

The Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme

Connecting exceptional talent
with great opportunity

STUDENT BROCHURE

FEBRUARY 2026

With support from

AON

AstraZeneca

Bank of England

European Bank
for Reconstruction and Development

FRESHFIELDS



Who we are

Freshfields is a global law firm with a history of successfully supporting the world’s leading national and multinational corporations, financial institutions and governments.

No matter what our clients’ aim, whether it’s raising business-critical capital or completing a market-changing merger, our 2,800 plus lawyers have what it takes to achieve it. We strongly believe that our people make our firm – it is their collective knowledge and commitment that our clients rely on when it matters most.

Commercial Law

Commercial Law is the broad term for the range of legal services designed to support businesses, financial institutions and governments rather than private individuals.

Lawyers in large commercial law firms might practise corporate, finance or intellectual property law, or focus on corporate investigations or the regulation of digital currency. They might work mainly with Private Equity clients or be experts in the Life Sciences sector. Their day-today might be mergers and acquisitions or advising clients in their sustainability endeavours.

Legal tech is at the centre of the way they support clients who are looking for innovative solutions to their business-critical issues.

These firms need the best and brightest, no matter what their background.

The City of London

The City of London, also known as the City or the Square Mile, is the financial district of the UK and a key financial centre globally. It stands as a symbol for the transactions which leading organisations undertake and as the hub for the services they need.



Doreen Lawrence

Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon, OBE

Baroness Lawrence was thrust into the limelight in 1993 following the racist murder at a London bus stop of her 18-year-old son Stephen.

Her relentless campaign for justice for over 30 years continues to transform British society. Doreen’s goals are threefold: to achieve justice for Stephen, to improve the criminal justice system and to build a more equal society where people from all backgrounds can contribute to its success.



My personal ambition is to help provide opportunities for people to become the best that they can be.

Doreen Lawrence

OUR AIM

You are reading this because Freshfields and Baroness Lawrence have been working together to broaden access to careers in commercial law. This means making sure that people from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences work as commercial lawyers.

Launched in 2013, the Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme was designed to address the disproportionate under-representation of Black and Black mixed-race men from less privileged backgrounds in large commercial law firms in the UK. It’s a model for other leading businesses in the City of London.

Until 2017, the scheme had only been open to eligible law students. However, from that year, we gave a small group of UK universities the opportunity for their eligible non-law students also to participate in the scheme. In addition to careers in commercial law, the scheme’s ongoing work with City organisations offers opportunities in other careers in the City of London.



Successful applicants will be selected in the summer of 2026.

We are looking to offer a small number of scholarships to talented students who will work closely with lawyers and other professionals with the aim of being offered opportunities that include trainee associate programmes (widely known as training contracts) with commercial law firms, including Freshfields, and in commercial law and other areas at other City of London organisations.



IS THIS YOU?

You are a law student, or a non-law student at one of our pilot universities...

you think you might be interested in working in commercial law or might be open to a career at another organisation in the City of London...

you might not know what a commercial law firm is, or what the City of London does...

someone in your university has brought the scheme to your attention.



Eligibility

Applications will be welcomed from exceptionally talented students who are open to the idea of pursuing a career in the legal profession or a career in the City of London and who satisfy all of the following seven criteria:

1. Black African or Black African-Caribbean or mixed-race Black African or mixed-race Black African-Caribbean.
2. Male or identifies as male.
3.
 - a. Studying in the UK at a UK university towards a law degree; or
 - b. studying in the UK at a UK university towards another undergraduate degree (pilot universities only, and up to 10 candidates per pilot university).
4.
 - a. In the case of a course of four years or fewer, is in the first year of that course; or
 - b. in the case of a course of more than four years, will on 6 March 2026 hold a total credit score of fewer than 120 credit points towards this degree.
5.
 - a. Has not at any time attended a fee-paying junior school in the UK; and
 - b. has not at any time attended a fee-paying senior school in the UK.
6. Has not at any time attended a school outside of the UK for which the fees are more than nominal.

