There are three Ethel Benjamin scholarship winners for 2011. The three recipients of this New Zealand Law Foundation award are Charlotte Leslie, Anna Crowe and Natalie Coates and all three intend to study for an LLM at Harvard University.

Natalie Coates became the first person to graduate from Otago University with first class honours degrees in both Maori and Law when she graduated in 2009. In 2010 she won the Bill Sewell Prize in Legislation for the best paper written on an issue pertaining to legislation. She was the top mooter at Otago University/University of the South Pacific moot in 2008.

Since February 2011, Natalie has been a law clerk at Aurere Law in Rotorua and from November 2010 until now she has been a research assistant at Victoria University. From July to December last year, she was a voluntary intern at Survival, an international NGO based in London that helps tribal people defend their lives, protect their land and determine their own future.

Natalie will use the scholarship towards an LLM, specialising in human rights and indigenous law and policy from socio-legal, philosophical, theoretical and practical perspectives. Programmes of this nature and specialisation are simply not yet available in New Zealand, she says.

The Law Foundation established the Ethel Benjamin scholarship to commemorate New Zealand’s first woman lawyer. It is awarded each year to outstanding women scholars to support post-graduate research in law that encompasses the foundation’s wider objectives, in particular research that will protect and promote the interests of the public in relation to legal matters in New Zealand. Most years, two scholarships are awarded.