

LNAT vs other law routes

A test for selected degrees, not a licence to practise and not the only road into law.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Take the LNAT only when an exact university course requires it. A non-LNAT law degree can still lead to qualification. A non-law degree can lead to the SQE or a law conversion. A solicitor apprenticeship combines work and study. The barrister route accepts a law degree or a non-law degree followed by conversion. Choose the destination and learning model first; the admissions test comes afterwards.

Checked against the sources named in this guide, August 2026. British English. Free to share.

1 Put the LNAT in the right box

The LNAT is an undergraduate admissions test used by listed university courses. It tests verbal reasoning and argument. It is not a law qualification, does not teach the professional syllabus, and does not make a candidate a solicitor or barrister.

The decision order is:

1. Which jurisdiction and broad career direction interest you?
2. Do you want university study now, paid work with study, or a different first degree?
3. Which exact courses or employers fit that route?
4. Does any selected course require the LNAT?

1 The tell

“Do I need the LNAT to become a lawyer?” starts too late and too broadly. The answer is usually “only if a course on your chosen university list requires it”. Professional qualification comes later through a regulator’s route.

2 Five routes, one clean comparison

Route after school	LNAT?	What comes next	Best fit signal
LNAT-requiring LLB	Yes, for that course	SQE route for solicitor, or Bar training route	You want that specific degree and enjoy academic study
Non-LNAT LLB	No, unless another choice requires it	Same professional routes remain open	You want a law degree without that admissions test
Non-law degree	Usually no	SQE can accept any degree; Bar route normally needs conversion	You want another subject first without closing law
Solicitor apprenticeship	Not as a general professional rule	Paid work, study, SQE1 and SQE2; typically five to six years	You prefer learning in employment and can win a competitive role
Law degree then Bar route	Course may or may not require LNAT	Academic component, vocational training, then pupillage	You are drawn to advocacy and accept a highly competitive path

The table is about England and Wales unless stated. Scotland and Northern Ireland have different professional routes. A university degree called “law” and professional authorisation are related, but not interchangeable.

3 If your aim is to qualify as a solicitor

The Solicitors Regulation Authority’s current SQE route requires a degree in any subject, or an equivalent level 6 qualification or experience; passing SQE1 and SQE2; two years of qualifying work experience; and meeting character and suitability requirements.

A law degree is therefore one preparation route, not a regulatory requirement for the SQE. A non-law graduate may choose a conversion or SQE preparation course because the assessments demand legal knowledge, but the SRA does not prescribe one universal training course.

A solicitor apprenticeship is a different learning model. The SRA says the post-A-level route typically takes five to six years, combines work and off-the-job study, and includes both SQE stages. Employer recruitment replaces the normal full-time university application as the main competitive gate.

4 If your aim is to qualify as a barrister

The Bar Standards Board describes three components: academic, vocational, and pupillage or work-based learning. The academic component can be a law degree, or a non-law degree followed by a Graduate Diploma in Law. After vocational Bar training and Call to the Bar, you still cannot practise until the work-based component is complete.

The BSB also states that becoming a barrister is highly competitive. That matters when comparing routes: the absence of an LNAT does not mean the absence of later selection.

2 Try it

Compare routes on five columns: learning style, money in or out, time, selection points and fallback value. “No LNAT” belongs in one cell. It should not decide the whole row.

5 Worked example: Maya has three sensible routes

Worked example Choose from constraints, not prestige slogans

Maya enjoys history and argument, wants to qualify as a solicitor in England, and is unsure whether she wants three years of full-time law study. Her shortlist includes one LNAT LLB, two non-LNAT LLBs, a History degree and several solicitor apprenticeships.

Route A: LNAT LLB

Take the LNAT because the exact course requires it. Best if the course itself is worth the test preparation and cost. It does not create a professional shortcut around the SQE route.

Route B: non-LNAT LLB

Apply without the admissions test. Maya still studies law and can later meet the SRA requirements. “No LNAT” does not make the degree less valid as an academic route.

Route C: History, then SQE preparation

Keep the subject she loves, then build the legal knowledge needed for the professional assessments. The SRA accepts a degree in any subject, but Maya should price the later training rather than pretending it is automatic.

Route D: solicitor apprenticeship

Apply to employers for a paid work-and-study route. This may fit her uncertainty about full-time university, but vacancies are competitive and applications need their own preparation.

Correct: Maya can apply across more than one route, provided she tracks deadlines and prepares each application honestly.

Misreading: Test prestige: assuming the route with the LNAT is automatically the best professional route.

Misreading: No-test shortcut: assuming an apprenticeship has no selection because it has no general LNAT rule.

6 When the LNAT is worth doing

Sit it when at least one serious course choice requires it. The marginal work can keep several universities open because one sitting is shared with the LNAT institutions selected in your profile.

Do not sit it merely to “prove you can” if no chosen course uses it. Spend that time comparing degree content, financing, placements, professional qualification and the actual admissions tasks in front of you.

The LNAT costs £75 for UK/EU candidates and £120 internationally. If cost is the barrier, the LNAT site currently lists a full UK/EU test-fee bursary for applicants who meet its stated benefit criteria. Apply before booking. A bursary solves the test fee, not the wider cost comparison between routes.

7 Sources

LNAT Consortium, Do I need to sit the test?

The current course list and the rule that taking the LNAT is separate from applying to university. [Check the official list.](#)

Solicitors Regulation Authority, SQE route

Degree or equivalent, SQE1 and SQE2, two years’ qualifying work experience, and suitability. [Read the SRA route.](#)

SRA, Solicitor apprenticeships

The five-to-six-year post-A-level route, paid work, off-the-job study and SQE requirements. [Read the apprenticeship guidance.](#)

Bar Standards Board, Becoming a barrister

Academic, vocational and pupillage components; law-degree and non-law conversion routes. [Read the BSB overview.](#)

Professional rules are jurisdiction-specific and can change. Check the relevant regulator before committing money to a qualification route.