

Let's Talk Podcast - The Summer Internship spotlight

Tara

Welcome to the Let's Talk podcast. My name is Tara Hodgins. I'm a pipeline trainee at A&L Goodbody and a former A&L Goodbody summer intern.

Brian

And I'm Brian O'Malley, a partner in A&L Goodbody and one of the partners with responsibility for the graduate talent programs.

Tara

We are delighted to bring you another episode of the Let's Talk podcast. Today, we'll be chatting about our summer internship program. So, Brian, I suppose we should start by talking about yourself. You yourself were an intern at one stage in A&L. So how was your journey and your experience from intern to partner at A&L Goodbody?

Brian

Yeah, it's a good question and I mean, being honest, it wasn't today or yesterday that I did the internship, but I do still remember it fondly. In case it's helpful to people, I wouldn't have done an internship very early in my college career only because I possibly wasn't as informed as maybe I could have been around what the opportunities were in law. So I did my internship in my final year in college. At the time I was doing a BA in legal science and French in the University of Galway. I did go on then to do one year LLB at Galway. So summer 2007, I believe it was June. There were six interns in that program, and I was successful in getting the offer of an internship. No different to now, there was a guaranteed interview for a training contract at the end. So I was successful in that as were a number of my intern colleagues that summer. And so, I mean, to prove the point, I guess that there can be quite a structured career development in firms like A&L Goodbody. I've stayed with the firm, I've been a trainee solicitor, I've been a solicitor, an associate, a senior associate and now for the last five years I've been a partner and for that length of time as well, I've also been responsible for the graduate talent programs.

Tara

Wow. And how do you think the internship program has evolved since you started it in 2007?

Brian

It certainly feels like it's quite a different animal. As I mentioned, there were six of us in June in 2007. I believe there were five or six as well in July. So quite a small number, by comparison to the number of interns that we now have joining our programs. Last summer, it was 30. So summer 2025, it was 30. And that can change. Sometimes it's actually more than that. So size-wise, there's a lot more to manage. We get to meet a lot more people from diverse backgrounds, be it diversity of discipline, diversity of university, and diversity in the broadest sense. So certainly, I think it's also a more diverse internship for that reason. It's also quite a bit more structured than I would have experienced in 2007. When you were looking for a training contract all those years ago, I mean, really what you did was you tried to get in the door of one of the good firms, and you just worked hard. And that was it. There was no other magic formula. And I think because we come at the internship in 2025 as being much more structured, being much more thoughtful around what the interns can take out of it beyond the offer of a training contract. So focusing on their own personal and professional development through a very structured program. I think there's worlds apart between an internship 15 or 20 years ago and one that we would see now. So that's largely it. I mean, it is not that you don't work or even work hard if there's a really good case on. But I mean, I would say that that takes up 65 to 70% of your time, whereas the structure program itself, where you're doing training sessions, you're doing WRC mock trials, you're doing negotiations, that probably takes up 25 to 30%.

Tara

I think I would agree with you there, there's definitely a very large sense of community when you go to A&L, especially as an intern, you're welcomed with open arms and no question is a stupid question and everyone embraces you and wants you to learn and it's really a great place to foster professional development as well. Could you give us any interview and application advice for people considering the internship? Who can apply?

Brian

Generally, we prefer that somebody has done at least one year at third level. So beyond that, I think you need to have an interest in law. You need to be on course to achieve a degree in whatever third level institution you're in. And I think you need to have an interest in figuring out whether this is something that you would like to do longer term. Does law spark an interest for you? And if it does, then you would register your interest.

You'll be provided with an application form. And kind of touching on the application form for a minute, we're quite transparent about what we expect when we look at the traits that would make a good lawyer. And those traits are not very different, not different at all, to what would make a good trainee and what would make a good intern. And you'll find that on our website. But some of the things will include what are the things that motivate you? So what are you interested in? So that is to give us some color about who you are as a person. We emphasize building relationships as something that's really important. But all that means is that are you somebody who is able to build a rapport with somebody, work in a team or individually, but also kind of able to focus on, can I get along with people? You know, so I think that's really important. There are other things like commercial awareness. You know, sometimes people shy away from, you know, a term like that. All that really means is do you have some sense of what's happening happening in the world? So it's not more scientific than that. I think people should not be scared about concepts like that. And then the other key thing, I suppose, is, you know, your interests. So are you are you committed to figuring out whether this is something that you would like? So that's broadly, you know, a number of the key things that we look for when we assess somebody through the application form and through the interview. You'll find more detail on that on the website. And then just to be, you know, even even more transparent, there is a form of assessment that you will do. I've sat on myself, so you will do it before your application is said to have been submitted. So you do the application form, you do a couple of assessments. So that is they're kind of the prerequisites. And then the interview comes. And the interview itself is like we have tended to say, you know, it's just a conversation. And that's as much so people understand that nobody's trying to catch you out. The themes that you will be assessed on when somebody is looking at your application form are not at all different to what somebody will want to talk to you about. So it's the things like, what are you motivated by? Can you unpack that for me? Can you give me a little bit of color that we can put on the canvas that describes Brine O'Malley? It's just trying to figure out who you are, what you're motivated by, and also whether we think you actually have an interest in, you know, figuring out what law is all about.

