

## **First Steps: A Non-Law Graduate's Entry Into The Legal World**

**People decide to enter the legal world for a myriad of reasons and at different stages in life. So what options are available for those who have graduated with a non-law first degree? How accessible is a career in the law to those who enter it later in life?**

For many who have finally finished their three, four, (maybe even five!) years at University, the big question after graduation is what next? The ideal scenario would be to enter a profession relating to your degree but what if you decide to do something completely unrelated to your degree?

Graduating with a Ba (Hons) in History, (having previously studied Law at Undergraduate level) my entry into the legal world could be seen as going full circle with no one denying that I have chosen a far longer route to the eventual goal of qualification!

The first option for those who graduate as I have with a non-law degree is to move onto post-graduate study. The Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) allows graduates to convert their undergraduate degrees into Law degrees, with many institutions offering this. The immediate disadvantage to this is the self-funded nature of the GDL. So unless the potential student has financial backing or have prepared and saved way in advance of their decision to study the GDL, this option though accessible in criteria (There are no requirements beyond a minimum degree classification) possesses a substantial financial barrier. The expensive nature of the GDL is by no means a sure fire way to qualification despite the financial and academic pressures a potential student will face

The second option is to enter the legal world as a Paralegal, for many this is an attractive option for those who wish to enter the legal world as non qualified legal professional, allowing them to gain valuable working experience and legal knowledge. For some firms, this offers the potential to recruit beyond the traditional pool of legal graduates, many with skills and expertise to bring to the firm that may not otherwise have the opportunity to do so. Though like with any job, this requires such positions to be available and for firms to otherwise consider non-law graduates who meet at least the requirements for the position.

The announcement of the Solicitor's Qualifying Exams (SQE) offers the graduates of tomorrow a new route to qualify, with the exams allowing for graduates of any discipline the opportunity to qualify as a solicitor upon their successful completion, a drastic change to traditional route of qualification.

With this the Solicitor's Regulation Authority seem to have recognised the need for a more inclusive rather than exclusive entry criteria to the legal profession, particularly for those who could not otherwise afford the gamble of further study and training (GDL & LPC). Though with the

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untested nature of the SQE, it remains to be seen how truly accessible the new system will be.