How to find UK cases and legislation

A guide to finding UK cases and legislation using the BPP libraries hard copy and online resources.

How to find out if a law report is available from the library

When a case is first heard a ‘judgment’ or ‘transcript’ will be handed down by the Court. This may then be written up in any of several Law Report series.

Very early ‘nominate’ Law Reports were written up by Barristers and Court Reporters and named after them e.g. Manning & Granger. These were reprinted in the English Reports.

From 1865 the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting became responsible for producing the Law Reports series and are referred to by the Court [e.g. QBD for Queen’s Bench Division] or the business of the Court [e.g. AC for Appeal Cases], and are considered the most authoritative series.

There are other general series covering a range of courts and subjects e.g. Weekly Law Reports and the All England Law Reports, as well as specialist series e.g. Lloyd’s Law Reports or Personal Injuries and Quantum Reports.

Many of these series are available in hard copy in the BPP libraries, or electronically via the legal research resources. To find out where to find the full text of a law report:

1. Go to the Search Journals and Law Reports search box via the Online Library, and type in the name of the Law Report Series e.g. “Weekly Law Reports”. Use speech marks if you are sure of the exact title.
2. Many law reports are available via Lexis Library or Westlaw. To access these you need your Athens username and password. There is no single source which contains the full text of all law reports.

Understanding case citations

Cases are often referred to by where they may be found in a law report series. This reference is made in the form of a citation, e.g.:

Pepper v Hart [1993] AC 593

Richardson v Howie [2004] EWCA Civ 1127

Since 2001 cases have also been assigned a neutral citation. These refer to the court in which the case was heard rather than a law report, e.g.: Richardson v Howie [2004] England & Wales Court of Appeal, Civil Division

Deciphering abbreviations

For an explanation of legal abbreviations, go to: http://www.legalabbrevs.cardiff.ac.uk/ or the following print sources:

- Raistrick, Donald. Index to legal citations and abbreviations
- Any issue of the Current Law Monthly Digest
- Halsbury’s Laws Cumulative Supplement Part 1

For further information please contact your library issue desk or email library@bpp.com

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Finding cases on Westlaw

Westlaw indexes reported and unreported UK cases. It provides a useful summary of the case called the ‘case analysis’ linking to where cases and legislation have been cited, where the case has been judicially considered, and other useful commentary. Check ‘Cases Help’ for full information, but Westlaw does provide the full text of many law report series including the English Reports with coverage from 1220.

1. Go to the Online Resources section of the Online Library.
2. Select Westlaw then log in with your Athens username and password.
3. You can search via party names, citation or keywords from the cases search screen:

4. For more options click on Advanced Search. This screen allows you to search for cases discussing a particular piece of legislation etc.
5. Use either search screen to locate your case.
6. A list of cases found will be displayed. The Case Analysis link provides a summary of each case with links to key information.
7. Where the full text of a law report is available on Westlaw the citation will be hyper-linked. Click on the link to view the full text.
8. If the full text is not available on Westlaw use the Search Journals and Law Reports box via the online library to see if it is available in one of the BPP libraries or via another online resource.

Finding cases on LexisLibrary

LexisLibrary contains the full text of many law report series including the All England Law Reports and the English Reports with coverage from 1220. In addition it provides summary details of a large number of UK cases using the Case Overview function.

1. Go to the Online Resources section of the Online Library.
2. Select LexisLibrary, and then log on with your Athens username and password.
3. There are several options for searching. Use the Find a Title area to enter a case name or citation using the fields provided. You may be offered suggestions to select. This defaults to the Case Overview option linking to the full text where available.
4. Alternatively click on Cases on the top navigation bar. This detailed page offers specific help and tutorials related to searching for cases, and links to international cases too.
5. You can search by subject terms, party names, citation or judge. Enter your search terms, select a date range if you wish and click on Search.
6. Your hits are displayed with the most recent first. Click on the party names for the full text of the law report or use preview first (on the right). Narrow by source or topic on the left if required.
7. Click on the icons on bottom right of the screen to print, email or save the document.

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Finding cases on Lawtel

Lawtel contains details of UK cases from 1980. It is useful for recent and unreported cases. It does not offer the full text of any law reports. However, it often has the full text of the judgment as handed down in court.

