

Pupillage Guide
2022 - 23

*Welcome to Blackstone Chambers' Pupillage
Guide for 2023 applicants.*



Introduction from the Heads of Chambers

We hope this guide will give you a clear overview of how pupillage at Blackstone Chambers works. We think it's important that applicants know what to expect throughout the application process, along with an outline of the year in pupillage and leading into the first years of tenancy.

Chambers enjoys an enviable reputation for its wide range of work covering commercial, public, human rights, employment, EU and public international law, as well as a number of specialist fields including financial services, competition, tax and sports law. Blackstone Chambers prides itself on the quality of its advocacy and the breadth of its expertise. Blackstone Chambers is consistently ranked as the leading set of Chambers in The Lawyer magazine's Litigation Tracker. The tracker analyses judgments across all the main courts in England and Wales, with chambers measured by the number of reported cases, market share and case days. Its statistics show that over the past five years (August 2017 – August 2022), members of Blackstone Chambers were involved in the highest volume of decided cases. These cases represented more than double that of the second ranked set.

We are proud of Blackstone Chambers' reputation and we attract a wide range of clients from all walks of life. We work hard to offer a friendly and open approach to client service. We are delighted to report the conclusion of major building works which have been running for several years. All members of Chambers, pupils and staff, are now reunited in the Blackstone House complex. Our new facilities include state of the art meeting and conference rooms, and improved accommodation for all. This has provided us with an enhanced and modern working environment to meet the needs of clients going forwards.

We enjoy our collegiate working environment. Members of Chambers tend to work closely together, seeking regular advice from colleagues. We do not believe in rigid hierarchies, and all members participate fully in the life and work of Chambers. We are committed to the principle of equal opportunity and draw our recruits from many different backgrounds, academic and professional. Current data also shows that roughly one third of our junior tenants are women.

We invest very strongly in our pupillage programme, and we believe our pupils complete their year with extremely robust legal and practical skills.

This is the final year of our ten year appointment as Heads of Chambers: we and our successors Jane Mulcahy KC and Tom Weisselberg KC look forward to meeting you should you undertake a mini-pupillage with us.

Monica Carss-Frisk KC and Tony Peto KC
Heads of Chambers

"A set with an unbeatable range of expertise across a plethora of legal disciplines," Blackstone Chambers has a commercial litigation offering of great renown.
Chambers and Partners 2022



Our practice areas (and case examples)

Regarded as one of the 'magic circle' sets in London, Blackstone Chambers receives high rankings in the two principal legal directories, Chambers UK and Legal 500. Blackstone is currently listed under 17 practice areas in the Chambers UK Bar directory, and under 31 areas in Legal 500. The broad range of high-quality work which is undertaken here truly provides the scope for practitioners to exercise a myriad of legal skills in practice.

It is not possible to list all of our practice areas in great detail here, but the online CVs of our barristers (see www.blackstonechambers.com/barristers) will give an idea of the vast number of interesting and cutting-edge cases and areas of law in which barristers in these Chambers are instructed. To give a sense of the breadth of our work, we have provided the following outlines of each of our core practice areas.

Commercial

Commercial law involves representing clients in business and financial disputes and giving advice on related legal issues. The clients may be individuals, small businesses, large corporations or government and regulatory bodies. Members of Chambers regularly appear in commercial cases in the full range of courts (from multi-million pound cases in the Commercial Court to small business disputes in the County Court), tribunals (for example, in financial services regulation or tax fraud cases) and commercial arbitrations. Commercial disputes arise in a great variety of factual situations and may raise novel and complex points of law.

Specific areas involved include arbitration, banking and financial services, commercial judicial review (see public law and human rights below), contract disputes, company law, fraud, financial services, insolvency, insurance and reinsurance, media and entertainment, partnership, professional negligence and the sale and carriage of goods. Commercial cases also frequently have an international dimension: they often require consideration of issues of private international law (i.e. whether the English courts have jurisdiction over the case and which country's law is applicable), and opportunities arise for travelling and working abroad.

Examples of the type of case you might see during time in Chambers (often involving a team of barristers) include:

Rowe & Ors v Ingenious Media Holdings Ltd [2021] EWCA Civ 29

The appeal arose in the context of the ongoing civil claim brought by hundreds of investors in the Ingenious films and games schemes against various defendants, including promoters and banks. A number of the Claimants in the litigation were funded by entities forming part of the Therium group.

AXA S.A. v Genworth [2020] EWHC 2024 (Comm) and [2019] EWHC 3376 (Comm)

A claim for over £500m, relating to historic PPI mis-selling, from the vendor of subsidiary insurance businesses. AXA struck out the defendant's Part 20 counterclaim as an abuse of process, before prevailing at subsequent liability and quantum hearings involving issues of contractual construction and subrogation, and expert evidence on market practice.

Our practice areas (and case examples)

Privatbank v Kolomoisky and ors [2019] EWCA Civ 1708

The case concerns an alleged scheme perpetrated by the defendants to misappropriate c. US\$2 billion from the Bank.

PCP Capital Partners LLP, PCP International Finance Limited v Barclays Bank plc [2021] EWHC 307 (Comm)

The proceedings concerned Barclays Bank's recapitalisation in October and November 2008, at the height of the global financial crisis. The Claimants ("PCP") claimed in deceit. Highlighted as one of The Lawyer's Top 20 Cases of 2020.

Mahmoud v Breish and Hussein [2020] EWCA Civ 637

A Court of Appeal ruling relating to Libyan Investment Authority, control of sovereign wealth of Libya and identity of Government of Libya.

Ocado Group Plc (2) Ocado Central Services Ltd -v- Mr Raymond McKeeve [2020] EWHC 563 (Ch) & [2020] EWHC 1463 (Ch)

The High Court dismissed an application, brought by two members of the Ocado group, for permission to make a committal application for alleged interference with the due administration of justice.

