

# Job satisfaction

How would you rate your overall job satisfaction?



Lex 100 Winners

## ANALYSIS

1	Harbottle & Lewis LLP	10.00
2	Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom (UK) LLP	9.80
3	Howard Kennedy	9.33
4	Birketts LLP	9.14
=	Capsticks	9.14
6	Latham & Watkins	9.00
7	Farrer & Co	8.87
8	Burges Salmon LLP	8.86
9	Blake Laphorn Tarlo Lyons	8.82
10	Covington & Burling LLP	8.80
=	Wedlake Bell	8.80
12	BP Collins	8.75
13	Stephens Scown	8.70
14	Travers Smith LLP	8.67
15	DMH Stallard	8.64
16	Brabners Chaffe Street LLP	8.62
17	Bates Wells & Braithwaite	8.60
=	Freeth Cartwright LLP	8.60
19	Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP	8.54
=	Ince & Co	8.54

This category shows those firms which are home to some of the most content trainees in the country. In previous editions regional firms have featured more prominently, but this year it's fairly evenly split, although none of the top-scoring firms have large trainee intakes. In first place is media firm **Harbottle & Lewis**, which also scored well last year. Harbottle may not take on many trainees (four each year), but those lucky few seem to get plenty of interesting work ('decent exposure to the exciting stuff') and benefit from a positive atmosphere. Whilst you won't find any US firms featuring in the work/life balance section, there's a good showing here. The most highly placed is **Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom** where 'the degree of exposure and involvement in deals seems to considerably outstrip other firms'. **Latham & Watkins** is 'a genuinely great place to work. You can't say more than that!', and at **Covington & Burling**, the trainees value the 'friendly and nurturing environment'. Meanwhile trainees at West End firm **Howard Kennedy** benefit from 'superior support services and greater client contact than trainees at City firms'. Healthcare specialists **Capsticks** are not far behind; 'we get to do real work from day one and I think that's one of the things that sets us apart'. Last year Lincoln's Inn firm **Farrer & Co** achieved a clean sweep, appearing in every single one of these ten tables (this year it features in nine). It's another good showing this year with trainees still very happy in their jobs. At Ipswich firm **Birketts** the combination of reasonable working hours, good levels of responsibility and close supervision contribute to the high levels of job satisfaction. One trainee at **Blake Laphorn Tarlo Lyons** 'has gone up and down the country working on different matters and I love the different legal areas I have been exposed to'. Variety is also the spice of life at Bristol's **Burges Salmon**: 'I shouldn't imagine many trainees have had the experience of visiting clients on a dairy farm to discuss faulty milking apparatus as well as working on a multi-jurisdictional facilities management procurement' muses one trainee – and we'd agree.

# Firm living up to expectations

How far has the firm lived up to your expectations?



Lex 100 Winners

## ANALYSIS

1	Harbottle & Lewis LLP	10.00
2	Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom (UK) LLP	9.60
3	Howard Kennedy	9.33
4	Birketts LLP	9.29
5	BP Collins	9.25
6	Stephens Scown	9.20
7	Burges Salmon LLP	9.10
=	Travers Smith LLP	9.10
=	Freeth Cartwright LLP	9.10
10	Capsticks	9.00
=	Cripps Harries Hall LLP	9.00
=	Farrer & Co	9.00
=	Forbes	9.00
=	Latham & Watkins	9.00
=	Shadbolt	9.00
16	Blake Lapthorn Tarlo Lyons	8.94
17	Walker Morris	8.93
18	Brabners Chaffe Street LLP	8.92
19	Morgan Cole	8.90
20	Anthony Collins	8.85

