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Choosing where to apply for pupillage is hard. Finding the right fit is vital if you’re going to have a chance of success. How do you make a shortlist or work out if the set is right for you? Welcome to the Chambers Reports.

A lot of factual info about barristers’ chambers can be found on their websites: size, practices, location, basic pupillage info. But looking online can only get you so far; there’s no real substitute for getting off your butt, meeting barristers and gaining insider knowledge by doing mini-pupillages.

But you can’t do a mini at every set, so you need a way of gaining the type of insight you would from a mini in another way. To help with this we’ve done some digging on a bunch of sets and come up with the Chambers Reports. Each one includes details on:

- the type of work a set does;
- recent case examples;
- what work pupils are given;
- how the application process works;
- how pupils are assessed; and
- the set’s working culture.

For over ten years now we’ve been schlepping round the Inns of Court regularly visiting Britain’s best most interesting barristers’ chambers. At each one we speak with pupils, juniors, supervisors, QCs and clerks. This is no small task, so we visit sets every other year and refresh the existing Chambers Report in the intervening year. This year’s roll call of 44 sets includes 22 new features and 22 refreshed ones from our 2019 edition.

“It’s not just the case that there are a group of good, intelligent people who get pupillages, and then a group of people who aren’t any good who don’t get pupillage. Even for the good people it’s getting tougher and tougher to gain pupillage and many are not succeeding.”

Quinn Clarke, director of education at Gray’s Inn

We try to visit as many different types of set as possible, from the grandees of the Chancery Bar to more modest publicly-funded get-ups. Our selection strives to include something to suit most tastes, from commercial and common law to crime, IP, tax and family.

We should add that the on-the-record nature of our research at the Bar means we can’t—and don’t pretend to—give the same warts-and-all, anonymously sourced ‘True Picture’ treatment to sets as we do to solicitors’ firms. You’ll have to find out about any warts yourself.

For the fourth time this year we’ve included a set outside London: St John’s Chambers of Bristol. Their inclusion reflects efforts by the regional Bar to establish a greater national presence. Over the past five to ten years sets in and outside London have become more conscious of costs, marketing and self-promotion. Many now have dedicated marketing teams and a marketing manager. Between them the sets in our Chambers Reports are offering up around 110 pupillages for 2020. That’s roughly a quarter of the total 450 or so on offer. You can find a list of all sets offering pupillage on our website. It would be remiss of us not to point out that the number of pupillages on offer has fallen drastically in recent years: the 2018 figure was down 50% on the 2005 total. The Bar—at least at the junior end—is a leaner, meaner profession than it was ten years ago.

All this means that competition for pupillages has become even more incredibly fierce. So it’s more important than ever to be able to explain why you want to do a pupillage at the particular set you are applying to. For this you need to gain a full understanding of the areas it practises in, how its pupillage is structured, and what approach it takes to marketing and promotion. The Chambers Reports can help you gain this understanding.
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* sets visited in 2020  ** guaranteed second six earnings
Pupillage deadlines

Most sets recruit 18 months in advance – i.e. they are recruiting in the academic year 2020/21 for pupillages to start in 2022/23.

Around half of pupillages can be applied for via the Pupillage Gateway, a dedicated portal for pupillage application run by the Bar Council.

This year, the sets recruiting outside of the portal have conveniently synchronised deadlines with the Gateway. Deadlines aren’t yet published in the Gateway, but it is likely to stop accepting applications in early February, and applications usually open in early January. Keep an eye on this page for specifics www.pupillagegateway.com/applicant-home/timetable/

But make sure you spend you Christmas holiday preparing applications. Sample forms can be found on the Pupillage Gateway.
Atkin Chambers

The facts
Location: Gray’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 19/32 (13 women)
Applications: c. 120
Outside Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 2x3 and 1x6 months
Pupillage award: £72,500 (can advance £25,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 10
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

Bob the barrister! Can he fix it? Bob the barrister! Yes he can!—well, almost certainly if he’s at this premier construction set.

The Chambers
“Our lifeblood is big, big projects,” begins pupillage committee member Rónán Hanna. “Vast international airports, huge offshore oil rigs and wind farms and major new flagship transport infrastructure... all big projects often with a big story behind them. What went wrong? Why did it cost so much? Why did it take so long? Why is it so broken? Those are the questions we typically deal with.”

Senior clerk Justin Wilson feels that “construction work is sometimes seen as quite dry, but the projects we work on are so technically complex and interesting that you’re almost doing quasi-engineering work.” Our junior sources agreed: “Getting to grips with the technology behind all these wonderful buildings is what makes construction interesting and quite unlike other parts of the commercial law.” Wilson also points out that this area of work is “tangible—you’re arguing over a bridge or an oil rig, and you can see it. For some weird human reason that resonates with people.”

“Atkin’s members have played their part in the construction of household-name projects all over the globe. Take London—from the M25 and the Underground to the grand heights of the Shard and the Wembley and Olympic stadiums, the handiwork of members has left a mark. Further afield, the set has worked on oil fields from the North Sea to Saudi Arabia, plus much more major infrastructure in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Multiple cases surrounding the $5.2 billion project to widen the Panama Canal have landed at Atkin’s door, and in the Middle East alone members have worked on matters connected to the Dubai Marina, Palm Jumeirah and international airports in Dubai, Qatar and Oman.

“We do work all over the world in weird and wonderful places,” Justin Wilson concludes, and Hanna adds that “there’s a lot of scope for travel even for very baby juniors.” One we spoke to had indeed just come back from working in Hong Kong on a public inquiry, and while some members focus more on domestic work, “there’s always somebody jetting off to Singapore or Dubai,” according to one source. “As a pupil I’ve never been anywhere... well, I’ve been to Basildon.” PFI work is the biggest trend for the set in the UK: “We’ve got lots of these disputes!” says Wilson. “They often rumble on forever.” David Streatfeild-James QC and Andrew Fenn secured one recent win in a £100 million dispute arising out of payment provisions in a 30-year contract for the operation of the M25. The set is also doing work in the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster: “We’ve got three people on the inquiry and we’ve had multiple trials over cladding issues and fire safety.”

Sources with an interest in commercial and international work found that construction offered the perfect blend of the two. This specialist set was established about 60 years ago and has top construction rankings from Chambers Global and Chambers UK Bar; the latter also bestows top rankings for the set’s international arbitration and professional negligence work in the construction space. “When I joined 25 years ago people told me I was joining a load of ‘brickies,’” Wilson quips. These so-called ‘brickies’ are also a dab hand at energy, natural resources and IT work.
The Application Process

Atkin is used to taking instructions from magic and silver circle firms and hands out a tasty £72,500 pupillage award. The pupillage committee sifts through dozens of CVs to find those worthy of such a prize. “It’s good to see well-rounded applications as well as academic excellence,” says Hanna. “One candidate last year was an internationally top-ranked musician.”

About 25 applicants attend a 15-minute interview with a panel of three. Candidates are asked to present short submissions on a topical issue – should the government allow Carillion to go into administration? Should university students be able to ban controversial speakers from their campuses? You get the picture. Those who impress are invited back for a longer interview with a larger panel of six or seven “firing questions at you.” A week beforehand, candidates get a set of papers and are asked to prepare a skeleton argument. They make an oral submission on the papers, after which they face more questions. That lasts roughly 30 minutes.

“I’d be slightly shocked if someone said they had a burning passion for construction in an interview!”

A pupil told us that not having a legal background wasn’t a disadvantage: “The process is about making arguments out of rational thought rather than tricky legal points.” But what about understanding the construction industry? “I’d be slightly shocked if someone said they had a burning passion for construction in an interview! The committee wants to get glimpses of your potential.” At the very least, hopefuls should show “an interest in the industry and want to learn more.”

“In our trade you meet a real range of people,” says Rónán Hanna. “Not only culturally and ethnically but from CFOs of oil majors through to a couple of young lads digging a hole in the ground.” Hanna emphasises the importance of being able to tweak your approach to fit: “The grand barrister in a suit might not get the best out of the witness.” You might not think of the construction industry as a sentimental one, but working on projects that have gone wrong “means dealing with people who are very emotionally engaged. If it’s proven that a construction or project manager did a bad job then they will get sacked and their name will be tarred.” Clients can even face removal from a country in especially high-stakes cases. “On many occasions I’ll say, ‘You’d better start telling me the story,’ and they say, ‘You’d better get a bottle of vodka out!’”

Sources described these assignments as the “basic building blocks of a barrister’s practice” – opinions, advices, applications, skeleton arguments and more. “I’ve done lots of pleadings,” a pupil described. “I’ve also done a bit of arbitration adjudication.” On one assignment a pupil worked on a statement of claim regarding whether it was valid for the owner of a power station to terminate the contracts of people working there. Supervisors then “give you their version so you can compare good ways of doing X, Y and Z.” Supervisors compile a report assessing pupils’ work which later feeds into the tenancy decision.

“Any time I’ve got a question I can just blurt it out.”

Towards the end of each seat, pupils undergo assessed advocacy exercises before a judge, the pupillage committee and whichever members would like to attend… no pressure then! “It’s the closest experience I’ve had during pupillage to actual practice,” a baby junior said. “The final one is the one that counts – that is the time you take your feedback on board and shine.” Before that moment in the spotlight, pupils get a number of pieces of assessed work from members of chambers to do in about five weeks. This is followed by a test paper set by the pupillage committee – pupils have one week to work on that. This whole period is rounded off with the final advocacy test. In 2019 both pupils gained tenancy at Atkin.

With fewer than 50 members this is “one of the smallest commercial sets.” Many of the clerks and barristers have been at Atkin for decades, as Justin Wilson makes clear: “Between the four most senior clerks, we’ve been here for over 100 years. Many of the silks were pupils when I started so they’ve all grown up together and the junior members are doing the same now.” Chambers is based at Gray’s Inn with rooms overlooking the leafy park; junior sources felt “a sense of friendliness emanating through these walls. Any time I’ve got a question I can just blurt it out.” Friday drinks “tend to be well attended. There’s also afternoon tea every day at, oh – ‘right about now, actually.’” Pass the sugar?
Atkin Chambers

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Chambers profile
Atkin Chambers is a leading set of commercial barristers with an international reputation for providing advocacy and advice on cases concerning construction, engineering, and infrastructure project development and disputes. Disputes are extremely varied and include transport, oil and gas, and renewable energy, IT and telecommunications, and social infrastructure projects. Wider commercial and professional negligence work is frequently related to such disputes.

Type of work undertaken
Atkin Chambers is a leader in the field of construction law. Its barristers are regularly instructed to advise on, and act as advocates in relation to, some of the largest and most complex disputes domestically and internationally. Examples include The Shard, The Olympic Stadium, the upgrade of London Underground, Heathrow T5, the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, The Panama Canal, airports across the Middle and Far East, flagship road and rail infrastructure, and oil and gas projects in the Middle East, Africa and Asia-Pacific. In 2019 Chambers was awarded The Legal 500 set of the year for both construction and energy, and international arbitration, and was named Construction Set of the Year at the Chambers and Partners UK Bar Awards. In 2020 Atkin Chambers was, for the second time, honoured with the Queen’s Award for Enterprise for International Trade, the UK’s highest recognition for international business success.

Pupil profile
Chambers is committed to recruiting pupils and tenants who will participate in its continued success in international and domestic practice. Chambers looks for pupils who are well-motivated and have an interest in practising in the areas of law in which Chambers specialises. Applicants for pupillage should have a first-class degree or a good upper second-class degree. Postgraduate qualifications are viewed favourably but are not essential. Applications from non-law graduates are welcomed. Pre-existing knowledge of construction law is not required, although candidates should have a strong grounding in contract and tort law.

Mini-pupillage
Although a mini-pupillage is not a pre-requisite to applying for a pupillage, prospective pupils are encouraged to apply in order to gain some knowledge of the areas of law in which Atkin Chambers specialises. Please see website for details of how and when to apply.

Pupillage
Atkin Chambers takes recruitment to pupillage and tenancy extremely seriously. The pupillage year is structured to provide all of the Bar Council’s minimum training requirements and the additional training Chambers considers necessary for successful entry into the high-quality commercial work of its practice. Atkin Chambers provides its own advocacy training and assessment in addition to that provided by the Inns of Court. Applications for the year starting in September 2022 open on Monday 4 January 2021 and close at 11am on Monday 8 February 2021. Atkin Chambers is not part of the Pupillage Gateway — please apply direct. Application requirements include a CV, a covering letter of no more than two pages in length and two references — please see Atkin Chambers’ website for details.

Funding
Chambers offers two 12-month pupillages. The pupillage award is £72,500. Up to £25,000 of this award may be drawn down in advance to assist pupils during their BPTC.
2 Bedford Row

The facts
Location: Bedford Row, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 18/56
Applications: c. 200
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 4
Seats: 2x6 months
Pupillage award: £15,000 + £15,000 guaranteed earnings
Mini-pupillages pa: 80-100 unassessed
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

A top criminal law set that puts pupils through their paces.

The Chambers
It’s no secret that the Criminal Bar was under great pressure even before the Covid-19 crisis; criminal barristers voted collectively to stage a walkout in July 2019, demanding reform. “Given all the changes, I wanted to be at a set with the best reputation in the country for criminal work,” pupil interviewees reasoned. Their faith in 2 Bedford Row is well founded: this set has long been top-ranked by Chambers UK Bar for its criminal practice as well as health and safety work, and it picks up further rankings for financial crime, professional discipline and sports know-how.

2BR’s members also have expertise in niche areas including military, cybersecurity and environmental law, but crime remains the core of its offering and makes up the bulk of its workload. “For me it’s the most interesting area of law,” a pupil declared. “You might be working with the same legal points, but you’ll never have the same day twice.” Another explained their initial attraction to 2 Bedford Row: “I was struck by the fact that a junior tenant had spent time during their third six in the Privy Council on a death penalty appeal. The idea you could be doing that kind of work so early on was very exciting to me.”

“The Chambers
Moving into their second six, pupils can expect to be engaging “with the full range of work you’d find in the Magistrates’ Courts. That includes everything from drinking and possession of drugs charges to domestic abuse cases.” Pupils can expect to be out and about a lot during this time, typically juggling multiple trials a week. “My first

acquittal for a defendant accused of masterminding a plot to smuggle half a tonne of cocaine from Colomba on a private jet. At the junior end, Kevin Toomey recently defended a woman accused of murdering her uncle; she in turn alleged that he’d subjected her to years of sexual abuse. In the financial crime space, 2BR’s clients include corporate entities as well as oligarchs, fund managers and prominent business owners. Simon Baker represented entrepreneur Dominic Chappell following his prosecution for various counts of tax fraud arising out of his takeover of BHS from Sir Philip Green.
time I was in the court was fine: I thankfully only had to say five words,” a now baby junior said. “At this point, I’m rarely nervous about going to the Magistrates’ Court, and only sometimes nervous about the Crown Court – it depends on the nature of the case.”

“Jury advocacy is a very different beast to anything else.”

The idea of getting on your feet so quickly (and often) may be daunting, but pupils assured us 2 Bedford Row runs “a great training programme. Every Tuesday there’s a session led by a member of chambers that will focus on a different area of advocacy.” One junior tenant explained that “jury advocacy is a very different beast to anything else. It’s a lot more performative and often less legalistic.” Once they’ve gained tenancy, Compton tells us the set expects newbies to “fairly rapidly be doing more Crown Court than Magistrates’ Court work. That should come within their first six months.” He also tells us: “There are various secondment options that junior members are encouraged to consider, including placements with regulators, banks and the CPS.”

Pupils get a feedback form for every piece of work they do. These are collated in the run-up to the tenancy decision; there’s also a mock trial exercise for pupils which the whole set is invited to watch. “It’s a pretty gruelling experience,” interviewees conceded. “Two pupils will act as the prosecution and two will act as the defence, while other members play witnesses and a senior member will take the role of the judge.” To make things fair, all pupils are marked to standard criteria.

“All this makes for a tough pupillage, but a thick skin is a key quality for anyone to thrive at the Criminal Bar. We asked Allan Compton how the practice differs from commercial work: “The chaotic nature of practising in the Criminal Bar means that you inevitably need a slightly different character to survive.”

All this makes for a tough pupillage, but a thick skin is a key quality for anyone to thrive at the Criminal Bar. We asked Allan Compton how the practice differs from commercial work: “The chaotic nature of practising in the Criminal Bar means that you inevitably need a slightly different character to survive. For example, you have to be comfortable not being in control of the whole process.” Does that have any significant effect on the set’s culture? “I think there is very much the sense that we are all in this together,” Compton reasons. “We recognise the need to step in and help colleagues out where necessary, even at very short notice – it’s very much a culture of rolling with the punches.”

Pupils also need to roll with the long hours that come with criminal law – 12-hour days or longer are not uncommon. Compton assures us that “the days of exhausted pupils working 48 hours for supervisors are gone – we’ve really clamped down on that.” What’s more, members do still find the time to let their hair down. A pupil entertained us with their story: “When I first got my offer, William Clegg QC – a giant of the Criminal Bar and a former head of chambers – threw a big garden party for myself and the other pupils with a BBQ and some very nice rosé.” The source felt “you get the impression that though everyone is an individual, there’s a real sense of community here.”

The Application Process

2 Bedford Row has returned to the Pupillage Gateway in 2020 with “completely revamped marking criteria,” head of pupillage Allan Compton tells us. “We are trying to consider factors that have been given less weight in the past, including candidates’ backgrounds, the challenges they have faced, and any adversities they may have had to overcome.” Providing an example, he says chambers would “consider a candidate with less impressive A-level results that grew up in a single-parent household.”

“…designed to test an individual’s ability to marshal an argument at speed.”

Around 70 candidates complete a first-round interview. They’re required to give a short presentation on a topical issue – they learn the subject just 30 minutes before – as well as to wrestle with an ethical question. The presentation is only a minute long and is “designed to test an individual’s ability to marshal an argument at speed,” Compton explains. “In 2020 candidates were asked to justify the extension of cameras in court for the whole trial process,” while a current pupil who’d shone in their interview had to argue “whether male and female circumcision should be treated as equivalent.”

Applicants who score higher than 70% in the set’s new marking criteria return for a second interview. This revolves around a legal question, “typically something like a bailiff application. You’re interviewed by a five to six-member panel, acting as they would in the Court of Appeal.” Candidates should also be prepared to answer more general questions about their life experiences during both rounds, providing “evidence of their commitment to the Criminal Bar,” which is especially important to 2BR as “attrition rates at the junior end of criminal law are so high,” Compton reminds us.

Keeping it 100: Just as in the year before, 2BR granted tenancy to all four of its pupils in 2020.
2 Bedford Row  (William Clegg QC)

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Chambers profile
Widely regarded as one of the leading crime chambers in the country, 2 Bedford Row is ranked as a leading set in Chambers and Partners in 2018. Legal 500 ranked Chambers as a top-tier set in 2017.

Type of work undertaken
Chambers both prosecutes and defends and is committed to all aspects of criminal and regulatory. Its members have extensive expertise in areas including crime, fraud, regulatory work (for GMC, GDC and the NMC), health and safety, inquests and public inquiries (including the Hillsborough football stadium disaster and the Grenfell Tower fire).

Pupil profile
Chambers recruits candidates from all backgrounds who display the highest intellectual ability, excellent advocacy skills, sound judgement and a real commitment to criminal law and its related fields. Candidates encourages applications from all candidates including those from non-traditional backgrounds, mature students and BAME candidates.

Pupillage
Chambers offers up to four 12-month pupillages each year but will require a 3rd six to be successfully completed before inviting applications for tenancy. Each pupil will have a different pupil supervisor in each of the three six-month periods. This ensures that pupils are provided with a thorough grounding in all aspects of chambers’ practice. Chambers also provides structured advocacy training throughout the pupillage year and will pay for pupils; text books, all appropriate courses including attendance to the ‘Forensic Accountancy’ courses.

Mini-pupillages
We offer mini-pupillages of one week duration but are flexible as to when you can conduct your mini-pupillage. We encourage applications from students who are in their second or third year at University; postgraduates; and to those who are considering applying to us for pupillage in the next Pupillage Gateway cycle.

Assessment for mini-pupillage will be based upon three criteria:
• Commitment/dedication to the criminal bar
• Insight into the areas of practice within Chambers
• Advocacy

Applications should be sent to Rhys Rosser. The application should contain a Curriculum Vitae and a covering letter – both documents should each be no longer than one page maximum in length.

Places are usually given between four and six months after an application is received should it be successful.

Due to the confidential nature of our work and restrictions at some courts, we are unable to offer mini-pupillages to anyone under the age of 18.

Funding
Pupils will receive a minimum of £30,000 over the course of their 12 months in Chambers. This is made up of a grant of £15,000, payable during the first six and guaranteed earnings of £15,000 during the remainder of the pupillage. In recent years pupils have billed far in excess of the minimum £30,000 guaranteed by Chambers.
Blackstone Chambers

The facts
Location: Middle Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 55/58 (32 women)
Applications: 350
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 4
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £70,000 (can advance up to £20,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: varies
Mini-pupillage deadline: same as Pupillage Gateway

This prestigious chambers “don’t do boring” – pupils get stuck into a mix of commercial and public work with barristers at the top of their game.

The Chambers
A Blackstone’s throw away from Temple Station, currently quite hidden by scaffolding and building works, sits one of the Bar’s heaviest hitters: Blackstone Chambers. In stark contrast to the construction outside, the set’s plush interior – a five-star hotel manager would approve, we’ll put it that way – serves as a reminder of its status. So what’s going on outside? “That’s a consequence of increasing in size year on year,” senior clerk Gary Oliver explains. “We’ve just taken over the entirety of Garden Court. It’s an 18-month to two-year plan – when the building project is finished, we move out of here temporarily and then we put in two new lifts and a new top floor.” Expansion bodes particularly well for prospective pupils: “We take four each year and if they meet the standard required they’re all taken on as tenants. Growth is guaranteed for the next ten to 20 years.”

That’s a lot to process, but one constant at Blackstone is its stellar reputation across a range of practice areas. This set is highly regarded for its commercial, public, employment, competition and sports law expertise; it boasts top-tier rankings in Chambers UK Bar for these areas plus civil liberties and human rights, financial services, civil fraud, media & entertainment, and telecommunications. In total, Blackstone garners rankings in 18 different areas – more than any other chambers. Many of our sources were attracted to the “great mix of work” and found upon joining that “we do all do some of everything in that range!” Gary Oliver emphasises that “in your first five years of practice here as a junior you could do an equal split of our five main practice areas.”

Newer arrivals also declared that “Blackstone does all the best Supreme Court cases.” The chambers certainly has more ‘Stars of the Bar’ than you could shake a barrister’s wig at, and sources were star-struck seeing “all of these crazy geniuses doing this amazing work!” Household-name silks like Lord Pannick and Dinah Rose are among the members handling top cases.

“…all of these crazy geniuses doing this amazing work!”

On the public side, Sir James Eadie QC and others recently acted for the Secretaries of State for the Home Department and Justice in the Supreme Court over challenges to the compatibility of criminal record disclosures with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Michael Fordham QC was in the Supreme Court representing the Welsh government over the autonomy of devolved administrations to decide on post-Brexit law. As for commercial work, members acted for UTB, one of the half-owners of Sheffield United FC, in a dispute with the other half-owner SUL over control of the club. Also in sports, Adam Lewis QC acted for Chris Froome after UCI and WADA delayed clearing him following an abnormal result.

The Pupillage Experience
Pupils sit with four supervisors, each for three months apiece. The idea is that they’ll go through four different areas: “In an ideal world you’d sit with one member that does mostly commercial work, one that broadly does public work, one that does employment, then a fourth seat.” The
One
Sources
The first-...to the highest level early on,” junior tenant recalled:

“...sign to make sure pupils know what they’re doing.”
Pupils also tagged along to conferences and court appear-
ances with their supervisor. Sources noted that the vast major-
ity of their work was on live matters:

“The only papers my supervisor asked me to work on were those they were actually dealing with,” one said. Exceptions to the ‘all live’ rule come in the form of written and advocacy as-
sessments, which also serve “as a chance for other members of chambers to see your work.”

“The quintessential Blackstone barrister is an advocate.”

Blackstone poses five written tests—usually pleadings or advice—and seven advocacy sessions. All pupils do the same exercises, which are marked by two members of chambers. Pupillage committee member Jane Mulcahy QC says: “The initial advocacy trainings are not marked—they’re just for practice. Towards the end we start assessing pupils based on them, and the last advocacy session is designed to make sure pupils know what they’re doing.” One junior tenant recalled: “The final assessment was the one where I presented an application.” Blackstone pupils came in thinking “this is the set where I could get the most advocacy experience at the highest level early on,” and Mulcahy stresses that “the quintessential Blackstone barrister is an advocate.” Pupils don’t have a standing second six but felt they’d got their advocacy fill through their assessments: “There are a lot, so you’re not short of practice. If you get

taken on there is a wealth of opportunities to get on your feet immediately.”

The final tenancy decision is made based on these assessments, alongside four reports written by each of the pupils’ supervisors. “All your work is assessed in the sense that it’s all contributing to your supervisor’s impression of you.” According to Mulcahy and junior tenants, slightly more weighting is placed on “what your supervisors think of you and the reports they write.” The tenancy committee produce a final report that summarises all the materials, then the tenancy decisions are made by an all-chambers vote. All four pupils stayed on as tenants in 2020.

The Application Process

Blackstone recruits through the Pupillage Gateway but also has its own independent application process for mini-pupillages—the set requires that all potential pupils do an assessed mini. Applicants are marked against various criteria including “academic achievement, motivation for coming to Blackstone, and other things you’ve done which show you’re interested in being an advocate.” The first-stage interview involves “a sort-of debate. All topics have a legal spin but don’t require knowledge of the law—mine was ‘Is Twitter good for freedom of expression?’”

Successful candidates then progress to a three to five-
day mini-pupillage with an assessment at the end. Up next there’s “a big whittling-down and ten to 20 people come in for the final-round interview,” which sources said involved “talking more about your experience of the mini-pupillage.” Candidates will also give a short presentation on a topic that they’re given in advance. “The challenge with the final-round interview is the number of panellists—it’s usually seven or eight, which can be quite daunting. It’s a test of your skill: maintaining your nerve with that many people in the room asking questions and taking notes shows that you have what it takes.”

“It’s a bunch of super-smart QCs chatting about cases over a beer on the roof.”

Blackstone members are an undeniably intelligent bunch, and to be in with a shot of pupillage (let alone tenancy) “you have to be able to show a high level of ability.” It’s not just about intellect, though; Jane Mulcahy tells us: “The thing we prize most highly is your advocacy experience. Don’t underestimate how useful it is to tell us if you have experience in mootings or debating—you can be the cleverest person in Great Britain but that won’t necessarily make you the best barrister.” It’s probably nonetheless fair to say that the set does indeed house some of the cleverest people in the country: an Oxbridge degree is not a prereq-
usite but the vast majority of members have at least one qualification from Oxford or Cambridge to go with their numerous other impressive achievements.
Members are also clever enough to know when to let their hair down. “If I were to paint a picture of what Blackstone really is, it’s a bunch of super-smart QCs chatting about cases over a beer on the roof,” one source declared. Modern traditions include Thursday drinks held in chambers, fish and chips on a Friday, and famous annual Christmas and summer parties.

**The kids are alright**

To mark International Women’s Day in 2020, Blackstone teamed up with the Guy Fox History Project to publish the ‘History Rocks: Women in Law’ children’s book, celebrating female achievements in the legal system. Invaluable reading for future lawyers of all ages!
Blackstone Chambers (Monica Carss-Frisk QC and Anthony Peto QC)

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Chamber profile
Blackstone Chambers occupies large and modern premises in the Temple and is currently undergoing redevelopment to provide for future growth.

Type of work undertaken
Blackstone Chambers’ formidable strengths lie in its principal areas of practice: commercial, employment and EU, public law, human rights and public international law.

The commercial law work includes financial/business law, international trade, conflicts, sport, media and entertainment, intellectual property and professional negligence. Public law incorporates judicial review, acting both for and against central and local government agencies and other regulatory authorities. It also covers all areas affected by the impact of human rights and other aspects of administrative law. All aspects of employment law, including discrimination, are covered by Chambers’ extensive employment law practice, and Chambers’ EU work permeates practices across the board. Chambers recognises the increasingly important role which mediation has to play in dispute resolution. Seven members are CEDR accredited mediators.

Pupil profile
Chambers looks for articulate and intelligent applicants who are able to work well under pressure and demonstrate high intellectual ability. Successful candidates usually have at least a 2:1 honours degree, although not necessarily in law.

Pupillage
Chambers offers up to four 12-month pupillages to those wishing to practise full-time at the Bar, normally commencing in September each year. Pupillage is normally divided into four sections and every effort is made to ensure that pupils receive a broad training. The environment is a friendly one; pupils attend an induction week introducing them to Chambers’ working environment.

Chambers prefers to recruit new tenants from pupils wherever possible. Chambers subscribes to Pupillage Gateway.

Mini-pupillages
Assessed mini-pupillages are an essential part of the pupillage recruitment process and no pupillage will be offered at Blackstone Chambers unless the applicant has undertaken an assessed mini-pupillage. Applications for mini-pupillage are accepted from 1st September 2020. We strongly recommend that applications be made early in our mini-pupillage application window. Applications should be made in the year before pupillage commences. We presently aim to have mini-pupils on site in Chambers this year, but this is very COVID-19 dependent. We successfully conducted about half our mini-pupillages remotely in the previous application round and we plan to conduct them remotely again if the circumstances change.

Funding
Awards of £70,000 per annum are available. A partial draw-down of up to £20,000 is available in the BPTC year. Since Chambers insists on an assessed mini-pupillage as part of the overall pupillage recruitment process, financial assistance is offered either in respect of out of pocket travelling or accommodation expenses incurred in attending the mini-pupillage, up to a maximum of £250 per pupil.
Brick Court Chambers

The facts
Location: Essex Street, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 43/48 (33 women)
Applications: 174
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 5
Seats: 3x4 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance up to £25,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: c. 50
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

For a balanced and rigorous pupillage full of commercial, public and EU work, follow this yellow Brick road...

The Chambers
The best things come in threes: The Lord of the Rings, French hens, Destiny’s Child, etc... Brick Court’s trio of core practice areas are no exception: the set’s commercial, public and competition/EU work all pick up excellent rankings in Chambers UK Bar. “Our three strands are sexy areas of law,” says senior clerk Paul Dennison. “They allow pupils to get a unique kind of breadth.” Pupils were excited to work at the “top level across these areas,” and also mentioned the highlight of “getting to be part of those cases that fall on the boundaries between the practice areas.” So, just what have Brick Court’s barristers been up to of late?

On the commercial side, Neil Calver QC worked on the $1.5 billion dispute between three Ukrainian oligarchs over the sale of the steel plant Donbass, while over on the public front Maya Lester QC represented Cypriot company Lamesa Investments in a $30 million matter that examined the status of US secondary sanctions in English law contracts and penalty measures applied to Russia. When it comes to EU law, top-ranked QC Marie Demetriou has been representing a Romanian individual who is trying to enforce a multimillion-pound ICSID arbitration award against the Romanian government, which has been opposed by the European Commission as the payment would (in the view of the Commission) be classed as unlawful state aid.

“We attract clients and solicitors who are involved in top-level litigation,” Dennison adds. “That’s largely down to our historic reputation and brand for this sort of work – we’ve got a number of big-hitting silks who pull in work through the door.” At the time of our calls, a lot of the work coming through to Brick Court was Covid-19 and Brexit related. “We’re in the eye of the storm,” Dennison explains. “We’ve had lots of trade deals coming through because of Brexit, and Covid has presented us with business insurance litigation and breach of warranty cases.” Overall, Brick Court “thrives under pressure because we’re able to adapt quickly and navigate cases through our types of work.”

When discussing the set’s academic reputation, one pupil joked that the external perception is that “we’re all brains on sticks who come in, shut the door and then don’t talk to anyone and go home and watch Wagner or something. I honestly don’t know why it has that rep!” Dennison acknowledges that “chambers has a reputation, but it’s a massively friendly place. The support network in place for pupils is first class.” Our pupil interviewees agreed and told us that “there’s a culture of knocking on doors to chat, no matter how senior.” We heard of Christmas parties, Friday drinks and (socially distanced) events in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. “Shortly after lockdown the junior barristers contacted pupils and organised a Zoom drinks event. They wanted to make sure that we didn’t feel isolated, and that’s emblematic of our generally very welcoming culture,” one source recalled. Pupils also told us that Brick Court “instills a sense that you can do this job in sensible hours most of the time. We work 9am to 6pm pretty religiously.”

“...we’ve got a number of big-hitting silks who draw in work through the door.”
Chambers Reports: Brick Court Chambers

The Pupillage Experience

Pupils sit with three supervisors and usually sample the “classic Brick Court mix” of the three main practice areas. With commercial supervisors, interviewees had worked on expansive and complex “cases going on with parties all over the world.” We specifically heard of work coming in from Africa and the Middle East on disputes in sectors such as banking and energy. Here pupils drafted opinions, orders and skeleton arguments, but also conducted research and attended meetings with solicitors. Stephen Midwinter QC represented the British Virgin Islands-based fund Fairfield Sentry during a $6 billion matter tied to the fallout from the Madoff Ponzi scheme and the application of a section from a BVI insolvency act in a foreign court.

On competition/EU work, pupils contributed to a lot of pharmaceutical, telecoms, transport and cartel matters. Helen Davies QC recently represented energy company Prysmian against the National Grid and Scottish Power regarding a follow-on damages claim resulting from a power cables cartel decision made by the European Commission. Here pupils worked on tasks similar to those mentioned above, but a real highlight for one was “attending case management conferences, where you could see the real top barristers in their field in action.” Overall, pupils liked this work as it gave them a “whistle-stop tour of how a Chancery Division trial works and the opportunity get involved in all the stages.” Again, “pure public work” gave pupils access to cases operating “at the highest level,” including a lot of Supreme Court work. Barrister Robert McCorquodale has recently been working on a case that stemmed from the removal of the people of the Chagos Islands from their islands in the Indian Ocean; McCorquodale made an argument before the Supreme Court on the admissibility of a Wikileaks-obtained diplomatic document in court. Pupils typically don’t do any of their own work until after the tenancy decision, when they do “little County Court things. But it wasn’t as scary as I imagined – I felt really prepared.”

The assessments are “very well organised. You always know what’s on the horizon and what the next task is.” Pupils undertake seven advocacy exercises, but the first two are unassessed as “we just want to get them comfortable with the process,” says outgoing chair of the pupillage committee Michael Bools QC. “You don’t know what’s hit you,” a pupil reminisced. “It’s not like mooting at all. But it is realistic – it’s the kind of grilling you’d get from a High Court judge.” There are six written pieces of assessed work, which cover each core area of Brick Court’s practice. Each one is assigned on a Monday morning at 9am and pupils are required to submit the work by 5pm Friday. “It keeps it to the week, and you don’t do work for supervisors – it’s protected time and the idea is that you’re focusing entirely on that piece of work.”

The tenancy committee goes on to review the reports from the advocacy and written exercises, as well as the work pupils have conducted for other members of chambers. Pupils liked that “there’s a big emphasis on it being an objective decision.” After the tenancy decision is made, a celebratory champagne party is held on the roof. In 2020, Brick Court kept on two of its three pupils. Once pupils become juniors, they can “keep a broad practice. You have a meeting with the clerks about your future practice. I wanted to do all three areas and they said ‘absolutely!’”

The Application Process

Initial applications through the Pupillage Gateway are anonymised “to cut out any sort of unconscious bias,” Bools tells us. These are given to the pupillage committee and some additional reviewers, who Bools says are “looking for evidence of outstanding intellectual ability – and not necessarily in law.”

Each application is marked ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to indicate whether a candidate should be invited along to an interview for a mini-pupillage at Brick Court. “If there’s disagreement, it’s put to the chair of the pupillage committee to decide,” Bools adds.

Out of over 300 applicants in 2019, around 125 were offered an interview. These initial 15-minute interviews are conducted by two members of the pupillage committee. Bools tells us the interview questions are “designed specifically not to require any legal knowledge and test analytical ability and reasoning. We’re looking for how they construct an argument, how they think on their feet and how they defend a position.” After this, interviewers score candidates against a set of criteria that include analytical ability and keeping calm under pressure. The results determine who gets offered a mini-pupillage – in 2019, 67 people were offered minis.

“We’re looking for how they construct an argument, how they think on their feet…”

Mini-pupillage is also scored against standardised criteria, and assessed work is blind-marked. After standardisation, the scores are added to the “master spread-
sheet,” which Bools tells us “incorporates everything from the application to the mini-pupillage work – we then have an A3 spreadsheet that ranks all those who did the mini-pupillage in order.” The spreadsheet decides the 15-or-so who will get a final interview. The final interview is split into two parts. The first deals with a case report that applicants are given in advance for which they prepare a two-page skeleton argument to present for 15 minutes in front of the panel. Bools tells us interviewers then “probe a bit to assess the candidate’s ability to reason and think logically.” Then there’s part two: the unseen question, which interviewers pose and then “test the candidate’s position and whether they can maintain an argument on their feet.” After more standardised scoring, the panel comes to a collective score and makes pupillage offers to around five people a year.

Roka and (maki) roll

Successful applicants are taken to fancy Japanese restaurant Roka for lunch, where they can network with Brick Court barristers who are working on matters they may be interested in.
Brick Court Chambers  (Mark Howard QC and Helen Davies QC)

7-8 Essex Street, London WC2R 3LD
Tel: 020 7379 3550   Fax: 020 7379 3558
Email: lyana.peniston@brickcourt.co.uk
Website: www.brickcourt.co.uk

Chambers profile
Brick Court Chambers has long been a leading commercial set of Chambers. We also have particular expertise in EU/competition law and in the fields of public law and human rights law. In all our practice areas, members of Chambers are regularly involved in the leading cases of the day.

Brick Court is fully committed to equality of opportunity and considers it important that family and professional life should be compatible. We are particularly proud of the fact that all female tenants with children have continued in practice at Brick Court.

Pupil profile
Candidates are generally expected to have a first or good upper second class degree and to demonstrate outstanding intellectual ability, not necessarily in law.

Pupillage
We regard it as important to provide a broad training to our pupils. Some will wish to develop a commercial practice whilst others will prefer to specialise in EU or competition, or in public law and human rights. An increasing number of our tenants have practices which traverse more than one of these fields. We also take considerable care in relation to the training we provide to our pupils. For example, advocacy exercises under the supervision of senior members of Chambers are an integral part of pupillage at Brick Court. Further information about pupillage can be found on our website.

Mini-pupillages
Mini-pupillages are an important part of our pupillage selection procedures. We do not expect to select pupils merely on interview, nor do we expect you to make your choice on such a limited basis. Please apply once you are eligible to do so and before applying for pupillage. The application form, together with a note of any deadlines for applications, can be found on the pupillage page of our website.

Funding
All 12-month pupillages carry an award of at least £65,000 which is divided into two parts: £45,000 for the first six (non-practising) with the remaining £20,000 being paid during the second six (practising). Up to £25,000 of the first six award may be drawn down during the year prior to pupillage (subject to Chambers’ approval). Chambers pays for all compulsory courses during pupillage, and for all pupils to accompany their pupil supervisor to a hearing before the European Courts if the opportunity arises.
Cloisters Chambers

The facts
Location: Middle Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 15/36 (25 women)
Applications: 215
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £54,000 (can advance £8,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: up to 10
Mini-pupillage deadlines: currently suspended due to covid-19

Headline-hitting employment and personal injury cases keep pupils happy at a set standing up for the little guy.

The Chambers
The word ‘law’ invokes notions of justice and rightness, of truth and accuracy, or simply of a fair and equitable society for anyone who happens to be listening – hopefully anyway. Perhaps that’s just the case for the Atticus Finch es among us. But according to some members of Cloisters Chambers, their day-to-day is indeed determined by such notions: “Its ethos is very much about using law to amount in positive and effective social change,” noted one source, with another finding that “Cloisters has always strived to be a force for good, to coin a horrible cliché.” As one example, a minimum of five days’ pro bono work is required from all tenants at Cloisters: “No one I know has done less than that,” sources said.

“Its ethos is very much about using law to amount in positive and effective social change.”

With over 30 years at Cloisters under his belt, head clerk Glenn Hudson says: “It’s ultimately a relationship-driven business, and my goal is to make it like an extended family where we all look out for each other.” As lovely as that is, there’s more to Cloisters than a supportive atmosphere. Namely, the “stellar” and “premier league” quality of work they do. Its employment practice has a top-notch ranking from Chambers UK Bar, and the set also gets strong commendations for personal injury. Several members are also highly ranked in clinical negligence.

Hudson tells us that employment work makes up about 60% of chambers’ workload, with the rest split between clinical negligence, personal injury, sports, “and a little bit of human rights.” Our sources were appreciative of the “enormous range” of work on offer and the names that come with it – whether that means opposing some of “the largest companies in the UK” (such as Tesco and Merlin Attractions), or acting for “vulnerable pro bono individuals who can’t afford to represent themselves.”

Hudson tells us: “We do some absolutely cutting-edge work in the employment field, along with clinical negligence and PI.” And that employment work is regularly in the headlines. Jacques Algazy QC has led many high-profile cases, including dismissals such as that of theatre critic Mark Shenton by the Sunday Express after pictures of him appeared on a pornography website. Algazy also handled Angela Gibbins’ dismissal from the British Council after she made comments about Prince George on Facebook. On another notable case, Schona Jolly QC acted for Deliveroo riders arguing that they were entitled to employment rights and payments such as minimum wage and holiday pay. In another high-profile example, Jason Galbraith-Marten QC successfully defended a decision holding that Uber drivers are workers for the purposes of statutory rights.

On the personal injury side, William Latimer Sayer QC represented two victims of the highly publicised rollercoaster crash at Alton Towers, when the Smiler ride collided with a test car. Leah Washington and Vicky Balch had to undergo above-knee amputations following injuries they sustained from sitting in the front row. Latimer-Sayer also represented PC Kristopher Aves in a claim
against the Motor Insurers Bureau after he was left paralysed from injuries sustained in the Westminster Bridge attack. Daniel Lawson secured a £1.5 million settlement for a roofer who suffered a serious back injury after falling through a skylight. In a clinical negligence case, Sarah Fraser Butlin settled claims of between £20,000 and £200,000 for negligent treatment by a urogynaecologist.

The Pupillage Experience
Four three-month seats allow pupils a chance to spend time in both the employment and personal injury/clinical negligence spheres. “Your supervisors will set you work,” sources explained, “and they’ll give you feedback on it with areas for improvement,” especially in the first six. Pupils also made it clear that work can be sourced from other members. And thankfully, “work is never dumped on you. Your supervisor is like your guardian and makes sure you’re not burdened.”

“I was ultimately successful and have been subsequently reinstructed by the client – that’s one of the most rewarding things about my second six.”

The second six sees a change of pace, as pupils are allowed on their feet. But we were assured that there’s “a gradual gearing up” for pupils, with support from supervisors available at every turn. For one pupil, one notable case concerning unpaid invoices gave them the chance to “do the opinion, assess the merits, prepare the case, and go to court to make submissions. I was ultimately successful and have been subsequently reinstructed by the client – that’s one of the most rewarding things about my second six.” Similarly, another pupil assisted in a “very exciting” and high-profile unfair dismissal case arising out of the Trojan Horse scandal, in which there were claims of an organised attempt to introduce an Islamist or Salafist ethos to several schools in Birmingham. Beyond that, legal research, drafting skeleton arguments, drafting particulars and attending conferences were all commonplace tasks for our sources.

Gaining tenancy at Cloisters is “heavily weighted” on three assessments: legal research, advocacy, drafting – all of which are weighted at 20%. Another 30% comes from a final interview, which apparently isn’t too dissimilar to the second-round interview of the application process, where pupils “crunch a legal problem” in front of four or five barristers. The remaining 10% of the tenancy decision is based on feedback from supervisors, clerks and staff members. As tough as the flurry of assessments may sound, sources felt that this structure alleviated a constant sense of scrutiny throughout the pupillage: “You’re not worrying about whether every little mistake you make will be monumental, whether it’s a social faux pas or work not being good enough.” The overall scores are out of 100, with any pupil achieving 80 or above being recommended for tenancy. Those with a score between 70 and 80 can be also recommended by discretion. In 2020 both pupils gained tenancy.

The Application Process
If there were TripAdvisor reviews for application processes, it sounds like Cloisters would do pretty well. “I loved it,” said one extremely enthusiastic source. “It was by far the best application process I did!” Initial applications from Gateway are scored on academic achievements, excellence beyond academia, and a candidate’s general ethos and fit. “All applications are marked blind,” sources told us, “and your university is removed” from the form. Roughly 40 to 50 people make it to a first round of interviews, where a panel of interviewers seek to test candidates’ “ability to analyse rules, think clearly and argue a petition” by way of a “fun and challenging” back and forth. But there’s no need to swot up on the intricacies of the Equality Act just yet. Instead, candidates are faced with a made-up problem. For one source, this concerned pirates: “I was asked about children who sailed to an island and declared themselves to be pirates. On the basis of a fictional piracy statute, they probe you and question you to see your legal agility.”

“There aren’t big egos, nor are there people who love the sound of their own voice.”

The savvy few who make it to the second and final interview face a “much more detailed legal problem,” which usually contains an employment or personal injury element. Questions are sent to candidates a week prior, so hopefuls have plenty of time to squirrel away with research. At the interview, “three members of chambers ask questions to test the depth of your thinking,” before posing a topical question at the end. It could be anything from diversity quotas in the judiciary to the implementation of the sugar tax, but sources said that ultimately the question is an opportunity for applicants to “present a cogent case when pressed – they don’t expect you to have exhaustive knowledge. It’s simply about taking a side, and explaining why.”

Sources felt that the whole process was about “trying to judge people objectively on face value,” which they felt was emblematic of the wider culture pervading the set. “At other sets, people might not go in because of a place’s politics,” says Glenn Hudson. “Here, it’s about making sure...
people want to come to work.” Whether it was the ability “to talk to anyone,” the fact that “people are genuinely friends,” or the regularity of being “at each other’s for dinner and drinks,” our junior sources told us: “There aren’t big egos, nor are there people who love the sound of their own voice.”