Vale S.A. (& Ors.) v. Steinmetz (& Ors) [2020] EWHC 461 (Comm)

The claimant members of the Vale mining group brought a claim in fraud for c. US\$2 billion, relating to a joint venture for the mining of iron ore in the Republic of Guinea. The claimant obtained a worldwide freezing order. An important decision was made on the second defendant's application as to the correct approach to the ordinary course of business exception in freezing orders.

"Highly regarded as 'one of the best and brightest sets', Blackstone Chambers houses 'top quality barristers able to advise on a range of issues', with consistent visibility on important judicial reviews cases and matters that attract a great deal of public attention."

Legal 500, 2022



Our practice areas

Public Law and Human Rights

Public law and human rights cases are often at the cutting edge of legal developments in the UK and serve to help maintain the balance between the interests of the individual and the State. For many years, Blackstone Chambers has been the home of barristers dedicated to ensuring that the rights and interests not only of individuals but also of regulatory bodies and companies are recognised and protected. Our members act in human rights cases and judicial review both for and against public bodies. We are involved in areas including freedom of expression, immigration, education, planning, housing and local government.

Blackstone Chambers is particularly noted for its ability to provide commercial advice in a public law context. Because of our strength in commercial and public law, we are able to offer expertise in regulatory and other areas which cross both sectors.

Examples of cases in this area include:

NSK v the United Kingdom (ECHR 197 (2022))

European Court of Human Rights grants interim measures preventing removal of asylum seeker to Rwanda pending determination of judicial review of Rwanda removal policy here. Refugee pushback policy withdrawn following legal challenge here.

Jennings v Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) [2022] EWHC 1619

In a high-profile judgment, the Family Court has granted a declaration that it would be lawful for the Applicant, Mr Jennings, to use an embryo created using his sperm and the eggs of his late wife, in treatment with a surrogate, notwithstanding the absence of her written, signed consent to that effect.

Wong v Basfar [2020] UKEAT/0223/19

An appeal to the Supreme Court concerning the application of the commercial exception in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities in the context of modern slavery.

Privacy International & Ors v Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs & Ors [2021] EWCA Civ 330

A very high-profile case concerning the crimes committed in pursuit of intelligence. The Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal of the claimants and ruled that the Security Service had the legal power to run undercover agents who participated in criminality in pursuit of intelligence.

R (Elan Cane) v SoS Home Department [2020] EWCA Civ 363

A challenge brought by non-gendered campaigner Christie Elan-Cane, to the Government's policy of refusing to issue non gender-specific 'X' passports.

Shamima Begum v Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) [2020] EWCA Civ 918

One of the most high-profile cases of the year. The case concerned the Secretary of State's decision to deprive Shamima Begum of her British citizenship.

R (Miller) v The Prime Minister and Cherry and ors v Advocate General for Scotland [2019] UKSC 41

The Supreme Court heard arguments in the legal challenge to the prime minister, Boris Johnson's decision to prorogue Parliament. The Court concluded that the Prime Minister's advice to Her Majesty was unlawful, void or of no effect and Gina Miller's appeal was allowed and the Advocate General's appeal in the case of Cherry is dismissed.

Employment

Members of Blackstone Chambers undertake a complete range of contentious employment work both for employers and employees. They advise on matters ranging from high value or complex High Court employment disputes, including restrictive covenants, injunctions, confidentiality, TUPE and gardening leave, to the entire gamut of issues in the employment tribunals, from unfair dismissal and equal pay to discrimination issues in all their forms. The expansion of anti-discrimination legislation and the application of the Equality Act 2010 provide an ever expanding range of issues on which advice and representation is sought by both employers and employees alike.

Many employment cases, due to confidentiality issues, do not hit the headlines but interesting cases in the field have included:

Asda Stores v Brierley [2021] UKSC 10; [2019] EWCA Civ 44

The Supreme Court dismissed Asda's appeal in equal pay proceedings brought by 35,000 Asda store workers seeking to compare their terms with those who work in Asda's distribution depots.

X Christie v Canaccord Genuity Limited [2022] EWHC 1130 (QB)

Mr Christie was an investment banker who brought a series of claims against his former employer, Canaccord, alleging that he had been awarded unduly low discretionary bonuses and further that Canaccord had promised him a £1m retention award by way of an oral agreement.

Uber BV and others v Aslam and others [2021] UKSC 5

Appeal by Uber concerning whether drivers who use the Uber app are "workers", and if so, how working time should be measured for the purposes of calculating entitlements under employment protection legislation.

Morrison's plc v Various Claimants [2020] UKSC 12

In this case two members of Chambers acted for Morrison's in the Supreme Court on whether the company is vicariously liable for the criminal acts of its employee in releasing the personal data of other employees onto the internet having regard to the EU Data Protection Directive.

Benyatov v Credit Suisse [2020] EWHC 85 (QB)

Representing Credit Suisse in defending a £60m claim brought by a former employee following his conviction in Romania when working there. He successfully applied to strike out much of the claim. This was one of The Lawyer's Top 20 cases for 2020.

'Blackstone has an excellent reputation for employment law.' -
Legal 500 Testimonials, 2022.

Our practice areas

EU and Competition

Competition and European law expertise is a key practice area for Blackstone Chambers. The range of specialist knowledge to be found among the many barristers at Blackstone Chambers who practice in competition and EU law includes US antitrust, mergers, jurisdiction issues, free movement, the control of misleading advertising, judicial review and parallel importation. Expansion of work in this area has seen an increase in the number of cases working their way through the Competition Appeals Tribunal.

Members of Blackstone Chambers regularly act on behalf of UK and multinational corporations and for the UK Government, the governments of EU Member States and Candidate States, European Institutions, and a full range of regulators across a wide spectrum of industries, as well as for other public bodies. This has continued to be an important area of practice for Members of Chambers since the UK left the European Union.

