherwise value legal training include: the Department of Labour, the Department of Building and Housing, the NZ Food Safety Authority, the Inland Revenue Department, the Ministry for the Environment, the Ministry of Economic Development, and the State Services Commission. Some of these organisations recruit through graduate recruitment programmes. Check with your careers office.

Some local authorities, such as Auckland City, have legal sections to manage statutory regulations, draft and enforce bylaws, and conduct other legal business. These are large organisations with many regulatory responsibilities. Parking infringements, for example, may lead to prosecution.

Private Companies and SOEs:

In-house legal counsel: Many large commercial organisations and state-owned enterprises employ in-house lawyers to carry out their legal business. Again, roles can be specialised, often with an emphasis on commercial property, commercial litigation, banking, finance or international law.

Management roles: Large corporates, management consultancies, financial services organisations and other business enterprises are keen to recruit Law graduates for their management potential. In some companies this is a formal management trainee programme which can offer opportunities for a high-level business career often with the possibility of overseas secondment if the organisation is multinational. Other situations may not be so structured but the skills and legal knowledge which Law graduates bring with them usually ensure good opportunities for career advancement. Check with your careers office for graduate recruitment information.

Community Law Centres: These are a network of centres usually managed by an incorporated society or charitable trust, which offer free legal advice and representation to those who are disadvantaged. They are staffed largely by senior law students and volunteer lawyers, which is an excellent opportunity to gain legal experience as well as do social good. There are paid positions in some Centres.

Academia: If you are keen to develop an academic legal career, teaching and conducting research, a good first step is to discuss your aspirations with academic staff. Polytechnics also teach law-related courses, such as the NZLS Legal Executive Course.

Other law-related roles: There are a range of roles which draw on a legal background. Often these are within law firms but not always as the legal operation in other organisations can be quite extensive. These include:

- **Legal executive:** These are trained professionals in their own right and can carry high levels of responsi-

bility. They may specialise in, for example, property conveyancing or estate administration.

- **Legal researcher:** A specialised role which typically requires managing information systems and the ability to interpret and apply legislation. Excellent organising skills and the ability to critically evaluate information are required.
- **Law librarian:** Sometimes combined with a research role, law librarians typically use electronic and print resources to research legal issues for lawyers and handle reference enquiries. Usually some study towards a librarian qualification is desirable.
- **Legal administrator and legal secretary:** These roles usually require some legal background and always require organisational ability and initiative.
- **Case manager:** Generally a role within the Court system often working in a particular Court, for example the Environment Court. The role involves managing the progress of cases through the judicial system.
- **Legal editor:** Legal publishers, for example Lexis-Nexis, employ a good number of fresh Law graduates on an as-needed basis and they are valued for their enthusiasm and intelligence.

Because of its fundamental place in the scheme of things, the legal system effectively supports its own specialised industry. There are, for example, HR consultancies which specialise in legal recruitment, and legal conference producers. Law is an excellent complement to journalism. Union organisers often have a legal background. Legal training is useful for roles involving clients with contractual arrangements such as literary or sports agents. A Law degree travels very well and continues to work for you long after graduation.

SKILLS

A Law degree extends students both intellectually and personally. Law graduates can claim all the higher-order thinking skills and many personal skills including a full-on work ethic, and the sort of self-confidence that is developed through turning challenge into achievement. More specifically, Law graduates would be able to demonstrate:

Intellectual power:

A Law degree covers a great deal of territory. This includes legal concepts, theory, principles, the legislative process, interpretation of the law, rules of evidence, and much, much more. As a result, Law graduates carry a lot of knowledge and many conceptual maps around in their heads. They learn to abstract, compare,

contrast, and cross-reference information and become good at identifying themes, patterns, principles and discrepancies. Such rigorous intellectual training inevitably develops the capacity for *abstract reasoning*, *critical analysis*, and *balanced judgement*. These skills are always valuable, but particularly so in situations where a cool head, an astute overview of both content and process, and strategic vision are required. These are leadership qualities and can lead to success in any job role which calls for decisive and logical thought processes.

Organised understanding:

Law students are required to understand and integrate considerable amounts of specialised information. The process of transforming volumes of statute law, case law, legal precedent, and so on, into some kind of conceptual whole requires skills of *concentration*, *memory*, *deduction*, *critical reasoning*, and *logical analysis*. These are qualities which Law graduates bring to their work roles. These can be professional legal practice or any number of positions where an organised mind and the ability to assimilate and apply new information are important, such as technical roles, policy development, journalism, and library, archive or curatorial roles.

