



LEGAL LENS

PRESENTED BY THE
SOASLawSoc

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WELCOME TO LEGAL LENS

A Legal Newsletter without the Legalese

Brought to you by the one and only SOAS Law Society, the Legal Lens Newsletter is the fastest way to cultivate commercial awareness, hear about upcoming legal opportunities both on and off campus, and stay up-to-the-minute on all things law!

As SOAS Professor Scott Newton put it, "Law is the secret plumbing and wiring of the world.". Our goal is to untangle and lay that wiring out straight; to demystify the legal world by breaking down its latest developments in a way that's digestible and accessible for Law and non-Law students alike!

So, if you're looking for the sharpest snapshot of Law today, take a look through *Legal Lens*.

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by Jerusha John
& Nawaf Babgi

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by Shahzeen Salam

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by Nayah Kelly

Happy Holidays from the Legal Lens Team

COMMERCIAL AWARENESS SEGMENT

BY JERUSHA JOHN & NAWAF BABGI | 3RD YEAR LLB LAW

EU FINALIZES LANDMARK AI LEGISLATION: A GLOBAL FIRST

The European Union has set a global precedent by finalizing a comprehensive framework to regulate artificial intelligence (AI). This landmark legislation adopts a risk-based approach, focusing on high-risk and general-purpose AIs. It prohibits certain AI applications, like biometric categorization and untargeted facial recognition scraping, and imposes strict limits on law enforcement's use of remote biometric identification, requiring judicial approval in specific cases. Excluding military applications and non-professional AI use, this legislation aims to ensure a balance between innovation, fundamental rights, and European values, with enforcement starting as early as 2026.

UK INVESTIGATES MICROSOFT/OPENAI PARTNERSHIP

The UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is investigating the relationship between Microsoft and OpenAI. This scrutiny follows concerns about a potential "relevant merger situation" after Microsoft gained a board seat in OpenAI. The investigation focuses on the implications of their collaboration for competition in the AI market.

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES FLIGHT ATTENDANTS REJECT CONTRACT AGREEMENT

Flight attendants at Southwest Airlines, represented by the Transport Workers Union Local 556, have overwhelmingly rejected a proposed contract agreement. The decision, made by a 64% to 36% vote, reflects the union's stance to stand united for better outcomes. Despite the rejection, holiday travel will not be impacted. Southwest Airlines, expressing disappointment, will continue to operate under the current contract while awaiting further actions from the National Mediation Board and union.

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES THIS WINTER

DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR

COMPILED BY SHAHZEEN SALAM | 2ND YEAR LLB LAW



but first :

WHAT IS A VACATION SCHEME?

Vacation schemes, simply put, are internships with solicitor's firms – an integral component of a legal education and play a crucial role in shaping the careers of aspiring lawyers. During this dynamic one- to two-week stint, you'll dive into genuine tasks, soak in the firm's culture, and yes, receive compensation for your efforts.

These experiences cater to both law and non-law students, although typically not open to first-years. But if you're a fresh face in university, fear not—there are plenty more tailored schemes, insightful days, and open events designed just for you.

SPRING VACATION SCHEMES *DEADLINES for 2024*

Bird & Bird

15th December, 2023

Goodwin Proctor

15th December, 2023

Weil, Gotshal & Manges

20th December, 2023

Dechert

31st December, 2023

BCLP

14th January, 2024

Baker McKenzie

15th January, 2024

SUMMER VACATION SCHEMES *DEADLINES for 2024*

Bird & Bird

15th December, 2023

Goodwin Proctor

15th December, 2023

Weil, Gotshal & Manges

20th December, 2023

Simmons & Simmons

31st December, 2023

Hogan Lovells

4th January, 2024

Baker McKenzie

31st January, 2024

Don't miss out on these exciting opportunities to apply for vacation schemes! Act promptly, as the firms listed above have set their deadlines for 2024. Ensure you seize these chances before it's too late!



TERM HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SOAS LawSoc

A quick highlight reel from the Society of all our most memorable moments in the last term at SOAS. If you missed out, no worries—there's more to come after the Christmas Break! Stay tuned for updates.

