

PUPILLAGE POLICY DOCUMENT

1. Description of Chambers

With four QCs, including one Senior Treasury Counsel and over thirty juniors, Atkinson Bevan Chambers is one of the leading specialist criminal sets in the Temple. We are committed to maintaining a balance of high quality defence and prosecution work in London and on the Western and South Eastern circuits, and have been awarded Quality Mark for the Bar accreditation in recognition of the importance placed on procedures in practice management. Chambers offers a friendly and relaxed environment in which to complete pupillage.

2. Areas of Work

Members of Chambers are involved in all kinds of criminal cases ranging from high profile and sensitive matters requiring specialist expertise such as murder and terrorism to less serious offences found every day in the magistrates' and Crown Courts. Many of our barristers have developed particular expertise in such areas as commercial, Revenue and VAT frauds, drug cases, corruption, child abuse and sexual offences, and multi-handed police and undercover operations. We are represented on the Attorney General's Panel of Prosecution Advocates, which covers work for, amongst others, HM Customs and Excise, the Department of Environment, Inland Revenue, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Health and Safety Executive. Members are regularly briefed by the Serious Fraud Office. There is also a specialist Criminal Confiscation team within Chambers.

3. Pupillage Committee

Responsibility for the management of pupillage falls to the Pupillage Committee, the current members being Ian Darling, James Brown and Jane Osborne. Philip Shorrocks assists with advocacy training. Vicky Beasley, Chambers' Administrator, acts as Secretary to the Committee.

4. Pupillage Recruitment

Chambers is a member of OLPAS (the On Line Pupillage Application System). We aim to recruit two twelve-month pupils each year via the OLPAS summer season. We do not feel obliged to fill all the places offered each year; equally in exceptional circumstances more than two pupils may be recruited. Any vacancies not filled via the OLPAS summer season will be advertised on the 'Newsflash' page of the OLPAS website. Ad-hoc applications for twelve-month pupillages are not accepted.

5. Selection Processes

Atkinson Bevan Chambers is committed to a policy of equal opportunities and candidates are welcome regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or political persuasion.

We aim to recruit articulate and confident candidates, regardless of their background, who can demonstrate drive and determination and who are committed to a future at the Criminal Bar. We look for applicants who can balance intellectual excellence with common sense and pragmatism. The recruitment of pupils is taken very seriously and every pupil is selected on the basis that they are a potential tenant.

Applications via the OLPAS summer season will be made using the standard OLPAS on-line application form. Applications in response to vacancies advertised on the 'Newsflash' section should be made by way of an application form which may be downloaded from Chambers' website or requested from the Chambers' Administrator Vicky Beasley.

All applications received are considered by three or four members of the Pupillage Committee against a standard sift criteria. No applicant may be rejected on the basis of one person's opinion alone. In addition to the qualities detailed in the paragraph above, we look for evidence of ability to absorb and manage complex information; evidence of interaction with a wide range of people from a variety of social and professional levels, sustained over time; and evidence of the ability to prioritise work commitments whilst sustaining social interests, and of the ability to cope and achieve results under pressure. No formal requirements are imposed as to the level of degree attained, although our assessment system does take this into account, along with all other factors contained within the OLPAS form.

200 – 250 applications are normally received via OLPAS, and from this pool around 30 candidates are short listed for interview. These interviews are normally conducted on a weekday evening by three or four members of the Pupillage Committee, or other members of Chambers in the event of their unavailability. Each interview will last around fifteen minutes; candidates will be asked in detail about their application form; the panel may also ask one or more hypothetical questions. Candidates are scored against Chambers' standard criteria which are as follows:

Intellectual Qualities: Applicants must demonstrate intellectual vigour, having the ability to grasp complex information and identify the key issues quickly and effectively. They should be able to absorb details; perceive inadequacies, inconsistencies and inaccuracies; appreciate different perspectives; develop new solutions; and query standard answers. They must be able to balance intellectual competence with common sense and pragmatism.

Motivation: Applicants must demonstrate strong drive and determination, with particular and active interest in issues relevant to the Criminal Bar. Commitment to a future career at the Criminal Bar should be evident, through for example a desire for intellectual challenge and an interest in courtroom challenge.

Relationships: Chambers will look for evidence of friendly, supportive relationships with a wide range of people over a long period. Important attributes will be an ability to identify others' needs; to exercise discretion; to gain others' trust; to negotiate and to present effectively. Applicants must demonstrate an ability to mix with all members of Chambers, their staff and their professional contacts.

Temperament: Applicants should be able to evidence that they have coped well with a hierarchal environment and with highly formal situations. They must be able to demonstrate an ability to manage professional priorities calmly and competently, balancing these commitments with their individual social interests. Applicants must be able to manage personal stress such as financial and career uncertainties without detriment to their work.

Impact: During interviews, successful applicants will be articulate, confident, perceptive and courteous. It should however be borne in mind that interview performance is only one aspect in the selection criteria, based on a relatively short meeting. Interviewers will also take into account the quality of other relationships the candidate has sustained long term.

