

Graduate Case Study

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Job Title: Technical Assistant
Degree: MBioch Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry
Universities: University of Oxford
Practice Area: Patents
Technology Areas: Biotechnology Life Sciences



Experience at Dehns:

I learnt of the patent profession at a careers event for scientists during my second year as an undergraduate. It was described as a career requiring a combination of scientific, legal and linguistic skills which sounded different to the other careers I'd heard about. Having been a trainee at Dehns for three years, I still think this is a good description of what the job requires.

The work is interesting and intellectually challenging. It involves getting to grips with the technical subject-matter of cases, considering the relevant laws and being able to articulate the salient points to a client, a patent office Examiner or another attorney. Clients rely on your opinion and it is satisfying when your suggestions turn out to be successful.

There are many aspects to the job but a typical day involves corresponding with clients on communications received from patent offices or other attorneys across the world and preparing responses to those communications. Frequently, the issue in hand is whether or not an invention is patentable. A new patent application may need to be drafted and client meetings and Hearings at the UKIPO or EPO are also part of the job.

The working environment is professional and at Dehns you have responsibilities from day one, which is rewarding. You immediately begin working on cases under the guidance of a number of partners, which means you have a variety of types of work and exposure to different working styles. You share an office with a more experienced trainee, which is an ideal training environment as you have someone other than your supervising partners who can answer your questions.

In my first year with Dehns I completed the postgraduate certificate in IP Law at Brunel University. Some trainees complete the certificate at Queen Mary, University of London instead. These courses are a good introduction to IP law and provide exemption from the foundation level qualifying exams. Final qualifying exams certainly require hard work in the months leading up to them, however, your private study is supplemented with internal and/or external tutorials and lectures organised by CIPA.

Dehns is a very friendly firm with a sociable group of trainees in each of its offices. My experience is that patent attorneys genuinely enjoy their work and have a healthy work-life balance.

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