

PUPILLAGE RECRUITMENT - POLICY & PROCEDURES 2021

Latest version – June 2023 – no substantive changes apart from 1.3 and 2.3 highlighting a change in Chambers Policy to recruit 2 pupils per year.

Purpose

Chambers has a very positive commitment to its Pupillage recruitment strategy underpinned by a very ‘hands-on’ approach to the on-going development of its Pupils. All but one of our Pupils since 2013 has been offered and has accepted tenancies within Becket Chambers.

This Policy sets out the Chambers guidelines for the Pupillage recruitment journey.

Context

1. Leadership and Administration of Pupillage

- 1.1 The Head of Pupillage is appointed annually by the Chambers Management Committee and reports quarterly to the Management Committee.
- 1.2 The Head of Pupillage co-ordinates the Pupil Supervisors and activates a Pupillage Selection Panel as and when appropriate.
- 1.3 The current Chambers policy is now to recruit two Pupils per calendar year, if possible, and any amendment to this policy shall be decided upon by the Chamber’s Annual Meeting.
- 1.4 The Chambers’ pupillage process will always be followed in accordance with the best practice set out in the Chambers’ Equality and Diversity Policy.

2. The Chambers Pupillage Strategy

- 2.1 Becket Chambers has a positive and proactive recruitment strategy which aims to provide all of its Pupils with expert and practical training to fully prepare them for their role as a qualified barrister. Ultimately, it is the intention of Chambers to offer pupillages with the clear potential for a tenancy to be awarded at the end of the pupillage.
- 2.2 We believe that the best way to achieve this strategy is to provide each pupil with a wide range of Chambers’ work i.e. civil and the 3 core family practice areas. We also aim to involve our Pupils in Chambers everyday life, thus illustrating what is expected of a Becket Chambers barrister in day-to-day practice.
- 2.3 The current policy of Becket Chambers is to offer two twelve-month funded pupillages per year. The policy is reviewed annually by Members of Chambers at the Annual Chambers meeting. Pupillages will normally be staggered for practical resourcing reasons with a pupillage starting at the beginning of April and the second pupillage starting at the beginning of October in each calendar year but in 2023 it is planned that both pupillages will begin in October 2023.

The Recruitment Process

3. The Pupillage Gateway Scheme

3.1 Chambers is a member of the **Bar Council Pupillage Gateway Scheme** ('the PG Scheme'). It is intended that, save for when not practical, all pupillage applications shall be dealt with in accordance with the PG Scheme rules.

3.2 The following actions and deadlines shall apply to ensure compliance with the PG Scheme application rules (such actions and deadlines always being subject to change in order to meet the PG Scheme requirements):

3.2.1 The Head of Pupillage will scrutinise the current year's PG Scheme rules for key dates, deadlines and requirements and draft a suitable advertisement for uploading onto the Scheme.

3.2.2 The advertisement referred to in section 3.2.1 above, together with any other supporting Chambers materials e.g. the Chambers website, should provide sufficient information to enable prospective pupils to understand:

- The type of work that Becket Chambers barristers do, its size, location and culture;
- the number of pupillages available;
- the application process and deadlines, timing of interviews and the criteria that Chambers will use to assess applicants and decision dates;
- when (on their path to qualification) candidates can apply;
- the Becket Chambers pupillage training programme and what to expect from a pupillage at Becket Chambers;
- the pupillage award, including expenses and other costs of training that the Becket Chambers will cover (and what it doesn't cover);
- prospects at the end of pupillage and the process for applying for tenancy/employment; and
- the practical impact of the Becket Chambers equality and diversity policies.

3.2.3 No later than seven days prior to the PG Scheme registration deadline the Senior Clerk (working with the Head of Pupillage) shall register the Chamber's account with the PG Scheme (paying any necessary fees) and submit any applications for approval including the draft advertisement referred to in section 3.2.1 above.

3.3 In the event that Chambers wishes to recruit outside of the PG Scheme then the Head of Pupillage shall arrange the same (working with the Management Committee) whilst ensuring that all applicable rules are complied with.

