

Access to the Professions

Reach
Scotland



Case Study: Caitlin Hagart

Caitlin attended the Royal High School in Edinburgh and took part in Access to the Professions and Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS). She is studying Law and will graduate in 2018.

What attracted you to studying Law at Edinburgh?

I always enjoyed Modern Studies at school, and had an interest in politics and current affairs. I knew I liked to be faced with challenges and problem solving. I think once I had it in my head I thought that I wanted to do it, it just sort of stuck and I became determined to do it.

Through attending Access to the Professions sessions throughout my fifth and sixth year at school, this is what really kicked my passion to study law. Getting to see the current Law students and hear about their experiences, how much they enjoyed it, and seeing that they were 'normal people', makes you realise this is a goal you can actually achieve if you work hard for it, and these events make you want to work hard to achieve it.

How did LEAPS and Access to the Professions help you in your decision making process?

Access to the Professions had one of the biggest influences in my decision to apply for studying law. It is such a daunting experience to anyone having to apply, but especially to those who are the first member of their family to do this process. I was just fortunate my school had good assemblies on how to do this etc, and this combined with Access to the Professions, I truly believe, is why my application was successful.

It gives you a true insight into what it is like to be a Law student at University of Edinburgh. You have a bit of a head start compared with other students starting, as I knew my way around Old College and the Law Library etc- I did not even appreciate this when I was in first year.

These little things give you such a huge confidence in your first few weeks at university. I can't stress enough how inspirational these events were to me, and how much they will be inspiring all those school pupils who are attending them.

What have been the best and the worst things about studying Law at Edinburgh so far?

The best thing for me is undoubtedly the society opportunities that the University of Edinburgh has. I successfully stood to be part of the Law Society Committee at the end of my first year, and the last 3 years being a part of this really have given me the most incredible opportunities, and the most amazing memories that I'll forever treasure.

In my third year, I became Vice President, and this year I am finishing up holding the position of President- I am absolutely heart-broken this is coming to an end.

There are so many societies that you can become a part of at Edinburgh University and that for me is what has made my experience here so amazing.

The worst thing for me, are those months where you do have exams and essay deadlines, and need to commit more time to solid studying, rather than my other commitments.

As much as I do enjoy studying Law, it is all my extra-curricular activities which make me love University, so when it is exam season and I need to cut down on those to solidly revise etc, it can be a bit more un-enjoyable. But those times are never for long.

How have you found balancing study alongside University life?

I have always personally had a good work and life balance, as this is something of importance to me. I have always worked part time throughout my time at University, and in second year actually took on two part time jobs that year- I worked full weekends at John Lewis, and I was also a brand ambassador for a magic circle firm, Linklaters.



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In my third and fourth year I was fortunate enough to become a LawPALs Student leader, where I got to help first years through peer assisted learning, and this was something I loved as a break from my own University work, and that I was passionate about doing.

Getting to support the first years and give them the reassurance and confidence they need is something that is so great to be a part of.

I have also been involved with the Law Society, running it the last two years as discussed above, and this has been extremely time-consuming. But has been an amazing break for me daily from my University work. It makes me work a lot more productively in the time that I have.

What are you currently doing and what your plans for your future career?

I am currently in my fourth year, trying to battle through my dissertation. I will graduate in a few months, then I hope to stay at Edinburgh to do the Diploma in Legal Practice. I will then be a trainee solicitor at a firm called Dickson Minto, which specialises in Corporate law.

I will spend part of this two year traineeship in their Edinburgh office, and part in their London office. I did a summer placement with them in the summer and that is how I got offered this traineeship, and after only spending 3 weeks there and absolutely loving it, I am so excited to start there full time.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

I could not be more grateful for Access to the Professions, and more passionate about this programme. As the first in my family to go to university, it can seem very out of reach and unknown. I know this programme helped both me, and my parents so much with understanding the process of applying. While I thought, I wanted to study Law at Edinburgh, it is Access to the Professions which confirmed this for me.

I know how inspirational I found it to be, and I am absolutely positive it still will be for future school pupils. It gives you a form of confidence in yourself to firstly apply to study Law, and then to have the belief that you are capable of doing it.