Case examples include:

Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd and others v Visa Europe Services LLC and others; Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd and others v Mastercard Incorporated and others [2020] UKSC 24

A significant judgment in the Supreme Court in relation to combined cases brought by Sainsbury's and other retailers concerning the multilateral interchange fees charged by Visa and Mastercard.

CK Telecoms UK Investments Ltd v European Commission (T-399/16)

The General Court handed down a landmark mergers judgment, annulling the Commission's decision to block CK Hutchison's acquisition of O2 UK from Spain's Telefonica for 10.25 billion pounds (\$12.6 billion) in 2016.

Crossley & Ors v Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft (the "VW NOx Emissions Group Litigation") (Instructed by Slaughter and May) [2019] EWHC 783(QB)

The class action arising out of what is often described as the 'emissions scandal'. Following a two-week trial of two preliminary issues, Mr Justice Waksman found that the controversial engine software function amounts to a 'defeat device' for the purpose of EU law, and that previous findings of the relevant German authorities were binding on the High Court in that respect.

Michael O'Higgins FX Class Representative Ltd v Barclays Bank plc, Citibank N.A, JP Morgan Chase & Co & Ors [2020] CAT 9

Proposed collective proceedings before the Competition Appeal Tribunal arising out of European Commission decisions concerning conduct in FX markets. Highlighted as one of The Lawyer's Top 20 Cases of 2020.

Mastercard Incorporated and others v Walter Hugh Merricks CBE [2020] UKSC 51

An application for a CPO to enable the continuation of proceedings brought by the respondent as a proposed class representative for 46.2 million people who between 22 May 1992 and 21 June 2008 purchased goods and/or services from businesses in the UK that accepted Mastercard cards.



International Law

This is a highly specialised practice area and Blackstone Chambers is experienced in advising and representing governments, corporate bodies and individual litigants on international disputes, constitutional affairs and human rights issues before a range of international courts. Barristers have particular expertise in international boundary disputes, state and diplomatic immunity and international protection of human rights. They appear regularly before the International Court of Justice, international arbitration tribunals (for example ICSID, the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes) and before domestic courts in cases involving issues of public international law.

In addition to the litigation flowing from such disputes, members of Chambers are able to become involved in the development of law in other related ways.

Recent cases of note include:

NSK v the United Kingdom (ECHR 197 (2022))

European Court of Human Rights grants interim measures preventing removal of asylum seeker to Rwanda pending determination of judicial review of Rwanda removal policy.

Município de Mariana v BHP Group plc and BHP Group Ltd [2020] EWHC 2930 (TCC)

The claim was brought in England by more than 200,000 Brazilian claimants in relation to the collapse of the Fundão Dam in Brazil in 2015.

Elgizouli v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2020] EWHC 2516 (Admin)

The Divisional Court handed down a decision regarding the provision of material by the Home Secretary to the United States' Government following a request for Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA). MLA is a form of cooperation between states for the purpose of assisting in the investigation or prosecution of criminal offences. The requested material related to the alleged terrorist activities of the claimant's son, Shafee El Sheikh, formerly a British citizen.

Inquiry on Protecting Children in Armed Conflict

The 5000-page report of the Legal Panel, of which Shaheed Fatima KC is the lead author, was published as a book, *Protecting Children in Armed Conflict* (2019, Hart/Bloomsbury Publishing). It reviews the position of children in armed conflict by reference to the six grave violations, as identified by the UN Security Council, and by reference to international humanitarian law, international criminal law and international human rights law.

Our practice areas

Sport

Blackstone Chambers has considerable experience across all areas of sports law including agency, broadcasting, contract, disciplinary, drugs, employment, image rights, regulation, sponsorship, state aid and ticketing. We have developed a leading reputation for sports law in part through our existing strengths in complementary fields of practice, notably: public law, EU and competition, commercial law, human rights and employment law. As a result, Blackstone Chambers attracts a range of clients, from major sports governing bodies to sporting individuals, teams, clubs, agents and broadcasters.

The range is huge, but example cases include:

PGA European Tour golfers' suspensions stayed pending appeal SR/165/2022

In a decision of the Chair of an Appeal Panel appointed by Sport Resolutions, suspensions of the professional golfers Ian Poulter, Adrian Otaegui and Justin Harding from playing in the Scottish Open and two other DP World Tour co-sanctioned tournaments were lifted pending determination of the golfers' substantive appeals.

The Football Association Premier League Limited v PPLive Sports International Limited [2022] EWHC 38 (Comm)

The Premier League successfully obtained summary judgment for over \$212 million in its claim against PPLive, its former broadcasting partner for mainland China and Macau.

Fulham FC v Jones [2022] EWHC 1108 (QB)

Significant appeal concerning the circumstances in which the Court will find civil liability for a serious injury sustained in the course of a professional football match.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) v. Chijindu Ujah (CAS 2021/ADD/33)

The Anti-Doping Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) issued a decision on sanctioning the Team GB sprinter, Chijindu Ujah, for an Anti-Doping Rule Violation at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Manchester City FC v Premier League [2021] EWCA Civ 1110

Challenge to the Premier League's dispute resolution system in the Commercial Court and Court of Appeal, and in the underlying arbitration.

British Gymnastics

High-profile case concerning gymnasts who claim to have suffered from abusive practices and culture within British Gymnastics.

Newcastle United v The Premier League

A very high-profile case concerning a Football Club's dispute concerning new ownership with the Premier League.

Media and Entertainment

Members of Chambers act for a wide range of film, theatre and record companies, book, music and newspaper publishers as well as numerous performers, directors and producers and have been involved in many of the major disputes in this field.

Often work in this sector will include issues of copyright and other 'soft' intellectual property issues covering issues as wide ranging as:

Sheeran & Ors v Chokri & Ors [2022] EWHC 827 (CH)

Acted for Ed Sheeran and others, the co-writers and publishers of the song "Shape of You" where the Claimants sought a declaration that they had not infringed any copyrights of the Defendants in writing and exploiting that song.

