

Advocate

Advocates in Scotland give legal advice to solicitors and other professionals, and specialise in the expert presentation of cases either in court or at other decision making bodies. They also provide opinions on a wide range of legal matters which do not involve going to court.

They are sometimes called counsel, and are similar to barrister in the rest of the UK.

The Work

You could be:

- advising solicitors and other professionals on a wide range of legal issues
- researching the facts of each case, including the details of previous relevant cases
- preparing cases for court, by reading witness statements and other reports important to the case
- presenting the facts of the client's case to the judge and jury, cross-examining witnesses and summing up the case
- in civil matters, preparing a written case on the client's behalf
- writing up your opinion of cases and other legal matters
- dealing with all types of cases, but perhaps, after lengthy experience, building up expertise in particular areas
- in addition to appearing in court, also appearing at other decision making bodies, such as employment tribunals and public inquiries.

Pay

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

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

Self-employed Advocates depend for their income on solicitors and other professionals deciding to instruct them. Earnings vary widely, depending on success and workload.

- The Law Society of Scotland sets the minimum rates for trainee lawyers. Currently, the recommended rate for trainees is £24,840 (2025) for the first year of training and in year 2 this will rise to £28,850.
- Income for Advocates at the start of their career is usually in the range of £30,000 to £38,000 a year.
- Advocates based in the Procurator Fiscal Service as Advocate Depute can earn in the region of around £97,000 to £150,000 a year.
- Trained lawyers working for the Government Legal Service for Scotland (GLSS) can earn around £47,000 a year, rising to around £58,000 a year with experience.
- When an Advocate becomes a KC (King's Counsel), they can earn significantly more.

Conditions

- Advocates work from the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh as well as in courts.
- You have to work long hours when you are preparing an important case, including evenings and weekends.
- You frequently have to prepare for cases at short notice.
- You would wear a wig and gown in court.

Getting In

- The first step to becoming an Advocate is to obtain a degree in Scots Law (Foundation Programme) and the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice. The Diploma is Stage 1 of Professional Education and Training (PEAT), one of the postgraduate stages of becoming a solicitor. For detailed requirements into this profession, see the job profile on [Solicitor](#).
- For entry to the LLB degree, you normally need 4 or 5 Highers at A or B, preferably at a single sitting. You need to have Higher English, and some universities also require passes in Maths, a science subject, 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 apply through UCAS as well.
- After the Diploma, for Stage 2 of PEAT, you would complete at least 21 months' training within a solicitor's office (although 24 months is recommended).
- You must matriculate as an Intransit to the Faculty of Advocates' and pass the Faculty of Advocates' examinations in Evidence, Practice and Procedure.
- Following that, you would then have to serve between 8 and 9 months as a pupil to an Advocate. This process is called 'devilling', and is unpaid. It comprises of a mix of skills training courses and time spent working with a devilmaster (a practising member of the junior bar of at least seven years and working primarily in civil practice).
- On successful completion of the devilling period, you would be admitted as an advocate.

Most Advocates are self-employed, including working as Crown Counsel - Advocate Depute for the Procurator Fiscal Service. Some Advocates also work for the Scottish Government through the GLSS. The traineeship adverts get posted on the [Work for Scotland](#) website at the start of the year, for posts starting in September of the following year.

What Does It Take

You need to be able to:

- absorb facts quickly and retain them
- read and understand complex legal documents
- think logically and quickly and react to unexpected information when in court
- speak confidently in public and present legal opinion to the non-expert
- work well under pressure to meet deadlines.

You need to have:

- excellent attention to detail

- excellent communication skills
- sound judgement
- analytical skills
- good research and writing skills
- physical and mental stamina.

Training

Once you have qualified as an Advocate, you will be expected to keep your skills and knowledge up to date through continuing professional development (CPD).