Successful candidates may be determined after one round of interviews; alternatively there may be a shortlist of up to six candidates who are called to attend a second interview. The interviewing process remains similar to that of the first interview, except that the panel will be comprised of additional members of Chambers, and a non-legal advocacy test may be included.

6. Pupillage Awards

Pupils taken on for twelve months will receive an award of up to £15,000 for the first six months payable in regular monthly instalments, and guaranteed earnings of £1,000 per month for the second six months. We do not 'claw back' payments from previous months if pupils subsequently earn more than the monthly award. A percentage of the award for the first six months may be payable during the BVC course.

Pupils will be expected to pay a Chambers' contribution of 5% of their actual earnings during the second six; pupils do not pay Chambers' rent.

Pupils will be reimbursed for travel on the Western Circuit during the first six months, and also in the second six when attending court with a member of Chambers.

7. Pupillage programme

Pupils are assigned to two pupil supervisors over the 12-month period. During the first six non-practising months pupils attend court with their pupil supervisor on a daily basis, and complete research and written work as directed. Effort is taken to ensure that the pupil has contact with, and the opportunity to work for, tenants of all levels of seniority within Chambers. During the second six months pupils conduct cases in court alone and can expect to develop their own busy practice. In-house advocacy training is provided during pupillage (see '8' below), along with regular written assessments by the pupil supervisor and feedback from instructing solicitors.

8. Training

During the first six months Chambers will provide advocacy training sessions on a monthly basis. These will involve specific areas that will be of use when appearing in court during the second six. Whilst this work is not 'graded', notes will be kept and will be used in consideration of applications for tenancy at the end of pupillage (see '10' below).

Chambers will pay for pupils to attend the three compulsory courses necessary for Continuing Education (Advocacy, Advice to Council and Forensic Accounting). We will also pay for ECHR and Proceeds of Crime Act training (as approved by the Bar Council).

9. Third six pupils

Third six pupils are recruited throughout the year according to the needs of Chambers. Applications are received on an ad hoc basis and are considered against the same criteria used for full pupillages by at least two members of the Pupillage Committee. Applicants who fulfil the sift criteria are invited to attend an interview in front of three or four members of the Pupillage Committee (or other members of Chambers where necessary). Third six applicants will be asked to attend Chambers fifteen minutes before their scheduled interview time in order to prepare for an advocacy test.

Third six pupils are recruited on the basis that they are potential tenants; they are subject to the same recruitment procedures as twelve-month pupils (see '10' below).

10. Recruitment to Tenancy

Twelve-month pupils are considered for tenancy towards the end of their year's pupillage. Historically it is unusual for pupils to be taken on at this stage, and a far more likely course is that pupils whom Chambers considers to be prospective tenants will be offered a third six months.

The tenancy selection criteria for pupil applicants are as follows:

Intellectual Qualities: The applicant will have shown him/herself on paper and orally to have a firm grasp of criminal law and criminal litigation. They should be well informed on all developments at the Criminal Bar and maintain up to date knowledge of current and new legislation and procedural issues.

Motivation: S/he has shown a dedication to pursuing a career at the Criminal Bar and to advancing his/her position in Chambers and should be willing to contribute actively and positively to the reputation of Chambers, both in the professional context and in its development of quality services, with a commitment to Quality Mark and to Equal Opportunities. As individuals, they should strive to work, with integrity, to the highest standards relative to their call.

Relationships: Applicants will have demonstrated a willingness and ability to interact professionally and socially with all levels of Chambers, staff, Solicitors and clients.

Temperament: They will demonstrate an ability to remain calm and to cope with the pressures of life at the Criminal Bar. They must also have the ability to cope with deadlines and with a number of competing requests.

Impact/ Advocacy: Is articulate, confident and assertive whilst remaining courteous

The decision as to whether a pupil is to be taken on as a tenant is made by every member of Chambers at a Chambers' Meeting. Prior to this meeting, pupils will be required to produce a specified piece of written work, which will be assessed by a group of members of Chambers (this group will not include pupil supervisors of those applying for tenancy). Pupils are also asked to perform a specific piece of advocacy in front of the same group as above. The group will then provide a report to the Pupillage Committee.

Also prior to the Chambers Meeting, all members of Chambers are asked whether they have information or opinions on any pupil, which they reduce into writing. The Pupillage Committee will also consult with the Clerks' Room for the clerks' perspective and with the Chambers' Administrator, who conducts regular pupil reviews. Pupils are asked to provide a selection of their written work which is made available for perusal by members of Chambers. Pupils are asked before the meeting if they want to provide references from solicitors or others outside Chambers. All information is then compiled and a report on each pupil is given to the Chambers Meeting. Thereafter Chambers votes on each pupil according to Chambers' Constitution. .

It is impossible to say how many tenancies will be offered in any year. It depends on the work available at that time, the profile of Chambers at that time, and the merits of each pupil.

Chambers will endeavour to help you find an alternative position for those not offered tenancy. Such pupils will be allowed to remain in Chambers for a period of three months from the date of the relevant Chambers Meeting and will then be expected to move on.