QLegal

A Winning Combination

It's not every day you get invited to the House of Commons to meet the Attorney General and Solicitor General. But this is what happened recently to members of the qLegal team who attended the 2019 LawWorks & Attorney General's Student Pro Bono Awards reception and prize-giving.

Walking through corridors that would not have looked out of place in Hogwarts, the Queen Mary team joined dozens of other hopefuls for afternoon tea and a chance to catch up with their counterparts from other universities.

qLegal is the Centre for Commercial Law Studies, pro bono legal advice clinic. Postgraduate law students, supported by leading external lawyers, provide free legal advice to tech start-ups and entrepreneurs who could not otherwise afford legal support.

Clients receive advice on how best to set up a business, protect intellectual property rights, comply with data protection regulations, and ensure that essential commercial agreements are sound. Giving fledgling businesses a sure footing is also qLegal's way of supporting community development, with the aim of redressing economic inequalities.

The motives are not wholly altruistic. qLegal students who interview clients, conduct research and draft client advice letters gain practical skills underpinned by professional ethics, complementing their academic study and putting them in a stronger position when they navigate the job market.



qLegal alumna, Kaveesha Thayalan (LLM in IP Law 2019) explains: "qLegal was an integral part of my university experience and of my legal education. I developed important skills required to succeed in the legal industry which have been vital in equipping me with the requisite knowledge and skills for my current position as a Legal Analyst."

From its inception 5 years ago, qLegal has developed new programmes to respond to the increase in student participants and shifts within the legal sector. The LawTech Externships programme opens students to new ways of delivering legal services, and in the Teach



Arif Faiz (LLM Dispute Resolution 2019) expands "I chose to apply to qLegal so I could gain practical experience in the rapidly evolving technology sector in the UK. I enjoyed working with other students who were equally passionate about developing their commercial awareness and helping businesses grow."

Tech Law programme, qLegal students deliver classes on entrepreneurialism and business law to school pupils who then pitch their own business ideas to an expert panel of judges. It's a positive experience all round. Supervising lawyer and Partner in international firm, Ropes & Gray, Phil Sanderson notes, "I have been judging the Teach Tech Law Pitch It competition for 3 years now. I am delighted to play a part…".

The positive impact on the wider community was recognised at the House of Commons when qLegal, along with its sister organisation, Queen Mary's Legal Advice Centre in Mile End, won the Best Contribution by a Law School Award, the most highly fought category.



qLegal student, Disha Vaghela (LLM Commercial and Corporate Law 2019) explains, "I certainly challenged myself. The experience has taught me to confront my perceptions and become a confident public speaker." This was a sentiment echoed by the school pupils who were pitching their ideas.

But there's no resting on our laurels. As we look towards the next 5 years, qLegal is keen to keep on top of shifts in legal practice and client need. Legal design, multi-disciplinary advice, and international initiatives are some of the areas being developed for next year.

There's a special bond between all who are involved with qLegal. If you are interested in joining the family, whether as a supervising lawyer, an externship provider or international partner, we'd love to hear from you. And if you are part of the qLegal alumni community, what are you doing now? Let's stay in touch!

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For further information, to update your contact details or to contribute an article to the Bulletin please email us at ccls-alumni@qmul.ac.uk or call the CCLS Alumni Office on 020 7882 8058.

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