

Top Prize for 'Law in Practice' Student

Wednesday 20 November, 2013

A Bachelor of Laws (Hons) student at [Sheffield Hallam University](#) has been awarded the coveted **Law In Practice Prize** thanks to the support of national law firm Simpson Millar LLP.

Zoe Ascott earned her stripes under the guidance of Cathie Delaney, partner at [Simpson Millar LLP's Sheffield](#) office, who heads up the clinical negligence department and is a Clinical Legal Supervisor for the Law in Practice module.

During the course of 2 terms, Zoe spent one day each week with Cathie and her team. The opportunity enabled her to observe and participate firsthand in how to meet the individual needs of clients and in the legal process required to **succeed in pursuing challenging cases**.

"Taking part in the Law in Practice module has been invaluable to me. It has helped me make connections between theory I have been taught and the link to practice allowing me to see the Law in context in the real world," says Zoe. "The module has shown me how to approach situations in the correct professional and empathetic manner and how to react specifically to different clients, depending on their vulnerability, none of which can be taught in the classroom."

According to Cathie, Zoe impressed everyone with her personable nature, teamwork, and professional approach.

"Simpson Millar LLP is committed to supporting and encouraging law students, and I take great satisfaction in enabling the personal and professional development of those who come and work with me," says Cathie. "Zoe was a ray of sunshine, going above and beyond what was expected of her. Watching her grow as she embraced the difference between theory and practice in the application of the law has been a real privilege."

Participation in the programme **allows students to experience the reality of practising law**. Although students do not deal directly with clients they get involved in case research and, where appropriate, attend client meetings as observers. They also listen to telephone calls so that they learn how to adopt the correct manner with specialists and consultants, across a diverse variety of cases.

"The work of a clinical legal supervisor takes dedication but the satisfaction of seeing someone like Zoe develop her skills and grow professionally is very rewarding," says Cathie. "It's a pragmatic approach, and my job is to facilitate rather than to teach in the traditional sense. I set tasks based on real life case files, and take students through the process of building a case from start to finish. This includes legal research, analysis, problem-solving, drafting and so on. They are involved hands-on at every step of the way and can discover for themselves where the negligence lies and how to build the blocks required to win a case."

Sometimes students recognise that becoming a solicitor is not for them and that they would prefer to use their knowledge within academic life. Others discover exactly what their strengths are.

"Zoe has shown beyond a shadow of doubt that she has made the right choice. She has gained commercial awareness too, and demonstrated that she is a good all-rounder. We're so proud of her," says Cathie.

Cathie was among the Platform Party on 18 November 2013 when Zoe's degree was conferred with an LLB Honours degree from Sheffield Hallam University.

Zoe is now looking forward to a bright future which benefits others and enables those in need of help to get the justice they deserve. "By conversing with real clients at Simpson Millar LLP I appreciate more than ever the helpful work that is performed by my chosen profession," she says.

In conclusion, Ms Vinny Jethwa, Law in Practice course Tutor, Sheffield Hallam University says: "Sheffield Hallam University's approach to clinical legal education combines the strengths of the University's schemes of study with a method of teaching different from that used in many other Universities, namely work placements. We have created a network of organisations willing to host our students who undertake the Law in Practice Module. These organisations are taking a strong and active interest in supporting the education of our students, who provide assistance for the placement organisation and the wider community. The module develops the student's lawyering skills so that they

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are better prepared for the world of work in the legal sector. In addition, the Module provides the opportunity for firms to encourage the growth of the local economy by retaining Sheffield's best legal talent."

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