‘Exceptional talent’ will be assessed in the round. There will be no minimum academic results requirement.

“I felt my confidence and skillset develop with every exercise.”
FSL candidate

“I’ve realised I’ve an interest not just in coding but in cyber security too.”
FSL scholar

7. Satisfies at least one of the following socio-economic criteria:
 - a. in the case of a full-time student, is in receipt of a maintenance loan from Student Finance England or a grant from Student Finance Wales or from Student Finance NI which in each case is above the scheme’s relevant limit, or a bursary from Student Awards Agency for Scotland;
 - b. would have received such assistance from one of the above UK bodies were it not for the fact he is studying part-time;
 - c. is in receipt of means-tested maintenance assistance from a UK government body equivalent to that described in paragraph 7a;
 - d. has at any time been eligible for free school meals at a UK senior school or other senior school;
 - e. has at any time attended a senior school that is above the country average in terms of the number of students eligible for free school meals or, for a senior school in England, where the percentage of such students exceeds 20%;
 - f. is considered by one of the UK bodies referred to in 7a above or by his UK university or an award-making charity as a care leaver or care experienced or, in Scotland, as having been looked after; or
 - g. has an overwhelming case on socio-economic grounds (other than the student’s exceptional talent which is a necessary criterion for all applicants) that, although the student does not meet criteria 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e or 7f above, it is appropriate for him to be considered for inclusion in the scheme.

Benefits

Scholars will receive the following support:

- interview coaching and other development opportunities;
- commercial familiarisation during university holidays;
- an alternative route to interview for a place on the trainee associate programme or summer vacation scheme at Freshfields;
- a £5,000 contribution towards course and associated study-related costs; and
- mentoring.

The timing of this support is explained to everyone who is selected for a scholarship. If a scholar is not on a three-year course, we will discuss the most appropriate timing. The mix of benefits will be tailored in order to meet the requirements of each scholar’s particular circumstances.

“I’m looking forward to the commercial familiarisation I will gain through work experience. That time at Freshfields and their clients will give me a chance to see how the organisations work themselves and with each other.”
FSL scholar

To find out more about the Scholarship Scheme, please visit our [website](#)

“I’ve gained the kind of soft skills that I would never have gained from university, or from reading a book either.”
FSL scholar



Getting the right people

You might not have considered a career working as a commercial lawyer or that working in the City of London could be for you.

You know you're ambitious, smart and determined to succeed, but you sense that there's probably more to the working world than you're currently aware of, and don't know how to access this. Do you sometimes feel a bit uncomfortable about where you fit in?

You don't see yourself reflected in many of the people who seem to be running the UK's top businesses, but also know you're different from many of the people you grew up with, most of whom aren't doing a degree at university.

You yearn to be challenged, and to challenge yourself, but how? You don't have any contacts at the UK's leading institutions and only a vague sense of what they do – but this doesn't matter anyway because you're not convinced that any prestigious UK law firm or business would be falling over itself to give you its experience, time or advice.

If this is you, and your university has asked to sponsor you for the Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme, you're the type of person we want to apply.



It was a split decision whether to apply – I didn't get a scholarship, but the coaching and feedback meeting turned it into a win.

FSL candidate



As someone from the North, it's definitely made me think that a life in the City is accessible to someone like me.

FSL scholar



My CV has drastically improved.

FSL candidate

Don't assume the organisations we've described don't want you. While you're working hard to get a good degree, this scheme is designed to find people like YOU – the talent within UK universities that organisations like ours might otherwise miss.

Nice to meet you. Provide the information for the forms and we look forward to talking to you soon.

There will be plenty of opportunities to learn more about the scheme. You don't need to make any decisions yet. All we ask is that you are absolutely determined to finish your degree.

That's all. If you do decide to apply, see the application as the start of a conversation. That's how we see it.



Like what you've read so far? Keep reading.

Step-by-step instructions can be found on page 10.