Getting On

- Once you have finally qualified, you may practise as an Advocate, based in Edinburgh.
- Unlike solicitors, almost all Advocates are self-employed and in practice on their own; they cannot form partnerships.
- After a number of years' experience, usually at least 13, you can apply to 'take silk' (become a King's Counsel), as a senior Advocate, which leads to more work in important cases.
- You may get promotion to sit on tribunals.
- You may become a sheriff or judge.
- You could work as a specialist legal adviser for a private company or local or central government.

More Information

The Faculty of Advocates holds an annual open day for those interested in a career as an Advocate. See the website for more details.

Other members of the Faculty of Advocates include judges, sheriffs and a small number working in industry, commerce or central or local government. Some Advocates specialise in a particular field, but in Scotland most of them do a broad range of work.

Contacts

Faculty of Advocates

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Email: info@advocates.org.uk

Website: www.advocates.org.uk

X: @FacultyScot

Government Legal Service for Scotland (GLSS)

Tel: 0300 244 4000

Email: GLSSResourcing@gov.scot

Website: www.gov.scot/publications/legal-traineeships

Law Society of Scotland

Tel: 0131 226 7411

Email: lawscot@lawscot.org.uk

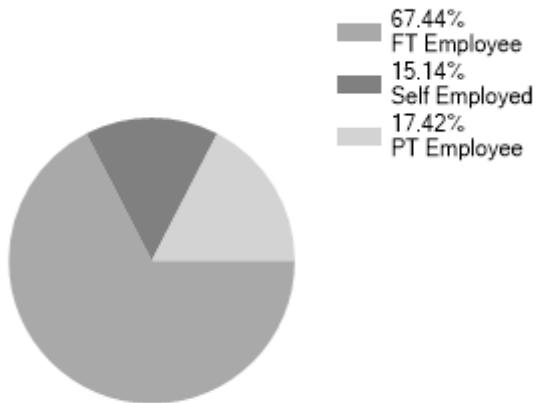
Website: www.lawscot.org.uk

Website (2): www.lawscotjobs.co.uk

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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

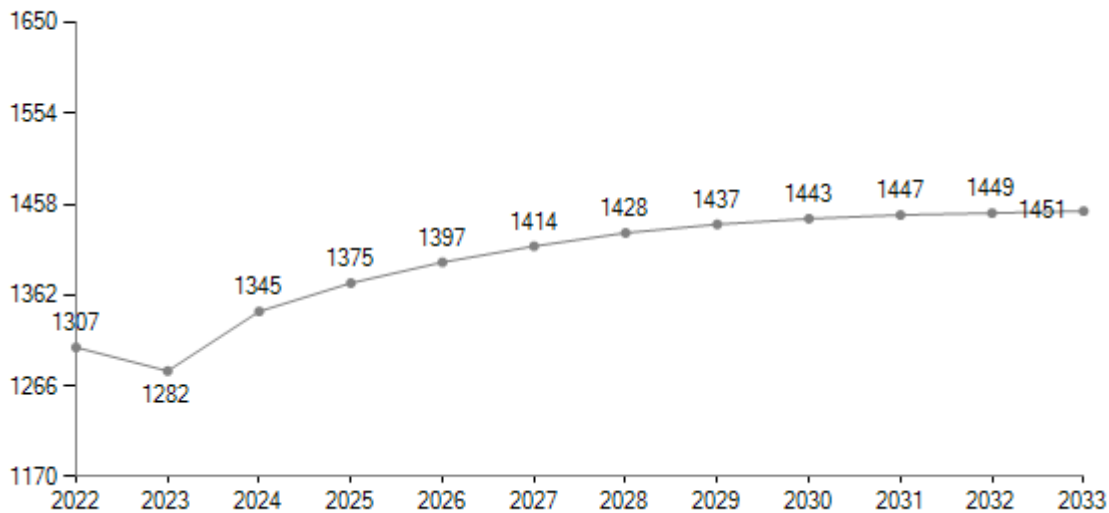


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)