

Personal statement: Legal Practice Course (LPC)

My interest in law was first sparked off by talking to a solicitor at a law careers fair. I was fascinated to hear about his involvement in an unfair dismissal case and was attracted by a role where logical argument could be used to protect a vulnerable individual caught up in a complex and emotionally charged situation. I asked if I could work-shadow him for a day and was delighted to be offered two weeks' work experience. During this time I attended court, sat in on client meetings and assisted with office tasks. I finished this placement determined to start the route to a career in law.

I am applying for this course because - after completing two-thirds of a degree in law and Spanish, three placements in contrasting law firms and some pro-bono work - I feel that I have a better understanding of what a legal career involves and I am convinced that a career as a solicitor is right for me.

In the first year of my degree I joined the student law society and now have a major role on the executive committee with responsibility for organising events. This has included leading a team of students to set up and take part in a charity debate. I have the capacity for a large workload and balancing my growing role in the student law society with the demands of my degree is helping me to develop my time-management skills.

Also in my first year, I attended an open day for a large commercial law firm in London. The day included work-shadowing a trainee and meeting associates from a wide range of departments. I also took part in a team negotiation exercise to reach a mutually agreeable settlement. I discovered that my strengths lie in logical thinking and prioritising the most important facts.

I was offered a summer vacation scheme as a result of this open day. I was able to assist an associate in two different departments and take part in a client pitch, researching a client and delivering a presentation to a company to provide business advice. I came away with positive experiences to add to my CV but a desire to contrast this placement with one at a law firm working with different clients. I organised a visit to a public services law firm. Here the emphasis was on providing advice to public and third-sector organisations. Although I found the wide range of clients interesting, I realised that the commercial field wasn't where I want to work.

I decided to compare this with a vacation placement at a personal legal services firm. I was able to assist in the divorce and family department and liked the holistic approach, helping the client to work out what was right for them personally, legally and financially. I also enjoyed wills and estates work; helping people understand complicated law, making it as

simple as possible by communicating in plain English. I also developed my writing skills, after being given the opportunity to draft a will.

In my second year I have been able to do some pro bono work at the local Citizens Advice Bureau. This has helped me to look at a person's situation, identify what is relevant and then apply the appropriate legal knowledge. I have fully developed my research skills, listening skills and ability to explain complex terminology in a way that members of the public can understand. I also developed my interviewing skills and the ability to write formal letters. This experience has helped me to recognise that I would prefer a law career with a people-centred focus and would like to work in family law, a law centre or local government.

Throughout my course I have chosen electives that have supported my developing interests in family law and criminology. I have come to the realisation that as well as being interested in the rules that determine whether a person has committed a criminal offence, I am equally interested in factors which may have led to offenders breaking the law in the first place. The importance of neighbourhood and the effects of poverty are also factors that interest me.

I have found modules on family law particularly absorbing. I was especially interested in the role and limits of the law in regulating family relationships, and how the law is used in family disputes and contact with children after parental separation. I have decided to write my dissertation on the limitations of child protection policy.

I have chosen these law schools because of the focus on developing practical skills through case studies, the wide range of employability modules and the professionalism of the tutors. I am keen to hone my skills in advising and interviewing clients and preparing legal documents. I am interested in the emphasis on case studies that mimic real-life scenarios. I also like the idea of courses with a practitioner mentor scheme and a wide range of work experience placements, as I haven't yet secured a training contract. I am particularly interested in opportunities to do a work placement in the legal department of a social services childcare team. I attended open days for each of these three courses and I was impressed by how many tutors had professional experience and current links with legal practice. I am keen to further develop knowledge and skills in human rights law, criminology and family law, so have chosen courses that offer electives in these areas.

In my spare time I volunteer for a local victim support group. This involves visiting victims of crime in their own homes to offer assistance with security issues and making claims for compensation, but more importantly to allow people to express their feelings. I find great satisfaction in relating to people in difficulty and making sure that they are aware of their own rights.

I have a keen interest in netball and captain a team in a local friendly league. I find physical exercise complements my interest in keeping up-to-date with legal issues – keeping fit in both body and mind.

I am motivated by an interest in human rights and helping people understand what they are entitled to, particularly in cases where complex legal language dissuades people from exercising their rights. My future plans are to secure a training contract in a personal legal services firm, with a particular interest in divorce and family law, or to work in local government in child protection. I am enthusiastic to take the next step in the route to enable me to work as a solicitor.