Top up your Cloister card

Cloisters is situated at Elm Court, a picturesque courtyard straddling Inner Temple and Middle Temple.
Cloisters

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Chambers profile
Cloisters is a leading set in the fields of employment, equality, personal injury, clinical negligence, regulatory, sports, human rights, and commercial law, with a reputation for delivering exceptional results. It provides responsive, first-class client service combined with technical excellence and commercial perspective to resolve the most complex legal problems for individuals, and organisations of all sizes.

Type of work undertaken
Employment & Equality: Cloisters is a leading employment law set, with unrivalled expertise in discrimination and equality issues. Recent landmark cases include Ashers v Lee (the ‘Gay Cake case’), Gilham v MoJ (judges’ whistleblowing rights), Conway v Secretary of State for Justice (assisted suicide), Uber BV v Adam (worker status for Uber drivers), Padley v Firstgroup plc (wheelchair access on buses), Taiwo and Onu (migrant domestic workers and race discrimination), O’Brien v MoJ (part-time judges pensions), UCU v University of Stirling (collective consultation), Bull v Hall (sexual orientation discrimination), Stott v Thomas Cook (compensation for disabled air passengers) and Howard v Metropolitan Police Service, a widely-reported case involving direct discrimination against a female police officer by a senior officer on the grounds of sex and race.

Personal Injury & Clinical Negligence: Cloisters is consistently a top-ranked clinical negligence and personal injury set in Chambers and Partners. We continue to be at the forefront of high-value litigation involving catastrophic brain and spinal injury. Cloisters barristers appeared in the Supreme Court in Cox v MoJ. Recent clinical negligence High Court trial successes include Pringle v Nestor Prime Care Services (amputation following negligent triage of septicaemia) and Coakley v Dr Rosie (GP failure to suspect bacterial meningitis); leading clinical negligence cases in the Court of Appeal include for example, Iqbal v Whips Cross University Hospitals (lost years’ earnings for children), Cuffon v NHSLA (local authority payments and double recovery). Recent High Court PI trial successes include Farrugia v Burtenshaw (future care PPO), Collins v Serco (vicarious liability, attack on custody officer by detainee), Malvicini v Ealing PCT (disabling psychological injury, accident at work). Seminal Court of Appeal appearances include Connor v Surrey County Council (interplay of public and private law), Stanton v Collinson (seatbelts, contributory negligence), Noble v Owens (fraud/video surveillance). Members of chambers are also consistently instructed in the leading workplace stress cases.

Pupil profile
Chambers welcomes applications from outstanding candidates from all backgrounds and academic disciplines, including people coming to the Bar later in life, and people with disabilities.

Pupillage
Chambers offers two 12-month pupillages for those wishing to practise full-time at the Bar, normally commencing in October each year. Each pupil is supervised by a different supervisor each three months to show the pupil different areas of practice. Second six pupils will be allocated work by clerks subject to availability of work and pupil ability.

Mini-pupillages
Cloisters offers up to ten three day mini-pupillages each year. Five of the ten places are reserved for applicants from less advantaged backgrounds, with a disability, or caring responsibilities. All applicants must have completed at least their first year at university in any subject. The mini-pupillage is not assessed and is not a requirement for applications for pupillage.

Funding
Cloisters offers two funded pupillages each year. Each pupil will receive an award (currently £54,000 per year). Pupils can request an advance during the BPTC year.
Crown Office Chambers

The facts
Location: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 22/78 (32 women)
Applications: undisclosed
Outside Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 3
Seats: 2x6 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance up to £10,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: c. 20
Mini-pupillage deadline: TBC

Hear ye, hear ye – by royal decree, prospective practitioners of insurance, civil and commercial law should look to this chambers.

The Chambers
Senior managing clerk Andy Flanagan rightly describes common law as a “broad church,” and Crown Office welcomes in work from various different practices that fit that bracket. Insurance is the biggest game in this town, and about 70% of chambers' work involves representing insurers; firms like DAC Beachcroft, Kennedys, BLM, Clyde & Co and DWF often come calling for members’ expertise.

Let’s break it down further: personal injury, industrial disease and clinical negligence account for 40% of the set’s overall income. “Out of the 100 barristers we house, around 45 are involved in these on a regular basis,” according to Flanagan. Construction, property damage, commercial, international arbitration and professional indemnity make up another 35% of the pie; the remaining slices include health and safety regulatory and product liability. Flanagan explains that “historically Crown Office has always been a defendant-based set, taking on varied instructions from both insurers and the actual lay clients.” The set’s recently taken on more claimant-side matters and the mixed practice offers plenty of variety for newbs: “One day I’ll be working on cases with senior consultants; the next I’ll be engaged in lower-level projects, dealing with a construction matter for a guy whose cousin is a builder.”

“We go out there four times a year and punch well above our weight.”

Chambers UK Bar awards the set top rankings for personal injury, property damage, and health & safety, with product liability, professional negligence, and international construction arbitration not far behind. Flanagan tells us that he, alongside Roger ter Haar QC and Andrew Rigney QC, lead the way on infrastructure, energy and international arbitration in the Middle East. “We go out there four times a year and punch well above our weight in construction-related international arbitration,” he suggests.

Other interesting cases are closer to home. A Crown Office member acted in a claim brought against British Airways by the family of deceased pilot Richard Westgate – they claim the cause of death was aerotoxic poisoning due to organophosphates in the air supply of the cockpit. Elizabeth Boon was instructed when a defective tumble-dryer started a fire that led to the deaths of two people. In another high-profile matter, David Platt QC represented the orchestra of the Royal Opera House when a viola player alleged they’d suffered ‘acoustic shock’ during rehearsals of a Wagner opera; the case progressed to the Court of Appeal. As for the pure insurance side of things, Ben Quiney QC acted for the brokers in a multimillion-pound dispute with the British Gymnastics Association over aspects of its coverage.

The Pupillage Experience
Throughout two three-month seats in the first six and a single six-month stretch in the second six, pupils can dip their toes into personal injury, clinical negligence, health and safety, commercial, construction and insurance matters. Pupillage committee head Alex Antelme explains that these often overlap – “a classic example is if a large...
Juniors wanted to emphasise that the focus of the first two to three weeks of the pupillage is all taken into consideration during the tenancy decision process. Crown Office takes a holistic view of the process. "We have always thought the whole point of pupillage is not to be an exercise in torture for twelve months. It is primarily a learning process and a unique opportunity to find out what life at the Bar is like." Juniors wanted to emphasise that the Crown Office tenancy decision is "not a popularity contest. They are looking for someone who can approach issues in a logical way rather than being overwhelmed." Put another way, if a pupil is good enough they will be taken on. One pupil achieved tenancy in 2020.

The Application Process

Sat outside the Pupillage Gateway, Crown Office receives 100 to 200 applications every year; only 30 to 40 candidates come in for a first-round interview. "We have our own specific application form which takes a bit of work but is designed to elicit whether applicants have the key characteristics we're looking for." Juniors described the first interview as "initial filtering" with a relaxed feel. Twelve to 20 people come for a more technical second-round interview "which is judged by a larger panel and assessed in more detail with set exercises to complete." Juniors described the application process as a "good opportunity to provide evidence for what you're saying about yourself, giving practical examples rather than just saying, 'I like law.'"

"If you came to our Friday drinks you'd find we're a welcoming bunch."

Interviewees are asked to prepare a piece for 20 minutes and members question them on their solutions. "I recall being asked to prepare advocacy on a piece to do with an aircraft accident, where we were representing the aircraft manufacturer on an allegation that the aircraft failed as a result of a fault on our side," a successful former applicant recalled. "We had evidence to argue that we weren't to blame—the twist was that there was a fault on our side but the other side hadn't picked up on this. We had to figure out how to carefully respond to the allegation without giving away that fact that there was a hole in the case." Sounds complex, but pupils generally found the process to be stimulating and enjoyable.

Alex Antelme reassures us that chambers has a "laid-back culture: if you came to our Friday drinks you'd find we're a welcoming bunch." This is definitely the feel you get as you enter the doors of Crown Office; insiders were full of stories about the "chatty and relaxed culture; every day
I have friendly conversations while making a mug of tea.” Antelme ventures that “we don’t suffer from old-fashioned barrister self-importance, and this is visible in the way we deal with the people who work with us, from the clerks to the cleaners.”

Keep it in the family
Crown Office runs an ‘aunts and uncles’ support system: each pupil is paired with a junior who’s “not involved in decision-making processes. Aunts and uncles are there to address concerns that pupils might not feel comfortable airing with their supervisor.”
Devereux

The facts
Location: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 12/46 (20 women)
Applications: undisclosed
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £60,000 (can advance up to £20,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: undisclosed
Mini-pupillage deadlines: paused due to Covid-19

There’s strength in diversity, as this set with multiple specialisms continues to prove.

The Chambers
“Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, we’re looking at a record year for Devereux in 2020,” chambers director Vince Plant tells us. Given how turbulent this year has been, that’s no mean feat. A secret to this set’s success is “specialism in four areas: tax, employment, personal injury and commercial law,” as outlined by Marika Lemos. “Chambers’ work has remained buoyant during the lockdown period. The current crisis is generating a lot of employment, insurance and PI work; tax is one of life’s certainties and tax work too has not diminished.” According to Chambers UK, Devereux shines brightest in the employment, personal injury, tax and telecommunications fields; it also scores rankings for insurance and clinical negligence.

“In the ten years I’ve been here, the set’s tax practice has really grown,” Plant notes. This required lateral recruitment—“chambers needed more hands on deck very quickly” according to Lemos, who herself joined Devereux alongside a handful of key tax practitioners including Good Law Project founder and director Jolyon Maugham QC. Members were recently instructed by HMRC during the first challenge to the Diverted Profits Tax, linked to allegations that profits made in the UK were diverted to group companies in Switzerland. Individual members of the tax team are on the A, B, and C Attorney General’s panel of junior counsel.

“Stuffiness just isn’t a feature here, the set’s tax practice has really grown,” Plant notes. This required lateral recruitment—“chambers needed more hands on deck very quickly” according to Lemos, who herself joined Devereux alongside a handful of key tax practitioners including Good Law Project founder and director Jolyon Maugham QC. Members were recently instructed by HMRC during the first challenge to the Diverted Profits Tax, linked to allegations that profits made in the UK were diverted to group companies in Switzerland. Individual members of the tax team are on the A, B, and C Attorney General’s panel of junior counsel.

“Stuffiness just isn’t a feature here,” Lemos notes, “equality, diversity and opportunity of access matter.” Plant concurs: “This is a business and that comes with some extreme pressures, but it’s quite a fun place to work.” Pupils also came to a similar conclusion: “It’s collegiate, supportive, open, and friendly,” one said. “Everyone I’ve met has been absolutely lovely.”

The Application Process
Devereux accepts applications through the Pupillage Gateway: a written application precedes two rounds of interviews. Insiders told us: “There’s a real focus on practicality and how you would answer real-world problems, rather than just abstract conversation about law.” Marika Lemos says the interview questions aim to “get people to demonstrate their thought processes, it’s the first chance
to see the candidate’s legal reasoning.” Though the first round typically has a silk on the panel, there’s reportedly a “more rigorous approach in the second,” with four members presiding. Round two is also longer and “more complex,” with a “proper problem to go through. Once you’ve prepared an argument, the panel asks you follow-up questions.”

Devereux hosts an interim drinks event between the two interviews. One interviewee described this as “a great way to make you feel more at home and relaxed,” and another who was unsuccessful after round one the first time they interviewed described this as their primary motivation for applying a second time. “A number of our current tenants have been through the application process more than once,” according to Lemos. “We’re very openminded. When it comes to reapplying, it’s nice to see people’s perseverance and continued desire to join chambers.”

“The key is to demonstrate a real motivation for wanting to join.”

Lemos also tells us: “Everyone on the panel will have read each applicant’s CV, so the interview is about getting a glimpse of the candidate’s personality. That doesn’t mean a constructed reality TV personality of course, the key is to demonstrate a real motivation for wanting to join.” Beyond academics, Lemos says Devereux looks for the practical qualities necessary at the Bar: “We want candidates to demonstrate they understand being a barrister is about building a practice, showing business acumen and understanding you’ll have to be a self-starter.” Beyond that, Lemos highlights the importance of focus: “It’s really key that applicants understand the chambers they’re applying to. For example, people sometimes say that they are applying to do ‘commercial’ work. But they don’t really focus on what that means, and which part of ‘commercial’ work members of chambers practise in. Applicants should ask themselves, which part of ‘commercial law’ really interests them? Do they regard employment and tax as part of that? Are they just interested in insurance work? It doesn’t matter what the answer is, but we do want to see that they have thought about it.”

The Pupillage Experience

Pupillage at Devereux is “really carefully structured and you know where you are at each stage of the process,” sources found. Each pupil does three seats of three months each in the set’s core practice areas: employment, tax and personal injury. “Some real heavies” of the Bar act as pupil supervisors. The tenancy decision comes around the nine-month mark and the final three months of pupillage act “as a transition into practice,” during which pupils can take on their own cases.

In each seat, the pupil tends to follow what their supervisor is up to. “While you’re with the tax team,” for example, “you knuckle down and get involved with the basics of tax law and how disputes work. You don’t find yourself doing much work for others in that period.” During their personal injury and employment seats our sources were more likely to take work from other members. “At one point I did a task for a silk that ended up being used in the Supreme Court,” one shared. Pupils were happy to largely stay in their supervisor’s lane: “It’s quite nice being protected as it means you’ll never get a request from left field.”

“At one point I did a task for a silk that ended up being used in the Supreme Court.”

Our sources were surprised and impressed with their responsibilities in each seat. “I did a skeleton for a case in the Court of Appeal five weeks into pupillage, which I couldn’t ever have imagined doing,” one beamed. The tax seat comes with a “heavy” advisory flavour alongside “lots of appellate work,” but it’s not all poring through documents; a pupil recently went abroad for a trial with their supervisor. Personal injury is mainly claimant-based: “We do some defendant work, but the majority of instructions are claimants dealing with multimillion-pound cases.” Drafting advice, schedules of loss, counter-schedules and “millions of skeletons for preliminary hearings” were common assignments for pupils across the seats. “On my first day I was going into a settlement meeting in a multimillion-pound clinical negligence claim,” an interviewee recalled.

Pupils described the set’s assessment process as “extremely rigorous.” They’re not wrong: pupils complete five assessed written pieces and two oral advocacy assessments over their first nine months. An initial grace period to “find your feet” means only one assessment before Christmas; it’s then roughly “one a month” until the tenancy decision.

“If you’ve done something wrong they’re honest, clear, and not frightening at all.”

Written assessments emulate a pleading or an opinion the pupil might see in practice; they get one day of the working week set aside to complete the assessment. A junior walked us through their experience: “I had to complete an opinion that required interpretation of a joint venture contract for oil and gas exploration; a senior practitioner had worked on the case previously. The feedback I got

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For detail on ranking tiers and ranking locations, visit [www.chambers.com](http://www.chambers.com)
covered the differences between our approaches, which was fascinating.” Oral advocacy assessments also replicate real practice and are conducted in front of chambers members and former judges. “I was more nervous than I’ve ever been in my whole for that first advocacy assessment,” an insider admitted. Pupils receive “comprehensive written feedback” based on objective marking criteria provided in advance. “Everyone’s lovely and if you’ve done something wrong they’re honest, clear, and not frightening at all,” we heard.

Assessment feedback and supervisor reports mean pupils can track their progress across the year. “If you address any issues when they crop up, you’re going to meet the objective markers. Chambers makes it very clear where you stand throughout the process and you’ll be offered help to improve if you need it.” The final tenancy decision is influenced by written and oral assessments, reports from supervisors and other feedback from members; the pupilage committee produces a summary report before a full chambers vote. In 2020, Devereux granted tenancy to both its two pupils.

Same name, very different game:
Chambers is conveniently located opposite The Devereux pub. “I was sat at my desk apparently not looking that busy,” one pupil laughed. “Someone saw me from the pub through my window and called me to invite me over!”
Devereux Chambers

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Firm profile
Devereux is a leading set with more than 50 barristers, including 12 silks, offering a wealth of expertise in commercial litigation, insurance, reinsurance; professional negligence; IT and telecoms; contentious and non-contentious tax; employment and industrial relations; clinical negligence and personal injury. We are a multi-specialist set known for combining legal excellence with a collaborative approach. Our barristers offer clear, robust legal advice and outstanding advocacy while remaining approachable. They are supported by an excellent team of experienced practice managers and business services staff.

Main areas of work
• Commercial Litigation
• Insurance and Reinsurance
• Professional Negligence
• IT & Telecoms
• Tax
• Employment and Industrial Relations
• Clinical Negligence
• Personal Injury

Training opportunities
4x3 months, with seats in Tax, Commercial, Employment, Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence.

University law career fairs 2020
Legal Cheek virtual fair 2020.
Erskine Chambers

The facts
Location: Chancery Lane, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 11/20 (7 women)
Applications: undisclosed
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance up to £20,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: c. 45
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

A petite chambers advising very big businesses, Erskine is top dog of company law.

The Chambers
“Companies,” a source laughed, when we asked what kinds of clients tend to instruct this top commercial set. When we pressed for more detail, they suggested it’s a mix of “enormous corporate entities and private companies that are doing very well.” What those companies need help with is even more varied, and Erskine’s practice subdivide into four large chunks: company law and corporate advisory work; restructuring and insolvency; corporate and commercial litigation; and offshore work.

Members also assist companies that are going through insolvency or trying to avoid it (Erskine barristers were involved in the ‘Waterfall’ judgments surrounding the distribution of £8 billion from the administration of Lehman Brothers’ UK arm), and step in when disputes erupt either between businesses or major players within them. Two members were recently involved in a £100 million clash between members of a private equity firm, and another member acted for British American Tobacco in multi-jurisdictional litigation over responsibility for pollution of rivers in the US.

Asset recovery claims also fall into the litigious bracket, and the fastest-growing substream of work is offshore law including insolvency, fraud and asset recovery. For example, one member was instructed by the lead defendants in $9.2 billion fraud and asset recovery litigation in the Cayman Islands resulting from the 2008 collapse of Saudi conglomerate the Saad Group.

With just over 30 members, Erskine’s much smaller than most commercial sets, and joint senior clerk Mark Swallow (working alongside counterpart Chris Reade) doesn’t expect that to change any time soon. “We’ve instead become much more outgoing to market ourselves,” he tells us. “Clients have wanted to get to know our juniors better so we’ve been involving them in talks and social events.” We asked if Brexit had slowed down business in the company law sector; Swallow confesses “there has been a cloud over things, but we’ve picked up work in other areas and long-term I think we’ll be busier than ever.”
Chambers as a whole convenes at the nine-month mark to discuss tenancy, decided via an all-member vote in which a pupil needs 85% approval to be kept on. Matthew Parfitt stresses that “if there are multiple pupils they aren’t in competition for places, there’s more than enough work to go around.” In 2019 Erskine made tenants of both of its two pupils; unusually, neither of the 2020 prospects secured tenancy.

The Pupillage Experience
Pupils undertake four seats of three months. Newcomers shadow their supervisor closely; after Christmas, pupils are unleashed to work with as many members of chambers as possible. “As you get closer to tenancy your supervisor acts more as a tutor and adviser than someone to get work from,” pupillage committee secretary Matthew Parfitt explains. An insider advised: “It’s advantageous to work for a wide variety of members in order to boost your chances of gaining tenancy.”

To start out with, a pupil’s workflow depends heavily on what their supervisor is doing, though it’s “almost invariably live work.” Shadowing and research are par for the course but pupils also get to draft pleadings, skeleton arguments and opinions. We heard that corporate advisory work “isn’t so different from litigation. It’s extremely technical, as is everything chambers does.” However, the nature of Erskine’s specialism does mean members won’t be in court as often as at some chambers, so pupils get a chance to shadow whoever’s got a case that’s court-bound. Pupils don’t do any advocacy themselves – “that’s made quite clear in advance so I didn’t have a problem with it,” one source said. Another weighed in: “I don’t think it would have been helpful for my practice to have picked up small claims. Not doing that leaves more time for getting to grips with the intricacies of company law.” Interviewees found themselves tackling more complex opinions as tenancy neared.

“We’re looking for someone interested in the really specialist areas of law we cover.”

Interviewees agreed that there’s no one type of person that fits in well at Erskine; cleverness and an interest in company law are the only real common traits among members. “We’re looking for someone interested in the really specialist areas of law we cover but who has a relaxed demeanour and a sense of humour,” one source said. Joint senior clerk Mark Swallow suggests “appreciating the needs of clients” is essential. “Chambers is looking for applicants who balance academic rigour with being personable.”

It certainly helps to be personable when chambers tea rolls around every Friday. A source admitted that it can be intimidating at first but “you quickly get used to it and it’s a great opportunity to get to know people. We talk about all sorts, whether it’s something unusual that’s come up in a case or what we’ve been watching on Netflix. We’re serious when we need to be but relaxed when we can be.” The good vibes extend to a healthy social scene. During the warmer months “you’ll usually find members in the pub on a Friday,” and chambers runs an annual ski trip. “It says a lot about how much we get along that we’re even happy to go on holiday together!” one interviewee laughed. Pupils stick to a

The Application Process
Erskine newly recruits through the Pupillage Gateway. Twelve or so candidates are invited to a first interview with two members; the best five or six then progress to a second round in front of a five-member panel. Both rounds are built around a problem question, followed by a more general discussion. Matthew Parfitt assures us that the problem question is chosen carefully so non-law students won’t be at a disadvantage; Erskine has recruited more non-law than law graduates in recent years.

Matthew Parfitt tells us the committee reviews applicants based “40% on intellect, which is demonstrated by their degree and in interview; 40% on soft skills and whether they’d be able to interact with judges and clients; and 20% on drive and commitment, which pretty much all our applicants score very highly on!” A source who’d smashed the interview advised future prospects to “be prepared to adapt your views, but don’t capitulate when pressed.”

For detail on ranking tiers and ranking locations, visit www.chambers.com

Chambers Reports: Erskine Chambers

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fairly rigid 9am to 6.30pm timetable while they’re learning, though workdays for tenants can be a lot longer.

**Erskout**

New tenants often go on two three-month secondments to a City law firm immediately after joining: Freshfields, Skadden, and Slaughter and May are common destinations.
Erskine Chambers

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Website: www.erskinechambers.com

Chambers profile
Erskine Chambers is widely recognised as the leading specialist company law set. We have particular expertise in litigation and advisory work in the fields of company law, restructuring and insolvency, financial services and commercial dispute resolution. Much of our work is international and members regularly carry out work involving the Channel Islands, Cayman, the British Virgin Islands, Bermuda, Hong Kong, Singapore and the United States.

Type of work undertaken
Erskine specialises in company law disputes and advice on corporate transactions, including: mergers and acquisitions, IPOs, corporate governance, shareholder disputes, joint venture disputes and technical company litigation. The work is often complex, high-profile and market-sensitive. A large proportion of our work is litigation at the intersection of company, commercial and insolvency law, including high-value contractual disputes, and civil fraud and asset recovery. We have a strong reputation for both insolvency litigation and corporate restructuring.

Pupil profile
We consider candidates with both law and non-law degrees. Approximately half of our recent junior tenants did not read law at university. It is not a prerequisite to have studied company or insolvency law, although candidates who are able to demonstrate some interest in Chambers’ core practice areas are preferred.

Pupillage
We offer up to two pupillages each year. We have designed our pupillage to provide both an introduction to Erskine’s specialist areas and some more general training for commercial/chancery work. Pupils generally sit with four pupil supervisors during the course of the year, and pupil supervisors are selected to ensure that pupils have an opportunity to gain experience in all of Chambers’ core practice areas.

Mini-pupillages
We offer both funded and unfunded mini-pupillages. As our work is specialised, we generally offer mini-pupillages only to candidates who are in their final year studying law at university or who are undertaking the GDL. It is not a prerequisite for applying for pupillage to have undertaken a mini-pupillage in Chambers, although we encourage those with an interest in pupillage here to apply for a mini-pupillage.

Funding
Erskine offers up to two 12-month pupillages each year, each carrying an award of £65,000. Up to £20,000 of the award may be drawn in advance for the BPTC or other postgraduate legal study at the discretion of Chambers.
One Essex Court

The facts
Location: Middle Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 45/65 (21 women)
Applications: c. 175
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 5
Seats: 2x3 months + 1x6 month
Pupillage award: £70,000 (can advance up to £23,334 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: undisclosed
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

Commercial connoisseurs at One Essex Court seek those with “a maturity of judgement” and “a nimbleness of intellect” to join their top-class ranks.

The Chambers
One Essex Court sits in the centre of Middle Temple and is regarded as one of London’s top sets for all things commercial. “The great thing about being a commercial set is that we can house many different groups under the commercial litigation umbrella,” senior clerk Darren Burrows highlights. And OEC does just that – the set’s barristers dabble in everything from banking and finance to energy to civil fraud to general commercial disputes, each of which gains a tippy-toppy Band 1 ranking from Chambers UK Bar. Pupils were drawn to “the many massive cases coming into chambers,” one of which saw several barristers defend Tesco against shareholder claims arising from an overstatement of trading profits. Burrows also noted: “We do a good deal of banking and finance-related work – we’re still involved in cases that have their origins back in the financial crisis over a decade ago.” For example, Malcolm Gammie QC recently appeared for HMRC in the successful dismissal of an appeal by the administrators of Lehman Brothers in the Supreme Court; the issue at hand was whether the administrators had to pay £5 billion of statutory interest to HMRC before paying interest to creditors.

“So many silks with high-calibre practices.”

This is a set where standards are high: OEC houses multiple stars of the Bar including head of chambers Lord Grabiner QC and Laurence Rabinowitz QC. A junior tenant reflected: “There are so many silks with high-calibre practices, taking on so many massive cases that they’re always in need of juniors. So you know you’re never going to be out of work.” At the same time sources felt “although people are working on very serious, high-pressure cases, the people here are friendly, the atmosphere is down to earth, and everyone is approachable.”

The Pupillage Experience
Pupillage is split into three chunks: two three-month stints and a final six-month stint, each with a different supervisor. “For the first three months you mostly work for your supervisor, rather than doing a huge amount for other people in chambers,” one new tenant recalled. Pupils do a bit for others over this period, but it’s during the second three months that “you start to get farmed out a bit more and work for a wider range of people.” Pupils start out with legal research and drafting notes or opinions. Sources had also helped prepare for hearings, which means “preparing openings and cross-examination scripts for witnesses” or “drafting more formal documents like pleadings and skeleton arguments.” Pupils go along to court with their supervisor on big cases, but the clerks also arrange for them to “go to small County Court hearings with a first-year tenant, which is really helpful because the nature of the County Court is very different to the High Court.” As for the range of work chambers does, pupils see “absolutely everything,” though there can be slight variations – one rookie had seen “a little bit more energy work,” for instance.

It’s during pupils’ second six that things get more juicy: pupils get on their feet thanks to small County Court cases which the clerks seek out especially for them. New tenants and current pupils had handled “small hearings,
Despite theFootball rivalries aside, pupils There are times when the hours get longer pupils feel it’s someone they can have an open conversa tion with.

The Bar

people have treated me like part of chambers from the day I arrived.”

Anna Boase revealed. “The problem question is which are relevant and how they apply.”

“People have treated me like part of chambers from the day I arrived.”

Pupillage Gateway. We were curious what OEC asks appli cants now the Gateway application form is more flexi ble. “We asked students to describe what law they would change and why,” Anna Boase informed us. “That gave us the opportunity to get students to do a short piece of written work and show us how they write, how they argue, and what their ideas are.” Three members review every appli cation, then the set invites around 40 people to a first round interview. “We give students an hour in advance to look at a statutory interpretation problem,” Boase reveals. “They then come into the interview, and we invite them to present their answer as though they were advising a client. That allows us to see how they present orally and allows us to ask questions to see how they deal with that.”

Around ten successful candidates are invited to a sec ond interview which sources reckoned “follows exactly the same process.” Boase adds: “The problem question is even more legally focused, and based on a genuine case a member of chambers has had to deal with.” Despite the question being a firmly legal one, a junior advised: “Knowing a lot more law isn’t going to help you; doing well is more about taking the basic principles you know and working out which are relevant and how they apply.” Those who tend to impress are those who “understand and can articulate a sensible answer in response to all aspects of the problem – those who identify a clear structure in their answer and follow that path.”

The Application Process

All our interviewees agreed that OEC has a friendly and generally relaxed nature. “When Inner Temple Hall is open, everyone goes to have lunch there every Friday,” one source reported. “And that’s people of all levels of senior ity – I could be sat next to a pupil or next to Laurence Rabi nowitz, who would happily have a conversation about how much he hates Chelsea!” Football rivalries aside, pupils felt “people have treated me like part of chambers from the day I arrived.” Socially, the set hosts drinks every last Thursday of the month, “which are well attended.” One pu pil also mentioned that “once a month all the women in chambers meet up for lunch – it’s a nice way to meet more senior women in chambers.”

Interviewees estimated that they “normally come in be tween 8am and 9am, and leave sometime between 6pm and 7pm.” There are times when the hours get longer though. “I did some work on a massive trial when a member of chambers got brought in as lead counsel very late in the day,” one pupil recalled. “They needed someone to do legal research, and there was a lot of it, so I was working into the early morning.”

“You’ve got to show improvement and that you’re learning.”

The tenancy decision is made halfway through the final six. There are no formal assessments, rather “the principal assessment is done by supervisors based on the work a pupil has done along the way, taking into account the fact that the pupil is likely to improve over the course of the year,” pupillage committee member Anna Boase explains. All work is assessed: each supervisor writes a report based on pupils’ work. If a pupil has worked for another member of chambers, that member will also fill out a mark sheet on that work. In order to be successful, one interviewee highlighted, “you’ve got to show improvement and that you’re learning.” Another added: “Being responsive to your supervisor is key, like adapting what you do to be most helpful to them.” Based on supervisor reports, the tenancy committee meets and makes a recommendation as to whether or not a pupil should be taken on. Chambers as a whole then votes and “more often than not they follow the recommendation.” In 2020 all three pupils were made tenants.

OEC recently set up a mentoring scheme for pupils: each pupil has a mentor for the year, who importantly “doesn’t participate in the tenancy decision at the end, so hopefully pupils feel it’s someone they can have an open conversa tion with.”

mainly road traffic accidents” in their second six and ap preciated “the opportunity to do some advocacy and get used to having a client of your own.” Sources reported that RTAs “normally involve some cross-examination – not just an application – so it’s really valuable getting that type of work.” One interviewee reflected: “It’s certainly exciting! I think everyone is a little nervous the first time they go to court, but one of the strengths of starting advocacy in your second six is that you’re not just parking it until you’re a new tenant.” Sources emphasised that this means “there’s a lot of support from your supervisors – you’re not cast out into the world.”

For detail on ranking tiers and ranking locations, visit www.chambers.com

Rankings in Chambers EUK Rankings

Banking & Finance
Commercial Dispute Reso
lution
Competition/European Law
Energy & Natural Re-

sources
Fraud
Intellectual Property
International Arbitration

For detail on ranking tiers and ranking locations, visit www.chambers.com
One Essex Court  (Lord Grabiner QC)

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Chambers profile

One Essex Court is a pre-eminent set of barristers' chambers, specialising in commercial litigation and arbitration, both domestic and international. Members provide specialist advice and advocacy services worldwide, which include all areas of dispute resolution before a range of courts and tribunals. Barristers here can regularly be found appearing in much of the high profile litigation passing through the English High Court, often for opposing parties.

Type of work undertaken

Chambers’ work embraces all aspects of domestic and international trade, commerce and finance. Members of chambers are recognised specialists in the many diverse fields characterised as commercial disputes work, also regularly accepting nominations as arbitrators, mediators and experts. Work here includes, but is not limited to: arbitration; banking and financial services; civil fraud and investigations; commercial litigation; company and insolvency; competition and EU; energy and natural resources (oil, gas, utilities etc); insurance; intellectual property; IT, media and broadcasting; professional liability; public law; sports; gaming and licensing; tax and revenue law.

Pupil profile

Chambers has for many years maintained a policy of active recruitment and expansion and only offers pupillage to those who are thought capable of becoming tenants. Provided a candidate is proven to have the requisite ability, no distinction is drawn between candidates who do and those who do not have a law degree. Pupils at One Essex Court do not compete against one another for a predetermined maximum intake.

Pupillage

At least four guaranteed 12-month pupillages are offered per year, each with substantial funding. In addition, Chambers now offers a separate pupillage within its intellectual property group. From the beginning, pupils assist pupil supervisors with their papers, do legal research, draft opinions, pleadings and skeleton arguments. There are substantial opportunities for advocacy in the second six months of pupillage. Chambers subscribes to Pupillage Gateway.

Mini-pupillages

Mini-pupillages last for either one or two days. They are not formally assessed. A mini-pupillage is not a pre-requisite for pupillage although it is encouraged as it can provide a good opportunity both to see a snapshot of the work undertaken at One Essex Court and to meet some of the members of chambers. Please visit Chambers’ website for the application process and deadlines.

Funding

Chambers offers each pupil £70,000, supplemented by earnings in the second six. It is understood that this is amongst the highest awards available to pupils. An advance of the award is available, upon request, during a prospective pupil's Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) year. In addition to the pupillage award, there is also an interest free new tenant loan available on successful completion of pupillage.
5 Essex Court

The facts
Location: Middle Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 5/39 (19 women)
Applications: c. 300
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 2
Seats: 3x4 months
Pupillage award: £55,000 (discretionary BPTC advance)
Mini-pupillages pa: c. 50
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

“Working in the grey area between criminal and civil law,” this is the place to get your hands on police cases any barrister would find ‘arresting’...

The Chambers

“About 60% of our practice is what we class as police law,” 5EC senior clerk Mark Waller begins. ‘Police law’ isn’t a real practice area in the strictest sense, and members work on a broad range of “cases related to police forces: public law, inquests, civil claims, disciplinary matters and inquiries. Anything where a police force is challenged legally.” Having eagerly watched every episode of The Bill (possibly), pupils were drawn to the set by the idea of doing police law. “It’s quite unique,” a baby junior noted. “There aren’t many sectors where you can work in the grey area between criminal and civil law.”

Head of chambers Jason Beer recently represented the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) in a civil claim brought by six police officers after three investigations resulting in disciplinary proceedings – one concerned the officers’ use of a Taser on a fireman in the aftermath of the London riots.

The remaining 40% of 5EC’s practice includes local government and representing organisations ranging from the DWP to MI5. “It all slots into one package,” according to Waller. “A long time ago when we were doing just police work, we looked at the other organisations we could work with to mirror that expertise.” 5 Essex Court’s Alan Payne QC recently acted for the Home Secretary in an appeal before the Supreme Court on a challenge to immigration rules in the UK. Cases range from regulatory, immigration, inquests, employment and healthcare to a small amount of private client work. Waller says that by largely focusing on police and government bodies, 5EC gets “fingers in a lot of practices, giving us the ability to expand both defence and claimant sides.”

“Making a difference is about so much more than going to court.”

Pupils were impressed by the number of women at chambers: “They have an impressive commitment to diversity and lots of female QCs.” Approximately 10%-15% of barristers at 5EC come from a minority ethnic background. The set told us that “while this is broadly in line with figures published by the BSB in relation to the Bar as a whole, 5EC is firmly committed to taking steps to encourage and recruit more minority ethnic barristers and members of staff.” Though the prospect of defending police forces may put off certain applicants, Reichhold has a counter-argument: “After working on the claimant side for eight years before joining 5 Essex, I find that if you really want to make a difference, you should work defendant-side. As counsel you are advising the entity which everyone is trying to change in some way.” Reichhold tells us: “Making a difference is about so much more than going to court. It’s about advice, mediations and trying to get our clients to do things better.” For example, the head of chambers is working on an upcoming appeal about how police forces use facial recognition.

The Pupillage Experience
Pupils complete three four-month seats, each with a different supervisor. Reichhold says supervisors are chosen “to provide the right kind of work at the right time for that pupil.” Pupils only do work for their supervisor at first. Skeleton arguments, research pieces and advices are common tasks; pupils also “shadow other members at court and see what they’ll soon be doing themselves.”
Rankings in Chambers UK Rankings

Inquests & Public Inquiries  Professional Discipline
Police Law

For detail on ranking tiers and ranking locations, visit www.chambers.com

After a while pupils can seek out written or professional privilege tasks from other members. As an example of a privilege case, “the police will seize someone’s laptop but there are letters from lawyers on it,” a source explained. Pupils sift through information and remove any privileged information: “On a laptop it’s easier, but once an officer came around with sack of loose papers from the bottom of the client’s car. I had it spread out all over the floor to go through it!”

Common cases during pupillage include civil actions against police forces, defending judicial reviews for government bodies and “top-level policy advisory work with high-level QCs, which is really interesting and exciting.” Pupils get on their feet quickly in the second six, where they can expect to regularly be making civil applications for the police: “I’ve appeared on stalking protection, proceeds of crime and sexual risk orders. You’re typically acting for a police force in a magistrates’ or county court, but it’s a civil rather than criminal matter.” Pupils can expect to be in court anywhere between two to five days a week in normal circumstances. Early advisory work can be “scary at first,” but sources told us supervisors are “really encouraging and offer to look over anything before you send it out with your own name on it! They’re great at building your confidence.”

“It’s clear what’s expected of you at every stage.”

Supervisors assess every piece of work their pupil does, giving them a “list of concrete points to work on.” The tenancy process is likewise “totally transparent – it’s clear what’s expected of you at every stage.” There’s no formal exam-style assessment, but rather a “shortish” application form based on the Government Legal Department’s civil C Panel counsel application form. “We’ve found the form fits what we look for and provides a good springboard for a pupil to set out what they’ve learnt,” Reichhold says. Pupils attach their best work from throughout the year before the application “circulates to all members of chambers. They read it and complete a survey that goes on to the pupillage committee.” Reports from clerks, clients and supervisors all influence their decision. “It’s always going to be tricky and stressful,” a baby junior noted. “I found that at 5EC it was transparent and fair. You’re never taken by surprise at any stage.” One pupil secured tenancy in 2020.

“There’s an enjoyable environment at chambers, everyone’s aiming to help everyone else.” Junior members have a WhatsApp group they can use to “ask for help without worrying about looking foolish.” The Bar may have a reputation for snootiness, but we heard there’s “a very clear intention to mix people of all levels” at 5EC. “I’ve picked up so many different tricks from other people popping in, chatting and telling each other stories.” There is, however, a “social downside” for members – because they represent police forces all over the UK, “working here involves a lot of travel. If you hate trains, this isn’t for you!” Though it’s hard to meet for ad hoc drinks or lunches, “members try their best to make the most of it when people are around.”

The Application Process

In 2020, 5 Essex Court received about 350 applications through the Pupillage Gateway, whittled down to around 30 for first round interviews. The set redacts all personal information including names and universities. “Everyone on the pupillage committee does diversity and implicit bias training,” Reichhold says. The committee picks a handful of applications that prove “the most difficult to mark,” which they separately assess, before having a meeting in which those candidates are used as the “benchmark for the sift that year.”

For the first-round interview, a panel poses each applicant legal and non-legal questions. “Some are only half-way through the GDL and others may have a PhD in law,” Reichhold acknowledges. “We try to create a level playing field.” This year one of the legal scenarios was an off-duty police officer that “went rogue” trying to catch a serial cat killer (the Dulwich Moggy Murderer), “We don’t expect you to have a detailed knowledge of our practice areas or case law; we’re looking at how you structure ideas and get your point across.” Around ten candidates progress to a second-round interview, which includes an advocacy exercise and questions on a topical issue. “In 2020 we asked about coronavirus regulations and if the candidate considered them fair,” Reichhold reveals. This year the panel asked candidates to advocate for both sides of the argument. Though the “process is rigorous,” pupils told us their interviews were “a humane process. The panel were very gentle and friendly, expanded their questions and gave me little nudges when needed. They genuinely wanted the best of me.” 5EC takes up to two pupils a year.

“We try to create a level playing field.”

At the end of the process, chambers publishes an incredibly thorough and “super helpful” Pupillage Selection Report that we’d recommend you read no matter what chambers you’re applying to. The report “explains exactly what constituted strong or weak answers at each stage of the process, from the paper sift-through to the first-round and second-round interviews,” Reichhold explains. The report covers everything from typos to detailed responses to questions and serves to “level the playing field. It makes sure that everyone has fair insight into the interview process.”
Essex Court Chambers

The facts
Locations: Lincoln’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 41/56 (18 female)
Applications: 184
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: Up to 4
Seats: 1x3 months + 3-week rotations
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance £20,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 25-30
Mini-pupillage deadlines: c. December

Sitting at the very tip-top of the commercial Bar, Essex Court is a jack of all trades and master of quite a few of them.

The Chambers
The Spice Girls. Leonardo DiCaprio. Oasis. Essex Court Chambers. Wait, what? “We really began to thrive in the mid ’90s,” senior clerk Joe Ferrigno explains, “which is when we transitioned from a mostly shipping and insurance set to the global, magic circle, commercial set that we are recognised as today.” The Bar magic circle is less well known as such than its law firm equivalent – Essex Court is usually included alongside Blackstone, Brick Court, Fountain Court and One Essex Court. Drawing inspiration from NYC as well as London, Essex Court lives up to its reputation as “the chambers that never sleeps.” Joe Ferrigno explains what this means in practice: “When we assess our practice areas, we’re looking at 14 core commercial and international areas, and we are especially renowned as the dominant set for commercial litigation and international arbitration. All told though, members practise in a total of 23 areas; there isn’t much we don’t do.”

His claims are backed by Chambers UK Bar, which hands Essex Court top rankings for commercial dispute resolution, international arbitration, public international law, civil fraud, insurance, shipping and employment. The set also receives recognition for its banking and finance, energy and commercial Chancery practices. “If we were to really pick out strengths aside from our international arbitration, litigation reach, I’d choose public international law and employment,” Joe Ferrigno notes. The set’s pupils were suitably starstruck: “It is one of the best commercial sets if not the very best,” one declared. “The immense cross-border work, members’ handle over the systems of law in multiple jurisdictions and their depth of practices is what makes Essex Court stand out.”

Essex Court’s strategy is a two-pronged attack of domestic and international work. A big chunk of the latter is international arbitration: Joe Smouha QC recently represented infrastructure group OHL, challenging an ICC award of $1.6 billion linked to the construction of a hospital in Qatar, before the Commercial Court. In an example of public international law, Professor Dan Sarooshi QC acted as lead counsel for the United Arab Emirates in a case surrounding measures brought against Qatar in response to the state’s alleged £1 billion provision to terrorists. As for commercial litigation, junior member Anna Dilnot has represented hedge fund RP Explore since 2010 in a long-running dispute involving the construction of an oil refinery in India and funding for the project. Joe Ferrigno notes that “in recent years Essex Court have undertaken unprecedented expansion, embracing demands in the market with multiple lateral hires and new junior tenants joining our ranks.”

“The chambers that never sleeps.”

The Pupillage Experience
Pupils sit with their main supervisor for three to four months “to get up to the standard needed to advance to the ‘rota’ stage. Your first supervisor is there to give you constructive oral feedback and answer any silly questions you might have.” Early work for pupils revolves around “whatever the supervisor is doing,” with accommodation of what pupils need to see. “Let’s say I eventually feel like I haven’t done enough pleadings or defences,” a pupil posed. “My supervisor would get that arranged for me. We would often do dead work at this point to go with some live cases, but that makes for great learning opportunities.”
### Rankings in Chambers UK Rankings

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For detail on ranking tiers and ranking locations, visit [www.chambers.com](http://www.chambers.com)

After the Christmas season pupils proceed to the ‘rota’, “which is the assessment phase of pupillage.” They rotate through a grand total of seven supervisors, spending two to three weeks with each. Around three supervisors will be silks, and some will be tenancy committee members. Interviewees confirmed “it’s intense, but means we have the opportunity to see a whole range of people within chambers, the different styles of working of each and a good breadth of practice areas.” Pupils we spoke to had dabbled in civil fraud, international arbitration, employment, finance, shipping and insurance.

“The focus of pupillage is to bring you up to a certain standard, not to thrust you out there with no training.”

Recruiter and pupillage committee member David Peters says “one has to exercise judgement” during the rota phase. “The cases we handle are large and run for a long time, so giving a pupil three weeks to read up on them is hopeless – they won’t learn anything.” His own approach is to “give them a mix of live cases and recently deceased ones that are fresh in my mind. I can then very quickly assess how good a job they’ve done.” Pupils found themselves drafting particulars of claim, defences, legal opinions, parts of skeleton arguments and research notes, dead and live. We also heard “some supervisors have a specific piece of work they give pupils to see how they cope. They use that as a fair metric to judge everyone by the same standard.”

Pupils don’t get on their feet in the second six. “Given the size and scale of our work, our policy is that they don’t do their own cases until they finish pupillage,” Peters confirms. Pupils had no complaints: “The focus of pupillage at Essex Court is to bring you up to a certain standard, not to thrust you out there with no training. I much prefer getting detailed feedback and gradual improvement before being unleashed on the public.” Once their rota is complete, pupils return to their initial supervisor for the remainder of pupillage. “They therefore get an opportunity to see how you’ve grown, with the expectation that you would’ve addressed any issues you had prior to the rota,” insiders noted.

“Supervisors are aware that pupillage is a stressful period, you’re meeting new people constantly and figuring out their way of working,” a pupil said. “Members try to make it easier for the pupil with constructive feedback and they don’t expect you to mirror their working hours.” Pupils started their work day at 9am and, “by and large,” finished by 6pm. This left plenty of time to unwind with a drink or two, or head to the Inns of Court for a Friday lunch alongside senior members of chambers. Essex Court hosts annual Christmas and summer parties, as well as events for clients and celebrations for members taking silk. “We have a WhatsApp group set up amongst the juniors,” an insider revealed. “We’ve been hosting Zoom drinks since lockdown began.”

“When day one, you’re told this isn’t a competition with the other pupil.”

