

Legal executive

Job description

A legal executive is a professional person who is a member of The Irish Institute of Legal Executives. Working with solicitors, barristers, in the Courts of Ireland, and within other areas of commercial and legal practice, they assist in general and specialist legal matters. This goes beyond secretarial or administrative assistance: accumulated practical experience and/or academic credentials qualifies them to work with a solicitor or other legal practitioner in the handling of client cases relating to conveyancing, probate, criminal, civil, family or other legal matters.

The day-to-day job varies considerably depending on where employed but can involve providing backup to solicitors or working on small parts of big cases. Under the supervision of solicitors, some have files in their own names, deal directly with clients and work on cases completely from start to finish. They can also be appointed as commissioners for oaths.

Registration of the term Legal Executives for the exclusive use of the Institute of Legal Executives is at an advanced stage and upon completion no-one will be allowed to use that term unless they are a member of the Institute.

Work activities

- Interviewing clients; advising them on the best course of action to take
- Attending court to assist solicitors and barristers with the presentation of their case
- May specialise in such areas as conveyancing, litigation, probate family law, wills, criminal cases, civil disputes, company formation and debt recovery.

Work conditions

Travel: possible travel to meet clients or to attend court hearings, though much will depend on the practice. Overseas travel is rare.

Working hours: regular office hours.

Location: opportunities mainly in towns or cities throughout the country

Opportunities for self-employment: unlikely.

Typical employers

- Private practices
- Legal departments in banks, building societies and commercial companies
- Civil Service, Chief State Solicitors Office, local government etc.

Career development

May go on to become solicitors.

Salaries

Republic of Ireland: Junior legal executives earn €22,000–€24,000 but can earn salaries in excess of €30,000 after several years' experience. Those working in larger firms can earn considerably more than this.

Entry requirements and training

The Irish Institute of Legal Executives (IILEX) is the Irish governing body founded for the purpose and advancement of the interests of legal executives in Ireland. While a variety of courses exist, the IILEX in conjunction with Griffith College offer a Certificate and Diploma in Professional Legal Studies.

Specific degree subjects required

Open to non-graduates and graduates of any discipline.

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Other relevant degree subjects

- Administration
- Business
- Law
- Legal studies
- Management.

Postgraduate study

A pre-entry postgraduate qualification is not a requirement.

Specific entry requirements

There are two routes to full membership of IILEX both of which required practical experience.

Training

Most of the training is on the job.

Tips for applications

Gain experience as a receptionist or office junior in a legal office.

Skills and qualities

- Confidence
- Excellent communication skills
- Attention to detail
- Excellent research skills
- Ability to relate to clients from all backgrounds.

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