



Making the law work for all - Can you help?

Glasgow's Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Law School of Glasgow University run a scheme offering placements to law students willing to volunteer in bureaux. Read on if you are interested in making a difference by helping to provide a free service and enabling people to claim their rights under the law.

What would I have to do?

You will undertake training to become a CAB adviser. Once qualified you will work in a bureau for 6 hours a week interviewing clients, understanding their problems and researching the law to identify options for resolving their issues. You will be helping people exercise rights that will make a fundamental difference to their lives.

Why volunteer?

Giving up precious time - why would I do that? There are lots of good reasons. Whether you intend practising as a lawyer when you graduate or following a different career path, your potential employer will look to see what experience and skills you have gained. As a CAB adviser you will interview clients and understand their problems, research the law and interpret it for the individual, represent clients, write letters, make phone calls and negotiate on the client's behalf as well as working as part of a CAB team. These skills are highly regarded by employers. Volunteering with CAB will enhance your CV and our partnership with the College's [Graduate Skills Programme](#), means you will get extra support to articulate your skills and experiences.



'I have been made redundant - is that right?', 'I haven't got any money, can I claim Universal Credit?'; 'My partner is abusive - what can I do?' Social security, employment, family, debt and consumer problems are key issues. You can help others to understand their options and resolve their problems.

I was looking for a practical use of my skills.... Competition for traineeships or devilling is hot, and being able to show that I'd already had clients that I'd assisted through issues certainly delivered. (Ex GU law student)

What is involved in the training?

The training includes modules on key areas of the law needed to answer client enquiries, for instance, social security, employment, immigration, consumer and family law; the principles of CAB work: impartiality, independence, confidentiality and upholding equality and diversity; using Advisernet, the CAB information system to research, as well as skills training in interviewing and case recording. To make it easy to train at your own pace and in your own time, many modules are available online as part of the CASlearn system. Once placed in a bureau you will spend some time shadowing an experienced adviser who will then observe you conducting interviews and handling cases until you feel confident to work on your own. You will be part of a team and there are always support workers for each session to assist advisers with tricky cases.

In the period of the lockdown CABx have operated a telephone service. As offices reopen you may be asked to advise using the telephone or working face-to-face.

Will the work contribute to my degree?

Students who successfully complete 100 hours of service (training contributes towards this total) and submit an e portfolio detailing their experience and skills are awarded 10 academic credits. The portfolio, part of the Graduate Skills Programme, provides useful evidence for legal sector employees.

Previous student CAB volunteers have gone on to successful careers as solicitors, advocates and working for the Scottish Human Rights Commission, charities and as academics.

How do I get started?

You need to complete an application form obtainable from: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/careers/findingjobs/internships/opportunities/>. The Internship Hub will review your application and you will either be shortlisted or rejected. If you are unsuccessful you will receive feedback from the Internship Hub. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an induction meeting where you will meet the people involved in organising this scheme and be able to ask any questions. Those selected to train as advisers will be allocated to one of the bureau in the Glasgow area. Every effort will be made to place you as near as possible to where you live but in the event of you having to travel to an office, all reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Who will I report to?

You will work with the manager or the training support staff for your bureau and as part of the CAB team. The manager or training officer will be responsible for keeping a record of your training and service, supporting you as an adviser and writing a reference for you on completion of your period of service. The first point of contact in the University is the Internship Hub manager, Sheena McBeth, sheena.mcbeth@glasgow.ac.uk or 0141-330-8458. In the School of Law, the contact is Steven.McKinnon@glasgow.ac.uk

How flexible are the working hours?

All bureaux have some paid staff but volunteers form the backbone of the service and work on a rota basis. Managers need to know when and for how long volunteers are available but they also recognise that students have other calls on their time and that at exam time, in particular, extra hours are very precious. Managers are flexible but you need to keep in contact and communicate if you are having difficulties in sticking to time commitments. If you are able to offer additional hours, speak to your bureau as this can speed up the time it takes to qualify as an adviser.

How will I know that I am making a difference?

All bureaux in Scotland are members of a network called Citizens Advice Scotland. This organisation provides services to bureaux, such as IT, training and information, and is also responsible for carrying out social policy work. Client case records provide the evidence that enables CAS to advocate for changes in the law. For example, recently CAS have advocated for changes to Universal Credit and disability benefits and campaigned to promote energy efficiency and relieve fuel poverty. Bureaux also carry out advocacy on local issues and if you are particularly interested in doing social policy work, please mention this in your application form and let your allocated bureau know about your interest.

Last year CABx in Scotland helped 272,500 clients with 723,00 different issues. The network represented in 4,700 tribunals with an 88% success rate. Action by advisers helped clients gain £131 million in unclaimed and appealed benefits. You can contribute to these amazing outcomes.

The work is interesting, varied but hugely important and always valued by clients. We guarantee you will get a buzz out of helping others and contributing to your community.

With CAB you'll encounter people from every walk of life ... You'll be in the room with real clients, facing real issues... and seeing how things work in practice (Ex GU law student)