Brian

Yeah. So that's that's the kind of process from application to interview in general terms. But I mean, there's there's a bit in that. And as I say, you will get more detail through the Web site. What I would say in addition is it's a it's a paid internship. Yes, it's a four week process. And you will get exposure to a particular legal department, but also broader legal departments, especially through the targeted clinics and legal sessions that we run where you will you will get a good sense of broadly what every type of lawyer does in a large corporate law firm. Can I turn the tables for a minute, if you don't mind? Of course you can. And because I mean, it's it's too obvious a point to say that you have much more recent experience of the summer internship than I do. What were a couple of the highlights of the internship? What are the things that you remember from it that you

think, OK, that was that was a lesson that I now have and I've taken away that I can apply, you know, more broadly.

Tara

Yeah, I think one of the things that stood out to me the most was our Friday workshops. So we had our contract reviews, negotiations and the workplace relations course. And those kind of workshops really helped me gain a better understanding of what the company do as a whole. And it gave me an understanding of the different departments that we work with. And it just gave you a more cross departmental understanding of everything. And it was really interesting to get to work with your fellow interns as well with that. So you get put into teams for some of it. And it's nice to go back to your intake, your intern intake and work with them as well as, you know, having to work with your team. I really enjoyed getting the hands-on experience with my team as well. I did a lot of contract review in that. And it was something I found really interesting. And I liked the responsibility that was given to me. There's something I don't really enjoy when you're an intern and you go in and you aren't given that hands-on experience. So you're just left to filing and sorting things and whatever. But in A&L, we got the opportunities to work on big cases, to do research, and to work alongside our peers to get things done. And that's something I really enjoyed. The team that I worked with myself were fantastic. I really, really enjoyed working with them. They were great. They taught me so much. And they, you know, once again, we talked about it earlier, but they kind of welcomed me with opened arms and gave me opportunities that I didn't know I would be able to take within the company.

Brian

That's great. It's good to hear.

Tara

Do you want to tell us a little bit more about that, about the training that's provided over the four weeks and the different exposure to the multiple departments in A&L?

Brian

It's a four-week paid internship, so it's based in our Dublin office. As I say, we're really interested in diversity of discipline, so we will have summer interns from lots of different educational institutions all around the country. For those that don't live in Dublin, we will support them when it comes to accommodation, so we try to make things as easy as

possible for an intern to do their internship. When it comes to the programme itself, as I mentioned, I see it as kind of a 70-30 split. In terms of the structure, you will be with a legal team, so we have about 22-23 particular practice groups in the firm. I'm a litigator. I work in the restructuring and solvency, so that's my practice group within a larger department. An intern will be assigned to a specific practice group like that, like mine, and what that will involve is you working with that team on different cases or mandates that we think will give you exposure to what life looks like as a trainee solicitor were you to be successful in joining the firm. That's the key thing. In addition to that, what we have is what I would call the structure programme, and that is where you develop particular skills that, as I mentioned, I think is something we can give back to the intern even if they're not successful in obtaining a training contract on this occasion. That is things like developing their presentation skills, working through a mock trial, learning how to do some legal writing, and learning how to negotiate a contract. Those skills that, even outside of law, are transferable to all different types of life situations. That's broadly the split of how we structure it. If you were to take my own team as an example, you will be assigned to me as a partner, or one of the other partners on my team, those four restructuring partners. You will get to work with me on a number of different things, whatever is on my desk, what I think will be stimulating for an intern and give them a good sense of what life is like as a trainee. You will also work with the associate on my team, and you'll have a trainee body. The body piece is really important, and that goes to ensuring that people feel comfortable in the internship, that we can not simply induct them, but make them feel very welcome, and have an open-door policy around any issues or questions more so than issues that they would have right from the outset. That's, in very general terms, how I describe the structure.

Tara

Amazing. Thank you. And you said, you know, you work directly with your interns as a partner. How do you think you engage with your interns during the summer internship program?

