

Career Opportunities in International Law

International Law is an interdisciplinary academic field for students who are interested in cross-border issues such as international business and human rights. To practice International Law, it is essential to first develop your legal knowledge and skills. Increasingly, international lawyers are specializing in at least one other area by combining a focused master's degree that supplements their legal skills. While a J.D. and an international degree cannot guarantee work that is global in nature, the combination will give you a leg up when such jobs develop within an organization. Additionally, it is beneficial to be proficient in at least one other language and to have overseas experience.

For every job in international law, analytical ability, research and writing skills, and the knowledge of the basic differences in the world's legal systems as well as their political and cultural contexts is essential.

Career Paths and Entry Salaries

The available career paths for an international lawyer can be broken down into law firms, federal government, corporate counsel, international organizations and non-profit groups.

Private law firms handle most international business transactions, although the degree varies on the specialty of the firm. New York City and Washington D.C. have the largest number of international law firms. However there are quite a number of firms in smaller cities. Law firms with foreign offices usually send mid-level associates overseas based on skills and language ability. Once there, an attorney may choose not to return to the United States and still be able to achieve partnership. The starting salary for an associate in a New York law firms ranges from \$82,000 to \$86,000.

The federal government's largest employer of lawyers is the Department of State and Defense. However, each division either has an in-house legal division or a General Counsel Office. Lawyers at the State Department will have timely policymaking work and have the opportunity to advise policy-makers. While the government cannot offer all the perks and comforts of a private firm, a young government attorney is likely to be given an immense amount of responsibility early on. Salaries for government lawyers also are lower than those in the private sector.

Corporate lawyers are the most active international lawyers today as most of the work done by law firms has now moved in-house. Corporations are more prone to hire lawyers well versed domestic issues like antitrust law, contracts, securities regulations, or trademarks and then train them for international law. Each company has its own bureaucratic ladder within the legal department for young lawyers to climb and as a first and second-year attorney you can expect to work very long hours on long-term cases.

International organizations and non-profit agencies offer a wide variety of options for an international lawyer. These organizations typically do not offer solid legal training and lawyers are expected to hit the ground running. The United Nations Legal Counsel's Office, the legal departments of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have the most active legal shops. The United Nations Legal Office is deeply involved in legal problems arising from the administration of United Nations operations. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund attorneys can be assigned to leading operations or participate in the settlement of investment disputes between countries. Legal positions in the private non-profit field include organizations such as Amnesty International USA, Catholic Relief

Services and CARE. It is advisable for attorneys to begin their careers in the private sector and then move into an international organization or non-profit.

Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field

"Of the two degrees, law and international affairs, you will find the former of paramount importance in the job hunt," (Kocher Segal, *International Jobs*, 5th Ed.) It is essential to first hone your legal knowledge and skills through internships and clerkships. A master's degree in international affairs, or a related field, should supplement your legal education by providing insight into the international legal world and exposing you to jobs as they arise within your firm.

Other skills that are highly recommended include foreign languages, overseas experience and a strong interest in practicing law in an international setting. The most common foreign languages required by organizations include French, German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish. Overseas experience allows you to immerse yourself in a foreign culture and develop the understanding and patience required to work in an international environment. Participation in the Jessup Moot Court competition, working for an international law journal and securing a summer position in an international law firm are further ways to expand your credentials. By adding these skills to a background of law and international affairs you will have a solid foundation on which to build an international legal career.

Sample Group of Employers:

- American Civil Liberties Union, www.aclu.org/
- Amnesty International, www.amnestyusa.org
- CARE, Inc., www.care.org/
- Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton, New York, NY, www.cgsh.com/
- Coudert Brothers, New York, www.coudert.com/
- Constitutional Court of South Africa, <http://www.constitutionalcourt.org.za/site/home.htm>
- Debevoise & Plimpton, New York www.debevoise.com/
- Davis, Polk, and Wardwell, New York, NY www.davispolk.com/
- Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, Los Angeles, CA <http://www.gibsondunn.com/default.aspx>
- Inter-American Court of Human Rights, <http://www.cidh.oas.org/DefaultE.htm>
- International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, www.ictt.org
- International Monetary Fund, www.imf.org/
- The United Nations, www.un.org/
- Woodrow Wilson International Center, www.wilsoncenter.org
- World Bank, www.worldbank.org/
- World Policy Institute, www.worldpolicy.org

Demand

Generally, competition for jobs is high due to the large number of law school graduates and the current economic climate that is forcing some firms to cut back on hiring. Increasingly, law graduates are using their specialized training to secure jobs in related fields.

