

WHY YOU SHOULD GET WITH THE PROGRAMME

Allianz recently launched a scholarship programme aimed at giving its brokers greater learning and increased professionalism. **Edward Murray** finds out how the scheme is going so far...



In the last edition of The Journal, Chris Hanks, general manager at Allianz, gave us an update on a scholarship programme the insurer recently rolled out. Here we get the lowdown from three people involved with the programme on a day-to-day basis.



The scholar: Ben Lawrence, Beaumont Lawrence

We have a good trading relationship with Allianz and it was actually our business development manager who flagged up the new scholarship programme when it was in the process of getting it off the ground. I thought it sounded like something worth investigating.

Our firm has just gained Chartered status and training is something we are very hot on. The scholarship programme was, therefore, right up our street.

I filled out an application form and had an interview with the Birmingham branch manager

to discuss my professional goals and talk about what the scholarship programme would mean to me and my company.

Fortunately, I was accepted and there are 10 of us in my group. Each module we study is broken down into three or four tutorial days where we go to the Birmingham branch and discuss the topic in full.

There is then a revision day and we subsequently sit the exam. Learning on this basis works very well for me and I get so much more from being able to talk through the topics than I would from a cold textbook. The environment in which the training is delivered has also really helped to motivate me.

At the moment we are studying commercial property and business interruption and I hope to complete the diploma in the coming months.

Other than the time out of the office and the exam fees, Allianz picks up the tab for everything else and there is nothing to organise or sort out. It really is fantastic value and I am delighted to have been selected for the programme.

Besides the technical learning, I have also enjoyed meeting new people and it has been great to get a chance to talk to others who are at a similar stage in their career and hear about the firms they work for.

Allianz has invested a lot of time, money and effort into this programme and certainly my own experience is very positive. It is always easier to learn in a structured group environment and this is exactly what the scholarship programme creates.

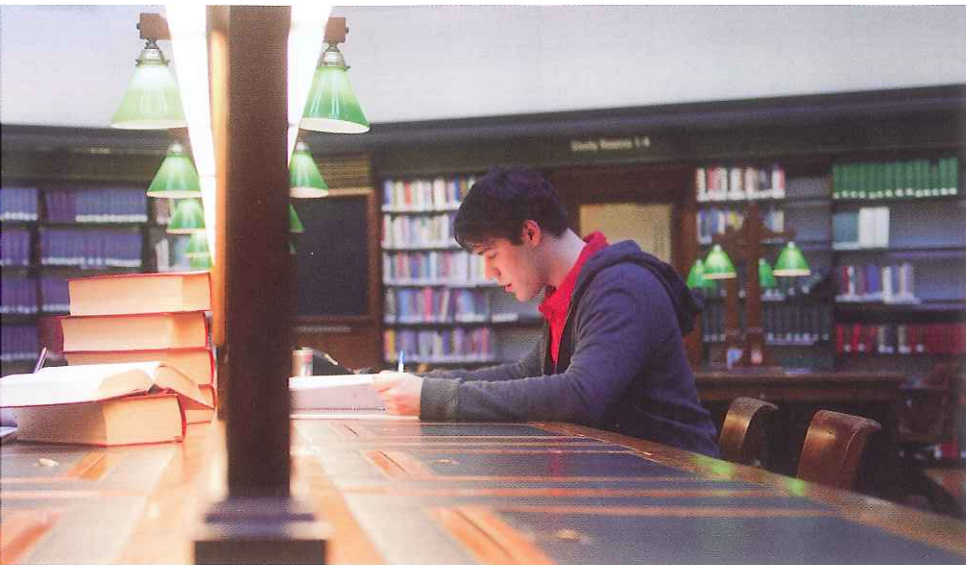


The mentor: Tony Beaumont, Beaumont Lawrence

Since this business began almost 40 years ago, we have always put a premium on providing a technically advanced service to our clients. Ben represents the next generation coming through and it is therefore important that he gets all of the requisite qualifications. Ensuring that the business will continue to focus on technical excellence for the next 40 years is an important aspect of our succession planning.

When I heard about the scholarship programme I very much liked the sound of it and we were delighted that Ben was offered a place. It is not just important from a qualifications point of view, but also from the perspective of working in partnership with Allianz and meeting some of his peers from other brokers operating in this part of the country.

In truth, the amount of time I have to commit to Ben as a mentor is not onerous and indeed it



is not really about putting in the hours on that basis. Instead it is much more about offering encouragement and discussing things through on a practical basis once he has been to one of his tutorial sessions.

I see my role as being there to assist in any way I can and to help bring any aspects of Ben's learning to life through the practical experience I have had over my career.

Financially, the firm picks up the cost of the exams, and so there is another level of involvement in that regard, but given that Allianz provides everything else, it really represents excellent value.

In the future, I would be delighted if other members of staff wanted to go through this programme and were selected for it.



The insurer: Gabriele Tischler, Allianz Commercial

Business training and technical excellence has always been at the core of what we do and in

2011, Allianz staff completed 412 exams with a pass rate of 84%.

We want to take that ethos to the market and we have already made a lot of strides in this area with 400 brokers a year going through our Allianz Partners Academy, which has been up and running since 2006.

The demand for the scholarship programme was intense and the competition for places was such that we had to turn many people away.

This is unfortunate and although we will be sticking to the same number of 30 for next year's intake, we will look at potentially expanding this in the future.

So far the feedback has been positive and I think a lot of this is down to the work we did before we launched the programme.

We spent a lot of time speaking to brokers to make sure we developed something that would be useful to them on a practical basis and really fit in with how they worked and what their staff needed.

We realise people have to make a big commitment to study for professional exams, and that they have to fit this into their professional and family lives.

However, we also think it is important that people who are serious about their career make these investments in their future and one of the reasons we interviewed all of the applicants was to make sure they understood what was expected of them and for us to get a feeling for how ready they were to make the commitment required.

APPLICATION CRITERIA

For the scholar

- Minimum of five GCSEs, grade C or above, including English and Maths.
- Minimum of two A Levels (or equivalent), grade C or above.
- Applicants must have passed one IF exam before nomination.
- Demonstrate the desire to pursue a career in insurance.
- The applicant is able to complete all four courses within 18 months.
- Be committed to studying the course programme.

For the broker

- Chartered or actively working towards Chartered status.
- Agreement to co-fund and support successful applicants.
- Agreement for candidate to travel to scholarship location (when required) to complete modules.

Successful applicants to the Allianz scholarship programme are also required to join the CII and provide Allianz with full details of membership.

We have been delighted with the quality of brokers that are enlisted and it is hugely encouraging to see such individuals coming through and paving the way for the future.

From our perspective, the investment we have made in this scholarship programme is about doing our bit to raise professional standards in the market. We want to operate in a market that is viewed as being confident, trusted and professional and for that to happen, everyone has to play their part.

If other firms start something similar, that would be fantastic and if our programme helps brokers to put an added focus on attaining their professional qualifications then that is exactly what we are hoping for.

The earlier people start to work towards their professional qualifications, the deeper the well of talent in our industry will become and that has to be a good thing. 