

Advice for those considering a legal apprenticeship

09 February 2024  Emily Berridge

Emily Berridge is one of our solicitor apprentices. She is passionate about promoting the solicitor apprenticeship as a route into law and has some advice for others considering this route.

A solicitor apprenticeship is a fantastic alternative to the traditional university route into the legal profession. This route offers a unique opportunity to gain on-the-job experience while studying part-time for a law degree.

One key advantage that solicitor apprentices have is that they're able to gain valuable work experience from day one. By being in an environment where they can learn from experienced solicitors and take on responsibilities from the start, apprentices can build up their confidence and establish rapport with both clients and members of their team.

Another significant advantage of a solicitor apprenticeship is that apprentices can earn a salary while they train. This is important as incurring high levels of debt can often be a deterrent for prospective students in the pursuit of a legal career. Following this earn while you learn path can remove that financial obstacle and help students avoid some of the debt that comes with studying a law degree or the Solicitors Qualifying Examinations.

Questions to ask yourself when considering routes into law

Young people interested in entering the legal profession often ask me for advice on how to decide whether the university route or an apprenticeship is right for them. I advise them to ask themselves the following questions:

1. Do I enjoy studying?
2. If I were to go to university, what reasons would I be going for? (i.e. am I going for the uni experience, to study, or because it is expected of me?)
3. What type of learning style best suits me? (For example, hands on or visual learning)
4. Is money a key priority for me?

For me, my answers were:

1. Do I enjoy studying?

I didn't enjoy full time study and I found it overwhelming. I knew that I enjoyed working so it made sense to combine the two.

2. If I were to go to university, what reasons would I be going for?

I would have only been going to university to get my law degree. The 'uni experience' didn't really appeal to me, so I questioned whether there was another way for me to get my degree.

3. What type of learning style best suits me?

I am a hands-on learner. If I do something once, I can remember it and develop that skill over time. I know that I am not someone who does well when they must read and write excessively as a form of learning.

4. Is money a key priority for me?

I loved the financial freedom of having a job and making my own money.

If you can answer the above questions and be really honest with yourself, you should have some clear guidance on which path is most suitable for you. Once I answered those questions it was clear to me that the route that best aligned with me, my home life and my career aspirations was the solicitor apprenticeship.

Despite this, one of the main challenges I found during the solicitor apprenticeship was balancing work and study. The apprenticeship route requires us to work full-time while studying part-time, which can be quite a challenge. We have exams three times a year so ensuring that you are meeting both your work and university targets at the same time can be difficult. However, there are many skills you develop along the way, such as prioritisation and being able to meet deadlines. These skills assist with making the work-life balance more manageable.

One disadvantage of choosing the solicitor apprenticeship is that we can sometimes feel like we're missing out on the social aspects of the university experience. However, many apprentices that attend university part-time are still able to participate in university societies and events, enabling them to get the best of both worlds.

Overall, the solicitor apprenticeship route has been the best decision I could have made for myself. I have been working at Browne Jacobson for the past two years since beginning the solicitor apprenticeship. This has allowed me to develop skills such as drafting, building client relationships, and networking – all of which the university route would not have been able to help me develop to the same extent.

Being a solicitor apprentice is a great way to gain valuable work experience, avoid high levels of debt, and increase diversity within the legal sector. If you're interested in pursuing a career in the legal profession, and you have answered the above questions, a [solicitor apprenticeship](#) could be a fantastic opportunity for you to consider.

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