You've been to the careers fair, collected your brochures and freebies, applied and won through the interview process. But now you've arrived, is your firm of choice delivering on its promises? Mirroring the previous table, it's top marks again for media boutique **Harbottle & Lewis**, where trainees feel that the firm is keeping its side of the bargain – 'it was clear after five minutes that this was a firm with down-to-earth people'. Other than failing to offer dessert as part of the free lunch (!), trainees have nothing bad to say about life here. **Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom** isn't far behind and is a good choice for those seeking a challenge; one trainee applied thinking 'the pressure combined with an opportunity to shine would bring out the best in me', another admits that it's 'not an easy ride, but the buzz is worth it when it all comes together'. At **Howard Kennedy** one trainee certainly did some thorough research: 'I had a clear idea what I was looking for. I wanted to work in a highly respected firm, with a high quality of work, a good work/life balance ... and supportive training structure'. And the research proved accurate. Ipswich firm **Birketts** proved popular with trainees seeking a 'regional leader in providing good quality services ... on a par with City firms'. At **BP Collins** it's more hands-on with more responsibility, whilst at **Stephens Scown** 'trainees are treated as individuals and not just numbers' and 'few firms have the same level of pride towards their trainees'. **Burges Salmon** also scores well: 'I felt that training and supervision on offer were second to none. I have not been disappointed'. At **Travers Smith** the training is 'miles ahead' and 'I could not recommend the firm highly enough to prospective trainees', a ringing endorsement. At **Freeth Cartwright** a trainee 'heard it was diverse and forward-thinking, and on commencing employment the rumours were confirmed'. The last word goes to a **Capsticks** trainee: 'I wanted to do healthcare work and I wanted to do it at the best healthcare firm. In my view, Capsticks is that firm'.

# Quality of work

How would you rate the quality of work you are given?



Lex 100 Winners

## ANALYSIS

1	Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom (UK) LLP	10.00
2	Latham & Watkins	9.67
3	Harbottle & Lewis LLP	9.33
4	Birketts LLP	9.29
5	BP Collins	9.00
=	Fisher Meredith	9.00
=	Forbes	9.00
=	Wedlake Bell	9.00
9	Blake Laphorn Tarlo Lyons	8.94
10	Shoosmiths	8.88
11	Speechly Bircham LLP	8.86
12	Brabners Chaffe Street LLP	8.85
13	Boodle Hatfield	8.78
14	Ince & Co	8.76
15	Cripps Harries Hall LLP	8.75
16	Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge UK LLP	8.71
=	Lester Aldridge LLP	8.71
=	Russell-Cooke LLP	8.71
19	Freeth Cartwright LLP	8.70
20	Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP	8.67
=	Farrer & Co	8.67
=	Travers Smith	8.67

Most trainees will admit to hum-drum work from time to time, and if you choose a firm with a strong corporate practice it's inevitable that you'll be getting to grips with due diligence, whilst would-be litigators are likely to be paginating bundles in the run up to trials. However, the firms in this table manage to balance this necessary grunt work with challenging tasks and interesting work, and two US firms lead the way. **Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom** trainees appreciate 'the ability to work on truly top-tier corporate deals', with one trainee 'working as the only support to three partners on a multi-billion pound placing' (be warned as 'you have to be prepared to sacrifice your personal life to some degree'). A **Latham & Watkins** trainee feels 'we are given more responsibility, greater client contact and genuine, interesting work'. Outside the corporate and City arena is **Harbottle & Lewis** where you could be 'handling your own files', doing 'really exciting stuff which is confidential' (shame!). At **Birketts** one trainee enjoyed 'attending a mediation with a client on my own and completing a corporate deal by myself'. Hours are fine at **BP Collins** but not at the price of interesting work – 'hours are less but the quality of work is so much better'. Legal aid specialist **Fisher Meredith** offers trainees a challenging workload which included for one trainee 'taking on a very hefty child abduction matter where the client's children had been warded in the High Court. Lots of running around but a fantastic result and great experience'. At the different end of the geographical spectrum is **Forbes Solicitors** where 'the work is interesting and I am given quite a lot of responsibility'. **Wedlake Bell** offers a lot more responsibility and better quality work, with 'far superior hands-on training'. **Blake Laphorn Tarlo Lyons** is apparently a 'great place for starting a legal career', whilst at **Shoosmiths** 'the trainees get a chance to do really good quality work because there are not too many of us'.

# Client contact

How would you rate your amount of client contact?



