

Career options with a law degree

When most people think of careers one could pursue with a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree, the obvious ones that spring to mind are traditional law jobs, such as working as attorneys and advocates. However, according to Professor Philip Stoop, head of the Stadio School of Law, there are many other career options available to law graduates.



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Considering an LLB degree

Professor Stoop explains that the LLB degree is an undergraduate qualification in law that equips students with a sound knowledge of the South African legal system and provides access to graduates for professional assessments by both the Law Society and General Council of the Bar examinations.

“The traditional or formal legal career is regulated by the Legal Practice Council under the Legal Practice Act of 2014. “Legal Practitioners” are attorneys, advocates and candidate legal practitioners (candidate attorneys / candidates doing pupillage),” explains Prof Stoop. “A person is only qualified to become a legal practitioner if he or she satisfies all the requirements of the LLB degree obtained in the Republic of South Africa. Attorneys or advocates are also sometimes appointed as state advocates, prosecutors, magistrates or judges.”

Three streams for LLB graduates

“An LLB qualification prepares graduates for three potential career streams,” he says. “Aside from the traditional or formal legal career, there’s also the option of a non-formal legal career. This sees graduates working in positions such as in-house legal counsel, legal advisors, human resource practitioners, labour law practitioners, state legal advisors, business rescue practitioners, compliance officers, company secretaries, and banking officials, for example.”

The third stream entails further study towards a postgraduate qualification in law, which opens several additional career possibilities. The LLM degree, which is a Masters in Law, allows graduates to specialise in particular fields of law, for example environmental law, taxation law, or criminal law. Many LLM graduates go on to pursue careers as judges, diplomats, politicians or mediators.

Other legal specialisations in high demand in South Africa and abroad include finance (including mergers and acquisitions), tech law, and compliance.



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Louise Schoonwinkel 13 Jul 2023



Alternative legal qualifications

Stadio School of Law also offers various other qualifications for those who wish to pursue a career in law without necessarily undertaking the LLB degree. These include the Higher Certificate in Paralegal Studies (NQF Level 5), which is an entry-level qualification aimed at paralegal professionals who assist lawyers in their legal work.

With this degree, one could pursue jobs such as court clerk, law clerk, legal assistant, legal secretary, or paralegal professionals. Further study opportunities include BA Law or BCom Law, two other qualifications available through STADIO School of Law.

The Bachelor of Commerce in Law (BCom Law) degree is designed to equip students with the core competencies necessary to pursue a career in law or commerce, for jobs including management, entrepreneurship, legal advisor, associate attorney, corporate secretary, or private investigator, among others. Delivered at NQF Level 7, the BCom Law degree also enables study towards the LLB, which is an NQF Level 8 qualification.

The Bachelor of Arts in Law (BA Law) degree equips students to interpret and apply the law and contribute to the development of the African political system. Prof Stoop explains that it also aims to offer personal and professional formation through the development of the student's leadership skills and their understanding of the Humanities within the Southern African context, enabling students to serve in a variety of capacities in the private and public spheres.

"Students can pursue careers in law, journalism, politics, management, intelligence, and public administration," he says. "The programme also serves as an alternative route for entry into the LLB degree. Law has always been the ideal course for students who enjoy solving difficult challenges. Lawyers deal with ethical, moral and philosophical issues on a regular basis. Law affects all areas of our daily lives. Studying law enables one to develop interests and skills in many areas of life, ranging from politics, international relations, and globalisation."