RICHMOND CHAMBERS.

immigration barristers

PUPILLAGE SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Overview

Richmond Chambers recruits pupils on merit.

We are looking for candidates with the intellectual and analytical ability, communication skills, judgment, motivation and professional potential to develop into excellent specialist immigration barristers.

Our pupillage is a full-time, employed, 12-month pupillage specialising in immigration, asylum and nationality law. Pupils work in a barrister-led practice with substantial direct-access work, referred advocacy and experience across both personal and business immigration.

We do not expect applicants to arrive as finished barristers or immigration specialists.

We assess potential: whether the evidence available to us indicates that an applicant has the ability and qualities required to develop successfully through pupillage and into practice at the Bar.

The ten criteria below are used throughout our recruitment process. Different stages may provide different opportunities to demonstrate them, and the criteria are considered together when assessing a candidate's overall potential.

2. Minimum eligibility

Applicants must be eligible to commence pupillage in accordance with Bar Standards Board requirements by the proposed start date.

We would normally expect an applicant to have achieved at least a 2:1 degree, or equivalent evidence of intellectual ability. This is a normal academic expectation rather than an absolute eligibility requirement.

We recognise that academic results do not provide a complete picture of ability or potential. Applicants who do not meet the usual academic expectation may provide relevant contextual or mitigating information and evidence of equivalent intellectual ability through, for example:

- postgraduate study;
- professional qualifications;
- legal or other professional work;
- research or published work;
- scholarships or prizes;
- substantial professional achievement; or
- other relevant evidence.

Previous experience of immigration law is not required.

3. Our selection criteria

Candidates are assessed against the following ten criteria.

Criterion 1 - Intellectual and analytical ability

We look for candidates who can understand, analyse and apply complex legal and factual material.

Evidence may demonstrate an ability to:

- identify the important issues in a complex problem;
- distinguish relevant from irrelevant material;
- understand and analyse legal rules and principles;
- apply law to facts;
- analyse evidence critically;
- recognise strengths and weaknesses in an argument;
- reason logically;
- identify uncertainty;
- reach a justified conclusion;
- think independently; and
- learn quickly.

Academic achievement may provide evidence of intellectual ability, but we do not assess intellectual potential by academic results alone. We consider achievement in context.

Criterion 2 - Written communication

Written work is central to immigration practice. Our barristers produce advice, representations, applications, witness statements, grounds of appeal, skeleton arguments, public law correspondence, legal analysis and client communications.

We therefore look for candidates who can:

- write clearly and accurately;
- structure an answer logically;
- express complex ideas concisely;
- distinguish important points from peripheral ones;
- make a reasoned argument;
- use language precisely;
- adapt their writing to the intended audience; and
- pay close attention to detail.

The strongest writing is not merely technically correct. It helps the reader understand what matters and why.

Criterion 3 - Oral communication and advocacy potential

We do not expect applicants to be polished advocates before pupillage. We look for the underlying qualities from which effective advocacy can develop.

These include:

- clear and structured oral expression;
- careful listening;
- answering the question asked;
- responsiveness under pressure;
- ability to explain difficult issues simply;
- ability to identify the strongest argument;
- reasoned persuasion;
- confidence without overstatement;
- ability to adapt communication to the audience; and
- willingness to reconsider a position where appropriate.

Where an advocacy or oral exercise is used, we assess potential as well as current performance.

Criterion 4 - Sound judgment

Immigration cases often involve incomplete information, urgent deadlines, vulnerable clients, competing considerations and difficult strategic choices. We therefore attach substantial importance to sound judgment.

We look for candidates who can:

- make sensible decisions on the information available;
- identify risk;
- recognise when more information is required;
- distinguish a client's objective from the legal merits of a case;
- approach difficult facts objectively;
- balance legal, evidential, procedural and practical considerations;
- identify when guidance should be sought;
- accept responsibility for decisions; and
- approach difficult situations with maturity and realism.

Criterion 5 - Genuine motivation for immigration practice

We look for a genuine and informed interest in immigration, asylum and nationality law. Previous immigration work is not required.

Strong evidence may demonstrate:

- a considered explanation of why the applicant wants to practise in this field;
- understanding of the breadth of immigration practice;
- interest in both contentious and non-contentious work;
- interest in personal and/or business immigration;
- appreciation of the importance of appeals and public law;
- awareness of the consequences immigration decisions can have for individuals, families and businesses;
- interest in working directly with clients; and
- commitment to developing specialist expertise.

An applicant's understanding of Richmond Chambers' specialist, direct-access and employed-barrister model may help demonstrate that their interest is informed. We are interested in the applicant's reasoning, not in whether they can repeat information from our website.

Criterion 6 - Commitment to a career at the Bar

We look for candidates who understand the role and responsibilities of a barrister and can explain why a career at the Bar is the right fit for their skills and motivations.

Evidence may demonstrate:

- commitment to practice at the Bar;
- understanding of barristers' professional independence;
- appreciation of the demands of pupillage and practice;
- ability to work independently while recognising when guidance is required;
- willingness to take responsibility for professional development;
- commitment to high professional standards; and
- a realistic and informed understanding of practice as a barrister.

Criterion 7 - Professionalism and integrity

We look for candidates who understand the importance of professional standards, ethical conduct and independence of judgment.

Evidence may demonstrate:

- honesty and integrity;
- reliability;
- respect for confidentiality;
- understanding of professional boundaries and obligations;
- ability to recognise ethical issues or potential conflicts;
- independence of judgment;
- ability to act responsibly and accept responsibility for decisions;
- respect for clients, colleagues and the tribunal; and
- maturity in professional communication and conduct.