Lex 100 Winners

## ANALYSIS

1	Fisher Meredith	9.75
2	Birketts LLP	9.00
=	BP Collins	9.00
=	Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom (UK) LLP	9.00
5	Stephens Scown	8.80
=	Wedlake Bell	8.80
7	Russell-Cooke LLP	8.71
8	Farrer & Co	8.67
9	Shoosmiths	8.63
10	DMH Stallard	8.57
11	Blake Lapthorn Tarlo Lyons	8.53
12	Freeth Cartwright LLP	8.50
=	Latham & Watkins	8.50
=	Shadbolt	8.50
15	Lester Aldridge LLP	8.43
16	Bates Wells & Braithwaite	8.40
17	Boodle Hatfield	8.33
=	Harbottle & Lewis LLP	8.33
19	Pannone LLP	8.30
20	Irwin Mitchell	8.22

You mastered client role play on the LPC course and now can't wait to meet the real thing but client contact, or more often the lack of it, is a common bugbear among many trainees. At the risk of generalising, it's often the larger city/corporate practices which disappoint. It seems the combination of big intakes, combined with top-dollar deals and demanding clients means that trainees aren't given as much exposure as they'd like. Be aware, however, that being the first port of call for clients can be great when they're happy but, as one trainee discovered, the reality can be 'an angry client at the end of the phone (the drawback of having your own files)'. One of the best legal aid firms in London, **Fisher Meredith** offers plenty of client exposure, a lot of it very challenging. It featured prominently last year too. For one trainee the best moment of their training was 'getting homeless clients into accommodation'. **Birketts** offers 'early client contact and responsibility from the start'; for one trainee this entailed 'doing holiday cover for colleagues – excellent experience with own caseload'. At **BP Collins** 'the balance between quality clients and real involvement in files is perfect'. **Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom** ensures trainees are working in small teams with the result that 'I have had some quite staggering exposure'. South West firm **Stephens Scown** is praised for giving 'case responsibility and client contact at an early stage'. 'Because of the small number of trainees you have your own cases to work on' at **Wedlake Bell**, whilst **Russell Cooke** offers diverse client experiences, ranging from 'having conduct of a very serious criminal case' to attending an employment tribunal alone with clients. **Farrer & Co** has a 'ridiculously impressive and unique client base' (HM the Queen for starters - but don't go getting any ideas...), with one trainee 'meeting clients on my second day'. Meanwhile **Shoosmiths** offers a great combination of 'social life and a direct dial to the client!'

# Stress levels

How stressful do you find your job?



Lex 100 Winners

## ANALYSIS

1	Harbottle & Lewis LLP	9.00
2	Bryan Cave	8.33
3	Andrew Jackson	8.25
4	Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge UK LLP	8.14
5	Kennedys	8.00
=	Prettys	8.00
=	Thomas Eggar LLP	8.00
8	Farrer & Co	7.93
9	Henmans LLP	7.83
10	Browne Jacobson LLP	7.77
11	DMH Stallard	7.71
=	Blake Laphorn Tarlo Lyons	7.71
13	Brabners Chaffe Street LLP	7.69
14	Foot Anstey	7.62
15	Mills & Reeve LLP	7.54
16	Cripps Harries Hall LLP	7.50
=	McDermott Will and Emery UK LLP	7.50
18	Burges Salmon LLP	7.46
19	Morgan Cole	7.45
20	asb law	7.33

With a career in law (or any service profession for that matter) stress is more or less a given, whether it be exacting clients, time pressures or stomach-churning moments when you think you've messed up. However, at the outset of your career your supervisors and colleagues should be there to take some of that pressure off and teach you how to deal with it. Some firms definitely advocate more of an in-at-the-deep end approach, so be honest with yourself and decide what you think you can handle. 'My supervisor going on holiday and leaving me to close a complex hedge-fund deal' was one trainee's best and worst moment, and sums up why a bit of adrenalin can be a good thing. What seems to characterise most firms in this table is that colleagues are supportive; trainees find life at no1 firm **Harbottle & Lewis** 'much less stressful and more enjoyable', whilst new entrant to this year's edition **Bryan Cave** features strongly, because 'the lawyers are keen to involve juniors and take the time to explain matters to them'. In Hull, **Andrew Jackson** recruits people who 'are happy to help out and everyone is very approachable and supportive, right down from the managing partner to the support staff'. **Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge** takes 'pastoral duties and support seriously' and 'there is always someone's door to knock on'. At **Kennedys**, the 'friendly and relaxed working environment' contributes to the low stress levels. 'Life at **Prettys** is much less stressful', 'you are supported from day one and there is always an associate or partner willing to help'. At **Thomas Eggar** the lack of billable hours targets means 'the firm is low in stress compared to others'. **Farrer & Co** has 'no silly hours; no bullying', plus 'supervisors know when trainees need support and when they are ready to take on more responsibility'. In Oxford, **Henmans** has a good support network in which 'everyone is very willing to spend time with you'. Finally, **Browne Jacobson** seems to have got things right: 'we have a less stressful job, get better quality work and don't work till 7pm every night'. Sounds good to us!

