Atkin
Chambers
Barristers

Atkin Chambers Pupillage Policy

This document sets out Atkin Chambers' pupillage policy. It has been compiled by members of the Pupillage and Recruitment Committee ("PRC") and approved and adopted by Chambers. It is reviewed by the PRC on an annual basis and updated as required. The contractual letter offering pupillage sets out pupils' specific obligations, duties and entitlements.

1. General

1.1. Chambers attaches the greatest importance to the recruitment and training of pupils and is committed to organic growth by recruiting tenants from those who have successfully completed pupillage with Chambers.

1.2. The purpose of this document is to set out the basis upon which Chambers selects its pupils, to provide an outline of the pupillage process, and to summarise the process by which applications for tenancy are made and assessed.

1.3. Pupillage in Chambers is administered by the PRC, which consists of five Members of Chambers: two silks and three juniors. The current head of the PRC is Jennifer Jones KC. The manager with responsibility for pupillage is our Chief Operating Officer, Julie Demeritt. The PRC meets regularly throughout the year to consider applications for pupillage; to administer the assessment process; and to monitor and review the pupillage process generally.

1.4. The head of the PRC has the power to co-opt additional members of the PRC, including to serve as deputies, for such period as may be necessary from time to time but for no longer than one year, which co-option may be renewed no more than three times.

1.5. Chambers reserves the right to update this policy from time to time if required to deal with any regulatory changes or requirements.

2. Equality and Diversity

2.1. Chambers aims to be a diverse, inclusive and welcoming organisation, which seeks to ensure that all its members and pupils can realise their full potential, irrespective of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity or paternity, disability, religion or belief, age or political persuasion.

2.2. Chambers strives to create and promote a culture in which discrimination, bullying and harassment are not tolerated and in which support is provided to pupils, barristers or chambers' staff who experience unacceptable behaviour. Pupils will receive, and will be required to comply with, Chambers' conduct policies as applicable from time to time. The standards of behaviour and conduct mandated by these policies may go beyond the minimum standards of conduct set by the BSB.

2.3. Chambers is committed to implementing a fair selection procedure for both pupillage and tenancy. It has adopted an equality and diversity policy and operates its recruitment and selection process in accordance with that policy. The selection of pupils and tenants is based solely on merit, as defined by the criteria set out in this policy.

2.4. An applicant for pupillage/pupil may make, and should feel free to make, a request for a reasonable adjustment at any time. Applicants for pupillage should address any such request to our Chief Operating Officer, Julie Demeritt. All requests for reasonable adjustments will be considered in accordance with Chambers' Reasonable Adjustments Policy, a copy of which will be provided to any applicant for pupillage upon request.

2.5. There may also be circumstances in which adjustments to normal practices may be appropriate to assist persons who are not disabled but otherwise have particular difficulties or needs during the application process and/or pupillage. If so, those matters should be raised with our Chief Operating Officer, Julie Demeritt and they will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

2.6. All members of the PRC have been equality and diversity trained and have undergone fair recruitment training as required by the Bar Council.

3. Application process – 12-month pupillages

3.1. Generally, Chambers seeks to provide up to two funded 12-month pupillages each year. Exceptionally, Chambers may choose to provide more than two such pupillages.

3.2. The annual pupillage award for pupils starting in September 2028 is £90,000. The award is paid in equal monthly instalments throughout the pupillage. Chambers offers up to £30,000 from the pupillage award by way of funding for the Bar Practice Course (BPC) and considers applications for further advances on a case-by-case basis.

3.3. Should a draw-down be taken by a prospective pupil and the pupillage not be taken up and/or the prospective pupil not have passed the BPTC or complied with any other conditions of their pupillage as expressed in a pupil's offer of pupillage by the start of the prospective pupil's pupillage and/or should the pupil choose not to complete their pupillage, Chambers is entitled to repayment of the drawn down sum.

3.4. Chambers encourages applications for pupillage from law and non-law graduates alike. No preference is given to law graduates. When assessing applications, the PRC recognises that the degree of legal knowledge expected of a non-law graduate may be different from what might be expected of a law graduate.

3.5. Chambers recognises that from time to time candidates may apply for pupillage in Chambers on more than one occasion. Repeat applications are considered afresh on their merits, but candidates are encouraged expressly to identify that they are repeat applicants and to set out any new or altered factors that the candidate would wish the PRC to bear in mind when considering a repeat application.

3.6. Chambers advertises pupillage on the Pupillage Gateway, as well as Chambers' website and follows the Pupillage Gateway timetable for pupillage recruitment. For pupillage commencing in September 2028, applications should be made as advertised on the Pupillage Gateway application system.

3.7. All applications received by Chambers are considered by not fewer than two members of the PRC, each of whom will form an independent judgment as to the merits of the application before them (determined by reference to the criteria set out below) and whether the applicant should be invited for interview.

3.8. Chambers operates a two-round interview process. We regret that not all applicants can be invited for interview.

3.9. Typically, between 20 and 30 applicants are invited to attend a first-round interview each year. First-round interviews are typically 15-20 minutes in length and are conducted by at least two members of Chambers, at least one of whom is a member of the PRC. Candidates may be asked questions about their written application. They will also be asked to make a short verbal presentation about a topical issue (provided shortly before the interview) and to answer some questions arising from that presentation.

