

Pupillage Document 2023/24

Introduction

1. In this document we set out our policies in relation to:
 - the choice of pupils
 - the finance available
 - the role and duties of pupils
 - the pattern of pupillage
 - the recruitment of tenants, and
 - the position of a pupil not offered a tenancy at the conclusion of pupillage.

2. We are a busy set of chambers with premises in Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool. We practise predominantly in the North but also much further afield, Chambers having a national reputation and profile.

3. We are a thriving organisation, having been managed progressively for the last 35 years. We have been at the forefront of many developments at the Bar. We organise ourselves as if a corporation, with a management board emphasising the business aspects of professional life, whilst maintaining concentration on the important, traditional values of the profession. Having been a leading set of Liverpool chambers for much of the 20th century, in 2000 we expanded into Manchester, and, in 2010, into Leeds. We have a large body of accredited mediators amongst our number. We look forward to continuing our success.

4. At the present time we have 23 Queen's Counsel and 173 juniors in chambers, who specialise in one or more of:
 - Alternative Dispute Resolution
 - Commercial
 - Business and Property
 - Criminal

- Data Breach and Privacy
- Employment, Pensions and Tax
- Family
- Local Government and Social Housing
- Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence
- Private Prosecutions
- Public Law and Court of Protection
- Regulatory and Professional Discipline

In addition, we have experts in taxation, pensions and insurance. A substantial part of our work is for local authorities and government bodies.

Pupillage Committee

5. The Pupillage Committee consists of a cross section of members of chambers from silks to more junior members.

6. This is not an ad hoc committee. It has, between its members, over 50 years' experience of considering pupillage applications.

Selection Procedure

7. For applications for pupillage commencing in Autumn 2023/24, Chambers is not a member of the Pupillage Gateway.

8. The application form is available online from **Wednesday 5th January 2022**, and the deadline for applications is 11am on **Wednesday 9th February 2022**.

9. Applications must be made on Chambers' own application form, which can be found on our website. Whilst we prefer applications to be made electronically, a hard copy of the form, which may be completed by hand and returned to us, will be made available upon request. We will make all reasonable efforts to

accommodate any applicant who may have specific requirements which need to be met in order for them to be able to complete the application form.

10. Any applications by way of covering letter with CV will not be considered.

11. We will communicate with candidates by email, unless that is impossible, or unless particular circumstances indicate that it would be inappropriate for us to attempt to do so.

12. The Pupillage Committee intends to consider all applications in accordance with the procedure described in more detail below.

13. The initial consideration of applications is carried out in accordance with strict criteria laid down by the Pupillage Committee.

14. Thereafter, the Pupillage Committee will meet. In view of the very considerable number of applications that we receive each year, it is simply not feasible to interview everyone.

15. At that meeting the Pupillage Committee carries out two further tasks:

1 It reviews the selection process undertaken, in order to ensure that its selection criteria have been adhered to, and that Chambers' Equal Opportunities Policy has been implemented. It does this by taking, before the meeting, a sample (about 10) of the applications received and itself applying the selection criteria in accordance with the Equal Opportunities Policy. This is done in an effort to ensure that no injustice is done to any candidate.

2 It also reconsiders the applications as a whole with a view to ensuring that no candidates have suffered inadvertent discrimination.

16. First round interviews will take place in Liverpool on **Saturday 26th March 2022**. We anticipate that we will offer first round interviews to approximately 12 candidates for each practice area in which we are recruiting. No interview on that day will last longer than 25 minutes. Some days prior to the interview, candidates will be provided with a question to answer; it will form the basis of discussion which will occupy part of those 25 minutes. Candidates must be prepared to defend the opinions they express. Unfortunately, due to the current Pandemic and Covid restrictions, it may be necessary to make arrangements for interviews to take place via Zoom rather than in person.

17. Interviewees are all assessed by reference to the same criteria, and the questions asked are designed both to give candidates the opportunity to perform in each criterion and to allow for objective marking by the interview panel (which will consist of Members of the Pupillage Committee, together with other members of Chambers and possibly Chambers' Chief Executive, Jonathan l'Anson). Each member of that panel will, independently of their colleagues, record the marks they have awarded immediately after the conclusion of each interview.

18. At the end of the day, the interview panel will collate their marks and discuss the result. They will then decide which candidates will be invited to take part in the second round. We anticipate no more than a total of twelve applicants will reach second interview stage.