Essex Court’s formal assessments include a pleading exercise, one to assess conference skills, and three advocacy exercises. Pupils suggested these act as “training and development, rather than a rigid assessment.” The first takes place before Christmas, then the rest are scattered within the rota; results from all five count towards the tenancy decision. On top of these formal assessments, David Peters confirms each supervisor prepares a written appraisal of each pupil for the tenancy committee. “They compile these reports with reference to Essex Court’s key criteria: intellectual ability, legal research skills, advocacy potential, judgement and decisiveness.” The committee makes a recommendation to chambers and there’s ultimately “no space for people to play favourites.” Interviewees breathed a sigh of relief knowing they “didn’t have to impress the whole chambers” and that “from day one, you’re told this isn’t a competition with the other pupil.” Peters notes that “once pupils are taken on, they all get a clean slate to build their own reputation.” Essex Court granted tenancy to three of five pupils in 2020.

### The Application Process

Candidates apply through the Pupillage Gateway. “The 200-word written application really stood out to me among others,” a pupil recalled. Twenty or so successful applicants progress to a single-round 30 to 45-minute interview. “We received a contractual dispute problem – similar to those you’d see at other commercial sets – and had half an hour to consider all the materials and prepare our answer,” a previous interviewee explained. “There wasn’t any need to have any prior legal knowledge to deal with this particular problem, which I really appreciated. They wanted to see how you deal with the issue, how you construct an argument and how you’d defend it.”

A recent tenant recalls: “The panel gave me simplified problem questions surrounding a fictional country, considering certain points of law. I had to build an argument.
around certain facts.” After presenting their argument before six or seven Essex Court members, conversation turns to the applicant themselves. “They asked about my motivations, why this set, my journey to the Bar and some competency questions,” a source said. Pupils were impressed to see “the panel included at least two or three women and varied in seniority.”

I’ll be there for you

Each pupil receives an informal mentor, usually a recent tenant. “The idea is they can be someone pupils can speak to with complete confidence,” the pupillage committee’s David Peters says. “We encourage them to be as open as possible during pupillage.”
Essex Court Chambers

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Fax: 020 7813 8080
Website: www.essexcourt.com

Chambers profile
We are a leading commercial set, with an international reputation for excellence.
Our members offer advisory and advocacy expertise on disputes relating to all aspects of business and commerce, both domestic and international. Our core areas of work include commercial litigation, civil fraud, international commercial arbitration, international trade, energy, shipping, PIL, insurance/reinsurance, banking and financial services. But our members enjoy the freedom to develop their own specialisms. Many have done so, in a wide range of areas. This means that pupils and junior tenants can see a broad range of work.

Pupil profile
Pupillage is primarily about training. We take that seriously. Our pupils can expect to be put through a rigorous but enjoyable training programme, including continuous feedback, regular appraisals and advocacy training. We also take career development seriously. Our members are supported by an enthusiastic, active clerking team from the earliest stage of their practice.
Our work is intellectually challenging. We seek to recruit the best and the brightest. A degree from Oxford or Cambridge is not a prerequisite of pupillage with us; not all of the top talent is concentrated in a small number of academic institutions. We encourage applications from all. We welcome applications from law and non-law graduates and for deferred pupillage.
We are committed to equality of opportunity. We will make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants.

Pupillage
We typically offer up to four 12-month pupillages per year. The pupillage award is £65,000. Of that sum, £45,000 is payable in equal monthly instalments in the first six months, and the balance in equal monthly instalments in the second six months. Up to an overall maximum of £20,000 may be drawn down in advance for the BPTC year and/or for relevant postgraduate study from the first six months award (with pro rata reductions during the pupillage year).
Undertaking a mini-pupillage is strongly encouraged. You are also encouraged to attend our Student Open Day. Reasonable travel and other expenses are refunded for both.
Please see our website for full details of pupillage, mini-pupillage and our Student Open Day, including when and how to apply.
Falcon Chambers

The facts
Location: Fleet Street, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 13/33 (15 women)
Applications: c.100
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance £22,000 for BPTC/drawdown)
Mini-pupillages pa: 12
Mini-pupillage deadlines: see Falcon Chambers’ website

Falcon Chambers flies high in the property law sky, while dipping a talon in the telecoms pool too.

The Chambers
What persuaded junior tenants and pupils to make their nest at Falcon Chambers? “They’re so highly regarded in property law, which is what I wanted to do,” one source put it simply. The 46-member set positively soars in real estate litigation and agriculture & rural affairs, bagging top Chambers UK rankings for both. With clients ranging from individual landlords and tenants all the way up to massive companies and developers, the cases Falcon’s barristers deal with are wide-ranging. Guy Fetherstonhaugh QC, for example, recently worked on the Tate Modern’s dispute with tenants of four flats overlooked by the gallery’s public viewing space. In another case, Stephanie Tozer QC handled a dispute about whether bed retailer Dreams met conditions in an agreement to surrender one of its stores – specifically whether it was obliged to pay damages for dilapidations. Other clients have included major gay nightclub XXL as it sought to resist possession by a developer in a £1.2 billion development, and WH Smith as the tenant in lease renewal proceedings against two landlords at a shopping centre in Croydon.

“As their seniority increases, they’ll work on more commercial property and higher-value matters.”

Senior clerk John Stannard says junior tenants usually begin their practice handling a “higher percentage of residential property work, and as their seniority increases, they’ll work on more commercial property and higher-value matters.” Obviously, property is key to Falcon Chambers, but it’s not all privacy disputes and landlord/tenant spats day in, day out. “We also have a huge focus on agriculture and rural affairs, infrastructure, and natural resources,” Stannard explains. About a third of the set handles rural and agricultural matters on a daily basis, so juniors will get to grips with those kinds of cases too. “There’s also environmental work to go around, with mines and minerals and energy featuring, which is quite specialist.”

Stannard continues: “There’s also been a lot of expansion in our telecoms practice,” elaborating that there’s recently been “a mass influx of code work” to the set. “For around seven or eight members, 40% of their practice is centred around telecommunications.” On a recent case, Stephanie Tozer QC acted for Vodafone in its application for the right to keep fibre optic cables within an electricity cable wire crossing the respondent’s land.

The Application Process
Falcon doesn’t use the Pupillage Gateway, so applications begin with a form on the set’s website. “The process starts earlier than most other sets,” juniors pointed out. Alongside supplying the usual background information, applicants answer questions about their achievements outside academia. There’s also an essay question, which is “designed to bring out a candidate’s ability to write concisely,” according to Adam Rosenthal QC, head of the recruitment committee.

Three members of chambers whittle down the initial flurry of applications down to around 20 candidates for the first-round interview. Here, three interviewers probe
candidates for around 20 minutes. Five to seven lucky candidates are invited back for the final interview. Before that, candidates have to undertake a written exercise. Rosenthal explains: “They are then asked to write a short essay which is to be a persuasive piece of writing stating whether the document creates a lease or a licence.”

“The panel’s eyes lit up when I mentioned a point about rent control and housing benefits.”

The final interview takes place before a panel of five. Noting the differences between the first and second interviews, sources said: “There’s definitely more pushback in the second interview to test your skills, but it wasn’t a hostile environment.” Candidates are then faced with problem questions and asked to construct arguments in hypothetical scenarios. Legal knowledge isn’t required for these exercises; the aim is to test candidates’ advocacy and analytical skills. Still, this insider reckoned “it’s worth knowing a thing or two about property law. The panel’s eyes lit up when I mentioned a point about rent control and housing benefits.” While knowing some factoids about property law is sure to impress, Rosenthal emphasises that “it’s a common misconception that pupils need to have existing knowledge of landlord and tenant law. We don’t expect any prior involvement in landlord and tenant law or the industry.”

The Pupillage Experience

To account for the expected gaps in property law knowledge, the set places pupils on a weekend property crash course run by Professor Martin Dixon of Cambridge University. “It was incredibly useful,” one course graduate praised, while another said: “Martin is great at explaining land law as well as inspiring us about its importance.” But rather than a formal schedule of classes, they said the course “is basically a great opportunity to chat about property law for a couple of hours.”

After that, it ramps up. The pupillage structure has pupils sit with four supervisors for three months each. “Some sets have a ‘thou shalt do work for one member of chambers’ commandment,” one junior joked, “but that’s not the case at Falcon. If there’s something interesting happening elsewhere in chambers, supervisors will encourage us to take it on.” Insiders felt their first three months were for “making mistakes and learning the law,” while the second six holds “more weight on the tenancy decision.”

“There was one dispute over a chandelier.”

Day to day Falcon pupils worked a manageable 9am to 6pm schedule, with plenty of time for chambers tea and lunch every Friday, which was a welcome opportunity to mingle with other members. Although they won’t fly the nest to go to court with their own work in the second six, pupils do get to shadow juniors right from the off. “They make an effort to take pupils along to interesting case hearings or standard possession hearings,” sources said. Pupils were also given “a lot of heavy black-letter law research” to do, as well as a lot of writing tasks, including “a wide range of opinion writing and drafting skeleton arguments.”

Rosenthal says “the quality of writing is very important” when it comes to the tenancy decision. At the end of each seat, supervisors write up their feedback on pupils, which is then collated in a report and reviewed around June or July by the pupillage committee. Rosenthal explains that there’s “a lot of weight placed on pupil supervisors’ reports since supervisors have seen a good cross-section of the pupil’s work.” Our insiders appreciated Falcon’s approach to assessment. “I liked that there was no specific day where I had to be 100%,” one shared. “It may be a nine-month interview, but it allowed me to shine where I can shine.” That said, it’s a good idea for pupils to shine as brightly as possible for a couple of “semi-formal” advocacy assessments. Semi-formal, you say? “We try not to make them too formal,” says Rosenthal, while junior sources understood “they’re in place to see if we’re good enough to be sent out to the courts.”

For those who aren’t offered tenancy, having the Falcon name stamped on your CV unlocks other opportunities. “Other chambers know the calibre of pupils at Falcon,” says John Stannard, and adds that on occasion the set liaises with other chambers that are interested in recruiting Falcon’s pupils who don’t gain tenancy. There was no need for that this year, however, as both pupils gained tenancy in 2020.
Falcon Chambers

Falcon Court, London EC4Y 1AA
Tel: 020 7353 2484, Fax: 020 7353 1261
Email: clerks@falcon-chambers.com
Website: www.falcon-chambers.com

Chambers profile
Falcon Chambers is recognised by the legal directories, solicitors and clients as the leading property chambers. Many of the major practitioner texts relating to property law are written by our members. We place a lot of importance on being a friendly, closely integrated group of colleagues. Many former members of chambers have become judges, including Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury, former President of the Supreme Court, Lord Justice Lewison and Mr Justice Morgan.

Type of work undertaken
Members of chambers are heavily involved in litigation in the real property, landlord and tenant and property-related fields, including cases involving insolvency, trusts, banking, revenue, professional negligence, environmental and treasury work. We are involved in both contentious and non-contentious work.

Pupil profile
Applications are welcome from all who have or expect to achieve a 2:1 or first in their degree, including students who have not yet completed a first degree, or non-law students who have not yet completed a GDL. The successful applicant will absorb complex information and identify essential points and practical solutions quickly; communicate clearly, concisely and persuasively, both orally and in writing; and remain calm, objective and confident while working under pressure.

Pupillage
Our current policy is to offer up to two pupillages each year, each of which is for 12 months. Pupils are allocated to a different pupil supervisor every three months in order to see a range of work and practices. We aim to give our pupils a good grounding in advocacy, in addition to the courses offered by the Inns, by providing structured advocacy training throughout the year.

Few of our applicants will have studied our speciality in any depth, and therefore we provide an intensive course in landlord and tenant law at Falcon Chambers, usually held in the last week of September.

Applications should be made by chambers application form which will be available from the website from the beginning of December 2020 for pupillages starting in October 2022. The closing date and interview dates are yet to be confirmed. More details are available on our website. Falcon Chambers does not receive applications through the Pupillage Gateway.

Mini-pupillages
Our mini-pupillages are not assessed and there is no requirement that you come to Chambers on a mini-pupillage before you apply for a pupillage. We do, however, encourage interested students to visit us for a few days to experience life at Falcon Chambers. We find that those who do so invariably apply to us for pupillage. The programme lasts for three days (usually Tuesday to Thursday), during which time we try to ensure that you will spend some time in court, sit in on a conference with clients and also sample some paperwork. We hold three mini-pupillage sessions each year, full details along with dates, when to apply and the application form are all available on our website.

Funding
Our pupillage award is up to £65,000 per pupil (for those starting in October 2022), of which up to £22,000 is available for draw-down during the BPTC year. In addition, in their second six months, pupils can expect to earn some additional income from their own work.

Successful pupils who become junior tenants are usually fully employed doing their own work shortly after being taken on.
Farrar’s Building

The facts
Location: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 7/41
Applications: undisclosed
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupillage deadline (2022 start): 7 February 2021
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 3x4 months
Pupillage award: £27,500 (plus £27,500 guaranteed earnings) + (up to £10,000 can be advanced for the BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 15
Mini-pupillage deadlines: 21 January, 21 April, 21 July and 21 October

Personal injury and clin neg take centre stage at this advocacy-loving common law set, alongside a supporting cast of employment, insurance and health & safety capabilities.

The Chambers
First and foremost, any prospective Farrar’s Building pupil should know is that this is a chambers with a hefty focus on advocacy. “Juniors in their second six can expect to be in court four days a week, every week,” senior clerk James Shaw states (in fact, we were told that juniors can be in court five days a week if they want to be!). The set’s areas of expertise lend themselves well to getting pupils and juniors stuck into advocacy almost from the get-go.

Personal injury and clinical negligence matters make up the largest portion of the set’s work, followed by employment, insurance, and health & safety cases. As such, pupils will get “a good grounding in personal injury and clinical negligence, and most will also see a few other areas.” “Juniors here can expect to be in court four days a week, every week.”

Farrar’s personal injury expertise secures a ranking in Chambers UK Bar, as does the set’s criminal work in the Wales & Chester Circuit. “It’s mainly two of our QCs who do the top-end crime work in Wales,” Shaw explains. “We do receive instructions for other criminal cases, but I wouldn’t say they would be particularly relevant to anyone applying for pupillage.” When personal injury and criminal matters overlap, pupils may get involved (if there’s a ‘death by dangerous driving’ case, for example), but if you’re after a criminal-focused pupillage, you may want to look elsewhere. In the personal injury sphere, Andrew Wille recently represented a man who had been employed on a construction site without adequate training and subsequently suffered an amputation of one leg and neuropathic damage to the other when the dumper truck he was operating overturned. On the clin neg front, Nigel Spencer Ley acted for multiple claimants against Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust regarding poor results seen in cases where upper gastrointestinal surgery had been carried out.

The Pupillage Experience
Over the 12 months, pupils have three supervisors and spend four months with each. The first supervisor is “usually the most senior of the three,” meaning first-seaters have a “real opportunity to get to grips with the kind of legal areas you’ll be working on at Farrar’s.” Pupils saw “the core areas of chambers’ work, including high-value personal injury, clinical negligence and some employment matters.” A current pupil felt the first seat was especially good for getting “really good paperwork opportunities, like drafting advices, defences, counter-schedules and particulars of claim.” The work is usually a decent mix between live and historic cases. Director of pupillage Hannah Saxena explains: “Particularly when they’re not on their feet, it’s helpful for pupils to work on the papers their supervisor would be doing to have a good idea of what’s
a tenancy assessment that involves a written exercise, an advocacy exercise and an interview. A junior tenant recalled their experience: “The advocacy exercise was challenging and treated as if you were actually going to court. That exercise was carried out in front of four or five senior members of chambers, who then put challenging questions to us.” Sources added that pupil supervisors don’t sit on that panel, in order to “keep it as fair as possible.” When the final decision is being made, other members of chambers can submit feedback on the pupil too. “Clerks also have the opportunity to collate feedback from solicitors from the occasions when you were on your feet,” interviewees added.

The Application Process
Candidates can apply to Farrar’s Building through the Pupillage Gateway. Hannah Saxena tells us that the initial paper sift is anonymous: “There’s an option to take out any info about gender, schools, etc, so we just see a number.” The initial application also includes a ‘bonus question’ which Saxena reveals “is never law-related – it’s usually designed to see a bit of the applicant’s personality and how persuasively they write.” A recent example was “What object would you have invented if you could?” Interviewees also recalled another exercise where they were given “a statement they wanted you to argue in five sentences to test how concise you can be.”

“...in the interview we got into a friendly debate about homemade pasta!”

Around 35-40 applicants make it through to the first-stage interview, which is held in front of a panel of three assessors. The interview itself lasts around ten to 15 minutes and is mainly used for the chambers to “try to get to know you on an individual level.” Candidates recalled the panel being “incredibly friendly – they had a genuine interest in wanting to get to know what you’re like.” The first stage also tends to involve “the odd test where you’re asked to debate a particular point.” One source recalled that “in my application I’d mentioned something about experimenting with vegan cuisine, so in the interview we got into a friendly debate about homemade pasta!”

Around eight candidates progress to the second interview, which is “much more in-depth,” Saxena explains that “the bulk of it is the advocacy exercise.” This year, candidates also completed a written exercise linked to the advocacy exercise in the week before the interview. “You have to prepare an application based on a brief you’re given,” said one pupil. “Once in the interview, the first part is making that application in front of a panel of barristers who, for those purposes, act as judges.” Saxena emphasises that the most appealing applicants are those who are “comfortable in communicating, holding an argument well and putting up a little resistance to judicial questions.” After the
advocacy exercise, there are usually “some other questions – some are based on your application, and some are used to test competency, knowledge of the legal sector, and motivation.”

Saxena is also keen to flag that “we want to recruit people for the long term – a number of our pupils are now tenants and silks.” Farrar’s is therefore “interested in someone with personality.” She elaborates that a large part of the set’s culture revolves around “being very friendly, while also enjoying being good in court.” One junior neatly summed up the set as “a personable family of experts.” This also meant that socialising together was a regular part of chambers life: barristers, clerks and pupils alike can let their hair down at ‘Wine Club’ on a Friday night where “everyone has a drink and a good old chat!” If you’d rather get some exercise in with your socialising, there’s also a ‘Run Club’ on a Tuesday evening. Bigger events include an “annual Christmas curry and karaoke night” as well as “social events with solicitors, which pupils are encouraged to come to.”

And finally...

Working from home has meant pupils and members have been spread Farrar and wide... but Hannah Saxena reassures us: “We are still touching base with pupils every day.”
Farrar’s Building

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Telephone: 020 7583 9241
Email: chambers@farrarsbuilding.co.uk
Website: www.farrarsbuilding.co.uk

Chambers profile

Farrar’s Building is an established, specialist set of chambers with particular expertise in personal injury; clinical negligence; employment; health and safety; inquiries; professional negligence; and disciplinary tribunals.

Members of chambers also specialise in insurance, product liability; commercial and serious and white-collar crime.

Chambers has an established reputation for excellence, with members acting for a variety of corporate bodies, insurance companies, prosecuting authorities, sporting bodies and players, disciplinary, regulatory and professional bodies, as well as individuals.

We are a friendly and reliable set of chambers, which prides itself on the way it is efficiently clerked and administered, by an experienced team.

We offer a breadth of experience across over 20 practice areas. Our talented and approachable members are ranked highly within both Chambers and Partners UK and the Legal 500.

Pupil profile

We are looking to recruit pupils who have the potential for a long and successful career at Farrar’s Building. Academic and intellectual ability is important and successful candidates usually have at least a 2:1 undergraduate degree. We are also looking for a demonstrable aptitude for advocacy and an interest in our practice areas.

Pupillage

Chambers offers two 12-month pupillages starting in October. Pupillage is organised in three, four-month periods, each with a new supervisor. The second four months is dedicated to assisting pupils make the transition from non-practicing to practicing.

Mini-pupillages

Farrar’s Building accepts applications for a three day mini-pupillage throughout the year, which are considered at quarterly intervals. The mini-pupillages are not formally assessed, they are usually during the Easter and summer university vacations.

Mini-pupils will shadow barristers at court and in chambers. In past years the experience gained from a mini-pupillage with us has typically enhanced a candidate’s application for pupillage at Farrar’s Building.

Applications are considered from those that have started higher education. Good academic ability and an interest in the law and specifically our areas of practice should be demonstrated.

Funding

The funding is made up of an award of £27,500 payable in six equal monthly instalments during the first six months and guaranteed receipts in the second six months of at least £27,500.

Recruitment

Farrar’s Building will be attending the Bar Council Pupillage Fair on 17 October 2020 which will take place virtually.

We recruit pupils via the Pupillage Gateway.
Fountain Court Chambers

The facts
Location: Middle Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 42/49
Applications: commonly around 150
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: Up to four
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £70,000 (can advance up to £20,000)
Mini-pupillages pa: around 40-50
Mini-pupillage deadlines: 30 October 2020, 28 February 2021, 30 March 2021

A “whole breadth” of the “highest quality” legal work awaits pupils at one of the Commercial Bar’s most renowned chambers.

The Chambers
“Ultimately, good people attract good work.” That’s the philosophy of Fountain Court senior clerk Alex Taylor, striking a surprisingly understated tone in light of the set’s standing. Let’s unpick the ‘good work’ bit first – “known for its precedent-setting commercial cases,” Fountain Court and its members routinely hit the headlines. Take Akhil Shah QC acting for liquidators following the insolvency of Thomas Cook; or head of chambers Bankim Thanki QC appearing in the Supreme Court on behalf of Ukraine in a $3 billion Eurobond claim brought by the Russian Federation following the invasion of Crimea. Members also acted on the consequences of Barclays’ capital raising from Qatar; in defence of Sports Direct in the first ever proceedings brought by the Financial Reporting Council under statutory powers to seek documents; and a spate of high-profile professional negligence claims involving the SRA.

As for the ‘good people’, an incredible six Fountain Court members took silk in 2020, “which we believe is a record for a magic circle set in the Bar.” That brought the total number of Fountain Court silks to 42 including door tenants. The set’s historically been a big feeder to judicial positions and seen other members “lost” to politics, which isn’t necessarily a bad thing. Such a reputation “helps in the overall prestige of the chambers,” Taylor notes. “It gives us a heritage of quality people who come to Fountain Court then go on to do super impressive things.”

‘Impressive’ is an accurate description of the set’s plethora of Chambers UK Bar rankings, including top spots for aviation, banking and finance, civil fraud, commercial dispute resolution, financial services, professional discipline, and regulatory and commercial travel. In the wake of Covid-19, Taylor anticipates disruption in members’ aviation, insurance, fraud and securities practices. “Commercial disputes is a buoyant market,” he notes, “and Covid will throw up even more new issues” for members to get to grips with. As for other practices, the set’s commercial crime strand “continues to flourish,” as does solicitor professional discipline. “We’re dominating that area,” Taylor declares. “I was only looking for commercial work rather than any kind of mix,” a baby junior interviewee noted. “When looking at that kind of legal practice, Fountain Court is clearly the best option,” they reckoned.

“Known for its precedent-setting commercial cases.”

The Application Process
All applicants must complete an assessed three-day mini-pupillage before applying to Fountain Court through the Pupillage Gateway. Before that, around a quarter of applicants receive invites to an initial interview. Pupillage committee member Sam Ritchie tells us that alongside questions about an applicant’s CV, a non-legal topic is up for discussion, “which is usually about current affairs and something on which you can take a position and debate certain principles.” After this initial acid test, successful interviewees progress to the assessed mini-pupillage “to
## Chambers Reports: Fountain Court Chambers

**Rankings in Chambers UK Rankings**

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For detail on ranking tiers and ranking locations, visit www.chambers.com

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**Find out all about chambers. We get to see their interest in us and commercial law more generally.** Ritchie confirms they must also complete an assessed written legal problem, “for which we provide the materials, so it doesn’t matter if you’ve done a law degree.”

“We’re looking for quickness of thought and ability to respond to arguments posed to you.”

Once they’ve wrapped up the mini, applicants can then make their full pupillage application via the Gateway. Around 12-15 applicants make it to a final 40-minute interview in front of six or seven members of the pupillage committee. The interview involves a legal-based problem to be solved in a presentation, which is reportedly “legally straightforward and nothing that requires hours of research to regurgitate from memory.” That’s followed by a “casual conversation” where the panel “asks the candidate personal questions, wanting to get an impression of them.”

That may sound intimidating, but sources suggested the tone and atmosphere of the interviews were “quite comfortable and comforting, which feels strange to say. I found it less intimidating than other sets, and that really reflects the Fountain Court approach: it’s a supportive and friendly place.” That aside, Sam Ritchie explains: “Academic excellence is the prerequisite quality. We’re looking for quickness of thought and ability to respond to arguments posed to you, plus your ability to take a position and defend it.” It’s worth recognising that most FC members attended Oxbridge at one point...

**The Pupillage Experience**

Each pupil does four three-month seats; they have the same supervisor for the first and last three months, with two additional supervisors overseeing the second and third seats. “Your first supervisor takes on a more pastoral, mentor-esque role, and you get to know them very well,” one source shared. The first three months are also unassessed, and your supervisor gives feedback without formal grading. “It’s a period to become comfortable, bed in, and learn what the expectations are and might become,” we heard.

After this initial grace period, pupils complete 20-25 assessed pieces of work for members of chambers. “You get farmed out and do tasks for several barristers,” told one source. “I’ve worked with everyone from the most senior silk in chambers to someone with two years’ call.” Ritchie says Fountain Court “likes pupils to receive a really wide view” of the set’s commercial practice. “I got to see a whole range of claims for breach of guarantee on a loan agreement, a public case involving EU law, and some work leading up to a solicitor’s tribunal,” one said. Another source described some of the work spent on an anti-suit injunction, getting to grips with drafts of pleadings and preparing a skeleton argument for an appeal in a disciplinary tribunal.

“...pupillage could definitely be characterised as a learning process. Chambers make it very clear that it’s not a competition.”

One source reckoned “pupillage could definitely be characterised as a learning process. Chambers make it very clear that it’s not a competition: pupils are never given the same work because everything’s live, so we can’t be compared directly.” They felt “pupils are encouraged to view one another as a source of support, rather than someone to beat.” There’s no room for showboating in court either, as pupils don’t get on their feet during pupillage. “Given our work” (built on high-value mega cases), “it would be too early to allow pupils to start practising before the tenancy decision,” Sam Ritchie points out. Pupils were in fact “grateful to have a full year focused on training and learning,” and advocacy comes early on after tenancy with a smattering of County Court hearings in which to demonstrate your skills. “I don’t feel I missed out on the practice of arguing issues,” one found. “When you do a task for a supervisor, you’ll really do have to defend your points to them – they’ll press you hard.”

Day-to-day feedback and sparring sessions with supervisors are the set’s alternative to formal advocacy assessments. That’s right, no exam-style tests or challenges, which also helps prevent any competitive spirit surrounding pupillage. “Not having to do advocacy exercises against other pupils is certainly a benefit and alleviates some unnecessary pressure,” one declared. “You’re all doing different work and there’s no point in duplicating it as it’s all live.”

“When we take on a pupil, the working assumption is that they will gain tenancy.”

Every member that a pupil’s worked for submits feedback for a compilation submitted to the pupillage committee. Come June, Sam Ritchie and co read through the dozens of reports for each pupil and decide if they should stay on as a tenant. “The pressure is spread over 25 or so pieces of work,” alongside general performance.
The Bar
Chambers Reports: Fountain Court Chambers

across the year, “which feels more manageable” and eases the burden (compared to a handful of crunch assessments). “You just come in and do your own work throughout the year, with little pressure,” a pupil found. Ritchie notes: “When we take on a pupil, the working assumption is that they will gain tenancy if they meet the standard as we don’t have a fixed number of places.” That proved true in 2020, when all three pupils secured tenancy.

The Commercial Bar may be known for its intensity and competitive spirit, but pupils remained cool, calm and collected after their first year. “I did wonder before starting if I’d find it intimidating, but I definitely haven’t,” one confirmed. Senior clerk Alex Taylor suggests “the standout feature of the set is its openness and friendliness,” but adds that Fountain Court isn’t one size fits all. “Collectively we all enjoy the law and getting to grips with a difficult legal question, but it would be hard to characterise us all similarly beyond that.”

**Time after time**
Sources agreed their standard 9am to 6.30pm working hours during pupillage felt “very manageable,” but longer days become more likely as a fully-fledged member.
Fountain Court Chambers

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Chambers profile
Fountain Court Chambers is a leading London set specialising in commercial work, and with an office in Singapore. Members of Chambers are recognised as leaders in the fields of banking & finance; administrative & public law; aviation & travel; commercial crime & civil fraud; financial services; insurance & reinsurance; international arbitration and others. Chambers has a friendly, progressive and modern outlook and prides itself on barristers who are first rate, user-friendly and easy to work with.

Pupil profile
Each year, we expect to take up to four pupils who are selected based on academic and intellectual ability as well as oral and written communication skills.

We want to recruit the best and brightest candidates whatever their background and we positively encourage applications from groups who are under-represented in chambers.

Pupillage
Fountain Court mentors and supports pupils by offering tailored training during pupillage. Pupillage is divided into four periods of three months. The first two months are unassessed, following which pupils will be asked to complete specific pieces of work for different members on ongoing cases. The work will be assessed, and both formal and informal feedback given. Pupillage does not involve competitive advocacy exercises and pupils are encouraged to co-operate with each other, with a view to this supportive ethos being carried on through tenancy.

Mini-pupillages
Fountain Court requires all pupillage candidates to have completed an assessed mini-pupillage. The mini-pupillage will last for two days, during which time you will learn about life at Fountain Court and complete a short piece of assessed written work. There are three mini-pupillage rounds each year, over Christmas, Easter and Summer university holidays. Fountain Court will pay £150 towards expenses upon completion. Applications are to be submitted on the form on chambers’ website.

Funding
Each pupil receives £70,000, in the form of a first six-month award of £50,000, with an additional £20,000 for the second six months. Up to £20,000 can be drawn ahead of pupillage.
Francis Taylor Building

The facts
Location: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 22/36 (11 women)
Applications: 94
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 3x4 months
Pupillage award: £55,000 + £10,000 guaranteed earnings (can advance £25,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 40
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

If planning, environmental and licensing work tickle your pickle then take a gander at Francis Taylor Building.

The Chambers
Since its formation in the 1920s, FTB has developed into “a specialist planning, environmental and public law set,” senior clerk Paul Coveny explains. “We’re a relatively niche set of chambers and we focus on our core areas, which are planning, environmental, licensing, regulatory and more general public law.” The set’s clients are split fairly evenly between the public and private sectors. Many of the UK’s local authorities call upon FTB’s expertise, as do various government agencies and departments like Defra and the Highways Agency. In Coveny’s own words, “typical clients are developers or operators who need permission to do or build something. On the other side of that fence we act for public authorities and planning authorities as well as gaming or gambling bodies. We also work with residents’ amenity and interest groups like Greenpeace and Save the Earth.” So whether you want to rage against the machine or oil its wheels, FTB might be of interest.

Members recently advised the London Borough of Hackney on a challenge to the legality (under the Equality Act 2010) of its new licensing policy, brought by local pressure group We Love Hackney. The Environment Agency instructed Richard Honey to advise on the case for safeguarding land to construct a new Thames Barrier, to be built by 2070; and Michael Humphries QC acted on a project to reopen Manston Airport in Kent, which would require extensive compulsory purchase powers as the site is currently owned by a company with plans for a housing-led scheme. Compulsory purchases play a role in many of FTB’s cases: Guy Roots was involved in a claim for compulsory purchase compensation for the construction of a football stadium, in place of granting planning permission for a high-rise residential site. Some members also do ecclesiastical work, including Mark Hill QC who represented a group of parishioners to challenge the construction of a building in a consecrated churchyard.

“We’re determined to grow in a sustainable way.”

Chambers UK Bar ranks FTB top in ecclesiastical law for all circuits, and in environment and licensing law in London; the set also scores high marks for planning and agriculture. Coveny adds that members are frequently instructed by top-level City players like Clifford Chance and Bryan Cave Leighton Palsner as well as national and regional firms including Womble Bond Dickinson and Burges Salmon. Shedding light on FTB’s strategy for the future, Coveny explains: “We’re growing organically and focusing on our core areas to strengthen our market position. We’re not looking to broaden our practice areas; we’re determined to remain focused and grow in a sustainable way.”

The Application Process
FTB now recruits through the Pupillage Gateway. Around 35 candidates then attend a first-round interview with three members of chambers. What kind of person fits the bill? Juniors suggested that prospective pupillage applicants tend to be interested in “diverse types of advocacy, getting the chance to do expert cross-examinations from...”
an early stage, or they just find that law related to houses floats their boat.”

As for standing out at the interview stage, Coveny reveals that as well as “stellar degrees and a strong academic track record,” applicants “need to be imaginative and show your commitment and enthusiasm for the areas of law we specialise in. I’ve had potential candidates drop me a line and pop in for a coffee and I’m always happy to make time to meet with people and talk about chambers.” Juniors agreed that “while you’re not expected to know everything about planning, it’s good to have done some research. It can be as basic as reading through the National Planning Policy Framework or watching a public inquiry in the High Court.” Candidates who make it through to the second-round interview have ten minutes to prepare a response to a planning permission-related legal question and a judicial review, before getting a grilling from members.

“While you’re not expected to know everything about planning, it’s good to have done some research.”

Sources told us that FTB “isn’t the most social chambers. Part of that is because people are often away on planning inquiries.” They felt that its culture is built around “keeping the best bits of Bar tradition. Members from all levels come together and talk; everybody knows everybody and because we’re in a specialist area we have the best people in the field here.” Others added that there’s “a real focus on modernising. For example, we have a rule where you can’t have an all-male panel if you’re hosting an event.” Speaking of events, there’s a chambers lunch every day in one of the conference rooms as well as regular chambers tea. FTB also hosts evening shindigs which all members can attend; a recent example was a private viewing of a Da Vinci exhibition.

The Pupillage Experience

Despite FTB’s relatively niche focus, pupils see “a great deal of variation” within the work that chambers offers. “I’ve had a supervisor who did a lot of immigration work and some environmental law nuisance cases; another who focused on environmental planning law; and some random cases about animal safety and exporting animal products,” one source revealed. “There’s still a lot I’ve only had a taste of, like compulsory purchase and rating or licensing.”

Pupils sit with three different supervisors over their year of learning, spending four months with each. “For the first four months you’re in more of a shadowing role and work very closely with your supervisor, having a stab at whatever they’re doing.” An insider said: “You never get stale work – it’s always live even if you’re just dipping your toe in.” We heard plenty of praise for the supervision and support on offer: “I’ve been doing cases and writing opinions in my own name in my second six, and if you walk into the office of a QC or a very senior junior they’ll drop everything to have a chat with you about the case.” That means “you’re able to get up to standard very quickly and by the time you’ve finished with pupillage you’re ready for tenancy. In the second six your work is expected to be as good as if you were a practising barrister.”

Getting on their feet for their second six, pupils are typically “instructed on applications for the Met Police, civil applications for things like closure orders and sexual harm prevention orders. They usually consist of a day of preparation and then a day or two in court.” A source who’d worked on planning applications revealed that “you end up doing quite meaty work because you’re acting for someone who can’t afford a more senior barrister.” They concluded that pupillage provides “a good balance of work that eases you into advocacy without you needing to be in court every day. I recently had my first experience wigged and gowned; people are very good at bringing you on and giving you experience you might not get otherwise.”

“...eases you into advocacy without being in court every day.”

As well as their day-to-day work, pupils complete four advocacy exercises: two mock public inquiries and two mock High Court hearings. These are “opportunities to practise your skills and gain experience rather than formal assessments. A lot of what we do isn’t taught on the BPTC so it’s important to try it out in a friendly environment before the real thing.” Members watch pupils and provide feedback, but these exercises “don’t play a huge part in the tenancy decision.” One interviewee described the advocacy practice as “perhaps the single most useful learning tool in pupillage.”

The tenancy decision is largely based around supervisors’ reports and comments from other tenants – every member gets a vote. Pupils learn whether or not they’ve earned tenancy on the last day of their penultimate month of pupillage, which is pretty late compared to other sets. Our sources reasoned that there are “arguments for and against that. The advantage is that you get as much time as possible to prove yourself, whereas the downside is that you can be unsure of where you stand.” 2020’s tenancy decision was yet to take place when we went to print.
Francis Taylor Building

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Twitter: @FTB_Pupillage

Chambers profile
Francis Taylor Building is a thriving and successful set of Chambers with a growing membership and active recruitment policy at all levels.

Types of work undertaken
As part of our specialist public law practice, members undertake work connected with infrastructure planning projects, transport and works schemes, heritage and conservation, utilities, highways, energy, common land and village greens, minerals, statutory nuisance and regulation, compulsory purchase and compensation, easements and covenants, advertisements, licensing, rating and religious liberty and ecclesiastical law.

Pupil profile
We seek to recruit two exceptionally able individuals with a degree of at least upper second class (not necessarily in law).

The selection process has three main stages. Full details of the criteria for each stage is available on Chambers’ website.

Pupillage
The 12-month period is divided equally between three different pupil supervisors. Pupils will work alongside their pupil supervisor and experience all aspects of their professional lives.

Pupils can expect to read their pupil supervisor’s instructions and papers, research relevant law, attempt their own draft pleadings and opinions for discussion, and accompany their pupil supervisor to hearings and conferences.

After the completion of the first four months of pupillage, pupils are also expected to undertake written work for, and attend hearings with, other members of Chambers as well as their pupil supervisor. In their second six months, pupils are also able and expected to accept instructions to undertake work of their own. In recent years our second-six pupils have been briefed to appear in a variety of courts and tribunals, including the High Court, county court, public inquiries and various administrative tribunals.

Members of Chambers also provide a series of introductory seminars for our pupils during their first six months to familiarise the new pupils with the main areas of Chambers practice and the issues of law and practice that most commonly arise.

We also organise a number of formal advocacy exercises for our pupils during the course of the year, including training in the cross-examination of expert witnesses (usually in partnership with expert witnesses from various external planning consultancies), and in the particular requirements of advocacy in the Administrative Court.

Mini-pupillages
Mini-pupillages are offered in three periods per year: January to March, April to July and October to December. Please refer to the mini-pupillages section of our website for application details and the next dates.

Sponsorships and awards
Two awards of not less than £65,000, including £10,000 guaranteed earnings (up to £25,000 advance for BPTC).
Hailsham Chambers

The facts
Location: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 9/45 (17 women)
Applications: 69
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 2x3 months + 1x6 months
Pupillage award: £45,000 + £5,000 guaranteed earnings (can advance up to £10,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: undisclosed
Mini-pupillage deadlines: TBC

When a doctor, an accountant or even a fellow lawyer gets sued for negligence, they could do worse than to hail Hailsham.

The Chambers
In an ideal world everybody would be perfect at their jobs, nothing would ever go wrong and nobody would need to sue a professional for negligence. It’s good news for Hailsham that we’ll probably never reach this utopia: 40% of the chambers’ practice consists of medical-related clinical negligence and another 40% is professional indemnity of various types. The set earns strong Chambers UK rankings for these two main practice areas. Quite a high proportion of Hailsham’s members dabble in both professional and clinical negligence but a handful do specialise in just one. These are demanding areas so, as a recent pupil put it, “a sincere interest and enthusiasm for negligence law is really appreciated.”

On the medical side of things, “all the big claimant firms” like Irwin Mitchell and Leigh Day call on chambers’ expertise, as do defendant organisations including NHS Resolution and the Medical Defence Union. Andrew Post QC recently defended King’s College Hospital against a wrongful birth claim which totalled £7.5 million. The claim centred on the hospital’s failure to identify that the child’s gender was ambiguous. The parents argued that had they been aware of this information, they would have terminated the pregnancy.

Much of the professional indemnity practice involves representing unlucky lawyers who are themselves being sued by another party. Nicola Rushton QC recently acted for the law firm Stitt and Co as it was sued for the alleged negligence of its conveyancing solicitors by property developer St Paul’s Mews. The developer’s £1–2 million claim was that these lawyers’ poor work meant houses could not be built on land it had purchased. Members also work for accountants, financial advisers and actuaries, and cases can be far-reaching: William Flenley QC was involved in a Court of Appeal case surrounding a €100 million fraud targeting oil billionaire Edward Heerema which touched on the issue of dishonest assistance by solicitors or accountants.

“Sincere interest and enthusiasm for negligence law is really appreciated.”

You might be wondering about that unaccounted-for 20% of chambers’ practice. Most of it’s made up of costs litigation (which focuses on lawyers’ fees and other costs of a court case), topped up with some regulatory and disciplinary work. Again, Chambers UK ranks the firm in these areas. “There’s been a real boom in costs work recently - it’s become such an important part of how litigation is run,” according to senior clerk Stephen Smith. So, Smith says, more and more “a big commercial case will come to the costs stage and then they’ll bring in the big guns – us.” The client base for this area tends to be more random. The UK Foreign Office recently instructed Alexander Hutton QC as costs counsel in a suit brought by 40,000 Kenyans claiming alleged torture and unlawful detention during the Mau Mau Uprising.

Smith was keen to highlight that a handful of barristers migrated over from various other sets in 2018: “Our main focus is having a strong core of barristers who enjoy a work/life balance and can perform at their best, because qual-
ity work is so important. We’ve seen healthy organic growth and we’d like that to continue – in theory we’d like to keep both of our pupils on each year.”

The Pupillage Experience

The first six of pupillage splits into two three-month seats with different supervisors: one in clinical negligence, the other in professional negligence. Pupils will end up seeing a bit of everything chambers does, as their third, six-month-long seat is targeted to cover any blind spots in their learning. Supervisors get “a fair amount of freedom but they know what pupils need to cover and we emphasise that their training is the priority,” head of pupillage Nicola Rushton tells us. Beside their supervisors, pupils complete work for at least ten other members over the course of pupillage; a source found “working for members of varying seniority on cases with different levels of complexity was very useful and interesting.”

Pupils get started by shadowing everything their supervisor does, whether that’s going to court or drafting and comparing notes. Whether the work is dead or from a live case, “supervisors always give immediate feedback” and write up a full appraisal at the end of the seat. “From my first week I was doing lots of drafting, that came to be really beneficial later in pupillage,” an insider recalled. Don’t worry if you’ve got all the medical knowledge of The Simpsons’ Dr Nick – expert reports are always on hand in clinical negligence cases “to help you understand all the different terms.”

“From my first week I was doing lots of drafting.”

The second six involves “striking a balance between taking on your own cases and making sure you’re still impressing your supervisor in the work you do for them.” Pupils can expect to be in court regularly by this point – one said: “It happened at the right time. Members from all levels offer to help with anything you need advice on.” They typically start small on matters like road traffic accident liability hearings and credit hire cases. “Hailsham runs a very open clerks’ room. The most senior clerks work with everybody on their cases including the most junior barristers and pupils,” Stephen Smith says.

“The nature of the beast is that everything you do is assessed to one degree or another,” one former pupil explained. There are two or three formal advocacy exercises to complete before the tenancy decision. These normally take the form of an application and a witness-handling exercise, plus a third task if a pupil needs more practice at something. “If everything’s gone to plan by this point they’re unlikely to be much trouble,” a source assured us. “You learn a lot by osmosis just from sitting in the same room as your supervisor.”

Each supervisor’s appraisal is given “great weight” during the tenancy decision process. The formal exercises are also considered, “not so much in terms of marks, but the comments that came out of them.” A chambers vote is usually unnecessary as “it’s clear if a pupil is ready” – both of Hailsham’s two pupils gained tenancy in 2020.

The Application Process

Hailsham’s recruitment calendar begins with an open evening in January. “Every chambers describes themselves as friendly,” Nicola Rushton points out. “The open evening should demonstrate that we really are!” Of the 25 attendees in 2019, 22 went on to submit a pupillage application. Hailsham uses the Pupillage Gateway but asks applicants an additional question related to clinical or professional negligence, designed so that applicants at any stage of study will be on an even footing. “Including that question is a good way of filtering out applicants that aren’t interested in our specialisms,” Rushton explains.

The next stage is a single-round interview. “Questions aren’t designed to test your point of view on a subject, but on how well you structure your answer and your persuasiveness,” a source who’d aced their interview told us. “The atmosphere is very much one of getting 100% out of you.” According to Rushton “one of the marking categories is judgement, which is tested through an ethical scenario. Emotional intelligence is very valuable in negligence work.” She also advises that “it’s a relatively document-heavy area so information processing is key.”

“We’re looking for pupils with the potential to build their practice here.”

“Our assessment process is geared towards finding the best candidates regardless of their background or any existing connections to the Bar,” Rushton goes on. “We’re looking for pupils with the potential to become members and build their practice here.” Only two of Hailsham’s seven most junior members did an undergrad degree at Oxford. Senior clerk Stephen Smith weighs in: “The main thing we hear from clients all the time is that they just want to work with a human being whom they can feel comfortable talking to about topics that aren’t law.”

And are Hailsham’s humans... human? “There’s no dog-eat-dog atmosphere here at all,” according to one insider. “The barristers and clerks are a friendly bunch and strike
a good balance between approachability and pushing you to develop your practice when you need it.” Chambers tea “will sometimes take place if somebody’s got a lot of cake to eat through” on their birthday or another occasion. “If you’re looking to go for drinks every Friday night this might not be the place for you,” but juniors get together for dinner once a month or so and there are some social events within chambers too.

You got a friend in me
Throughout their learning, pupils get assigned a recent tenant to act as a junior mentor who can “answer any really stupid questions you might have.”
Hailsham Chambers

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Chambers profile
At Hailsham Chambers we excel in our key areas of professional negligence, medical law, professional disciplinary and regulatory, costs, personal injury and commercial litigation. We win awards for our excellence and are recognised by the legal directories as a leading set for four of our main fields. Our work ethos is to provide the highest standards of advocacy, advice and service, which is complemented by the support given by members to each other across Chambers. We are proud of our history but we are a forward-thinking set.

Pupil profile
We want motivated, intellectually able candidates who are persuasive communicators and determined to succeed. Usually a minimum 2:1 degree is required but we focus on ability and potential.

Pupillage
We provide 12 months’ intensive, high-quality training in a relaxed atmosphere with two supervisors for three months each and a third for the final six. Candidates can expect supervision in two or more areas of Chambers’ specialisation. After six months, pupils accept instructions and attend court on their own account. Feedback is considered crucial for the learning process and a mentor is always available to discuss pupillage confidentially. Our pupils and junior tenants are busy and their billings compare well to solicitor equivalents.

