Procurator Fiscal

Procurators Fiscal are qualified solicitors who work for the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS). They investigate and prosecute all crime in Scotland and are independent of the police and the courts.

The Work

You could be:

- receiving and investigating reports of incidents from the police and other law enforcement bodies, such as HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)
- deciding if a crime has been committed under Scots Law and if there is enough evidence to prosecute – this process involves a lot of legal research
- deciding if it is in the public interest to prosecute or whether to impose a fixed penalty fine
- preparing cases for prosecution, summoning witnesses, instructing the police and other agencies to gather evidence
- initiating prosecution by putting the facts to the court – Justice of the Peace, Sheriff or High Court depending on how serious the crime is or, in the case of juvenile crime, referring the case to the Reporter to the Children's Panel
- presenting the case for the prosecution in jury trials in the Justice of the Peace and Sheriff Courts, and preparing cases for Crown Counsel (who are Advocates) to present in the High Court
- investigating and deciding on cases of sudden or suspicious death
- in some such cases, initiating a Fatal Accident Inquiry
- attending the scene of such deaths with a pathologist, as a coroner would in England and Wales.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting salary for a COPFS Legal Trainee (April 2025) is £33,754 in year 1 and £37,636 in year 2.

The salary for a Procurator Fiscal Depute starts at £57,701 rising to £71,942 in annual increments (April 2025).

Conditions

- Procurators Fiscal work from offices and in the law courts.
- You may have to visit scenes of crime or accidents.
- You would normally work a 37-hour week but may have to work long hours when you are preparing an important case.
- You would be on a rota to be on call over weekends and evenings.
- You have to wear a gown in court.

Getting In

- All Procurators Fiscal are qualified solicitors. You must first obtain the relevant law degree (Foundation Programme) and the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice (PEAT 1). The Diploma is the first stage of Professional Education and Training (or PEAT, the term used to describe the postgraduate stages of becoming a solicitor). For detailed entry requirements into this profession, see the job profile Solicitor.
- For entry to the LLB degree, you need Highers or Advanced Highers at A or B. (Check university prospectuses for the entry requirements for individual LLB courses). You need Higher English, and some universities also specify passes in Maths, science subjects, a language or a social science subject at National 5.
- If you apply to the University of Glasgow to study law you have to sit the National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT). You must register with LNAT to sit the test. You must also apply through UCAS.
- Following completion of the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice (PEAT 1) you then complete 2 years post-Diploma practical training (PEAT 2) with a practising solicitor. The 2-year traineeship could be with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS).
- COPFS offers a limited number of Legal Traineeships each year. There is strong competition for these places.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- independent, honest and trustworthy
- self-confident
- assertive
- able to make decisions which may be unpopular
- able to analyse situations logically, understand facts and present them clearly
- good at speaking in public

You need to have:

- patience, perseverance, attention to detail
- a good memory
- research skills
- good organisational skills.

Training

- Trainees in the COPFS follow a highly structured training programme over two years.
- The first year is spent in different placements undertaking a wide range of activities. Placements include: Local Courts; Appeals; Civil Recovery; High Court; International Co-operation; Policy and Engagement; Proceeds of Crime; Crown Counsel; Scottish Fatalities Investigations; and Litigation.
- In the second year, you would explore the role in more depth and present cases in the Justice of the Peace Court or Sheriff Summary Court.
- If you are already a qualified solicitor, having completed the PEAT 2 elsewhere, you can also join the

COPFS as a Procurator Fiscal Depute. You would shadow experienced staff as you gain experience of the service and of carrying out prosecutions.

Getting On

- Training in the profession is ongoing as you would need to keep up with changes in the law that may affect the job.
- There is a clear career structure with different grades of Procurator Fiscal. You will be employed in one the district offices across Scotland or in the Crown Office.
- You may have to move around Scotland to get wider experience. Competition is strong for promoted posts.
- You may be able to move to other posts within the Civil Service.

Contacts

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Statistics

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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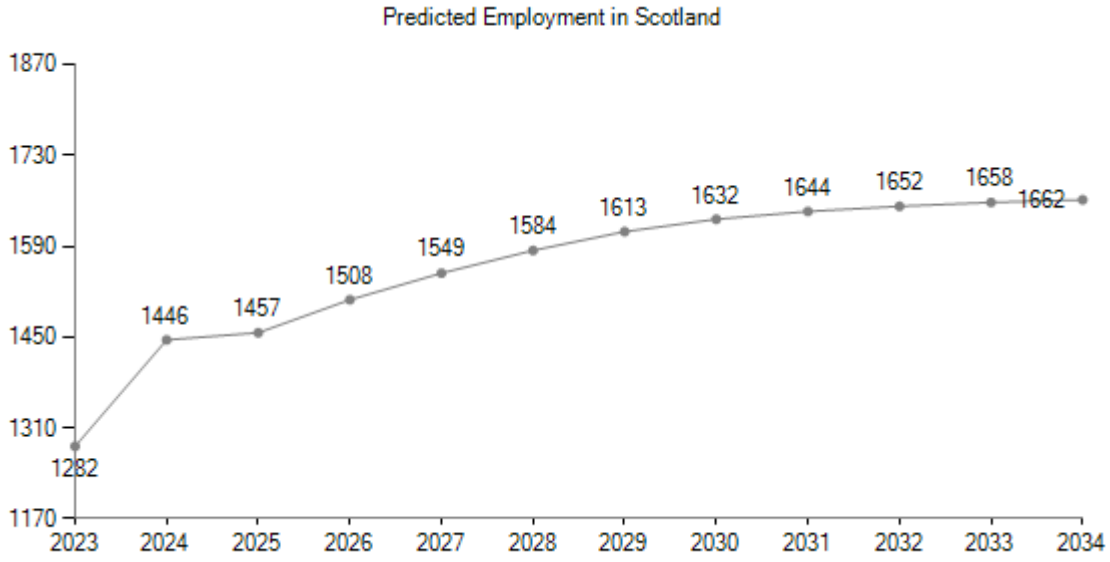

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