

Graduation Day (and a time to reflect)



Graduating is one of the most important parts of an educational journey. Not only is it a great day filled with celebration of your achievements with friends and family, but it is also a chance to reflect on how much you've learned and how far you've come.

On Friday 1 April, me and my fellow apprentices graduated at Central Hall, Westminster, London with a Level 4 Certificate of Higher Education (Legal Services) awarded by BPP University. This not only marked the end of our paralegal apprenticeship, but also the mid-way point of our solicitor apprenticeship. Our graduation ceremony was delayed due to Covid so we are currently half-way through our solicitor apprenticeship and due to qualify in 2025, which is both scary and exciting!

It feels like yesterday I was a new joiner at the firm and getting confused by the printers! Thankfully I have grown so much since then and here are my reflections on my apprenticeship journey:

Exams

After sitting my paralegal end point assessment exams, I thought they were the toughest exams I will ever sit – until I heard about the SQE! Our paralegal exams covered a limited range of topics, whereas the SQE covers everything. This includes practical exams on skills such as advocacy as well as theoretical exams covering topics like criminal law.

I always try to keep the end goal in sight and start preparing early whether that is asking my supervisor for tips, practising new exam techniques or re-reading old notes from earlier modules as the time spent now might help later on.



The life of a lawyer

Most of us at the start of our careers or at university aren't prepared for the reality of working in a law firm. Billing, time recording and chargeable hours aren't covered on most law courses. Being a solicitor apprentice has allowed me to ease into the working life of a lawyer. Covering matters when a colleague is on holiday or making sure work in progress is being billed is great experience for later on when I am qualified.

Law in practice

My main tasks as a paralegal apprentice were mainly administrative based. However, my current workload is now mostly fee earning. As I progress through my apprenticeship, I now have a greater understanding of the law as I start to put it into practice. For example, I'm currently in Real Estate and a few months ago I did not understand why some leases had to be registered and others didn't, but now I am able to identify if a lease needs registering and why.

Becoming a lawyer of the future

Since starting the apprenticeship, one of the key things I learned is that there is a growing demand for lawyers to not just be lawyers. It is also essential to have soft skills such as communication skills and presentation skills. Legaltech and business development are also important and I have loved getting involved with document automation projects and helping our Marketing team with our directory entries for Chambers and the Legal 500.

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