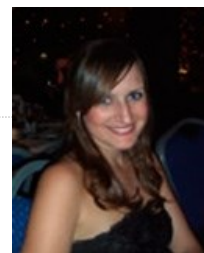


Alumna profile: Miss Hannah Lacey

Programme: LLB Bachelor of Laws, (2004)

Please tell us about your career experiences since graduating from the University of Birmingham



“ Whilst in my second year of my law degree at the University of Birmingham, I applied for a number a vacation placements with London law firms. In the summer between my second and final years I did three such schemes, one of which was with Allen & Overy (the other two were with Cameron McKenna and DLA). I had a fantastic time on the scheme and was interviewed for a training contract whilst I was there. A few weeks later I was delighted to find out I had been awarded a training contract with Allen & Overy.

“ I graduated from Birmingham in 2004 and took a year out. During this time I worked as a family court clerk at a high street firm for 8 months, before going traveling for 4 months to China, Vietnam, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. The court clerk job was very different to the type of work I would ultimately be doing at Allen & Overy and it was really good to see a very different side to the law and get some exposure to court. It really built up for confidence ahead of starting my training contract.

“ On my return from traveling, I went to Nottingham Law School to do my LPC. This was another great year as it was like being back at uni again! The LPC definitely gives you a good grounding from which to go and start your training contract as it is full of useful practical information that really is invaluable once you start your training. And so finally, in March 2007 I started my training contract at Allen & Overy in London.

What does your current job involve?

“ I am a trainee solicitor. I am almost one year into my two year training contract. So far I have sat in three different departments; International Capital Markets, Competition and Antitrust and CMT (Communications Media and Technology). I am currently in CMT and my supervisor does a lot of Intellectual Property work so I have been heavily involved in that. My supervisor is really good at getting me really involved in his deals, taking me to meetings with him and making sure I get plenty of client contact. I have recently been working with him on a pitch for a new, potentially large and interesting deal.

“ Before CMT I spent 3 months in Competition which I loved! I am actually going back there to do another 3 months later on in my training. During my time in Competition I was very lucky as there were some really large, interesting and high-profile cases going on and so I got some really good experience. One of those cases was the Microsoft case, which has recently been in the press. In competition I got to spend a fair amount of time in Brussels, going to meetings with the European Commission and even a fact-finding hearing for an anti-trust case, which are very rare. The hearing was really interesting as representatives from every member state were entitled to attend and ask questions (plus a few first class trips on the Euro Star is something I could definitely get used to!)

“ I move departments again in March and will be going to spend 6 months in Litigation which I am looking forward to. After Litigation I will be in my final 6 months and will have the opportunity to go abroad to do an international seat or to do a client secondment. I have to say I quite fancy 6 months in Dubai but, as I want to do Competition law, I think Brussels may be the way to go. At that time I will also have to start thinking about which area I want to qualify into after my training.

What is the best thing about what you are doing now?

“ I have had some really good opportunities already in my job. I have worked on some really huge deals that make the front pages of the national newspapers on a regular basis. Its pretty cool to read that story and know that you're involved (and know more about it than the papers do!).

“ However, the main thing for me is the people. I have to admit before coming to Allen and Overy I was slightly concerned that the firm would be full of Oxbridge people and I would be out of place. However this is not the case at all. Absolutely everyone I have met has been really nice; the trainees are a brilliant bunch and we have loads of fun nights out and I have been really lucky to have three great supervisors so far. They have all made a real point of getting me involved and making me feel a valued part of the team, and luckily have all been really good fun and easy to chat to (great considering I share an office with them!) .

What was the best thing about your time as a student here?

“ Everything! Cliche though it sounds, my three years at Birmingham were the best! I really genuinely found it very difficult to leave both the University and the City. The social life in Birmingham is brilliant, the people I met at University were all brilliant and the teaching was of such a high standard and really set me up for my career. I loved, and still do love, University campus and have to confess to coming back every so often for a nostalgic wander around (and Frenzy Reunited at the Guild of course!).

“ I can also genuinely say that my law studies at Birmingham set me up for my career today. I still keep some of my lecture notes in my office at work and look back at them from time to time for a refresher on something. Some of the knowledge I gained during my law degree, I was certain at the time that I would never use, and yet have been really surprised to find how much of it I do use. My law studies have proved to be a great grounding for my career.

How did you grow as a person by coming to University? Did it change your life in any way?

“ I definitely grew up a lot whilst at University and grew in confidence. University forces you to become much more independent and being at a university like Birmingham, you get to see the inspiring things that other alumni have done and it makes you realise that it possible for you too.

“ It exceeded my expectations. Birmingham is such a great city; with amazing nightlife there is always something to go to every night of the week. And while I was at Uni they really regenerated a lot of the city (the Bullring was built while I was studying) and made the city centre a lot more attractive. I would happily move back to Birmingham to work there.

What advice would you give to current students studying Law at the University?

“ Enjoy it. My three years at Birmingham really were the best three years of my life and if I could do it all over again I would. Career-wise, in law it really does pay to get focused early. I applied for vacation schemes at around Christmas time of my second year, and got my current job off the back of one of those. Also don't just do a couple of applications and get put off by rejections. Different law firms look for different things in people and, although I got offered three vacation placements, I got many many rejections as well. Law is a competitive career, but a law degree from Birmingham is well respected and should set you up for a successful career.