1. The insight meeting – 16 February 2026

If you would like to get a better sense of Freshfields as a place to work and to hear from some of our clients before you apply, you can come along to a full-day meeting that the firm is running for interested applicants. You will meet people of all ages who currently work at Freshfields and other City of London organisations, as well as scholars from previous years. You can look around the offices on Bishopsgate in London, ask any questions you might have, and discuss the scheme and the assessment centre with us.

Attendance is voluntary. It won't influence the application process and doesn't form part of your application. Travel expenses and catering will be provided.

2. Applying to be a scholar – by Friday 6 March 2026

There are two stages to this:

- Submit the online application, which must be completed by the university on your behalf.
- Create a two-minute film that tells your story.

Use it to give us a sense of who you are by picking out the things that have made up your life so far. You could, for example, talk about where you went to school, where you live, what your responsibilities are. You might want to tell us what you do in your spare time, what you have found hardest in your life and what you have enjoyed the most. What attracted you to study your subject and where are you studying it? How do you spend your holidays?

We're interested in who you are and what motivates you.

You can film your two-minute film on whatever you have access to – an iPhone, any smartphone or a video camera. The quality doesn't matter. If you're unable to prepare a two-minute film for any reason, or would have difficulty doing so in a way that could disadvantage you, just let us know. We are happy to consider adjusted or alternative approaches.

3. The assessment centre – Monday 30 and Tuesday 31 March 2026; and Wednesday 8 and Thursday 9 April 2026 (TBC)

We are currently planning for two assessment centres. An assessment centre comprises two in-person days followed by some further assessments using Microsoft Teams. Both in-person and virtual components are compulsory.

Updates will be sent to you closer to the time. We will give you full details of the assessment centre you have been allocated to, including the times when your assessments will be in person, and the times when they will be virtual.

The assessment centre is designed to test applicants across a range of skills and personal characteristics. The experience is intended to be fun, challenging and constructive, regardless of whether or not you are ultimately selected as a scholar. In-person components will be held in central London. Travel expenses, overnight accommodation (if relevant) and catering will be provided. The assessment will involve both individual and group exercises.

4. Awarding the scholarships – Summer 2026

The successful applicants will be contacted after the assessment centre. The Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholars will then be invited to attend a meeting (whenever is mutually convenient) to discuss both the scholarship and the support provided.

For those who applied but were not successful, don't be discouraged. As a thank you for your efforts, we will invite you to attend a virtual meeting to provide you with helpful feedback, and offer advice on your future career. There are many paths into commercial law and the City of London – as long as you keep moving forward, it doesn't matter which you take.

Assessment centre timings may change in light of travel strikes.