Language skills:

Law graduates are trained intensively in the precise and accurate use of language, including vocabulary, grammar and their associated nuances of meaning. Entire legal outcomes may hinge on the interpretation of a single word, and points of law may swing around the placement of a comma. Through such activities as the Moot Court Programme, Law students become adept at the art of argument both orally and in writing. Skilful use of language is the basis of good communication and most employers value communication skills above all others. Management and professional roles in particular depend on the ability to communicate clearly and effectively, as they typically involve writing reports, strategic plans, policy documents, case notes, job descriptions, and the like. They also require people who can speak with confidence, authority, and clarity, simplify complicated information, and persuade others to offer commitment. Because of their skill with language, Law graduates do these sorts of things rather well.

Problem-solving skills:

To the extent that the law is problem-solving on a large

scale, Law graduates are problem-solvers on a smaller scale. They understand the value of terms of reference, rules, limits and boundaries. They can decide the legitimacy of accusations, complaints, and grievances. They know the damage that breaches of confidence and unethical behaviour can cause. They understand the principles of negotiation and mediation. They have internalised the concept of justice and understand how to apply it. They can, if necessary, function in an adversarial environment. They are well equipped to anticipate, confront, defuse and resolve all manner of troublesome situations. These skills are of huge value in the workplace, especially where the job involves public contact or work with client groups, such as counselling, social work, and media relations or, at a more abstract level, supervisory and management roles.

Research and information management skills:

Law libraries and legal databases are massive repositories of information. Law students learn to use them effectively and efficiently which is good, because the modern workplace is a restless enterprise which gobbles up a great deal of information in the quest for market share, competitive advantage, or output enhancement. Most of this information resides on the Internet and in computer databases, some remains in archives and libraries. People, such as Law graduates, who can mine and interrogate databases and package their findings into reports or presentations are widely valued.

The ability to perform under pressure:

Law students are expected to manage their time and balance their workload. The pressure can be high but it is excellent training for high-output work environments, where keeping cool under pressure is the basis of good cooperative team work, productive client relationships, and makes you proud of a job well done.

GRADUATE PROFILES

Alice Tipping

*Legal Adviser
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
Trade*



I studied Law and a BCA (Bachelor of Commerce and Administration) with a major in Economics at Victoria from 1999-2003, for no other reason than I had no real idea what I wanted to do for a living, and I thought Law and Commerce would be a useful combination whether I went into public or private sector work. My first job out of university was as an Investment Analyst for Investment New Zealand, a division of New Zealand Trade and Enterprise that promotes New Zealand as a destination for foreign direct investment. I found myself writing business cases for multi-million dollar investments; assessing economic conditions, working with statistics and reporting on the impact of legal developments in New Zealand on international businesses. Needless to say, the content and skills of both of my degrees was immediately relevant, and I wished I had paid more attention to the commercial law papers I did!

I started work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in March this year, as part of the Trade and Economic Law Unit within the Legal Division. Six months in, I'm finding that my work draws on literally every paper I did at university. My job cuts across a large number of different areas of law and economics, from advising on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) implications of environmental policies pursued under the Kyoto Protocol, to providing legal advice to our trade negotiators working on the Australia-New Zealand-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement ('FTA' in trade jargon). Particularly with FTAs, I've found my study of law means I can understand not only how the international law of treaty-making works, but also what the provisions being negotiated, be it Intellectual Property, International Investment law, or Market Access for suppliers of services, will mean for business in New Zealand.

Underpinning all of my work are the skills of analysis and communication that I learned (slowly and painfully!) at law school. Understanding abstract concepts

and text, making a reasoned judgment about what it will mean for New Zealand, and then communicating this judgment clearly, simply, and accurately, is what being an international lawyer is all about. While most of you will move into law firms or public policy, international law is becoming exponentially more relevant to New Zealand and New Zealanders, and it's one of the most interesting and challenging career choices out there.

Mark Brown

*Tax Consultant
Ernst & Young*



I came to the decision to study law at university in an unconventional manner.