Professionalism is assessed through the substance of an applicant's answers and through the way they conduct themselves during the recruitment process.

Criterion 8 - Resilience

Pupillage and practice are demanding. We look for candidates who can deal constructively and sustainably with professional demands while maintaining standards.

Evidence may demonstrate an ability to:

- organise work effectively;
- prioritise;
- meet deadlines;
- prepare carefully;
- maintain standards under pressure;
- respond constructively to setbacks;

- ask for help where appropriate;
- receive feedback without defensiveness;
- reflect on performance and identify what needs to improve; and
- change approach where necessary.

We do not equate resilience with tolerating unreasonable working practices. We are interested in the ability to deal with professional demands carefully, constructively and sustainably.

Criterion 9 - Aptitude for direct client work

Richmond Chambers undertakes substantial direct-access work. Our barristers therefore need to combine legal ability with the ability to work effectively and professionally with clients.

We look for potential to:

- listen carefully;
- communicate with empathy and respect;
- explain difficult issues clearly to non-lawyers;
- deliver unwelcome advice appropriately;
- manage expectations;
- remain objective;
- work effectively with anxious or vulnerable clients;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- respect confidentiality;
- approach cases practically as well as legally; and
- inspire appropriate professional confidence.

Good client care is not the same as agreeing with the client. It requires compassion, clarity, independence and judgment.

Criterion 10 - Ability to work collaboratively

Barristers exercise independent professional judgment, but practice at Richmond Chambers is collegiate and team-based. Pupils work with barristers, legal associates and professional administrators.

We therefore look for candidates who can:

- work constructively with others;
- respect the expertise and contribution of colleagues;
- communicate reliably within a team;
- ask questions appropriately;

- seek guidance when required;
- support colleagues;
- contribute positively to a professional environment; and
- develop increasing independence over time.

This is not an assessment of whether someone is personally similar to existing members of Chambers. We value different perspectives and backgrounds.

Taken together, the ten criteria also allow us to assess whether a candidate has the potential to develop into an independent specialist practitioner after pupillage. Long-term development is not a separate scored criterion.

4. How the criteria are used

Application stage

The written application principally allows us to assess evidence relating to:

- intellectual and analytical ability;
- written communication;
- sound judgment;
- genuine motivation for immigration practice;
- commitment to a career at the Bar;
- professionalism and integrity;
- resilience;
- aptitude for direct client work; and
- ability to work collaboratively.

Oral communication and advocacy potential are principally explored at interview and assessment, although evidence in the written application may also be relevant.

Applications are anonymised at the sift stage so far as practicable. Contextual information and mitigating circumstances may be considered in accordance with our recruitment procedures. Equality and diversity monitoring is kept separate from the substantive assessment of applications.

Interview and assessment stage

Shortlisted candidates may be assessed through a combination of:

- structured interview;
- legal problem;
- written exercise; and/or

- advocacy exercise.

Questions and exercises may explore any of the ten selection criteria, including judgment, professional ethics, client care and aptitude for direct client work.

The precise format will be communicated to candidates in advance. The assessment is designed to test potential rather than specialist immigration knowledge that could only reasonably be acquired through practice.

5. What we do not require

Applicants do not need:

- previous employment at Richmond Chambers;
- a Richmond Chambers mini-pupillage;
- extensive immigration experience;
- personal connections to the Bar;
- a conventional legal career path;
- previous direct-access experience; or
- advocacy experience beyond what can reasonably be expected at their stage.

Neither a Richmond Chambers mini-pupillage nor previous employment as a Richmond Chambers legal associate confers preferential treatment in the recruitment process.

Relevant evidence may come from many sources. This may include legal work, employment, volunteering, caring responsibilities, public service, commercial work, research, teaching, community activity, leadership, campaigning or other experience involving analysis, communication, responsibility or judgment.

6. Contextual recruitment and mitigating circumstances

We recognise that achievements need to be understood in context.

Applicants may provide relevant information about mitigating circumstances. We also use contextual recruitment as part of our process.

Contextual information does not substitute for the need to demonstrate the qualities required for pupillage and does not result in automatic additional marks. It helps us assess achievement and potential fairly in light of the opportunities and circumstances available to the applicant.

7. Reasonable adjustments

We will make reasonable adjustments to our recruitment process where appropriate.

Requests for adjustments are considered separately from the substantive assessment of an application.

Applicants are encouraged to contact:

Kian Richardson

Senior Chambers Administrator

kian.richardson@richmondchambers.com

as early as reasonably possible.

Please see our Reasonable Adjustments and Access — Pupillage Recruitment and Training document for further information.

8. A strong application

There is no single background or experience that we expect successful applicants to have.

The strongest applications tend to:

- answer the question asked rather than simply repeating a CV;
- use specific examples and evidence;
- demonstrate analysis and judgment rather than relying on assertions;
- explain clearly what the applicant learnt from an experience;
- show an informed interest in immigration practice;
- demonstrate why a career at the Bar is the right fit for the applicant's skills and motivations;
- demonstrate reflection;
- communicate clearly and economically; and
- allow the applicant's own thinking and judgment to come through.

Applicants should not simply tell us that they are hardworking, resilient, passionate, committed or persuasive. They should provide evidence from which we can assess those qualities.

9. Review

These criteria are reviewed before each recruitment round to ensure that they remain relevant, fair and aligned with the qualities required for pupillage and the BSB Professional Statement.