19. The second round will take place **Thursday 7th April 2022**. It will probably last one full day and will include a mixture of formal interviews and assessed practical exercises. Accommodation will be provided at Chambers' expense for second round interviewees if required; travel expenses will also be met. At the end of the second round of interviews, candidates' marks will be collated and the Pupillage Committee will consider what recommendation to the Management Board, which makes the final decision whether an offer of pupillage is to be made. Unfortunately, due to the current Pandemic and Covid restrictions, it may be

necessary to make arrangements for interviews to take place via Zoom rather than in person. We will make any offer of pupillage on **Friday 6th May 2022** in accordance with the Pupillage Gateway Timetable.

20. In the event that a candidate is interviewed and not offered a pupillage, we will let that person know as soon as possible so that they may concentrate their attention on other applications.

21. If invited to interview, whether first or second round, candidates should be aware that they will be assessed carefully at all stages. That said, our fundamental approach to interviews is that they should be conducted in as informal an atmosphere as possible. We prefer conversation to confrontation. We are conscious that, for many candidates, attending interviews is in itself a stressful experience. We think it wrong to put the candidate under further pressure simply to see the reaction. Our belief, based on many years' collective experience, is that candidates are more likely to give of their best if they are put at their ease. Our objective is to make sure that we see the best of each candidate. Nonetheless, each candidate's first task as an advocate will be to persuade us that we would be making a serious mistake if we do not accede to their application.

22. As well as giving the Committee the opportunity to assess each candidate invited for interview, the candidates will have the opportunity of deciding whether they would want to join us if invited to do so.

23. It is important to understand that, when we make decisions about pupillage, we have the long term very much in mind. Our hope is that we will be able to offer a tenancy to the successful pupillage applicant at the conclusion of pupillage. The decisions that we make directly affect the very future of Chambers. It is for this reason that we take as much care as we do over applications for pupillage.

24. The Committee is acutely conscious that the decisions it makes may result in disappointment. We are sometimes asked to give reasons for our decisions. We ask candidates who have been unsuccessful to bear in mind the intensity of the competition and the extremely high standard of very many of the applications. We take no pleasure at all in refusing, as we are obliged to do each year, applications from candidates who we are fairly confident will do well at the Bar.

25. We assess applications quite regardless of age, sex, race, ethnic origin, disability, social background, political persuasion, religion, marital status and sexual orientation. Although we are in search of excellence, no candidate should feel inhibited from applying to us for either a mini-pupillage, a pupillage proper or a tenancy. Indeed, we welcome and encourage all applications, and will make every reasonable allowance to ensure that they can be made.

Qualities

26. We are looking for candidates with the following qualities:

- integrity
- a fine intellect
- a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion
- a capacity for sustained hard work under pressure
- sound judgment
- an ability to relate appropriately to the very widest cross section of society
- clarity of thought and expression
- confidence
- enthusiasm
- broadness of mind, and
- an ability to achieve.

We will look for evidence of those qualities in your application form and your interview. We will assess each application against those criteria. Please make sure

that you provide specific examples that demonstrate how your skills match the qualities and abilities sought. It is not sufficient to talk generally about a situation and what happened - we need to know specifically what the situation was, your task and the result.

We will only offer a Pupillage to candidates who are truly outstanding.

27. Whilst we take into account a candidate's A Levels, we do not require any minimum grades as a pre-requisite for interview. We believe that more recent evidence of academic achievement is of greater relevance to pupillage selection. As we require evidence upon which to base our decisions, we ask all applicants who are invited for interview to forward, before the first interview, certificates of A levels, degrees, and post-degree qualifications.

28. Equally, we accept that class of degree alone should not be regarded as an infallible indicator of likely success in practice. However, we receive hundreds of applications each year. As a general rule, we do not interview candidates with less than an upper second-class degree, unless there are extenuating circumstances. If a candidate with less than an upper second feels his circumstances are extenuating, they should explain why in their application.

29. We have no requirement that a candidate should have studied at a particular educational institute or type of institution.

30. We ask all candidates invited for interview to forward, in advance of the first interview, references supporting their application. A separate form is available on the website for referees' use.

Pupillage itself

31. We invest a lot of time and money in pupillage because we believe it to be of immense importance to the long-term well-being of Chambers.