Kelly-Marie Smith v Kesi Dryden & Ors [2021] EWHC 2277 (IPEC)

The High Court handed down its decision in a copyright infringement dispute concerning the song 'Waiting All Night' by English drum and bass band, Rudimental. The Court rejected allegations that the song had been copied from an earlier work, dismissing the Claimant's claims in their entirety.

Duchess of Sussex v Associated Newspapers Limited [2021] EWHC 273 (Ch)

Acted for the Duchess of Sussex on her copyright claim in one of The Lawyer's Top 20 Cases of 2020. The Duchess' dispute with Associated Newspapers concerned their misuse of private information, following their publication of a letter written by her to her father. The Judge granted her application in its totality (save for one minor aspect of her copyright claim, which will be dealt with as part of a future assessment of the financial relief to which she is entitled).

Telecommunications

Blackstone Chambers has a significant telecommunications practice, building on its expertise in commercial, public law and regulatory matters. Members of Chambers advise and represent regulators, operators and consumers on issues including regulatory, public law and competition. Issues cover fixed line and mobile networks and services, as well as internet-related matters relevant to telecommunications, including by-pass, interconnection and VoIP issues. Other areas of advice include the construction of licences, arbitration clauses, and the effect of constitutional freedom of expression and property guarantees on exclusivity.

Example cases include:

Unwire Planet & Conversant v Huawei & ZTE [2020] UKSC 37

Since 2014, members of Chambers have acted for parties in this high-profile matter concerning global telecommunications licensing. The Supreme Court's long-awaited judgment in the Unwired Planet and Conversant appeals upheld the decisions of the Court of Appeal and High Court in both sets of proceedings.

R (VIP Communications) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2019] EWHC 994 (Admin); [2020] EWCA Civ 1564

A judicial review challenge which successfully established that a direction by the Home Secretary to Ofcom, requiring it to refrain from liberalising the regulatory regime for GSM gateways on national security grounds, had been ultra vires and unlawful.

Vodafone & others v Ofcom [2020] EWCA Civ 183; [2019] EWHC 1234 (Comm)

The Court of Appeal has dismissed Ofcom's appeal against a judgment of the High Court awarding over £218 million plus interest as restitution of unjust enrichment to four Mobile Network Operators ("MNOs").

Our practice areas

Banking and Financial Services

Blackstone members have broad experience in banking and financial services including an extensive regulatory practice acting both for and against a variety of financial and other regulatory authorities, corporations and individuals. Members have advised extensively in relation to the Financial Services and Markets Act, advising regulators, approved persons and others on aspects including authorisations, listing rules, market abuse, financial promotion, collective investment schemes, and disclosure.

Members of Chambers also undertake a range of asset finance and banking litigation cases. Other areas of practice include pensions review, cases of alleged insider trading, professional negligence, and the impact of the Human Rights Act upon enforcement procedures of self-regulatory organisations.

Examples include:

The 'Mortgage Prisoners' Claim

Representing Northern Rock Asset Management in relation to high-profile potential large group banking litigation brought on behalf of 'mortgage prisoners' against multiple lenders.

Pipia v BGEO Group Ltd [2020] EWHC 402 (Comm)

An application brought by Bank of Georgia Group PLC ('BGEO') for a declaration that, for the purposes of disclosure (under PD 51U), BGEO does not control documents held by two subsidiaries (both incorporated in Georgia), one in which it held a 100% direct shareholding and the other in which it held an indirect shareholding.

Russell Adams v Options SIPP UK LLP [2020] EWHC 1229 (Ch)

A landmark test case on the potential liability of an execution-only SIPP provider (D) to an investor (C) whose underlying investment in the SIPP sustained significant losses. The Court held that D was not liable for such losses.

Burford v London Stock Exchange [2020] EWHC 1183 (Comm)

LSE opposed a Norwich Pharmacal application brought by Burford arising out of an alleged short-selling attack on its shares in August 2019. This was a landmark decision in both the area of financial services regulation and the Norwich Pharmacal jurisdiction.

Tesco market abuse Final Notice

In a landmark approach to compensation, the FCA exercised for the first time its power under section 384 of FSMA to require a listed company to make restitution to affected investors for the market abuse, imposing by agreement a compensation scheme with an estimated value of some £85 million. In view of the simultaneous agreement of a Deferred Prosecution Agreement with the SFO involving a fine of £129 million, the FCA did not impose a penalty for market abuse.

In addition, some of our members have areas of expertise which fall outside our core areas. For instance, we also have strength in areas such as privacy, lotteries and gaming, and environmental law.



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!"
Chambers Student Guide 2021



Pupillage at Blackstone Chambers

The work

We believe that pupils should be involved in every aspect of their pupil supervisor's work. This is very varied as can be seen from some of the examples set out in this brochure or in the News section of our website. We give our pupils a rounded overview of a barrister's role, and equip them for the legal and practical challenges they will face in practice.

As a pupil at Blackstone Chambers, you will have four supervisors through the year. Pupil supervisors are chosen to ensure that each pupil gets a solid grounding in the three core areas of Chambers' work – commercial, employment, and public law. Beyond that core, you will experience your supervisors' particular areas of expertise. In recent years, for example, supervisors have been experts in areas including competition law, immigration law, and financial regulation.

Pupillage at Blackstone Chambers is very much a hands-on experience. From your first day with your supervisor, you will get stuck into whatever cases your supervisor is instructed on at that moment. The typical work involves doing first drafts of the documents which your pupil supervisor is working on. You will therefore develop a wide experience of drafting pleadings and other court documents, writing skeleton arguments and compiling written advices. You may also be asked to do a first draft of questions to be used in a cross examination, or to prepare opening or closing submissions.

