

UNISON

Job Brief: Assistant Legal Officer – Legal Department

Introduction

UNISON is Britain's leading public services trade union, with over 1.3 million members working in the public services, private, voluntary and community sectors and in the energy services. We employ 1200 staff, approximately 370 at our national Centre in Euston, central London and the remainder in our twelve regions across the UK, including Northern Ireland.

UNISON is the leading union in local government, the NHS, community and voluntary sector, education and children services and a range of private and public sector employers where we negotiate pay and terms and conditions of employment.

UNISON Legal Services conducts strategically important and often groundbreaking employment litigation on behalf of the Union and its members: successful cases include the challenge to the imposition of Employment Tribunal fees in the Supreme Court and *Lock v British Gas*.

Legal Services manages the following national functions:

- The provision and management of all of the Union's Legal Services.
- Managing the external legal advice scheme that provides a comprehensive suite of legal services to members.
- Legal Complaints and feedback.
- HR policy and staffing matters, including defending litigation.
- Strategic Litigation, such as the ET Fees Litigation at the Supreme Court.

The post-holder must have the following skills and abilities:

- Newly qualified Solicitor/Barrister or Legal Executive.
- Self-starter and effective at problem solving.
- Confident and precise communication skills.
- Excellent knowledge of Microsoft packages, particularly Excel, and strong organisational skills.
- Team worker, and commitment to team working.
- Ability to work under pressure and to deadlines and understanding legal limitation deadlines.
- Ability to manage own workload in conjunction with the requirements of the team.
- Ability to understand the role of trade unions and their structures.

The Assistant Legal Officer is a part of the Legal Services Department based at the UNISON Centre, Euston Road.

The Role

The Assistant Legal Officer is a role for a newly qualified lawyer to support experienced Legal Officers (Solicitors) with legal advice, research and the running of litigation and managing the Union's legal services, as well as supporting the varied work of the department.

They will be a self-starter, be an effective problem solver, have excellent communication skills; be proficient in preparing schedules of loss, and calculating losses using Microsoft packages; prepare legal research; prepare legal advice and communications, prepare pleadings, government consultation responses, reports and briefings; communicate with courts, solicitors, barristers, senior management including the General Secretariat and other bodies such as courts and tribunals; maintain appropriate files and storage using electronic case management systems; work independently, manage cases, speak at legal events, and assist Legal Officers as appropriate.

UNISON's Aims

The key aims of the union as detailed in our Rule Book seek to:

- i) Extend and promote our influence in the workplace and in the Community.
- ii) Promote, safeguard and facilitate participation by all members in the union's democracy, with special regard to women, members of all grades, black members, disabled members, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members.
- iii) Provide effective standards of service in the areas of representation and advice, information to members on the work of the union, the provision of financial benefits and the maintenance of educational facilities for members.

Working Time

While the Assistant Legal Officer post can be a demanding position, requiring some attendance at meetings outside of the conventional working day, or working to legal deadlines, UNISON is a strong supporter of the work/life balance ethos and has a cross union flexible working policy.

UNISON
ASSISTANT LEGAL OFFICER
LEGAL DEPARTMENT

JOB DESCRIPTION

Grade: 5

Hours: 35 per week

Location: UNISON Centre

Reports to: Head of Legal Services / Legal Officers as appropriate

Overall Summary

The Assistant Legal Officer is a role for a qualified lawyer to support experienced and specialist Legal Officers (Solicitors) with legal advice, research and the running of litigation and managing the Union's legal services, as well as supporting the varied work of the department.

They will be a self-starter; take ownership of their work; have the confidence to manage up; be an effective problem solver; have excellent communication skills; prepare legal research; prepare legal advice and communications; prepare pleadings, government consultation responses, and reports and briefings; communicate with courts, solicitors, barristers, senior management, including the General Secretariat and other bodies such as courts and tribunals ; be proficient in preparing schedules of loss; and calculating losses using Microsoft packages; maintain appropriate files and storage using electronic case management systems; work independently, manage cases, speak at legal events, and assist Legal Officers as appropriate.

Key Tasks and Responsibilities

This is a specific post, and the duties will be drawn from the following:

Legal Support

Researching the law and keeping up with knowledge of civil litigation, personal injury law, contentious or non-contentious commercial law and intellectual property law. As well as other legal matters that may arise which may include data protection, contract, trade union and employment law (as relevant), and preparing advices, pleadings and claims for court and tribunal.

- Advising and explaining legal concepts to members “in plain English” (as described by the Law Society) and prepare case updates and reports for members.
- Undertaking and preparing internal reports, statistics and briefings, schedules of loss and other information as may be required, using electronic IT systems (especially proficient in Excel) where appropriate.
- Preparing circulars, bulletins and other publicity material for regions, branches or members.
- Such other tasks as are necessary for the running of the department.

