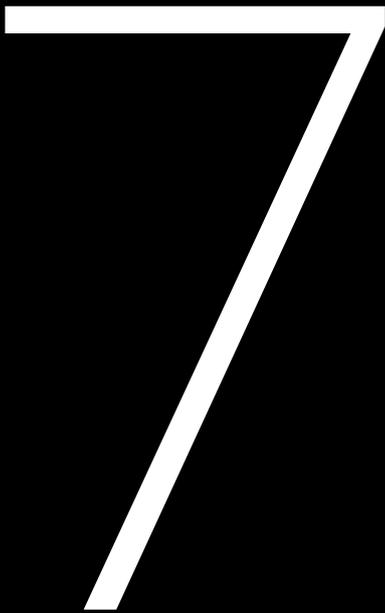


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# NQ Solicitors Guide 2019

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## Preparing for NQ interviews



**Brooke Thornham**  
Consulting

# Preparing for NQ Interviews

So far, you've worked with your recruiter to prepare and tailor your CV; they've approached some of their clients for you and you've secured an interview. Hurrah, the partnership is working well! But what now?

It has probably been at least 18 months (and in some cases several years) since you last had to sit in front of a decision making partner to sell your experience and to convince them you're the right person for their role. So what's different when going for NQ opportunities? In short, an awful lot.

When you interviewed for a training contract you may have had limited legal experience to offer. Therefore, your employer was making a selection based on your academic achievements, your life skills and largely upon your potential. When interviewing for NQ roles the emphasis changes. Partners will be keen to understand what you've learned during your training contract. This time they are buying into your experience and capability and your motivation and professional aspirations. Preparation is key.

Your recruiter should personally help you to prepare, before you attend the interviews they organise for you. We want to support you to do as well as you can, and we hope our support and experience will give you the best chance possible.

We've prepared a quick summary of things that may help below, but we would encourage you to take advantage of more in-depth bespoke guidance from a recruiter should you feel that you would like to explore this further.

## About you:

- **Know your CV.** You will need to know your CV inside out and be able to talk through your experience with confidence. Brooke Thornham will provide you with a copy of the CV that we have sent to a client on your behalf to help you to prepare fully.
- **Be focused in your answers.** Interviews for NQ and qualified solicitor roles are very different to training contract interviews. A good interviewer will ask many open questions where you "have the floor" so to speak. You need to make sure you stay on point and answer the question asked. The interviewers want to give you the opportunity to show them where your capabilities lie and may well test and challenge you. They will obviously want to ensure you'll be good with clients. The recruiting partner will be keen to understand exactly what level of involvement you have had on the various matters you have worked on during your training contract – how much did you do yourself, and how much supervision did you have. Obviously, they won't be expecting you to be the 'finished article', but they will want to understand what level of experience and technical knowledge you have, and how that will work within their team.

- **Give consideration to the “why” questions.** These will look to uncover your motivation and ambitions. Why are you looking to leave? Why are you interested in this particular firm over other firms (including your own)? Why this location? All the interviewer is doing here is a ‘risk assessment’, so as to make a successful and lasting appointment. It pays to give some thought to a coherent set of answers in advance.
- **Ask questions.** Try and formulate a few of your own questions which have a professional focus. Any focus on getting involved in marketing, taking additional responsibility, career progression will always be well received. Also, questions which demonstrate that you know something about the firm are very important.

#### **Research and preparation:**

- All the information you need is obviously available on the internet via the legal directories, online and print media relevant to the legal profession and local business news. Make sure you are very familiar with the information on the firm’s website, partner profiles, their position in the Legal 500 etc. And make sure you read any interesting articles or news pieces covering work that the team you’re looking to join has undertaken.
- Be mindful that firms might do some discreet research on you too. So if you use social media make sure that the visible content is professional and that employers will be comfortable with it.

- Take heed of what your recruiter tells you about the firm, the interviewers and their approach to interviewing, where known. Your recruiter will often know information which isn’t in the public domain, and which can make the difference between a success and failure at interview. For example having recruited for firms across the north for many years, we can provide invaluable insight into how a particular firms conduct interviews, the kinds of questions you might be faced with, as well as how to deal with various partner personalities, likes and dislikes.

#### **First impressions:**

- Look the part. Dress well, demonstrate positive body language, make eye contact and show enthusiasm! You never get a second chance to make a positive first impression.

The above is by no means a comprehensive guide to interview preparation but it is a snapshot to get you in the groove for what’s ahead. We can help you with the rest on an individual basis.



**Be aware of the latest opportunities by signing up for our regular Jobscast emails and monthly 'NQ Bulletin' newsletter containing market insights, advice, and details of specific NQ opportunities - visit our**

## Get in touch

If you'd like to speak with us about your own circumstances and how we can assist you then please feel free to check out our profiles, and don't hesitate to make contact with any of our team on **0113 487 3080**. (We are happy to schedule conversations out of hours to suit you.)



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