

Live Chat Series: ACCESS

23/11/2020



I was awarded the LLM by University of Glasgow, therefore can I apply to the access scheme?

I am planing to apply to the Middle East training contract because I am native Arabic speaker.

Career Choices question asked by **Mohammad B.** | 3 replies



Aasha T.

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

Hi Mohammed, good to see you again! I think we spoke about this in one of our other chats but please feel free to contact our Dubai office directly. Good luck!



Mohammad B.

23/11/2020

Okay, many thanks. Am I eligible to apply to the access scheme?



Aasha T.

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

No unfortunately you fall out of the target group - this is an opportunity for yr 12 and 13 students.

careers.cliffordchance.com/london/what-w...

What was your experience of the scheme like and how was the application process?

General question asked by **Muhammed P.** | 6 replies



O'Neil O.

Future Trainee, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

Hello I'm O'Neil Ouinsou I am currently a third year History undergraduate at UCL and took part in the ACCESS Scheme in 2018 then the Clifford Chance open day in 2019 followed by the SPARK scheme and am currently a future trainee at the firm. I look forward to following up on some of your questions.



O'Neil O.

Future Trainee, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

I found the scheme a great learning experience, given that I had not previously undertaken any legal work experience the programme was understandable and very informative, I really felt that I left with a comprehensive knowledge of the firm's operations and the wider legal sector. The application process involved a brief application form which outlines your motivations for applying and also details of the skills and contributions you feel you could bring to the scheme. There's also a brief work experience section too, I recommend outlining values and skills which the firm mentions on its website and provide good examples to support these with.



Karishma K.

ACCESS Alumni, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

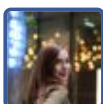
My experience during the scheme was unmatched. I found that I was able to learn so much about what life as a commercial lawyer was but CC also arranged for barristers to come in so we could make an informed decision. On top of this, they made the week interactive and towards the end we had a business challenge activity which not only allowed us to assume the role of a partner at the firm but it also helped us practise some of the key competencies a lawyer requires



Hania S.

23/11/2020

Great to hear from you ONeil! Seems like you are the lucky ones who have managed to complete all the experiences CC had to offer. Thank you for your fantastic insights



Katie A.

SPARK Alumni, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Hi Muhammed! Thank you for your question. The application process for me (in 2018-19) asked us to give our grades so far and answer general questions about your suitability to be a lawyer. The experience and the support I received both during the scheme and after was incredible. You gain exposure to CC as a firm and their culture, commercial work and an understanding of areas like M&A. The support continues with mentors and consistent communication from the firm. Good luck!



Karishma K.

ACCESS Alumni, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Furthermore, CC have always stayed in contact with us and offered masses of support even a year after my placement. In regard to the application process, I would divide it into two sections; the WG and the application form. For the application form it was not too difficult if I recall. The WG is not make or break for the ACCESS scheme (or at least it wasn't when I applied, you may want to check this with Jackie) which was good as I found it a bit difficult. Only advice for that is to practice and for the application form, be honest and do your research as to what the firm is looking for (in brief, this is interesting people with an interest in law who possess some of the key skills)



How does working for Clifford Chance differ to other firms?

[Life at the Company](#) question asked by **Elisa G.** | 5 replies



Chloe L.

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Hi Elisa, thank you for your question!



Chloe L.

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

For me, the best thing about working at Clifford Chance is the people. I am in my first seat, which means that I have only worked here for 3 months, but everyone has been so welcoming and friendly and genuinely wants to help me learn. For me, it is this that sets Clifford Chance apart from other firms.



Jacquelin T.

23/11/2020

Hi Chloe, may I ask what seats you are going to be taking?



Chloe L.

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Hi Jacquelin! Thanks for your question - I'm currently sitting in Real Estate and I'm really enjoying that so far



Chloe L.

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

In terms of future seats, I'm not sure yet. I think that I'd love to do a secondment to one of our international offices at some point!