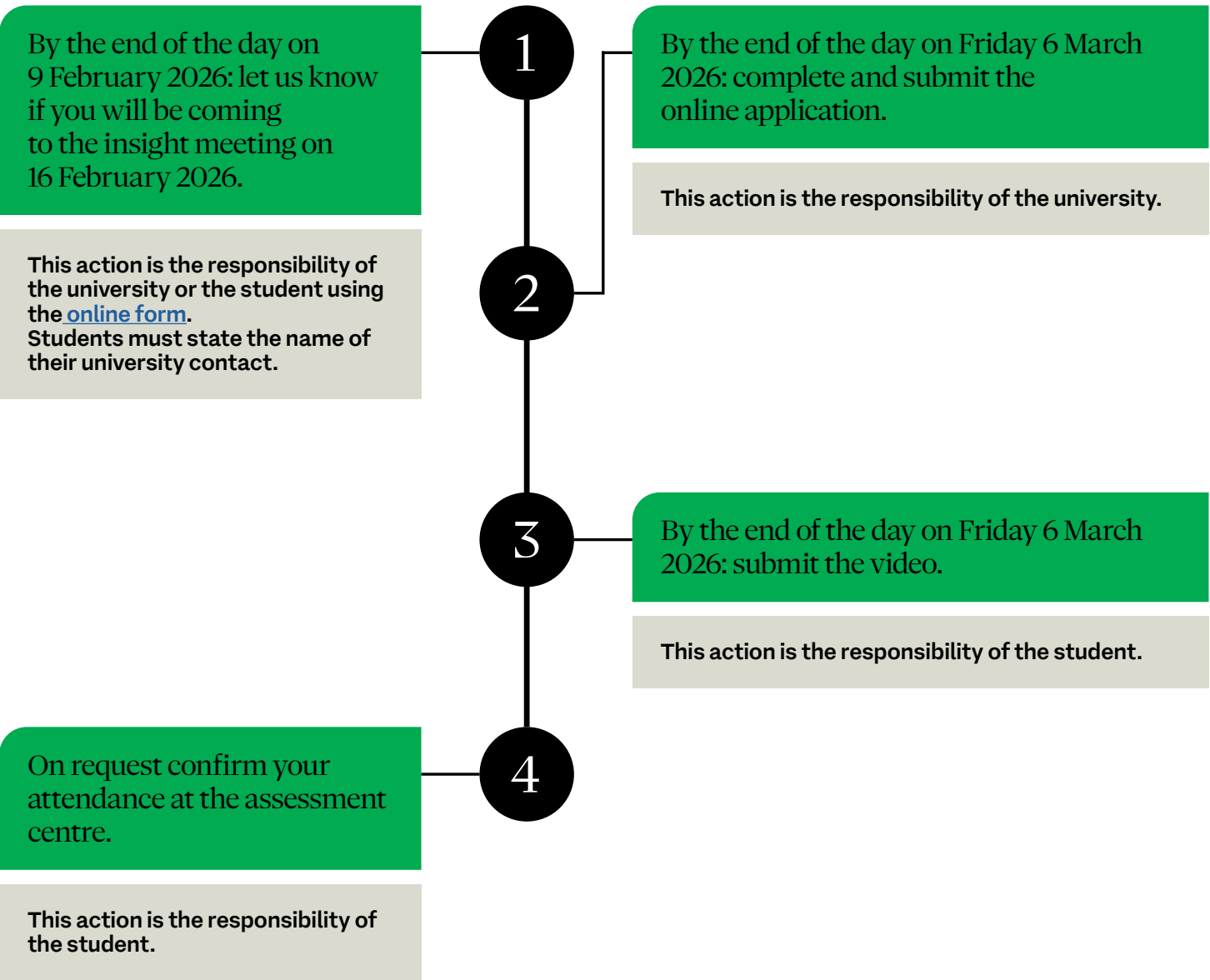
The university needs your consent to use your information in the process.

What to do if you have decided to apply

First of all, we are delighted you have made the decision to apply. We want you to succeed.

Deciding to apply for the Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme is a big deal. The stakes are high – trainee associate programmes and career opportunities in the City of London are highly sought after. If you are awarded a scholarship, and if you would like one, you will be guaranteed an interview for the trainee associate programme or summer vacation scheme at Freshfields.

So what do you need to do next, and in what order?



“

You may feel as though you’re not supposed to be in these spaces. I’ve learned I’m very valuable. I can provide an opinion which might not have been heard if I wasn’t there.

FSL scholar

Questions

If you have any questions, please direct them to Annette Byron or Mide Tinubu at Freshfields by email:

ContactFSLScheme@freshfields.com

Additional information

You can find out more about the firm and the scheme at:

www.freshfields.com/en-gb/about-us/responsible-business/freshfields_stephen_lawrence_scholarship/

You can view the scheme’s privacy notice at:

<https://www.freshfields.com/globalassets/noindex/fslss-privacy-notice-2025.pdf>



This material is provided by Freshfields, an international legal practice. We operate across the globe through multiple firms. For more information about our organisation, please see <https://www.freshfields.com/en-gb/footer/legal-notice/>.

Freshfields LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales (registered number OC334789). It is authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA no. 484861).

This material is for general information only. It is not intended to provide legal advice on which you may rely. If you require specific legal advice, you should consult a suitably qualified lawyer.

© 2025 Freshfields LLP, all rights reserved

www.freshfields.com