

IntoUniveristy Insight Day: Q&A

1. What work placements/ internships does DMH Stallard offer?

[HR] We usually offer around 30-40 unpaid work experience placements each summer, however this year we had to cancel the programme due to the pandemic. We are, as yet, unsure whether we will be running the work experience programme over summer 2021. Much of the work experience placement involves shadowing the fee-earner, therefore due to the pandemic and everyone working remotely, we are uncertain whether work experience will be viable due to the difficulty in supervising students remotely.

2. How much emphasis is there on A-levels when applying for a training contact at DMH Stallard?

[HR] We have no minimum requirement for A-level grades. Whilst academics are important and a 2:1 degree is preferred, our application scores across a number of areas as we are looking for well-rounded individuals. We consider relevant work experience, the applicant's motivation for applying specifically to us and we ask a couple of competency based questions, giving the applicant the opportunity to demonstrate some of the key skills we look for in our trainees. No application is rejected based purely on exam grades.

3. Why were you interested in your field of law?

[Lawrence] I was interested in the problem-solving aspect of my role, working in Real Estate Dispute Resolution. My clients come to me with a legal problem and it is my role to advise them and if they have a case, to bring it to a resolution. This often means I need to think creatively and then work diligently to get my client the result they want.

[Helen] I was attracted to the sense of achievement when a transaction is completed and the variety of deals and businesses involved.

[Marissa] I was surprised by just how complex Estate Planning is. There is always something new to learn and I know my job will never be boring.

4. Do you also work with barristers?

[Lawrence] Yes, I work with and consult barristers quite frequently. Barristers can be instructed to provide expert advice on specialist areas of law, to draft complex legal papers and to attend court on behalf of clients. Solicitors and barristers regularly dovetail and work together to resolve a dispute.

[Helen] Not often but occasionally when a company has not transferred shares properly in the past or not complied with the companies act on a share buy back we have to go to court to get it rectified and that involves a barrister.

[Marissa] Very occasionally, if we need a legal opinion on a complex area of law that may be challenged by HMRC in the future.

5. Do you have any advice in securing training contracts/spring weeks during coronavirus and how are these being affected by coronavirus?

[HR] As mentioned above, we cancelled our work experience programme this year due to the pandemic and we also took the decision to postpone holding our trainee assessments until next year and I expect many other firms have done the same. Whilst it is a difficult time, relevant work experience is invaluable in helping you secure a training contract. I think the only advice would be to persevere and even if you can gain the odd day or two of work experience (which firms may find more manageable at this time), rather than a full week, it will help.

6. What sort of extra-curricular activities do you recommend to develop your skill set?

[Lawrence] I would recommend pursuing any extra-curricular activity that you are passionate about and enjoy. Lawyers come in all shapes and sizes and have a wide range of interests and passions. I would recommend undertaking charity and community work in particular as a great way of giving back and enhancing your key skills such as communication.

[Helen] I agree with Lawrence, do what you enjoy but, given a choice, focus on activities that develop communication, team work and organisation skills.

[Marissa] I agree with Lawrence and Helen, any kind of extra-curricular activity can show commitment and the ability to balance competing interests. I also found that part time employment and volunteering were good ways to develop communication and team building skills.

7. How does funding work for law conversion courses?

[Lawrence] I understand that the law conversion course can be funded privately or through a loan. Alternatively, I believe the main law school providers also offer scholarships that can be applied for. On rare occasions, it may be that a law firm will

pay for the course (i.e. a sponsorship) if a student has already obtained a training contract with them to start after they finish law school. Generally the law schools will also offer payment plans and may be able to accommodate specific requirements.

8. What are the enjoyable aspects of studying a law degree?

[Lawrence] I did a History degree but the law conversion course is effectively a three year law degree in one year. I found the case law particularly interesting. You will read about a lot of cases during a law degree and many of the famous cases are famous because they contain interesting (and sometime unbelievable) facts.

[Helen] I also did not do a law degree and, similar to Lawrence did the conversion course. Although the conversion course was challenging in terms of volume of information to understand and learn for exams the subjects were varied and really interesting.

