

On course for success

Two Islanders who are currently pursuing law courses with the Institute of Law reveal their very different reasons for choosing to resume their studies



Nancy Chien



Joe Donohoe



Pothier is more than someone who wrote a textbook which is in the library

Joe Donohoe had been in the workplace for a number of years before deciding to wind down a bit. Then he decided to fill his spare time by undertaking a law degree part-time, studying for the University of London's LLB with tuition at the Institute of Law in Jersey. He describes his experiences

Nancy Chien is an experienced lawyer who moved to Jersey to take up the role of senior associate at Bedell Cristin. She has started the Jersey Law Course, in order to qualify as an advocate in the Island. She talks about balancing studies, work and a home life that includes a new baby

Structured offshore.



Voisin law firm and **Volaw Group** have created a strong reputation in developing and managing innovative financial structures including complex commercial transactions using Jersey entities.

You can benefit from our unique combination of legal knowledge and fiduciary expertise in the establishment and administration of trusts, companies and partnerships that may be used for a wide variety of conventional and Islamic structured finance and capital markets transactions, specialist investment structures and in the preservation and management of family wealth.

To see how our combined perspective can make all the difference, contact one of our experts today.

VOISIN LAW FIRM

Ian Strang - ianstrang@voisinlaw.com or

Nigel Pearmain - nigelpearmain@voisinlaw.com

VOLAW GROUP

Robert Christensen - rchristensen@volaw.com or

Trevor Norman - tnorman@volaw.com



www.voisinlaw.com
www.volaw.com

37 Esplanade,
St Helier, Jersey JE1 1AW,
Channel Islands.
Tel: +44 (0)1534 500300
Fax: +44 (0)1534 500350
mail@voisinlaw.com
mail@volaw.com

Voisin, Advocates, Solicitors & Notaries Public is a law firm regulated by the Law Society of Jersey. Details of the legal and regulatory status of the Volaw Group's members may be found at www.volaw.com

ALL things being equal, there may well be three members of my family at university in the course of 2014. My 17-year-old daughter hopes to start in September, joining her 19-year-old brother.

And then there is their 54-year-old father, three months into a law degree. While my children, in common with most of their contemporaries, are looking to the UK for a University education, I am pursuing a University of London law degree here in Jersey.

Not being one of life's great planners, I could not tell you precisely why I embarked on this course; but I do like change and challenge. Enrolling at university in my 50s satisfied both of those criteria. Initially my intention was to complete the course in two years on a full-time basis, taking a break from work. Before I had even begun, however, I found myself accepting a challenging role with Asset Risk Consultants, so I have now moved to the three-year programme. It is entirely possible to complete the degree in two years, even while working, but I want to enjoy the learning experience and not simply drive towards passing exams. The balance between work, family and studying over three years looks right.

On the course with me is a fantastic group of people. Some, like me, are past the normal undergraduate age and are studying either to further their existing career or switch to a new one. Others are either choosing to complete their primary degree in Jersey or have returned from a spell at a UK university.

Key to my decision to pursue this degree was that it was fully lectured. I really enjoy learning but I'm not so keen on studying so I knew that an Open University style distance-learning programme would not be for me. I need both the discipline of regular lectures and the human element in learning from an experienced academic rather than just a screen or a book.

The mid-week tutors, Rebecca and Jane, have been fantastic and the visiting faculty providing the weekend lectures is top class. So far, the majority of my lectures have been delivered by two lecturers. Claire, a martial arts expert and human rights enthusiast, has brought a real edge to the material, not found in the written texts. And Phil, a former senior police officer turned university lecturer, infuses the theoretical material with a whiff of the real world. That I have enjoyed going to lectures at 9 am on Saturdays and Sundays is a testament to their skills.

What will I do when I graduate? Well, as I have already said, planning is not really my strong suit. There are obvious benefits to simply having the qualification in my current role, but I have ruled nothing out. It would probably be absurd to consider going on to qualify as a lawyer in my mid-fifties; almost as absurd as going back to university 34 years after graduating the first time!

HAVING vowed never to take any legal exams again after qualifying as a barrister and solicitor in New Zealand and then as a solicitor in England and Wales, my curiosity got the better of me when I signed up for the Jersey Law Course.

Although people had told me that it is a gruelling process and that I need not undertake the course to perform my job as a trust and pensions lawyer, I wanted to find out for myself whether they were right.

I decided to take the course over two years and having completed the first year, I can wholeheartedly agree that they were correct about the amount of work involved. Complaints from those on the course about the lack of free time at the weekends and for holidays are entirely justified.

However, I must confess that some of my pain has been self-inflicted as I was pregnant during the first year of the course, leading to me sitting the first set of exams two weeks before the baby's due date. Luckily, she was not early.

Notwithstanding the volume of work (and complaining) involved, I am very pleased to have been given the opportunity to do the course. I have thoroughly enjoyed learning about the areas of law in which I have not had much practical experience to date, as well as reinforcing my understanding of the areas of law in which I do practice.

There is no better way to learn about such a wide range of Jersey law than to take the Jersey Law Course. It is also satisfying to be able to talk about Pothier with a level of understanding rather than to simply refer to him as someone who wrote a text book which is in the library.

The Jersey Law Institute is well run and the tutors are helpful and knowledgeable. The classes are interactive and they are actually a good forum to meet other legal practitioners, some of whom I would never have met otherwise. It is now difficult to imagine how people managed to do the advocacy exams before the Jersey Law Course.

The Jersey Law Course is no mean feat and I would not have been able to get as much out of it without the tremendous support of my family and my employer. I am looking forward to finishing my second year of the Jersey Law Course and am excited to qualify as the first Jersey advocate who can speak Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese.

As Jersey increases its presence in Asia, I hope that the combination of my new qualification and language skills will enable me to promote Jersey to Asian clients.