What does the 2021 intake look like is it currently scheduled to be online?

General question asked by **Robyn S.** | 5 replies



Jackie Trench

Graduate Recruitment Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Hi Robyn, it is currently TBC - we postponed all 2020 programmes to February 2021 in the hope that they could run in person but we have made the decision to run these virtually.

For the Easter and summer schemes we will wait until nearer the time to make a decision depending on where we are with restrictions across the UK.

Ideally they will run in person but we need to adhere to government guidelines as the safety of our staff and visitors is our biggest priority.



Robyn S.

23/11/2020

Hi Jackie. Many thanks for your response and yes very sensible indeed. I did think this might be the case as much is TBC.

**Robyn S.**

23/11/2020

If the programme were to run virtually, how much engagement with the teams and what kind of tasks and support would be implemented?

**Jackie Trench**

Graduate Recruitment Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

We are confident that the scheme will be able to run in exactly the same way virtually as it does in person - we saw the success of this with our vacation schemes this year. We would factor in lots of networking with each other as well as with trainees at the firm.

We actually create a whatsapp group for all ACCESS attendees once they are selected onto the programme so they start networking before the scheme has even taken place.

If they do run virtually then we will aim to have everyone into the office when it is safe to do so.

**Robyn S.**

23/11/2020

That is super encouraging and great to hear! Considering that most events and schemes have gone virtual this year it is very comforting to hear that CC still puts interaction and networking at the forefront. Thanks for the information and thank you for all the great webinars this year.



Is access available to international students?

General question asked by **Hania S.** | 5 replies

**Jackie Trench**

Graduate Recruitment Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Hi Hania, as long as you meet the equivalent criteria then you can apply. If the scheme takes place online then it will be fine to organise but if the scheme is in person then you will have to travel to London for the duration of the programme and, given ACCESS is aimed at students who are typically under 18, you will need to have someone come with you as we cannot have you staying in London by yourself from a safeguarding perspective.

**Hania S.**

23/11/2020

Sounds fair! Thank you very much for your detailed answer

**Aasha T.**

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Hello Hania, I would also recommend that you log-in to our events hub and watch any of the content that you have missed so you can really get feel for the firm. I would also recommend you take a look at our Global Virtual Internships and listen to our podcasts as part of your research: careers.cliffordchance.com/london/what-w...

**Aasha T.**

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

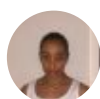
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**Aasha T.**

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

I would highly recommend our SMARTS series 2 podcasts - loads of relevant info for you in there. Link to those are here: careers.cliffordchance.com/london/our-pe...



What do you look for in applications?

When writings cover letter, what do you advise me to add?

Application Advice question asked by **Sade Vienna M.** | 4 replies

**O'Neil O.**

Future Trainee, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

The firm places great emphasis on being able to present a well-rounded application, this really involves drawing up on your key experiences and hobbies, try and include any unique skills you learnt and hobbies that you feel passionate about as these really make candidates stand out.

**Jackie Trench**

Graduate Recruitment Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

We are looking for a general understanding of what we do as a firm and for applicants to be able to articulate what they will get from the placement - I have lots of applicants telling me they want to be a barrister - as that isn't the type of law we do, they tend to not be successful - because ACCESS is the first step towards achieving a TC at the firm, we want people who are interested in this career.

For the areas of the application about you, as O'Neil says, we are looking for a range of activities that you get involved in - we want to know about you.

Please note that we do not read CV's or covering letters - we only read what you put in your application so no need to worry about this.

**Katie A.**

SPARK Alumni, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Following from Jackie and O'Neil, I'd try and link your answers to the ACCESS application questions to your suitability to a career in law. Link those unique skills, hobbies and experiences which O'Neil elaborates on to the skills that CC wants to see from their lawyers. As Jackie says, ACCESS is the first step to a Training Contract and CC wants to see your potential to be a great lawyer.

