

Graduate Case Study

Name: Eleanor Merrett
Job Title: Trade Mark Assistant
Degrees: LLB (Hons) Law with French
Certificat de droit transnational
MA in Legal Translation
Universities: University of Sheffield
Université de Genève
City University, London



Experience at Dehns:

After completing my degree in Law with French, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I knew that I didn't want to pursue a traditional legal career by training as a solicitor or barrister (at least not straight away) and was keen to use my French language skills, so I took a job as a legal translator in Switzerland. I had a great time, but a career in translation wasn't for me. When I returned to the UK, I came across the trade mark profession by chance whilst working at a commercial investigations company that conducted intellectual property investigations. After researching the profession, I discovered that it offered exactly what I was looking for in a career; the work is varied and academically challenging, but very much client-focussed and commercial.

I started applying for positions at the height of the recession, but was lucky enough to be offered a job at Dehns. I started in my role as a Trade Mark Assistant in 2009 and was given a lot of responsibility from the outset. I was allocated a number of clients and began assisting on all work relating to their trade mark portfolios. This gave me a feel for all aspects of the job and meant that I gained experience in all areas of practice, from filing applications right the way through to dealing with disputes. All of my work is supervised by senior attorneys or partners within the department, but I am encouraged to contribute my own thoughts and ideas and I definitely feel that my input is valued. I started interacting with clients very early on and this has been really helpful in terms of building up my commercial awareness. It is important to know what your clients' commercial priorities are as this is key to how you advise them.

The work itself is very varied. Trade mark attorneys are involved in the legal side of the branding and marketing process and also advise clients when they encounter problems in relation to their brands, including disputes and infringements. I wouldn't say that there is a typical day in the office, but most days generally involve a lot of writing (e.g. drafting advice or submissions), so good communication skills are a must. You also need to be able to analyse material and come up with innovative solutions to problems as well as arguments to support your particular position. On any given day, I might spend the morning drafting submissions or putting together evidence in opposition proceedings for one client, and the afternoon outlining a global trade mark filing strategy for a product that another client is planning to launch. Other fairly common tasks are liaising with trade mark attorneys in other countries, drafting specifications for new trade mark applications and reviewing and reporting the results of pre-filing clearance searches.

The qualification process has recently changed and it is now necessary to attend a course in trade mark law at Queen Mary (University of London) and a course in trade mark practice at Nottingham Law School in order to qualify as a trade mark attorney. I was part of the first year of students to take the law course in 2010/11 and have recently started the practice course in Nottingham. Juggling a full time job, a part time university course and private study is tough, but everything you learn is relevant to the job and the courses are a good opportunity to meet other people in the profession too. There is also an experience requirement which means that I have to keep a diary of my work and ensure that I gain experience in a number of key areas.



One of the best aspects of the job for me is that I am constantly picking up new things and learning from the experienced practitioners that I work with. Although the university courses are very useful, the 'on the job' training I have received is essential for putting the skills I have learnt into practice and gaining the confidence to interact with clients. The team at Dehns is really friendly and there is definitely an open door policy. The experienced attorneys in the department are always willing to help with any questions I have or give me guidance on more complex issues, so although trainees are given a lot of freedom and responsibility, there is also a very strong support and training mechanism behind this.

United Kingdom

Dehns
St Bride's House
10 Salisbury Square
London
EC4Y 8JD

T: +44 (0)20 7632 7200
F: +44 (0)20 7353 8895
E: mail@dehns.com

Dehns
Aspect House
84-87 Queens Road
Brighton
BN1 3XE

T: +44 (0)1273 244200
F: +44 (0)20 7353 8895
E: brighton@dehns.com

Dehns
59 St Aldates
Oxford
OX1 1ST

T: +44 (0)1865 305100
F: +44 (0)20 7353 8895
E: oxford@dehns.com

Germany

Dehns
Singlspielerhaus
Sendlinger Str. 29
80331 Munich

T: +49 89 2422 8130
F: +49 89 2422 8140
E: munich@dehns.com