32. Each pupil will have one pupil supervisor whose room, if space permits, they will share, and with whom they will spend the majority of their time both in and out of court. The pupil supervisor will be responsible for introducing the pupil to Chambers' life, and for ensuring that all necessary arrangements are made for the pupil to experience such aspects of Chambers' work as are outside the pupil supervisor's own practice.

33. We are an authorised AETO and each pupil is given at the beginning of their pupillage a bespoke training plan.

34. We encourage all pupils to attend the seminars, lectures and courses given on circuit, and further afield, and by Chambers, that are relevant to the work they are likely to undertake in practice. Similarly, pupils are encouraged to belong to any appropriate specialist bar associations.

35. During pupillage there will be a total of 4 weeks holiday per annum i.e., 20 days in addition to Bank Holidays during pupillage, with 2 weeks' holiday to be taken in the first 6 months and 2 weeks' holiday in the second 6 months. There will be some flexibility with regard to further time off if required during pupillage.

36. It is our intention that a close professional relationship should develop between pupil and pupil supervisor. A pupil should always feel entirely at liberty to turn to their supervisor for assistance, whether the problem is legal, ethical or personal.

37. At the conclusion of the first six months' pupillage, a pupil can expect to undertake paperwork and court work in their own right, subject always to the approval of their pupil supervisor.

38. Whether the pupil is offered a tenancy at the conclusion of pupillage will depend on the views expressed by Chambers as a whole. Clearly, the pupil

supervisor's report will be influential, but not necessarily conclusive. In formulating his report, the pupil supervisor gathers feedback on the pupil from a wide range of sources (including other members of Chamber, instructing solicitors and the clerking team) and thereafter makes a recommendation to the Management Board in that report. Obviously, we hope that every Chambers' pupil will eventually be offered a tenancy, but we think it right to make it clear that there is nothing automatic about the offer of a tenancy. A tenancy is the prize that awaits the pupil who has worked consistently hard during pupillage, and demonstrated a high degree of competence and commitment, thereby gaining the respect of Chambers as a whole.

39. The pupil's progress is continuously monitored by their pupil supervisor. A rather more formal review occurs at three monthly intervals, the purpose of which is to identify and resolve any problems or difficulties that the pupil might be experiencing.

40. No pupil will be taken by surprise if Chambers ultimately decides against offering a tenancy. The warning signs will almost certainly have been evident from quite an early stage and will have been raised during both formal and informal reviews; steps will have been suggested that are designed to correct the perceived failings or shortcomings.

41. If Chambers decides that a pupil should not be offered a tenancy, we will do what we can to try and help the pupil find a place in other chambers.

Grievance procedures

42. We have written grievance procedures that may be invoked by barristers, pupils, professional and lay clients, and staff.

Pupillage awards and funding

43. Chambers' pupillage award exceeds the Bar Council's requirements. We pride ourselves that we offer an attractive financial package which is a combination of grant and loan/guaranteed income.

44. In practice this means that we shall make the following payments to each pupil:

- £5,000 to be paid during the first week of pupillage.
- During the first 6 (non-practising) months of pupillage the pupil will receive £1,325 per month
- During the second 6 (practising) months of pupillage the pupil's monthly income will never fall below £2000. In the event that it does, the pupil's income will be supplemented by Chambers to ensure a minimum amount of £2000.

Further details will be provided with the pupillage offer.

45. We are also conscious that pupils are likely to carry with them a burden of debt. Should an offer of pupillage be accepted, we will discuss with the pupil their borrowing and may, dependent on individual circumstances, make an offer to assist with the management of that debt, possibly by way of interest free loan.

Expenses

46. All expenses for travelling within the Northern/North Eastern circuits are to be covered within the payments of the pupillage award.

However, if you travel off Northern/North Eastern circuits, you can submit an expenses claim for your travel off circuit and these expenses will be reimbursed to you on production of receipts together with the signed expenses form.

47. The Bar Council's funding requirements make no provision for the period after the conclusion of pupillage. Chambers will however guarantee each pupil

who is granted tenancy total receipts of £100,000 net of VAT by way of interest free loan during the first two years of practice as a tenant.

48. We hope that the receipts of most new tenants will exceed that sum. But for those tenants who may not have been doing work which is as well or as quickly paid, the guarantee will be there in the background to ensure that their monthly receipts do not on average fall below about £4,000 per month.

49. The precise terms of the interest free loan scheme will be agreed between the barrister and the Head of Chambers upon the grant of a tenancy.

December 2021