[Marissa] Whilst there is a lot of theory to learn when studying for a law degree, I enjoyed the opportunity to study lots of different areas of law from Immigration to Commercial.

One of the most interesting aspects of my law degree was taking part in the 'Law Clinic'. This was a drop in centre run by the university where members of the public could obtain free legal advice given by the students (under the supervision of a qualified solicitor). I got to put the theory into practice and get a feel for what the role of a solicitor was really like.

9. Do solicitors have the opportunity to go to court? If so, what would their role be?

[Lawrence] Yes, depending on what area of law you work in. In my role, in Real Estate Dispute Resolution, quite a few of my cases end up in court. I sometimes attend on behalf of my client but often I instruct a barrister to present the case. Occasionally, I attend court with a barrister and provide a supporting role. Solicitors are allowed to present cases up to County Court level and can only appear on behalf of their clients in the High Court if they take extra exams (called Higher Rights of Audience).

[Helen] As a corporate lawyer I do not go to court but I do get to go to exciting negotiation and completion meetings.

[Marissa] As a Private Client lawyer I do not go to court. If a matter becomes disputed, it is passed to our contentious team to deal with.

10. Is being in the workplace anything like Suits?

[Lawrence] Sometimes, although not very often. Slightly less glamorous and more desk-work!

[Helen] Sadly, the outfits, hair and make up are far less polished and we generally dress down! UK law is also far less cut throat than the storylines portrayed in Suits.

[Marissa] I agree with Lawrence and Helen, it is not as glamorous!

11. What tasks were you involved in as part of your training contract?

[Lawrence] It will depend on which firm you work for and how big the team is. Personally, I did my training contract at a smaller firm and worked very closely with



senior lawyers in the team. From day one, I was speaking to clients, and providing first draft letters and documents for my supervising partner to review.

[Helen] I agree it varies greatly from firm to firm but both at DMHS and ASB trainees have a good level of exposure to clients and get involved in drafting and research.

[Marissa] For me, this varied from team to team. In Commercial Property and Private Client I was liaising with clients regularly and preparing draft documents. In Dispute Resolution I had less client contact and more research based tasks. I was also heavily involved in preparing documents for court– a task known as ‘bundling’.

12.As a lawyer in London, can you practice in other parts of the world?

[Lawrence] It really depends on where in the world you want to work. You will be qualified as a lawyer in England & Wales and you would need to refer to the local rules governing recognition of overseas lawyers. It may be that you need a certain additional local qualification to practice in a different country. This is generally not the case if you work for an international law firm that has offices in different countries.

[Helen] I agree and it is easier to convert to some jurisdictions than others e.g. the companies act in Singapore and India are apparently based on UK law.

[Marissa] I have friends who qualified as lawyers in England & Wales and practice in Dubai. They work for international law firms and have transferred offices.

13. Having not studied law at A Level, how did you decide that it was worth pursuing that option? What research did you do?

[Lawrence] I did study law at A-level but I didn't pursue it at degree level. I spoke to friends that had studied law at degree and spoke to lawyers when I did work experience placements. Plus some internet research!

[Marissa] Whilst I did study law at A-level, similarly to Lawrence I found it really useful to speak to students who were either completing a law degree at the time or had already graduated.

14. Do you have any tips on networking on LinkedIn as a university student?

[Lawrence] LinkedIn wasn't a big thing when I was at university but nowadays it is a great way to connect with other professionals. I would try to connect with lawyers that I might come across at events (such as the Insight Day!) and definitely any that you work with as part of any work experience placements.

[Marissa] I did not have LinkedIn when I was at university but find it is a great tool to keep in touch with professional contacts I have made at events.

15. Is a training contract and the LPC the same thing?

[Lawrence] The Legal Practice Course is a postgraduate course that is studied at law school after a student has either completed a law degree or, if not, completed a non-law degree and then the law conversion course. A training contract is completed after the LPC and is a two year work placement at a law firm that must be completed to qualify as a solicitor.



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