Brian

And in a lot of different ways, so I mean, I can only take my own team as an example because it's a large firm, there's a thousand people in it, I don't know what approach everyone takes, but I think the approach that I would take is almost universally replicated, which is when an intern is assigned to the team, we will immediately try to get to know the person. So it's not about the type of work you'll be working on, it's not about, you know, what are the milestones that you need to hit, it's go for a lunch at the start, go for a coffee and just get to know the person. And it is then to make sure that you keep that dialogue open for the entire month. So it is not to super delegate the responsibility of making sure that the intern is engaged, is having their questions answered and is

stimulated by the work to the trainee body. The partner is ultimately responsible for that, so the way you achieve that is by open and regular communication. So I think, you know, in terms of that communication piece then, I think it is figuring out why the intern, why the intern is with us, so getting kind of to the root of what are you trying to achieve from the internship. And I think we generally have two types of interns that join us. One type is the person who resolutely knows exactly what they want to do in life. So as I mentioned at the outset, that obviously wasn't me because I didn't really know that there were large law firms in Ireland when I applied for an internship. But it's that person who actually does know and knows that this is a route to get to where they want to get to. And then I think the other type of intern is the person who is trying to figure out, well, actually could law suit me? So they may be doing law in college, but they may not be doing law in college. They might be doing psychology. We've had veterinary students previously. We've had medical students previously. We've had, you know, the full gamut of diversity of disciplines that you can imagine. And for them, but also for people that are doing law, it is to figure out, okay, this thing called corporate law, what's all that about? What do you guys do? And if you allow me to experience the life of a trainee solicitor, then it allows me to process my thoughts on, is that something that's attractive?

Tara

Yeah. Thank you. I think I was a little bit in the middle of the two to be honest with you. I started as a final year student as well as my first internship and I knew I wanted to do law but I didn't necessarily know I wanted to do corporate law and the summer internship program really helped open my eyes to the multiple disciplines that you have there and well now I'm almost a trainee. Good. I suppose would you have any advice for you know young students who are thinking about applying to the summer internship program or any interview advice.

Brian

I might start with the application, and then I might move on to the interview, because I think I can't teach you how to do the little assessments that we have, because that's kind of an individual experience, but just a couple of high-level things, I think, on the application and then on the interview itself. What I would say on the application is, and you won't hear this advice in many places, but do not eat a thesaurus. That language, like searching for the complex words or what you perceive to be the more eloquent way of expressing yourself, that just won't come across as real. Don't stress yourself out by trying to find a flowery or more eloquent way of saying something. Just present yourself and explain yourself and your own experience in very simple language. Look, that's a tenet of how we in a good body approach giving advice to our clients. We don't want the client to have to sit down and spend a lot of time figuring out what we're trying to say. We do want the client to understand our commercial advice in a really straightforward

fashion. I think that cannot start too early in your career. The other thing that I would say is, use the opportunity of the application to ... I mentioned the idea of putting color on the canvas in the interview, but start that with the application form. Don't think about what you think the firm wants you to say, and that, oh, this is what I think a typical training sister looks like. That's what I'm going to try and sound like or write like. Just talk about yourself. Use your own life experience. Give it thought. Be thoughtful about ... Actually, there could be interesting things that you think may not be typical, but actually could be very interesting. Be as authentic and real as possible in the application form. When it comes to the interview, one thing I would say, and this is not to make it stilted or anything like that, but to do good interview, I do think preparation is required. That is, obviously, knowing your application form. That is, knowing how you would describe all the elements of that in a very natural way. It's also how you show up in the room. I think the way you will show up in the room, which is not nervous, which does not seem robotic, is if you have done at least one dry run practice with somebody. A friend, a parent, anyone who you would trust, and that you shouldn't feel embarrassed in front of, I would definitely do a half an hour session or two with them beforehand. That will allow you to show up, ironically, more naturally in the interview, because you've got the slip-ups out of your system. You've composed yourself. You've actually heard yourself speak and describe yourself in a way that you would like to describe yourself in the interview. I think there's really no compensation for doing something like that. Then the other thing I would think, because I've mentioned that you should show your real personality, a tip to be calm would be to practice. The other thing is just to think about what you want to say and how you end what you want to say.

Brian

That is watching yourself on being quite monologue in how you approach it. Of course, you could talk forever if nobody interrupts you and doesn't want to move on with the topic, but just know the two or three points that you want to make on each of the themes that we're telling you about. Know that there are the few things that you want to say, and be comfortable when you've said it. You generally won't get the opportunity to go on a monologue approach and you'll be interrupted and it'll be very discursive. But if that's not the case, also know when you've said enough, when you've made your point.