FRESHERS EVENT: WHITE PARTY ON THE THAMES

The SOAS LawSoc kicked off the year for freshers with style by returning an annual favourite: the Boat Party on the Thames! Attendees danced the night away against the backdrop of London's lit-up landmarks and dazzled in an all-white dress code.

NETWORKING WITH LONDON LAW: SOAS CSNE & LCC

Two dynamic and high-energy networking events took place in the Paul Webley Atrium within a week of each other last November: the Commercial Speed Working Event (CSNE), designed to facilitate connections for aspiring Solicitors; and the Legal Careers Carousel (LCC), tailored to provide opportunities for those pursuing the Barrister route. We extend our gratitude to all the professionals and student participants for engaging in evenings filled with meaningful connections and powerful conversations.

CAREER INSIGHTS: PRESENTATIONS FROM OUR SPONSORS

Earlier last month, SOAS students had the privilege of attending an enlightening presentation evening featuring Nick Pacheco, partner at Magic Circle Firm **Slaughter & May**, along with trainee Olivia Harrison; where the two shared insights into their selection process and answered thoughtful questions on their career trajectories.

This was followed up by the exclusive opportunity to hear directly from **Hogan Lovells'** Graduate Recruiter, Jasmine Uppal, in an energetic presentation about what it takes to secure a place on their Vacation schemes and Training Contracts.



COMMERCIAL SPEED NETWORKING EVENT



SLAUGHTER & MAY PRESENTATION



HOGAN LOVELLS PRESENTATION



BAR DIGEST : WHAT HAVE YOU MISSED?

BY NAYAH KELLY | 3RD YEAR LLB LAW

1. Family Legal Aid Extended
2. New Law Forces Offenders to Attend Sentencing Hearings

FAMILY LEGAL AID EXTENDED

The eligibility of legal aid for private family law cases has been made more extensive. The reform surrounds Special Guardian Orders (SGOs) which are court orders in the UK that appoint one or more individuals as guardians for a child. They are made when a child cannot live with their birth parents but need long-term placement; and when granted, they allow those with parental responsibility to make legal decisions for the child. The broadened scope of family law legal aid now includes:

- a. prospective guardians making applications for Special Guardianship Orders
- b. and anyone with parental responsibilities responding to Special Guardianship Orders made by others.

The privilege of legal aid has been extended to private family law, this means the welfare of the child can now be freely safeguarded in matters like divorce, inheritance disagreements, and division of assets. The changes made in May 2023 bring the financial eligibility requirement in line with cases covered by public family law.

NEW JUDGE DISCRETION – FORCED ATTENDANCE AT HEARINGS

In the aftermath of the Lucy Letby hearing, where the notorious child serial killer refused to attend her own hearing, the Ministry of Justice is wielding new powers. Judges will now have the discretion to compel offenders to attend their sentencing, making it “clear in law” that reasonable force can be used. This move, however, faces spirited debates, with Silks (King’s Council barristers) such as Kat Bex KC, questioning its validity. The crux of the controversy is that the order will only apply where maximum sentences are involved, with a potential two-year jail time extension for non-compliance. Critics recognise that this small increase tacked on to a life sentence is ineffective and performative. On the flip side, there is concern that bringing taunting offenders to court and allowing them to mock the proceedings may do more harm than good – particularly on amplifying victims’ distress.

Supporters contend that the threat of additional prosecution and the judicious use of force could dissuade all but the most resolute criminals from evading public accountability. PM Rishi Sunak asserts, “People rightly expect criminals to face up to the consequences of their actions.”

The looming question: Is this legislative shift purely for show, or does it genuinely address systemic issues in our criminal justice system? Can forcing offender attendance bring the closure victims seek? And, crucially, can we trust custody officers to exercise “reasonable force”? As these inquiries linger, we invite our readers to weigh in on the discourse.

and last but not least:

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

From all of us on the Legal Lens team – have a wonderful Christmas Break, future lawyers! We look forward to welcoming you back well-rested to a term jammed full of all the events you love, fresh opportunities, and opening new doors together! Watch this space for all the latest and we hope you’ve enjoyed peering through glass with the 1st Edition of the SOAS Law Society’s *Legal Lens Newsletter!*

Thanks for Reading

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