

“Advocacy” is a term that may strike fear into many LLB graduates. While you may study a lot of case law at University and may even be part of groups such as a Mooting Society, advocacy is not something that you are really taught, or even properly come across, until the Diploma in Legal Practice. It is however, one of the PEAT 2 Outcomes and something that the Law Society of Scotland feel should be developed as part of your traineeship.

I have to say from personal experience, that advocacy was something that slightly terrified me, particularly when I found out that I was to undertake a seat in Litigation. However, having now completed a seat in the department, I know that I am not alone in the initial panic about the “going to Court situation”! Looking back, the experience is one that has certainly taught me a lot of transferable skills, as you will find with any seat during your traineeship.

So what is “advocacy”? The main element is as expected, appearing in court. Daunting for most, it provides you the opportunity to orally present your case. At Ledingham Chalmers, trainees have the chance to appear in court on a weekly rota. This allows you to gain confidence and a better understanding of the litigation process. The experience will require preparation, confidence, excellent communication, knowledge of both the law and facts of the particular case, together with the ability to think on your feet. It is worthwhile remembering that advocacy is more than simply appearing in court. Negotiation, careful drafting of documentation and attention to detail are also required in order to present the client’s case in the best light, particularly as many cases settle in advance of final court proceedings (costs being one of the primary reasons).

Tips? If you have a particular interest in advocacy, or it is a skill that you would like to develop, think about attending your local sheriff court as a student. That way, you can sit on the sidelines for a great insight into what it is like the world of civil litigation. If you are lucky, you may even see some Ledingham Chalmers solicitors while you are there!

To find out more about our training opportunities please contact
nan.mcpherson@ledinghamchalmers.com