Tara

Yeah, thank you. I would probably say the same, I think, in terms of the application itself, my advice to anyone who's thinking about applying would be to take your time with this, don't rush it, and know who, in terms of applications in general, know who you're applying to, you know, look it up, do your research, and have a general idea of who the company is, what they stand for, and how you can integrate that, or if it's going to be a good fit for you before you even start, because I know once application time comes

around for the internships, it's kind of just go, go, go, one after the other, but it's important to kind of slow down a little bit, do your research, look into it, and take your time with it, because you won't get everything you need to get across if you're rushing it, and I think the most important thing to remember is you have so many transferable skills that you might not even realise you have until you start digging deeper and looking into your own experience, who you are, and in your application in general.

Brian

I fully agree with that, Tara. Then I've given some high-level thoughts on how I think you might approach the application form and the interview, but either taking one or two of those or more broadly, what advice would you give to somebody listening to this podcast who's considering applying for an internship?

Tara

I would say, as I said before, take your time with the applications, do your research and as you said, Brian, don't be afraid of big words like commercial awareness. If you even every once a week have a look at what's going on in the world and the legal world specifically, I think that really helped me gain a better understanding of what corporate law firms actually do as a whole as well. It gave me a better understanding of what maybe I would be doing in the future and it helped me contextualize what would be going on. I think in general, in terms of the interview itself, as you said, you know, have confidence in yourself. But the way you do that is to prepare as much as as much as possible. I mean, you don't want to be going in and listing off this rehearsed lines about your experience or about who you are, because then once someone asks you a question, you get thrown off completely, but know exactly what you want to say and make sure you get across exactly how you want to be perceived in that interview, I would say. And then if you're lucky enough to get the internship, I would say don't be embarrassed at all. There's no question that's a stupid question. I think embrace it as much as you can. Make the most of it because it's an opportunity that you might not get again and you should absolutely make the most of it because when you do, it's a great experience.

Brian

Okay. That's really good advice. Can I ask you one other thing just on this, which is, I think we're both describing that interview that you will do in order to become a summer intern. Would you mind talking to us for a minute about the post-internship interview? So that interview where, I mean, we obviously guarantee all interns an interview for a

training contract. How is that different or similar to the interview that you do to try and get the internship?

Tara

I thought, generally it was quite similar, it's very conversational, but it's easier because you've been there for four weeks and most of the time you'll have worked alongside or know of your interviewer, which is extremely helpful. You're a lot more comfortable in the environment that you're in than in that situation. But in general, I would say, from my experience, I think the internship interview was a lot more daunting, but I think that comes down to the fact that you have been there for four weeks and you have the experience and you know what you're talking about and you have the proof to back it up on.

Brian

Yeah, I also think like if you've given the internships itself a good, you know, you've given it a good, you've applied good effort to it. So you've tried to do a good job on the job, you've tried to do a good job in the different group assignments that you're working on. And you've also been, as our culture would expect, you know, a really good colleague. I think there's no reason why you can't go into that in shoot for a training contract with a lot of confidence.

Tara

Yeah, absolutely. I would agree. I think, you know, prior to the apprenticeship interviews, while you do, you fill out another kind of application form and you talk about your experiences there. And that's also a great way to recap everything you've done. Because I think it's so easy to let the small things fall through the cracks. You know, the smaller things that you've done also reflect on your work ethic and how, on your experience, in general, within the internship. I think once you've put in the work, which I think everyone has, I think, you know, once you do the internship, once you get it and you're there, it's hard not to make an effort because you're working with so many extremely, amazing people, like just great minds. And they're all so dedicated to what they do. And they know so much, it's almost hard to not be inspired and want to work alongside them. But once you get into the internship and you do apply yourself and you make the most of it and you show that initiative, I think it's really important, you know, that's when you can go into the traineeship interview and be confident. And that's another thing I would say is, don't be afraid to ask for work and never be afraid if you do get there of your team, your partners, the associates, you know, they are there to help you and they are more than happy to give you work when you ask. And I think that's the

great thing. Well, that's what I found was one of the great things about the internship was actually the person focused approach that was taken by everyone who I encountered.

Brian

Yeah, yeah, I think, I think, I mean, that's my own experience having had a lot of interns on my team. So I, you know, I couldn't agree more.

Tara

Thanks Brian for giving us an insight into A&L Goodbody's summer internship programme.

Brian

and thank you Tara for a really great chat and for telling us about your experience.

Tara

you were looking for any information about any of our programs you can check out our website or follow us on social media. Thank you.