



CITY SOLICITORS' **EDUCATIONAL TRUST**

PRESS RELEASE

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LEADING CITY LAW FIRMS JOIN FORCES TO WIDEN ACCESS TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION

A group of the City's leading law firms has joined together to launch a major new charitable initiative, the purpose of which is to promote wider access to the UK legal profession. The initiative is being backed by 13 firms¹ who have collaborated historically through the City Solicitors' Educational Trust ("CSET"), a charity established in 1989 to provide financial assistance to university law faculties.

They are today announcing the launch of the CSET Summer School, a unique initiative designed to identify and encourage university students from a diverse range of backgrounds to consider a career in the law.

At present, the majority of law firm recruits are drawn from the Russell Group² of universities which includes Oxford, Cambridge and other leading UK academic institutions. The legal profession has long sought to attract a wider pool of entrants and the CSET Summer School has been established specifically to address this unmet need.

The CSET Summer School will target undergraduates who for any number of reasons may believe that they fall short of the requirements for a professional career, perhaps because they did not achieve the requisite A Level results and/or because they are not studying at one of the top UK universities. The focus will be on undergraduates studying law entering their second year and non-law students with a proven interest in law entering their third year at universities that fall outside of the Russell Group.

The CSET aims to identify around 1,000 such university students and invite them to apply for a place at the CSET Summer School. One hundred successful applicants will be invited to attend an intensive one-week residential course at a London university during their Summer vacation, when they will acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to assist them towards a career in the law. The CSET Summer School will comprise a mix of individual and group work, with a particular emphasis on the intellectual rigour required of successful lawyers. After the CSET Summer School, every student attending will have access to individual guidance and mentoring for the remainder of their time at university.

¹ The current sponsors of the CSET are: Allen & Overy, Ashurst, Clifford Chance, Faegre & Benson, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Hammonds, Herbert Smith, Linklaters, Lovells, Macfarlanes, Penningtons, Slaughter and May and Watson Farley & Williams.

² The Russell Group is an association of 20 major research-intensive UK universities. In addition to Oxford and Cambridge, Russell Group universities include King's College and University College London, London School of Economics, Bristol, Cardiff, Durham, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Warwick. www.russellgroup.ac.uk



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Selecting the CSET Summer School candidates will involve an individual assessment designed to identify students with natural analytical, numerical and communications skills. The assessment process, which will take the form of an online test and a face-to-face assessment, will employ very different criteria from those adopted for conventional recruiting based on academic achievement.

In developing their plans for the CSET Summer School, CSET and its sponsor firms consulted closely with the Sutton Trust, the leading educational charity which has been highly successful in enabling able school students from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain a place at university and thus realise their individual potential. One objective of the CSET Summer School is to complement the work of the Sutton Trust by enabling individuals who may not have benefited from its activities to improve their career awareness, their core skills and ultimately their career prospects.

Sir Peter Lampl, chairman and founder of The Sutton Trust commented: "I have the greatest admiration for this collective effort to encourage wider access to the legal profession. The Sutton Trust's work will be enhanced by initiatives of this nature that help students up the next rung in the ladder by giving them the wherewithal and encouragement to pursue a career they might not otherwise have contemplated."

Speaking on behalf of the CSET sponsor firms, Geoffrey Green, Senior Partner of Ashurst, said: "The CSET Summer School is an important step towards achieving greater diversity within the legal profession. It will enable City lawyers to support the important cause of widening access to the profession in a manner which can only be done collectively: no one firm could undertake this ambitious project on its own."

The group of sponsor firms behind the launch of the CSET Summer School – comprising Allen & Overy, Ashurst, Clifford Chance, Faegre & Benson, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Hammonds, Herbert Smith, Linklaters, Lovells, Macfarlanes, Penningtons, Slaughter and May and Watson Farley and Williams – is seeking additional support from other City law firms. Over the coming weeks, several of their Senior Partners will hold a series of meetings with potential sponsor firms with the objective of enlisting the widest possible support across the profession for this important collective initiative. It is hoped that, in time, the CSET will be able to broaden its activities by holding Summer Schools around the country.

Any law firm wishing to learn more about membership of the CSET should contact Howard Jacobs, Chairman Management Committee, City Solicitors' Educational Trust on 020 7090 5403, email chair@cset.org.uk

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