You will also be involved in every step of the advisory and litigation process. Pupils attend conferences with clients, listen in on phone conversations where appropriate, and are encouraged to discuss the strategic, procedural and ethical elements of cases with their supervisors.

The emphasis which we place on the close working relationship between pupil and supervisor means that pupils do not do any additional work for other members of Chambers. You will be able to focus entirely on the cases which you are involved in on a day-to-day basis.

Because Blackstone pupils are exposed to such a wide range of legal areas, the whole year is non-practising, which means that pupils do not take on any of their own paid work during pupillage. On the other hand, we strongly encourage our pupils to take on pro bono cases with FRU or other charities, and we will provide support and ensure that you have the time you need to dedicate to pro bono work.

Pro bono work

A commitment to pro bono work is an important part of the culture at Blackstone Chambers. As evidence of that commitment, from September 2021 to August 2022, our barristers have been involved in almost 100 separate pro bono cases. Many of these cases are high-profile, including acting for various claimants and Asylum Aid in the Rwanda Litigation, a challenge to the Secretary of State's policy of removing asylum seekers from this country to Rwanda and working on the Legal Task Force on Accountability for Crimes Committed in Ukraine, but many are not and are cases acting for individuals, in relation to employment, immigration and other issues.

Blackstone Chambers is a long term supporter of Advocate and a gold sponsor. Chambers is also a supporter of the Free Representation Unit or "FRU" since its inception. Members of Chambers sit on the case review panel for Advocate and also take on individual case referrals to provide advice or representation.

We strongly encourage our pupils and junior barristers to take on pro bono cases through Advocate, FRU and other charities, and we will provide support and ensure that you have the time you need to dedicate to pro bono work.

Pupillage at Blackstone Chambers

Training

Pupillage is, first and foremost, about giving you the skills you need to be a barrister. We are proud of our reputation for providing a legal training which is second to none.

The first week of pupillage at Blackstone Chambers is an induction week. We have specifically designed the week to help pupils get the most out of pupillage: we introduce you to the members of Chambers, the staff, the resources available, and we explain many of the mechanics of work as a pupil and a barrister. We have found this week invaluable for settling pupils into their new role.

The core of your education at Blackstone Chambers is the interaction you will have with your pupil supervisor. We believe it is vital that pupils are with their supervisors at every step of the legal process, and not isolated from the real action.

Pupils are encouraged to discuss their work with supervisors. Pupil supervisors also strive to give constructive feedback on every piece of written work which their pupil produces; whilst we cannot promise that there is always time to meet this ambition, you will certainly receive ample detailed feedback and suggestions for improvement during your year.

We also build in a structured programme of feedback to give a more general picture of our pupils' progress. Before you leave one pupil supervisor for a new one, your old supervisor will complete a form commenting on your progress across a wide range of skill sets – from written work to interactions with clients – and suggesting areas for you to work on. You will be given a copy, and it will form the basis of a constructive discussion with you before you move on to your next supervisor.

Pupils also have the benefit of detailed feedback from other members of Chambers through our programme of assessed work. Through the year, pupils do five pieces of assessed written work, each of which must be completed over a period of two days. The work is then assessed, typically by one senior and one junior member of Chambers. As the name suggests, one purpose is for us to gain an objective view of pupils' progress. But equally important is that it provides a structured opportunity for pupils to receive intensive feedback from other members of Chambers. We take this role extremely seriously, and all markers spend time discussing the work with the pupils.

Last, but certainly not least, is the advocacy training which we provide. A team of our barristers, who are experienced advocates and trained advocacy trainers, provide a programme designed to equip pupils for the kinds of cases they are likely to face in the first years of practice. Covering witness handling and legal submissions, we build on what you learn at bar school and at your Inn. The advocacy sessions will be watched by the other pupils, the Chambers Director, and two or three members of Chambers as trainers. In total, we provide seven advocacy sessions. The last four of them are assessed, meaning that your performance will be taken into account should you apply for tenancy in Chambers.

Applicants are sometimes surprised by the number of 'assessments' which our pupils do. But we have found them to be an invaluable way of giving structured feedback to pupils. It is also a way of making fair and objective comparisons. Remember that, wherever you do pupillage, you will be 'assessed' on a daily basis. We feel that the fact that we have formalised the process, and built in intensive feedback sessions, is a real benefit for our pupils and for Chambers. Pupils also tell us that their year is a far less stressful experience because they know that the assessment process is clear and fair.



The lifestyle

Blackstone Chambers is a friendly and inclusive environment, and as a pupil you will be integrated into Chambers' life. You will sit with your supervisor, not in an annexe away from the action, and you will be invited to Chambers' social events.

As you would expect, barristers at Blackstone Chambers work hard. On the other hand, we recognise that most people work best when they have a sensible work-life balance. We judge our pupils by the quality of their work, not the quantity. When we say we expect pupils to work Monday to Friday, from around 8.30/9.00 to 6.00/6.30, we mean it. Pupils in Chambers any later are often urged to go home. So, whilst there may be times when you choose to work longer hours, you will rarely be expected to do so.

Pupils are entitled to 20 days of holiday per year plus bank holidays, and we normally require pupils to take 10 days in their first six, at Christmas and Easter, and 10 days in the summer of their second six.

In line with our policy of encouraging the best applicants from all backgrounds and walks of life, we are open to discussing any particular requirements you may have in terms of balancing work and other commitments. Please feel free to contact us for a confidential discussion.

The finances

We currently offer a pupillage award of £75,000 for pupillages commencing in 2024. Pupils may apply to draw down up to £22,500 during their BPC year. These figures are not affected if, like many of our pupils, you are successful in obtaining further financial assistance from your Inn. Our awards may be reviewed during the currency of the application process.

