

ICSA Member case studies



Patricia Johnston

Trainee Company Secretary, Deloitte and Touche

What is your current role?

I am in the third year of my training contract with Deloitte and Touche as a Company Secretary.

What other roles have you held prior to your current one?

This is my first professional job since completing my Masters in Management and Corporate Governance.

What are the main responsibilities of your job?

As part of the Corporate & Legal Team at Deloitte, I work closely with my colleagues in audit, tax, corporate finance and other specialist areas, as well as external advisors on complex arrangements and transactions. We advise on a wide range of routine and specialist matters relating to the Companies Acts 1963–2009 and associated legislation including managing projects from inception to completion.

What is a typical working day for you?

On a daily basis, I look after my portfolio of clients annual compliance requirements. I liaise directly with clients and with the audit and tax departments on large projects such as group restructurings.

What is your educational/training background?

- BA LLB (Hons) Law and Government
- MSc PGdip in Management and Corporate Governance
- GradICSA

What skills are required for your role?

A company secretary requires an exceptional eye for detail, great organisational skills and an ability to liaise with a variety of people in large projects. A company secretary also needs to be able to work well under pressure and to meet tight deadlines.

Which elements of your role do you most enjoy?

I love the interaction element of my job. I enjoy meeting and chatting to clients and colleagues in different departments about various projects. I also love the technical side of the job and enjoy learning about new developments in company law and company secretarial developments.

Which elements of your job do you least enjoy?

The company secretary in a financial services practice is typically a role which is mainly office-based.

How do you see your career developing?

I would like to stay in practice for a number of years in order to fully develop my skills and knowledge in respect of company secretarial work applicable to companies of all sizes. I eventually would like to be a Company Secretary for a PLC or a financial services company.

What advice would you offer to a graduate or a current student studying the scheme?

I would advise a current student or graduate either thinking about or pursuing a career in company secretarial practice to consider the Masters in Management and Corporate Governance from the University of Ulster, as this course provides the student with GradICSA status. This allows students to complete the examination side of company secretarial training prior to commencement of work and means that no further examinations will be necessary which takes a lot of pressure off. I would also advise a current student to consider where they would like to end up working or what area of company secretarial they most enjoy and try to get into an initial job this way, as they can then build a career from the offset, in the area in which they are most interested.



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How has your training helped you carry out your role?

The training I have received has helped me to fully understand the role of the company secretary and has enabled me to translate academic and technical knowledge and to utilise it in practice with client work.

What do you think are the particular benefits of becoming a Chartered Secretary?

Chartered Secretaries are highly valued and, once qualified, a Chartered Secretary has many opportunities to work in very interesting companies and on very interesting projects. Chartered Secretaries also have the opportunity to travel internationally as ICSA operates globally.

What made you decide to become a Chartered Secretary?

I went to a career talk about the Masters in Management and Corporate Governance and was very interested in the work of a company secretary. Training as a company secretary allowed me to pursue a career in law and in an area of law in which I was particularly interested.

Would you recommend the ICSA qualification to others?

I would certainly recommend the Masters in Management and Corporate Governance, as the ability to complete the professional qualifications whilst doing the Masters and prior to starting work was great, as it enables the student to obtain Chartered status much more quickly. It also removes the pressure of having to complete examinations and attend classes whilst working full-time. ■