

qLegal Policy: LinkedIn and References

Context

qLegal's programmes have been designed to allow students to develop useful skills and gain relevant experience that is valued by employers. It makes sense for students to let the world know about what they have achieved with qLegal, via LinkedIn and/or a reference from qLegal.

The qLegal brand is important not just to the qLegal staff and Queen Mary, but to current, past and future students. If it is devalued, it reflects badly on everyone associated with qLegal. So, each qLegal student and alum is an ambassador for themselves, qLegal and all its stakeholders.

The policies below are to help you sell yourself and qLegal in the best light.

For support on how to use LinkedIn well, and generally regarding recruitment and employability, please take advantage of CCLS' dedicated Careers team. They provide practical resources and offer 1-1 appointments.

Describing your qLegal experience on LinkedIn

1. Can I ask qLegal and qLegal staff to connect on LinkedIn?

- We actively encourage all qLegal alumni to connect with [qLegal on LinkedIn](#). Please let us know which year/programme you were on.
- Accepting or declining an invitation to connect with students on LinkedIn is at the discretion of each member of staff.
- **Hot tip:** continuous respectful communication and professional behaviour during the year will help with people wanting to connect with you!

2. How do I reference my professional experience on LinkedIn and on my CV?

- Explaining your professional experience in a convincing and truthful manner is an important way to market yourself and progress in your professional career.
- It will ensure that your current and future employer trusts the information you give them.
- Your trustworthiness will reflect on qLegal and QMUL as an institution.

3. How do I do that specifically?

- It can be hard to get the balance right between marketing yourself and not being misleading.
- When describing your qLegal experience on LinkedIn, please use “**qLegal student volunteer ([programme])**”/ For example:
 - qLegal student volunteer (Future of Law Programme, Public Legal Education stream).
 - qLegal student volunteer (Future of Law Programme, Projects stream).
 - qLegal student volunteer (Legal Advisory Programme).
 - qLegal student volunteer (Externship Programme).



Role titles which **do not truthfully explain/reflect** your qLegal experience, and which you shouldn't use include:

- “Legal counsel”
- “External legal counsel”
- “IP Legal advisor”
- “Full time intern”

4. How can I describe who qLegal is and what it does?

- Suggested wording to describe who qLegal is:

qLegal is Queen Mary's innovative, award-winning commercial law clinic providing free legal and business support to start-ups, social enterprises and other organisations.

5. How much detail should I provide about my qLegal experience and client information when applying for a job or detailing my experience in an interview?

- Do include areas of law and specific tasks you've undertaken.
- Please ensure you **do not include any confidential information** about your client(s) in your job applications or professional network listings.
- As a general rule, do not write anything that you could not comfortably speak about in further detail if asked to do so in an interview.



Asking for a reference from qLegal

1. What is the process of asking for and giving references?

The process for seeking and giving references/recommendations is not the same across the world. The general position in the UK is:

- An applicant is asked to submit names and contact details of referees in the job application.
- A reference can be given by professional or academic contacts who know you and your work.
- References are generally only taken up in the UK once a job offer has been made (i.e., the offer is conditional on good references, but it happens right at the end of the recruitment process).

Exceptions to this general rule, where references may be asked for earlier in the recruitment process include:

- Where the applicant is registering with a recruitment agency, the agency may require references before placing the applicant in an organisation.
- For prospective barristers, chambers and Inns of Court may require references before offering a pupillage or scholarship.
- For academic positions, including PhD applications, the educational institution may require a reference as part of the application.

2. What information does a reference typically contain?

Depending on the recruiter, different levels of information may be asked of a referee:

- basic confirmation of an applicant's role and the dates that the applicant was part of the organisation.
- confirmation as above but with some additional specific questions around skills, experience and character.
- an open request for information about the candidate's suitability for the role.

Giving a reference is at the referee's discretion. For legal reasons, many UK organisations acting as referees will only provide a basic confirmation of the role and dates of their former employee.

3. What information will qLegal provide?

We would hope to be able to provide a highly complimentary reference for any qLegal student, but this is subject to the following:

- any reference we give will be factually accurate and not misleading.
- it will be in accordance with the level of information the recruiter has asked for.
- we have sufficient evidence to back up the statements we are making.

This means we might not be able to give a reference to every student who asks for one. Similarly, a student may decide to choose a different referee if they are not confident we can give a positive report of their involvement in qLegal.

For example, if a student's behaviour has fallen short of qLegal standards and/or a student has not completed their qLegal programme without good reason, it would be difficult for qLegal to give a glowing reference. (We have listed below the top tips to ask for a reference. Further suggestions can be found in this [article from Indeed](#).)

4. How should I approach asking qLegal for a reference?

- Please see the graphic below for a summary of how to approach qLegal for a reference. We recommend you ask your Programme Lead to be your referee as they will be best placed to know your work and performance. ***Please do not ask more than one qLegal staff member for a reference, as we will not be able to accommodate this.***
- Before agreeing to give a reference, we will check our records. This might impact whether we choose to provide a reference or not.
- Where there is a specific deadline for providing a reference, we recommend you ask at least **two weeks before the application deadline**.

- If you are applying for several roles during the same period, please ask us only once for a reference.
- Please note, the employer/recruitment agency may contact us directly and you may not know when this will happen.
- Please note we are only able to provide reference letters in English.

If you need a reference soon:

- You will need to **send us all the information we need when you submit your application**, so we will be ready when any request is made. Give us as much information about your involvement as possible (including your programme and other outputs so we can refer to other team members for their feedback if necessary).

If a significant time (over a year) has passed since you asked us for a reference:

- Please get in touch again to say we may receive a reference request, updating us with your recent contact details.
- When we are asked by the employer, we may contact you, and you must reply immediately with the information we need so we can write the reference in good time.

If you need a generic reference or simple proof of professional experience after leaving qLegal, because the country you are applying for a position in expects such reference letters attached to your application, please let us know in your email. We recommend you ask for a reference at least two weeks before the application deadline.



REFERENCES

WHEN, WHO AND HOW TO ASK FOR ONE



ENGAGE

- Make sure you engage in your programme so your programme lead knows who you are.
- Document what you do as you do it.



COMMUNICATE

- Ask the programme lead if they will act as your referee generally.
- Get in touch with them again in good time before they are asked to provide a reference for a specific role.

SUBMIT



REQUEST

- Email qlegal@qmul.ac.uk with your request, copying the programme lead, with the subject line "Reference request".



INCLUDE

***Context of your qLegal experience:**

- detail the dates of your qLegal experience,
- the programme you were in,
- the work you undertook (e.g. which workshop, client case, externship or consultancy project you were on),
- any relevant figures (e.g. number of client case/workshop/project you participated in).

***A brief description of the job you are applying for.**

***The location of the job you are applying for.**

***Any specific deadlines you need to meet with regards to the application.**