Mini-pupillages
Mini-pupillages give insight into Chambers’ areas of practice and life as a junior tenant, and are unassessed. Candidates submit a CV and covering letter to meet the criteria set out on Chambers’ website. We consider two batches of mini-pupillage applications on 31st December and 31st July each year.

Sponsorship and awards
We offer a £50,000 award including £5,000 guaranteed earnings and excellent training and prospects, with the aim to invite successful pupils to become tenants. We also allow pupils to draw down up to £10,000 during the BPTC year.
1 Hare Court

The facts
Location: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 14/27 (19 women)
Applications: undisclosed
Outside Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 3x4 months
Pupillage award: £35,000 (can advance £10,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: undisclosed
Mini-pupillage deadlines: 31 January 2021 and 31 July 2021

Winning the race to the top of the matrimonial finance world, this is 1 Hare you don’t want to bet against, especially in a divorce...

The Chambers
Senior clerk Steve McCrone “started here 30 years ago, when 1HC was a full-service family law set.” Things changed once “legal aid provision changed and most of our instructing solicitors decided not to continue with legal aid. That’s when our specialisation in the financial side of family law started.” As anyone who’s ever got married knows full well, matrimonial finance is a thorny subject, and you should leave any preconceptions of ‘simple’ family law at the door. While the set “still does children work, it’s more at the junior end, or where children issues run hand-in-hand with financial affairs,” McCrone tells us.

“We want people to join us because they’ve got passion for family law.”

1 Hare Court’s website summarises the set’s scope as “acting for people from all walks of life, from international multimillionaires and celebrities, to the man and woman on the street.” It’s also got a wonderful video of a hare scampering around chambers’ surroundings, which we could watch all day. The more disciplined folks at Chambers UK Bar instead took the time to rank 1HC top in London for matrimonial finance. Recent high-profile cases include Richard Todd QC acting as lead counsel on a Supreme Court case which has become a go-to on prenuptial agreement issues; Nicholas Cusworth QC representing a wife in the successful adjournment of English proceedings in favour of an ongoing Italian Court case; and Nigel Dyer QC advising on a Chancery Division appeal to determine if a wife occupying a house pending post-divorce sale should be considered a trespasser.

Looking to the junior end, a recently qualified tenant described “cases where divorced clients can’t buy two houses, so how will they both have a home? Interesting in a different way!” As for value, we’re looking at “a couple of hundred grand to a couple of million,” a pupil told us. Looking to the future, McCrone tells us the priority for 4NS is to “maintain chambers’ position in the market” with a focus on “organic growth.” Pupillage is a big part of that, so it’s good news that 4 New Square granted tenancy to both pupils in 2020. “It’s an encouraging sign for now and the future – chambers has reduced the number of pupils it takes but increased the pupillage award to compete with some of the commercial sets who offer larger packages.” McCrone concludes: “We want people to join us because they’ve got a passion for family law.”

Juniors described 1HC’s culture as “ambitious but supportive. We do hard work and appreciating the balance that’s required for everyone. Looking at chambers as a whole, including members who are married or have children, it seems you can balance those commitments.” Steve McCrone summarised the set: “If you’ve got a passion for family law – especially the financial side – and dealing with high net worth individuals, trust cases and complicated financial remedies matters, there’s nowhere better to go.”

The Pupillage Experience
Pupillage’s structure is straightforward: pupils sit with three different supervisors for four months each. The arrangement is an open marriage: “You can go and see other people. If your supervisor has a quiet week they’ll find out who else is doing something interesting.” Pupillage com-
“You’ve got to be able to win the trust of your client, who for the first 10 to 15 years of your career is likely to be significantly older than you.” Harvey lays out the tightrope that members need to tiptoe: “You have to able to inspire trust and empathise to inspire confidence, but also maintain a professional distance. You’re not a counsellor or a friend.”

The Application Process
Sat outside the pupillage gateway, 1 Hare Court asks simply for a CV and cover letter. “It’s changed from a handwritten submission to a typed letter, which is useful,” a junior chuckled. Pupils preferred the non-Gateway application route as “you aren’t constrained by word count. In a cover letter you can address what you’d like to, rather than answer generic questions.” Once the applications are in, “about half of the committee does a first sift,” Tom Harvey reveals. 20 to 25 candidates progress to a first-round interview “that’s all about you as a candidate,” previously successful applicants said. The panel invites eight or so standouts to a “more rigorous” second session. “You’re given cases to read about a week beforehand and have to set out how you’d deal with those issues,” they explained.

“If you’ve never studied family law before,” you won’t be at a disadvantage during interviews. Juniors assured us the aim is to “see how applicants do with knowledge provided to them, rather than looking for advance specialism in family law.” Harvey confirms the committee isn’t looking to “trip you up,” and there’s “not one particular characteristic” the set is looking for. “If you join here, you’ll be in court two to three times a week – so you’ve got to have a desire to do advocacy.” It also helps “to be self-assured and clear about what you want from practice.” A pupil added that it helps to “have a relatively strong and personable character.”

“If you join here, you’ll be in court two to three times a week – so you’ve got to have a desire to do advocacy.”

1HC doesn’t subscribe to every hare-brained Bar tradition, but pupils noted “there is tea on Thursday afternoon and we’re sometimes lucky enough to have champagne, which goes down well.” Bubbly teas can spill into after work drinks. “My co-pupil and I go about once a fortnight,” one pupil said, “there is tea on Thursday afternoon and we’re sometimes lucky enough to have champagne, which goes down well.” Bubbly teas can spill into after work drinks. “My co-pupil and I go about once a fortnight,” one pupil said. “There’s also an interview round in the form of a mock trial: “We put pupils in a courtroom situation and ask them to deal with a sample case. That lasts roughly 20 minutes; the second half is questions from the committee about the work they’ve done and anything they’ve found challenging.” Harvey confirms pupils aren’t kept in the lurch, and the committee “tries to reach a decision within a week.”

Throughout pupillage “there are soft skills that you need to demonstrate. You’ve got to be able to win the trust of your client, who for the first ten to 15 years of your career is likely to be significantly older than you.” Harvey lays out the tightrope that members need to tiptoe: “You have to able to inspire trust and empathise to inspire confidence, but also maintain a professional distance. You’re not a counsellor or a friend.”
1 Hare Court

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Chambers profile
1 Hare Court was the first set of chambers to specialise in family law. The majority of chambers' work is in the area of matrimonial finance, and members of chambers also advise and act in private child law and TOLATA disputes. We now have 14 silks, 27 juniors and four associate members. Former members of chambers include three former members of the Court of Appeal, three former Presidents of the High Court Family Division, two current High Court Judges (Philip Moor and Nicholas Mostyn), and three former High Court Judges. Current members of chambers have acted in almost all landmark matrimonial finance cases, including White, Miller/McFarlane, Charman, Agbaje, Macleod, Radmacher v Granatino, Petrodel v Prest, Wyatt v Vince, Sharland, Cooper-Hohn v Hohn. More recent cases of significance in shaping the direction of family law, in which current members of chambers have acted, include Chai v Peng, Work v Gray, Birch, Thum, Owens, Waggott, Martin, WX v XH, Potanin v Potanina and FRB v DCA [No 2].

We expect that applicants will have a strong academic record. 1 Hare Court has a long-standing tradition of contributing to legal works. Rayden on Divorce, the principal practitioners’ textbook, was renamed Rayden & Jackson as a tribute to the former head of chambers Joseph Jackson QC, who edited the work for many years. Members of chambers continue to edit Rayden & Jackson, as well as many other leading books, and we regularly contribute articles to the specialist press. Candidates who demonstrate the potential to carry on this strong intellectual tradition will impress.

A pupillage at 1 Hare Court offers training in advocacy, advice and drafting in every aspect of family work, particularly matrimonial finance. Our strong reputation and the quality of training available means that those pupils who are not taken on stand a good prospect of finding a professional opportunity elsewhere, frequently in other specialist chambers or firms.

Who should apply: Candidates should be able to show that they have a flair for advocacy, presentational and analytical skills and the ability to develop sound judgment, as well as having a strong academic record. Given the emphasis on financial work, some aptitude and interest in commercial/financial matters is desirable. However, chambers’ work remains rooted in human problems and a sympathetic but perceptive response to those problems is essential.

When and how to apply: We recruit pupils once a year. Applications for pupillages commencing in October 2022 open and close in accordance with the Pupillage Gateway timetable. Applications should be sent with a full CV and typed covering letter (marked pupillage application) to the chambers’ administrator. References may be helpful. Those invited for an interview are likely to be interviewed on a Saturday in April 2021. Chambers is not a member of Pupillage Gateway but keeps to the timetable for the communication and acceptance of offers. For more information see the chambers’ website.

Mini-pupillages
These are available during term time only. Applicants must be at least at undergraduate level and have some interest in family law. Applications are accepted twice a year and should be sent with a full CV and typed covering letter marked for the attention of Georgina Howitt.

Applications for mini-pupillages are usually assessed twice per year. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, we will not be accepting applications for mini-pupillages until January 2021. For mini-pupillages between February and July 2021, applications should be submitted between 1-31 January 2021. For mini pupillages between October 2021 and January 2022, applications should be submitted between 1-31 July 2021. Please note that ordinarily applications will not be considered outside these application periods.

Sponsorship/funding
Two fully-funded pupillages.
Henderson Chambers

The facts
Location: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 14/36
Applications: over 100
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £70,000
Mini-pupillages pa: up to 36
Mini-pupillage deadlines: end November 2020, end of March 2021 and end of July 2021

Hop on over to Henderson for top-class product liability, health & safety and consumer law cases (and much more...)

The Chambers
“I couldn’t believe how friendly and welcoming everyone was. I was really taken aback by the open environment,” beamed a representative pupil interviewee. While this humble 50-member set may have created a homely environment it certainly means business when it comes to work. “We are very well known for our product liability and health & safety expertise,” says chambers director Jason Housden, who took the reins in May 2020. However, there’s a lot more going on at Henderson than just product liability, with Housden explaining that the set’s work can be broken down into the following percentages: 30% product liability, 25% commercial (spanning regulatory, European law, public law and procurement issues), 20% health and safety, 10% consumer and 5% apiece for environment, property and employment matters. An examination of the Chambers UK Bar rankings confirms that Henderson is top dog when it comes to product liability and health & safety work in London, but it also scores high marks for its IT, environment and consumer law expertise.

“The 100,000 claimants we’re managing on the Volkswagen deal is a prime example of just how big it is.”

“The theme that runs through many of these areas is group actions,” adds Housden. “We have appeared in most of the leading group actions over the past 20 years and developed the law in this area.” Pupils agreed that the set should shout louder about the standard of its work in the group litigation arena, with one telling us that they weren’t “aware of how specialist the group litigation work is at Henderson. The 100,000 claimants we’re managing on the Volkswagen deal is a prime example of just how big it is.” Another interviewee described the set as having hit “the sweet spot, as here you have the big group commercial litigation but also have the ability to go to court for advocacy [on smaller, discrete matters].”

A recent and widely publicised matter showcases the set’s group litigation prowess: members recently acted on the Post Office group litigation for over 550 claimants who suffered business losses caused by the introduction of a new IT system and the way in which business franchising practices were run. Over in product liability, members have recently acted for Johnson & Johnson UK over claims that one of its incontinence products caused long-term injuries, as well as GlaxoSmithKline in a group litigation against claims that its antidepressant Seroxat has higher withdrawal rates and is therefore a defective product. On the health and safety front, Oliver Campbell QC was involved in the inquest into the death of a 15-year-old girl following an allergic reaction to a Pret a Manger product. Environment members, meanwhile, have been working on claims that have been brought following the collapse of a dam in Brazil.

The Pupillage Experience
The pupillage year is broken into four three-month stints. Each rotation is with a different supervisor and together they expose newbies to the majority of the set’s prac-
ties. It’s not completely compartmentalised, however, as we heard pupils “work exclusively with their pupil supervisor for the first three months” and subsequently end up doing work for other members of chambers with a view to building up the feedback forms for tenancy. “You’ll typically work with around 15 members of chambers outside of your pupil supervisors,” one source confirmed.

All pupils’ work is live. Writing up advice and research notes are staple activities. Pupils also find themselves “drafting statements of cases, letters for action, opinions, orders and skeleton arguments.” Sources felt that the fact their work was live gave them an advantage as “you’re not just tickling things off the list and going through the motions. My supervisors have really integrated me into what they’ve been doing. They’ve taken me to conferences and court hearings, and I’ve been involved in calls from solicitors. You go through the experience with them.” Another pupil found that there is “real assistance from your supervisors. They show you off around chambers and say to senior members that you’re keen to work with them and ask if they have any work you can help with.” Pupils typically begin taking on their own cases during the second six, by appearing in court a few times a week on matters like landlord/tenant disputes and possession hearings. Covid-19 has impacted the pupil experience this year, with one explaining that lockdown meant that “there wasn’t much difference between the tasks [in the first and second sixes].” However, sources did praise their supervisors for “trying their best to get us involved in calls.” Barrister and director of pupillage training Adam Heppinstall also assures us that “supervisors take daily interest in their pupil and during lockdown have used everything from a text to telegram messaging to stay in touch.”

When it comes to assessment, Heppinstall explains how “supervisors express their assessment in prose, alongside a grade out of five on a mid-seat basis and end-of-seat basis. The seat grade together with the report is what goes towards the tenancy decision in July.” Pupils undergo around two to three formal advocacy assessments, starting off with an exercise in front of a junior member and working their way up to presenting to a judge. One pupil told us that their judge was “a former member of this chambers. It was exactly how you would expect an advocacy assessment to be done, but what was interesting about it was that it was a real case with real papers.” The case presents the real difficulties that you would encounter if you got a set of papers.” Henderson conducts no formal written assessments, though all work completed throughout the pupillage is considered in a dossier of reports, which is supplemented by feedback from supervisors.

Pupillage hours are stated as 9am to 6pm but the nature of working on live cases means “you can’t cling on to the 9 to 5 five days a week,” one pupil explained. Another informed us that “there have been times when, for example, I’ve been given a particular of claim to draft on a Friday and have ended up working the bank holiday weekend.” Overall, the set “encourages you to manage your time, and if there isn’t any work to do you’re expected to leave no later than 6pm.” This leaves enough time for pupils to collectively enjoy the occasional “wine and beer in the hall, replacing the formal tea!” (Although we’re sure that tea would still be available if that’s your tipple.) We also heard that “Friday lunches are a big thing: an email is sent around asking if anyone wants to pop along to the hall for lunch.” Heppinstall adds that “pupils really do become part of the life in chambers. We don’t send them down to the basement and tell them to come up at 4pm for a chat!”

The Application Process
Before even contemplating Henderson’s basement, you need to head on over to the set’s pupil portal and fill out an application form. “Working with the organisation Rare to run a contextualised recruitment process is one of the big innovations we brought online this year,” explains Heppinstall. Candidates fill out an application form on the Rare system, which “takes into account various socio-economic factors. It identifies their school and measures their grades against the average. Marks are then brought together from the application form, they are marginally adjusted using the Rare system, and the top 30 candidates are invited to a first-round interview.”

At interview, three junior members of chambers and a senior chair will ask a mix of legal and non-legal questions to whittle down the final interview candidates to between 12 and 15 successful candidates. This final round “includes all members of the recruitment committee and covers questions about certain cases in chambers.” Heppinstall explains. Although academic excellence may have been on the set’s radar for a long time, Heppinstall reveals that this is now put into context “once the sift is done (using the Rare system alongside). We also now use the STAR [situation, task, action, result] interview technique to see how candidates work as a team, what their time management skills are like and how they would relay advice to clients. These changes have created a much better interviewing environment.”
Henderson Chambers

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Chambers profile
Henderson Chambers is a leading commercial/common law chambers with acknowledged expertise in all of its principal areas of practice. Members and pupils are frequently involved in high-profile commercial and common law litigation.

Type of work undertaken
Henderson Chambers has unrivalled expertise in product liability (which covers a wide range of commercial work including sale of goods and insurance disputes, multi-party pharmaceutical and medical device claims and regulatory and enforcement proceedings) and is consistently rated as the leading set in this area. Chambers is also widely recognised for the excellence of its health and safety work.

Over the last few decades Chambers has been involved in many of the major commercial and landmark International Group Actions.

In addition, members are noted for their expertise and experience in areas including: banking and finance, consumer credit, employment law, regulatory and disciplinary proceedings, public law and judicial review, personal injury, property law, and technology and construction. Several members of Chambers are Treasury Counsel (Civil). Many of them are currently engaged in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the VW Emissions Litigation and in the recently concluded Post Office Group Action.

Pupil profile
Chambers looks for individuals who can demonstrate a first-class intellect whether via the traditional route of an outstanding higher education record or via proof of success in other professions, in business or in employment. It is a friendly and sociable set which works hard, both at servicing the needs of clients, as well as engendering a nurturing and supportive professional environment. Chambers is looking for potential tenants who can help it meet those twin objectives.

Pupillage
Pupillages are for 12 months, usually with four different pupil supervisors for three months each. Pupils have the opportunity to spend four weeks at Griffiths & Partners in the Turks and Caicos Islands in order to experience practice in another jurisdiction at first hand. Pupils will attend court regularly (on their own cases) during their second six months.

Mini-pupillages
Chambers offers unassessed mini-pupillages. Our online application system operates to fixed application periods. Visit our pupillage website at www.hendersonpupillage.co.uk for details of how to apply. We also recognise that for those who live outside the capital, it can be expensive to stay in London.

We offer up to 15 bursaries every year of £200 each to candidates who are likely to have difficulty meeting the costs of attending a mini-pupillage with us.

Funding
Chambers offers up to two funded 12-month pupillages a year. Our pupils receive a minimum remuneration of £70,000. This consists of a guaranteed award of £70,000, plus any additional earnings during the second six months. A drawdown of up to £20,000 is available during the year.
11KBW

The facts
Location: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 20/43
Applications: 150
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 3
Seats: 2x3 + 1x6 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance up to £15,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 30-35
Mini-pupillage deadline: 9 November 2020 (assessed)

Pupils here get a “rigorous but fair” ride through the niches, nooks and crannies of 11KBW’s two focus areas: employment and public law.

The Chambers
Head away from the bustle of Fleet Street, Embankment and the Strand into the calm haven of Inner Temple Garden and you might find yourself at the doorstep of 11KBW. The set was founded in 1981 by ten barristers (including one you may just have heard of, former PM Tony Blair) against a backdrop of Thatcher’s Right to Buy scheme, the downfall of some of the UK’s biggest employment sources and a series of riots across the country. It’s no wonder that the set has a “strong tradition of public service” and its two main areas of work are employment and public law. “There aren’t too many sets that are a leading force in both those areas.”

Public law covers niche areas such as education, environment, procurement and community care, while employment can come in the form of sports and media, competition and data protection or human rights work. Chambers UK Bar bestows top rankings on 11KBW’s community care, public procurement, data protection, local government, education and employment practices; the set also acquits itself very well in administrative and public law, European law, and civil liberties and human rights. Brexit has helped shine a spotlight on the chambers: Jason Coppe QC caused a stir by appearing in the High Court to argue that Boris Johnson misled the public during the campaign.

“Strong tradition of public service.”

Joint senior clerk Mark Dann tells us that “11KBW’s practice splits roughly 50:50 between employment and public work.” The employment practice is itself split almost evenly between claimant and defendant work. Silks such as John Cavanagh QC have been working on matters like representing the BMA union in a test case about junior doctors’ rest breaks; he also acted for Virgin to obtain an injunction to prevent a pilots’ strike over the December holiday period. Daniel Stilitz QC took on a case in the Court of Appeal raising human rights arguments to contend that deputy district judges should be protected by whistle-blowing legislation.

11KBW’s breadth in this area can lead to some strange contradictions: Christopher Jeans QC worked to reinforce Deliveroo’s assertion that riders are not ‘workers’, whereas fellow member Sean Jones won a victory for Hermes couriers and established that as ‘workers’ they were entitled to the National Minimum Wage. Headline-snatching cases carry across into the public side: community care cases have included Andrew Sharland defending Nottinghamshire County Council in a public inquiry into the mistreatment of children in care of Nottinghamshire councils, and Hannah Slarks representing the government in a dispute over the compensation scheme for victims who contracted hepatitis C and HIV from contaminated NHS blood products.

Education is one of the biggest slices in the public law pie. Jonathan Moffett QC defended Surrey County Council’s decision to make cuts in its special educational needs budget; other members have worked on similar cases in the borough of Hackney and in Bristol. Other educational work includes representing parents in disputes over their
Work is, however, man’s enjoyment. 11KBW welcomes one to the type of legal work that matters. If that isn’t for you, it’s a different life for you. We heard from insiders that “everyone is generous in sharing their wisdom and experience. It’s great to have confidential moral support from someone who’s been there and done it.”

The Pupillage Experience
Pupillage is split into two three-month seats and another lasting six months. The first seat primarily involves taking work from your supervisor, but in the second and third pupils will mostly be plying their trade with other members. “Seats aren’t fixed on a particular area - you can do a whole mix in any given month.” Work is, however, managed by supervisors so newbies don’t get swamped. A cornucopia of written tasks includes pleadings, skeleton arguments and opinions, and pupils also shadow other members at court and tribunal hearings. Nobody gets on their feet in court until after the tenancy decision - pupil supervisors report and advocacy exercise. The members test pupils on their feet in court until after the tenancy decision - pupil supervisors report and advocacy exercise. The members test for consistency, and pupils meet both markers - tangible subjects that don’t put non-law students at a disadvantage. Around 30 make it through to a three-day mini-pupillage. Candidates spend the first two days working for different supervisors; on the third day they visit chambers to meet their future tenant. Applicants receive a recent case in advance so they can come prepared to talk about it confidently.” The type of case changes on rotation but they’re all “people’s issues” - things that matter to people. Pupils also get a junior tenant mentor: “It’s great to have confidential moral support from someone who’s been there and done it.”

Each piece of work goes into the pupil’s folder along with supervisor reports and advocacy exercise performance reviews. There are three advocacy tests during pupillage - one for public law, another for employment and one more that could cover either. The pupillage committee takes all this into consideration when it makes the tenancy decision: Knight calls the process “rigorous but fair because it’s evidence-based. You can only make the process so pleasant but we try to avoid stress as much as possible.” Insiders found the process “transparent and objective. It’s made very clear what you need to do.” In 2020, 11KBW’s tenancy decisions were pending at the time we went to print.

The Application Process
Candidates must first get a place on an assessed mini-pupillage in early November. Hopefuls apply through a form; around 60 or 70 make it to a first-round interview. Applicants receive a recent case in advance so they can come prepared to talk about it confidently.” The type of case changes on rotation but they’re all “people’s issues” - tangible subjects that don’t put non-law students at a disadvantage. Around 30 make it through to a three-day mini-pupillage. Candidates spend the first two days working for different supervisors; on the third day they visit chambers to meet their future tenant. Applicants receive a recent case in advance so they can come prepared to talk about it confidently.” The type of case changes on rotation but they’re all “people’s issues” - tangible subjects that don’t put non-law students at a disadvantage. Around 30 make it through to a three-day mini-pupillage. Candidates spend the first two days working for different supervisors; on the third day they visit chambers to meet their future tenant. People are also invited to a recent case in advance so they can come prepared to talk about it confidently.” The type of case changes on rotation but they’re all “people’s issues” - tangible subjects that don’t put non-law students at a disadvantage. Around 30 make it through to a three-day mini-pupillage. Candidates spend the first two days working for different supervisors; on the third day they visit chambers to meet their future tenant. People are also interested in having as tenants.” 11KBW welcomes one to four pupils a year.

“...no expectation at all to work into the evenings.”

A chunky hardback titled Women’s Legal Landmarks sits on a table at 11KBW’s reception, reinforcing its commitment to female talent. High Court Justice Dame Elizabeth Laing and recently retired High Court Justice Dame Elizabeth Slade both hailed from 11KBW; there are also a number of women in senior positions in the “historically male-dominated” clerks’ room. “I’d like to think that we run...
a fair and equal clerks’ room here,” joint senior clerk Lucy Barbet says.

Speaking of fair, pupils tend to head home by 6.30pm on an average day; it’s an hour later on average for junior members. We heard “there’s no expectation at all to work into the evenings – they actively encourage you not to.” It helps that 11KBW’s public-focused work means “you don’t want to waste clients’ money spending a lot of time on something.” The flip side of that coin is “you also end up not billing for a lot of work because it doesn’t feel fair.”

And finally...

The fruits of your labours
Healthy eaters need not worry – 11KBW’s cakefest is balanced out with plenty of wholesome fresh fruit.
Chambers profile
We are a specialist civil law set providing high quality advice and advocacy to a wide range of private and public sector clients, both claimants and defendants.

Types of work undertaken
Pupils can expect to gain a range of experience across the following areas: public law and human rights; employment and discrimination law; commercial law; European community law; data protection; information law, media and data privacy; public procurement, partnership, professional discipline and regulatory law and sports law.

Pupillage
The great majority of tenants are recruited from those who have done a 12-month pupillage here. We offer pupillages only to those who we believe have the potential to become tenants and our policy is to offer tenancy to all pupils who meet the required standard during their pupillage. We place a high premium on outstanding intellectual ability, but we are also looking for the strong advocacy skills, determination and practical common sense that will lead to a successful practice.

11KBW is a member of the Pupillage Gateway. Applications for pupillage commencing October 2022 should be made in the new Pupillage Gateway spring round in 2021 (although we accept deferred applications). Interviews will be held in April 2021 and offers of pupillage made in accordance with the Pupillage Gateway timetable. We require applicants for pupillage to do an assessed mini-pupillage in chambers. When we make pupillage selection decisions we take into account performance in assessed mini-pupilages, together with Pupillage Gateway application forms and performance at interview. Applicants must have a first or good upper second class degree (in any academic field).

Mini-pupilages
Chambers requires applicants for pupillage through Pupillage Gateway to do a one week assessed mini-pupillage in chambers. The deadline for applications for mini-pupillage is 9th November 2020 for those applying through Pupillage Gateway for pupillage commencing in October 2022. We will invite candidates for assessed mini-pupilages to a short interview in chambers in December 2020. If that causes particular difficulties, we will consider applications for alternative arrangements, such as interview by video conference. Assessed mini-pupilages will take place between January and March 2021. In exceptional circumstances, applicants for pupillage may ask to submit a written answer to a mini-pupillage problem instead of doing an assessed mini-pupillage in chambers. Any such application should also be made by 9th November 2020 for those applying for pupillage commencing in October 2022.

Awards
We offer a Pupillage Award of £65,000 (up to £15,000 of the pupillage award may be paid to prospective pupils as an advance in their BPTC year).
Keating Chambers

The facts

Locations: Essex Street, London
Number of QCs/Juniors: 30/33 (14 women)
Applications: undisclosed
Apply inside the Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 3
Seat: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £70,000 (can advance £21,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: several (number varies)
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

Keep calm and Keating on: construction and commercial cases are all in a day’s work for members here.

The Chambers

“Someone once said that if you can build it, and if there’s a delay or defect to the project, we can deal with it,” senior clerk Will Shrubsall says of Keating Chambers. Construction law is one of the biggest cogs in the machine of its practice, but the set has a broader commercial practice: “The vast majority of our work arises out of construction, engineering and infrastructure projects around the world,” Shrubsall elaborates. “We do a vast amount of work related to energy, rail, hospitals, roads and schools.”

Chambers UK Bar acknowledges the set’s expertise with top rankings for construction; international construction and engineering arbitration; energy and natural resources; and public procurement. “Our public procurement team is relatively small, but we have top leading silks and a number of highly recognised juniors,” Shrubsall notes. “We’re looking to organically grow that area with pupils that come through.” Keating is also open to lateral growth, as was made clear when Charles Banner QC made the leap from Landmark Chambers, bringing with him a caseload including Heathrow’s third runway dispute. You’ll often see Keating’s name on cases linked to the capital’s transport: Sarah Hannaford QC recently led a team for train manufacturers Alstom in a dispute with London Underground over the procurement of a new fleet on the deep-tube lines.

“In other areas of Keating’s practice, Adam Constable QC represented Keadby Generation as claimant in the High Court after a fire destroyed Yorkshire’s Ferrybridge power station and caused £70 million of losses. Fellow members Marcus Tavener QC and Tom Owen took roles on a £150 million professional negligence case surrounding a shopping centre development and the scope and nature of duties for surveyors, architects and other construction professionals. Many prospective pupils were drawn to the set’s commercial prowess, but head of pupillage Lucy Garrett QC pre-warns that “you have to be shrewd as well as intelligent in the commercial world. That’s what we’re looking for.”

The Pupillage Experience

Pupillage at Keating consists of four seats of three months, each with a different supervisor. Lucy Garrett QC elaborates that “although we’re all members of a broad church, there are some members that focus more on different areas like procurement or oil and gas. We make sure pupils see the different aspects of practice.” Each pupil will sit with supervisors of various seniorities. The first seat acts as an introduction: Garrett explains that “the first three months are seen as a learning curve. We don’t let pupils do work for anyone else in chambers in their first three months, only their pupil supervisor. They should be allowed to make mistakes without it impacting their prospect of gaining tenancy.” Pupils tackle both live and historic work, most often drafting pleadings and opinions. A junior also

“Keep calm and Keating on: construction and commercial cases are all in a day’s work for members here.”
recalled time spent on “skeleton arguments and advice, which were fairly short and discrete.”

“They should be allowed to make mistakes without it impacting their prospect of gaining tenancy.”

“You get more involved in the practice of your supervisor” from the second seat, while also starting work for other members of chambers. Pupils sorted through “pleadings, defences, particulars of claim, replies – lots of drafting!” By the third seat they’ll usually be on their feet and start talking on “little pieces of work in our own right.” A junior member recalled providing “advice over the phone on contractual points; helping a solicitor draft a defence; and working on a few hearings in County Court – small procedural applications or resisting summary judgment.” Our pupil sources also received “an introduction to adjudications, which are a big feature of construction law.”

The experience of getting up in front of a judge was “incredibly nerve-wracking at first,” but a leap of faith worth taking. “A lot of it is about being fearless, doing your best and being polite.” More recent pupils had a spot of bad luck in the timing of their second six: when Covid-19 hit, many hearings were cancelled or postponed. “Our clerks and supervisors have been trying to get us cases, but there’s just been fewer of them to go around,” pupils lamented. They’d be likely to handle “three or four hearings during the second six” in normal circumstances. “It picks up more after the tenancy decision,” which usually precedes pupils’ fourth seat.

“A lot of it is about being fearless, doing your best and being polite.”

Pupils also undertake three assessed advocacy exercises over the year – “the third exercise is more important than the first,” to account for progress over time. A silk judges each session, and they usually resemble “mock court hearings based on real cases.” Each pupil supervisor will provide a detailed report on their charges and assess them against the set’s criteria. “Every member a pupil works for will complete a standardised form that goes to the tenancy committee,” sources said. Keating’s committee will review all the documentation and produce a report on who should earn tenancy. Interviewees reckoned “reports from your supervisors carry the most weight, especially from your second and third seats.” Sources also emphasised that Keating is “looking for a trajectory of improvement to demonstrate you’re learning and continuing to improve while practising.” In 2020, all three pupils secured tenancy.

“A lot of people have their head down and work very hard, but they will also be friendly and social,” sources suggested. They were especially relieved to find that “barristers are very willing to field questions from junior members of chambers.” Pupils felt well supported, even during the 2020 lockdown: “The clerks have checked in on us repeatedly, telling us how they’ve been managing to get work and checking in on our wellbeing. They’re pretty attentive.” In more normal circumstances, “we normally go for drinks with members on a regular basis,” pupils said – it certainly helps that Keating Chambers is located across the road from multiple popular pubs. The set hosts Christmas and summer parties, and more active members can get their sweat on as part of chambers’ netball and football teams. If you’re more of a foodie, there’s a weekly chambers lunch which “all staff and barristers are invited to.”

The Application Process

Prospective applicants can find Keating on the Pupillage Gateway. The set marks initial applications anonymously to “eliminate opportunities for unconscious bias to creep in.” After this paper sift, around 50 applicants receive a “written case study, upon which they produce an opinion.” These will often be based on a real case, sometimes simplified to ensure the process isn’t too challenging. Lucy Garrett QC gives us more detail: “We provide the candidate with an extract from the relevant legal textbook that covers the principles they’re advising on. We’re not trying to test how well revised someone is like an exam – we’re trying to work out how good they are at applying the facts to the case.”

“We’ve seen all sorts of cool topics presented on, from teaching a chimpanzee to talk to motorbike cornering.”

Some 25 to 30 candidates who’ve shown promise progress to a first-round interview at Keating Chambers in front of a panel of around five pupillage committee members. Candidates will typically answer questions based on their CV and application form and complete an advocacy exercise. “In my interview the committee asked me whether it was defensible that there were only two women on the Supreme Court,” a current pupil reminisced. “I had to argue that it was, which was trickier!”

Between ten and 14 candidates earn places in a second-round interview in front of a similar-sized panel. This involves a five-minute presentation on a topic of the candidate’s choice: “We’ve seen all sorts of cool topics presented on the years, from teaching a chimpanzee to talk to...”
motorbike cornering.” Garrett reveals. That’s followed by a return to the candidate’s initial case study opinion: a successful applicant recalled that “the panel changed some facts from the case study and then asked whether it would change the advice I gave.” Candidates usually have to also answer 15 minutes of structured questions, often including ethical questions. The panel marks each candidate individually and the combined mark is expressed as a total percentage – to secure pupillage at Keating, candidates must score at least 85%. At first, the top three performers will receive an offer; Garrett adds that “if the fourth or fifth candidate gets more than 85%, they might receive a pupillage offer if one of the top three refuses.”

Build build build

Though construction is key at Keating, sources stressed “a preconceived interest in construction law is not at all essential.”
Keating Chambers

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Tel: 020 7544 2600  Fax: 020 7544 2700
Website: www.keatingchambers.com

Chambers profile
Keating Chambers is a leading commercial set specialising in high-profile commercial litigation and international arbitration. We specialise in construction, engineering, energy, shipbuilding, procurement and professional negligence. These disputes often relate to significant projects in the UK and overseas and typically involve complex issues in the law of tort, contract and restitution. Chambers is based in modern premises just outside the Temple. In their first years of practice, tenants can expect earnings equivalent to those in other top sets of commercial chambers.

Type of work undertaken
Our members are involved in disputes of all shapes and sizes: from residential building works to multi-million pound projects for the construction of airports, dams, power stations and bridges. Members of chambers have been instructed on projects such as the Olympic venues, Wembley Stadium, the Pinnacle, the Shard, the Gherkin, the Millennium Bridge, the London Eye and the Channel Tunnel. Work also includes rapidly developing areas such as IT, telecommunications, energy, planning and environment and EU law. Members act as advocates in litigation and arbitration throughout the UK. We are often instructed to act in international hearings elsewhere in Europe and throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Caribbean. A number of our members specialise in international arbitration. New and alternative methods of dispute resolution are often used and several members are frequently appointed as mediators, arbitrators and adjudicators.

Chambers’ area of practice is dynamic and challenging. The relevant principles of law are constantly developing and the technical complexity of disputes requires thorough analytical skills.

Members of Keating Chambers regularly publish books, articles and journals. Keating on Construction Contracts, the leading textbook in its field, is written and researched by current members of Chambers, along with the Construction Law Reports. We also contribute to Halsbury’s Laws of England and Chitty on Contracts.

Pupil profile
It must be emphasised that no specialist or technical knowledge of construction or engineering is required or assumed. However, a sound understanding of the principles of contract and tort law is essential. Save in exceptional cases, we expect applicants to have an upper second or first class degree, whether in law or not. Chambers assesses all applications using its own selection criteria, which can be found on our website, along with a full explanation of the selection process.

Pupillage
Pupils are normally allocated four supervisors in the course of their 12-month pupillage. This ensures that each pupil sees a variety of work of differing levels of complexity within chambers.

Comprehensive training in the core skills is required for practice in our field. To this end, pupils are encouraged to prepare drafts of pleadings, advices, letters and other documents that their supervisor or another member of chambers is instructed to prepare. Pupils are also asked to prepare skeleton arguments for hearings. They attend conferences with clients, both in and out of chambers and, of course, hearings in court, arbitration, adjudication and mediation.

Mini-pupillages
For details please see our website http://www.keatingchambers.com/recruitment/mini-pupillage/

Funding
We offer up to three 12-month pupillages with an award of £70,000. Of this, an advance of £21,000 is available in respect of BPTC fees (incurred or to be incurred).
7 King’s Bench Walk

The facts
Location: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 23/40
Applications: 177
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 4
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance up to £25,000)
Mini-pupillages: 8-12 per season
Mini-pupillage deadlines: 1 December 2020, 1 March 2021, 1 July 2021

Shipping law prowess, insurance expertise and commercial acumen are powering this 400-year young set into the future.

The Chambers
London isn’t short of walking routes rich with history, from the tourist-trampled Oxford Street to hidden nooks and crannies that even many residents won’t have ever seen. King’s Bench Walk is one such storied street – but for the members of chambers at number 7 on the Walk, present-day accomplishments are as important as past glories.

Eddie Johns, one of 7 King’s Bench Walk’s affable clerks, agrees that there’s “certainly a long-standing legacy at this chambers.” He’s not exaggerating – its history traces back to the sixteenth century and the present chambers were built all the way back in 1685. “We are a very well-established set,” Johns deadpans. “We’ve been going for donkey’s years.” Neither he nor we could quantify the length of a donkey’s year, but we can share plenty of information about 7KBW as it stands today.

Pupils arrived at this set longing to “experience some of the best commercial law work available at the Bar.” A glance at Chambers UK confirms that they’ve come to the right place: 7KBW earns top commendations for its insurance, shipping and commodities work and scoops up high rankings for commercial dispute resolution, international arbitration, energy and natural resources. Johns explains that shipping and insurance each make up a quarter of the set’s practice; the other 50% is commercial work. “We’re proud of our tradition of being a shipping set, but we’re keen to point out that’s not all we do.”

On one notable shipping matter, Robert Bright QC successfully represented a banking consortium in a mortgage dispute with Stallion Eight Shipping Co.– the Court found that the group didn’t breach its $15.7 million loan contract. Jonathan Gaisman QC was instructed on a particularly high-profile marine insurance claim: the insurers of the Brillante Virtuosa, a tanker carrying 140,000 tonnes of fuel, allege that the attack and subsequent burning of the ship was staged and a massive example of insurance fraud. Also in insurance, David Edwards QC acted for a US medical device manufacturer pursuing a $25 million claim for indemnity over sums paid to patients affected by allegedly defective hip implants.

As for the commercial side of things, Gavin Healey QC recently wrapped up a ten-year case representing Smith & Nephew in a multimillion-dollar Tennessee suit over artificial knee implant devices. Junior member Jennifer Sutherland acted for Hardy Exploration & Production to enforce a £70 million international arbitration awarded in Kuala Lumpur against the government of India.
The Application Process

7KBW streamlines applicants through the Pupillage Gateway and welcomes successful applicants in for a single interview: “Having to do just one is really nice because you can put all your focus on that one performance.” Applicants receive a legal problem in advance; they’re required to prepare a skeleton argument and submissions for an advocacy exercise. “Interviewers take a rigorous approach with questions as you’re making your submissions but they strike the right balance between that and being friendly,” a source recalled. “They make sure to pitch the question so that GDL candidates can compete on an even footing with law students.”

“Don’t overcomplicate things,” one source recommended. “Make sure you’re focusing on answering the question that’s been posed.” It will also stand you in good stead to “think in commercial as well as legal terms throughout.” Interviewers present the perfect opportunity to demonstrate why a 7KBW pupillage is right for you: “You’ve got to understand the job of a barrister. Work out why you would fit in as a member here and why this path would be better for you than becoming a solicitor, for example. Think about it carefully—enthusiasm counts for a lot.”

“The distinction between the two sixes is that there’s more assessed work in the second—though your supervisors are assessing your performance throughout.” Accordingly, pupils’ hours tend to remain uniform: days start at 9am and wrap up between 5.30pm and 6pm. The thinking behind this is that “you’ll have plenty of time to do long hours in the future! During pupillage the emphasis is fully on your training because you’ve got to cram all of it into a year.”

Good thing too—members falling out would quickly get awkward given that “there’s lots of socialising outside of work here,” be that in lunches, drinks or “silks visiting each other in France.” There’s organised fun too—a Christmas party organised by first-year tenants and a “raucous” yearly night out with the clerks in tow. Afternoon tea traditions live on at 7KBW, though pupils are only allowed to attend on Wednesdays. “I think it’s about protecting us,” one reckoned. “It means you don’t feel the need to go every single day.” We’re not saying that pupils need protection from terrifying barristers: “First-year tenants have helped me out and walked me round the garden to talk things over when I’ve had a wobble.” Johns longs for this to remain the case: “There’s not a churning-out culture here. I hope we don’t ever take on a corporate air and try to compete with solicitors’ sheen.”

The Pupillage Experience

7KBW has changed the structure of pupillage going forward: all pupils now do three seats with three different supervisors before the tenancy decision. While each seat counts, the first is designed “to break you in” so that pupils “get up to the required standard quickly.” Pupils sit with their supervisor and shadow their practice, working almost exclusively on live cases. “There’s a lot of emphasis on getting you involved in as much as possible,” whether it’s research, acting as support on big opinions and pleadings, or attending trials across the country. Our interviewees found that “every part was interesting,” but the odd highlight stood out. “There was a massive oil and gas case about a transaction worth over $100 million and we had to prepare for the trial in seven weeks,” one reminisced. “I was there as a pupil at the bottom experiencing in a very quick timeframe how it all works; that was a great opportunity to see high-level practice.”

Pupils don’t get on their feet, but that’s no bad thing according to our sources. “It’s non-practising up until an offer is made,” one clarified. “The distinction between the two sixes is that there’s more assessed work in the second—though your supervisors are assessing your performance throughout.” Accordingly, pupils’ hours tend to remain uniform: days start at 9am and wrap up between 5.30pm and 6pm. The thinking behind this is that “you’ll have plenty of time to do long hours in the future! During pupillage the emphasis is fully on your training because you’ve got to cram all of it into a year.” After the first few months in chambers, pupils can start to take on work from other members; their supervisor’s there to make sure they don’t get overloaded.

“Pupillage is not about becoming the finished product straight away.”

Formal assessments begin around Christmas, after pupils’ bedding-in period. Everybody completes around four standardised written assessments for silks along with three advocacy exercises. “It’s the same sort of thing you’ve been doing day-to-day,” one source explained. “The only difference is they tend to be slightly bigger, maybe 20 pages instead of ten. I found it challenging but definitely not impossible.” Pupils were keen to dismiss the idea that everything rides on these assessments: “The written work is important but chambers takes a holistic view to pupillage.”
It’s about how good you’ve been throughout the year and whether you’re ready to become a member here.” Remember also that pupillage lasts a year for a reason – “it’s not about being the finished product straight away.”

King’s Bench Walk this way

In 2020, two pupils secured tenancy at 7 King’s Bench Walk.
7 King’s Bench Walk

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Website: www.7kbw.co.uk

Chambers profile
7KBW is a leading commercial chambers, with a reputation for excellence, intellectual rigour and providing practical, commercial advice. Its members practise across the full breadth of commercial law and are ranked highly in the leading legal directories. Members appear regularly in the Commercial Court, the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court, the Privy Council and in arbitrations. They also appear in court and arbitrations in a significant number of other jurisdictions including Singapore, Bermuda, The Bahamas, The Cayman Islands, Dubai and Hong Kong.

Type of work undertaken
7KBW’s practice areas are exclusively commercial, we are at the cutting edge of legal developments and cover the following: all aspects of insurance and reinsurance, shipping and transport, professional negligence, civil fraud, international trade and commodities, energy, oil and gas, agency, injunctions and arrests, shipbuilding, sale of goods, banking and financial services, aviation, construction and private international law. Most of 7KBW’s work has an international dimension.

Pupil profile
Candidates with strong analytical and intellectual abilities. 7KBW does not typically interview candidates who do not have a first or a good upper second-class degree. 7KBW offers up to four funded pupillages per year.

Pupillage
Pupils are allocated a pupillage supervisor for the first two to three months and will change pupillage supervisor more frequently thereafter. A large component of pupillage is assisting in the preparation of trials and applications and attending court with the pupil supervisor. It will also involve drafting statements of case, researching the law, advices and attending conferences. Whatever the nature of the pupil supervisor’s work, a pupil can expect to be fully involved in it. 7KBW also organises advocacy exercises and pleading seminars for pupils.

Applications should be made via the Pupillage Gateway 2021 season for pupillages commencing in September 2022. Deferred pupillages commencing in September 2023 will also be available but will only be offered in exceptional circumstances.

Mini-pupillages
Two-day mini-pupillages are available. Mini-pupillages do not include any formal assessments and completion of a mini-pupillage is not a prerequisite for applying for pupillage, but it is strongly encouraged. For information about how and when to apply, please refer to the website at www.7kbw.co.uk/pupillage/mini-pupillage/

Funding
Pupillages are fully funded, with awards of £65,000 for 12 months. 7KBW is willing to advance up to £25,000 of the award on an interest-free basis for use during the BPTC year, on condition that any advance will be repaid if the pupil does not pass the BPTC exams or complete his or her pupillage.
Landmark Chambers

The facts
Locations: London (Fleet Street), Birmingham
Number of QCs/juniors: 35/61 (23 women)
Applications: c. 250
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 3
Seats: 4x3 month seats
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance up to £25,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 60
Mini-pupillage deadlines: various

As the premier planners of the Bar, Landmark also warrants a serious look for those interested in public and property law.

The Chambers
2002 was a landmark year. Halle Berry became the first black actor to win the Academy Award for Best Actress, Ben Affleck was named sexiest man of the year by People Magazine, and devastatingly, Justin Timberlake and Britney broke up. But over on the legal stage, this was also the year Landmark Chambers entered the scene, making it younger than your average avocado-toast-loving millennial. But while millennials are frequently depicted (unfairly, might we add) as lazy, entitled and lacking aspiration, we can say with confidence that Landmark covets none of these undesirable qualities.