I began university in Auckland doing a commerce degree which required students to do a commercial law paper. The ComLaw paper was at what can be described as an inconvenient time for a 19 year old student. I was fortunate enough to be informed that a Law paper (which was at a convenient time) could be taken in place of the ComLaw paper. After considering such weighty factors I walked into LAWS 101 happy that I would not be stuck in rush hour traffic after class. While I would not recommend embarking on the study of law with such shallow considerations my foray into the area is a keen example of kismet.

From the first lecture I was hooked. The topics were stimulating and my brain suddenly woke up at university. I had found a subject that required significant thought, tested the mind, caused me to question my values and discussed important issues, both historical and current, that affected all of society.

Not content with living at home and studying, I decided to transfer to Victoria on the recommendation of one of the Auckland lecturers. It remains one of the best recommendations I have received. Victoria's School of Law provided me with a challenging yet enjoyable environment where my enjoyment of legal study was cultivated and shared with others. Along the way I made many close friends (who are now also professional colleagues),

worked for a law firm in San Francisco, tutored other students in commercial law and learnt how important the law is in every aspect of life. A particularly memorable topic I studied was the issues surrounding Maori customary title to land. Subsequent to this topic the Foreshore and Seabed legislation was proposed and the resultant furore occurred.

The challenging nature of legal study prepared me well for my entry into the job market. It teaches you to understand and synthesise a vast body of knowledge, be organised with a demanding workload, recognise the strengths and weaknesses of both sides of an argument, and interact with others on an intellectual level. These are the types of skills that employers value and are looking for in job candidates.

I was lucky enough to be employed as a tax consultant by one of the largest professional services firms in the world, Ernst & Young. My role is both varied and challenging and I actively implement the skills I learnt at Victoria's School of Law every day. The majority of my work consists of working as part of a team providing advice and solutions to large corporate clients. The skills learned at law school of thoroughly researching an issue and analysing the information are the exact ingredients required for writing a useful piece of advice.

Additionally, as tax affects every single decision a business undertakes, my work covers a diverse range of issues and I am building greater experience than would be possible if I worked in an area with a narrow focus. The size of the firm also provides future internal opportunities not possible in domestic firms. For example, some of my colleagues are now working in Ernst & Young Australia, England, Belgium, and Singapore to name a few.

I would unquestionably recommend undertaking the study of law and especially at Victoria to any prospective student that enjoys strong intellectual debate around social issues and wishes to undertake a rewarding challenge. Also, in Wellington, rush hour traffic consisted of the 15 minute stroll from home to lecture theatre.

Rebecca (Becky) Prebble

*Law Clerk
Russell McVeagh*



When I was in fourth form, my best friend Vicky told me that she planned to do law at university. At the time, I didn't have any particular idea of what I might do with my life, the flirtations with the idea of being a vet (kittens!) or a marine biologist (dolphins!) having faded with the end of primary school. When Vicky said she would do law, then I decided that I might too. In those days, the fact that Vicky was doing something was a pretty good reason for me to do it. So when I finished high school, I ended up enrolling in law.

In my experience, very few law students have a clear idea of what they want to do once they graduate. I was no different - I probably changed my mind every six months or so. As part of my decision making process I tried out quite a few different jobs. As an undergraduate I worked in the library of a law firm, as a summer clerk, as a research assistant at Victoria, and as an intern at a tax research body in Croatia. As the end of my degree crept closer, however, I started thinking seriously about what it was exactly that I enjoyed about the law and where I could go that would let me do those things.

With that in mind, I decided to accept a job offer from Russell McVeagh. Even though I remember declaring loudly that I could never see myself working at a commercial law firm (unfortunately a lot of my friends remember that too), I eventually realised that the practice of law was what my skills and preferences were pointing me towards. I wanted to be actually doing law, and I knew that working in a big firm would give me a broad base of experience.

A lot of what I do at Russell McVeagh is quite a bit like law school: people ask me to answer a particular legal question, and I go off and research the answer. For me, the great thing about being in a big firm is the breadth of legal issues that I have been exposed to. Even if I am only tangentially involved in something, I still feel that

I am learning a lot and that I am a part of something bigger.

While I realise that working in a commercial law firm is not for everyone, it is a very good place to start if you want to translate the basic legal reasoning that law school teaches you practical skills that can be applied to real life legal issues.

Christine Turner

**Government Relations Manager
and Legal Counsel
Trade Me**



When I graduated with law and science degrees in 1997, I had no idea that nine years later I'd be working in a place like Trade Me as Government Relations Manager and Legal Counsel. And I didn't have a clue about the interesting roles I'd take on along the way.

