



## How to Becoming a Lawyer by Courtney N. Wowryk

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Becoming a lawyer is a long and often gruelling process. After a minimum of two years of university those interested in a legal career face three very challenging years of law school. Best depicted in the 1970's class "The Paper Chase", law students must endure professors with mean (or altogether non-existent) senses of humour, fierce competition for grades, 100% close-book exams and seeming endless reading.

The fun isn't over after surviving law school however, because while law school successfully teaches students to "[t]hink like lawyers," most students graduate with little practical experience. Accordingly, in order to protect the public (by ensuring that all lawyers have basic legal skills and are of good moral character) all lawyers must article for a one year period before they are called to the bar.

During their articling year, students work full-time in a legal setting where they practice under the watchful eye of an experienced lawyer. Articling Students' experiences differ greatly however, based on the type of firm or organization they are matched with. Those students who article at large private firms, community based legal organizations or with the Federal or Provincial Crowns generally specialize in one or two

areas of law. Those matched with smaller firms, including all of the firms in Brandon, do not specialize, but gain experience in many areas. I personally have done family law, child protection, real estate, wills and estates, as well as corporate and commercial law. Needless to say, there's never a dull moment as an Articling Student, and I never run out of work.

This brings me to the second difference between Articling at a small firm such as my own, and at a large or strictly criminal law firm: the hours of work. While I always have a large amount and variety of work to do, I'm generally expected to work from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. This is very different from some of my fellow Articling Students matched at large firms across the country, who often work sixteen hour days, seven days a week, taking power naps on their office floors.

In addition to working full-time (or longer) in a legal setting, Articling Students in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, must also complete the Canadian Professional Legal Education Program. CPLED, as its commonly called, consists of weekly reading and assignments that are completed over the

internet and in person at the respective Law Societies. These weekly assignments have replaced the dreaded "Bar Exam," and together test students to make sure they have the skills and experience required in the first few years of practice.

Between work and the CPLED Program most Articling Students learn how to conduct client interviews, draft documents and form legal arguments. We also spend considerable time researching points of law (often obscure), gaining court room experience at the Provincial Court and Queen's Bench levels, as well as developing practice management skills and learning the business side of the law. However, simply because an articling student becomes a lawyer does not mean that the learning process is over. Lawyers continue to educate themselves throughout their practice, in an effort to better serve their clients, and the court.

For more information on becoming a lawyer, please contact the University of Manitoba and the Law Society of Manitoba.