

Paralegal News



The Sir Tom Cowrie campus at Sunderland University

Picture: Sunderland University

Paralegal students on the rise at Sunderland

By Lyndsey Jones

The number of students opting to take the paralegal diploma as part of their law degree course at Sunderland University is increasing.

This academic year, out of a first-year intake of 110, 76 students have chosen to study for the paralegal diploma run in conjunction with the National Association of Licensed Paralegals. This has risen considerably since 14 students obtained the diploma in 2005, when the option was first offered.

As the number of law degrees on offer nationally has expanded, and with about 10,000 law students graduating in law each year, the Sunderland course gives students an edge in an increasingly competitive job market.

Peter Minto, a senior lecturer in law at Sunderland University, who was instrumental in setting up the paralegal course five years ago,

said: "It's been a very successful programme. Some students choose to do their law degree studies at Sunderland University because of the paralegal programme and past graduates have obtained interviews for jobs and LPC places because of it."

He continued: "This course adds value – it provides a little extra for our students. It's an additional qualification that could tip the balance in their favour at interview.

"We've had anecdotal feedback from students who have attended LPC interviews who have said they were asked in some detail about their paralegal qualification, as it is an unusual additional qualification for a law graduate to have."

As part of the Bachelor of Laws degree, students are under no compulsion to take the paralegal course. But more and more are

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Welcome to our online magazine

Welcome to the launch edition of the National Association of Licensed Paralegals new online magazine, Paralegal News.

Our online magazine will keep our Association members up to date with the latest news and features on the legal profession.

In the first edition of our new quarterly magazine, we focus on our highly successful partnership with Sunderland University, where more and more law undergraduates are taking up the option to study for the NALP diploma in paralegal studies.

On Page 3, learn how you can develop your skills on the NALP's intensive practical skills course and how the Fellowship Award courses can earn you three years' worth of licence Continual Professional Development points.

We are also starting a regular column where Amanda Hamilton, General Secretary of the NALP, answers members' queries in Question time on Page 4.

"We're really excited to be launching this new service to benefit our members and to thank them for their continued support," said Amanda. "We look forward to welcoming our members to Paralegal News."

And don't miss the summer edition full of hot advice and fantastic features – out in July.



Paralegal students on the rise at Sunderland University

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choosing to do so. Once a student has decided to take the diploma, they must enrol as a student member of the NALP, which gives them the benefit of belonging to a body that is dedicated to promoting the status of paralegals and they can also turn to the NALP for advice relating to career or legal matters.

Not only will they cover core course elements such as the English legal system and the law of contract, they can also choose options such as civil and criminal practice, succession, company and employment law. Students will receive a law degree but can also obtain a paralegal diploma that includes commercial law options.

Nicola Wake, 22, graduated last year after studying law for three years at Sunderland, where she also chose to take the paralegal diploma. She excelled at the paralegal courses, winning three awards from the NALP for being the joint highest in her year for contract law, and highest for tort and family law.

"I would definitely recommend students do the course. It's an opportunity to get an extra qualification without additional assessment," Nicola said.

Steve Oliver, 39, a second-year law undergraduate at Sunderland, has also

chosen to do the paralegal diploma in conjunction with his law degree. One of the reasons he chose to do the course at Sunderland was because of the high reputation and vast experience of the university's tutors.

Peter Minto, for example, has been a practising magistrate for 20 years and has sat at Durham crown court. Peter's knowledge comes from practice as well as theory.

And according to Sunderland University's website, research undertaken by members of the law department also plays a key role in underpinning teaching and influencing national and international legal trends. "The staff are leading authorities in law," Steve said.

Another reason Steve would also recommend students to do the course is that "you get two qualifications for one". It also reduces the qualification period for the granting of a Paralegal licence by the Association from five years to two, so you can gain a much quicker entry to independence, he said.

Sunderland University's website also supports this. "The paralegal accreditation is a qualification in its own right and it entitles students to start work in a paralegal role immediately after graduation," it said.

Amanda Hamilton, General Secretary of



Picture supplied by Peter Minto

'This course adds value – it provides a little extra for our students'

Peter Minto (above), senior law lecturer at Sunderland University

the NALP, is delighted the course is so popular. "The reason why the course has proven successful is because after graduating the students not only have a law degree but a paralegal qualification as well. This gets them noticed by solicitors," she said.

"The feedback to the NALP has been encouraging in that students have positively stated that doing both qualifications has been beneficial in getting a job."

For more details on the law degree and paralegal diploma on offer at Sunderland University, go to: www.sunderland.ac.uk/study/subjectareas/law



Picture supplied by Steve Oliver

Law undergraduate Steve Oliver recommends the paralegal course

Recent graduate Nicola Wake says the paralegal course is 'an opportunity to get an extra qualification without additional assessment'



Picture supplied by Nicola Wake

Undergraduate keeps his career options open

Former Customs and Excise employee Steve Oliver is now in his second year studying law along side the paralegal diploma at Sunderland University. He worked for Customs and Excise for 14 years, investigating drug and VAT cases. "I was involved with complex fraud and drugs trials and I gave evidence in trials. I enjoyed the work. It was great fun." It was that experience that spurred him on to study law when he was

looking for a change of direction after selling his own business. Once he graduates, he hopes to pursue his interest in human rights and the restrictions on those rights that the government's reaction to terrorism has posed. He would like to take his bar exams and practise either in the UK or the US, where there have been paralegal qualifications for years. And having the paralegal diploma will help Steve to keep his career options open.

