

ADLS WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

ADLS Work Experience students bring “great energy” at Christi Law

Law students are an integral part of the success of general practice law firm, Christi Law.

Principal Christina Tan explains: “I’ve used law students in my firm since 2009. At the time, I was in partnership and sharing staff. I needed someone to help me with my workload, and that help was a student. It enabled me to get my work done in a timely manner and focus on billables. Students are a key part of my practice at Christi Law, and that’s not likely to change.”

Back in 2009, Ms Tan relied on her network to find suitable students, but becoming involved with the ADLS Work Experience programme over the last couple of years has enlarged the talent pool, with the result that she’s now spoilt for choice.

Currently, Christi Law has a team of four law students who job-share across the week – Johnson Zhuang, Jack Gu, Rebecca Lum and Ossama Mohamed – plus another law student (Robyn Hwang) who is doing office administration work.

“It’s a wonderful experience having students in the business,” says Ms Tan. “They are intelligent and can do everything a legal secretary can do, and more. They do a range of work for me including research, due diligence for commercial transactions, preparing court documents and simple contracts, drafting company resolutions, wills and deeds. I even have one member of my student team who I can send to court to seal orders and to file documents, and another I can send to the Disputes Tribunal with a client to be a support person for the hearing and take notes in the event an appeal is necessary. All in all, they are very handy to have around.”

A recent ADLS Work Experience vacancy at Christi Law attracted 37 applications. Ms Tan says that students need to make sure their CVs “pop”. She encourages students to do everything they can to appeal to a prospective employer. “If you can speak another language, highlight that skill. Include copies of your exam transcripts and written references from previous employers.”

The students working at Christi Law as law clerks all say that work experience placements are hard to come by.

Johnson Zhuang says: “After working here, I have a better understanding of what lawyers’ duties are – it has set me up with invaluable experience that I would probably not have got at many other firms. Some of the things I have assisted with have definitely impressed other lawyers, and have been selling points on my CV.”

Jack Gu says: “This opportunity makes a huge difference to my career, it allows me to apply the



Christina Tan is pictured here with her team of Work Experience law students (from left to right): Rebecca Lum, Johnson Zhuang, Ossama Mohamed, Christina Tan, Jack Gu and Robyn Hwang

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✧ Christina Tan,
Principal, Christi Law



knowledge that I learnt from school to the real facts. As a graduate, I am ready for the job market and am confident of finding a job soon.”

Rebecca Lum says: “I walked in not knowing what to expect ... but it has definitely been an eye-opening experience, and I have gained so much from my time here. I am enjoying this placement a lot. I have learned so much since I started, and

every day I still learn something new. Working with real clients makes this all the more enjoyable, as every client has their own unique circumstances.”

Ossama Mohamed says: “If employers are capable of taking on students, I would encourage them to hire students. Employees who are still studying are malleable and so can be powerful tools in a workplace. Knowledge learned now tends to stick with someone for a long time.”

Ms Tan recommends the ADLS Work Experience programme to colleagues all the time. “I think small- to medium-sized law firms, senior lawyers who are not tech-savvy, and barristers, would all benefit from hiring a student. They bring great energy to a firm.”

To those considering hiring law students, Ms Tan says to get in early. “The bright students, once they graduate, will most likely apply to the bigger firms. By hiring second- and third- years, I can hire the talent that I want and train them up while they’re still studying. That helps my practice, and the students learn valuable skills that help them stand out from the pack and secure the job they want after graduation. It’s a situation that helps both parties. I feel proud that students who have worked with me have gone on to win a place in a large firm.”

ADLS has Work Experience partnerships with a number of law students’ societies around New Zealand and is actively looking for part-time paid opportunities, especially outside Auckland. To list an opportunity or to find out more about the ADLS Work Experience programme, visit adls.org.nz or email workexperience@adls.org.nz. ✧