Since its inception, Landmark has grown to establish itself as the pre-eminent planning set of London, the sole holder of a top ranking in the field from Chambers UK Bar. It is also top ranked for its expertise in environment, local planning and community care, and is highly regarded for its agriculture and real estate litigation capabilities. In fact, Landmark’s barristers collectively haul in over 100 Chambers UK Bar rankings, belaying its prestige and status as one of the larger sets in the city. And it’s set to grow larger still, as senior practice manager Mark Ball points out: “We opened our Birmingham office last year and we’ve seen real growth in our property practice, which has expanded by 50% in the last 15 months. Of the six laterals that have recently joined the set, five are property lawyers, and the other is a public law specialist. Moving forward we will continue to build our international profile and look to attract strong lateral recruits across the board.”

Ball estimates that planning makes up around 60% of Landmark’s total workload, the remainder being split equally between public and property law. This balance of practice areas was a big draw for one of this year’s pupils: “If you want to do property law, you’re generally looking at Chancery sets, and I wasn’t necessarily interested in that type of work. I was interested in both property and public law, which I think is quite a rare combination.” As a business, the set is divided into five practice teams: two teams handle planning work, one does public law, another focuses on property, and there’s a development team which focuses on managing juniors’ workloads. Juniors may remain a part of the development team for up to seven years after gaining tenancy, sampling work across the board before typically choosing to specialise in one area. However, Ball points out that this model is “only a rough guide,” adding that “juniors can opt to specialise after a year if they wish.”

The Application Process
Landmark has traditionally offered two separate streams of application. The first opens before Gateway in November and offers just one spot for those with an interest specifically in property law. The second application route opens up later through Gateway. It’s also “open to those who are not successful the first time round,” head of pupillage committee Carine Patry points out. This may
be changing in 2020, as all pupillage recruitment moves in line with the Gateway. Three members of the set are tasked with whittling down 200 or so applications to around 40 for the second stage, which features a 45-minute written assessment. “It’s something legal-based that doesn’t require much knowledge,” Patry explains, “maybe a question around some statutory provisions.”

Around 12 to 15 candidates are invited back to the final interview, which includes a shorter written task, followed by an interview. “Mine was with a panel of five people,” one pupil recalled. Candidates discuss the writing question and then face “competency style questions” from the interviewers – “it’s more of a dialogue than a grilling,” one source felt. The questions here are often topical, “which gives people a chance to show a bit of personality,” Patry tells us. Last year’s question was about “the recognition of the rights of trans people to their children.”

The Pupillage Experience

Whether pupils come through Gateway or not, the pupillage structure remains the same. All pupils complete four three-month seats covering the set’s main disciplines: property, public and planning. Pupils are free to choose where they wish to return for their fourth seat. “If you’re in the property stream, there’s an expectation that you will return to property for your fourth seat, but that’s not set in stone,” one junior explained, adding that across seats “a clear majority of the work you’re doing is live. If your supervisor has a hearing coming up, you might help draft the speaking notes and pleadings, prepare skeleton arguments, and conduct research.”

In the planning seat, “I was out of the chambers two or three days a week, going to planning inquiries and attending court in regard to judicial reviews,” one pupil told us. “I was even able to attend the judicial review of the National Planning Policy Framework, which is the document in planning.” James Maurici QC recently represented the Secretary of State, defending five judicial reviews brought against the Airports National Policy Statement concerning the runway expansion at Heathrow. Claimants include five London boroughs, the Mayor of London, and Greenpeace. Meanwhile member Richard Moules acted for residents of apartments beside the Tate Modern, who claimed the Tate’s viewing platform breaches neighbouring residents’ rights to privacy.

“There was one day where we walked around Mayfair with a valuer, snooping around all the nice flats and houses.”

Property was “much more paper-based,” with appearances in court rarer than in planning. That’s not to say pupils were stuck inside all day either: “I did some leasehold enfranchisement work, which involves a lot about valuation. There was one day where we walked around Mayfair with a valuer, snooping around all the nice flats and houses - it gives you lots of house envy!” Pupils also reported working on right of way disputes. Tim Morshead QC recently worked on a very complex case at the Supreme Court surrounding exactly how to define a ‘highway’. On the less nitty-gritty side of things, David Holland QC acted for a former tenant of a large office in Birmingham in a multimillion-pound dilapidations claim brought by its former landlord.

Sources described the public law seat as “somewhere in the middle” of planning and property, with a combination of paperwork in chambers and getting out for court visits. “In terms of the work, it’s top stuff,” maintained one pupil, who regaled their time “going to the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg and advising the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.” In a Supreme Court case, member David Blundell worked with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to challenge the legality of the prohibition on abortion in cases of rape, incest and serious fetal abnormality.

“We’re too big to run things in the old-fashioned, traditional way.”

Pupils complete one written assessment in each of their three seats, which might be “writing an advice or pleading.” They also do one advocacy assessment mid-way through their pupillage. “Mine was a judicial review application for permission and was done over three days,” one pupil explained. “I spent a day and a half writing a skeleton and then there was a mock hearing the following day with a silk who sat in as a judge.” The results of these assessments inform the tenancy decision, along with reports from supervisors, members of chambers, and instructing solicitors. In 2020, one of the set’s pupils gained tenancy.

Patry pinned Landmark’s culture down to its size, reflecting that “we’re too big to run things in the old-fashioned, traditional way. We have multimillion budgets and a huge number of staff members need looking after. There is also an increasing recognition of the importance of diversity and wellbeing at the Bar.” One pupil “really valued” having a women’s networking group. Sources also pointed to “small touches that contribute to making Landmark a great place to work.”
place to work,” such as cake on Mondays and a monthly masseuse.

**Big firm, little firm, cardboard box**
Landmark works with everyone, Ball tells us, “from larger international outfits such as CMS and BCLP, all the way down to high street firms.”
Landmark Chambers

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2 Cornwall Street, Birmingham, West Midlands, B3 2DL
Tel: 0121 752 0800

Email: pupillage@landmarkchambers.co.uk
Website: www.landmarkchambers.co.uk
Contact: Natasha White-Foy
HR and Administration Manager

No of Silks: 35
No of Juniors: 61
No of Pupils: 3

Firm profile
Landmark is ranked as the number one planning, property and environmental Chambers in the UK by the top legal directories. We are consistently regarded as one of the leading sets in our other main areas of work and have consistently won Real Estate Set of the Year and Planning/Environmental Set of the Year at the Chambers UK Bar Awards.

Members have been involved in some of the most significant cases and inquiries in recent years, including Crossrail and HS2, the third runway for Heathrow, the Supreme Court hearing on the prorogation of Parliament, the Supreme Court property cases General Motors UK Ltd v The Manchester Ship Canal Co Ltd and Peel Water Services Ltd and Regency Villas Title Ltd and others v Diamond Resorts (Europe) Ltd, the Infected Blood and Child Abuse Inquiries and the infringement of LGBTQ+ rights case Jones v AG Trinidad & Tobago.

Pupil profile
Chambers looks for articulate and intelligent individuals from all backgrounds who can demonstrate strong advocacy skills and have a practical approach to problem solving.

Pupillage
We offer up to three London-based pupillages of twelve months duration each year and all applications for pupillage must be made through the Bar Council Pupillage Gateway. Further information may be found on our Chambers’ website.

The pupillage year is divided into four seats of three months each, during which time we will encourage you to work for a cross-section of members and we will arrange for our Silks to act as your satellite supervisors on more complex cases. This will allow you to see a wide variety of work and take advantage of Landmark’s unique position as a leading specialist set, with significant overlap between its private and public law practices. In your second six months you will also be offered opportunities to appear in court of your own accord, usually in the County Court or First-Tier Tribunal.

We are committed to providing our pupils with high-quality and constructive training. To that end, you will receive regular feedback from your supervisors and, at the end of the first and third seats, you will be invited to participate in formal feedback sessions with the Chair and Secretaries of our Pupillage Committee. Finally, our pupils participate in, and receive feedback in relation to, three written and one oral advocacy assessments during their pupillage year.

Mini-pupillages
Landmark runs a comprehensive mini-pupillage programme from Chambers’ premises in London, taking up to 60 students per annum for a period of three to five days’ duration. Landmark Chambers believes that it is important to ensure that students from all backgrounds are able to undertake their mini-pupillage at minimal expense to themselves and, in doing so, improve social mobility at, and access to, the Bar. We therefore offer all mini-pupils a maximum reimbursement of £100 for reasonable travel and lunch expenses. Additionally, Landmark operates a discretionary accommodation funding scheme for students visiting from outside of London.

For further details about pupillage, mini-pupillage, Landmark’s open evenings, property moot competition and judicial review moot competition, please visit: www.landmarkchambers.co.uk/pupillage-recruitment

Funding
We offer an award of £65,000 per pupil; up to £25,000 of which may be taken as an early drawdown. We also fund the compulsory courses required of pupils by the Bar Standards Board.
Littleton Chambers

The facts
Locations: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 13/39 (10 women)
Applications: 120–140
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £67,500 (can advance £15,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 12–14 assessed
Mini-pupillage deadlines: part of pupillage application

“An emphasis on training” meets “forceful and impactful cases” at a “punchy set” with more to it than employment prowess.

The Chambers
Don’t be fooled by the name – Littleton is a big deal, especially when it comes to the Employment Bar. The set has been one of the leading outfits in the field for years, but “commercial work is very much a growth area for chambers now,” senior clerk Jason Drakeford tells us. “We have plans to grow through lateral hires in the next twelve months.” Looking back at the set’s 80% employment practice as of 2015, Drakeford suggests Littleton could see a “50:50” commercial and employment split in future. “As much as we’re growing the commercial side, we’re still very focused on our top-tier employment offering,” he assures us.

“It’s a punchy and impactful set; the work is cutting-edge and very interesting.”

Littleton is among the best in the Employment Bar and Chambers UK Bar ranks it accordingly. In 2019 alone, members were instructed in 19 appellate cases in the Employment Appeals Tribunal, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court. Members have recently acted on litigation brought against Harvey Weinstein and a “landmark” appeal on diplomatic immunity in Saudi Arabia; the House of Lords Commission appointed Naomi Ellenbogen QC to conduct an independent inquiry into bullying and harassment in the House. Chambers UK Bar also recognises Littleton for partnerships, sport and commercial dispute resolution. Charles Samek QC acted in a multimillion-pound dispute between Allergy Therapeutics and Inflammax Research over potential data manipulation resulting in the failure of an anti-allergy drug trial; in another recent case, David Lascelles counselled the defendants in a £1.5 billion claim alleging breach of a deal to sell the UK’s most expensive residential property.

“The application process...”

The Application Process
Littleton accepts applicants through the Pupillage Gateway and aims to offer two fully funded pupillages a year. “We’re not a chambers just looking at Oxbridge applicants,” Drakeford suggests, “we want to promote socioeconomic diversity.” That hasn’t always worked out – 12 of the set’s 15 members under ten years’ call have attended Oxbridge at some point – but the set has recently refreshed its process. As of 2020, Littleton will be one of the few sets to use the Rare Contextual Recruitment System, designed to weight applications by their socioeconomic backgrounds. “Rare is an investment,” a source said, “and a very good step forward” as part of a larger long-term strategy for improving diversity at the Bar. Littleton also offers “a good scheme through which senior female barristers mentor more junior women coming through.” Check out our re-
During their year of training, pupils complete four formal advocacy calls. “I saw how my first draft of a skeleton argument was refined as it went to trial,” one recalled. “It’s not all just scoring for scoring’s sake, as members “are genuinely interested in pupils’ development,” we heard. “Even when you receive a good score, you’ll also be told what specific areas you could improve in. The granularity of feedback is really amazing.”

“The quality of both oral and written training has been very high.”

Pupils were unanimously impressed with Littleton’s approach to training: “It’s worth applying for that alone,” one suggested. “The quality of both oral and written training has been very high. Through a continual emphasis on punchy advocacy, I not only became a better advocate but a better writer too.” Dale Martin summarises the approach supervisors should take: “Not only is it our job to work out if pupils are good enough, but we must also tell them where they’re getting anything wrong, so they can develop.” He takes the key skill of witness handling as an example: “No matter how good you are, you need experience,” Martin explains. “We give specific training on witness handling, pupils never go in blind.”

Supervisors compile written reports to go with the assessed pieces of work for other members, advocacy and written assessments – all of them feed into the tenancy decision, taken by all members. “Everything is put before the members in a meeting and voted on,” Martin says. To avoid any unpleasant surprises, “we give substantial feedback as the year goes on so pupils have a chance to address any shortfalls. We never hoard information or hide their progress: everything’s transparent.” In 2020, Littleton did not disclose the results of its tenancy process; the set granted tenancy to both pupils in 2019.

“The days of stuffy barristers are behind us... the days of ivory towers are long gone.”

“Chambers is a very supportive environment,” a Littleton baby junior said. “I’ve found my time here excellent.” Senior clerk Jason Drakeford has a similar view: “I’ve worked in several sets and it’s not stuffy at all here. Everyone’s on first name terms.” Surveying the Bar as a whole, he feels “the days of stuffy barristers seem to be behind us. Solicitors want to instruct barristers who are team players and able to connect with clients: the days of ivory towers are long gone.” Outside of the courtroom, hierarchy isn’t strict. “I was invited for dinner at a member’s house,” a pupil revealed. “The boundaries between colleagues and friends do blur.”

Interviewees described a “pretty good social life” on the whole. On top of chambers tea, business development events and seasonal parties, members meet for informal gatherings. “The boundaries between colleagues and friends are blurred.”

The senior clerk adds “academic excellence,” Littleton’s application process assesses soft skills and other qualities across three stages. The set invites around 20% of initial applicants for an initial interview: they’re then given a legal exercise and have the chance to discuss two competing judgments related to contract or tort law. Duty of care, remoteness and causation may come into play. Following this, the best performers will progress to a three-day mini-pupillage involving written and oral exercises, before a final interview conducted by four members of chambers.

“The process is quite technical and there’s an emphasis on legal analysis. They really put you through your paces.”

“Unlike at some sets, the process is focused on technical skills and there’s a legal problem question in each round,” a junior told us – clarity of expression and legal reasoning are two key skills required of applicants. “The process is quite technical and there’s an emphasis on legal analysis. They really put you through your paces,” we heard. Head of pupillage Dale Martin QC adds that “the process is rigorous and time-consuming, but we find it’s a system that works and allows pupillage applicants to see how we operate.”

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drinks after work and sporty socials like table tennis and go-karting. “Genuinely humane” hours leave plenty of time for such frivolities. 9am to 6pm is the norm: “The expectations are realistic, and supervisors are careful to make sure pupils are not overworked. There were a couple of pinch points in my second six, with one supervisor working on a big High Court case calling for slightly longer hours, but it was certainly nothing crazy or unreasonable.”

Littleton mix

Make no mistake, pupillage is a rigorous process that requires hard work and dedication. Dale Martin QC suggests “Littleton’s people take their work seriously, but not themselves.”
Littleton Chambers

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Chambers profile
Littleton Chambers is acknowledged as being a top class set in each of its main practice areas. Its success is based upon both the desire to maintain high professional standards and a willingness to embrace change. It prides itself on the skills of its tenants, not only as advocates and advisers on the law, but also for their analytical and practical skills.

Type of work undertaken
Littleton Chambers specialises in commercial litigation, employment law, professional negligence, sports law, mediation and arbitration.

Pupil profile
Applications are invited from candidates with a minimum 2:1 degree or equivalent. Littleton takes a considerable amount of care in choosing our pupils and prefers to recruit its tenants from persons who have completed a full 12-month pupillage with Chambers. We endeavour to take on pupils who not only have excellent academic skills, but who show a flair for advocacy, have the ability to understand practical commercial issues, and importantly, have the interpersonal skills to provide the qualities that are expected of the modern-day Bar. We operate an equal opportunities policy which is designed to support diversity in our pupillage recruitment process.

Pupillage
Chambers generally offers pupillage to two people each year.
During your 12-month pupillage you will have the benefit of three pupil supervisors in succession. Your pupil supervisors will provide support and guidance to you throughout your pupillage, ensuring that you understand not only the nuts and bolts of a barrister’s work, but also the ethical constraints which are such a distinctive feature of chambers’ professional life.
After six months, you will be entitled to take on your own work. Typically, pupils in Littleton Chambers have been briefed once or twice a week. Your pupil supervisor will provide assistance in the preparation of these briefs to ensure that your client receives the best possible service from you.

Mini-pupillage
• Assessed mini-pupillage forms part of the pupillage application process
• Mini-pupillages are not offered outside of this process

Funding
We believe that fair remuneration is important. Our pupils receive a £67,500 pupillage award and they keep all second six earning. It is possible to draw down some of this funding during the year of bar finals.
Maitland Chambers

The facts
Location: Lincoln’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 25/47 (9 women)
Applications: 93
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 3
Seats: 4x10 weeks
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance up to £20,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 70-80
Mini-pupillage deadlines: 15 November 2020, 31 March 2021

Maitland is indeed a land of mates – “the focus is on feedback” at this top commercial Chancery set.

The Chambers
“We’ve just finished a very long trial in Hong Kong,” senior clerk John Wiggs tells us. “It’s a multibillion-pound family dispute where the matriarch has passed away and the siblings are fighting over parts of the company that the family owns.” This particular case is a fine example of what Maitland Chambers shines at: “We sit right in that space between estate and trust disputes with corporate structures involved.”

About 95% of the work at Maitland comes under the commercial Chancery umbrella, but this set appealed not only to those with a “laser focus” on this area of law but also applicants who “didn’t have a clue what commercial Chancery meant!” Wiggs explains: “Our core areas are commercial litigation, trust disputes, insolvencies, civil fraud, property litigation and company/shareholder disputes.” The remaining 5% includes trust advisory, pensions and charities work. Chambers UK ranks Maitland top-tier for commercial chancery, civil fraud and offshore work. It’s also highly rated for its real estate litigation, restructuring/insolvency, charities, company, and partnership practices.

“The silks have the kinds of practices that I want to have.”

“When I’m at lunch on Friday with the juniors, they’re kinds of people I want to be in five, three, or even two years’ time,” one pupil gushed. “The silks have the kinds of practices that I want to have one day in the future.” Alongside instructions from smaller firms, work also comes from the top of the law firm mountain, including the magic circle: Freshfields used Maitland barristers in a Tesco shareholders’ dispute arising from the supermarket’s accounting misstatement scandal in 2014. Another recent case saw a team of Maitland barristers representing a Russian billionaire, whose fishing company Norebo supplies McDonald’s and Birds Eye, in his tussle with another Russian fishing tycoon. The barristers successfully applied to discharge a £350 million freezing order. But John Wiggs stressed the variety junior members would experience here: “We don’t want our barristers to grow up just being the fifth junior on a big oligarch litigation. We want them doing that and cutting their teeth in the County Court too.”

The Application Process
If this is starting to pique your interest, there’s one thing to note before we go any further. Future pupils can probably expect some change in the recruitment process; pupillage committee member David Mumford QC explains that “chambers is doing a top to bottom review from the application to the pupillage itself, then to the tenancy decision.” The whole shebang! “It’s a question of pulling up the floorboards and seeing if there’s anything we could be doing better.” For example, the set’s “running our application form against web engines that will identify gendered language–certain terms that studies suggest disincentivise certain groups.”

The pupillage committee sifts through between 100 and 150 applications every year and Mumford tell us that
Maitland is “giving careful thought as to what we can do to remove any unconscious biases: for example, whether we should blank out data about which university an applicant attended.” Sources observed: “More than half the people here haven’t done law at uni – it’s very common for people to come from history or maths.”

“It’s done in a friendly way but it’s designed to challenge them.”

Maitland now takes applications through the Pupillage Gateway. Thirty candidates come to chambers for the first-round interview, where they’re given a short problem. This may have a legal context but pupils agreed that “it’s tailored so people who haven’t studied law can demonstrate their analytical skills just as well as someone who has.” Mumford elaborates: “It may be a clause in a contract, and we ask them what they think it means.” After 30 minutes of thinking, they meet with a panel of three. There’s a bit of back and forth “to try to relax them,” then probing begins! “It’s done in a friendly way but it’s designed to challenge them,” Mumford clarifies.

Ten to 12 candidates make it to the second round, where they’ll discuss a more detailed problem. “They’ll be given a more substantial set of instructions,” says Mumford. “Much like a client would come to you and explain a situation.” The panel is slightly bigger too – candidates may face up to five members. In both rounds, interviewers look for whether candidates can “hold an argument in the teeth of challenging questioning.” Pupils recalled: “Whatever argument I put forward was challenged fairly comprehensively, but it didn’t feel intimidating.” Candidates should also show strong interpersonal skills: “When they turn up at their first Country Court hearing, is the client going to think ‘I’m in safe hands?’”

The Pupillage Experience

A maximum of three lucky ducks progress to pupillage, where they’ll sit with four different supervisors for ten weeks at a time until June. “You get a spread of different areas of specialisms,” sources explained; pupils all sit with the same supervisors but “aren’t encouraged to be too competitive.” There isn’t a huge distinction between the first and second six, though pupils “should see the first half of the year as a learning exercise.” One elaborated: “I didn’t know the first thing about a huge range of areas that I suddenly had to read up on! Supervisors were kind enough to say, ‘You don’t need to turn this round in a tight timescale – go to the library and find out what company law is.’”

“...pages that you’ve written go out in the name of someone really distinguished!”

Outside of assisting on live cases, dead work assignments could be anything from skeleton arguments (there’s a dead skeleton joke in there somewhere) to opinions. Pupils do several for each supervisor, who then provides “detailed” feedback: “If 99% of your opinion is really good but you missed the one killer point, they’ll pull you up on it.” Every assignment is graded, and feedback is provided so that “pupils can mark their progress over time to try to attain a standard that will mean they can get tenancy,” says Mumford. “The idea is they should know their trajectory and be able to adjust it.”

Pupils are graded on every piece of work but “the tenancy decision isn’t made on grades from October – I don’t think I’d have got an offer if it was! It’s about where you are in May and June and checking you’ve progressed.” Supervisors also compile written reports at the end of each seat and pupils undergo six advocacy assessments in front of a barrister ‘judge’. “It’s treated as if it’s an actual hearing,” said pupils – one admitted their “first one was a disaster!” Another pointed out that “if you come to Maitland, you’ve usually got very good grades. Getting knocked back was a bit hard.” Six might be a daunting number, but interviewees “actually wouldn’t have minded if there were more.” If that sounds masochistic, consider that “the focus is on feedback – you can make some howling mistakes!”

“You work hard but under your own conditions.”

Advocacy assessors meet with pupils’ supervisors to “discuss the merits of each pupil and take a view as to whether they’ve made the grade,” David Mumford explains. “That gets distilled into a recommendation for chambers, which is then voted on.” However the policy is to offer tenancy to anyone who has made the grade. In 2020, all three pupils gained tenancy.
Another telling feature of Maitland life is that “if we’re not in court, most of us mooch around in plain clothes.” A junior agreed that “you work hard but under your own conditions,” adding semi-seriously that “some people are always pottering around in lycra.” We’d advise going easy on the spandex during pupillage. Senior clerk John Wiggs weighs in: “We always encourage pupils to come and talk to the clerks. When they start, we organise drinks with them so they can get to know us.” Afternoon tea is a good opportunity for meeting other Maitland members. “That sounds really pretentious,” a junior scoffed. “Basically, you go to the kitchen and grab a mug of tea!”

**Home in time for tea**

9am to 6.30pm is a typical day at the office for Maitland pupils.
Maitland Chambers

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Email: clerks@maitlandchambers.com
Website: www.maitlandchambers.com

Chambers profile
Chambers UK has rated Maitland in the top rank of commercial chancery sets every year since 2001.

Type of work undertaken
Maitland is instructed on a wide range of business and property related cases — from major international commercial litigation to disputes over the family home. Its core areas of practice include commercial litigation, banking, financial services and regulation, company, civil fraud, insolvency and restructuring, media law, pensions, professional negligence, real property, charity law, trusts and tax. Much of the set's work is done in London (as well as in other parts of England and Wales), although instructions often have an international aspect, involving acting for clients and appearing in court abroad. Chambers’ work is predominantly concerned with dispute resolution; but it also does non-contentious work in the private client field.

Pupil profile
Academically, Maitland looks for a first or upper second class degree. Pupils must have a sense of commercial practicality, be stimulated by the challenge of written and oral advocacy and have an aptitude for and general enjoyment of complex legal argument.

Pupillage
Maitland offers up to three pupillages, all of which are funded. There is no limit to the number of tenancy offers we can make in each year; if you are of the requisite standard, you will be offered tenancy, so our pupils are not in competition with one another.

During the assessment period, pupils sit with four supervisors in rotation, spending ten weeks with each. The set takes the view that it is important for pupils to see a variety of the areas of work done in chambers.

Chambers believes that oral advocacy remains a core skill of the commercial chancery barrister. The set provides in-house advocacy exercises for pupils during their pupillage. These take the form of mock hearings, prepared in advance from adapted sets of papers, with senior members of chambers acting as the tribunal. They provide detailed feedback after each exercise. These exercises are part of the assessment process and help develop essential court skills.

Mini-pupillages
Applications are considered three times a year; please see chambers’ website for current deadlines, and details of how to apply.

Funding
Chambers offers up to three 12-month pupillages, all of which are funded (£65,000 for pupils starting in September 2022). Up to £20,000 of the award may be drawn down in advance during the BTC year or to pay BTC fees. There is also a cashflow assistance scheme available at the start of practice as a tenant.
Matrix Chambers

The facts
Location: Gray’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 35/57
Applications: c.250
Outside Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £50,000 (can advance £10,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: TBC. From 2021 Matrix will offer mini-pupillages through ‘Bridging the Bar’.
Mini-pupillage deadlines: TBC

Plug yourself into this Matrix. Open your eyes to a reality of top-rated human rights and public law work, alongside many other commended areas.

The Chambers
If at 20 years old you can achieve a standing comparable to Matrix Chambers’ then it would be fair to say that you’re winning at life. Formed in the year 2000, Matrix Chambers has built up quite a reputation for itself in a relatively short space of time. “The spread of work is absolutely huge,” says pupillage committee member Lorna Skinner. “I think we do pretty much everything except family law and tax.” The set’s raft of rankings in Chambers UK Bar certainly suggests Skinner hasn’t taken Morpheus’s blue pill by mistake. It comes out on top in London for its civil liberties & human rights, community care, education, and employment expertise. That’s just one layer of reality at Matrix though: it also picks up acclaim in a further 15 areas, including crime, public law, public international law, financial crime, European law, and defamation/privacy. Across all circuits in the country, Matrix stands out for its claimant police law and Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) related matters.

“I think we do pretty much everything except family law and tax.”

The work, said one baby junior, is “seriously impressive.” The matters at Matrix address some of the most complex, sensitive and pressing issues out there. In the public law space, Phillippa Kaufmann QC has brought a judicial review against the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) following the Crown Prosecution Service’s refusal to prosecute an undercover police officer who was deployed to spy on an environmental protester and developed a sexual relationship with her. The case examines the question of consent in this context of deception and whether the police officer can be prosecuted for rape. In the civil liberties and human rights area, Raza Husain QC has been challenging the Director of Immigration in Hong Kong on the issue of human trafficking and forced labour, as well as on the application of fundamental family life rights in immigration cases. Over in the data protection realm, Hugh Tomlinson QC has been working on a representative action on behalf of 4.4 million iPhone users regarding Google’s use of personal data. If employment law is your area of interest, then there have been many headline-generating cases of late, including James Laddie QC’s representation of an individual bringing an £11 million disability discrimination claim against their former employer, Goldman Sachs. This is, of course, just a snapshot of some of Matrix’s most high-profile areas. The broad range of practice areas means the set has always had “a huge cross-section of clients,” senior practice manager Elizabeth Bousher tells us.

For the eagle-eyed among you, you’ll have noticed that Matrix doesn’t use traditional Bar terms like ‘senior clerk’ or ‘pupil’ but instead favours more up-to-date titles like ‘senior practice manager’ and ‘trainee’ (respectively). In fact, Matrix prides itself on its progressive approach, which it promotes through its set of core values. “As time has gone by these [the set’s core values] appear less radical,” says Skinner, “but at the time we formed as a set they
really were.’ Among the 16 core values is a commitment to running “a democratic organisation, where all staff from the most junior to the most senior have an equal say.” In addition, the firm is one of only a few chambers to be a member of Stonewall, the LGBTQ+ charity, and it has a good track record for gender representation compared to some similar-sized sets. Speaking of size, Bousher tells us that Matrix has “had new members come in – we had four people join crime/fraud last year. There's plenty of work, but we're not looking to grow hugely. We'll be focusing on organic growth to meet demand.”

The Pupillage Experience

We were told that most of the work comes from the trainee’s current supervisor, as there’s an “expectation that you’ll help your supervisor with their matters.” A trainee said that the type of instructions “depends on the seat: each supervisor has their own area and you dip into it.” Sources highlighted that if you make your preferences known “the set is receptive and helps you to sit with the right people.” Interviewees were subsequently pleased that they’d been able to work with QCs in areas of interest.

“You’re not on your feet for the first nine months,” so trainees typically begin to speak in court during the final three months of the pupillage. Court appearances during those initial nine months “depend on your supervisor and the area of practice: some people are in court often.” One source revealed that there’s still a lot for trainees to do in court, even if they’re not conducting advocacy: “Every time your supervisor is in court you’re reading court papers, as well as drafting skeleton arguments, research memos, cross-examination notes, appeal grounds – there’s a lot of papers-based work.” Skinner says that pupils can expect to do a mix of live work and previous cases during this initial period. In the final three months, “you’re practising in your own right and working for a supervisor,” a junior barrister confirmed.

There are four assessments throughout the pupillage, which are considered alongside reports from the first three supervisors. The latter are “marked out of 36: there are nine categories worth four marks each.” Examples of these categories include written expression, legal analysis and judgement, practical judgement, and commitment to Matrix’s core values. At the end of each seat, trainees meet with their supervisor and HR to discuss the report for the purpose of ascertaining “whether you’re meeting the standard for membership or not,” and if not, what can be done to improve and meet it. Unsurprisingly, “you should be getting the ‘it should be fine’ or ‘you’re already there’” kinds of responses, especially at the end of later seats.

While the reports were felt to be “the most significant” element when it comes to deciding who gets tenancy, the four assessments also play their part. Read more about these online. The tenancy process, which is normally conducted in mid-July, involves the “training committee putting an assessment report together from all of your work – the four assessments, plus the three supervisor reports,” one trainee in the know revealed. “A recommendation is then put to the membership and everyone votes.” Our source said that Matrix is “as transparent as it can be” about the process and added that “if you’ve got good reports you should be confident.” In 2020, Matrix retained one of two pupils as a tenant.

Of course, socialising is key when navigating a pupillage. Fortunately for Matrix’s trainees, the set “puts on lunch for all staff and barristers every Thursday,” a junior barrister told us, “so everyone who’s around tends to go to that. There are also drinks on a Friday night in chambers.” Other formal social events include a Christmas party, a staff party and a drinks event every quarter. There’s time for socialising outside of work too, as “they’re very keen on enforcing that trainees go home at six and don’t take work home.” Another trainee added that “the hours haven’t been relentless with unrealistic deadlines. If I work late or over the weekend then that’s my choice.”

The Application Process

To kickstart the process, candidates need to complete an application form, which includes an answer (around 500 words) to a short essay question. “Those applications are then sifted by a team of three, who each do about two-thirds each,” says Skinner. For those thinking the maths is wrong, there is a deliberate overlap built into the process “to ensure consistency among the marks.” The applications, says Skinner, “are marked according to our selection criteria,” which cover “obvious things like a candidate’s degree and legal experience,” but also “life experience” and connections with “the set’s core values.” Skinner adds that there are “16 marks available for candidates, including one mark for exceptional circumstances.” The committee also makes adjustments for a disability.
Around 40 applicants make it through to the initial interview stage. This interview “is usually comprised of three standardised questions” and conducted by two members of varying seniority and practice area. Matrix also tries to make all of its interview panels as diverse as possible. To increase diversity and accessibility, the set has “put up a recorded interview with a previous applicant on the website, so people who haven’t had interview experience can see what a good interview looks like,” says Skinner, who adds: “We’re aware that people may not have a law degree, so we ask questions about current affairs and interesting ethical points.” Matrix also has a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled applicants. From that pool of interviewees, “we identify ten candidates for the second round, which involves a much longer interview with a bigger panel.” On this panel you’ll find five members of Matrix and the CEO. Candidates at this stage will go through a problem (which is normally legal-based but presented with all the info interviewees would need regardless of degree background) with the panel on top of answering other questions.

We need tech. Lots of tech.

We’re sure that Matrix was already pretty tech-savvy before lockdown, but of late we heard that the set has been using tech to its advantage more than ever. “Two barristers started a podcast and we’ve been embracing webinars. It’s been nice to get together over Zoom!”
Matrix Chambers

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Chambers profile
Matrix is a collection of lawyers specialising in a wide range of practice areas throughout the UK and internationally. Described as ‘professional and forward thinking’, we are an approachable set that are proud of our record of innovation. Our core values govern the way we work and outline our commitment to operating within an environment where diversity, accessibility and client care are widely championed.

Types of work undertaken
We have a multi-disciplinary approach with several members recognised as leading practitioners in Chambers and Partners and Legal 500. Matrix acts for private and public clients and has particular expertise in over 29 international and domestic areas of law including commercial, competition, crime, data protection, defamation, discrimination, education, employment, environmental, extradition, fraud, freedom of information, human rights, immigration, asylum and free movement, international arbitration, local government, public and administrative law, media, mutual assistance, prison, social welfare, and sports law. Matrix has a strong international presence, acting in more than 114 countries for governments, international corporations, legal firms and individuals.

Pupil profile
Matrix welcomes applications from exceptional candidates from all backgrounds and is committed to diversity across the whole organisation. We therefore encourage and welcome applications from groups which are potentially disadvantaged or historically under-represented in the legal profession, including women, disabled or LGBTQ+ people, those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, and those who are Black, Asian or from another minority ethnic group. We are happy to make reasonable adjustments to the interview process and advertised positions for disabled candidates.

Pupillage
Matrix offers up to two traineeships, both starting 1st October for 12 months. The 12-month training period is split roughly into quarters. The training committee will usually choose who will supervise the trainees during their year, but trainees are consulted throughout on which areas of law they would be interested in covering. It is expected that trainees will experience the wide range of work covered at Matrix with seats in varied practice areas throughout the year. There is a scheduled programme of training that takes place which includes internal and external training, written and advocacy exercises and secondments. Matrix trainees do not generally take on oral advocacy in their own right until the last quarter.

Mini-pupillages
Matrix offer mini-pupillages in conjunction with the Bridging the Bar scheme. Anyone interested in this, should get in contact with the scheme to check their eligibility. For up to date information and details on other opportunities available at Matrix, please visit the ‘recruitment’ section of our website: www.matrixlaw.co.uk

Funding
Matrix offers up to two 12-month training places with an award of £50,000 and an additional £10,000 contribution during the BPTC year for applicants who are yet to undertake Bar finals. Any applicants who have already completed the BPTC year will still be entitled to the additional £10,000 contribution in the year prior to commencing traineeship.
Monckton Chambers

The facts
Location: Gray’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 21/44 (18 women)
Applications: 132
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance £20,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 25
Mini-pupillage deadlines: October-December, January-February

Feast your eyes on the competition, public and EU law specialists with undeniable Euro-vision.

The Chambers
In the red corner! The chance to “work on huge cases where you might be appealing to the Court of Justice of the European Union on behalf of Google or Apple.” In the blue corner! A pupillage during which “you’re fighting for the rights of child refugees.” Which tickles your fancy? Trick question, there’s no need to make your mind up – mixing the two shades to form a pleasing purple, Monckton members work on “an enormous range of work spanning public, commercial, EU and information law plus everything in between,” according to one pupil. “I liked that there was scope to represent massive multinationals but also individuals in need too.” Another junior weighed in: “A key selling point for me was the chance to work on both the claimant and defendant side of law within the public sphere.”

First junior clerk Steven Duffett tells us there are some other colours bleeding into the picture: “We have recently hired a number of commercial law experts with established practices. As such, we can now offer a distinct commercial practice independent of our competition work. That has added more strings to our bow that potential applicants should keep in mind.” EU and competition law remain Monckton’s raison d’être and these “form the umbrella which covers most of the areas that members work in.” To give you an idea of the set’s prestige in this field, renowned European human rights law expert Ben Emmerson (played by the magnificent Ralph Fiennes in Official Secrets, an Iraq War docudrama) left Matrix Chambers in early 2019 to join Monckton’s ranks.

“I liked that there was scope to represent massive multinationals but also individuals in need too.”

Given all this Europe talk, you may be wondering why we haven’t mentioned the B-word yet. At the time of our interview in summer 2019, Brexit was yet to take place and it was “difficult to measure its impact,” Duffett declared in a statement we suspect he’s given a few thousand times. “We have however had a lot of people requalify in Ireland to maintain legal privilege in EU courts; that’s a contingency plan for the worst-case scenario.” For now, at least, the set doesn’t seem to have suffered any significant slowdown and all our interviewees were keen to highlight how busy things were: “There’s a real lack of availability across the board, which is a good sign!” The set earns top Chambers UK rankings in both EU and competition law as well as in telecommunications, tax and public procurement work; it also picks up strong accolades for its human rights, public law, sport, data protection and environmental law capabilities.

Brexit has in fact brought in work: Gerry Facenna QC represented two MPs in a case before the Court of Justice of the European Union to determine that Article 50 is unilaterally revocable. A Monckton team lead by Philip Moser QC successfully defeated a challenge brought against HM Passport Office over the procurement contract for blue passports. To give you an idea of the varied practice here, Moser also advised on a car accident where a farmer drove into a suspected metal thief and left them paraplegic.
On the public law side of the practice, Tim Ward QC acted for mobile network operator O2 in a Court of Appeal review of Ofcom’s decision to auction off more of the radio spectrum for mobile phone companies to use for 4G and 5G services. Finally, one for the sports fans – Paul Harris QC and Fiona Banks recently acted before the FIA Court of Appeal for two teams competing in the 2018 Le Mans event, challenging a decision to disqualify them after one team finished first. This was due to the questionable legality of adding a part during refuelling.

The Application Process

Applicants begin at the Pupillage Gateway and complete a question unique to Monckton: “It ensures people aren’t just applying to us without thought as to who we are and what we do,” head of pupillage committee Meredith Pickford QC tells us. A recent example was a question on the controversial ‘gay marriage cake’ dispute.

“It ensures people aren’t just applying to us without thought.”

The first-round interview is pitched at “average intensity,” one junior told us. “It wasn’t just a chat but there are some questions focused on getting to know you as well as some competency-based ones and some probing about your previous experience.” Post-probing, the interviewers typically throw in a topical discussion point for good measure. Recent examples include whether or not the FBI should be able to decrypt iPhone data; and whether the government should enforce plain packaging on tobacco products.

Those who impress are invited back for a more formal second-round interview in which interviewees discuss a legal problem in front of a seven to eight-person panel. Pupils advised future applicants not to “entrench yourself in one position, it’s okay to backtrack on your thinking!”

The Pupillage Experience

Monckton’s pupils complete four three-month seats, each with a different member supervisor; they are however given the option of staying with their third supervisor for the fourth seat. “There are a core group of supervisors who rotate every year, but you typically sit with at least one specialist in public law, one in competition, and do one mixed seat,” pupils explained. That’s not set in stone – we spoke to one source whose first seat was in tax and procurement law.

By the end of their first seat, new arrivals are quickly farmed out to other members of chambers to round out their pupillage and get exposure to a range of different cases. We spoke to one junior who “worked for various NHS bodies that were bringing proceedings against a drug manufacturer. I was helping conduct research and draft bits of the skeleton argument.” Brexit preparations – or lack thereof – have also brought in a steady stream of work. As one pupil explained: “I worked on the case where Eurotunnel sued the government for awarding a shipping contract to a company without any ships. Following that, I was involved in the case that followed where P&O sued the government for settling with Eurotunnel on the terms they did, helping to draft a response to the statement of facts.” It’s not all politics – legal aid work is also on offer. For example, we spoke to a pupil who’d been “helping a child with disabilities secure accommodation from the local authority.” The increasing prominence of the set’s commercial practice has also “provided juniors with more to cut their teeth on, principally in the form of cancelled flight cases,” Duffett explains.

“Considering how high-profile the work is, it’s remarkably relaxed.”

There’s no practising second six and Monckton doesn’t put a great deal of emphasis on formal assessments during pupillage. “There are a number of advocacy exercises throughout the year which are taken into account, but they are principally there to improve skills – they’re not hard passes or fails,” Meredith explains. Instead, all pupils’ work is assessed consistently throughout the year; they’re also provided with feedback forms throughout pupillage “so you always know what path you’re on and the areas you need to improve in.” Approaching tenancy “you have a fair idea of where you stand.” In 2020, Monckton did not disclose how many of its pupils became tenants.

It’s not just the tenancy decision that’s kept as stress-free as possible. “Considering how high-profile the work is, and how busy we are, it’s remarkably relaxed” at Monckton according to our sources. They cited administration manager Wendy Holmes as a “great example. Every Monday she knocks on everybody’s doors and check how we’re all doing, she’s our resident friendly face.” Another highlighted the “very relaxed” relationship between the clerks and barristers: “There is no formality. It’s very much ‘How was your weekend? Good luck in your half marathon next week?’” Don’t worry – running isn’t mandatory...
4 New Square

The facts
Locations: Lincoln’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 31/53
Applications: 136
Apply through the Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seat: 2x3 + 1x6 months
Pupillage award: £55,000 + £10,000 guaranteed earnings
Mini-pupillages pa: 40
Mini-pupillage deadlines: 16 October 2020, 30 October 2020

It’s hip to be square: 4NS offers a varied commercial pupillage in a “very professional” yet “very friendly” environment

The Chambers
“In the last 15 years, 4 New Square has developed into a strong and varied chambers with a series of specialist areas under a commercial umbrella,” senior clerk Lizzy Stewart begins. Applicants arrived in search of a pupillage with variety on their minds: “I was interested in professional negligence as well as other areas that 4 New Square was expanding into, such as international arbitration,” a source revealed. Breaking down the areas of practice that chambers covers, professional liability and commercial work make up the biggest slices; construction, insurance, international arbitration, offshore and sports law all play a role too. 4NS achieves its highest Chambers UK Bar rankings for professional negligence, but also scores highly for insurance, sport, construction, property damage, product liability, professional discipline and commercial dispute resolution.

“It’s a common misconception that our work is all professional negligence. It’s there and yes, we lead in that area, but we’re also a leading set for insurance and commercial litigation.”

According to Harris, “that’s more and more the way the practice is going. Speaking to members under ten- or 12-years call, professional negligence is part of what they do, but not all.” Graham Eklund QC recently represented Zurich Insurance in a £5 million claim alleging that the non-disclosure of facts after a fire at waste management group Niramax invalidated its insurance policy. Acting for the insurer of a hotel and restaurant which was largely destroyed by fire, Ben Elkington QC represented Suffolk Life Annuities in a £3 million claim brought against the roofing contractor and their own liability insurer. In a leading commercial case, Daniel Saoul QC has been instructed by Allen & Overy and Hogan Lovells to act for the claimants in US$300 million commercial fraud proceedings brought by Kazakh companies against their former directors and shareholders.

The Pupillage Experience
Pupils complete three seats with three different supervisors – two for three months each, then a final six-month stint. “Chambers has a broad scope of practice that’s reflected in individual members’ caseloads. Most pupils will see lots of different types of work,” we heard. Over the course of pupillage, multiple sources got a mix of professional liability claims, insurance and general commercial litigation on their plates, while some had also seen construction, sports and civil fraud claims. “My first supervi-
sor was involved in some pretty chunky bits of litigation” during the first three months of one source’s pupillage. “I was doing a lot of ancillary tasks for those big cases.” Others noted that “if a case is lead by a QC, the pupil is likely to do smaller and more specific tasks.” Examples include research, document analysis and “occasionally a first attempt at draft applications.”

“When you start, dead cases are useful because there’s less time pressure.”

Interviewees eventually found themselves doing a roughly even mix of live and historic work; one reckoned “it’s probably true to say you do more live work as you go through pupillage. When you start, dead cases are useful because there’s less time pressure.” By their second seat, pupils noticed a “much stronger emphasis on drafting” and that supervisors were more likely to be “involving you on smaller, more accessible matters.” On such cases, pupils can take charge of “standard documents like advices, statements of cases and various forms of correspondence.”

The second six typically comes with chances for pupils to get on their feet, while also continuing to do work for their supervisor. Sources estimated that pupils should be in the County Court around once a week, advocating for “small matters claims suitable for someone of our level.” A junior recalled: “My first ever hearing was a road traffic accident which was very fact-heavy. I also did a small breach of contract claim stemming from failure to pay a due sum.” Sources described getting on their feet as “a learning experience: it’s quite different, going from watching your supervisors in court to being in court yourself. The parts of the brain you engage are different.” Our latest pupil interviewees sadly hadn’t yet had the opportunity to go to court as their second six coincided with the 2020 covid-19 lockdown; at the time of our research, they reckoned “things should start up again soon,” and some had already got court appearances lined up in the diary.

“It’s easier to get an A early in the year, and it gets harder closer to tenancy when work should be of a higher quality.”

Two assessed moots, “judged by either silks in chambers or retired court of appeal judges,” provide pupils with more advocacy experience. They also complete four written assessments over the year (usually advices), for which they have around 24 hours: “4NS wants to test how you respond and the quality of your written work under circumstances where time is a bit tight, and you might not have seen the relevant law before,” a pupil told us. Beyond these formal assessments, pupillage committee member Miles Harris notes that “supervisors mark virtually every piece of work their pupil does.” Everything is “graded in accordance with where they’d expect you to be in that part of the pupillage.” A pupil explained: “It’s easier to get an A early in the year, and it gets harder closer to tenancy when work should be of a higher quality.” Supervisor reports and assessments alike are considered as part of the tenancy decision. In 2020, 4 New Square’s one pupil achieved tenancy.

