



Legal Research Skills in a Nutshell

Before you begin your legal research it is recommended that you complete the Legal Research Exercises which are located in the online library guidance section of your Laws VLE. The Legal Research exercises cover the basic skills you will need for undertaking legal research.

Step 1- Read your Course materials

Have you consulted the relevant course materials provided?

- Read the relevant chapters of your module guide, and the essential readings mentioned there.
- Read the relevant extracts from your module readings.

These should always be your first steps when covering materials for your study. These resources will direct you to the cases, legislation and journal articles relevant to your research.

Step 2 – Think about relevant Search Terms.

You will need to spend some time thinking about the focus of your research question, and the search terms which are appropriate. Your first search of the Online Library databases may give you too many or too few results. You may then need to **rethink** your search, to find alternative search words and phrases. For example if your research topic is conditional fee arrangements, you could search by a combination of these terms:

Synonyms (words with the same meaning) – success fees, “no win, no fee”.

Narrower terms – search by a specific jurisdiction.

Organisations – The Law Society

Related terms – legal aid

Broader terms – costs.

Step 3 – Access the Online Library Databases

Using your Student Portal password you should search your Online Library databases such as [JustisOne](#), [LexisLibrary](#) and [Westlaw](#). Your databases can be accessed either from your [Study Programme Gateway](#) (<https://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/programme>) or from the [Databases section](#) (<http://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/resources/databases>) under Find Resources.

To log in with your student portal password select the link provided. If you have forgotten your student portal password contact the student advice centre. <https://my.london.ac.uk/>

Step 4 – Search the Online Library Databases

[Summon](#) is the Online Library’s journal search engine. Summon is a quick way of searching for journal articles, eBooks, and newspapers across the Online Library databases from a single search box. **Please note that Summon does not search for cases.**

Link directly from your Summon results to the full text. Access the Summon search box on the Online Library homepage: <https://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/>

You will find more information about searching Summon in the [Summon for Law Students guide](#) (<http://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/support/faq/how-do-i-search-summon-legal-resources>).

You can also undertake a search of the Westlaw journals database find journal articles relevant to your research. Westlaw contains the legal journals index and is therefore a good starting point. You may find that the full text is not available for some articles in Westlaw. However, the full text may be available in another database. To find out if another database has the journal (or case report series), search the A-Z Journals List: <http://zk6qc5fe9p.search.serialssolutions.com/>.

The new Legislation Compare tool is now live! [Find out here.](#)

☆ 🏠 🔗 Journals

[Terms and Connectors](#)

Free Text

1 Subject/Keyword

Article Title

Author

Journal Title

Document Type

Date

Term Defined

2 Cases Cited (Party)

Cases Cited (Citation)

3 Legislation Title

Legislation Provision No.

Organisation Cited

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1. Search by Subject / Keyword. Combine your search terms using the **AND, OR** and **NOT** connectors.
2. Search for articles which cite to a particular case.
3. Search for articles relating to legislation or a specific provision.

TIP! When narrowing your search look at the Subject / Keyword terms given to relevant articles and then search by those terms.

No single database contains all the information on a subject so you will need to carry out the same searches on [LexisLibrary](#) and other databases, to ensure you find all the resources available.

To search the LexisLibrary journals database, log in then select the journals database from the menu at the top of the page.

If you are unfamiliar with how to search the legal databases read the quick start guides provided for each database to help you get started.

<http://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/support/quick-start-guides> . Read the [Legal Research Skills FAQ guides](#)

(<http://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/support/faqs/law>) to develop your legal research skills.

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Journals Index
International Content
Bulletins

Search terms

Put **and** between your search terms to find them anywhere in the document. [Search tips](#)

Add topics to search

Sources

Article title

Author

Article citation [Citation help](#)

Specify date:

Step 4 - Evaluate your results

Consider the relevance of your results in helping you to answer your research question.

Contact the Online Library Enquiry Service for help at:

<https://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/support/online-library-enquiry-service>