

LLM – Programme Choice?

Students' motivations for studying an LLM vary. Some may do so for the pleasure of study and others may do so because they wish to go on to a PhD and, ultimately, to an academic career. However, many of our students wish to pursue a career in the legal profession.

The concern of some students when considering which programme to study at LLM is that their choice will influence their future employment prospects. They worry that by deciding upon one particular programme they might limit the range of work that they can apply for at a later date but that if they choose a general LLM this might be too broad for a specific area of work.

In terms of advice, it is important to realise that every person is unique and there is no general answer about which is the best programme to take in order to work in a particular legal role. This depends upon personal experiences, goals and aspirations. There are however some common-sense actions that can be taken to help. For example you should carefully read about the modules offered within each Programme and consider how they fit in with your current career profile and the one that you wish to develop.

When thinking about a programme choice, a useful point to consider is that when writing a CV (or resume) to apply for a particular position in the UK you have the opportunity not only to name your LLM Programme but to include details of all your chosen modules within it and (once known) the title of your dissertation. This means that if you want to take a particular programme and choose to select one taught module in another parallel or complementary LLM legal area you can do so and use your CV to explain the spread of modules you've taken. When teamed with your work experiences, individual skills, achievements and positions of responsibility you can tailor your CV to show why you are the right person for the job in question.

Another point to bear in mind for those wishing to eventually take up a Training Contract in the UK, is that no matter how specialised your LLM, the training you receive at a commercial law firm will cover a number of different areas of law. It is only at the end of your training that you will be expected to choose a single area in which to practise. This choice will depend not only upon previous academic and professional experience but also availability of work, how you performed during training and what areas of work you found the most enjoyable.

Enjoying what you do is always important and this is something else to bear in mind when making your LLM programme decision. As you are investing a great deal of time and effort into your LLM year it is logical to choose a programme with modules that you find interesting and enjoyable. It's also likely that you will do better when you enjoy your chosen modules as you will be motivated to work well.

A final point to highlight is that once you have applied for your chosen programme you leave your decision regarding which modules to take within this programme until after you arrive at Queen Mary. During the extensive two week induction period you will have the chance to discuss choices and gather further information and experience a week of teaching on the modules that interest you. This will give you a great opportunity to decide which modules are best for you, taking into consideration not only content but teaching style and how this suits your own unique requirements as a learner.