To gain an understanding of these attributes and the firm culture definitely take a look at CC's podcasts: careers.cliffordchance.com/london/our-pe... or their events hub: careers.cliffordchance.com/london/global...

**Katie A.**

SPARK Alumni, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Apologies, I gave the Virtual Internship link! Events hub link: careers.cliffordchance.com/london/what-w...

Are there other ways for year 12s to get work experience?

Hi - I don't qualify for access under the exact criteria that I've seen on the application and website, are there any other ways for year 12 students to gain any work experience at Clifford Chance?

Application Advice question asked by **Alexander P.** | 4 replies

**Aasha T.**

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Hi Alexander, thanks for your question. We don't run any other formal schemes for year 12 students however our events hub this year has hosted in excess of 50 virtual events the majority of which are open to everyone. So I would advise that you go and take a look at the events and watch the catch-up content. You can also take a look at our global virtual internships, again open to everyone. careers.cliffordchance.com/london/what-w...

**Aasha T.**

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

You can take a look at the Global Virtual Internships as well...careers.cliffordchance.com/london/global...

**Aasha T.**

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

I would also recommend that you watch as many of our Youtube videos and listen to our podcasts to really start to familiarise yourself with the culture, the types of individuals that work with us. I would highly recommend our SMARTS series 2 podcasts - loads of relevant info for you in there. Link to those are here: careers.cliffordchance.com/london/our-pe...

**Alexander P.**

23/11/2020

Thank you!



What kind of commercial awareness questions do we have to prepare for in the interview?

Application Advice question asked by **Gloria C.** | 19 replies**Gloria C.**

23/11/2020

Also how you you best advise us to prepare for them?

**Karishma K.**

ACCESS Alumni, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

There is not an interview required in the application but one thing that CC is good at is offering mock interviews during the scheme. I was able to have an interview with a current trainee and then offered some detailed feedback on this afterwards

**Gloria C.**

23/11/2020

As a non-law undergraduate student, is there any advice that you would give when applying for Clifford Chance?

**Karishma K.**

ACCESS Alumni, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Also, CC partner with Rare Recruitment who help with developing your commercial awareness. If you then choose to join their programme, you can also benefit from further mock interviews

**Gloria C.**

23/11/2020

Thank you ~

**O'Neil O.**

Future Trainee, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Yes, as a History undergraduate myself there's a number of key skills you develop from your degree which is useful to highlight in the application process. For instance, be sure to draw upon research skills, teamwork skills and the ability to synthesis large information when writing essays. All of these are essential to being a good lawyer as well as the alternative insights you bring through having a different perspective and approach to practicing law.

**Gloria C.**

23/11/2020

Where would be the best place to demonstrate this information?

**Gloria C.**

23/11/2020

I noticed that in one of the other chats that you also completed the SPARK scheme. I am also hoping to apply for the SPARK scheme as I am in my first year and I was wondering if you could give me any advice on you to prepared for the 'commercial awareness' aspect of the interview

O'Neil O.



Future Trainee, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

Within the application process I was asked what key skills I felt I developed and how I could contribute to the scheme, I feel this is the best point to bring in the necessary skills you develop from your studies.



Gloria C.
23/11/2020

Also I completed a few virtual programmes that I wanted to talk about but I don't know if they would qualify as 'work experience' or 'extra curricular'.



Jackie Trench
Graduate Recruitment Manager, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

We would advise you popping these in the work experience section - if you have attended loads then you do not need an entry for each but maybe one entry to cover all of the virtual events you have been involved in



ONeil O.
Future Trainee, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

Yes great question so in the commercial awareness section of the interview its key that you start practicing early so that you're comfortable talking about a topic you have been following. To do this get in the habit of discussing topics with friends as well as signing up to some free commercial news forums like Finimize, your university may also offer a Financial Times subscription so try and gather information from as many sources possible. It's also a great idea to look up some key transactions the firm has. been working on through its news section.



