



Interview with Denitsa Urumova – CILEX Paralegal

At LA, we are focused on supporting different career paths and routes into law, such as [CILEX](#) and [Graduate Solicitor Apprenticeships](#), as well as supporting colleagues in business/ operational roles.

We are speaking to colleagues who are pursuing legal qualifications or have qualified using other equivalent means to highlight different pathways that may not be as widely publicised as the law degree/two-year training contract.

Paralegal Denitsa Urumova, based in the [Real Estate](#) team in Southampton, is currently working to qualify under the CILEX route and has shared her journey with us.

Please tell us a little about your role and the work you do

I am a Paralegal in the commercial property team in Southampton. I assist the fee earners in the team with anything they may need help with, as well as handling various matters myself (under supervision). I mainly assist with post-completion matters such as drafting SDLT returns and submitting Land Registry applications.

Please tell us a little bit about your route.

I initially joined LA in 2018 as a business admin apprentice, with no prior experience in law, but quickly found that this was not the role for me and progressed to a Support PA role in the property development team in Bournemouth within a few months of starting at LA.

After a couple of years, I was offered the chance to move to our Southampton office with the idea of advancing to a Paralegal position – I was offered (and accepted!) the role in the summer of 2020.

I then decided I would like to pursue a career in law formally and chose to study with CILEX alongside working at LA. I started the CPQ Foundation Stage in May 2022.

Most of the studying is done online through e-books and practice questions at the end of each section throughout the modules. There are two mock exams at the end of each module that you can complete and then come back to as and when needed to assist with studying/revision.

The official exams were around 2-2.5 hours long and are only set in January and June, so you would need to complete the course book and revision before the set exam dates. Luckily, the exams could be held in the comfort of your own home as long as you have Wi-Fi, a computer with a camera and a quiet place to take them.

I would work throughout the day at LA and then come home to continue studying for a few hours every day. I pushed myself to complete the course faster than the anticipated 18-24 months, with my final exams taking place at the end of June 2023 and officially qualifying as a CILEX Paralegal in September 2023.

The next step would be to progress to the CPQ Advanced Stage, where I would study a wider variety of legal areas, such as Criminal Law and Family Law. The approximate study time for this stage is again 18-24 months due to the increased content, but this can easily change due to the time you can allocate to studying, how many hours you're working during the day, etc.

The final stage of CPQ is the Professional Stage, where you choose only one area of law to study for which you'll gain your practice rights. This stage is approximately 12-18 months.

How have you found your experience?

I found it challenging at times to motivate myself to study after having a long day in the office, but the anticipation and excitement of receiving a qualification at the end pushed me to continue.

I think it was the right pathway for me to take as learning online, rather than in a classroom or lecture hall, gave me the freedom to study where and when I wanted to do so. I wasn't tied to a set timetable and could even choose which module to study and in what order. The course came with a study guide which you could use to see how many hours to spend on each section of a module. This was particularly useful as I could see which areas I was struggling with, so perhaps taking longer than necessary with my studies.

I was also allocated a learning advisor who I met with on Zoom frequently to ensure I was on track with my studies and to discuss anything I may need help with. This was a big help throughout the course, as it was nice to reflect on how far I've come and to just have that extra support from someone who works with other students and has perhaps gone down the same route.

If I were to do things differently, I'd say that I would have started the course earlier on in my time at LA. I was conflicted on whether to pursue law for many years as I didn't particularly want to go to university, but if I had researched into alternative pathways to becoming a lawyer or had been a bit more informed about the different qualifications associated with law, I feel that I would have made the decision to study much earlier in my journey.

What advice would you give to someone looking to get into the legal profession via a similar route?

I would recommend that you research thoroughly into the variety of ways to becoming a lawyer as it's not as clear cut anymore as going to university, getting a training contract, etc. There are many avenues out there, such as a solicitor apprenticeship, CILEX, CLC, etc., that I feel aren't as widely talked about within this community as the traditional route.

Think about how much time you can commit to studying and whether you will need to work alongside this. I think I was quite lucky to join a wonderful firm such as LA, where they graciously funded my course and supported me throughout my journey. I wasn't pushed into doing a course I didn't want to do, but, at the same time, they ensured I was continuing to develop my skills as a legal professional.

I feel that choosing which path to take when studying law is a very personal choice, and what is right for one person may not be for another. It is very easy to fall into the pressure of doing what everyone else is doing just because it seems like the only way when, actually, if you take the time to assess what your own needs and expectations are, you might find that an alternative pathway to becoming a lawyer such as CILEX may be better suited for you.

Interested in a career at Lester Aldridge?

We are looking for bright, enthusiastic people to join our teams as paralegals. Legal experience can be helpful, but if you have good communication and organisational skills and a desire to learn, full training will be given. Find out more on our [Careers](#) page.