



Oxford Law Society

How to Make Successful Applications for Oversubscribed Events

All of our society's dinners and socials are oversubscribed. To level the playing field and ensure that all of our members have a fair chance of attending our events, here is some advice on what makes a good application.

[It may also be worth attending our informative presentations such as "Demystifying US law firms", "How to Network Effectively" and firm-specific events (e.g. Clyde & Co's drop-in Application Workshop on the afternoon of 24 Oct).]

- If you can replace the firm's name with another name and the content of your application is still (largely) applicable, it's not specific enough
- Mentioning a recent deal that they've done and/or members of their client roster is always good! It is slightly hard to navigate some firms' websites; good alternatives are Chambers Student, Legal500 and Legal Cheek ("The Firms Most List" is especially helpful in providing a feel for the firm's working culture). Firms won't expect you to have detailed knowledge of the deals (largely because these are confidential and the headline-catching deals are often very, very complicated!) But more than this, can you demonstrate why that deal *genuinely* interests you? And that you haven't just plucked the most recent deal off their 'News' section?
- What are their strong practice areas? There are corporate boutiques such as Macfarlanes and Travers Smith; IP specialists such as Bristows, Bird & Bird; private equity powerhouses such as Kirkland & Ellis, Weil Gotshal, etc.
- How would you stand out from other candidates? Are you doing the 4-year law course; do you know any other languages that are relevant to their other international offices / jurisdictions? Have you glanced through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) targets? Is the firm big on LegalTech? [If you are an international student, it may be worth being subtle (e.g. interested in secondment opportunities as one of the seats) even if your ideal plan is to relocate to another country upon qualification]

- Relevant experience: not having any experience will NOT count against you (and relevant experience doesn't need to be legal!); but if you've been to any first year schemes and/or open days (or indeed previous LawSoc events with the firm) it's probably worth mentioning. Similarly, if you are a law student it may be worth being familiar with the basics of contract law, and looking into specific (litigation) cases that the firm has been working on (e.g. Mischon de Reya and Blackstone representing Gina Miller). The Lawyer website is often a goldmine of such info :)
- Please note that in most cases applications are reviewed by Oxford Law Society representatives but sometimes the Graduate Recruitment Team will review it themselves or request us to forward the applications (in the case of the latter, we will communicate this clearly in the application form)
- Sometimes the sponsoring firm will impose restrictions on the number of people from each demographic (e.g. first year law and second year non-law / penultimate year law and final year non-law etc.) that are able to attend the dinner; this is their prerogative and as such, the society does not have any control over such requests
- Where possible, we will send out names of firm representatives attending the event. It has not been unheard of for a partner who led the deal to be present at the event, and indeed there will be a number of co-/managing partners coming to Oxford this term.
- We will NOT consider late applications; please also adhere to the word count

TLDR: If you spend at least 20 minutes writing an application (and not just typing in the first thing which comes up on Google), generally speaking your application will be of a sufficient standard to be in the top 25% of applications. It is substantially easier to stand out at these more intimate events as compared to a Law Fair, where hundreds of students will pass through their stall.

Here are some examples of good applications:

Example 1:

A career in city law offers a combination of constant intellectual challenge regarding issues of great commercial significance and the opportunity for extensive interpersonal interaction with clients and fellow solicitors, which strongly appeals to me. Similarly, the law remains a highly stimulating profession, requiring solicitors to consistently engage with new political and societal developments, and given the uncertainty surrounding Britain's impending exit from the European Union, there is seemingly no more exciting time to be involved in the legal profession. In this context, being a solicitor for a firm with high-profile clients such as those of Macfarlanes, provides a real opportunity to make an impact and support change through innovating with regard to new legislative developments, which I would relish. Macfarlanes appeals to me not only due to the diverse range of prestigious clients the firm acts for, but also due to its emphasis on the supportive, collegiate culture that exists within the firm. I was excited to read of the remarkable 20% growth in revenue that Macfarlanes has enjoyed in the past year, alongside the consistently strong work in M&A and Private Equity. Further, I am impressed by the firm's clear forward-thinking, business-minded ethic, as was demonstrated by this year's launch of a corporate crime and investigations practice in response to the rapid growth of work in this area. As such, I have applied for a training contract at Macfarlanes, and am eager to talk to representatives of the firm to discover more about day-to-day life at Macfarlanes and which practice areas sound most appealing to me.

Example 2:

Given my bilingual and expatriate background, law in an international context has developed into a passion of mine. Beyond my Oxford studies (Law with German Law), I am to continue exploring the wide extent of international legal work opportunities in the City.

My interest in interacting with Macfarlanes representatives stems from its international expertise, such as in antitrust law. My interest in EU competition law developed from work experience at the German law firm Luther with a competition lawyer to meeting the competition law lawyers at the Herbert Smith Freehills First Year Scheme. Specifically, Macfarlane's antitrust law work in pharmaceuticals fascinates me. The in-house legal experience I organised at AstraZeneca's legal department gave me a flavour of the regulation and competition considerations in this area. I aim to build on this short introduction by exploring opportunities in City firms relating to pharmaceutical firms.