1. Go to the Online Resources section of the Online Library.
2. Select Lawtel then log on with your Athens username and password using the 'Login via OA Federation' link, and then select BPP University from the dropdown University list.
3. Tick Case Law if searching from the Home Screen, or select Cases on the top navigation bar for a more detailed search screen.
4. Using the advanced Cases search screen it is possible to search by party name, subject, court, keywords, legislation etc. The latest cases added to the service are displayed on the right hand side of the screen.
5. Lawtel provides a summary of each case found.
6. Where the official judgment is available, a link to the Full text is provided in the top left of the screen. Lawtel does not provide the full text of Law Reports although users who subscribe to Westlaw (in addition to Lawtel) will be offered a link through to Westlaw’s case analysis. BPP University has subscriptions to both.

Finding cases on HeinOnline

HeinOnline is useful for accessing some specialist areas of case law including the nominate reports, reported in the English Reports. The English Reports are also available on LexisLibrary and Westlaw.

1. Go to the Online Resources (Law) section of the Online Library
2. Select HeinOnline then log on with your Athens username and password.
3. From the links select ‘English Reports’ or Case Law – English Reports.
4. Search by party names or citation.
5. From the results list, click on the citation to view the case in PDF format.

Finding cases on freely available websites

BAILII

http://www.bailii.org/

Free access is provided to transcripts of all publicly available UK and Irish cases. This can be useful for very recent or unreported cases.

Supreme Court

http://supremecourt.uk/

Judgments from the UK Supreme Court (from Aug 2009) are available on the court’s website, as well as a link to earlier, House of Lords cases.

Cases from tribunals

Cases from tribunals are often not available via the legal research databases but are published on the tribunal’s own website. See

http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/hmcts/tribunals.htm

NOTE: when viewing individual hits in full if you see a link saying “Order full text”. This is a paid service to which BPP does not subscribe.
Finding UK legislation

The full text of UK Statutes and Statutory Instruments can be found via numerous online resources, and printed sources in the library.

Finding legislation on LexisLibrary

LexisLibrary contains all UK statutes and statutory instruments in force. All amendments and revisions to the legislation have been included.

1. Go to the Online Resources section of the Online Library.
2. Select LexisLibrary then log on with your Athens username and password.
3. Use Find a Title... Legislation to find a specific Act or SI. As you type in search terms, suggestions will appear in a drop down list. Alternatively, click on Legislation in the navigation bar for a more detailed search screen.
4. Enter subject terms in the search terms box if the name of the Act is unknown or you wish to search for any legislation on a particular subject.
5. Or search by legislation title, chapter number (entered in series number field), date or Royal Assent.

Following a search to retrieve an entire Act, please note each section is presented separately. The first item serves as a contents page for navigating to the other sections, each with its own status signal. It also provides a PDF of the Act and any STOP PRESS information (very recent amendments not yet incorporated). The ‘Find out more’ links will apply to the whole act if accessed from the contents page, or an individual section if selected. Click to view full Annotations as supplied by Halsbury's Statutes. Key legislation also has links to historic versions.

Finding legislation on Westlaw

Westlaw contains all UK statutes and statutory instruments in force. All amendments and revisions to the legislation have been included.

1. Go to the Online Resources section of the Online Library.
2. Select Westlaw then log on with your Athens username and password.
3. Searching via the legislation basic or advanced search screens will retrieve legislation divided into sections.
4. To retrieve the whole of the document, click on ‘PDF of entire act’ from any result page.

Following a search to retrieve an entire Act, please note each section is presented separately and accessed from an initial ‘Arrangement of Act’ page. This also shows the status of each section. Users can link to related materials for the whole Act or for an individual section if it is first displayed in full.

Previous versions of Acts are available by clicking through earlier versions. Use the Advanced Legislation screen to look at historic or prospective versions of legislation.

Finding legislation on www.legislation.gov.uk

The National Archives provide free access to the full text of all UK Acts from 1988 onwards and Statutory Instruments from 1987. This includes some original enacted and revised Acts. However, to ensure currency and to benefit from added functionality, students should always use LexisLibrary or Westlaw.

Finding printed legislation in the library

Halsbury’s Statutes of England and Wales: A set is available in some BPP law libraries. It provides the full text of all statutes of England and Wales currently in force. All subsequent amendments and revisions are included in the text. The fifty main volumes are accompanied by updating volumes and files. You will need to look through each of these parts of the service to ensure you have up to date information.

Current Law Statutes Annotated: This set is available in some of the BPP law libraries. It contains the full, original, un-amended text of all UK Statutes since 1948. It is accompanied by separate citator volumes which list subsequent amendments to each statute.

Blackstone’s Statutes on...: This series is arranged by subject and published annually for the academic year and is therefore not updated during the course of it. Similarly - BPP Law School Core Statute book for LLB/GDL.

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