# Work/life balance

How happy are you with your work/life balance?



Lex 100 Winners

## ANALYSIS

1	<b>Morgan Cole</b>	<b>9.73</b>
2	<b>Harbottle &amp; Lewis LLP</b>	<b>9.67</b>
=	<b>Lupton Fawcett LLP</b>	<b>9.67</b>
4	<b>Prettys</b>	<b>9.50</b>
5	<b>Henmans LLP</b>	<b>9.33</b>
6	<b>Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP</b>	<b>9.31</b>
7	<b>Kennedys</b>	<b>9.27</b>
8	<b>Andrew Jackson</b>	<b>9.25</b>
=	<b>BP Collins</b>	<b>9.25</b>
10	<b>Foot Anstey</b>	<b>9.23</b>
11	<b>DMH Stallard</b>	<b>9.21</b>
12	<b>Farrer &amp; Co</b>	<b>9.13</b>
13	<b>Penningtons Solicitors LLP</b>	<b>9.11</b>
14	<b>Brabners Chaffe Street LLP</b>	<b>9.08</b>
15	<b>Edwards Angell Palmer &amp; Dodge UK LLP</b>	<b>9.07</b>
16	<b>Ashfords</b>	<b>9.00</b>
=	<b>Browne Jacobson LLP</b>	<b>9.00</b>
=	<b>Cripps Harries Hall LLP</b>	<b>9.00</b>
=	<b>Forsters LLP</b>	<b>9.00</b>
=	<b>Payne Hicks Beach</b>	<b>9.00</b>
=	<b>Shoosmiths</b>	<b>9.00</b>

No prizes for predicting an absence of Magic Circle/City firms in this table, and congratulations to all these winners who are getting one of the most important things right. Of 21 firms in the list, a mere six are based in London, with the others well spread across the country. And the overall winner? Cardiff's **Morgan Cole**. Trainees here are evidence that you can pretty much have it all – 'good responsibility but not too much', 'varied practice areas', 'a social life in and out of working hours' and 'far fewer late nights – we don't work crazy hours'. There is much to learn from the way this Welsh firm treats its trainees. Joint second are two very different firms: niche London media practice **Harbottle & Lewis** and full-service Leeds outfit, **Lupton Fawcett**. Both firms know how to work hard and play hard and the excellent work/life balance does not come at the cost of high-quality work. At Harbottles, the work and clients are fascinating and often high-profile 'so it doesn't always feel like work', while at **Lupton Fawcett**, the friendly atmosphere and encouragement to 'have a good social life' comes from those running the firm. At Ipswich-based **Prettys**, trainees 'never have to work through lunch', at **Henmans** in Oxford there may not be much of a social life, but they 'really encourage a good work/life balance', while at Birmingham's **Anthony Collins** 'we have real responsibility, client contact from day one, a great life outside of work, as well as socializing together', plus 'if we ever have to work late, we genuinely get time off in lieu'. This is something we believe all firms should actively consider – make those overworked (and we know some might say, overpaid) trainees a little happier by thinking a bit more about time off when there's a quiet period. Among the other winners it is striking to see the US/UK product of frequent mergers, **Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge**, as international, commercial practices are not normally known for their reasonable hours. EAPD, however, is praised by trainees for its great attitude to a life outside work and for 'taking pastoral duties and support seriously'. Well done to the other firms in this table for doing that too.

