



A reflection of the Gilshenan &Luton Winter Clerkship experience

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Winter clerk Connor McGovern-Cubby shares insights from his time at Gilshenan &Luton.

Why did you apply for the clerkship?

I applied for the Winter Clerkship with Gilshenan &Luton because it offered practical experience at a well-respected firm with a strong reputation in criminal, regulatory and employment law. As a final-year law student with an interest in criminal law, I wanted to contribute to real matters and learn directly from experienced practitioners.

Throughout university, I developed a strong interest in criminal law and pursued further study to deepen my understanding of the criminal justice system. However, academic study could only offer a glimpse of the practical realities of working in the profession. I had found few opportunities to experience the day-to-day work of a criminal law firm, so applying for the Winter Clerkship seemed like the perfect opportunity to connect classroom concepts with legal practice.

What did you do during the clerkship?

During my clerkship, I completed a wide range of tasks. I attended court and recorded orders, joined client conferences, observed proceedings, reviewed evidence, drafted briefs of evidence for barristers and prepared internal reference documents. I also helped progress matters by identifying next steps, completing follow-up work and keeping tasks on track. These responsibilities taught me to take ownership of my work, manage priorities, communicate effectively, and contribute meaningfully to each matter. The team explained why each task mattered and encouraged me to ask questions. Their guidance made the work approachable and helped me build confidence from the outset.

I attended several levels of court and observed a variety of matters, including pleas in the Magistrates Court, directions and pre-trial hearings in the District Court, and inquests in the Coroners Court. Seeing these proceedings first-hand showed me how lawyers prepare, communicate and respond in real time. Some settings initially felt unfamiliar, but the team answered my questions and helped me understand each proceeding. Their support made every experience manageable, interesting and rewarding.

Before the clerkship, I had never worked in a private criminal law firm, so I wanted to understand how lawyers guide a matter from a client's first contact with police through to the end of a trial. The Winter Clerkship's comprehensive training program – run alongside G&L's graduate program – introduced me to criminal law procedure and strategy through individualised sessions on taking instructions, maintaining effective record-keeping, briefing and instructing counsel, prosecuting, and other essential aspects of practice. The structured training gave me a clear foundation and showed me that I did not need to arrive with all the answers. I was also able to learn from the current graduates at the firm, who provided me with key insights into life working as a junior person in the law.

What was your most memorable day?

My most memorable day began with a section 222 Justices Act appeal from the Magistrates Court in the District Court. I enjoyed seeing an unfamiliar area of regulatory law in practice because it revealed the breadth of criminal and regulatory work and the close connection between the two. That afternoon, I joined a client conference with a barrister, who shared practical advice about client management and clear, effective communication. Moving from court to a client conference in one day showed me how varied legal practice can be. It also taught me to maintain my composure, reset between tasks and give each new responsibility my full attention.

What will you take away from the clerkship?

I will take away practical skills, greater confidence and valuable lessons from the firm's solicitors. They spoke openly about building a successful legal career, welcomed my questions and turned each task into a learning opportunity. The clerkship showed me that students do not need extensive legal experience to contribute and grow. If you are a younger law student who feels interested but unsure, I encourage you to apply. The program offers the support, training and practical exposure you need to build confidence and take the next step.

This blog is of a general nature and should not be relied upon as legal advice. If you require further information, advice or assistance for your specific circumstances, please contact us.