The Application Process

As of 2019, 4NS is back in the Pupillage Gateway. In addition to the typical Gateway questions, 4NS adds “a question asking candidates to describe a recent case they’re aware of and why they find it interesting.” 4NS selects around 50 applicants for the first interview, which is around 10 to 15 minutes long with “general questions about why they’re drawn to the Bar, and why 4 New Square in particular.” Candidates should also expect to discuss the case they picked out in their initial application: “We use that to test their potential attitude as a barrister,” Miles Harris notes.

Up to 16 candidates score spots in a second-round interview with a panel of around 4-5 members including an advocacy exercise and a brief presentation. Candidates receive “papers and a few legal resources and have to write a short letter of claim in the imagined scenario.” A pupil explained: “It was designed to test legal reasoning, rather than knowledge.” Candidates will then interview with a panel of around four members. Harris lays it out: “There are four sections, and candidates choose two to complete. Each has a number of propositions they can argue for or against, which don’t require legal knowledge – they’re intended to test a candidate’s ability to argue points and respond to questions.” Sources recalled topics like “whether there should be quotas for the judiciary, or the permissibility of using drone strikes in foreign countries.” The final part is an advocacy exercise in front of the same panel, including a brief presentation.

“We also consider their potential to be a good advocate – someone who’s able to present arguments attractively and persuasively.”

Considering what makes an applicant attractive, Harris emphasises 4NS “wants pupils who are going to be successful tenants.” What does that mean in practice? “It’s essential that they have the intellectual ability to do the most complex commercial work. Lots of candidates show that,
but we also consider their potential to be a good advocate – someone who’s able to present arguments attractively and persuasively, as well as having the capacity for getting on and working with others.” Sources noticed these traits are widespread at 4NS: “I’d describe it as very professional. Everyone works pretty hard but is very friendly and welcoming at the same time. It’s so interesting to get to know other members at chambers drinks or other after work events.”

**School of mock**

4 New Square runs a mooting workshop for students undertaking the GDL at City University
4 New Square

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Website: www.4newsquare.com

Chambers profile
4 New Square is a leading commercial and civil set of barristers comprising 83 members, of whom 31 are QCs. 4 New Square enjoys a formidable reputation in its principal areas of work: commercial litigation and arbitration, insurance and reinsurance, professional liability and discipline, costs and construction law. Its members are also recognised as leading practitioners in a variety of other fields including chancery litigation, financial services law, public law and sports law. Members of 4 New Square appear in a wide range of tribunals (court and arbitral) and are regularly instructed to take landmark cases to the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. Jackson & Powell on Professional Liability is written and edited by current and former members of Chambers. Chambers attracts a large amount of junior advocacy work, reflecting the emphasis on developing pupils and junior tenants into experienced advocates to equip them for a successful career at the Bar.

Type of work undertaken
Banking and financial services, civil fraud, commercial, commercial chancery, company and insolvency, construction, contentious trusts and probate, costs and litigation funding, disciplinary, energy, IT, insurance and reinsurance, international arbitration, offshore, product liability, professional liability, property damage, public international law, public law and human rights, real property and sports.

Pupil profile
Our aim is to recruit two new tenants each year and it is our express intention, wherever possible, to source those tenants from our own 12-month pupils. As it is our hope and ambition that each of our pupils should reach the required objective standard for tenancy, it follows that our general recruitment practice is to select two 12-month pupils each year. We do not stream our pupils and each has an equal prospect of securing a tenancy.

Considering prospective candidates for pupillage or mini-pupillage, we concentrate on four criteria:
• Evidence of the requisite intellectual ability, as distinct from pure legal knowledge. At this stage intellectual ability is usually measured by performance in university and school examinations and at interview and other experience. We may also require applicants to complete a piece of written work during the course of the selection process
• Potential as an advocate both in oral and written advocacy
• Personal qualities such as self-reliance, independence, integrity, reliability and the capacity to work effectively with clients, colleagues and Chambers’ staff
• Motivation to succeed in a career at the Bar, including the steps taken to acquire the personal qualities required of a barrister

Pupillage
The first six months: You will go to court and attend conferences with your pupil supervisor. You will also assist them with their written work: carrying out written advisory and drafting work on their current papers and undertaking detailed research on the law.
The second six months: As well as continuing with work for your pupil supervisor, you will take on an increasing amount of your own court work. Chambers places a strong emphasis on advocacy and supports its pupils in gaining valuable practical experience. You can expect to be in court on your own about once a week up to the tenancy decision and potentially on a more regular basis thereafter. You will be expected to complete three assessed pieces of work for other members of Chambers.

Mini-pupillages
Mini-pupillages generally last for two days and, save in exceptional circumstances, take place in specific weeks in June, July, November and December of each year. We aim to take ten mini-pupils per week. Mini-pupillages do not involve formal assessment but we do record feedback on your likely suitability for pupillage in Chambers. They are not a pre-requisite for a pupillage application. However, we encourage applicants to do a mini-pupillage in Chambers. We believe they provide a fantastic opportunity to get an understanding of the work we do and, perhaps even more importantly, an opportunity to meet members of Chambers and get a feel for the working environment.
Applications must be made on Chambers’ own mini-pupillage application form, from our website.
Coco Chanel’s No5 may have set the bar high for perfumery, but the members of No5 Chambers have done so for various areas at the Bar, especially in the Midlands.

The Chambers

“We have always been driven by quality, not quantity, and we decided a long time ago that the way forward was to specialise.”

In this part of the country, Mohammed Zaman QC recently acted for the former director of Northampton Football Club during a £4 million (plus) matter related to alleged breaches of fiduciary duty and preferential payments. Other examples of recent work include Michael Dick’s representation of the ringleader of a ‘grooming’ gang in Huddersfield during a three-month trial in the criminal court; London-based Philip Rule’s defence of the principal defendant in an alleged drug conspiracy and money laundering matter; and, also in the capital, planning expert Hashi Mohamed’s handling of a case on behalf of Marden Parish Council involving a Gypsy and Traveller site’s planning permissions.

The Application Process

If this has piqued your interest, then pupillage committee member Harpreet Sandhu tells us that No5 “is primarily looking for people who want to specialise in the following areas: business; property; crime; personal injury and clinical negligence; public law; and planning and environment law.” Pupils are based in either Birmingham or London, though availability of practice-focuses in each location varies year by year “based on business needs,” Sandhu explains. Keep your eyes peeled.
No5 recruits exclusively outside the Pupillage Gateway. All candidates are required to fill out a “fairly standard application form,” which features a mini essay-type question and space for applicants to showcase their awards and accolades. Here candidates also state their preferred practice area (see below) and location. The initial 300 or so applicants are sifted down to around 75 candidates, who are then invited to participate in the first round of interviews. At the paper application stage, “we are primarily looking for a demonstration of a candidate’s commitment to the Bar,” Sandhu says. “For example, someone who has undertaken research or taken the time to get practical experience in the area that they want to practise in.”

“We ended up discussing baking and how to bake the perfect Yule log!”

Interviews by their very nature can be intense, but pupils made it clear that No5 took a more relaxed approach to the process. As one pupil joyfully told us, “we ended up discussing baking and how to bake the perfect Yule log!” A topical question is also discussed: “It's typically a current issue with a legal bent to it,” Sandhu explains, who advises incoming interviewees “to keep abreast of recent developments in the law and current affairs.”

Those who impress (around 15 candidates) are invited to participate in a mini-pupillage, which provides “an opportunity for us to engage with candidates in a less artificial way,” Sandhu points out. One pupil recalled: “I went to court and attended a conference. The people I went with weren’t part of the pupillage or recruitment process so I could ask questions about chambers – it all felt quite relaxed.”

All candidates are presented with a legal-based question upon arriving for their final interview. This question provides the basis for the interview, which, for one pupil, “lasted around 45 minutes and took place in front of nine members of chambers.” That may sound like a daunting format, but one source reassuringly explained that “everyone was friendly. My palms weren’t sweating compared to other interviews! I ended up doing a role play, which turned into a laughing fit and we even spent a couple of minutes talking about The Real Housewives of New Jersey!”

“The Pupillage Experience

Most sets have their pupils sit with various members during pupillage, but at No5 pupils formally sit with one supervisor for the full 12 months. But this is not as limiting as it sounds, Sandhu reveals: “Although pupils are placed to specialise in one area, we do encourage them to go and gain experience in a second or third area of law. While supervisors will be looking after them for the first three to four months, they will be working for other members and going out with juniors to get experience.”

“Although pupils are placed to specialise in one area, we do encourage them go gain experience in a second or third area of law.”

One pupil interviewee gave us some more insight: “I applied for property and that’s my main area, but I’ve also done some personal injury work, which is great because it provides more opportunities for advocacy.” Similarly, another source told us: “I’m a criminal specialist, but I recently spent time in immigration, public and family. I’ve also been working on a few personal injury cases because in the early days of criminal practice your diary can be quite empty.”

Day to day, pupils often spend their time assisting their supervisors. “I often do the work of my supervisor two days in advance of them doing it too. For example, if we were drafting a defence, I would get the papers, conduct the research, and then draft it. My supervisor would then draft their own version and we would compare the two. It’s a good way of working because when she’s doing the research herself, I can begin to understand her thought process.” Others reported attending court “almost every day, drafting attendance notes and looking after the client,” while another interviewee highlighted that summarising interviews and evaluating evidence were stock pupil tasks. Moving into their second six, all pupils are expected to begin standing on their own feet in court and begin taking on their own cases in preparation for tenancy.

“Nobody is in competition with each other.”

When it comes to formal assessments, No5 only requires pupils to do one in the form of an advocacy exercise halfway through pupillage. However, there are four reviews that take place throughout pupillage – at the third, fifth, ninth and eleventh-month points. “In each review supervisors write a report and an email gets sent back across chambers asking for feedback,” a pupil informed us. They found the process a useful way to gauge their own progress: “One of my pieces of feedback was that I lacked confidence, which was helpful to get in advance of being on my feet.” The final decision on tenancy is made following a recommendation from the pupillage committee; however, Sandhu makes it clear that “we offer all pupillages with a
mind to give pupils tenancy after—nobody is in competition with each other.”

Culture-wise, a pupil reflected that “operationally it feels corporate because it’s so big, but not on a personal level.” A relaxed dress code helps to keep things casual, especially near to Christmas, “when you see some quite horrendous seasonal jumpers around!” one interviewee quipped. Another highlighted the generosity they’d experienced: “They will never let you buy lunch. It’s a tradition. If we go out for drinks and dinner it’s the same thing.” Mc-

Daid, discussing the atmosphere, emphasises that “the days of the Dickensian formality served their purpose and the Bar survived and prospered through that period, but it has given way to a modern relationship that works better for everyone. ‘Mr’ and ‘Miss’ have been replaced with first names and there is a raft of policies, including wellbeing and respect policies, which mean that everybody knows where the parameters are to ensure everyone in our business is treated equally.” In keeping with most sets, pupils rarely work past 6pm.

A league of their own

“We were the first and thus far only chambers to take up back-of-shirt sponsorship of a football team when we sponsored Birmingham City Football Club for three years,” McDaid tells us. “We’ve had season boxes at football and cricket grounds, the ballet and the theatre to name but a few.”
XXIV Old Buildings

The facts
Location: Lincoln’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 13/33 (11 women)
Pupillage applications last year: c.120
Outside Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 3
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 + (can advance £16,250 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 60
Mini-pupillage deadline: rolling (see website)

This set’s got aviation in the back, top rankings attached, Chancery work in stacks, and commercial work to match.

The Chambers
Contrary to its name, XXIV Old Buildings is a forward-thinking set. That’s according to pupillage committee member Steven Thompson QC anyway: “Although Commercial Chancery sounds like an old-fashioned label, it’s a modern collection of work that can span trusts and estates work through battles for corporate control and financial services disputes to aviation litigation, both domestically and internationally.” Thompson adds that the set handles “high-value and urgent” work in the civil sphere. The set straddles Chancery and commercial work to great effect, earning top rankings from Chambers UK Bar for its traditional Chancery and offshore practices, closely followed by a flurry of high scores for its commercial Chancery, civil fraud, aviation, and partnership work. Chambers director Sue Medder tells us: “Chambers’ USP is its experience and expertise in international trust litigation. Increasingly, however, the skills honed in such litigation have been of great use in many other areas of law.” And this wide range of practice areas was attractive to a pupil who “didn’t want to nail my colours to the mast of a particular area of Chancery.” Some were also drawn to the set’s “somewhat niche practice in aviation law.” More on that shortly...

“The concepts of law and equity are the golden thread that runs through what we do.”

Thompson is keen to dispel any misconceptions that the work is at all “unmanageably wide-ranging.” Instead, he explains that “because barristers’ chambers have usually aligned themselves with an area of law rather than an area of business, it isn’t that wide. The concepts of law and equity are the golden thread that runs through what we do.” Elaborating on the set’s business strategy, Thompson tells us: “We’ve decided to grow organically. Our pupils and junior tenants are our primary source of growth. We think it creates a more cohesive atmosphere and a better structure of work.”

As we mentioned before, XXIV’s members are a dab hand at dealing with complex offshore matters. For example, David Brownbill QC recently acted for the claimant in a multi-hundred-million-dollar claim against a Saudi bank in a Supreme Court case. Stephen Moverley Smith QC acted for the claimants in a claim in Gibraltar to recover $10 million worth of stolen art deco furniture from a French bank. On the more traditional side of Chancery work, Elspeth Talbot Rice QC recently handled a family dispute over a collection of Chinese porcelain from the Ming and Qing dynasties. Closer to home, Rice also handled a dispute regarding the ownership of a village in Dorset. Edward Cumming QC recently acted for philanthropist Jamie Cooper on an appeal over the court’s jurisdiction to supervise the administration of charities, which arose out of the divorce between Cooper and Sir Christopher Hohn. Sue Medder tells us that the set also works “at the more exciting end of aviation,” including tackling the consequences of the grounding of the Boeing 737 Max aircraft in the spring of 2019. Edward Cumming QC also recently advised Monarch Airlines and helped secure the release one of its former aircraft, which was grounded just before it was scheduled to take Jet2.com holidaymakers to Tenerife.
## The Pupillage Experience

Some pupils lean towards Chancery work (wills, trusts, 1975 Inheritance Act claims), while others focused on the commercial side (banking fraud, contractual disputes). What pupils do depends on which supervisor they sit with, but they can also take on tasks from other members at chambers. Over the course of pupillage, pupils typically sit with four different supervisors for three months at a time. Sources told us that pupils tend to start out as generalists: “One day you’ll be working on financial services and the next you’re challenging the validity of a will.” They added that “you’re expected to make a valuable contribution to a live matter, but typically you’ll be drafting applications and the usual skeleton arguments.” One source recalled “helping out on a matrimonial finance litigation. Most people of means structure their estates through trusts, so it’s not unusual to have a Chancery junior on such a case.” This pupil was also kept busy with “a massive commercial piece of litigation for a major healthcare provider.” Pupils also enjoyed getting stuck into “exciting international matters. Around half of my work has had international or offshore elements.”

Senior practice manager James Ladbrook adds that juniors can get stuck into “Regulation 261 applications, which are essentially flight delay disputes. They’re a good opportunity to appear on your own in front of a judge.” Some pupils and juniors were indeed able to get on their feet, but cautioned that this isn’t representative of pupillage as a whole. “You have to be patient,” one source reflected. “It’s taken me until fairly recently to start seeing direct progress, such is the variety of work here. The precision, academic rigour and research required to formulate some of these arguments means that it’s satisfying when it pays off.”

“The lack of formal assessments is a real positive.”

XXIV sets no formally assessed tasks; pupillage is a constant process of assessment. Yikes. Steven Thompson QC says: “Pupillage may feel like a year-long interview, but from our perspective it’s a year-long training.” Our sources echoed this idea, explaining: “It’s a marathon rather than a sprint.” Pupils also assured us that “the process here isn’t about pitting people against each other,” adding that “the clerks are very good about keeping an open dialogue about capacity, so there’s no unnecessary pressure.” Pupils have reviews with their supervisor every one and a half months to consolidate feedback, and overall interviewees felt that “the lack of formal assessments is a real positive.” Thompson goes on to tell us that chambers has kept on “roughly 1.5 pupils per year.” These figures reflect an average taken over the last few years, so future pupils need not worry about which one of them will be severed in two. Our interviewees assured us that “over the years, people who haven’t been kept on have said they knew it was coming.” In 2020, both its two pupils became tenants.

### The Application Process

The application process at XXIV Old Buildings kicks off with candidates submitting a simple form explaining why they desire pupillage at the set, followed by an online aptitude test “that was designed to recognise the risk of unconscious bias and minimise its effects,” Steven Thompson QC explains. The top 16 performers in the test automatically go through to a 15-minute interview with a three-member panel, and a further 16 are also selected for the interview from the next best 32 based on their application form.

“Even when you’re not working with someone on a case, there’s a constant discussion about how you’re doing.”

From those interviewees, the 12 brightest pupillage prospects progress to an assessment day testing their written, oral and negotiation abilities through a series of tasks. Thompson tells us: “There’s a structured negotiation between four people; it’s really interesting to see how people use their interpersonal skills.” He adds that the assessment day is attended by as many barristers as there are candidates. Pupils reflected that the “big advantage” of the process is its “efficiency – the whole process only takes two to three weeks.” Sue Medder tells us that along with excellent academics, applicants also need to demonstrate “interpersonal skills, and be commercial about generating work.” Any final tips for this stage? Thompson quips: “If you have the necessary core skills but haven’t ever spent the evening drinking warm wine, you can learn to do that.”

Pupils felt that the culture at XXIV Old Buildings “doesn’t have any of the stereotypes you might expect at the Chancery Bar.” They were pleased to report that the set has left the tradition of ‘chambers tea’ in the 19th century, opting instead for sunny evenings at the pub, chambers lunches and even five-a-side football matches on occasion. According to Sue Medder, this atmosphere is helped along by the set’s “transparency of billing. Every single barrister knows exactly what everyone earns, which leads to an openness and an understanding about what people are doing within the set.” She adds that there’s “no ‘upstairs downstairs’ culture,” while a junior source had these words of wisdom for potential applicants: “Don’t assume that Chancery commercial sets are cut-throat, unfriendly
or even lonely places. Even when you’re not working with someone on a case, there’s a constant discussion about how you’re doing.” Others agreed: “If you ever need someone to bounce ideas off of or foolproof your arguments, you can knock on anyone’s door.”

DON’T PANIC

XXIV’s application deadline was once among the earliest for the Bar, but as all sets now run in line with the Pupillage Gateway timetable, you’ve got some more time to prepare your application.
The facts
Location: London (Strand)
Overseas offices: Abu Dhabi, Dubai
Number of QCs/juniors: 25/66 (27 women)
Applications: 260
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £40,000 + £20,000 guaranteed earnings (can advance £15,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 16
Mini-pupillage deadlines: April/May and October/November

Introducing OT: the real OG of healthcare and commercial work in London with a growing international reach.

The Chambers
In the blockbuster film Taken, Liam Neeson thought he was all-that with his ‘very particular set of skills’. But he might have met his match with Outer Temple Chambers and its “unusual range of expertise,” in the words of pupillage secretary Saul Margo. To be clear, that doesn’t include car chases or hunting down kidnappers: “We have commercial chancery on one end and health and safety work on the other.” A senior source triangulates OT’s specialisms as “pensions, clinical negligence and personal injury,” but the set has also made its name in employment law.

A full picture of Outer Temple’s wingspan comes from Chambers UK Bar, which ranks the set highly for clinical negligence, employment, pensions, health and safety, travel and personal injury (OT also scores nods for its Court of Protection, financial services and professional discipline practices). With an impressive domestic presence, the set’s looking overseas for future growth opportunities: it’s already got office space in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Tech development is a priority for the set; it now offers a range of online client communications and training, such as video conferencing and paperless working. OT is also working with Oxford University Deep Tech Lab, focusing on the impact, knowledge-transfer, incubation, and “a critical reimagining of the potential of legal services in dispute resolution...” With the legal market turned on its head, OT member Victoria Brown assured us “a physical chambers will remain – nothing can replace human interaction and tangible work experience.”

“Nothing can replace human interaction and tangible work experience.”

Cases at this set often have a tangible human element, sometimes with tragic connotations: Christopher Wilson-Smith QC recently acted on a clinical negligence case of an infant who ran into the path of a stolen car and suffered a catastrophic spinal cord injury, with a suit brought against the hospital for mistreatment. Outer Temple members lead by Andrew Short QC advocated on equal pay claims by thousands of shop workers brought against Asda; Short and another team were instructed by 204 judges in a challenge to public sector pension scheme changes. Also in pensions law, junior member Lydia Seymour acted on High Court claims seeking clarity on the scope of liability for enhanced redundancy terms under a TUPE transfer.

The Pupillage Experience
Pupils complete four three-month seats – the first two will be employment, and clinical negligence and personal injury. The second six could consist of seats in any of Outer Temple’s other practice areas. We heard the logic behind this order is to provide pupils with a good foundation of work in preparation for their second six: “Both PI and clinical negligence have an emphasis on advocacy and
court proceedings.” Interviewees were delighted to learn “you are guaranteed to be working in court during your second six.” A common example is tribunal hearings: “You are working on your own cases and in court on your own account,” albeit with members on hand to help prep you when needed.

Roles played by pupils vary depending on practice. Employment cases including constructive dismissal, equal pay and breach of contract claims call for pupils to carry out research, attend client meetings and draft skeleton arguments and advice. The workload will be similar in a commercial seat, where supervisors mainly advise both claimants and defendants with pensions issues: “I worked on a big pensions case regarding railway funds, with defendants having to make big franchise and procurement decisions,” one pupil recalled. There’s a medical slant to personal injury and clin neg, with sources witnessing “historical sexual abuse claims brought against institutions in court.” Last but not least, pupils in public law helped on commercial fraud cases. Interviewees were thrilled with the work and professional development opportunities throughout pupillage: “Everyone in chambers has a real interest in watching you grow and making sure you get the type of work you are interested in.”

“It can be daunting, but everyone is very encouraging.”

Every piece of work a pupil completes circles back to them with detailed feedback from their supervisor, which they then discuss in end of seat ‘roundups’ with the head of pupillage. Comments should come as no surprise as Outer Temple “aims to foster close working relationships” between pupils and members. The set also runs six advocacy training exercises throughout the year and a separate legal opinion: “As a junior, you can always feel free to knock on a silk’s door and go grab a bite to eat,” provided they’re not slammed with a mega case of course. The whole OT gang gets together for cocktail classes, networking sessions, comedy club nights, meals at fancy restaurants and pub quizzes; there’s also a staple Chambers tea every Wednesday afternoon (come for the biscuits, stay for the banter).

“You can always feel free to knock on a silk’s door and go grab a bite to eat.”

Pupillage secretary Saul Margo explains the secret to chambers’ historically high retention rates: “We sustain open dialogue when pupils are struggling, and we still take on pupils who go on to prove themselves even if they had a difficult start.” The tenancy decision is made in June or July based on feedback from supervisors. A pupil recounted their personal experience: “Whilst I was at the pub with my colleagues, members of chambers started congratulating me and buying me drinks. It was a really lovely way to find out I made tenancy.” Not everyone gets the good news over a pint: it’s more common to receive a phone call. Outer Temple granted tenancy to both its twopupils in 2020.

The Application Process

Initial applications go through OT’s online portal: commitment, drive and motivation are key criteria here. Competition is fierce, and among hundreds of applications, only three will secure pupillage. Interview processes are kept continually under review and change each year, but prospective candidates can anticipate a written test of judgement and both legal and non-legal questions during their interviews. Outer Temple has recently been reforming its recruitment process to be as inclusive as possible. “We have a policy that applicants for pupillage who have a disability progress automatically through the initial sift and as a result they often make it to the interview stage.” Saul Margo reveals.

“A lot of this work is not faceless – it involves real people who may have had tragic experiences.”

First-round interviews take place on a Friday or Saturday, with the final round on the following Sunday – no being held in suspense here! The panel looks for potential pupils who are “business-savvy and have the ability to build relationships with clients.” In the most recent round, applicants had a legal scenario to summarise in 45 minutes before sitting down with three members of chambers and answering questions. On the Sunday, the best candidates got a summary of the same case and had to debate the relative merits of their original verdict with a panel of two silks, two senior juniors and one junior. A successful past interviewee noted that “although it is a robust interview
process, the interviewers were very friendly. It’s not like you’re grilled for the sake of it.”

OT offers mini pupillages for up to eight potential pupils twice a year (December and June). Candidates can expect a week of court visits, seminars and case research for an insight into life at the Bar. “The program provides students with great development opportunities,” a source noted. Saul Margo says Outer Temple focuses more on diversity than a cookie-cutter model: “We are conscious of not saying there’s a certain type of person we hire.” There are some key essential traits as “a lot of this work is not faceless – it involves real people who may have had tragic experiences, and what we do has an impact on their lives. Members here must possess empathy and be interested in the human condition.”

I’ve started so I’ll finish

Quiz nights are a popular Outer Temple pastime – we heard that chambers’ chief executive “somehow always manages to be on the winning team.” Highly suspicious...
Outer Temple Chambers

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Chambers profile

OTC is a leading, global civil and commercial chambers with a forward-thinking approach to business development and client care. We are involved in some of the most cutting-edge litigation and advisory work undertaken by the Bar. In London, we are located directly opposite the Royal Courts of Justice and we have barristers and staff based in the Middle East with offices in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, as well as representatives around the world including Australia, the Far East, US and the Caribbean. We are the only UK Chambers with registered offices in the DIFC and the Abu Dhabi Global Market.

We have been ranked in 9 practice areas by Chambers & Partners and in 20 practice areas by The Legal 500. We are platinum accredited Investors in People and offer a structured, well-supported, challenging and broad pupillage experience.

Main areas of work

We practise, principally, in the following areas:
Banking and financial services, business crime, clinical negligence, commercial, court of protection, disciplinary and regulatory, employment and discrimination, insolvency and restructuring, pensions and trusts, personal injury, private client, professional negligence, public law, sports law, travel law.

Pupil profile

We assess applicants for: intellectual ability, potential as an advocate, motivation, commitment, and professional compatibility with Chambers.

Pupillage

We offer a well-structured pupillage programme, usually four seats with four supervisors each ending with quarterly reviews, and a range of oral and written advocacy training exercises across the year. Over the past 5 years we have had a 100% pupil to tenancy conversion rate for mainstream 12-month pupils.

Mini-pupillages

We run two mini-pupillage weeks yearly (early July and early December). Our mini-pupillages are not assessed. Further details on our website.

Funding/Awards

We offer up to two 12-month pupillages with an award of £60,000. At Chambers’ discretion up to 25% of the 12-month pupillage award is available for draw-down during the Bar Professional Training Course year.

University law careers fairs 2020

This year we plan to attend: University of Law, University of Bristol, City University London, BPP Law Fair, University of Oxford, Durham University, Bar Council Pupillage Fair, Cambridge Barristers event, and the Target Jobs Pupillage Fair.
4 Pump Court

The facts
Location: Middle Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 27/45 (15 women)
Applications: 86
Outside Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 2x3 + 1x6 months
Pupillage award: £70,000 (can advance £15,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: not defined
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

With construction, technology, banking, international arbitration and more pumping through its practice, 4 Pump Court has set the bar high for all things commercial.

The Chambers
“Our work falls under the commercial umbrella,” says senior clerk Carl Wall, “but the practice areas come in different guises.” Construction and energy account for around 40% of 4PC’s instructions, making it the biggest piece of the pie. Shipping, commercial litigation and technology make up roughly 15% each, while insurance, professional negligence and banking compose a combined 20%. The set picks up Chambers UK Bar rankings across all of these areas, with IT and professional negligence singled out for top accolades.

Having “invested heavily in our Middle and Far Eastern profile” over the last decade, the set’s international arbitration work has increased significantly in recent years. In fact, construction-related arbitration has earned the set a high ranking from Chambers UK Bar. The arbitrations often relate to energy plants, airports, transport systems, universities, and shipyards, but specific details are highly confidential. Elsewhere within the set, Stephen Cogley QC and Alexander Wright recently achieved a €225 million worldwide freezing order against a Russian oil refinery following allegations that it sold oil to a third party despite prepayment agreements with a VTB Bank subsidiary.

The set recently welcomed three new silks and two juniors in just over twelve months, so Wall says “there’s no doubt we’re growing.” Culturally, juniors told us the set “really values loyalty – we build our client relationships over a long time, and our head clerk has been here since the beginning.” James Hatt, head of pupillage recruitment, was a 4PC pupil himself. “We’re a set that people stay at,” he says.

The Pupillage Experience
Pupils sit with three supervisors over the course of pupillage: two for three months each and a third for the final six months. The first six is non-practising, so pupils spend their time working for their supervisors. “At the end of the day, they’re the ones who sign off on your pupillage and accredit you to be self-employed, so they give you tasks to meet that criterion.” Said tasks include drafting “a lot” of documents for active cases: “Surprise, surprise, commercial law is about drafting pleadings, statements of case and advisory letters to clients.”

“I helped out on a major trial where we represented the FCA.”

Pupils’ work depends on which area of law their supervisor specialises in. “My first supervisor did a mix of technology and construction disputes with a bit of construction-related professional negligence,” one told us, “but my second supervisor was big on financial services and banking, so I helped out on a major trial where we represented the FCA against individuals for misrepresenting their financial products to consumers.” Other supervisors were “big on the shipping industry, which is a beast in and of itself but incredibly interesting.” Speaking of which, 4PC’s Nicholas Vineall QC recently represented Manchester Shipping in
claims of around $30 million arising out of the breakup of a Russian shipping empire.

Rookies also attend conferences with solicitors, clients and experts. Pupils did a bit of research “but not as much as I expected. They’re more concerned about honing your drafting skills so you can communicate clearly with clients, the other side and judges.” If the supervisor doesn’t have an active case on the go, pupils work on historic cases of around six months old. Newbies occasionally work for barristers who aren’t supervising them, but “it’s not that common because 4PC likes to give you just one source of feedback in the first six.”

Pupils begin practising a week or two into the second six: “Most commercial places don’t let pupils begin practising that early, so it’s cool 4PC does.” Cooler still, we heard there’s a “steady line of road traffic accidents on the insurer side here, so I’m often marched down to County Court to represent an insurer. It’s a chance to hone your cross-examination skills.” Pupils continue working for their supervisors in the second six as well.

“We didn’t feel like we needed to knock each other out!”

Assessment comes in the form of two oral and two written exercises in the first six. The written part is blind-marked by members of chambers, whilst the oral portion – an application and a mock hearing – is conducted in front of a panel of three members. “My co-pupil and I were against each other in the hearing, but it was actually really fun,” one shared, “We didn’t feel like we needed to knock each other out!” Pupils also get feedback on work they’ve done throughout the pupillage, though “not every bit of work is graded.”

Ahead of the tenancy decision, the pupillage committee gathers reports from supervisors and other members who’ve worked with pupils. “We base the decision on the reports, assessments and anything else relevant,” says James Hatt, head of pupillage recruitment. “We then make a recommendation to the heads of chambers,” though the heads tend to approve the committee’s decision. Both the set’s two pupils were taken on in 2020.

“Having someone to turn to in the good times and the bad is vital.”

Overall, our sources felt “pupillage isn’t a competition – we’ve been told that if we’re both good enough we’ll both be taken on, so we’re comfortable helping each other out.” Pupils and juniors five years’ call and under also get a clerk mentor. “No matter how friendly people are, pupils don’t always feel comfortable sticking their head above the parapet, so the clerk mentor is someone ‘safe’ to talk to,” they said. “Having someone to turn to in the good times and the bad is vital.” Members find more camaraderie in Middle Temple Hall, where they often have lunch together. In keeping with a “very un-stuffy” vibe, juniors and QCs are on a first-name basis, and a few lucky souls are even given nicknames.

The Application Process

4PC recruits outside the Gateway, so the application cycle kicks off with an application form on the set’s website, which is “a chance for applicants to show their written advocacy abilities,” says Hatt. “Of course we look at academic achievements, but we also look for people with good judgement and the ability to get on with people in different spheres.” Ultimately, “what stands out is common sense.” A look at the set’s most junior members shows that a lot of them studied at Oxbridge, but the group also contains graduates of Trinity College Dublin, Glasgow and Durham. It’s also worth noting that 4PC doesn’t require candidates to have done mini-pupillages.

“You’re not a professor so sometimes the best answer is ‘I don’t know, but this is what I think.’”

4PC gets roughly 100 applications each year, which are sifted down to 16 top candidates. The first interview focuses on legal analysis. Candidates are given a legal issue to prepare whilst waiting to be called in, then have to advocate for a certain side in the actual interview. “It’s very much about analysing the problem and responding to our questions,” says Hatt. The interview panel consists of four barristers at mixed levels of seniority. “We try to get a spread of backgrounds and types of practice,” says Hatt. “It’s a friendly process but we do try to probe and get people to think on their feet.” A pupil emphasised that “they’re not trying to trick you into an answer. You’re not a professor so sometimes the best answer is ‘I don’t know, but this is what I think.’” Hatt has this advice: “When answering questions, show good judgement in a calm and authoritative matter.” One junior recalled that “most of the interview was a general discussion about my interests and why I wanted to become a barrister.”

Five to six lucky candidates are invited back for a second interview which is structured around oral advocacy. The
potential pupils are given mock court papers earlier in the week beforehand, then advocate in a 15-minute mock hearing on the day. Hatt tells us: “We decide who to take very quickly, then make a recommendation to the heads of chambers. We make offers as quickly as we can after interviews, subject to the heads’ availability.” Pupils are afforded £70,000 upon joining the set, one of the highest awards at the Bar.

And finally...

_____ up the jam: Every Friday, 4PC members enjoy a fill-in-the-missing-song-lyric competition before heading down to their local.
4 Pump Court

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Chambers Profile
4 Pump Court is one of London's leading sets of commercial barristers' chambers, with a reputation for excellence in advocacy. 4 Pump Court prides itself on its reputation as an approachable and friendly place to work.

Types of work undertaken
The work of chambers covers virtually every aspect of commercial law. We have particular expertise in commercial dispute resolution, professional negligence, technology and telecoms, energy, shipping, construction and engineering, and insurance and reinsurance.

Pupil profile
We are looking for people who have the potential to become outstanding advocates. We are keen to recruit bright, independent-minded people, who are articulate, confident and perceptive, and who thrive on hard work. They will also be keen to learn, have the ability to get on with people, and be able to demonstrate common sense and judgement.

We are committed to equal opportunities and diversity, and select candidates for pupillage and tenancy solely on merit.

We require a minimum of 2:1 in your degree, but we do not require a law degree.

Pupillage
We take recruitment of pupils extremely seriously. We recognise that attracting talented individuals with the ability to become top-class advocates, and training them carefully, is a key part of retaining Chambers' position as a leading set in the areas of law in which we practice.

We want you to feel welcome and relaxed, and will therefore do our best to make you feel fully integrated in chambers' life. We want to encourage you to develop your skills and to contribute fresh ideas.

Your pupillage will be for 12 months and during that time you will have three different pupil supervisors. We try to allocate our pupils so that you have the opportunity to experience as broad a range of work as possible. In your second six months, you can expect to undertake a significant case load of your own. We place great emphasis on the development of advocacy skills and we are committed to giving our pupils as much experience in court as we can.

Mini-pupillages
Limited places available throughout the year upon application by completing the application form available to download from our website.

Funding
Usually two funded pupillages with awards of £70,000 plus earnings in second six for pupillages commencing October 2022, of which up to £15,000 may be advanced during the Bar Professional Training Course.
Apply by 11am on Monday, 8th February 2021 for pupillage beginning October 2022.
Pump Court Tax Chambers

The facts
Locations: Bedford Row, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 12/23 (10 women)
Applications: 53
Outside Pupillage Gateway (under review)
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 1x3 months + 2x6 weeks, then fortnightly rotations
Pupillage award: £67,500 (can advance £25,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: c.25
Mini-pupillage deadlines: 10 October 2020, 29 January 2021, 7 May 2021

Tic-tax-toe: the winning formula for these masters of tax is a “unique combination of tax knowledge, litigation experience, and client service.”

The Chambers
Tax law. Is it an impenetrable legal labyrinth? Or a juicy intellectual challenge? If you think the latter, you’re in good company. For the pupils at Pump Court Tax Chambers and all those who work there, tax law is a problem solver’s dream. As one pupil shared, “what I like about tax law is that you get to dig deep into technical projects.” The subject matter of cases can be hugely complex, such as the high-profile film finance scheme of Ingenious Film Partners, which HMRC alleged was a tax avoidance scheme. The PCTC team, led by David Milne QC, is defending against the claims in this ongoing case. With over 30 barristers specialising in tax, this set has earned the highest praise possible from Chambers UK with three top-tier tax rankings.

“What I like about tax law is that you get to dig deep into technical projects.”

Senior clerk Nigel Jones says the set is defined by “our unique combination of tax knowledge, litigation experience and client service in an ever-changing field of law with sophisticated and knowledgeable clients.” The client base ranging from magic circle firms to high-street firms for smaller matters. The work chambers does is split into eight distinct areas: corporate tax, personal tax, indirect tax, customs and duties, employee remuneration, professional negligence, stamp taxes and arbitration. Stamp duty land tax cases have been a trend in recent years: in one ongoing case, Roger Thomas QC represented Project Blue as taxpayer regarding its acquisition of Chelsea Barracks for redevelopment, and how much stamp duty is owed to HMRC.

“Covid-19 hasn’t had any disastrous effect on us,” says Jones. “Our advisory work is going strong and everyone has been kept busy.” You might associate tax purely with advisory work, but a junior tenant we spoke to had been so busy with litigation that “it’s more of a fight to make space for the advisory work, to be honest!”

The Pupillage Experience
The set splits its work evenly between direct tax (corporation and business tax), private tax (inheritance, income tax and trusts) and indirect tax (VAT and customs duties). The pupillage is initiated by a ‘bedding in’ period during which pupils sit with one supervisor until the Christmas break. A junior tenant said this “is the core time for learning as much as possible, getting to grips with the work, and looking at different cases, opinions and litigation.” Our senior sources confirmed the aim of the first six is to expose pupils to the typical sorts of matters PCTC works on and prepare them for (hopefully) tenancy. The pupillage committee has actually been toying with the idea of starting the pupillage a couple of weeks earlier than usual for future pupils. “This extra time would give pupils an overview of substantive tax law,” says Richard Vallat QC, head of the pupillage committee.

“... analysing the way tax code interacts with European fundamental freedoms.”
Again, this is testament to how technical this area of law is. Pupils may work on jurisdiction review cases or puzzle over double tax treaties. “I was looking at tax in the UK and internationally,” one told us, “analysing the way tax code interacts with European fundamental freedoms.” There are also plenty of chances to go to court in the first six: “I took notes of cross-examinations at the High Court and Court of Appeal.”

The second six is more private client-focused – a junior tenant recalled working on matters involving “inheritance tax, income tax, capital gains tax and wills drafting” throughout. At this point, “the emphasis is on learning about substantive tax law and how to approach litigation,” notes Vallat. The first three months of the second six are divided between two supervisors. At the tail end of the pupillage, pupils go through a fast-track rotation, spending two weeks with three to four different supervisors. During this period, pupils spend their time focusing on one or two tasks. “A supervisor will email you a skeleton argument of a case,” for example, for the pupils to analyse and then provide an opinion.

Additionally, pupils undergo two assessed moots around Easter time. PCTC’s most recent pupils were given a question referring to the Court of Justice in Luxembourg, which we heard is a “classic type of question” in these assessments. Understandably the moots can be quite intense, not least because they’re open to all members of chambers to come and watch, but “if you like advocacy, it’s quite exciting really.”

The tenancy decision is made in July. Taking into account supervisor feedback as well as the assessed advocacies, the pupillage committee grades pupils out of ten, with supervisor feedback as well as the assessed advocacies, pupil’s notes of cross-examinations at the High Court and Court of Appeal.

The set’s application process kicks off with a CV and covering letter, which is treated as a form of advocacy: clear and concise writing comes off well. Although tax experience isn’t required, applicants do need to have an interest in tax legislation and be able to explain why they’re interested in the Tax Bar. Around 20 applicants are invited to the first-round interview, where interviewees are given around 15 minutes to read through a piece of statute to discuss during the 30-minute interview. The interview is marked for technical analysis and how willing candidates are to defend and change their answers when pressed. “We try to bring out the best in people as opposed to scaring them,” says Vallat.

Junior sources told us much of the set’s culture and socialising revolves around mentorship, both professionally and personally. “You get the impression that people want to help you,” they said. “We have a studious, refreshing, and supportive atmosphere.” Through a formal mentorship programme, pupils have a panel of people they can run to with any questions. Members often attend seminars and networking events together, including a programme called ‘meet the juniors.’ As senior clerk Nigel Jones explains, “we usually take half a dozen juniors along and give soundbite presentations with drinks and canapés after.”

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“we don’t need candidates to come in over-polished – we look for normal people!”

From here, the top ten candidates are asked to submit a written tax opinion in the space of eight hours. “This task is intended to enable a deeper process of thinking and allow different strengths to come to the fore,” says Vallat. A junior tenant reflected on their taxing day: “It’s inherently stressful, but you also get to have a good crack at showing what you’re made of!” Based on the anonymised opinions, the panel invites up to five candidates back to the final-round interview, where they orally defend their work.

Vallat outlines what the set scouts for throughout the application process: “We are looking for technical ability, the ability to engage with statutory language, solid academic credentials, and persuasive speaking.” But not to fear, the
odd slip won’t rule you out: “We don’t need candidates to come in over-polished—we look for normal people!”

And finally...

Tax to the max: PCTC puts on tax master classes for anyone looking to brush up—you can register your interest in the next event by emailing the set.
Pump Court Tax Chambers

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Tel: 020 7414 8080
Email: clerks@pumptax.com
Website: www.pumptax.com

Chambers overview
Pump Court Tax Chambers is the largest specialist tax set.

Type of work undertaken
All areas of tax work (both contentious and non-contentious). Corporate tax clients range from City law firms and the major accountants sending work such as M&A, reconstructions and demergers to the corporation tax and VAT problems of small businesses. Private client work comes from a broad range of sources – City solicitors, regional firms, chartered tax advisers and IFAs, who act for private individuals, trustees and landed estates. Much of chambers’ work concerns litigation and members of Chambers regularly appear in the Tax Tribunals, the High Court, the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court and the CJEU. Junior members’ litigation tends to be led for the first couple of years, with an increasing amount of lower-value litigation on their own after that. Tax problems tend to bring in all other areas of law, and Chambers’ VAT practice involves a great deal of EU law. Members act for both taxpayers and HMRC.

Pupil profile
Applicants who are intelligent, articulate and well-motivated. Successful candidates will generally have at least a 2:1 honours degree (although not necessarily in law). Prior experience of studying tax law is not required.

Pupillage
Chambers offers up to two 12-month pupillages (normally beginning in October and terminable early only for cause) to those wishing to practise full-time at the Bar.

Pupils will work with at least three pupil supervisors in their first six months and will also sit with other members of chambers so as to receive a broad training in most aspects of Chambers’ work. Tenancy decisions are usually made in July.

Funding
Award of up to £67,500. Up to £13,500 of the award may be advanced during the BPTC year.

Mini-pupillages
Chambers offers funded mini-pupillages. The programme runs throughout the year. Applications should be made via email to pupils@pumptax.com with accompanying CV and marked for the attention of the Mini-Pupillage Secretary. See https://www.pumptax.com/pupillage/mini-pupillage/ for further details including deadlines.
Quadrant Chambers

The facts
Location: Fleet Street, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 25/44 (14 women)
Applications: 70
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 3
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance £25,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: undisclosed
Mini-pupillage deadlines: 31 Oct 2020, 31 Jan 2021, 30 April 2021, 30 June 2021

Quadrant’s expertise may be anchored in shipping law, but its members are making waves across the commercial Bar.

The Chambers
“Our roots are in the marine sector but we have successfully broadened out into the synergistic areas and we are now recognised as one of the leading commercial sets,” senior clerk Gary Ventura explains of Quadrant. “When I joined 20 years ago, shipping made up about 80% of our work; now it’s around 45%. In the last two years we have attracted lateral hires who have helped broaden chambers’ presence in the commercial sector. These individuals appreciate the culture that has been developed over a numbers of years at the set.” Out of 67 Quadrant members, there are now 13 who do nothing shipping-related. Chambers UK Bar grants the set top rankings for both shipping and travel (regulatory and commercial); Quadrant also earns accolades for aviation, commercial dispute resolution, and energy and natural resources.

In a massive $1 billion shipping case, Lionel Persey QC represented the Kingdom of Spain in court after the MV Prestige oil tanker sank and spilled millions of gallons of oil into Spanish waters, the largest environmental disaster in the country’s history. As part of a $170 million dispute between joint venture owners of a fleet of vessels and tankers, with elements of fraud and breach of fiduciary duty, Poonam Melwani QC obtained a worldwide freezing order for over $60 million. Back on land, Simon Rainey QC defended Iran in $600 million enforcement and state immunity proceedings alleging terrorist activity; and Paul Downes QC represented West Ham FC in a clash with the owners of London Stadium after they blocked a request for increased stadium capacity.

Quadrant name appears in all kinds of mammoth cases, but pupils were keen to stress that the set’s success hasn’t gone to members’ heads. “There’s a huge amount of pomposity at the Bar, but we attract people who have a healthier attitude towards self-importance than other sets,” according to one source. “We take the piss out of each other to keep everyone grounded.” Each pupil gets a clerk mentor “to foster a relationship before starting tenancy,” and they were happy to use this launching pad. “Right from the beginning, the senior clerks made a massive effort to help me get my name out there.”

“The Pupillage Experience
It’s appropriate that Quadrant pupils sit with four supervisors, each for a three-month seat; they’ll sometimes do two seats with the same member. “Having multiple supervisors is very beneficial because you see different ways of doing things, so you can develop your own style,” sources said. Pupils mostly work alongside their supervisor and focus on whatever their specialism is. They’re not too restricted: “My supervisor had a very broad practice and my caseload varied from shipping to fraud and bribery.” Others had cut their teeth on a mix of dead and live cases across shipping and commodities law, commercial arbitration and “many types of commercial litigation.” Skeleton arguments, written advice and court shadowing are com-
mon pupil tasks. “We stress to supervisors that they need to give feedback on any task within a week, when it’s still fresh in pupils’ minds,” pupillage committee head Chris Smith QC tells us.