4. The Pupil Recruitment Process

Reviewing Applications

- 4.1 Prior to the deadline for applications within the PG Scheme the Head of Pupillage shall determine the criteria which shall be applied when reviewing CVs and interviewing candidates (with the input, advice and support of the Chambers Equal Opportunities Officer).
- 4.2 The Head of Pupillage shall produce a document setting out the agreed selection criteria against which all applications shall be assessed and graded.
- 4.3 The process of reviewing applications shall proceed as follows:
 - 4.3.1 Within 24 hours after the closing of the deadline for prospective applicants applications on the PG Scheme the Senior Clerk shall download all applications from the PG Scheme portal. The applications will then be distributed by the Senior Clerk to two pre-selected members of the Pupillage Selection Panel (as activated in accordance with section 1.2 above) in equal shares for marking against the agreed selection criteria in section 4.2 above.
 - 4.3.2 The marked applications (in accordance with section 4.3.1 above) shall be returned to the Head of Pupillage within one week of receipt.
 - 4.3.3 The Head of Pupillage shall then re-distribute the applications to the other pre-selected member (so that each application is marked by both pre-selected members). The second tranche of applications should then be returned to the Head of Pupillage within one week of receipt.
 - 4.3.4 The Pupillage Selection Panel shall then meet as soon as possible after the second markings in section 4.3.3 above to review the marks received by each candidate. The Pupillage Selection Panel shall:
 - 4.3.4.1 review any differentials in the marks given by each scorer to ensure that any anomalies shall be properly considered;
 - 4.3.4.2 determine which of the applicants should be invited for interview. The aim shall be to invite up to 15 applicants for first interview, the precise number to be determined by the Pupillage Selection Panel based upon the quality of the applications received; and

4.3.4.3 determine the pro forma questions that are to be asked of the candidates at the first interview and the criteria against which the candidates shall be assessed during the first interview stage (again with the input, advice and support of the Chambers Equal Opportunities Officer).

First Interviews

- 4.4 The Head of Pupillage will have already selected and invited at least 2 members of the Pupillage Selection Panel to conduct first interviews with selected candidates within the agreed interview window.
- 4.5 Within 24 hours of the meeting at section 4.3.4 above the Senior Clerk shall invite the successful candidates to interview and arrange the timings of those interviews in accordance with the timetable provided by the Head of Pupillage. The Senior Clerk shall also notify the unsuccessful candidates of the Chambers decision not to invite them for interview and update the PG Scheme portal appropriately. Feedback shall only be provided to those candidates who are not invited for interview unless it is specifically requested.
- 4.6 The applicants shall be asked the pro forma questions previously agreed by the Pupillage Selection Panel together with any additional questions arising from the answers given on the applicants original applications.
- 4.7 The Pupillage Selection Panel shall, as soon as possible after the first round of interviews, determine which of the applicants should be invited for second interview. The aim shall be to invite up to 7 applicants for second interview, the precise number to be determined by the Pupillage Selection Panel based upon the quality of the candidates interviewed and the number of available pupillages. The Pupillage Selection Panel shall also plan and determine:
- 4.7.1 The pro forma questions that are to be asked of the candidates and the criteria against which the candidates shall be assessed;
 - 4.7.2 The everyday mock scenario enabling the applicant to showcase their advocacy and/or advice skills to be undertaken at the second interview; and
 - 4.7.3 The timetable for the second interviews.
- 4.8 The Senior Clerk and Head of Pupillage shall notify the unsuccessful candidates of the Chambers decision not to invite them back for the second interview and provide unsuccessful first interview candidates with feedback, if requested.

Second Interviews

- 4.9 As soon as practicable after the meeting at section 4.7 above the Senior Clerk shall arrange the timetable for the second interviews in accordance with the timetable agreed at that meeting. The second interviews shall, as far as possible, be conducted by the same members for consistency in approach and shall be completed within 3 weeks of the meeting at section 4.7.

4.10 Immediately after the final second interview the Pupillage Selection Panel shall discuss the performance of the candidates throughout the recruitment process to determine the order in which they rank the candidates. Following that determination the Pupillage Selection Panel shall consider whether the first choice candidate(s), together with appropriate reserves, are of a sufficient standard to be offered a Pupillage with Chambers.

4.10 In the event that the Pupillage Selection Panel consider that any applicant has the necessary potential to be considered for pupillage at some point in the future then consideration shall be given to offering such candidates a mini-pupillage with Chambers.

