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Morgan Cole



Vault 2009 UK Law Rankings



- #1 Best Firm for Informal Training
- #5 Best Firm for Working Hours
- #5 Best in Diversity - Women

Ranking Methodology

In spring 2008, Vault surveyed over 2,500 solicitors in the UK and asked them to rate the top Law firms. We took these scores to calculate our prestige rankings. For our quality of life rankings, solicitors were asked to rate their own firms on specific issues and then scored the firms against each other.

About Vault

Founded in 1997, Vault is the leading media company focused on careers. With offices in New York, London, Mumbai and Hong Kong, Vault provides graduates and young professionals worldwide with insider information on careers and education through its websites and career guides.

The Stats

No. of lawyers: 259
Partners: 52
Solicitors: 166
Trainees: 20
No. of offices: 6
Trainee intake: 12
Trainees retained: 88% (2008)
Chairman: Robin Havard
Managing partner: Elizabeth Carr
Base Salary (2008)
Wales
1st-year trainee: £18,500
2nd-year trainee: £20,500
Newly qualified: £35,000
Thames Valley
1st-year trainee: £21,000
2nd-year trainee: £23,000
Newly qualified: £39,000

Major Departments & Practice

Commercial • Commercial Property • Competition • Construction • Corporate • Dispute Management • Education • Employment • Energy • Finance • Health & Social Care • Information Technology • Insurance • Intellectual Property • Private Client

Notable Perks

- Buying & Selling of holiday scheme
- Trainee social groups & activities
- Active CSR committee groups
- Child care voucher scheme
- Healthcare cover
- Death benefit x4 of salary
- Free employee assistance

European Locations

Bristol • Cardiff • Oxford • Reading (2 locations) • Swansea

Employment Contact

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The following is independent Vault research from the Vault Guide to the Top 50 UK Law Firms.

Getting Hired

Intelligent and outgoing

“We are a popular choice within the local market so there is competition for any job,” notes one insider in Wales. Others agree that it can be tough to land a job at Morgan Cole. “Having interviewed people, I wouldn’t say it was easy to get a job unless you are an applicant with the right attitude,” one solicitor tells us. The “right attitude” includes being “clever but with good common sense”, with a commitment to working at a regional firm—“ie, not those who want to use the firm as a stepping stone to a job in London”. Candidates should be “enthusiastic”, “technically able, commercially aware, able to network and market”. The firm also “welcomes people who have experience in areas other than law”, and “age is no object: there are a high proportion of older trainees”.

The hiring process for qualified lawyers is fairly standard—“two-interview process and informal meeting with team”. For training contracts, we are told, “The level of candidates interviewed is very high”. Most trainees agree that “the firm is looking for candidates who are outgoing and good with people, as much as those that are academically gifted”.

Our Survey Says

Fully engaged

There are lots of happy lawyers at Morgan Cole, thanks to a “a variety of interesting and challenging work”, “excellent training and approachable superiors”, and a “friendly, down-to-earth” culture. It is “a great, vibrant firm, with partners and associates who are always willing to impart and share their knowledge and experience to junior lawyers,” declares a contact

in Cardiff.

Most insiders find that the “hours are reasonable”. “The time spent in the office reflects the particular nature of the work undertaken,” explains one solicitor. “There is flexibility in terms of needing to leave slightly early or start later. There is no ‘last one in the office mentality’”. Indeed, “if you’ve done your work you leave at 5pm”. Lawyers appreciate that they are treated like grown-ups: “Partners trust solicitors to get on with their work, so no surveillance culture!”

Have a seat and I’ll make you a cuppa

Relations between solicitors and partners are considered very good. “All the lawyers and partners are very approachable, operating on an ‘open-doors’ basis,” says one solicitor. “There is no perceived partner/solicitor divide” and lawyers are “treated with respect and appreciation”. One Oxford source is awed by the fact that “partners make tea for everyone in the office (trainees/NQs aren’t always expected to do it!)”.

This helpful attitude carries over into “excellent on-the-job training”. “Partners and senior solicitors spend a great amount of time explaining things to juniors,” insiders say, and add that “advice and guidance are always at hand, if required”. There’s no such thing as a silly question. “All the partners in the firm are always willing to answer any questions that may appear stupid or trivial, and each trainee has a mentor throughout the training programme to monitor the level of supervision and satisfaction with the training,” reports a corporate lawyer. While it seems that most formal, structured training is geared toward trainees, “if the fee earner in question feels that they require training in a particular area, the firm is more than happy to assist”.

One area in which Morgan Cole excels is in its commitment to

making the firm a successful workplace for women. “I think a lot can be gauged from the number of female partners in the firm,” says one lawyer, and another notes that “a lot of the women solicitors with children work part time”.

The firm’s atmosphere is clearly one of its assets. Morgan Cole is described as “a friendly firm that prides itself on the excellent way it looks after its staff”. It is considered “reasonably social”. Some insiders say there are “lots of social events for all staff to participate”, as well as more informal outings, such as Friday night drinks or “curry evenings”.

Trainees Talk

Respect from the start

“Overall, I really enjoy my trainee experience,” reports one insider, reflecting a common view. “The people are great, the work has always been stimulating and I have never found myself in the photocopying room for longer than a couple of minutes,” says another. “Everyone is friendly, from the secretaries to the partners,” which makes for a “friendly supportive environment”. The firm’s much-touted quality of life extends to trainee solicitors as well, who cite the “good work/life balance across teams”. Trainees may “work longer hours when a particular project demands it”, but “you are not expected to work all hours that God sends”.

Many say that they receive “good levels of responsibility and very good exposure to partners and clients”, but others find that they have to ask “for a bit more responsibility” and “don’t have enough direct contact with clients”. The “level of responsibility and workload varies depending on department,” explains a second-year. However, in general, insiders report, “Responsibility is given if you feel happy enough to take it. The support is always there if you need it”.