Trade Me didn't even exist when I left law school. And while many of the students I graduated with were preparing for careers in law firms, I was more interested in getting involved in what the law *should* be, but didn't know how.

Trade Me is like no other place I've ever worked before (government, ski fields, Parliament, Telecom). With total staff of about 60 young people all sitting in one room, the flow of ideas is constant, everyone's accessible, good ideas are considered on merit and decisions are made quickly on the spot.

In my first few months I found myself grappling with the legality of selling sharks, handbags, amputated human limbs, gin traps and a bikini used in a streaking incident, and helping identify and remove breaches of court suppression orders on the Trade Me Message Boards.

The role is varied and continually changing. It involves some staff compliance training on consumer, copyright and privacy laws, and working with our Trust and Safety team on policies to keep the process as safe and smooth as possible for our members.

I also work closely with government agencies to help ensure listings comply with a wide range of laws, help with their investigations, keep them updated on what we're doing and discuss potential law changes.

The jobs I did before this were not a direct route to Trade Me either. After a brief stint in a government department and working part-time as a ski instructor, I worked as a Parliamentary Researcher for the Labour Caucus in Opposition and then in Government where I did a combination of research, analysed bills as they were introduced into the House, and prepared policy advice.

After some overseas travel, I completed my Legal Professionals and then joined Telecom as Environmental Manager where I advised staff on compliance with environmental and infrastructure networks laws, made submissions on those laws, managed some litigation, and got environmental initiatives going such as office recycling and energy efficiency.

I also joined the Corporate Lawyers Association of NZ (CLANZ) and received a scholarship for a paper on developing in-house compliance programmes. I used the \$5000 prize to attend law and corporate responsibility conferences in Canada.

I found my studies, particularly in Public Law, prepared me well for understanding the wider legal framework and how laws are made. Being able to understand the wider regulatory environment and how policy and politics interact has been really useful, particularly where my jobs have involved making submissions on the law as it stands and also being able to influence what the law should say.

I didn't think I'd be doing any of these things when I was at university, but it's been great. So I'd strongly recommend keeping open-minded about where your career might take you - straying from the beaten track can be great fun.

LAW AT VICTORIA

The LLB continues to be a popular degree with students, and its structure reflects the University's aim of producing graduates marked by the three key attributes of (i) creative and critical thinking, (ii) leadership, and (iii) communication skills. Those skills, in turn, are of enormous use in the workplace – and not solely the workplace of legal practice. Consequently, students are recognising the LLB for its value across a number of career paths. While the more predictable career path may still be that of private legal practice, Victoria's LLB graduates are also sought after in the private corporate world, in the wider public sector (and in particular in law reform agencies, policy-making bodies, research and drafting institutes), and in academia. And the attraction and value of the LLB is enhanced further still when combined with another degree: the LLB/BA (Bachelor of Law/Bachelor of Arts) and LLB/BCA (Bachelor of Law/Bachelor of Commerce and Administration) remain extremely popular, and highly useful, conjoint degrees.

Broadly speaking, the LLB itself is split into two parts: the compulsory subjects, as laid down by the Council of Legal Education and common to all NZ LLBs, and the 300-level electives offered by the VUW Law Faculty. The former part covers the basics which every LLB graduate must cover; the latter provides the students with the opportunity to specialise. At that specialist level, the VUW Law Faculty is particularly strong in the Public / Administrative / International Law areas – not unexpectedly for a law faculty which has the heart of government, all levels of court up to and including the Supreme Court, and the legislative drafters themselves all within a stone's throw of the Faculty's offices.

Upon invitation, LLB students may enter the Honours programme. The LLB(Hons) degree sees the students pick up Honours-level work during the course of their LLB. That work comprises the submission of an extended legal writing, and the submission and presentation of seminar papers, in classes which are a mix of Honours and Masters students. This blending of Honours and Masters students sees all students being challenged to perform to a higher standard – and meeting that challenge. On average, entering the Honours programme adds an additional year of study.

The LLM is an option for those who choose not to go down the LLB(Hons) track, and for others who wish to enhance their legal skills. The LLM can be completed by thesis, dissertation and course work, or simply by course work, and at a pace which suits the individual student's other commitments. The LLM offerings reflect the wide-ranging strengths of the Law Faculty and the demands of the students, with a strong focus not only on Public and International Law, but also on business law, common law and personal law.



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