

## Reflecting on my time with Browne Jacobson

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I was especially keen to attend the firm's vacation scheme which provides a key opportunity for candidates to improve their legal knowledge, gain invaluable work experience and, ultimately, assess whether the firm is right for them. Having secured a vacation scheme and spent some time working with the firm, I would say the experience has exceeded my expectations.

While the training contract application process is rigorous, it is obvious that the firm has put considerable time, resource and effort into ensuring that the vacation scheme is well structured, enjoyable and enables candidates to get to grips with the firm's culture. I was particularly glad to hear that the scheme was being run on a hybrid basis, with the opportunity for candidates to work in the office and from home. Even further, I have had the opportunity to experience more than one practice area, extending to the education, employment, insurance & public risk, business & professional risk and health, advisory & litigation teams.

Reflecting on my experience so far, there has been a real emphasis on enabling candidates to meet as many colleagues at the firm as possible, while engaging in the real day-to-day work that a trainee would be involved in. In my short time with the firm, I have engaged in pragmatic legal research, drafting, matter reviews/discussions and (virtually) attended a court hearing.

I have been warmly welcomed into each team and I have had several opportunities to discuss the day-to-day client issues faced by the firm's lawyers. Throughout, I have been encouraged to provide my own thoughts and opinions on legal issues and how I would approach them, in much the same way a trainee would be expected to provide their views.

At the same time, we have been set a group project/presentation to prepare before the end of the vacation scheme. This has been a great opportunity to get to know my fellow candidates while working collaboratively, across offices, towards an assessed end-goal.

In terms of getting the most from your vacation scheme, it is important to do your research, have questions ready and don't be afraid to reach out to colleagues. Get to know your fellow vac-schemers, set up a Whatsapp or MS Teams chat and put yourself out there. If you have an interest in a particular sector or practice area, don't be afraid to voice that. I have also found that it is important to ask for feedback to understand what you've done well and where there is room for improvement. I would also recommend keeping a diary of each day for your records, to refer back to on your CV or future applications.

There is no doubt that securing a vacation scheme is an extremely competitive process. It is therefore important to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible, as early on as possible. Looking back, if I could give my younger-self one useful nugget of advice, I would say that it is important to be as proactive as possible in looking for legal work experience or volunteering opportunities. It is important for anyone who is considering a career in law to obtain some first-hand experience, to get a feel for the day-to-day work and have an opportunity to ask questions.

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