

5. Frequently asked recruitment questions

Q. What is the recruitment process?

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

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. All of the required legal information (i.e. regulations or statutes) is provided with the question. It is not possible to provide examples of previous questions.

Q. Who carries out the interview?

A. The interview panel will be made up of three people; an independent, experienced Chair, usually a non-lawyer; a lawyer from the department to which you have applied; and a lawyer from another GLS department.

Q. Can you tell me more about the interview?

A. The selection process is intended to give as full a picture as possible of your legal, analytical and communication skills. As well as discussion of the written exercise, the interview covers general legal issues, previous experience and the job for which you have applied. Interviews are generally held in central 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 apply now for a post in the GLS. 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 apply now for a GLS post.

Q. I do not have a 2:1 degree (or above). Will my application still be considered?

A. All candidates should have obtained an upper second-class degree. If you obtained a lower class of degree but feel that your experience since then demonstrates evidence of high level academic and/or professional achievement, you should make reference to this in the space provided on the application form.

Q. I am qualified as a Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives. Am I eligible?

A. If you are a 'FILEX' and have been accepted on to the Roll of Solicitors then you are eligible to apply to the GLS.

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/pupillages are available each year in various Government departments and you should refer to the 'Graduate Recruitment' pages on the GLS website (www.gls.gov.uk) 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 a qualified lawyer competition. However, the GLS offers a small number of training positions and pupillages each year. Please contact the GLS Recruitment Team on 0845 300 0793 or e-mail 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 www.careers.civil-service.gov.uk

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. What are the GLS' nationality requirements?

A. The GLS is part of the wider Civil Service and therefore the general Civil Service nationality rules apply. To apply to the GLS, you must be a UK national, a Commonwealth citizen, or a national of an EEA member state. Certain non-EEA nationals may also be eligible for appointment. Also, you should have the right to work and reside in the UK.

Q. Will GLS departments sponsor me for a work and/or residency permit?

A. No. GLS departments do not sponsor individuals.

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

A. To apply to become a lawyer in GLS you must fulfil the nationality requirements and be eligible to practise in England and Wales. If you are qualified to practise in another jurisdiction, you will need to take the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test (QLTT). Information about the QLTT can be obtained from the Law Society on 020 7242 1222 or www.lawsoc.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 Legal Officer/Grade 7, Grade 6 and Senior Civil Servant.

The level of entry into the GLS will 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 and current knowledge required for the GLS. As a serving Civil Servant, you can also 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 job description.

Q. May I apply to more than one department?

A. Yes. Please note that if you have applied unsuccessfully to a department and wish to apply again, you will need to wait six months before reapplying to that department.

Q. How does the reserve list operate?

A. If, at interview, you are considered to meet the requirements of the job but are not made an offer – due, for example, to the number of other successful candidates – you will have the option of having your details placed on the GLS reserve list. This list is circulated to other recruiting departments, who will contact those candidates who may be suitable. Your details will remain on the reserve list for six months. If you wish to reapply for another department at any stage, you will be free to do so and your name will be removed from the reserve list with immediate effect.

Q. Which departments are recruiting?

Most vacancies are advertised on the GLS website (www.gls.gov.uk) .

GLS departments who do not use the central GLS recruitment arrangements to recruit lawyers will advertise their positions on the Civil Service Recruitment Gateway (www.civilservice.gov.uk/jobs) rather than on the GLS website.