While globalization brings the private and public sectors closer together, the demand for international lawyers rises. Increasingly, larger organizations are establishing offices in foreign countries to handle international issues. This development has created a niche for lawyers with a master's degree in international affairs, language skills, cultural awareness

and overseas experience. Developing countries need lawyers to assist in their legal transformations and organizations like the United Nations need lawyers to interpret their charters and international law.

Future Challenges of the Profession

The demand for international lawyers with expertise in international relations and cross-border transactions will continue to grow as the legal industry globalizes. The international legal field is constantly redefining itself by adding new areas to the practice, making it difficult for attorneys to describe themselves as all-inclusive international lawyers.

The international law career field is unsystematic at best and preparing yourself to meet its demands is challenging because there is no international law career ladder to climb or road to follow. Another challenge of the profession is to not be discouraged by the lack of international work at the beginning of your career or the length of time it takes to develop your career. As a rule, a lawyer will gain experience exclusively in domestic law until a client involved in an international project requires their domestic expertise.

Resources for More Information

Associations/Websites

- American Bar Association, www.abanet.org/intlaw/home.html
- American Society of International Law, www.asil.org
- Friends of Jessup, www.foj.org
- International Law Students Association, <http://www.ilsa.org/>
- International Bar Association, www.ibanet.org
- International Chamber of Commerce, www.iccwbo.org/
- International Municipal Lawyers Association, www.imla.org
- Inter-American Bar Association, www.iaba.org

Directories

Kimes International Law Directory

Publications

- ASIL's Careers in International Law: Your Indispensable Guide to Career Paths and Internships in International Law (1999)
- Careers in International Affairs, Editors: Maria Pinto-Carland and Lisa A. Gihring, Georgetown University Press (2003)
- Careers in International Law: A Guide to Career Paths and Internships in International Law (2003)
- Careers in International Law, Mark W. Janis, ed., Washington D.C.: Section of International Law and Practices, American Bar Association, (1993)
- Global Law in Practice, Ross J. Harper, ed., The Hague: Kluwer Law International and International Bar Association, (1997)
- ILSA Guide to Education and Career Development in International Law, Jonathan C. Green et al, International Law Association, (1991)
- The Official Guide to Legal Specialties: An Insider's Guide to Every Major Practice Area, Lisa L. Abrams, Harcourt Legal and Professional Publications (2000)

- *Public Service and International Law: A Guide to Professional Opportunities in the United States and Abroad*, 3rd edition, Stephen K. Park and Susan J. Feathers, New Haven, Conn.: Yale Law School, (1998)

Field Specific Information

J.D./M.P.A. The combined Juris Doctor/Master of Public Administration is available for students who plan to use their law degree in federal, state or local government agencies and not-for-profit or quasi- governmental organizations. The dual degree is intended to enhance the student's career possibilities in law, government, health care, non-profit and related fields. The dual degree can be valuable for persons seeking careers as city managers, administrators of judicial and quasi-judicial organizations, staff members in governmental agencies, and legislative researchers, among others. The J.D./M.P.A. creates rewarding opportunities in law firms, health care facilities, insurance companies, public interest organizations

Internet Resources

- <http://www.internationaljobs.org/> – A tool to assist job seekers interested in international employment as organizations such as the UN, International Criminal Court, International Labour Organization, World Bank, etc.
- www.lawcrossing.com – Legal employment job and internship board and career resources for lawyers, law students, paralegals, legal secretaries and other legal professionals.
- www.idealists.org – A project of Action Without Borders which contains job and internship listings in economic development, social services, human rights, environment, etc.

www.lib.uchicago.edu/~llou/careers.html - Website affiliated with the University of Chicago Law School which provides a collection of links to other job sites where users can search for law positions.