# Friendliness of the firm

How would you rate the friendliness of the firm



Lex 100 Winners

## ANALYSIS

1	<b>Birketts LLP</b>	<b>10.00</b>
=	<b>Harbottle &amp; Lewis LLP</b>	<b>10.00</b>
=	<b>Shadbolt</b>	<b>10.00</b>
4	<b>BP Collins</b>	<b>9.75</b>
5	<b>Morgan Cole</b>	<b>9.73</b>
6	<b>Farrer &amp; Co</b>	<b>9.67</b>
=	<b>Lupton Fawcett LLP</b>	<b>9.67</b>
8	<b>Travers Smith LLP</b>	<b>9.60</b>
9	<b>Brabners Chaffe Street LLP</b>	<b>9.54</b>
10	<b>Jones Day</b>	<b>9.50</b>
11	<b>Pannone LLP</b>	<b>9.46</b>
12	<b>Bates Wells &amp; Braithwaite</b>	<b>9.40</b>
=	<b>Covington &amp; Burling LLP</b>	<b>9.40</b>
=	<b>DWF LLP</b>	<b>9.40</b>
=	<b>Forsters LLP</b>	<b>9.40</b>
16	<b>Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP</b>	<b>9.38</b>
=	<b>Browne Jacobson LLP</b>	<b>9.38</b>
18	<b>Freeth Cartwright LLP</b>	<b>9.33</b>
=	<b>Howard Kennedy</b>	<b>9.33</b>
=	<b>Latham &amp; Watkins</b>	<b>9.33</b>

The good news is that once again 'friendliness' is our top-scoring **Lex 100** category. More good news: friendliness doesn't seem to come at the expense of anything else, spread as it is between big and small firms (although firms with smaller trainee intakes definitely fare better), London and regional, with US firms doing well in the table again too. Top of the tree with a perfect score of ten are Ipswich firm **Birketts**; niche London media practice **Harbottle & Lewis** and Reigate-based commercial and construction outfit **Shadbolt**. At first glance, these firms have nothing in common, but a closer look reveals they all have a small, close-knit group of trainees who feel at home in their firm. At **Birketts**, 'the close supervision from the partners is superb', at **Harbottles** there is 'a positive atmosphere and dedication to staff', while at **Shadbolt** 'there are lots of young associates who are approachable and friendly'. The next few firms in the table are geographically distant, but again tend to have a smaller rather than larger trainee intake. Gerrards Cross-based **BP Collins** has 'a collegiate atmosphere where everyone is really friendly and you feel like a valued member of the team', at **Morgan Cole** 'everyone is friendly from partners to secretaries' and 'my supervisor even makes me tea', while at **Farrer & Co** in London, the combination of 'utter legends', 'eccentric characters' and the 'wonderfully relaxed atmosphere' make it 'unbelievably friendly'. London corporate outfit **Travers Smith** deserves a mention because it reaches number six in the table while having a larger trainee intake than most here and managing to work on the highest level deals, while maintaining a 'collegiate atmosphere' where the people are 'brilliant and inspiring to work for but great fun with it'. The unstructured contract where trainees sit on their own, doesn't stop US/UK commercial firm **Jones Day** from performing well here, while at the other end of the scale charities-focused **Bates Wells & Braithwaite** offers 'genuine friendliness and camaraderie'. Further north **Brabners Chaffe Street**,

**Lupton Fawcett** and **Pannone** all score highly. Which goes to show, friendliness, as far as our trainees are concerned, is pretty widespread and certainly not tied down to one particular firm type.

# Social life

How good is your firm's social life?