Through my involvement in Oxford Transitional Justice Research and ten Model United Nations conferences, I am also especially curious about Macfarlanes' CSR work, especially on increasing access to justice. Getting to know firm representatives and understanding their involvement in such projects through such a dinner would be insightful.

Ultimately, this event would be an invaluable introduction to Macfarlanes as I seek to embark on a career in law with an international dimension.

Example 3:

As an international student the prospect of engaging in a career in city law is highly appealing. The idea of being able to work in an environment that is versatile and internationally relevant is an opportunity I would not want to miss. In particular, I recently encountered Macfarlanes in an article about a Trainee and Junior Law survey which specified they were one of the best law firms for training in the country, especially with regards to the area of private equity.

I enjoyed reading across Macfarlanes' website, particularly the "Latest Insights" section of which the articles' "question and answer" structure was helpful in understanding the central points of each issue. Because I have a particular interest in intellectual property as well as the IT sector, I would like to use this opportunity to know more about the work of Macfarlanes in these areas. It was especially interesting that Macfarlanes was involved in Anheuser-Busch's disputes with Budvar over the Budweiser trademark, as it is something we regularly encounter in our daily lives.

Example 4:

I have a keen interest in working at Gibson Dunn & Crutcher due to its dual strengths in both Contentious and Transactional work. Its training contract seats, in Corporate Finance and Dispute Resolution tie in well with my academic interests as a current graduate student of Law & Finance at Oxford. Its large consolidated global network will allow me to provide financial advice on the largest deals on a multi-jurisdictional basis, this greatly appeals to me as an individual with a diverse and international background.

By attending the event, I hope to learn more about the application process, the firms training contract structure, and culture. The opportunity to ask trainees about the transactions or litigation experiences they have worked on will be an invaluable learning experience for me. Additionally, I would also use this opportunity to meet with the partners of Gibson Dunn to find out more about their leverage structure and team models.

This session will be a valuable opportunity to learn more about a career with, and the culture of, the firm.

Example 5:

One of the main attractions of a Gibson Dunn is their global regulatory investigations practice. Having worked on a range of matters involving securities regulation in India, including takeovers of listed companies, issues relating to fraud and market manipulation, insider trading and delisting, I am deeply interested to learn more about this area of law from a global perspective. Gibson Dunn is one of the leading law firms in this field, and their lawyers are known to have significant expertise in handling cases involving LIBOR manipulation etc.

By attending the dinner, I hope to gain an insight into how the firm works, and more specifically into their securities regulatory practice in their London office. Additionally, given my interest in the area, I also plan to apply to their summer vacation scheme programme. In this context, I hope to learn more about their application process and the skills and attributes they look for in their employees.

Here are some examples of applications we have rejected in the past:

Example 1:

I've always been a city girl at heart, living very close to NYC growing up and spending each summer working in the city. Now, after spending a few weeks in the UK, I have developed a love for this country and am exploring the idea of working in London after graduation, if I can get sponsorship. Macfarlanes is one of the most prestigious firms in the UK and has been exposed to some of the most well-known cases and clients. At this dinner, I hope to meet with various representatives to get a sense of the culture at the firm and learn more about how they got to Macfarlanes. It would be great to get their insights on how they prepared to be an associate, what the trainee program is like, and what they look for in applications. As I begin on my journey, I am eager to learn as much as I can to ensure I am best prepared for a career in corporate law. I want to know what resources are available to trainees and the support networks at the firm to promote diversity. I am drawn to Macfarlanes' smaller firm size which allows for a more collaborative and closer-knit community. In smaller firms, trainees are given more responsibility earlier on. Despite being a UK firm, they serve international clients which I think is great exposure, especially in corporate law.

Example 2:

From attending an event with Gibson Dunn, I would hope to gain a real insight about what it is like working at a US law firm from people who work there. I hope to find out about the opportunities for me in my first year and in later years to apply for vacation schemes with the hope of obtaining a training contract at the end of it. I have a particular interest in working abroad and collaboration with German speaking countries or even working in one of these countries is of real interest to me. Therefore, I would like to find out about the opportunities there are to work in different jurisdictions. I am also interested in working in the US itself and I would like to learn about how I would go about working there in the future, having obtained an English law degree.

Example 3:

Gibson Dunn is one of the most international of all law firms and has a strong capability in many sectors including life sciences. As a student of Biological Sciences with a particular interest in molecular genetics I would be very interested to know more about the firm and how my science expertise can be combined with an international legal career.

Example 4:

By attending this event, I hope to gain a greater insight into Vinson & Elkins, having not had much contact with the firm before. I believe this event will be an invaluable opportunity to learn more about the firm and ask pertinent questions to assist in choosing whether to apply for further opportunities with the firm, including vacation schemes. I'm particular, I hope to learn more about the culture of the firm, the working environment, why the representatives of the firm have chosen Vinson & Elkins, and which seats trainees can complete.