Pupillage at Blackstone Chambers

The Tenancy decision

At present, Blackstone Chambers' policy is one of gradual expansion. We do not operate a quota for tenancies. Chambers has space to expand and is looking to take on outstanding candidates. It is our general practice to recruit starter tenants only from our own pupils. We are optimistic about the future of Chambers and our ability to meet the challenges of a changing legal world. Over the past few years we have taken on new tenants each year, and we intend to do so for the foreseeable future.

The statistics speak for themselves: over the past 10 years we have taken on 29 tenants from our annual pupillage intake, accepting between 2 and 4 pupil tenants a year.

We invest a lot of time ensuring that our tenancy decisions are entirely fair, and that the process is as transparent as possible. We normally take tenancy decisions in early July each year. We will tell you the date well in advance. The decision is taken by a vote of the whole of Chambers. The information on which members of Chambers base their decision is feedback from your pupil supervisors, your assessed work, and your performance in the advocacy training. At the meeting, all members of Chambers are given the opportunity of expressing their views on candidates. However, because of our policy of not allowing pupils to do work for other members of Chambers, there is no chance that any pupil will be unfairly advantaged simply because they happened to work on a particular case.

The alternatives

We invest a lot of time ensuring that our tenancy decisions are entirely fair, and that the process is as transparent as possible. However, pupils who do not stay on as tenants at Blackstone Chambers do have a wide range of options. The high quality of our training and of our pupils is known and respected across the profession. Furthermore, if you are not offered tenancy here, your pupil supervisors and others in Chambers will pull out all the stops to help you to find a place at another set of chambers which fits your interests. This usually means doing a third six months of pupillage there, although sometimes pupils go straight into tenancy elsewhere. In previous years, pupils who have not stayed on at Blackstone have gone on to successful practice in other top sets of chambers.

Life as a Tenant

Your professional life as a member of Blackstone Chambers will be an attractive one. You will work hard, but you will be your own boss. We enjoy our professional lives and work in a friendly atmosphere. We work as individuals although, of course, we have many common interests as members of the Chambers. You are responsible for your own work but you should feel free to consult with your colleagues and to draw on the collective expertise of Chambers. You should never be just one brick in a pyramid of delegated work.

"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." -
Chambers Student Guide 2021

As a junior tenant you can expect a broad mix of advisory and advocacy work. At the more junior end of Chambers there is County Court and employment tribunal work, and even very occasionally some Magistrates Court work. You will also find yourself involved in High Court litigation from an early stage in your career, in particular dealing with interlocutory applications. You will also be instructed as a Junior assisting a Silk in larger cases and in advisory work. We place a very heavy emphasis on giving our junior barristers a range of experience from covering their own smaller cases to assisting on large cases. You will certainly have a varied and stimulating life.

It is our experience that our junior tenants very soon begin to make a good living at the Bar. Of course, the earnings of individual barristers do vary. However, within a short time of commencing practice the earnings of junior tenants in these Chambers are certainly comparable to those of assistant solicitors of comparable length of experience. Over time, we are confident that your income will stand favourable comparison with that of any other professional person.

Chambers' expenses, including rent, are shared between members of Chambers in proportion to their receipts in the previous year. The Chambers' financial year commences at the beginning of April. Accordingly, and on the basis of a tenancy commencing in October, you will pay no Chambers expenses or service charge for your first six months in Chambers; in the following year, you will only pay a modest amount proportionate to your receipts in those first six months.

Members of Chambers are fully aware of the financial strains encountered by tenants establishing their careers at the Bar. In order to try to ameliorate any difficulties, Chambers offers new junior tenants an interest free loan of up to £30,000 at the beginning of their first practice year, repayable at the end of 15 months in practice.

And what do two of our junior tenants say...?



Dominic Howells

I didn't grow up dreaming of being a lawyer. I read Philosophy, Politics and Economics at university and afterwards spent six years working in mergers and acquisitions. If you haven't studied law at university, becoming a barrister takes three years as a minimum: the law conversion course, the bar course and the year of pupillage.

Being a barrister has a number of distinctive qualities when compared to other professional jobs. The most important for me is that the intellectual aspect marches together with practical considerations in deciding how to advise clients or present arguments in court. The most dramatic in terms of its effect on daily life is that all barristers in chambers are self-employed. That means not having a boss, not being anyone's boss and earning the product of your own labour.

Spending a year doing pupillage at Blackstone Chambers is a great preparation for life as a tenant because you get to see work in a wide range of Chambers' different practice areas. Pupillage involves receiving training and being assessed throughout the year. That is a somewhat stressful combination wherever it is undertaken, but the process at Blackstone at least seems even-handed and free from political intrigues.

At the time of writing I've spent one year in practice, having started as a tenant in September 2017. During that year I've done a great variety of work including commercial law, public law, employment, sports, music and film, tax, regulatory, competition and fraud cases. In many of these cases I have acted as sole counsel and in some I have been led by more senior barristers.

Junior barristers at Blackstone Chambers are expected to accept instructions in all of Chambers' practice areas and to do both led and un-led work. That is not to say, however, that you won't have any influence over what you take on. The work I have done this year has reflected my preferences, both as to subject matter and in my wish to get a good amount of advocacy experience.

Being a junior barrister is hard work, but just how many hours you spend in chambers depends on how industrious/avaricious you are. It appears possible to combine practice as a junior barrister with a normal home and social life and still to achieve earnings which are favourably comparable with those of newly qualified solicitors at the U.S. firms in London.

Those facing the embarrass de richesses of multiple pupillage offers at top sets might wonder what there is to distinguish them. The variety of work a Blackstone is unique among the leading sets of chambers. It's not easy to tell before undertaking pupillage what kinds of work are going to be the most interesting or rewarding, so having a lot of options as a junior barrister is a distinct advantage. I would also say in Blackstone's favour that it is a friendly and collegiate place. There is quite a mix of different personalities which makes it easy to be oneself. There's a lively social side if one is looking for that but it's also entirely acceptable to go home when one's work is done.