Gloria C.
23/11/2020

Thank you so much for the advice, I really appreciate it



Gloria C.
23/11/2020

Would it be enough to simply follow the news or is there anything else I could do that could mimic the layout of the interview?



Karishma K.
ACCESS Alumni, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

Try and discuss these news cases with other law/economics students and engage in the material as that is what you will be doing in interview



ONeil O.
Future Trainee, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

I feel that developing an opinion and discussing it with friends is the best way to prepare as it gets you thinking on your feet and having to develop your point of view.

Karishma K.



ACCESS Alumni, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

Also, don't just read one article; usually these matters are ongoing so choose a couple that actually interest you and follow them throughout. I think depth is better than breadth



Katie A.
SPARK Alumni, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

Personally, I'd recommend following a few news stories in depth. Read multiple articles / different newspapers to get a few different perspectives.



Gloria C.
23/11/2020

Thank you so much for your time, I will definitely try to implement these



After Access what schemes are available to students en route a training contract?

Curious to find out what other work experiences Clifford Chance offers

General question asked by **Robyn S.** | 8 replies



ONeil O.
Future Trainee, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

There is a wide range of experiences on offer, from the initial ACCESS scheme the firm also offers various Open Days which aim to give an insight into the culture of the firm and the kinds of skills the firm looks for in the recruitment process. Alongside this there is also the SPARK scheme which is essentially the firm's flagship vacation scheme offered to first years, this also involves a trip to one of the firms international offices (granted Covid doesn't persist). Once you receive an offer from the firm future trainees can also access the onboarding internships offered through the LIFT scheme which provides opportunities for secondments at the firms clients, tailored at improving your business awareness and understanding of client operations.



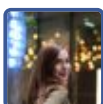
Robyn S.
23/11/2020

Thank you ONeil, that is very insightful.



Robyn S.
23/11/2020

The Open Days sound fab, where could I find out more information on those? Definitely Keen to find out more.



Katie A.
SPARK Alumni, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

Hi Robyn! After ACCESS, I applied to CC's SPARK scheme and undertook this over summer. SPARK is their first year opportunity which can ultimately lead to a Training Contract at the end of the scheme. SPARK (in normal, non-Covid times) will involve work shadowing in the office and, as O'Neil says, an international opportunity. Then, CC offer Training Contract interviews but no longer provide and recruit from vacation schemes.

You can learn more about SPARK and LIFT at the events up: careers.cliffordchance.com/london/what-w...

You can also, in your own time, undertake CC's Global Virtual Internships: careers.cliffordchance.com/london/global...



Robyn S.

23/11/2020

Hi Katie, thank you for sharing your experience. I have taken all those details down and look forward to reading them. Sounds great and super exciting. Much appreciated!



Katie A.

SPARK Alumni, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

CC have democratised access to their Open Day content through including this in the Events Hub and online materials. They no longer hold in-person Open Days but definitely take a look at the above links!



Katie A.

SPARK Alumni, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Here's a link to some podcasts from the firm, too: careers.cliffordchance.com/london/our-pe...

These will give you an insight into the firm culture and the type of clients CC work with.



Robyn S.

23/11/2020

Amazing thanks, big podcast fan :)! consume loads of them daily. Have a nice afternoon really appreciate all the information



What level of responsibility is given to trainees and how does this change after qualification when becoming an NQ?

General question asked by **Salma P.** | 10 replies



Chloe L.

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Hi Salma, thank you for your question!

Chloe L.

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance



23/11/2020

The level of responsibility a trainee is given can vary from seat to seat. In my first seat, Real Estate, I've been given a good level of responsibility. I take the lead on some aspects of transactions and often email clients myself but with other things I work under close supervision of a NQ

**Chloe L.**

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

After qualification, I think that undoubtedly the level of responsibility increases. However, it's important to remember that there is always someone on hand to give support and guidance where needed.

**Salma P.**

23/11/2020

That sounds great! And were you able to choose your seats?