4.11 The Senior Clerk and the Head of Pupillage shall also notify all unsuccessful candidates of the Chambers decision at the final interview stage and provide unsuccessful second interview candidates with feedback, if requested.

5. The Offer of Pupillage

5.1 The Senior Clerk or Head of Pupillage shall notify the successful applicants of the decision of the Pupillage Selection Panel at the earliest opportunity, in accordance with the rules of the PG scheme at that time, both verbally and in writing.

5.2 Upon confirmation that the successful candidate(s) have accepted the offer of Pupillage this must again be confirmed in writing to the successful candidate(s) by the Senior Clerk on behalf of Chambers.

5.3 It is fully understood that the time period between the offer and acceptance of a pupillage and the actual start date for the Pupillages will normally be a lengthy period and so it will be the responsibility of the Head of Pupillage to ensure that regular communications are maintained with the future Pupil during that period.

5.4 It is important that key documents evidencing the Pupillage are sent to the Pupil at least 3 months before the start of a pupillage. These documents would include:

5.4.1 A copy of the Pupillage Agreement and the Pupillage policy documents referred to therein; and

5.4.2 Copies of all outline Pupillage supervision documents.

6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusiveness

6.1 It is important to re-iterate, as set out within the Chambers PG Scheme advertisement referred to in section 3.2.1 above, that Chambers is committed to creating a diverse workspace. Key equality, diversity and inclusion areas that must be fully taken account of during the Pupil recruitment process include:

- All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for a pupillage without regard to race, colour, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, genetics, disability, age, or veteran status;

- Chambers encourages and welcomes applications from women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals, neurodiverse and disabled people and those who are LGBT+, as well as candidates from other under-represented groups and positively will seek to encourage applications from groups who are currently under-represented in Chambers such as women, those from ethnic minorities and persons with a disability;
- Chambers has no preference for an undergraduate law degree over the one-year conversion course. We look for the best and the brightest candidates whatever their background;
- **Reasonable adjustments** - If a candidate requires any reasonable adjustment to be made during the interview/ assessment process, then candidates have been asked to make this clear on their Pupillage Gateway application form;
- **Extenuating circumstances** - If a candidate feels that their educational, or other, performance has been affected by specific circumstances, then again candidates have been asked to make this clear on their Pupillage Gateway application form; and
- Chambers encourages candidates to give us a full picture of any mitigating circumstances, including neurodiversity and late diagnosis neurodivergence if applicable. It is our policy to make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled or neurodiverse candidates (including where a mental health issue is classified as a disability) to demonstrate their suitability for the position.

7. Applications for Tenancy

- 7.1 The Process for making an application for tenancy with Chambers will be for the Pupil to make the necessary application in writing not less than six weeks prior to the conclusion of their Pupillage.
- 7.2 Forming an integral part of the tenancy application should be a portfolio including the following:
- Examples of written work, drafting and attendance notes completed during the Pupillage;
 - At least six written references from appropriate referees, including instructing solicitors, legal advisors, opponents etc. that a Pupil may have requested and obtained during their Pupillage;
 - A summary review of the Pupil's overall performance during their Pupillage including their Pupil Supervisor's recommendation as to whether they should be offered a tenancy within Chambers;
 - An oversight review from the Head of Pupillage as to the Pupil's performance throughout their Pupillage including any concerns raised by either them or their Pupil Supervisor and what action, if any, was taken in respect of the same; and
 - Their pupil diary, including details of any BD, social or other similar events attended.

- 7.3 Their completed portfolio (either hard copy or in pdf format) should be given to the Senior Clerk not less than four weeks prior to the conclusion of Pupillage and made available by the Senior Clerk for all Members of Chambers to review prior to consideration of their tenancy application.
- 7.4 Chambers shall, prior to the conclusion of the Pupil's Pupillage, determine whether they are to be offered tenancy with Chambers. The Pupil will be notified of the Chambers' decision as soon as practicable by the Head of Pupillage or any individual to whom this job has been delegated.
- 7.5 Should a Pupil not be offered tenancy then, unless it is deemed inappropriate to do so by Chambers, the Pupil will be allowed to remain as a "squatter" with Chambers for an initial period to be agreed. During any such period rent will be paid at the current "introductory" rate (presently 23%) of your receipts.

Further information

Chambers will review its' Pupil policies and procedures periodically to reflect changes in legislation, good practice etc.,