

Guidance Notes and Selection Criteria

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Guidance Notes to Mini-pupillage application form 2022-2023

Thank you for considering making an application to Blackstone Chambers. These guidance notes provide you with information about the way in which we decide which candidates will be offered mini-pupillage. They are intended to help you to complete your application form in a way which provides us with the information we need, and gives you the best possible chance of having a mini-pupillage with us.

When we get your application form it will be anonymised before being passed to a member of our pupillage committee for assessment. Their focus will be on: your academic achievements; your legal and non-legal work experience and any other experience evidencing skills which are relevant to a career at the Bar in general and Blackstone Chambers in particular; your written and oral advocacy skills and experience; and your written communication skills. Applications which are assessed as being just below the standards required for an interview are assessed afresh by a second member of the pupillage committee.

Academic Achievements. We are looking for candidates of exceptionally high academic ability. We consider past academic performance at degree level to be a good indicator of academic ability and generally require as a minimum that candidates have either obtained a first-class undergraduate degree **or** have obtained a 2:1 *and* a distinction (or equivalent) at post graduate level. However, we make exceptions for candidates identified by the Rare Contextual Recruitment System as having significant potential. We also make exceptions for candidates who can demonstrate that there were exceptional circumstances (for example relating to health) which led to their receiving a lower overall grade than they otherwise would have done; and those whose applications contain other evidence of exceptional academic ability.

Please make sure that you provide us, on your application form, with your overall degree mark as well as the breakdown for individual subjects. If your degree is from an overseas university, please tell us what you consider the UK equivalent degree grade to be, and on what basis. If you are in your third year of university working towards an undergraduate degree and would like us to rely on predicted grades, or if you would like us to take into account a predicted grade at post-graduate level, you will need to provide supporting evidence of that predicted grade from your university. If you are inviting us to take account of any exceptional circumstances, please explain the effect those circumstances had on your overall grade and provide us with any supporting evidence.

Please do provide as much information as you can about your academic achievements. The more evidence we have of high academic achievement, the better your chance of being invited for interview. We do not treat degrees provided by any particular universities as being superior to any other.

Please also consider very carefully the importance of providing contextual information to us and giving your consent for that information to be shared through the Rare Contextual Recruitment System. We use Rare in order to help us level the playing field and identify potential in candidates from less advantaged backgrounds. So if you do not provide the contextual information requested and provide consent for it to be shared with Rare, we may not be able to take that information into account in assessing your application.

Work Experience and other experience. We are looking for evidence of skills and interests which are relevant to a career as a barrister generally, and to our chambers in particular.

We appreciate that not all candidates will have had the same opportunities to gain legal work experience but we do expect to see some evidence of your interest in and aptitude for a career in the law. If there are particular reasons why you have been unable to get legal work experience (such as mini-pupillages) we will consider them when assessing your application so please make sure you tell us about them. We also consider that non-legal experience is important so please do tell us about any work experience, or other relevant experience, you have and think carefully about the way in which experience outside the law might be relevant when describing your role to us. You may, for example, have had to deal with vulnerable people, or difficult customers or have shown resilience under pressure; you may have advocated on behalf of particular individuals/groups. All of this experience is relevant, in whatever context you have gained it, and we want to hear about it.

Advocacy and written communication skills. Our chambers puts great emphasis on high quality written and oral advocacy. Please provide us with a full list of your advocacy experience: examples may be legal such as mooting, representing clients through FRU or legal advice centres, or non-legal such as debating or advocating for a particular cause on behalf of an interest group, or in a work environment.

Your application form is your opportunity to demonstrate your persuasive written communication skills. Think carefully about your answers to the questions about why you believe you will make a good barrister and why you want to join our chambers. Make sure that your answers are well structured; clear; and persuasive.

Blackstone Chambers Pupillage Selection Criteria

Candidates for a pupillage in Chambers will be selected according to the extent to which they meet the following selection criteria, or, where appropriate, have shown during the recruitment process definite potential to meet the respective criteria.

1. Intellectual Ability

Candidates should have excellent intellectual ability as demonstrated by:

- 1.1 Formally assessed qualifications at degree level, including any postgraduate degrees, and professional or vocational qualifications
- 1.2 High quality legal analysis demonstrated consistently throughout the recruitment process
- 1.3 Academic awards, scholarships, prizes, and/or publications of exceptional note
- 1.4 Academic references (but only at the final interview shortlisting stage).

2. Analytical Ability

Candidates should:

- 2.1 Be able to deal effectively with written, numerical and spoken information
- 2.2 Approach a large amount of information calmly and in a structured manner
- 2.3 Be able efficiently to distinguish between relevant facts and irrelevant information
- 2.4 Relate facts to applicable legal principles
- 2.5 Unpick complex arguments
- 2.6 Not over-interpret information or make unwarranted assumptions

3. Effective Communication Skills

Candidates should:

- 3.1 Communicate clearly, giving sufficient background information to aid understanding without overloading audience
- 3.2 Structure communication to aid understanding
- 3.3 Adapt style and language of communication to the needs of the audience
- 3.4 Present complex legal points simply and accurately
- 3.5 Listen to others and builds on their points.

4. Strong motivation for a career at the Bar

Candidates should demonstrate that:

- 4.1 They have researched and obtained good understanding of what a career as a barrister entails, incl. positive and negative aspects of the role
- 4.2 They are committed to a career as a barrister
- 4.3 They are motivated by the role.

5. Strong motivation for a career at Blackstone Chambers

Candidates should demonstrate that:

5.1 They have researched and obtained good understanding of what Blackstone Chambers practice areas are

5.2 They are currently committed to a career in the relevant practice areas.

6. Advocacy Skills

Candidates should:

6.1 Be able to build a logical, rational argument based on fact and a good understanding of the law regardless of personal perspective

6.2 Be able to predict objections and has arguments ready to combat them if raised

6.3 Have a good understanding of influencing tactics and uses them confidently

6.4 Demonstrate good judgment in choice of material.

7. Interpersonal Skills

Candidates should:

7.1 Be able to build effective working relationships with a range of different people

7.2 Be able to work well as part of a team

7.3 Treat others with courtesy and respect

7.4 Have an ability to understand and empathise with different points of view

8. Resilience

Candidates should be:

8.1 Calm, objective, confident and in control under pressure

8.2 Comfortable and skilful in handling conflict

9. Ability to work independently

Candidates should:

9.1 Demonstrate ability to work independently

9.2 Be able to rely on their own judgment when guidance cannot be found elsewhere

9.3 Not get distracted or demotivated when working alone

10. Drive and determination

Candidates should:

10.1 Have and maintain a strong focus on achieving outcomes

10.2 Work to get round obstacles; does not give up

10.3 Be proactive in shaping what gets done, being aware of boundaries of own

10.4 Ensure deadlines are kept and promises met.

10.5 Have a strong work ethic.