“Pupils typically work for someone with ten to 15 years’ call, so the matters are fairly technically complicated,” we heard. “The high-value nature of work” at Quadrant means the second six is non-practising, though some get pupils to stretch their wings on secondment. “I went to a leading London-based insurer, which was a really good way to develop market awareness and get to know key clients in that sector,” a baby junior explained. “Since securing tenancy, I’ve had a steady stream of insurance work coming from that secondment.”

Assessment comes in the form of written and oral exercises once every three months, set by senior Quadrant members (usually silks). Each pupil does the same exercise in the same timeframe, “so we can compare them—not because it’s a competition, but so we can see how their thinking might differ in the same scenario.” These are prime opportunities to impress members who aren’t your supervisor or involved in the day-to-day of pupillage.” Oral assessments are typically an application for summary judgment or mock appeal hearing, with a QC playing judge: “They ask you questions and try to challenge and test you under pressure to see how you react, then they give you oral feedback straight away.” Quadrant scores pupils against defined competencies; they found the instant feedback helpful “because otherwise I’d have forgotten what I did in the assessment!” One source suggested the three-month gap between tests means “you don’t feel like you’re constantly being assessed.”

Chris Smith outlines Quadrant’s approach: “We emphasise that we’re not just testing whether pupils are good enough. It’s about helping pupils reach that threshold, and we invest in them with a high pupillage award.” £65,000 is indeed at the higher end of the pupillage award scale. Each assessment goes into a file with reports from the pupil supervisors – Quadrant’s pupillage committee assesses the whole file and makes a tenancy recommendation to chambers. “We expose pupils to a small pool of members, and the views of their pupil supervisors are generally determinative. So if their pupil supervisors recommend them for tenancy they are likely to be taken on,” Smith suggests. Two out of three pupils secured tenancy in 2020.

Sources described a “fantastically friendly” relationship between pupils, clerks and barristers: “Chambers laid on a night out for pupils and clerks, which was really beneficial because it can be intimidating going into the clerks’ room before you get to know them.” Quadrant’s magnificent library is the meeting point for various social drinks and client events throughout the year, “and pupils are encouraged to join in. When we put on our Quadrant badges and speak to clients as a team, it really feels like we’re a group of people supporting each other.” One interviewee summed up their sentiments: “I don’t get the feeling we’re just a collection of self-employed people; it feels like one cohesive unit.”

The Application Process
Quadrant sits in the Pupillage Gateway. Chris Smith reveals that they “tweak the application process year on year: we still use the Gateway’s application form, but this year we decided to add our own questions too, as we had otherwise found we were getting the same template answers.” In the interest of diversity, Quadrant signed on to the Rare Contextual Recruitment System in 2020. The external agency sets candidates’ academic achievements against their school’s average. Smith suggests: “It’s very useful because the majority of candidates applying to us have incredibly impressive academics and by using the Rare System we can identify candidates who have overachieved at school, or against the odds.”

Between 15 and 30 applicants (26 in the most recent round) take on a written test designed by members. “We don’t want to give an unfair advantage to people who have a law degree, so the test doesn’t include any degree-level legal knowledge,” we heard. The assessment usually involves a two-page legal problem that candidates provide a five-page advice to. “Not all chambers do something similar, but it’s a great opportunity to shine,” pupils suggested. Twelve or so candidates make it through to the interview stage; there will be either be one or two rounds depending on whether Quadrant has set a written test that year.

“It’s not necessarily about knowing the right answer; it’s more about whether you can argue your answer in a persuasive and consistent way.”

Interviewees receive a passage from a case to consider about half an hour before the interview, which is split into two sections: for the first, candidates answer questions about their given case for 15 to 20 minutes. Quadrant deliberately picks cases that they’re unlikely to have
read about to ensure a level playing field: “They just want to see your gut reaction, and for you to demonstrate you understand it.” The second half of the interview revolves around an ethical problem, but there’s no need to have brushed up too much in advance: “A lot of it is common sense, such as knowing whether your client is lying,” Chris Smith explains. “It’s not necessarily about knowing the right answer; it’s more about whether you can argue your answer in a persuasive and consistent way. What matters is that you justify what you say.” One junior tenant “gave completely the wrong answer during their interview, but they stuck to their guns and answered so persuasively we gave them pupillage.” Don’t necessarily follow their example – but do take inspiration from their story!

Stay grounded

We asked what advice Chris Smith had for budding barristers: “You need to be sensitive, serious and responsive with clients, to show them you’re not a puffed-up balloon who thinks ‘Oh, aren’t clients lucky to have me.’ There’s nothing worse than a pompous 26-year-old in a waistcoat.”
Quadrant Chambers (Luke Parsons QC)

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Email: pupillage@quadrantchambers.com
Website: www.quadrantchambers.com

Chambers profile
We are a leading set of barristers specialising in commercial law. We act as advocates in court, arbitrations and inquiries, and provide specialist legal advice to clients from around the world in a wide range of industry areas. A number of us also act as arbitrators and mediators. Many of us are qualified to practise in other jurisdictions, including Australia, the BVI, California, Germany, Hong Kong, New York and South Africa. Distinguished former members of Quadrant Chambers have gone on to chair high-profile public enquiries, and to sit as judges in the High Court (QBD, Commercial, Administrative and Admiralty Courts), DIFC Courts, European General Court, Court of Appeal, House of Lords, Privy Council and UK Supreme Court.

Type of work undertaken
We hold a pre-eminent position as a leading international commercial disputes set with a strong sector driven approach. We are market leaders with a reputation for excellence in our areas of focus: aviation and travel, banking and financial services, commercial disputes, commodities and international trade, energy and natural resources, insurance and reinsurance, international commercial arbitration, and shipping.

Pupil profile
We look for candidates with a very strong academic background. Successful applicants will generally have (or be predicted) a first class degree, and they must have/be predicted at least a high 2.1 to apply. Candidates must have excellent analytical abilities, outstanding written and oral communication skills and the ability to perform under pressure. They must also be able to demonstrate that they have the commitment, energy and robustness to succeed in the competitive world of the Commercial Bar. Successful candidates often read law for their first degree, and an increasing number also have postgraduate law degrees. However, these are not pre-requisites. We welcome applications from candidates who have studied any serious academic subject at university.

Pupillage
We offer up to three pupillages of 12 months’ duration each year. We aim to develop in our pupils the skills, knowledge and sound judgment they will need to become successful commercial barristers. During their first and second six months, pupils sit with up to three pupil supervisors and are exposed to a wide range of high quality commercial work. Tenancy decisions are made at the end of June. Pupils also undertake advocacy and written assessments throughout their pupillage. Quadrant Chambers uses the Pupillage Gateway to manage its applications. Thereafter our process involves a series of interviews and a test set. Please see our website for further details.

Mini-pupillages
Mini-pupillages are available in March/April, July, September and December of each year. Places are limited. Please see our website for details.

Funding and sponsorship
Pupils receive an award of £65,000, part of which may be advanced during the BPTC year. Pupils also have the opportunity to do fee-earning work during their second six.
Queen Elizabeth Building QEB

The facts
Location: Middle Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 7/28 (16 women)
Applications: 142
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 2x6 months (usually)
Pupillage award: £35,000 (BPTC advance available upon request)
Mini-pupillages pa: undisclosed
Mini-pupillage deadlines: see website

Housing “premier league people” in “premier league accommodation,” QEB has grown a healthy family tree.

The Chambers
“We define family law in quite diverse terms,” QEB senior clerk Howard Rayner begins. “Members work on matters related to trusts and pensions, companies, jurisdictional issues, conflicts of treaties and child law.” Comfortably lodged in the serene surroundings of Temple Gardens, the set picks up a Chambers UK ranking in matrimonial finance and 21 of its 34 members earn individual accolades. It’s matrimonial finance work which brings in the bulk of QEB’s instructions – around two-thirds – while child abduction cases and private law, forced marriage, civil partnerships, foreign divorces and TOLATA (Trusts of Land and Appointment of Trustees Act) cases provide the rest. Firms which call on QEB’s aid range from “top-ranked family law firms” like Penningtons Manches, Mills & Reeve, Withers and Harbottle & Lewis to smaller outfits.

Asked whether Queen Elizabeth Building is looking to extend its own family tree much further, Rayner declares that chambers is “very proud of the family environment in chambers and if we get bigger and bigger, which we could easily do, we would lose that. We have premier league people, premier league accommodation and a premier league clerks room and we don’t need to change that.” There are no fears of falling into the relegation zone either, and Rayner reassures us that QEB is reacting to market changes: “We are at the vanguard of changes in dispute resolution processes. Adapting doesn’t necessarily involve growing.” Pupillage supervisor Rosemary Budden agrees: “There’s very little movement at chambers as we recruit exclusively from our own pupil ranks and so we’ve all built a rapport over a number of years.”

Compared to civil and criminal law, our interviewees compared family law to being on the set of Jeremy Kyle. “It can get super dramatic,” one noted. “You get this bizarre look into the deepest, darkest secrets of somebody’s personal life. I’m not a voyeur but it’s often interesting!” Other sources saw the appeal of family law as striking “the right balance between dealing with people, rather than just financial institutions, and good levels of advocacy. We go to court around three times a week, which is more than commercial barristers typically do.”

“You get this bizarre look into the deepest, darkest secrets of somebody’s personal life.”

Everybody’s seen some family drama, but QEB tends to deal with spats that are more extreme than fighting for control of the television remote: member James Ewins represented Prince Louis of Luxembourg in a contested financial remedies application over assets owned by the country’s royal family, as well as a wife in an application for her husband’s committal to prison for not paying her maintenance. Catherine Cowton recently acted for a husband in divorce proceedings with more than £180 million worth of assets on the line. Cases which involve children can be similarly high-stakes: William TYzack got involved in a matter brought by a mother seeking permission to remove her children from Bosnia to Serbia.
Rankings in Chambers UK Rankings

Family/Matrimonial

For detail on ranking tiers and ranking locations, visit www.chambers.com

The Pupillage Experience

Pupils sit with three supervisors, each for about four months at a time. “They start out with their first supervisor halfway through September; transition to their second over the Christmas holidays; and move to their third half-way through April. The tenancy decision is made by early July,” Rosemary Budden explains. It’s not uncommon for pupils to find their first seat challenging, as family law is so different to other practices. Budden points out that “across the three years of studying a law degree, there will probably only be two weeks of family law within that. We are a very specialist set and there is a lot to learn.” Given that pupillage also touches on complex finance and trusts law it’s a relief to learn that “there’s definitely a grace period until the Christmas holidays.”

The first seat is dedicated to laying the basic groundwork, with supervisors “showing pupils the ropes” and their charges trying to keep up. In contrast, sources described the second seat as “the engine room of pupillage, transitioning from theory into practice,” before the pupil’s third supervisor takes them “under their wing, and teaches them how to make their own successful practice.” QEB also assigns pupils a junior contact – normally a tenant with at least one year’s experience – to bring them along to court and prepare them for getting on their feet.

“The engine room of pupillage, transitioning from theory into practice.”

According to our interviewees, during the first six of pupillage “you basically do what your supervisor is doing. If they are writing an opinion, you write an opinion and if they’re doing a telecom, you write a telecom note for them. When you move to your second supervisor, you still do work for them but towards the end of the six you would start on your own practice.” Pupils’ diaries will fill up with two to three court visits each week during the second six and “although we work on smaller money cases like basic children abduction and molestation matters, it is a steep learning curve.” Clearly, this isn’t an area of law for the faint of heart. Second-sixers find themselves juggling court cases, assessments and assisting their supervisor. To make sure pupils experience a spread of work within family law, Budden informs us, QEB “sometimes arranges an exchange with another family set that has more care work going on. We like to think of ourselves as a boutique with 34 members and are always conscious of who is doing what, so we are open to sending pupils out to see specific types of work.”

The Application Process

If you’d like to join the QEB family, start your journey by sending in an application via the Pupillage Gateway. Budden informs us that the set has “moved to a new system. We previously used to have one round of interviews but now we have two.” QEB invites 30 applicants to the two-day first-round interview; the best ten return for a second one-day grilling on a case study. “These are never a test of knowledge of the law,” Budden reveals. “It’s more about how a candidate thinks about something and their approach to problem solving.” Going into more detail about the criteria involved, Budden explains that “the case studies are determining the candidate’s ability to weigh up factors and their reasoning. The remainder of the questions are designed to assess interpersonal skills, tenacity, resilience, ability to get on with others, advocacy and intellect.”

“Questions are designed to assess interpersonal skills, tenacity, resilience, ability to get on with others, advocacy and intellect.”

“Go on home”}

Between Christmas and July, pupils complete five or six formal assessments – these, along with their performance throughout pupillage, are considered during the tenancy decision process. In recent years, the assessments have included one formal and one more laid-back advocacy test; two written exercises plus another drafting first appointment; and one more assessment in a conference format. “We try not to drag out the same assessments every year and so we tweak which ones we include,” Budden tells us.

At the end of each four-month block of pupillage, supervisors write a report grading each prospective tenant from one to four on areas including presentation, communication and persuasiveness. Interviewees felt a degree of pressure to “make sure not to piss anybody off” during their pupillage, though Budden reassures us that a pre-decision meeting takes place between pupils and their supervisors to address any concerns they have. Every member has a say in the final tenancy decision, but head of chambers Tim Amos QC has the final word on who makes the cut. QEB had not finalised its 2020 process at the time of going to press.
Queen Elizabeth Building (QEB) (Tim Amos QC)

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Email: clerks@qeb.co.uk
Website: www.qeb.co.uk

Chambers profile
QEB is a leading set of family law chambers, particularly well-known for dealing with the financial consequences of divorce, but with immense experience in all aspects of family law including: jurisdictional disputes, foreign divorces, pre-marital agreements, civil partnerships, injunctions both financial and domestic, private law child work, child abduction, Inheritance Act claims and disputes between former cohabitees.

QEB has been established for well over 100 years and is consistently rated as one of the top-ranking sets for family law. Members of QEB have been involved in many of the most important cases of legal principle, including: White, Sorrell, Miller, Spencer, Marano, Robson, Schofield, Jones, Z v Z (No. 2) Petrodel v Prest, Mittal and Cooper-Hohn, AB v JJB (EMR Modification), Arif v Anwar, Broomfield, A v B (CJEU), E v E (Art.19 and Seisin B 11a) and Fields.

Many members of chambers have continued into high judicial office and Lord Wilson sits in the Supreme Court.

Pupil profile
The practice of family law is hugely varied and clients come from all walks of life. International and conflict of laws issues arise increasingly often. An ability to deal not only with complex financial disputes, often involving commercial issues, but also with child-related or other emotionally fraught and sensitive situations, is essential. We are looking for applicants with a strong academic record (minimum 2:1 law or non-law degree save in exceptional circumstances), good legal and analytical skills, and an ability to communicate sensitively with a wide range of people at a critical time in their lives.

Pupillage
QEB offers two pupillages each year. A 12-month pupillage at QEB offers top-quality training and very good financial support in a busy, friendly environment. Pupils have three pupil supervisors, but are also encouraged to work with other tenants at all levels to gain a broad experience of our work. Pupils are automatically considered for tenancy, and our new tenants are only recruited from our pupils. QEB’s reputation is such that where a pupil is not taken on, he/she is usually well placed elsewhere.

Chambers is a part of the Pupillage Gateway system. Applicants should apply in early 2021 for a pupillage beginning in September 2022. Please consult the Pupillage Gateway website for details of the timetable.

Mini-pupillages
Applications for mini-pupillages are made by application form. Please consult our website at www.qeb.co.uk for full details.

Funding
Chambers offers a pupillage award of £35,000 pa, plus earnings in the second six and from devilling. Pupils do not pay chambers’ expenses or clerks’ fees. Chambers also funds the compulsory Inn Advocacy and Practice Management Training Courses.
Radcliffe Chambers

The facts
Location: Lincoln's Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 11/52 (15 women)
Applications: 140
Outside Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £60,000 + earnings (£15,000 can be advanced for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 8
Mini-pupillage deadlines: paused due to Covid-19

One part commercial, one part Chancery, and a sprinkle of other areas... that’s the recipe for Radcliffe’s rapid growth.

The Chambers
The Bar is a selective profession, a tough cookie to crack – but at Radcliffe Chambers, the chances of winning a prized spot as a pupil have doubled. Well, sort of: mathematicians would point out that if you’re not up to the job, your chances have stayed the same. What we’re trying to say is that the firm now takes two pupils a year rather than one, with both of its first twosome being granted tenancy in 2019. It’s one of the clearest symptoms of Radcliffe’s recent growth. Chambers’ workload grew 20% in 2018 and “that continued into 2019,” according to CEO Fiona Fitzgerald. Seven qualified barristers also joined the set’s ranks in 2018, and in 2020 both pupils achieved tenancy too.

The set balances traditional and commercial Chancery work. To be specific, the practice can be broken down as follows: 25% private client; 20% commercial; 20% insolvency; 15% property; 10% pensions; 5% banking; and 5% charities. Instructions come from a variety of international, offshore and UK-based clients and firms. Hogan Lovells and Eversheds are two examples from the top end, but the set takes work from all sorts, regional heavyweights and sole practitioners included. Chambers UK Bar bestows Radcliffe with plenty of strong rankings, from traditional Chancery and Court of Protection matters, to pensions and charities. Robert Pearce QC recently assisted on a charities case focusing on the National Fund, a donation made to the government by a former nurse back in 1928, which, now being 700 times its original value, totals £350 million. The case dealt with whether or not the fund should be spent on reducing the UK’s national debt, as the Attorney General wished, or distributed for other charitable purposes.

“I’m so happy I’ve done pupillage at a chambers that’s really on the rise.”

As for Chancery cases, Keith Rowley QC acted for the Airways Pension Scheme in a dispute with British Airways over a contentious payments increase APS granted its members; meanwhile, Christopher Boardman acted for the claimant in a £3 million Welsh High Court breach of contract dispute over the suspension of a coal haulage agreement.

Property work comes throws up some unusual details: Simon Williams helped win damages for negligence on behalf of an individual whose neighbour’s pottery kiln exploded, setting fire to the client’s house. Fiona Fitzgerald adds that “the property market remains buoyant despite Brexit, and our private client practice has been incredibly busy.” Members also keep busy when companies end up in dire straits: Dawn McCambley represented the liquidators of consultancy firm Bowe Watts Clargo in misfeasance, fraud and breach of fiduciary duty proceedings brought against the company’s former director.

Radcliffe “isn’t historically known for offshore work but there’s been a push to change that,” according to Fitzgerald, who declares that “chambers is constantly looking to improve. We’re seeing more and more cutting-edge work related to unusual offshore trusts and tech.” A pupil described Radcliffe as “vibrant, dynamic and ready to adapt
The problems with diversity at the Bar begin at sixth-form level,” says Fitzgerald. “We follow the scheme up with long-term mentoring and we’re encouraging other chambers to get involved.”

The Pupillage Experience

Pupils sit with four different supervisors for three months at a time, seeing a spread of commercial and traditional Chancery work. Daniel Burton says that the pupillage committee “works to ensure pupils see a broad spread of what chambers does, taking into account any of their personal interests or requests.” And sources praised their teachers: “All my supervisors have been really approachable. They clearly want to help you develop, and helping them on cases is a fantastic feeling.”

The Application Process

Radcliffe recruits outside the Pupillage Gateway, asking applicants for a covering letter and CV. Previous applicants considered it “a very thorough and fair process. There’s more freedom to include what you want rather than trying to fit your whole self into a 150-word box.” Pupillage committee member Daniel Burton explains that “a lot of Chancery law is based around written work, so it’s good to introduce that element as soon as possible in the process.” Five key criteria up for consideration are intellect, commerciality, persuasiveness, credibility and commitment. “Print and read the first draft of your cover letter aloud; it’s a good way to weed out any troublesome sentences,” one source recommended.

Up to 30 candidates come in for a 15-minute first-round interview: “You’re asked ethical questions and about your background. They’re looking at fairly standard competencies.” The best performers progress to a more stringent second round, a one-day mini-pupillage. Candidates are sent a drafting exercise to do beforehand, usually an opinion related to Radcliffe’s work. They shadow members in the morning before getting another set of reports for a mock conference. “You get every opportunity to show how good you are,” judged one source.

“We’re looking for all-rounders with the potential to become modern barristers.”

Daniel Burton reveals interviewers are “looking for all-rounders with the potential to become modern barristers. That means having excellent legal skills, but also being able to market themselves.” Fiona Fitzgerald agrees: “50% of the puzzle is intellectual rigour, and 50% is commercial ability and having the skills to deal with clients.” A pupil suggested that “this set prides itself on bringing in socially adept people.”

Radcliffe’s seen an uptick in BAME applicants recently, and is looking to boost diversity. In 2018, chambers hosted its first student camp for ten students from non-traditional backgrounds, inviting even more for the 2019 edition. “The problems with diversity at the Bar begin at sixth-form level,” says Fitzgerald. “We follow the scheme
New Square. Daniel Burton recalls that “one had regular chambers coffee mornings, the other afternoon tea... so we kept both! It’s really important that people get to chat regularly to help cohesion within chambers.” Sources spilled the tea for us: “I find it’s a lovely opportunity to hang out with members in a less formal environment. We’ll be talking about football then five minutes later I’ll learn something really interesting about charities law.” A handful of barristers tend to go for drinks most Fridays, and you can almost always find a group in the Members’ Common Room in Lincoln’s Inn around lunchtime.

“I came in expecting to join a relaxed set and my time here has only confirmed that,” one of our insiders concluded. Long nights poring over papers aren’t the norm here, at least not among pupils: 9am to 6pm is a typical day and “you rarely need to work on weekends.”

Mind the Radcliffe edge

“Get any experience you can before applying,” a baby junior advised. “Whether it’s mini-pupillages or volunteering at evening clinics, it will look good on your CV.”
Serle Court

The facts
Location: Lincoln’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 28/40 (15 women)
Applications: 112
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 3
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance up to £22,500 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 30
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

Juniors say intellect and affability go hand in hand at Serle Court, as much as its expertise in traditional and commercial Chancery.

The Chambers
In all good unions, previously independent entities unite and saddle up for mutually exponential benefit. Think Disney and Pixar, Facebook and WhatsApp, or even going back to the late nineties, Exxon and Mobil. On the flip side, for advice on mutual ventures the nation’s eyes aren’t likely to turn to eBay and Skype, AOL and Time Warner, or Sting and Shaggy (the less said about that questionable musical alliance the better). In the legal world, the merger between 1 Hare Court (no relation to the 1 Hare Court featured in this guide) and Serle Court in 2000 found harmony and success where Sting and Shaggy could not. Namely in the marrying of their respective commercial and traditional Chancery practices. As the set’s chief executive John Petrie puts it: “We are a commercial & Chancery set, so if someone wants only commercial work and has absolutely no interest in Chancery whatsoever, we would explore why they have applied to Serle Court. We do have many pupils who wish to forge a career in commercial work and they are absolutely able to do so and very successfully.”

The set sits among the best of the best for both its commercial Chancery and traditional Chancery work according to Chambers UK Bar. It also scoops the highest commendations for its offshore, partnership, and civil fraud practices. Head clerk Steven Whitaker gives a rough breakdown of the set’s work. Commercial litigation and Chancery work account for 20% each, while fraud and trust and probate take 15% apiece. Company, insolvency, and property work make up 10% each. Whitaker emphasises however that this “can all shift year on year,” as the set may “get involved in a massive case that gives one practice a leap.”

“You get lots of big business disputes, with a cast of colourful characters!”

Pupils can expect exposure across these areas, from commercial litigation to straightforward commercial contracts to traditional Chancery (“trusts, probates, and charity work”). They may also do work on offshore international trusts. Be it Jersey, Guernsey, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, or Hong Kong, Whitaker explains that “the market for offshore work has certainly grown outside the area of private international trusts in recent years. We have people in multiple jurisdictions on a regular basis, on large-scale cases involving company law issues, international frauds, and contractual disputes involving large sums of money. For this reason, we often see ourselves marketing to international clients every couple of months.” On one notable case, Philip Marshall QC was instructed in a claim in the British Virgin Islands for over $1 billion that arose out of a failed energy joint venture in Russia. Similarly, Marshall acted in a jumbo $1 billion claim in Guernsey arising from mortgage-backed securities trading by private equity company Carlyle Capital.

In the commercial Chancery space, Philip Jones QC continued to act for JTA Bank, a Kazakh bank, in a $6 billion fraud claim. On home soil, David Drake acted for the NHS in a damages claim of over £200 million arising from allegations that a French pharmaceutical company fraudulently obtained patents for a popular prescription drug.
Civil fraud is another speciality of the set. “You get lots of big business disputes,” one junior explained, “with a cast of colourful characters!” In one case, Elizabeth Jones QC acted on behalf of businessman and philanthropist Sir Owen Glenn for more than three years, in proceedings connected to Spartan Capital, a joint venture company in the British Virgin Islands. Philip Marshall acted for media firm Constantin Media in a £250 million claim against German bank Bayerische Landesbank for carrying out the sale of Formula 1 at an undervalue as a result of bribes.

The Pupillage Experience

Upon arrival, “a settling-in process” allows pupils to get the lay of the land (read: chambers), before they’re assigned to their first supervisor. Over four three-months seats, the pupillage is structured to make sure pupils work under a blend of both commercial and Chancery supervisors. Our sources noted how the pupillage “is almost entirely non-practising,” meaning there’s no real distinction between first and second sixes. In the place of live work, supervisors “set pieces of dead work” for newbies which have been completed by pupils in previous years, “to get a sense of where you sit” in comparison. And while supervisors determine the scope of work and practice areas a pupil is exposed to, there’s still an opportunity to reach out to other practitioners towards the end of their first seat. “A pupil may say they haven’t done a skeleton in trusts,” one source explained, “or they’ve had a chance to do a few opinions but haven’t had a freezing injunction. So the new supervisor will give opportunities to remedy that.”

One interviewee felt that as a whole, “pupillage is a bit more informal here.” Baggy shirts and bucket hats? No, no: simply that Serle Court’s assessments aren’t as all-encompassing as one might think. Petrie notes that “it’s very much a training process and not a testing process here – we’re going to train a pupil so they will eventually be offered tenancy.” So, while there are two or three assessed pieces of work throughout the year – be they skeletons, advocacy, or opinions – which each supervisor marks and evaluates, pupils didn’t feel as though they were held captive to a grade. “The assessments are there to demonstrate that we’ve come to a particular level and can do certain things,” they felt, rather than being the one and only key to tenancy – though of course assessment is an important factor in that decision.

“You build relational ties and don’t see your peers as direct competitors.”

On that note, the final decision lies with members of the tenancy committee, who consider pupils’ assessed work from the year, along with feedback from supervisors before determining their fates at around the third quarter of the pupillage. According to Petrie: “We will not offer a pupillage to anyone who we do not think is likely to be offered tenancy. If we had a year where the candidates weren’t up to standard, we wouldn’t take them.” Moreover, Petrie assures us that pupils are only taken on in the first place if there’s going to be room for them as junior tenants, so during the pupillage “they are not in competition with one another.” He says. Pupils confirmed: “You don’t feel a sense of competition. You build relational ties and don’t see your peers as direct competitors.” In 2020, Serle Court granted tenancy to both its two pupils.

The Application Process

As of 2019, applications for Serle Court are streamlined through the Pupillage Gateway. Petrie reveals that the set “gets roughly 120 to 125 acceptable applicants” a year. That’s only the acceptable applicants, mind you. “We’re very, very lucky,” Petrie continues. “Every year we end up with exceptional pupils. It’s almost embarrassing the talent you get!” Three members whittle down those anonymised applications to around 30 candidates for the interview stages. The set then conducts a first round of interviews, which entails a 15-minute chat with each of the candidates. First though, they’re given 15 minutes to think about a question; interviewers tend to press them on why they haven’t chosen an alternative answer. The top ten candidates who can hold their ground against those devil’s advocates are invited to the second-round interview, where they’ll face a “far more detailed problem” and go through it all again. Fortunately, this time they’re given a generous 45 minutes to prepare for the questioning.

“Everyone’s hard-working and successful.”

After the second round, every member of the interviewing panel “comes together to review the scores.” Petrie tells us: “We don’t actively seek to recruit from Oxford or Cambridge; it doesn’t matter where applicants come from, we just take the best.” Whether that’s people with multiple degrees, PhD holders, or mature applicants with previous career experience, Petrie says “there’s a real variation” in candidates and “no singular characteristic we’re looking for.” That said, academic rigour is unsurprisingly one of the most sought-after qualities: “The Chancery Bar requires intellect, and it requires intellect of a high standard.” Our sources observed “everyone’s hard-working and successful,” but they wanted to make it clear that it’s not just about the high IQs at this set. We heard that during their downtime the barristers of Serle Court enjoyed play-

For detail on ranking tiers and ranking locations, visit www.chambers.com
ing football, cricket and darts together. “What stands us apart?” Petrie poses. “Exceptional intellect alongside human and sociable people.”

Finish nice and Serle-y

Days of 9am to 6pm were the standard during pupillage, and even in the early days of tenancy. One junior told us: “There’s not a culture of pressurising you to work every hour here.”
Serle Court

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Chambers profile
Acknowledged as “one of the very best commercial chancery sets, and one of the few that genuinely competes in both traditional chancery and commercial litigation”, Serle Court “offers a variety of skill sets that others can’t provide, and houses some of the biggest names at the Bar” – Chambers UK.

Serle Court is one of the leading Commercial Chancery sets with 70 barristers including 28 silks. Widely recognised as a leading set, members are recommended in 22 practice areas by Chambers UK and 20 practice areas by Legal 500. Serle Court has a stimulating and inclusive work environment and a forward-looking approach.

Type of work undertaken
Serle Court’s main areas of chancery and commercial practice include: civil fraud; commercial litigation; company; insolvency; international and offshore; partnership and LLP; private client, trusts and probate; property; mediation; and arbitration.

Other areas of expertise include: administrative and public law; art; banking and financial services; charities; competition law and state aid; court of protection; EU law; insurance and reinsurance; intellectual property; private international law; professional negligence; public international law; regulatory and disciplinary; sports, entertainment and media; and tax.

Pupil profile
Serle Court is interested in well-rounded candidates from all backgrounds. Chambers looks for highly motivated individuals with outstanding intellectual ability combined with a practical approach, sound judgement, an ability to develop good client relationships and the potential to become excellent advocates. Serle Court has a reputation for ‘consistent high quality’ and for having members who are ‘highly intelligent, user-friendly, approachable and supportive’ and seeks the same qualities in pupils. Serle Court generally recruits pupils with a degree classification of a good 2.1 as a minimum. Serle Court is committed to equality and diversity and encourages and welcomes applications from women, people of minority ethnic origin and people with disabilities, as well as candidates from other groups which are underrepresented in the legal sector.

Pupillage
Serle Court offers an excellent preparation for successful practice, a genuinely friendly and supportive environment, the opportunity to learn from some of the leading barristers in their field and a real prospect of tenancy. Pupils sit with four pupil supervisors in order to experience a broad range of work. Chambers aims to recruit up to three pupils each year.

Mini-pupillages
Serle Court offers around 30 mini-pupillages each year. The application form is available at: www.serlecourt.co.uk/join-us/mini-pupillage.

Funding
Serle Court offers each pupil an award of £65,000 for 12 months, of which up to £22,000 can be drawn down during the BPTC year. Chambers also provides an income guarantee worth up to £120,000 over the first two years of practice.
South Square

The facts
Location: Gray’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 17/26
Applications: 119
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: TBC
Seats: 8x6 weeks
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance up to £20,000)
Mini-pupillages pa: 35
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

When businesses fall apart, South Square’s restructuring experts are there to help pick up the pieces.

The Chambers
Current events have only thrown a bigger spotlight on how fragile the global economy really is, and again proven the inevitability of boom and bust periods. On hand to deal with the million and one problems that arise when a company goes pear-shaped, you’ll find South Square Chambers. The set’s restructuring and insolvency practice has been top ranked by Chambers UK Bar for over two decades, testament to the expertise of 14 ranked silks. “It’s a very fast-paced and very varied practice area,” pupillage committee head Tom Smith QC tells us. “As well as bringing you into contact with many different industries, there are a huge number of legal issues that arise in the context of a restructuring including security, employment, fraud and banking queries.”

Restructuring isn’t the be-all and end-all of life at South Square, but it’s hard to spend much time here without locking horns with the practice. Director of chambers William Mackinlay explains: “Though the majority of what we do is restructuring and insolvency work, it’s difficult to provide an exact breakdown of all our practice areas because there’s so much crossover and overlap between them; cases often require us to draw on three or four areas of law.” The broader expertise of members here shines through in additional Chambers UK Bar rankings for banking and finance, chancery, commercial dispute resolution, company and offshore law. Pupils arrived at the set’s doors “attracted to the prospect of working across multiple jurisdictions including Singapore, Hong Kong and the Middle East.” South Square is also a significant player in the Caribbean, including the Cayman and British Virgin Islands.

Going deeper into the distinct appeal of restructuring law, a source told us: “There’s a lot more court work for juniors compared to a lot of other commercial practices. It’s an area that relies on lots of applications being made to court and there are plenty of short, 15-minute hearings that are perfect for junior tenants.” At the same time, “it’s not like a criminal set; there are periods of a few weeks where I won’t be in court at all.” According to Tom Smith QC, “restructuring differs from strict litigation where there’s a battle between two parties. It’s often about finding a way to get a deal through that represents everyone’s interests, which means you spend a lot of time working with corporate and finance lawyers as well as litigators. That’s fairly unique to this practice.”

“As well as bringing you into contact with many different industries, there are a huge number of legal issues that arise in the context of a restructuring.”

South Square member Barry Isaacs QC recently acted for creditors of an insolvent unicorn company (valued at more than $1 billion) in proceedings to remove administrators from office, while David Allison QC worked on the Waterfall II litigation to resolve outstanding issues surrounding the distribution of the $7 billion (or so) remaining assets of Lehman Brothers. On the junior end of the spectrum, Adam Al-Atta represented Monarch Airlines when it appointed administrators in 2017. Outside restructuring, Felicity Toube QC has acted in litigation spanning the UK, the Middle East, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands on a case brought against a fraudster in Saudi Arabia, with
hundreds of millions of dollars missing. As for banking and finance, Georgina Peters acted for UBS in disputed Fairhold Securitisation claims under interest rate swap transactions totalling over £300 million in value.

The Application Process

Given that most applicants will not have come across much restructuring law during their studies, South Square “does not expect candidates to have completed any courses or internships pertaining to restructuring,” Smith tells us. “However, we do take into consideration if someone is interested in financial and commercial law generally.” The set moved quite recently to the Pupillage Gateway “to offer a uniform application process,” according to Smith. From there on, there are two interview stages that stand between hopefuls and one of two coveted pupil spots a year. Applicants who score a spot on South Square’s assessed mini-pupillage proceed straight to the second round.

“We do not expect candidates to have completed any particular courses or internships pertaining to restructuring.”

A junior member outlined the process: “The first interview round is conducted by juniors and it mainly involves going through your CV. I was also asked typical questions including why do you want to be barrister? and there was a short problem question.” An example of this could be: “Should the NHS charge smokers more?” Successful past applicants told us you “don’t have long to respond so aim to provide short, structured answers to the questions.”

For the second round, candidates sit before a panel of around five senior members of chambers in a session that’s more focused on a legal problem. “I was asked to arrive 30 minutes before the interview and received a legal problem to look at,” a pupil recalled. Smith assures us “the question is emphatically not meant to test your legal knowledge, but rather your reasoning abilities.” South Square’s junior tenants under ten years’ call attended a range of top unis including Oxford, Cambridge, KCL, Warwick, Nottingham and UCL – we noted that over half attended Oxbridge at some point in their studies; one junior is an ex-Royal Marine, and another was formerly an associate solicitor at a US firm in the City.

The Pupillage Experience

South Square takes the unusual step of rotating its pupils round different supervisors every six weeks. Juniors highlighted this “as a real strength of the pupillage, both in terms of exposing you to different areas of law and the different working styles of individuals.” One pupil explained further: “My supervisors included members focused more on big restructurings, one who did more company commercial work and directors’ disqualification cases, and one focused more on personal insolvency.”

Pupillage at South Square is non-practising, so there isn’t much of a difference between the first and second six. “I think the reason why you don’t get on your feet is because the nature of the work is so complex,” sources reasoned. “A level of familiarity with the relevant law and commercial practice only comes with experience.” Pupils instead work on a mixture of live and dead cases. “You might variously be required to draft pleadings, skeletons and notes, as well as conduct research on points of law to assist with active matters your supervisor is working on,” juniors explained.

A South Square pupillage also comes with plenty of opportunities to go to court, as well as to prepare and attend meetings with solicitors. Far from being put off, sources found dead cases were “great learning opportunities to compare and contrast your approach to a case with that of your supervisor.”

“A level of familiarity with the relevant law and commercial practice only comes with experience.”

The pupillage process includes four distinct assessments. The advocacy assessments are typically built around dead cases; juniors explained that “you are given the papers 48 hours in advance, from which you have to produce a skeleton argument and attend a mock hearing. A couple of QCs will act as judges and the test itself will last for around 45 minutes.” Pupils also get papers a couple of days in advance to produce their written assessments: “An opinion on particulars of a claim, for example.” Our sources appreciated that “you’re not expected to carry on working at the time; you’re given a chance to really concentrate on the assessment. We’re able to spend time studying in the library.”

Tenancy decisions are in the hands of the executive committee, based on recommendations by the pupillage committee. They in turn take on board pupils’ performance during assessments along with supervisor feedback, which is bundled into a formal package following each six-week rotation. South Square recruits two pupils a year and “if they are both up to the required standard we would expect to take them both on,” director of chambers William Mackinlay makes very clear. Indeed, in 2020 both pupils achieved tenancy.
Forty-three members make up South Square Chambers. “It’s fairly large, but not so big that you don’t get to know everybody fairly well,” Mackinlay poses. “You always have people wandering into each other’s offices all the time to chat and compare notes – which, for a young barrister, is invaluable.” On top of a members’ drinks on the last Thursday of every month, the set also holds a Christmas party and Spring Reception Ball for clients; in 2019 the latter was held at Spencer House in Mayfair.

The Not Late Show

Pupils at South Square rarely work longer than 9am to 6pm days – weekend work is the exception, not the norm.
South Square

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Chambers profile
South Square is recognised as a leading set of commercial barristers. Our members have acted in many of the most important insolvency, restructuring, banking, commercial, company and fraud-related disputes of recent times. Whilst our pre-eminent reputation is built on a track record in restructuring and insolvency, our expertise in banking and finance enables members to provide practical and commercial solutions to a wide range of complex business law issues.

Type of work undertaken
Insolvency, restructuring, banking, commercial, company law

Pupil profile
Chambers looks to recruit up to three high calibre pupils with a strong academic record and the potential to become an outstanding commercial barrister. The minimum academic qualification is a 2:1 degree. Pupils are selected from a broad range of backgrounds and experience, whether recent university graduates or those seeking a second career at the Bar. A number of our members have degrees in law, some have taken non-law degrees and then sat the CPE/GDL, and others have started their career in another sector before becoming a barrister.

Pupillage
Chambers provide 12-month pupillage opportunities. Applicants must apply through the Pupillage Gateway. We all also offer third six pupillages and applications are accepted on an ad hoc basis.

Mini-pupillages
Chambers also offers funded and unfunded mini-pupillages — see Chambers’ website for further details www.southsquare.com/pupillage

Funding and benefits
Pupils receive awards of £65,000 per annum (reviewable annually). £20,000 of the pupillage award may be paid in advance for living expenses during the BPTC. As a junior tenant you would receive a number of benefits including: subsidised travel and conference fees, no rent during your first 15 months of tenancy and no receipts charge for the first six months, subsidised membership of key professional associations for the first two years, and assistance and training in financial planning and business development.

University law careers fairs 2020
• City University of London
• Oxford University
• Cambridge University
• Bar Council Pupillage Fair
St Philips Chambers

The facts
Locations: Birmingham, Leeds
Number of QCs/juniors: 10/130 (53 women)
Applications: 190
Outside Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 5
Seats (during pupillage): 1
Pupillage award: £20,000 + £20,000 guaranteed earnings
Mini-pupillages pa: 45
Mini-pupillage deadline: September 2020

Maestros of the Midlands, St Philips Chambers offers the unique opportunity to become a ‘master of one’ via its specialist pupillages.

The Chambers
At a time when barristers’ chambers mergers were few and far between, 1998’s union of Birmingham’s Priory Chambers and No.7 Fountain Court (and the addition of No.1 Fountain Court four years later) created one of the largest sets in the UK. Now, St Philips Chambers – which took its name from St Philips Cathedral in Birmingham – stands at around 150 members over two locations: Birmingham and Leeds. The chambers’ Midlands prowess was a big draw for pupils, along with its ‘specialist pupillages’ – each of its pupils sits in one practice for the full twelve months. "I wanted to do pupillage at the best chambers I could," one pupil reflected. "I knew I wanted a specialist family law pupillage – St Philips has one of the best family departments in the UK."

"We chose to expand into Leeds and London in 2013," chambers director Joe Wilson recalls. "Fast forward a few years, we came out of London because it’s such a big market. We’re a very well-established set outside of London – we’re never going to compete in the City so we strategically closed our office there." St Philips Leeds is still going strong: "It’s actually a very buoyant and vibrant market. Leeds has all the big financial institutes and big law firms," Wilson points out. "It’s a big commercial centre but doesn’t have many barristers." All the better for St Philips.

"In business and property we have areas like insolvency, and wills, trusts and probate."

Back at the Birmingham mothership where most members sit, Wilson breaks the set’s practice into five main areas: crime; family; business and property (aka commercial); personal injury and employment; and regulatory. "There are lots of subgroups within each of these," Wilson explains. "For instance, in business and property we have areas like insolvency, and wills, trusts and probate." Chambers UK Bar awards the set top-tier rankings in the Midlands for chancery, commercial dispute resolution, company, crime, employment, family, professional negligence, real estate litigation, and restructuring/insolvency.

In one recent case, the set’s Richard Atkins QC defended bus company Midland Red in Birmingham Crown Court regarding their employment of a 77-year-old driver who lost control of his vehicle, causing the death of an old-age pensioner and a seven-year-old boy. Elsewhere, James Morgan QC represented Northampton Borough Council in a £2 million misfeasance claim against former directors of Northampton Town FC; and Edmund Beever acted for a senior doctor as co-defendant to a race and disability discrimination case.

The Pupillage Experience
A key draw for St Philips is the option to do a specialist pupillage in one of its core areas (depending on the requirements of each practice, the practices on offer can vary each year). Head of pupillage Yolanda Pemberton explains that St Philips takes this approach because "people are now asked to make decisions of where they want to specialise much earlier now, so to attract those people we have also had to adapt and offer specialist pupillages." Pupils will have typically have one overarching supervisor throughout pupillage; some will also spend time...
with specialist supervisors. One pupil recalled stints with “a public children specialist, a private children specialist and a financial remedies specialist in the first six months.” A former pupil had a different experience: “I only had one supervisor; who I was happy to stay with. When he was travelling or on holiday I would assist someone else.”

During their first six, pupils were able to see cases ranging from high-profile international arbitration to “urgent hearings where a child may be at risk if they stay with their caregiver any longer.” Much of the time, pupils “shadow their supervisor,” getting access to their case papers and attending court with them. Our interviewees were also able to crack on with various written tasks: criminal pupils tried “drafting defence statements, writing and responding to bad character applications, and preparing the basis of pleas,” while family pupils tried “local authority case summaries and skeleton arguments.”

“The nerves haven’t really left, but they’re good nerves now.”

Pupils get on their feet for their second six. Yolanda Pemberton links this to her own experience as a qualified barrister: “I am a specialist family practitioner doing public law cases; I spend every day in court doing advocacy. This is one job where you do not know whether you are going to like this job or whether you’re going to be good at it until you actually do advocacy. There are courses and in-house trainings available for pupils, and the training that we provide during pupillage, but we cannot replicate the exact conditions of being in court as hard as we try.” During their second six, pupils will go to court four days a week, which our sources found “very helpful. You can go over any issues with your supervisor.” One junior tenant recalled splitting their time “between the magistrates’ court and the Crown Court. The former gave me more freedom to explore my own style, and set up and run a trial; the latter helped with getting to know and understand all the formalities.” It was no surprise to hear pupils found the experience “completely nerve-racking at first! The nerves haven’t really left, but they’re good nerves now.”

Over the year, pupils will have four reviews: their pupil supervisor fills out a form listing “things you did well, things you could improve, and other general targets. You then have the chance to self-assess and write any responses to the feedback in the box next to it.” St Philips doesn’t run formal assessments – an offer of tenancy depends solely upon the reviews. Yolanda Pemberton adds: “Pupils are reviewed at regular three-month intervals during their twelve-month pupillage, they are assessed on an ongoing basis against professional competencies. After meeting with the pupil, the committee will discuss and make their recommendation.” Importantly, Pemberton says the set “always offers pupillage with a view to tenancy. If we’re offering five pupillages across the specialties, we’re looking to recruit five tenants.” What’s the key to success? Juniors reckoned it helps to “be a people’s person – everyone who gets to that stage has the same skill sets and knowledge of the law.”

The Application Process

St Philips has recently recruited five pupils a year, but may be hiring more: “We’ve been saying we need an out-and-out employment pupil,” chambers director Joe Wilson recalls. For 2020/21, the set advertised for one business and property, one crime, one employment, one personal injury and two family pupils. The set lists vacancies on the Pupillage Gateway, posing a few of its own questions. At this point chambers is looking for “examples of when candidates have had to use advocacy in life, and when they’ve had to problem-solve.” Successful applicants (marked anonymously “to try and prevent any unconscious bias”) receive invites to a pre-selection evening involving a first-round interview. Current pupils recalled it “felt more like a relaxed chat between you and the pupillage committee” than an intense interrogation.

“We’re not expecting the applicant to be perfect or to have to advocate ability to stand up in the Court of Appeal at this point!”

