

SECURING A VACATION SCHEME - WHERE DO I START?



Before I began studying law at the University of Exeter, I was completely unaware of what Vacation Schemes were, let alone their highly competitive nature or what an application entailed. This meant that when I was faced with my first prospect Vacation Scheme opportunity, I essentially went in blind. This was a real challenge and something I found quite daunting, especially as the application fell within the span of my summer exams.

However, after successfully landing a place on the Clarke Willmott Summer Vacation Scheme 2025, I realise that there were certain steps I took that not only made the application process easier to navigate but also helped me deliver strong, considerate responses. [Here are my Top Tips for securing a Vacation Scheme and ensuring your application is well-crafted](#)

1. Complete meaningful research

Before you begin writing your application responses, make sure to thoroughly research the firm you are applying to. This can involve looking at the firm's [website](#), the firm's [social pages](#) like LinkedIn and Instagram to gain a deeper insight, and even using reliable [firm ranking guides](#), such as Legal500, to identify what sets them apart from the rest.

Those reading your application will want to see that you have taken time and effort to tailor your responses to the firm rather than providing generic statements. This will help [show the firm that you are genuinely invested in them](#) and passionate about the work they do. It will also spotlight our ability to carry out in-depth research – a skill law firms will want to be able to actively demonstrate.



Below are four general research areas and corresponding questions that you may wish to actively consider throughout your application.

1) [The firm in general](#): Why that office? Why that firm? What sets the firm apart?

2) [The team you are applying to](#): Why do you want to work with them? What do you find interesting about their work specifically?

3) [The firm's work outside of practice areas](#): Do they engage with the local community? What does the firm's culture look like?

4) [The firm's practices and values](#): What values of the firm do you align with? What are some practices they enforce that you find beneficial or interesting?

★ **Top Tip** - create a folder on your desktop and favourite items such as key insight articles, case overviews, and social media posts, to later locate and reference if relevant.

2. Using AI wisely

When used correctly, AI can be a helpful tool to structure your answers and support your research in a timely manner. However, using it as a stand-alone tool, without cross-checking the information it provides, is something you should avoid.

AI can hallucinate incorrect and misleading information that may jeopardise your application's success should it be relied upon blindly, so make sure that any research and content is substantiated by other sources to ensure it is accurate and relevant.

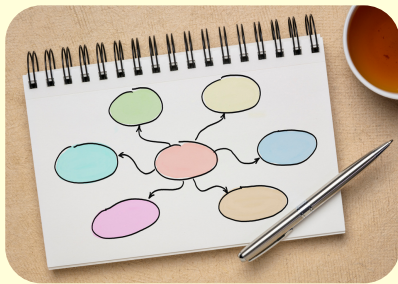


The firm will also want to get to know the real you and see you develop the responses submitted in your written application at interview. To do this, make sure the responses supported are your own, reflecting your own unique voice and perspectives.

This can, too, help set you apart from other candidates, as it will allow you to wholly demonstrate your own values, interests, ideas, and logic – showcasing your 'personal brand' is important and should not be sacrificed.

3. Revise and Practice

Since interviews usually occur a few weeks after application deadlines, you should remind yourself of the key points you made throughout your written application, any firm specifics you referenced, and your reasoning behind answers to competency-based questions. This will help you justify your perspectives, defend your reasoning, and think quickly under pressure should they ask you and follow-up questions.



I also found it beneficial to prepare for questions outside the scope of my written application by drafting and practicing answers to common interview questions.

However, do not feel the need to memorise these responses word-for-word. Interview questions can be unpredictable, and it is unlikely that you will be asked exactly what you prepared for. Use this simply as a mechanism for boosting your confidence, easing nerves, and practice for recalling information on the spot!

★Top Tip - Make a list of your prior achievements and circumstances where you have demonstrated key skills such as adaptability and critical thinking. Mind-mapping is a useful tool to help visualise your experiences clearly.

4. Be yourself

This tip is something that may seem overused, but I cannot emphasise enough how important it is to be authentically yourself throughout the application process. In my experience, the firm will genuinely want to get to know you as an applicant and learn about your own personal approaches to problems.

Try to remember that the legal profession is a diverse field that values original thinking and is shaped by a broad spectrum of perspectives. Do not dim your own flair to fit into a 'Type A' mould which, quite simply, does not exist.

Though application processes are challenging, I hope these tips have given you a useful starting point to approach them with greater confidence. It may be difficult but try to remain positive throughout, trust in your preparation, and most importantly, trust in yourself. Good luck!