

Graduate Case Study

Name: Mark Bell
Job Title: Technical Assistant
Degree: DPhil in Particle Physics and MPhys in Physics
Universities: University of Oxford
Practice Area: Patents
Technology Areas: Engineering
 Electronics, IT, Communications
 Physical Sciences



Experience at Dehns:

I started at Dehns three years ago after completing a DPhil in Particle Physics. At the time I wasn't sure what I wanted to do next, but had a tick list of things I wanted from a job: scientific and technical in nature, academically challenging, and producing something tangible for someone in the commercial world (unlike my DPhil which was quite abstract). I had a couple of friends who had recently entered the patent profession from similar backgrounds and I spoke to them about what the job of being a technical assistant entailed. It seemed to tick everything on my wish list so I applied for and got a job with Dehns, and so far I haven't been disappointed.

On a day to day basis I deal with lots of different cases for a wide variety of clients - large corporations, SMEs, and even some individual inventors. The variety of technologies from these different clients is both interesting and challenging – one minute I am looking at a kettle component and then I have to understand how birefringent crystals work. As by definition inventions need to be new, the work is always constantly changing, and the patent system is such that I am always working on lots of different cases at a time with a large turnover of work to meet regular deadlines.

There is a lot of reading and analysing information in order to draft a new patent specification or to write to a client with advice, so I often have my thinking cap on. Then I might be required to think of a carefully crafted argument against a patent office examiner's objection to convince them that my client's invention is indeed the best thing since sliced bread. After lots of reading, thinking, writing and arguing, hopefully I have secured my client a granted patent which is of commercial use to them which gives me a great feeling of satisfaction.

I have enjoyed starting my career with Dehns – I have a good supervising partner to work for who looks after my training, most of which is based around the work I am doing. There is a good ethos in the firm of working hard while you are there, but not by working excessively long hours. I have lots of friendly, supportive colleagues, and even though I am based in our smaller Oxford office, I feel I am very much part of a larger firm. Twice a year all the offices meet up for a social event which is lots of fun, and I also meet some of the other technical assistants at places like CIPA lectures or on the Brunel course I took to gain the Certificate in IP Law.

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