

Barista Jo opts for legal career after smelling the coffee

A barista who is determined to carve out a career in law has been awarded the Kirk Murdoch Scholarship, which was set up in memory of the respected lawyer and business leader.

Jo MacLeod, 27, worked in a number of retail jobs after leaving school but gave up her full-time Starbucks position to return to college to obtain an HND in legal studies.

The mother of a six-year-old daughter, Jo is now a third year law undergraduate at Edinburgh Napier University and is the fourth recipient of the scholarship named after [Pinsent Masons'](#) former Scotland chairman who passed away in 2017.

The scholarship is aligned with [The Lawscot Foundation](#), a charity established by the [Law Society of Scotland](#) to help talented students from less advantaged backgrounds to access a career in law.



Jo MacLeod, awarded the Kirk Murdoch Scholarship by law firm Pinsent Masons

The scholarship students receive financial support, career

mentoring, a summer work placement, and can potentially be awarded a legal traineeship at Pinsent Masons on graduation from university.

Jo, originally from Stirling and now living in Leith, said: “When I left school at 17 I went to university to study sociology and politics but it wasn’t for me. Since then I have worked in retail, but I realised it didn’t want to work in a coffee shop forever and decided to get back into higher education.



Business leader and inspiring lawyer, the late Kirk Murdoch
“A big attraction for studying law was that there are so many potential job routes once you graduate. It’s all about providing the best life opportunities for my daughter and a legal career opens up so many opportunities.”

Jo grew up watching popular crime shows such as Suits and CSI and initially she thought she wanted to be a criminal lawyer but a summer placement with an Edinburgh commercial law firm changed her outlook.

She added: "I think most people view criminal law as pretty cool, but once you start studying law you realise there are so many other areas that you can specialise in, and I found my brief introduction to corporate law really exciting and I think I really connected with that.

"Pinsent Masons is such a well-known reputable law firm and being lucky enough to be offered the Kirk Murdoch Scholarship is a great opportunity which will be a tremendous support as I complete my studies."

Former University of Dundee law student Emilia Gordon, who was the Kirk Murdoch Scholar in 2020, has recently been awarded a traineeship and will join Pinsent Masons' London office.

Chair of Pinsent Masons in Scotland, Katharine Hardie, said: "Kirk Murdoch championed talented young lawyers throughout his own career and was always willing to give of his time and encouragement to younger colleagues to enable them to achieve their potential.

"He would be delighted at the quality of undergraduates who are benefitting from a scholarship in his name and that his legacy is enabling students to enter the profession.

"Emilia Gordon is a fine example of what can be achieved when potential is nourished and encouraged, and I am confident our latest scholar Jo will do her best to follow a similar path as she progresses in her legal career."