Gayatri Sarathy

I joined Chambers as a tenant in September 2018. Before coming to the Bar, I studied law at the University of Oxford. I also worked as a research assistant in the public law team at the Law Commission and volunteered with an NGO.

For me, being a barrister offers a unique combination of engaging intellectually with complex legal issues and thinking practically about how they are resolved and presented before a court. There is rarely a dull moment and my days are full of variety: whether that is researching for an advice; advising clients in conference; drafting written submissions; or appearing in court. Being self-employed means that you are in control of when and how long you work.

Pupillage is very useful preparation for the beginning of your career at the Bar. Each pupil shadows the same four members of Chambers in different areas of practice, alongside written and advocacy assessments. During that time, you attend court with your pupil supervisor and draft notes on the law, pleadings and skeleton arguments. It is rigorous, but also incredibly fair. You are given regular feedback from pupil supervisors and advocacy trainers, who are two senior members of Chambers.

You are not required to work for any other members of Chambers. Whilst it is a year-long assessment, it is also invaluable training as a lawyer and an advocate.

Why Blackstone? First, as a junior tenant, there is a huge diversity of work on offer and you are encouraged to maintain a broad practice in your early years (though there is opportunity to specialise if you would like). That is important because there are areas of law you may enjoy academically and not in practice or vice versa, or areas of law that you may never have studied, like sports law. My first year has involved a real mix of commercial, employment and public law — both on my own and in teams with other members of Chambers. A particular highlight was being involved in the Privacy International case with Dinah Rose KC, Ben Jaffey KC, Sir Jeffrey Jowell KC and Tom Cleaver before the Supreme Court.

Beyond this, the environment in Chambers is supportive and collegiate. Every door is open to ask a question and there are weekly drinks which, in the summer months, are held on the roof terrace. It is a privilege to be part of Chambers and I would wholeheartedly encourage everyone to apply.



Applying for Pupillage

Pupillage standards

We are looking to recruit pupils of exceptionally high academic ability who can demonstrate an interest in and aptitude for a successful career at Blackstone Chambers. We place particular emphasis on a candidate's written and oral advocacy and communication skills, which we assess throughout the application procedure. It is by no means necessary for your first degree to be in law.

We use the Rare Contextual Recruitment System (CRS) when processing applications. The CRS uses national data to map the social, financial and educational background of candidates so as to ensure that all candidates of merit and potential are identified during recruitment processes and thus given the appropriate chance to flourish. All applicants for mini-pupillage or pupillage at Blackstone Chambers are given the opportunity to consent to their personal information being processed by the CRS and the result of such analysis being provided to the Pupillage Committee for consideration at the outset of the application process.

Pupillage and Mini-Pupillage applications

Blackstone Chambers will be a member of the Pupillage Gateway for applications for pupillage commencing in September 2024. All applications for pupillage must be made through the Gateway. However, in selecting candidates for pupillage we rely heavily on assessed mini-pupillages to provide Chambers with a deeper understanding of a candidate's abilities and aptitude for a career at the Bar. Only those applicants who have completed an assessed mini-pupillage in Chambers will be considered for pupillage.

In order to facilitate mini-pupillages for as large a pool of candidates as possible we encourage potential applicants to apply to us as early as possible in the legal year in which they intend to apply for pupillage. This year applications for mini-pupillage may be made to Chambers via our website from 7 October 2022. The mini-pupillage applications window will close on 31 December 2022, shortly before the Pupillage Gateway opens for pupillage applications on Wednesday, 4 January 2023. After this point, any Gateway applicant for pupillage who has not already applied directly for mini-pupillage will be treated as an applicant for both mini-pupillage and pupillage.

Equal Opportunities

All barristers, clerks and staff are fully committed to diversity and inclusion within Blackstone Chambers and the Bar generally, and to equality of opportunity for all. It is Chambers' policy to treat everyone fairly and equally. Candidates for pupillage and tenancy are assessed, and offers of pupillage made, solely on merit.

We are taking proactive steps to review and continually improve all aspects of the administration and life in Chambers, and to ensure and improve equality of access to pupillage, training and practice development and employment opportunities within our organisation. We always consider requests for reasonable adjustments to be made during the course of our applications process so as to remove or reduce disadvantages experienced by applicants with disabilities. Such adjustments might include (by way of non-exhaustive examples) the provision of information in alternative formats, easily accessible interview and mini-pupillage venues, or extra time to prepare for or undertake assessment.

A request for reasonable adjustments should be made in the first instance to Carla Rodriguez, and will be considered by the Pupillage Committee in conjunction with Chambers Equality and Diversity Officers as appropriate.

Applying for Pupillage

Mini-Pupillage applications

Applications to Chambers for mini-pupillage should be made on our online application form, which can be found, with guidance notes, at www.blackstonechambers.com/pupillage. The application form is accompanied by an Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form. You are not obliged to complete the Monitoring Form but we encourage you to do so in order to assist us in assessing the effectiveness of our Equal Opportunities policies and action we are taking to promote equality. We also encourage you to provide contextual information through the Rare CRS platform.

Since space in Chambers for mini-pupils is limited, save in exceptional circumstances we will only offer mini-pupillage to those who intend to apply, or have already applied, to Blackstone Chambers for pupillage in the forthcoming or current applications cycle. We welcome repeat applications. However, please note that if you have been unsuccessful previously in an application to Blackstone Chambers, the Pupillage Committee will generally wish to see evidence of positive changes.

Mini-pupillages should circumstances require it. However, you should not be disappointed if you are not successful in obtaining a mini-pupillage this year and we would encourage you to re-apply next year.

Mini-pupillage selection process

Your application form will be assessed by a member, or members, of the Pupillage Committee who will decide whether you should be invited for interview. Their focus will be on: your academic achievements; legal and non-legal work experience evidencing skills which are relevant to a career at the Bar in general and Blackstone Chambers in particular; written and oral advocacy experience; and your written communication skills. Please refer to our Selection Criteria on our website and the guidance notes to our mini-pupillage application form for more information.