**Chloe L.**

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Yes, seat allocation runs on a points system. We are each given 200 points for the duration of our TC (ie to split across the 4 seats however we wish.) You then bid points on seats that you would like to do - if you get one of those seats then points are deducted from your account

**Chloe L.**

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

(of course, all of this is explained in more detail before the seat allocation process begins, I have just given you an overview of how it works!)

**Salma P.**

23/11/2020

That's cool, I didn't know they had a points system!

**Salma P.**

23/11/2020

Thanks Chloe!

**Chloe L.**

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Yes - it's a good way to make sure we can express our preferences with seats, and makes allocation fairer!

**Chloe L.**

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

You're welcome! Please do feel free to ask any other questions you might have.

For those who have done Access/Spark scheme does this give them an advantage over those who apply for direct TCs?

General question asked by   **Salma P.** | 9 replies



Karishma K.

ACCESS Alumni, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

In short, it would not give you an advantage, however it does give you exposure to the firm which allows you to tailor your applications and gain a better insight. Further, the support CC gives after the scheme includes workshops with Rare Recruitment which help you with creating a competitive application and developing the relevant skills so whilst it does not give you an advantage, if you take advantage of all of the opportunities given it can put you in a stronger position



Salma P.

23/11/2020

Thanks Karishma!



Salma P.

23/11/2020

And is Rare Recruitment the same as Vantage?



Chloe L.

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

I would echo this completely. Completing both Access and Spark myself, I found that the real advantage was being given an opportunity to network with others and learn about the culture at Clifford Chance. This gave me two personal advantages: 1) I had more to say in my TC interview, as I knew about the firm and, essentially, why I wanted to work there; and 2) when joining the firm I had a 'ready-made' network of colleagues who I knew and had worked with before.



Aasha T.

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

Vantage is a new recruitment platform that is being utilised by RARE



Katie A.

SPARK Alumni, Clifford Chance
23/11/2020

Hi Salma! Thank you for your question. I'd say that ACCESS (as Karishma has said) gives you the opportunity to develop your skillset and gain an unparalleled understanding of the firm that can allow you to stand out in later applications for SPARK or a Training Contract. You can certainly gain an understanding of the firm elsewhere, however ACCESS is an incredible opportunity for personal development and I would say it's unmatched. Experiencing the firm first-hand provides you with a deep understanding.

ACCESS also gives you support, as Karishma says, in an application to SPARK which can lead to a TC.

**Salma P.**

23/11/2020

Thank you Chloe, Aasha and Katie for the insights :)

**Chloe L.**

Trainee Solicitor, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

You're welcome, and best of luck with your application!

**Salma P.**

23/11/2020

 #286971

Thank you! All the best with your training at CC!

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Can you apply to ACCESS if you are retaking year 13 exams without being enrolled at a normal school?

I am a year older than current year 13 students, however I am having to sit some exams due to the pandemic. Will I still be able to apply?

Application Advice question asked by   **Rabia B.** | 8 replies

**Aasha T.**

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance

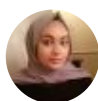
23/11/2020

Thanks Rabia, ACCESS this year is primarily being targeted at year 12 students but that shouldn't stop you preparing to apply for our SPARK scheme in the first year of university if you are planning to do that. There are lots of useful resources you can be exploring even now that will assist you in your preparation to apply.

**Rabia B.**

23/11/2020

Thank you for your response Aasha! I will definitely be preparing for the SPARK scheme in the meantime.

**Rabia B.**

23/11/2020

Aasha, one more question, what are the specific resources you are referring to in your message?

Aasha T.

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020



Our events hub this year has hosted in excess of 50 virtual events the majority of which are open to everyone. So I would advise that you go and take a look at the events and watch the catch-up content. You can also take a look at our global virtual internships, again open to everyone.

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Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

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Aasha T.

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Aasha T.

Graduate Recruitment Marketing Manager, Clifford Chance

23/11/2020

Good luck!



Rabia B.

23/11/2020

Thanks so much Aasha!