Organisational and Recruitment

- Assisting with the provision of legal information and advice to regions and branches.
- Assisting with the organization of litigation, and the diverse range of legal issues that arise in the department and supporting experienced legal officers as relevant, including with the management of the Union’s legal services.
- Supporting and assisting in the development of recruitment initiatives e.g. drafting newsletters and leaflets for recruiting members in conjunction with legal cases.
- Assisting in the organising of seminars and sector conferences
- Maintaining appropriate files and storage of records/information in accordance with strict Law Society and Bar Council rules, with the union’s procedures and with GDPR and using electronic IT systems where appropriate.

Communication and Research

- Confident and precise communicator
- Giving concise written and verbal advice on civil litigation, personal injury, commercial law and intellectual property issues, to also include drafting reports, statistics and briefings where required and any other relevant legal matters under supervision to the Union’s members and staff at all levels of the Union
- Liaising with and co-ordinating, as required, work with external solicitors, barristers, or other outside bodies or individuals.
- Using electronic IT systems, e.g., e-mail and Internet, to communicate with other parties.
- Keeping up to date and writing and uploading materials for the relevant sections of UNISON’s website.
- Liaising and coordinating, as appropriate, work with other sections/ departments, regions, and outside organisations
- Ability to communicate with members, showing empathy where necessary.
- Drafting communications to members – e.g. letters re progress of case; letters in pursuance of litigation; emails regarding cases to tribunal and court and sending offer letters to members.
- Liaising with appropriate court, national and regional staff and tribunals.

Administrative

- Maintaining appropriate files and storage of records/information, using electronic IT systems where appropriate and in accordance with strict Law Society requirements.
- Providing other support as required to legal officers and the Head and Director of Legal Services
- Anticipating deadlines, to follow up on communication and progress work without being prompted
- Taking ownership of work, e.g. showing initiative by preparing responses to communications; and managing up.

General/Other

- Any other duties relevant to the overall responsibilities of the post

UNISON

ASSISTANT LEGAL OFFICER LEGAL DEPARTMENT

PERSON SPECIFICATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA

UNISON is an equal opportunities employer, committed to providing equal opportunities regardless of race or ethnic origin, gender identity, family situation, sexual orientation, disability, religion or age. This person specification is designed to help members of Interviewing. Panels judge the qualities of interviewees in a systematic and consistent way and in accordance with UNISON's equal opportunities policy. It is given to all job applicants for information.

Assessment code

A –Application

As– assessment

PI – panel interview

Heading	Selection criteria	Assessment
1. Thinking	1.1 Experience of developing solutions to resolve problems including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• analysing information to pursue claims• legal research• drafting pleadings, claims and schedules of loss• Assisting with the preparation of reports, statistics and briefings	A & As & PI
	1.2 Learning and Development <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can demonstrate continuous personal learning development• Keeps up with civil litigation, personal injury, commercial and IP law, and employment law if relevant	A & As & PI

2. Interpersonal and Communication	2.1 Excellent communication skills including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to communicate effectively in range of formats and circumstances • Ability to write and provide legal advice clearly and concisely • Ability to speak at legal webinars / seminars to members. • Ability to give advice to members on legal rights and benefits • Ability to work effectively with different people with different areas of knowledge and skill sets. 	A & As & PI
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	2.2 Experience of effective Team working	A & As
3. Initiative and Independence	3.1 Experience of prioritising own workload including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-starter and self-motivated • decision making within guidelines • following policies and procedures • delegating work to others appropriately 	A & As
4. Resource management	4.1 Experience of case management including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time management • understanding limitation deadlines • case management • maintaining confidential information 	A & PI & As
5. Physical skills <i>(with reasonable adjustments where necessary)</i>	5.1 Keyboard skills 5.2 Ability to travel	A A
6. General knowledge	6.1 An understanding of and commitment to the principles of equality and democracy 6.2 An ability to understand the role of trade Unions and the social and political environment in which the union operates	A & As & PI A & As & PI

	<p>6.3 Understanding of UNISON's policies and procedures or demonstrable capacity to develop such understanding based upon previous experience and/or interests.</p> <p>6.4 ICT packages including Microsoft Office suite</p>	<p>A & As & PI</p> <p>A & As & PI</p>
7. Specific Knowledge	<p>7.1 Qualified Solicitor/Barrister / Legal Qualifications</p> <p>7.2 Newly qualified lawyer.</p> <p>7.3 You will preferably have knowledge of civil litigation, personal injury law, contentious or non-contentious commercial law and intellectual property law. Knowledge of one or more of the following - data protection, contract, trade union and employment law is desirable but not essential.</p>	<p>A & As & PI</p>