Lex 100 Winners

## ANALYSIS

1	Farrer & Co	9.36
2	Lupton Fawcett LLP	9.33
3	Jones Day	9.14
4	Browne Jacobson LLP	9.08
5	Cobbetts LLP	9.04
6	Brabners Chaffe Street LLP	9.00
=	Howard Kennedy	9.00
=	Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom (UK) LLP	9.00
9	Walker Morris	8.93
10	Travers Smith LLP	8.87
11	DWF LLP	8.70
12	Pannone LLP	8.69
13	Clarion Solicitors LLP	8.67
14	McGrigors LLP	8.65
15	Hugh James	8.62
=	Olswang	8.61
17	Capsticks	8.57
=	Shearman & Sterling LLP	8.57
19	Burges Salmon LLP	8.50
=	Freeth Cartwright LLP	8.50

It is cheering to find that many firms view a good social life as an important part of a training contract and working life in general. Regional firms fare particularly well in this table, with Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool and Nottingham all home to top-ten socialising firms. At the top of the table, however, is mid-size London practice **Farrer & Co**, where there are 'lots of social events and colleagues tend to be very close-knit'. Trainees here 'would want to socialise with my colleagues even if I didn't work here'. At Leeds firm **Lupton Fawcett** trainees put the good social life down to the size of the firm which encourages a 'friendly and sociable environment' – 'as a trainee you end up knowing everyone in each department you train in' and presumably spend quite a lot of time in the pub with them too. US/UK practice **Jones Day** in London is known for its unstructured approach to training and trainees tend to be in control of both their work and their social life – and are very happy with the situation: 'we get better work, have a better social life and seem to enjoy it all more', says one when comparing life with peers at other firms. At Nottingham's **Browne Jacobson**, 'the firm recruits like-minded trainees and therefore we all get on really well and have a brilliant social life together, in addition to all the social activities firm-wide'; while at **Cobbetts** in Manchester trainees have 'close relationships' and there are 'inter-firm trainee events to enable us to get to know trainees in other offices'. And at Liverpool firm **Brabners Chaffe Street** one trainee was particularly attracted by the firm's 'reputation locally for being modern party animals!' It is good to see other hard-working, high-performing firms featuring in this table such as US giant **Skaddens** and London corporate practice **Travers Smith** where the 'collegiate atmosphere' aids both the work and the partying. The key ingredient to having a good social life it seems is not your firm organising the entertainment for you (although that can help obviously), but putting together a group of people who all genuinely like and want to spend time with each other – which is why the recruitment process is so important.

# Vacation schemes

If you did a vacation scheme with your firm, how would you rate it?



Lex 100 Winners

## ANALYSIS

1	Blake Laphorn Tarlo Lyons	10.00
=	Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP	10.00
=	Thomas Eggar LLP	10.00
=	Wedlake Bell	10.00
=	Withers LLP	10.00
6	Cobbetts LLP	9.9
7	Burges Salmon LLP	9.82
8	Latham & Watkins	9.67
9	Capsticks	9.60
=	Travers Smith LLP	9.60
11	Olswang	9.57
12	Debevoise & Plimpton LLP	9.50
=	Farrer & Co	9.50
=	Lewis Silkin LLP	9.50
15	Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP	9.47
16	Linklaters LLP	9.44
17	Walker Morris	9.43
18	Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge UK LLP	9.40
19	Ashurst LLP	9.33
20	Norton Rose LLP	9.29

Amazingly, there are five firms at the top of this table which score a perfect ten. Good news for them because, as we said last year, vacation schemes are becoming increasingly important for both law firms and candidates. Firms use them to cherry-pick the best candidates and must sell themselves well if they want the cream of the crop to choose them for their training contract. The conversion rate of vacation scheme students to trainees is a big deal for many firms, with some proud to achieve conversion rates of up to 90% (ie 90% of current trainees did a vac scheme with the firm, were offered a job, and, most importantly, chose to take it).

Vac schemes are also key for candidates to gain an insight into different types of practice, and provide a helpful couple of weeks to make a good impression. So, the five firms with the top score are Portsmouth-based **Blake Laphorn Tarlo Lyons**, US firm **Cleary Gottlieb, Thomas Eggar** (offices across the South East), and mid-size London firms **Wedlake Bell** and **Withers** – a truly mixed bunch, showing that success in this area is certainly down to individual firm rather than type. At **BLTL**, the vac scheme gave ‘an excellent impression of the firm and the variety of practice areas’; at **Cleary Gottlieb** ‘there was plenty of responsibility from vac scheme onwards’; **Thomas Eggar** showed itself to be ‘very friendly and fair’; while the scheme at **Wedlake Bell** indicated a ‘friendly, human firm’ and at **Withers** it enabled candidates to see the ‘broad range of departments on offer’. Just below these firms, with a score of 9.9, comes Manchester-based **Cobbetts** where one trainee sums up the benefits of a good vacation placement: ‘I experienced a workplace that was very friendly with current trainees who were content with their training and genuinely happy. This contrasted greatly with my experience of other firms when I attended their vacation schemes’. So firms beware – vacation scheme experiences count for a great deal when trainees come to making their decision. Be friendly, keep trainees busy and involved and let them experience a range of interesting work.