We will try to invite candidates for mini-pupillage to interview as early as possible and we will continue to interview and offer mini-pupillages until mid-April 2023. Interviews consist of general competency-based questions and a presentation and discussion on a topic chosen from a list provided to candidates 20 minutes before interview. Those selected for mini-pupillage following interview will be invited to spend four days in Chambers: three days with their mini-pupil supervisor, and one day completing a piece of assessed set work.

We offer financial assistance of up to £250 in respect of travel and/or out of pocket accommodation expenses incurred by candidates undertaking a mini-pupillage with us. In exceptional circumstances additional funding may be available. Please contact Carla Rodriguez for information.

“Blackstone Chambers is praised for its ‘strong expertise across a range of areas’, with ‘some genuine heavyweight advocates at the more senior end, together with really impressive juniors who will no doubt be stars of the future’.
Chambers Student Guide 2020

Pupillage Applications

All applications for pupillage, including from those who have applied directly to us for mini-pupillage, must be made through the Pupillage Gateway, which will open for applications on 4 January 2023 and close on 8 February 2023. We encourage candidates, in particular those who have not already applied to us directly for mini-pupillage, to complete their applications early in the applications window. Candidates who have not applied to us directly for mini-pupillage should nevertheless refer to the guidance notes to our mini-pupillage application form, for information about the way in which application forms will be assessed.

For more information about the Pupillage Gateway please refer to the Pupillage Gateway website www.pupillagegateway.com or contact the Bar Council via telephone 020 7242 0082, or visit their website: www.barcouncil.org.uk

Pupillage Interviews and Offers

After all mini-pupillages have been completed the Pupillage Committee will select those candidates to be invited to a final pupillage interview, which will take place in late April 2023. In recent years we have interviewed around 14 candidates for pupillage following completion of mini-pupillage. We will offer pupillages to 4 candidates, and one reserve candidate, on 5 May 2023.

References

We will take up references, university certificates and transcripts for any candidates who have progressed through to the mini-pupillage stage of our selection process. We will contact you at this point. We will not take up references or require university certificates or transcripts until a candidate's application has progressed through to offer of a mini pupillage. We will contact you at the relevant time to make this request.

We will require at least two academic references and a copy of your university official documents sent direct to pupillage@blackstonechambers.com. We strongly advise that you have contacted your referees and your universities well in advance of these possible requirements so that these supporting documents can be submitted by 6 April 2023 at the latest. Any delay may prejudice the processing of your application.



Applications Timetable

The timetable is as follows (please refer to the website for further information):

Late September 2022 – Mini pupillage applications open via our website.

31 December 2022 – Mini pupillage applications close on our website.

4 January 2023 – Gateway opens for Pupillage applications.

8 February 2023 – Gateway closes for Pupillage applications.

Late April 2023 – Pupillage interviews at Blackstone Chambers.

5 May 2023 – Offers of pupillage for 2024 will be made.

Members of Chambers

Heads of Chambers

Tom Weisselberg KC

Jane Mulcahy KC

Lord Woolf of Barnes
Michael Beloff KC
David Donaldson KC
Robert Englehart KC
David Hunt KC
Barbara Dohmann KC
Maurice Mendelson KC

Jonathan Harvie KC
Lord Pannick KC
Sir Jeffrey Jowell KC
Stephen Nathan KC
John Howell KC
Lord Keen of Elie KC
Charles Flint KC
Michael Bloch KC
Ian Mill KC
Harish Salve KC
Paul Goulding KC
Monica Carss-Frisk KC
Mark Shaw KC
Robert Anderson KC
Dinah Rose KC
Timothy Otty KC
Sir James Eadie KC
Robert Howe KC
Anthony Peto KC
Adam Lewis KC
Alan Maclean KC
Andrew Green KC
Javan Herberg KC
Sam Grodzinski KC
Andrew Hunter KC
Thomas de la Mare KC
Kieron Beal KC
Kate Gallafent KC
Andreas Gledhill KC
Andrew George KC
Adrian Briggs KC
Gemma White KC
Brian Kennelly KC

Shaheed Fatima KC
Ivan Hare KC
Tom Croxford KC
Catherine Callaghan KC
Nick De Marco KC
Charlotte Kilroy KC
Diya Sen Gupta KC
Tom Hickman KC
David Pievsky KC
James Segan KC
Catherine Donnelly SC
Victoria Windle KC
Robert Weekes KC
Hanif Mussa KC
Jessica Boyd KC
Andrew Scott KC
Joanna Pollard
Jane Collier
Emma Dixon
Stephanie Palmer
Leona Powell
Mark Vinall
Sarah Wilkinson
Iain Steele
Naina Patel
Tom Richards
Tristan Jones
Adam Baradon
Christopher McCrudden
Simon Pritchard
David Lowe
Emily Neill
Peter Head
Paul Luckhurst
Tom Cleaver
Tom Mountford
Tim Parker
Shane Sibbel
Fraser Campbell
Craig Rajgopaul

Ravi Mehta
Daniel Burgess
Harry Adamson
Jason Pobjoy
Jana Sadler-Forster
Kerenza Davis
Tom Leary
Luka Krsljanin
Tom Coates
Eesvan Krishnan
Daniel Cashman
Ajay Ratan
Flora Robertson
Celia Rooney
George Molyneaux
Navid Pourghazi
Isabel Buchanan
Andrew Trotter
Hollie Higgins
Dominic Howells
Natasha Simonsen
Gayatri Sarathy
Tim Lau
Rachel Jones
Carmine Conte
Warren Fitt
Tom Lowenthal
Will Bordell
Barnaby Lowe
Emmeline Plews
Rayan Fakhoury
Marlena Valles
Sean Butler
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