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Career Mail

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Get me Miss Moneypenny

COULD you be the new Miss Moneypenny? The archetypal old-school secretary in the James Bond films is the type that today's top executives are looking for.

by **Linda Whitney**

is through London secretarial colleges such as Queen's Business And Secretarial College, which has a 24-week executive assistant and PA course (costing £5,500), or St James's and Lucie Clayton College, which offers a 12-week personal assistant and management course (£3,466).

Both offer training to professional exam level in typing and shorthand and skills such as arranging travel, communication, report writing, proof reading, personal presentation and jobseeking.

Many students are graduates, but are not learning secretarial skills just to get on the management ladder. David Morel says: 'Candidates coming from courses such as these are snapped up quickly because employers realise these people are genuinely dedicated to a PA career.'

A lot of local colleges also offer professional secretarial courses leading to City and Guilds, London Chamber of Commerce or Oxford, Cambridge and RSA qualifications. On the IT front you will need advanced Word and Excel skills and must be familiar with PowerPoint — you may be tested on these at interviews.

Do not expect get a one-to-one executive PA job right away. 'You need to build up the skills and con-

fidence as it takes time to be comfortable dealing with very senior people and to gain the aura of authority you need,' says Corinne Bickford, principal of Queen's.

Typically, you'll start working in admin or as secretary to a team, not reaching a one-to-one position for a top executive in a major company until you are at least 30. The top jobs in terms of salary and prestige are mostly in London, but there is demand elsewhere.

STUART BADDLEY, director of Select Appointments in Newport, Wales, says: 'There is big demand for one-to-one secretaries with shorthand, audio and IT skills, especially from chartered surveyors, accountants and legal firms, where there is a lot of report writing involved.'

'People want PAs who can be full-scale administrators, making sure the boss is doing what he is supposed to be doing, at the right time, with the right tools. Pay in South Wales is about £23,000 compared with £30,000 or more in London.'

■ **QUEEN'S College:** www.qbsc.ac.uk. **St James's & Lucie Clayton:** www.sjccollege.co.uk. **Austin Benn:** www.austinbenn.co.uk, **Tiger Recruitment:** www.tigerrecruitment.co.uk. **Select Appointments:** www.select.co.uk



HELEN FALL, 24, left university when she realised she was enjoying her placement year in business administration more than her course. She went to Queen's Secretarial College and left with shorthand, typing, business, admin and PA skills. 'I got the first job I applied for, as secretary to a chief engineer at Rolls-Royce in Bristol,' she says. After working for four Rolls-Royce executives at once, she moved to London and is now PA to a partner at accounting firm Deloitte. 'I made a conscious decision to be a super-PA and reach the top,' she says, 'so I have gone for big companies where there is plenty of opportunity to progress.'