See the table for other firms with winning schemes, and for further information see our article on vacation schemes on page 485.

# Confident of being kept on

How confident are you that you will be kept on at the end of your training contract?



Lex 100 Winners

## ANALYSIS

1	<b>Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher &amp; Flom (UK) LLP</b>	<b>9.80</b>
2	<b>Covington &amp; Burling LLP</b>	<b>9.40</b>
=	<b>Stephens Scown</b>	<b>9.40</b>
4	<b>Foot Anstey</b>	<b>9.33</b>
=	<b>Harbottle &amp; Lewis LLP</b>	<b>9.33</b>
6	<b>BP Collins</b>	<b>9.25</b>
=	<b>Cleary Gottlieb Steen &amp; Hamilton LLP</b>	<b>9.25</b>
=	<b>Debevoise &amp; Plimpton LLP</b>	<b>9.25</b>
9	<b>Latham &amp; Watkins</b>	<b>9.17</b>
10	<b>White &amp; Case LLP</b>	<b>9.14</b>
11	<b>Slaughter and May</b>	<b>9.10</b>
12	<b>Dewey &amp; LeBoeuf</b>	<b>9.00</b>
=	<b>Wragge &amp; Co LLP</b>	<b>9.00</b>
14	<b>Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP</b>	<b>8.94</b>
15	<b>Lester Aldridge LLP</b>	<b>8.93</b>
16	<b>Forbes</b>	<b>8.80</b>
17	<b>Clifford Chance</b>	<b>8.75</b>
=	<b>Cripps Harries Hall LLP</b>	<b>8.75</b>
19	<b>Travers Smith LLP</b>	<b>8.73</b>
20	<b>Linklaters LLP</b>	<b>8.69</b>

Wouldn't it be nice if all candidates were as confident about being kept on as the trainees at firms in this table? This is certainly not the case, however, with scores varying dramatically between firms.

It is an emotive area and we received many complaints about the 'uncertainty' and 'lack of transparency' surrounding the job offer process.

The issue is two-fold: firstly, will there be a job for you at all; secondly, if you are offered a job, will it be in the department of your choice? Many trainees voiced concerns that although their firms' published retention rates are high, the chances of getting a job in your first choice department is certainly not guaranteed, with a significant number of trainees every year having to leave their firms to pursue their chosen practice area. This is particularly true of small to medium-sized firms with one or two popular departments where competition for jobs is intense. It can also affect larger City firms where the focus is on corporate/finance, with limited options outside these areas. But for some lucky trainees, the offer of a job on qualification seems almost a certainty. US firms, in particular, perform exceptionally well in this category, with **Skaddens** at the top of the pile and six others in the top 12. Also in abundance are Magic Circle firms with **Slaughter and May**, **Freshfields**, **Clifford Chance** and **Linklaters** receiving great scores. Other high-achieving firms to fare well here include London corporate practice **Travers Smith** and Birmingham powerhouse **Wragge & Co**. The confidence shown by trainees in these firms boils down to a number of issues: the firm's past record on retention; the prevailing economic climate; how well your firm has performed over the past year; indications given to individuals in appraisals; and, of course, an optimistic, self-assured attitude (which seems to be a common characteristic shared by trainees at some of the powerful firms mentioned in this table). Confidence of being kept on is not confined to large corporate/commercial firms, thankfully, and a number of smaller regional firms with limited trainee intakes also make the table (including **Stephens Scown**, **Foot Anstey** and **BP Collins**). Our advice is to check out previous retention rates and ask serious questions about this at interview.