The next step is a full interview day (usually a Saturday), involving two rounds. The morning “usually covers a legal problem that applicants will get a week in advance.” Interviewers are looking to see whether candidates can “demonstrate their ability to construct an argument and defend a stance with two or three people challenging them.” Don’t fret too much; Yolanda Pemberton notes that chambers is “not expecting the applicant to be perfect or to have the advocacy ability to stand up in the Court of Appeal from day one!” A final round in the afternoon involves “everyone sat at a round table where there were more questions about you as a person.” Pemberton emphasises that “applicants need to be prepared and do research. There is sufficient info out there to anticipate what might be asked in an interview or on an application form, but also be able to adjust if you’re thrown a curveball.” She also adds that candidates should “show a bit of their personality – we’re not cookie-cutter versions of barristers. I am very different to the head...
of pupillage at the time I was applying, and I’m really proud of that.”

Once at chambers, pupils were pleased to find “you feel like an equal no matter who you’re talking to.” This might surprising given the set’s sheer size, but juniors felt St Philips strikes “a nice balance between the corporate side of the legal profession, and being friendly and approachable advocates.” Pemberton gave the example of “current head of chambers, Andrew Smith QC: he meets with all of the pupils at the start of their pupillage and has a brain the size of Britain but can also sit and have a conversation with you and make you feel at ease.” Driving its own social scene, St Philips tries to run regular quizzes and after-work drinks. The set’s wellbeing committee also organises events, from bringing in yoga instructors to classical music concerts.

The saints go marching in

“Having five pupils,” more than at many chambers, “means you become a bit of a team. We’re encouraged to have strong cohesion in our little group,” interviewees said.
4 Stone Buildings

The facts
Location: Lincoln’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 8/29 (8 women)
Applications: 117
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £65,000 (can advance some for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: 50
Mini-pupillage deadlines: see website

4 Stone Buildings is a no-nonsense commercial chancery law set, where a lofty intellect and a personable manner are valued equally.

The Chambers
“When I first came here,” says senior clerk David Goddard, “it was more a chancery set, now it’s more company commercial, commercial and company insolvency work.” Goddard would know, he’s been at the set an impressive 37 years, and recently watched Robert Miles QC be appointed Justice of the High Court (Chancery Division) – “I interviewed him into pupillage.” Despite all this expansion, the set continues to sit at the top of the pile in Chambers UK for commercial chancery work in London.

Goddard summarised the set’s make-up: “We’re roughly 50% commercial and financial services, 30% insolvency, and 20% chancery and things like judicial review.” Goddard illustrated some recent highlights in a “big commercial civil fraud case.” 4 Stone, led by Miles QC, acted for the defendants the Liquidators of Hellas Telecommunications (Luxembourg) II SCA v Apax Partners LLP & Others. The claimants alleged that the Apax Group had acted fraudulently in its €3.4 billion refinancing of the Hellas telecoms group in 2007. The court ruled that the claimants were required to pay the defence costs after the claimants discontinued their case after just four days. While the firm mostly takes on businesses as clients, it also represents individuals as it did in Navigator Equities Ltd v Filatona Trading Ltd, where Jonathan Crow QC successfully represented Russian oligarch Vladimir Chernukhin against Oleg Deripaska in a high-profile Commercial Court trial. The court found that Deripaska had been responsible for organising an armed seizure of a development site in Moscow, which was a joint-venture asset. Talk about a hostile takeover.

Goddard highlights a pragmatic strategy for 4 Stone: “How we go forward depends on the climate.” So, “if there are a lot of takeovers then that’s what we’ll focus on. If there’s a lot of insolvency, as we’re unfortunately expecting, then we’ll get into that.” The set “keeps an eye on the business world and tries to tailor what we do around that.” 4 Stone Buildings typically takes on “two pupils a year and, if they meet the standard, we take them on,” and likes to grow “very much from the bottom.” Goddard notes that the chambers has “only ever taken on one member as a lateral hire.”

“We don’t expect pupils to turn up and produce work that is up to standard. Pupils need to be hitting the required standard at the end, not the beginning.”

The Pupillage Experience
According to our sources among the juniors and pupils, pupils “sit with four pupil supervisors,” spending three months with each. One pupil told us: “You will do work for both supervisors and for other members.” Unlike some sets, where the second six is characterised by pupils taking on their own clients, at 4 Stone Buildings there’s “no practice in the second six. The intensity goes up, you’re given a bit more responsibility and there’s a bit less hand-holding, but you’re not doing your own cases.” Typical tasks, we heard, were “drafting particulars, skeletons and cross-examination, and research,” but it “varies from supervisors to supervisor.” Head of the pupillage committee, Andrew de Mestre QC, describes the work as “homoge-
neous. There's company insolvency, commercial litigation, banking services, and pupils would expect to be exposed to all areas. The split will depend on the supervisor's practice that year.” De Mestre notes that “cases often cross areas.” So, while there will be “some pure insolvency in insolvency work, equally there's a lot of litigation where the underlying case is a contract case.”

“It's generally all live work.”

With so much on the go, De Mestre sees no point in making students work on previous cases. “It's generally all live work,” De Mestre explains. “It may happen that a live piece of work will be given to the next pupil to see how they compare. But it tends to be live work.” De Mestre says that even if “a supervisor is involved in a large case, he or she will arrange for the pupil to do other work for other people, but even that would generally be live work.” For the set to achieve its aims of developing rather than hiring already fully-fledged barristers, it is important “to get pupils to draft, not just feed them a diet of legal research,” says De Mestre. “Supervisors tend to have a lot of complicated work, and you can easily end up with pupils doing just re-

Tenancy is decided “principally on your performance throughout the year,” says De Mestre, and, added one junior, “there are no formal assessment sessions like at some chambers.” It was a system that pupils and juniors liked. “The view is that it's artificial and people are stressed enough. There's nothing your supervisor is going to learn from a formal assessment that they don't already know.” Instead, one junior explained, “you get feedback on work throughout the year and if there are things that could stop you gaining tenancy, feedback is provided at the earliest possible opportunity.”

“You don't need specific legal knowledge. You use legal analysis, but not specialised knowledge.”

The tenancy decision, therefore, is based on “continual assessment, with substantial feedback to ensure we can see if there's been improvement,” says De Mestre, and the decision is “taken by the whole chambers.” De Mestre adds that while there is “no formal grace period, we don't expect pupils to turn up and produce work that is up to standard. Pupils need to be hitting the required standard at the end, not the beginning.” As part of the pupillage, De Mestre explains that “supervisors do particular exercises. So, in the second six, pupils conduct mock conferences with supervisors as mock clients, and give advice, both tactical and legal.” These mock conferences “tend to focus on the area where improvement is needed most to provide pupils with opportunities to improve on weaknesses we’ve identified.”

The days where academic excellence would suffice are gone. Although, as Goddard says, “the calibre on paper is all quite staggering and phenomenal,” a strong CV is just “a gateway,” adds De Mestre. When deciding who joins the set, Goddard says, “a lot depends on personality, how they get on with people. Are they easygoing? Can they talk to clients easily?” Goddard adds that “you’ve got to have the intellect and relay it to the court in an easy manner. Clients don’t like to see barristers getting a hard time from the judge because they aren’t answering the question.” De Mestre concurs: “Once you’re in the interview, we’re interested to see how people argue a point in the face of counter-argument. It’s amazing how hard it can be, but it’s incredibly important in court.” While quick thinking is re-
quired, De Mestre insists the set doesn’t have a particular personality type in mind. “One of the great criticisms is that you’re picking people like you,” he says, acknowledging the problem of implicit bias. “There are people who argue aggressively, some are more understated.” For the set, there’s “no one prescribed way to be a good advocate, and we’re trying to avoid making judgements about people’s character.”

The set, Goddard says, “has a family feel,” aided by a daily tea, something it kept up, virtually, during lockdown. For the juniors, it’s an opportunity to “drink tea, warm up, and chat to other members of chambers.” Despite a nod to tradition with the tea, pupils said it’s “not a formal set. People think we’re old-fashioned, but we’re not corporate. We do top-end corporate work, but it’s not a corporate atmosphere.” De Mestre says it’s this atmosphere that sets the set apart. “We’re still reasonably mid-sized in an age where lots of chambers are getting bigger and bigger. But we still know everyone, we have an open-door policy, and we encourage that.” Juniors added that in addition to the tea, “we have two parties a year – summer and Christmas – but we’re not a set full of party animals.”

4 rocks

“We like discussing intellectual and sometimes strange topics.” Like? “One time there was discussion around the biology of seagulls and whether they were capable of developing gout. It turns out they can’t because they don’t have the right enzymes.”
Chambers profile

4 Stone Buildings specialises in company/commercial litigation and advice. The principal legal directories have consistently ranked 4 Stone Buildings as one of the top civil sets at the Bar in our core areas of expertise – commercial litigation, commercial chancery, company law, civil fraud, banking and finance, financial services and insolvency. Numerous individual members of Chambers are also recommended in other specialist areas, such as IT and telecoms, and administrative and public law.

Since few business disputes or problems lend themselves to rigid categorisation, we cover a wide range of related legal specialisations in addition to our core areas of expertise. Members of Chambers are just as likely to appear in the Commercial Court or in front of arbitral tribunals as in the Chancery Division, and we are also frequently instructed in cases overseas, particularly in the Caribbean, the Channel Islands, the Middle East and the Far East.

Pupil profile

Candidates are expected to have first class, or good second class, degrees. But mere intellectual ability is only part of it: a successful candidate must have the confidence and ambition to succeed, the common sense to recognise the practical advice a client really needs, and an ability to get on well with clients, solicitors and other members of Chambers — and the clerks.

Pupillage

We aim to give all pupils the knowledge, skills and practical experience they need for a successful career at the Bar. We believe that it is important for all pupils to see as much as possible of the different kinds of work in Chambers. This enables pupils to judge whether our work suits them, and enables different members of Chambers to assess the pupils. Each pupil therefore normally spends time with four pupil supervisors during the year. If other members of Chambers have particularly interesting cases in Court, pupils will be encouraged to work and attend Court with them.

All pupils work in their pupil supervisor’s room, read their papers, attend their conferences, draft pleadings and documents, write draft opinions and accompany their pupil supervisors to Court. Pupils are treated as part of Chambers and are fully involved in the activities of Chambers while they are with us.

Mini-pupillages

We encourage potential candidates to spend up to a week in Chambers and we will be pleased to arrange mini-pupillages at any time. A mini-pupillage application form can be downloaded via Chambers’ website.

Sponsorship and awards

We offer 12-month pupillages and aim to have up to two pupils each year. Substantial awards (currently set at £65,000) are available for each 12-month pupillage.

Chambers will consider any request to draw down part of the award during the BPTC year. Chambers also funds the cost of the compulsory courses which a pupil must attend during pupillage.
Tanfield Chambers

The facts

Location: High Holborn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 7/52 (18 women)
Applications: c. 100
Outside Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 2
Seats: 3x4 months
Pupillage award: £60,000 (can advance up to £15,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: up to 50
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

Property specialists with a “record year of growth” behind them and a progressive agenda for the future.

The Chambers

From entry level to the top of the tree, our Tanfield interviewees agreed that “this is not a traditional set. We’re less worried about clinging on to the past; Tanfield is more modern and forward-looking.” Pupillage committee member Daniel Dovar expanded on this idea: “There is a lot that needs to be done to break down some of the perceptions surrounding the Bar; there’s a lot of lingo that’s difficult to shake but so unnecessary! Who else says I’m going to chambers, and not going to work?” He goes on to note that “it does feel a bit absurd that chambers don’t have meetings, we have ‘conferences’, and that we still have to go to court in wigs!”

Chambers chief executive Eamonn Kelly has more examples of Tanfield’s progressive agenda: “We don’t have a traditional model as we have three senior practice managers supported by practice managers who are led by the CEO. There’s no divide between the clerks and barristers - everyone calls each other by their first names.” Barristers’ chambers in London are always on a mission to distance themselves from the profession’s stuffy feel, but, having spent some time at Tanfield’s High Holborn premises, we can vouch for its lack of stuffiness.

“We’re less worried about clinging on to the past.”

Members were however keen to avoid being labelled ‘relaxed’, which comes with connotations of laziness and complacency. Far from resting on its laurels, Tanfield is very much in expansion mode; Kelly tells us: “2018 was a record-breaking year for the set. We’ve grown both in terms of revenue and our number of members – over the last few years we’ve gone from having one silk to four and now to seven.” Looking forward, it doesn’t seem like anybody’s going to hit the brakes on progress: “That’s not about laying more pressure on members. It’s about working smarter, not harder, and maximising the value for our clients.”

Tanfield is already recognised as one of London’s finer property sets by Chambers UK, which awards them a ranking for real estate litigation work. While property makes up 80% of the total workload, it’s not the only thing chambers does: complementary areas including matrimonial finance, professional negligence, public law and social housing. Members get solo rankings in each of these areas. Pupils were keen to stress that Tanfield’s work “definitely isn’t just buying and selling houses!” For example, Timothy Polli QC recently represented 61 houseboat owners in a dispute over Chelsea Yacht & Boat Club’s practice of charging both market-rate mooring fees and premiums on long-term mooring licences. Restaurant chain Wagamama instructed Christopher Heather QC in reaction to the attempted enforcement of a lease agreement in Eastbourne.

Some of the set’s work has a less strictly commercial dimension. Acting for Harrods, senior junior Michael Buckpitt secured an extension in the High Court on an injunction controlling the activities of animal rights protestors. ‘Party wall’ case specialist Nicholas Isaac worked for Lion Homes on an appeal against an award rising from the redevelopment of Brighton Dome.
The Pupillage Experience

Every pupil spends four months with three different supervisors over the course of their pupillage. “Most of them are property specialists but each has a slightly different focus and style of work,” one pupil explained. “My first one did a lot of enfranchisement work; my second real property and mortgages; and my third was mostly landlord and tenant work.” Entering pupillage can be a daunting prospect so pupils’ “first four months is completely ring-fenced,” Dovar explains that “only in exceptional circumstances, such as if one is going to the Supreme Court, should pupils be doing work for other members of chambers.” Trainees will spend the early stages of pupillage attending conferences and trials, mirroring their supervisors, drafting pleadings and getting to grips with the day-to-day running of chambers.

Six months from starting, pupils complete one formal advocacy exercise and a written assessment. “You’re given a defence to draft – normally something property-related – before going in for a mock hearing, acting for the claimant on the other side.” Dovar explains that “it’s mainly to see that pupils are ready to begin standing on their own during their second six and it’s a good opportunity for us to give them pointers.”

“At one point I had an out of body experience while I was interviewing the witnesses!”

Responsibility quickly ramps during the second seat, the second half of which falls into the second six. That’s when pupils get on their feet in court: “Typically you start with possession hearings, which can be as quick as ten minutes.” Sources clarified that “you also do other types of applications including summary judgments, strikeouts and relief from sanctions.” One pupil recalled their first time handling their own case in a courtroom: “It turned out to be a more complicated Country Court case where I had to cross-examine the witness, prepare an application for relief from sanctions and complete a skeleton argument. My nerves were quite bad and at one point I had an out of body experience while I was interviewing the witnesses! Fortunately, the judge was lovely.” Another source explained that “the practice managers are really good when you move into your second six. They listen to what you’re comfortable with and give you a day’s prep between hearings if that’s what you need.”

Shortly before tenancy, another written exercise precedes a final interview. “It’s basically an assessed opinion for which you’re given a set of papers and have a week to write it up,” one junior reflected. “I think it’s mainly a test of your time management skills, making sure you can complete the paperwork while still attending hearings.” The committee gathers feedback from everybody a pupil’s worked for (including solicitors and clerks) before making a recommendation to the governance board on whether or not they should make the cut. Chambers as a whole makes the final vote. At the time of writing, one pupil had secured tenancy in 2020.

The Application Process

Our interviewees were appreciative of Tanfield’s custom application process, which takes place outside the Pupillage Gateway: “Tanfield restricts what you’re allowed to put down. You’re only allowed to include three examples of work experience, which makes your application more focused; I found when applying to other sets that it wasn’t clear how many you should list.” Dovar also explains that an application to Tanfield “needs to demonstrate an understanding of what we do here.” He clarifies that candidates don’t need to know everything about property law. “We don’t expect them to have a deep understanding of enfranchisement or what the difference between a 999-year and a 76-year lease is.”

From the initial 100 or so who apply, around 25 candidates are invited back for the first interview stage. They’re given a basic legal question: it could be based on “anything that tends to have a legal framework, can be quickly picked up, and has a structure.” Previous questions have covered nuisance claims and injunctions. Dovar explains that chambers is “looking for the ability to quickly assimilate information and present it concisely.”

“There’s much more to cut your teeth on at the junior end.”

This is followed by a more general interview covering candidates’ motivations for applying and their experience, plus ethical questions to test their moral compass. Only five candidates are invited back to the second stage: at 9am they’re given a property-related question based on work one of the members has done. By 4pm they have to submit a legal opinion. Those who’d made the cut in the past advised “planning well, the time goes quickly!” A maximum of two candidates progress to pupillage.

It was Tanfield’s property specialism that drew recent pupils to the chambers’ doors. As one explained: “It’s one of the few areas of law where you still get to go to court on a regular basis, but there are also a lot of academic contractual issues.” Another junior expanded: “Not to be disparaging, but it’s not like other areas of law where you’re never in court... or when you are, you’re sitting behind a leading silk. There’s much more to cut your teeth on at the junior end.”
Tanfield Chambers

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Email: pupillage@tanfieldchambers.co.uk
Website: www.tanfieldchambers.co.uk

Chambers profile
Tanfield is a leading, specialist property set and a ‘force to be reckoned with’ in real estate litigation. Operating from its own, member-owned premises just outside Gray’s Inn, Tanfield adopts a flexible and ‘unfussy’ approach, and is committed to excellent client care. All members, from its silks to its ‘junior juniors’ pride themselves on being open, friendly and approachable and are supported by a responsive and helpful practice management team.

Types of work undertaken
The core of Tanfield’s work is real estate litigation, including commercial and residential landlord and tenant, mortgages and securities, leasehold enfranchisement, right to manage, contractual sale of land, development agreements, overage, agricultural law, easements, public rights of way, restrictive covenants, boundary disputes, party walls, rights of light, trusts of land, service charges and social housing. The work extends into professional negligence, commercial and ADR, and administrative law. Tanfield also has a complimentary private client practice dealing with trusts, matrimonial and Court of Protection work.

Pupil profile
Chambers is committed to recruiting, on a strictly equal opportunities basis, pupils with a strong academic background and with a demonstrable commitment to a career at the Bar. Candidates are expected to have a first or good second class degree.

Pupillage
Divided into three periods of four months with different pupil supervisors. Pupils will gain experience of a variety of courts and tribunals as well the opportunity to work with as many members of Chambers as possible. During their second six months, pupils can expect to be on their feet regularly. Their work will consist mainly of possession claims and interim applications. Other likely work could include small claim trials, fast track trials and tribunal work.

Mini-pupillages
Currently Chambers offers one a week, save for Christmas and New Year, when we have a break. Application details can be found on our website under ‘Recruitment’. Our policy may change as we have recently partnered with Bridging the Bar.

Funding, sponsorship and awards
Pupils will receive an award of £60,000, of which half is by way of guaranteed earnings from their second six. £15,000 of the award is available, on request, during the BPTC year.
2 Temple Gardens

The facts
Location: Inner Temple, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 14/48 (24 women)
Applications: 279
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: 1-2
Seats: 2x3 + 1x6 months
Pupillage award: £55,000 + £15,000 guaranteed earnings (can advance £20,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: undisclosed
Mini-pupillage deadlines: 23 October 2020, 29 January 2021, 4 June 2021

This commercial set and insurance dynamo brokers cases for its budding barristers, so candidates need to show they can be “comfortable in a courtroom.”

The Chambers
Channelling their inner Craig David, juniors told us when it comes to 2TG life, “it just depends what your flavour is.” For us it’s mint choc chip, but they’re not talking ice cream. “I was interested in a range of commercial and civil practice areas, and 2TG met all of those interests,” one interviewee told us.Senior clerk Lee Tyler explains: “Although the majority of our work is insurance-based, we also have a very strong commercial arm which covers commercial fraud, dispute resolution and banking and finance.” The set acts for large commercial organisations and high net worth individuals, but insurers account for “the majority of our clients.”

Chambers UK Bar awards 2TG no fewer than eight rankings, mostly for prowess in all things insurance: its top-ranked practices are property damage and international personal injury. In a recent property damage case, Neil Moody QC and Daniel Crowley handled a multimillion-pound claim against Sony by the BBC concerning damage to stock in Sony’s warehouse during the 2011 London riots. Under the personal injury banner, barristers often deal with cases involving serious accidents on the road, in extreme sports, or while travelling overseas.

“We’ve seen a big spike in our instructions from the Middle East in the past 18 months.”

Tyler says product liability is one growth area: “It lends itself to lots of our other practice areas, like property damage, private international law and healthcare.” In a recent case, for example, Charles Dougherty QC acted for Beko (a white goods company) in claims that a defective fridge-freezer caused a big residential fire. The set is also investing in its commercial dispute resolution practice domestically and internationally. “We’ve seen a big spike in our instructions from the Middle East in the past 18 months,” says Tyler. The set hosts an annual arbitration seminar with the Dubai International Financial Centre – for the uninitiated, the DIFC is an independent economic zone in Dubai with English-language courts. In a recent case, 2TG member Timothy Killen was part of a team representing a Middle Eastern insurer in a $36 million claim.

The Pupillage Experience
The first six is divided into two three-month seats, with one supervisor per seat. In the second six, pupils do “a lot of our own court work,” with one supervisor throughout. It was a bit different this year when lockdown came into force – pupils stuck with the supervisors they’d had in the office, and 2TG introduced two-week ‘secondments’ with other members. Our pupil interviewee spent time with members dealing with employment law and clinical negligence defence. In an example of the latter, 2TG’s Michael de Navarro QC recently defended the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust against allegations...
that it didn’t provide sufficient advice about prenatal screening to the mother of a baby with Down’s syndrome.

Interviewees said 2TG aims “to expose pupils to as many practice areas as possible,” because “that variety carries on in your first year of tenancy” (barristers begin to specialise around the two-year-qualified mark). One source, for example, spent the first three months of pupillage dealing with property damage and personal injury issues, and the following three months doing all things commercial, from construction and insurance cases to civil fraud and DIFC matters.

In the first six, pupils begin assisting supervisors with their cases right away – that meant drafting pleadings and skeleton arguments, writing opinions and accompanying them to court. Alongside this, “we can work with ten or more members.” It sounds heavy going, but “all assignments go through our supervisors to make sure we’re not being overworked!” Case in point, “they want you in from 9am to 6pm, but don’t ask you to work weekends.” Caveat for the second six: if you’ve got a trial on Monday morning, you’ll likely do a bit of prep on Sunday. At 2TG, “you need to be comfortable in court because this set does a lot of advocacy.” Pupils get their own cases and clients early on, and during the second six it’s common for pupils to be in court three days a week.

“You need to be comfortable in court because this set does a lot of advocacy.”

Formal assessments crop up about four times a year, which include tasks like writing opinions on personal injury matters. Pre-pandemic, pupils would also do a couple of advocacy exercises a year, but Covid-19 slowed down the smaller, lower-value claims normally assigned to pupils. Instead, 2TG “really thoughtfully” set up advocacy exercises over Zoom to make sure pupils were getting enough experience. The reviews are in: “It was brilliant because what you don’t get from court is a barrister in your own chambers telling you how you did and how you can improve.”

When it comes to the tenancy decision, members of chambers submit reports on each piece of work pupils have done to the pupillage committee. Committee member Helen Wolstenholme explains: “We have strict criteria for tenancy selection, including high intellectual ability, sound judgement, the ability to think on your feet, and motivation.” The committee gives its recommendation to the board for approval. One pupil was pleased the decision is made in July, “because now I can relax. It’s barmy that some sets don’t make the decision until the end of pupillage!” 2TG granted tenancy to both its two pupils in 2020.

Like any English set worth its salt, 2TG takes great pride in weekly chambers tea (every Wednesday) and chambers drinks (every Friday). The former is “terribly civilised,” with members taking turns to bring cake. The junior end of chambers is “very sociable” – during the pandemic members embarked on socially-distanced walks together – but camaraderie isn’t reserved for juniors. “You can genuinely talk to anyone,” we heard, “so it’s natural for eminent QCs to walk through the door and strike up a conversation with junior barristers.” And it’s similar with the clerks: “I was ringing the clerks throughout lockdown just to chat, like to tell them about my new dog, or to thank our senior clerk Lee for getting me a case that’s going to the Supreme Court.”

The Application Process

Out of around 300 applicants on Gateway, 40 or so are invited to 2TG’s first assessment day. This is a bit of a deviation from standard one-to-one interviews. Candidates are given a group debating exercise “to see how they interact with others,” and are then asked to advocate for the topic in a tribunal-like setting. “We don’t expect people to pretend they’re in court,” says Helen Wolstenholme, “but more as if they’re in front of a student body like a disciplinary panel, representing their client.”

About 20 candidates are invited back to the second stage, which begins with a written exercise (usually a precis of a recent judgment). This is followed by another advocacy exercise, where candidates get half an hour prep time before arguing the case. On a separate day, candidates also attend a “long and rigorous” one-to-one interview. Wolstenholme says it consists of “a legal problem question as well as fairly open, competency-based questions, which give applicants the opportunity to expand on their CV and sell themselves.” One example might be ‘tell me about a time you were under pressure’.

“We like to see some sort of advocacy experience like mooting or even teaching.”

“We don’t expect applicants to have had courtroom experience.” Wolstenholme assures us, but given that pupils get so many advocacy opportunities, “we like to see some sort of advocacy experience like mooting or even teaching. Leading a class, holding its attention and speaking publicly is very similar to what you need to do in court.” Interviewers also want evidence of commitment to the Bar, like volunteering at legal advice centres. 2TG doesn’t discount those who haven’t done a mini-pupillage with the set, but
“alarm bells would go off if they haven’t done one in one of our practice areas.” Beyond this, Wolstenholme says the set takes pride in recruiting a variety of personalities: “There’s a lot of space for different types of people.”

**Time for change**

In efforts to increase social mobility, 2TG and their pals at *The Times* host an annual mooting competition, which is open to all students in higher education in the UK.
2 Temple Gardens (Martin Porter QC)

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Chambers profile
2TG is regarded as one of the leading commercial and civil law barristers’ chambers. The chambers specialises in professional negligence, property damage, insurance and personal injury and also has significant practices in employment, technology, product liability, sport and clinical negligence, alongside strength in private international law.

Pupil profile
Academically, you will need at least a high 2:1 degree to be considered. Chambers look for applicants who work well in teams and have the ability to get on with solicitors, clients and other members of chambers.

Pupillage
Chambers offers one of the most generously funded, well-structured and enjoyable pupillages at the Bar. It takes pupillage very seriously and aims to recruit the best applicants, and to ensure that its pupils have an excellent foundation from which to start a successful career at the Bar. Pupils have three different pupil supervisors during pupillage, and will also do work for other members of chambers. The aim is for pupils to experience as much of chambers’ work as possible during their pupillage year.

Mini-pupillages
Mini-pupillage is the best way to get a feel for life at 2TG. Chambers offer 12 mini-pupillages per year in three set weeks. Mini-pupillages are three days long and during that time you will see a range of barristers’ work. You will be asked to undertake an assessed piece of work and a short interview at the conclusion of the mini-pupillage.

Please note that applicants will only be considered after their first year of a law degree or during CPE. The best time to do a mini-pupillage is in the year or so prior to applying for pupillage.

Details of mini pupillage dates after March 2021 will be set out on the 2TG website.

Applications are accepted via the website by completing the online form.

Funding
Chambers offers up to three 12-month pupillages, all of which are funded. Its pupillage award for 2021 is £70,000. Please see www.2tg.co.uk for details of the award.
3 Verulam Buildings

The facts
Location: Gray’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/juniors: 28/55 (19 women)
Applications: >130
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: varies
Seats: 4x3 months
Pupillage award: £70,000 (can advance up to £20,000 for BPTC)
Mini-pupillages pa: no specific limit
Mini-pupillage deadlines: rolling

Money might be funny in a rich man’s world, but 3VB’s mighty commercial and banking practice is no laughing matter.

The Chambers
If you’ve got an eye for all things commercial and want to put it into legal practice, a pupillage at 3 Verulam Buildings could be right on the money. Think big-ticket international fraud cases, commercial disputes, international arbitration and various other specialisms. Practice manager Stephen Penson tells us the set’s had “a successful year of lateral recruitment that’s brought in both a regulatory and white-collar element” to the practice. “Our members benefit from being in a well-regarded commercial set, which gives them a platform for variety.” Well-regarded indeed: 3VB is highly ranked in Chambers UK for its banking and finance, civil fraud, commercial dispute resolution, financial services and IT practices. Penson explains that “the commercial sector straddles a lot of the areas we work in as far as the courts and our clients are concerned.” He adds that members also find time to work on professional negligence, insurance and media and entertainment law.

3VB’s practice extends across a truly global scale: in 2019 Hefin Rees QC successfully obtained a worldwide freezing injunction in the BVI Commercial Court, which included freezing 22% of the Bank of Asia’s founding shares. Keeping on the freezing order theme, Philip Hinks obtained one against a Russian national living in London to the big money tune of £1.34 billion, on behalf of the liquidator of a Russian bank. On a very topical case, 3VB member David Simpson represented the Bank of England and Financial Conduct Authority in a transfer of 440,000 Aviva life insurance policies valued at €9 billion to an Irish-incorporated subsidiary, aimed at mitigating the potential impact of a no-deal Brexit. Andrew Onslow QC and Richard Hanke teamed up to win an $87 million fraud claim for Iranian Offshore Engineering and Construction.

“There has been an aggressive period of growth over the past year.”

“There has been an aggressive period of growth over the past year,” Penson told us in 2019. “We’ve never advertised or wanted to increase numbers for the sake of it, but we’re always alive to opportunities and this year we’ve grasped some that have strengthened our core areas.” These include lateral moves from 39 Essex, Outer Temple and Littleton Chambers. Coupled with recruiting two to four pupils annually, Penson explains that 3VB has “settled into a growth rate that’s healthy for us.”

The Pupillage Experience
Pupillage is structured as four seats of three months. Each pupil supervisor has various specialisms, so their novice charges will see a mix of matter types which could range from international arbitration to shareholder disputes and possibly even pro bono. 3VB also gives pupils a ‘shadow supervisor’ – usually a more junior tenant – who acts as pastoral support and added backup. Our interviewees noted that they’d been “highly encouraged to network, and you don’t have to put in much effort because members will come to you. I’ve worked a lot for other members; the first seat was where I worked with my supervisor the most.” A source recalled working on “a three-week fraud trial during my first six. It was great and because the barristers were instructed late there was a lot of responsi-
Insiders added that although they and describes the Assessments are sometimes third decision pending.

He adds that As well as secured tenancy when we went to press in 2020, with the third decision pending.

"people who've done...is managed.” We put the same question to pupils, who described 3VB’s culture as "professional but very human and friendly. There’s no competition between pupils – chambers tell you that at the start but they really pull through and show you that you’re not competing.” Pupils are invited along for lunches and drinks, and to internal seminars: “You’re generally made to feel like you’re already a member here,” Stephen Penson adds that 3VB’s seen “a drive towards mentoring for new tenants” and describes the relationship between members and the clerking room as “a partnership. Senior members have an open-door policy, which works well for us and for juniors, because it provides more opportunities to learn.”

The Application Process

3 Verulam Buildings recruits via the Pupillage Gateway. An initial interview lasts about 30 minutes, to which between 35 and 50 applicants are invited. David Head explains that interviewers’ key criteria are “advocacy ability, commercial awareness and temperament.” As well as preparing a case, candidates get to talk more generally about their interests in chambers and its specialisms. Juniors felt 3VB’s blind interviewing approach “has obvious benefits for diversity but also encourages you to bring everything you can to the interview. There are legal questions but they’re at a level that’s accessible for GDL students.”

“People shouldn’t think they have to fit the stereotype of a barrister.”

Successful interviewees go through to a two-day assessment, during which they’ll shadow and assist a member of chambers and complete a uniformly graded three-hour assessment. The assessment period also includes a chance to get to know members of chambers, usually over lunch or drinks. Pupils recalled “really liking the atmosphere of chambers and its people during the assessment period. You can see they want you to do well and try to get the best out of you.”

There’s an emphasis on advocacy when it comes to recruitment at 3VB. David Head explains that as well as intellectual ability, they’re looking for “people who’ve done mooting or debating. They might also have done drama or taken a role in a society where they’ve advocated for themselves or for a group. We also look for interest and understanding of commerce and commercial law.” He adds that “there are many different types of ‘successful’ here. People

Our sources described a grace period at the start of pupillage and advised incoming pupils to “prepare for the trajectory to ramp up in the second seat between Christmas and Easter. That’s when I was expected to pull my socks up.” Pupillage also comes with four advocacy assessments, the final three of which are assessed. They’re based around cases which are likely to crop up in the County Court including strikeouts, summary judgment and interim applications. Juniors receive feedback immediately afterwards; they told us: “The process is really well done. You’re informed about them enough in advance to have time to prepare and chambers tries to create an environment where you can succeed.” Assessments are sometimes conducted for multiple pupils at once: “I’ve never felt in competition with my cohort,” one assured us.

Pupillage committee member David Head explains 3VB’s attitude to the tenancy decision: “If you’re good enough, then you’re in. We hope to take on all our pupils as tenants and have done for many years.” Two of three pupils had secured tenancy when we went to press in 2020, with the third decision pending.
shouldn’t think they have to fit the stereotype of a barrister.” Commercial interest doesn’t mean you need to have held a City job: you could “read newspapers or the legal press, and be aware of legal cases coming out of the Court of Appeal. You don’t need a practical background – that’s what pupillage is for.” Having said that, several of 3VB’s most junior tenants were solicitors at top international law firms before making the transition to the Bar.

3VBreak

If they feel a need to recharge, members can choose to take a career break for three years, a year’s holiday from rent or to take out £10,000 credit against chambers expenses.
3 Verulam Buildings

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Chambers profile
3VB is one of London's leading sets of barristers' chambers, and its members are often involved in the major commercial and international cases of the day. Recent examples include PCP Capital Partners LLP v Barclays Bank, Barclay v Barclay, Libyan Investment Authority v Société Générale SA, Stati v The Republic of Kazakhstan, The RBS Rights Issue Litigation, PJSC Tatneft v Bogolyubov, Tchenguiz v Grant Thornton UK LLP, Terra Firma v Citigroup, and Goldman Sachs International v Novo Banco SA. Members of chambers are also involved in high-value complex international commercial, energy and treaty-based arbitrations. 3VB prides itself on its professional expertise and the outstanding opportunities afforded to all tenants to build leading commercial practices. It is a forward-looking, friendly, and diverse set, with excellent practice managers and first-class facilities.

Type of work undertaken
3VB's members are recognised as specialists in categories that span the full range of commercial law including international arbitration, investment treaty work, banking and financial services, commercial and contractual disputes, civil fraud, energy, natural resources and infrastructure, construction, insolvency, insurance, technology, IT and telecoms, media and entertainment, and professional negligence.

Pupil profile
Commercial practice is demanding and 3VB seeks the brightest and the best. The characteristics we are looking for are intellectual and analytical ability, oral and written communication and advocacy skills, and the temperament and determination to succeed at the competitive Commercial Bar. As a minimum, candidates should have an actual or expected 2.1 in undergraduate studies (and a good record on the GDL where applicable). Many successful applicants have a first class degree or a master's degree, or both.

Pupillage
Pupils sit with four pupil supervisors for three months each. 3VB's pupil supervisors are ordinarily drawn from the senior juniors. Pupils also have the opportunity to work with many other members of chambers during the course of pupillage. Pupils are exposed to a range of cases, advocacy training exercises, and top-quality expertise from which to learn their skills, all in an encouraging and supportive environment. During the practising second six months, pupils are given the opportunity to undertake advocacy on their own account, to build up experience and earnings. Tenancy at 3VB is offered to all pupils who make the grade. Pupils are invited to many chambers events and socialise regularly with members and staff. 3VB normally offers up to four pupillages per year (including deferred pupillages). 3VB is a member of the Pupillage Gateway and, save for established practitioners and other applicants who have obtained BSB dispensation, all candidates should apply via the Gateway.

Mini-pupillages
Two-day mini-pupillages are an essential part of chambers’ selection procedure and include an assessed exercise; prospective applicants for pupillage are strongly encouraged to apply for a mini-pupillage; please visit the 3VB website.

Funding
The pupillage award is £70,000 per annum. Up to £20,000 of this award can be drawn down during the year before pupillage.
Wilberforce Chambers

The facts

Location: Lincoln’s Inn, London
Number of QCs/Juniors: 37/42 (19 women)
Applications: 136
Apply through Pupillage Gateway
Pupils per year: up to 3
Seats: 4x2 months + 1x4 months
Pupillage award: £65,000
Mini-pupillages pa: 28
Mini-pupillage deadlines: see website

The Wilber-force is strong in those who have a passion for commercial chancery and can “think outside of the box.”

The Chambers

“We are a chambers that knows exactly what we are,” states Jedi master – sorry, head practice manager – Mark Rushton. “We’re 71 members [at the time of research] which is fantastic – we’re not the biggest and we’re not the smallest. We won’t grow for growth’s sake; the plan is to continually look at our specific areas of law to see where we have maybe a lack of barristers, or if we need more mass in a certain area.” Wilberforce is a big name in the commercial chancery, traditional chancery, offshore and pensions fields, and also gains recognition in Chambers UK Bar for commercial dispute resolution, civil fraud, professional negligence, real estate litigation, private client tax, and restructuring/insolvency, among other areas. Pupils found they were “drawn to more academically challenging areas of law, and this set was perfect for that.” The set has a high number of silks, meaning “there would be lots of interesting big cases you could potentially be a junior on.”

And sources weren’t wrong: in these areas, Wilberforce barristers have been instructed on several high-profile and high-value matters to date. Barristers are amid a novel Supreme Court appeal (for the appellant) concerning vicarious liability in the context of fraudulent conduct. The clients invested in a failed property venture with a loan against their homes, but the mortgage broker had submitted a fraudulent application. The issue is whether the defendant is liable for his actions when he was their agent, not employee. Elsewhere, members are dealing with a “property Brexit” case, where the European Medicines Agency is claiming its 25-year lease of office space in Canary Wharf will be ‘frustrated’ when the UK leaves the EU. The case deals with whether the EMA can walk away from its lease due to Brexit, which means other tenants may also be able to do so. On the pensions front, members acted for ITV in a trial resisting an attempt by the Pensions Regulator to make ITV liable for a deficit in the pensions scheme of a former subsidiary.

“Each supervisor would tend to involve me in the work they were doing.”

Going forward, Rushton emphasises: “We’re looking at how we can make chambers even more cohesive than it already is.” Many were drawn to the set after having done a mini-pupillage and finding they were “impressed with how well organised it was” and felt members “were interested in seeing you at your best rather than putting you under artificial pressure.” One junior tenant appreciated that “no one put on airs or tried to be intimidating – they had no desire to make the process more stressful than it already is.”

The Pupillage Experience

Wilberforce pupils “get through quite a few supervisors” during their pupillage. The average is about five or six supervisors, spending around two months with each. This ensures pupils see “a wide spectrum of the set’s work,” as each supervisor will usually have a slightly different specialism. For instance, a junior tenant recalled: “My first seat was with someone who did a lot of insolvency, my second saw a lot of property, wills and probate, my third was pensions and offshore trusts, and my fourth was purely property.”
The majority of pupils’ work is on live matters: “Every supervisor would tend to involve me in the work they were doing – I’d get to do the first draft of, say, a pleading they were asked to do.” Other common tasks included first drafts of advices, research notes and opinions, preparing cross-examination notes and doing skeleton arguments for hearings. “It’s exciting – sometimes you see something going out with your imprint on it, if an idea you had gets deployed in court,” one pupil reflected. Sometimes supervisors will set their pupil dead papers which are “to see whether you can do junior tenant work – it might be a piece of work that came through to them when they were a junior, or they might ask another member if they have a set of papers suitable for someone in their first year of tenancy.” The purpose of these tasks is “for gaining experience and feedback.”

Wilberforce doesn’t have a standing second six – the work doesn’t differ greatly between sixes. Junior tenants recalled getting on their feet in the couple of months after the tenancy decision had been made (which is usually between June and July), but it “wasn’t common.” When the chance did arise, sources had done “simple possession hearings that were unopposed” or “very, very small claims trials.”

“You should be showing a trajectory of improvement.”

The tenancy decision itself is based on a list of nine criteria the set views as important that its pupils meet. These include factors such as intellectual ability, interpersonal skills, interest in the work, quality of written work and quality of advocacy. Each of the supervisors will “give rolling feedback to pupils on each piece of work,” which forms the basis of pupils’ assessment – supervisors will compile reports which are fed to the head of pupillage. Pupils also see these two ‘half term’ reports to target areas for development. “They want to see if you grow from your mistakes,” sources highlighted. In addition, there are formal advocacy exercises – usually two before the decision and one after. The first one isn’t usually taken into account for the decision, but rather serves as “an opportunity to try making a submission and learning from it.” The second one is assessed, though head of pupillage Martin Hutchings QC notes: “The assessed exercises play some part in the decision, but a lesser part.” The main thing everyone we spoke to emphasised was that “you should be showing a trajectory of improvement.” The pupillage committee will then make a recommendation on each of the pupils, and then chambers as a whole has the chance to vote on it. In 2020, both the two pupils gained tenancy.

The Application Process

As of 2019, Wilberforce hopefuls can find the set on the Pupillage Gateway. The reasoning for this, Martin Hutchings QC explains, was “because we think it’s fairer for students.” Other than that, the rest of the process hasn’t changed: after the initial paper sift, the set invites around 30 to 35 candidates for a first-round interview. “The first interview is a more general one, exploring the candidate’s motivation for chancery work and why they’ve chosen us as a set,” Hutchings explains. “But there is some emphasis on legal reasoning and problem solving.” It’s usually with two interviewers, and there’s a legal problem to tackle. However, pupils added: “The problems weren’t tests of legal knowledge – it was more about your ability to reason, your interpretation of language and your different ways of thinking practically around the problem.”

Around 15 candidates are invited back for the second-round interview with a panel of four interviewers. Pupils found the questions “much deeper” at this stage: “A lot of time was devoted to the legal questions and thinking on your feet,” Hutchings explains: “It’s about being able to think about legally-related problems, argue convincingly for both sides of the argument, and give coherent responses to questions.” He notes that “it’s very non-confrontational; we’re not trying to test whether people can stand up to difficult judges or show they don’t cry when shouted at. We think those are skills they will pick up through pupillage and court experience. We are testing whether they are intellectually up to it, whether they can hold their line when they argue or concede when they realise a point we’re making is pretty unanswerable. It’s about having that judgement and commercial nous.” Hutchings emphasises that “it’s really about intellectual ability in all its forms – that is really what we’re testing. The other skills, we can teach. Creative thinking is a hallmark of all the people who are made an offer of pupillage.”

“It meant I could fully rely on my co-pupil when I was stressed about something.”

Another hallmark of Wilberforce barristers is “openness”: “For the first two weeks, whenever I bumped into someone, they’d say, ‘Here is my room – if you ever need to see me, here’s where I’ll be,’ or ‘Send me an email if you ever need advice.’” Pupils and juniors felt comfortable “going into most people’s rooms and asking questions” and also got the “sense that chambers is trying to integrate people.” To
aid with this, the set holds chambers lunch every other Friday, and chambers drinks on the alternate Fridays. “There’s also a regular email that goes around the junior members to ask if anyone wants lunch – pupils are always invited too. They attend our chambers parties and are often invited to networking events.” Our pupil sources reckoned this was because “if an offer of pupillage has been made, they believe you ought to be good enough to be a tenant and they feel there’s a good chance you will become a member.” It also helped that pupillage at Wilberforce is non-competitive: “They were always looking to take all of us on. It meant I could fully rely on my co-pupil when I was stressed about something.”

Patience you must have, my young padawan

“We’re not trying to test whether people can stand up to difficult judges or show they don’t cry when shouted at. We think those are skills they will pick up through pupillage and court experience.”
Wilberforce Chambers

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Chambers profile
Wilberforce Chambers is one of the leading commercial chancery sets of chambers in the UK, comprising of 79 specialist barristers, including 42 QCs. Our barristers are involved in some of the most intellectually challenging and legally significant matters undertaken by the Bar today.

Type of work undertaken
Our principle areas of practice are arbitration, commercial litigation, company, insolvency, pensions, professional liability, property, trusts, tax, probate and estates.

Pupil profile
We look for pupils with high intellectual ability, good communication skills and an interest in commercial chancery work. You should be mature and confident, have the ability to work with others and be able to analyse legal problems well, demonstrating commercial and practical good sense.

Pupillage
Chambers operates a well-structured pupillage programme aimed at providing a broad experience of commercial chancery practice under at least four pupil supervisors with whom you will be able to develop your skills.

We have a minimum requirement of a 2:1 degree in law or another subject and have a track record of taking on GDL students as pupils and tenants — we ensure that our interview process does not disadvantage those who have only recently commenced their legal studies.

We take great care in our selection process to identify candidates who have real potential to join Chambers at the end of their pupillage. Importantly, our pupils are not in competition with one another for a tenancy, but are assessed solely on their own abilities and performance.

We are committed to promoting and achieving equality and diversity in Chambers, so we want to receive applications from anyone who has the qualities and skills we are looking for, no matter what university you have attended, no matter what age, race, gender or sexual orientation. Our pupillage application process is name, gender, school and university ‘blind,’ and all applications must be made through the Pupillage Gateway.

Mini-pupillages
We encourage potential candidates for pupillage to undertake a mini-pupillage in order to learn how chambers operates, to meet its members and to see the type of work that they do — but a mini-pupillage is not a prerequisite for pupillage. We run four separate mini-pupillage weeks (two in November/December, one at Easter and one in July). Please visit our website for further information.

Funding
The award is £65,000 for 12 months and is paid in monthly instalments. A proportion of the award (up to £20,000) can be drawn down during the BPTC year.
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