Editor Lyndsey Jones To discuss publishing contracts, call 07903 466019 or email jones_lyndsey@hotmail.com

Develop your practical skills



Get ahead in your career by attending the NALP's practical skills course

Picture: Wendy Mszyca

By Shane Wood

If you want to stand out from the crowd in an increasingly tough job market, sign up for one of the National Association of Licensed Paralegals' courses to help you develop your skills.

One of the NALP's most successful courses is the four-day intensive practical skills course, which is held every month through our sister company AH Paralegal Training.

Student NALP members, law graduates, undergraduates, and legal staff regularly attend this popular course to improve their career prospects.

The programme provides practical training that will give you an insight into the legal profession and the nature of the work you may be called upon to perform.

It is designed to promote confidence to enhance your chance of finding work and it also provides employers with paralegals they can feel confident about

hiring. It gives you an understanding of not only how to perform certain tasks but also why you are performing them

If you are seeking work, or promotion, or even a career change, this intensive course also helps you to increase your range of skills and options.

You will cover a wide range of subjects, including conducting district judge or High Court master applications; representation in the small claims court; assisting counsel in civil and criminal trials; immigration interviews and hearings; and police station attendances. (Please note that this is not the Police Station Accreditation Course.)

The intensive practical skills course runs as a class attendance once a month and lasts four days from Monday to Thursday.

The course also includes a guided tour of the Royal Courts of Justice in London for those students in the capital.

Don't miss your chance to develop your skills over the summer. Please book now as the summer months are

Update your legal knowledge

Strengthen your standing in your firm by updating your legal knowledge. Our Fellowship courses add to the paralegal's specialist knowledge in the area of law in which they are involved.

All our course syllabuses are online and you can earn three years' worth of Licence CPD points. The specialist areas covered include:

- Business law and practice
- Child welfare and the Children Act
- Civil litigation/Personal injury practice. NEW combined course
- Credit control and debt collecting
- Criminal law and practice
- Employment law and practice
- Export law
- Intellectual property law
- Landlord and tenant law and practice
- Matrimonial/Civil partnership law and practice
- Paralegal practice for the community and voluntary sectors
- Real property and conveyancing
- Wills, probate and administration

If you need a specialist course that is not listed, please call or email the NALP to discuss further.

always over subscribed. In-house training is also available.

For further details on the course and to book your place now, please email amanda@nationalparalegals.co.uk



Question time

Amanda Hamilton, NALP General Secretary, answers your dilemmas and queries

I'd like to join the Fellowship ring

Can I study for the Fellowship Award if my only qualification in law is at postgraduate level?

The Fellowship Award is a course for those who are already working in a legal environment and who wish to further their studies in their preferred area of specialisation. Therefore, if you work in a legal environment practising in the area of law already studied, you would be eligible. However, you will need to have basic knowledge of the English legal system if you have not already studied it.

Higher Certificate is the one for you

I have a degree in a non-law subject and graduated in 2006. Can I enrol to do the Postgraduate Diploma or must I have a law degree?

You need to have a law degree to complete the Postgraduate Diploma in Paralegal Practice. It is a requirement that you have knowledge of Principles of Law before completing the postgraduate course, which contains units of Procedural Law. A law degree covers the Principles of Law but *not* Procedural Law. Hence the reason why it is postgraduate course. The Higher Certificate would be the course we suggest for

those without a law degree. It offers a module in General Principles of English Law as well as a Procedural Law module (the latter being the main content of the postgraduate course).

Can foreigners find a job here?

I am a foreign qualified lawyer from another European country but cannot seem to find a job in the legal profession in this country. Can you tell me why?

The law in England and Wales is totally different to anywhere in the world except those countries that have been influenced by England such as Commonwealth nations. Our law is unique and is based on the common law system, which has evolved over a thousand years, whereas most European countries have a civil law system. Therefore, it is difficult to work in this country without knowledge of the English system. My suggestion would be to enrol on our Higher Certificate course which will give you a good knowledge of the Principles of English Law and Procedural Law in this country.

Do you have a dilemma? Email your questions to Amanda Hamilton at: Amanda@nationalparalegals.co.uk. Letters are selected for publication and we cannot give personal replies. The magazine accepts no legal responsibility for advice.

A big thank you to our members

I am happy to announce that we are the first paralegal organisation, outside of the US, to become members of the National Federation of Paralegal Associations. Please read the article on their website: www.paralegals.org

The future looks good for the NALP – we have moved to prestigious offices in Kennington to prepare for expansion, although the head office address remains the same.

We are also updating our website regularly to make it more 'user friendly'. For the latest information on our courses go to www.nationalparalegals.co.uk

In this depressing economic climate, we would like to reassure members that we offer

excellent qualifications at reasonable costs. We know the value of retraining when times are hard and that our economy can thrive only if people are encouraged to move forward and improve their lives.

Our motto is integrity and transparency and we hope this year to make inroads into promoting the Association, to increase the status of our profession and to offer more for our valued members.

I would also like to thank you all for your continued support.

Amanda Hamilton LLB (Hons)
General Secretary