3.10. Typically, 10 or so candidates will be invited back for a second-round interview. Second-round interviews are typically 45 minutes in length and are normally attended by the whole of the PRC. Candidates are provided with a legal problem in advance of the second-round interview and will be asked to prepare a brief written document in advance of interview, before providing a presentation and answering questions on the problem during the interview. They may also be asked to argue a position in relation to a separate unseen legal or topical issue.

3.11. All second-round applicants are invited to visit Chambers and meet members to gain a more thorough understanding of the nature of the work undertaken by Chambers as a whole and the nature of the pupillage on offer. Chambers' experience is that applicants find this opportunity useful in their decision-making process if they are subsequently offered pupillage.

3.12. At each interview stage, candidates are first assessed independently by each member of the interview panel. Those assessments are then discussed by the whole panel to reach an agreed combined assessment of each candidate.

3.13. In assessing candidates' applications and performance both when deciding whether or not to invite a candidate for interview and at interview stage, the PRC will consider the following:

3.13.1. Intellectual excellence. The PRC will assess intellectual excellence by reference to all material contained within a candidate's application, which includes but is not limited to the educational achievements of the candidate. If invited to interview, the PRC will further assess the candidate's demonstration of that intellectual ability.

3.13.2. Advocacy/ communication. The PRC will consider initially examples of advocacy/ communication ability set out in the candidate's application and, if invited to interview, the oral (and at second round written) advocacy abilities of the candidate (including but not limited to preparedness, presentation style, clarity, persuasiveness, ability to anticipate and address opposing points and ability to respond under pressure).

3.13.3. Motivation and ability to build a successful practice as a self-employed barrister within Atkin Chambers. This includes but is not limited to an awareness of the high standards of conduct expected of members of the Bar, an awareness of the diverse needs and perspectives of others and an awareness of the requirements of (and commitment to) personal business development.

3.13.4. If invited to the interview stage, the PRC will also consider the candidate's judgment and their potential to:

3.13.4.1. advise confidently and calmly in commercial matters to professional and lay clients.
3.13.4.2. work well with members of chambers, solicitors, clients and staff as well as independently.

3.13.5. These criteria will be evenly weighted at each stage of the process, where they are applicable.

3.14. The PRC may use internet searches to perform due diligence on candidates in the course of recruitment. For example, to search for publicly accessible articles or blog posts referred to in a candidate's application.

3.15. Written offers of pupillage will be made by the head of the PRC to successful applicants in line with the Pupillage Gateway timetable.

3.16. Offers of pupillage are made subject to the successful completion of a Bar training course at a provider authorised by the BSB.

3.17. Records of all applications and documentation in relation to selection decisions are held in Chambers for a period of two years. The records indicate the way applications are disposed of, and, where known, the diversity characteristics of each applicant, including ethnic origin and gender.

3.18. Unsuccessful applicants for pupillage who were invited to either first or second round interview may request feedback on the reasons for the rejection of their application. Regrettably, the PRC is unable to provide feedback to candidates who were not invited to interview. Requests for feedback should be made to our Chief Operating Officer, Julie Demeritt, within 14 days of rejection. We regret that requests made after this point will not be granted. Concise feedback will be given by telephone call or a Teams (or similar platform) meeting only.

3.19. Any applicant to whom an offer of pupillage or tenancy is made will be required to disclose whether they are, or have been, subject to any disciplinary investigations or findings whether, by any previous employer, chambers (as a tenant or pupil), Inn or BSB/JCIO, or any other regulators. This is an ongoing obligation. Any individual failing to make a full accurate disclosure will be reported to the BSB for dishonesty. Offers of pupillage or tenancy will be subject to a good disciplinary record and conduct. Offers of pupillage may be revoked and/or pupillages terminated in the event of an unsatisfactory disciplinary record, false declaration, or failure to notify chambers of any disciplinary investigations or findings.

4. Pupillage – general aims

4.1. Pupillage in Chambers commences in early September in each year and is divided into two six-month periods: the non-practising period and the practising period. Chambers aims to take tenancy decisions in early July of the following year (approximately 10 months into pupillage).

4.2. In advance of their start in Chambers, pupils will be notified of the identity of their first pupil supervisor. Pupils will also be provided with a copy of the Chambers Pupillage Contract which should be signed and returned to Chambers together with all necessary documentation prior to the commencement of the pupillage.

4.3. Pupils are required to comply with Responsibilities of Pupils as set out in section 4H of the BSB's Bar Qualification Manual (as updated from time to time) throughout the duration of their pupillage.

4.4. For the protection of our pupils, intimate relationships of any kind between mini-pupils, applicants for pupillage and pupils and any members of Chambers, Chambers staff/clerks, and door tenants is strictly prohibited. Any mini-pupil, applicants for pupillage or pupil who receives any inappropriate advances is strongly encouraged to report the same. No individual making a report of any inappropriate advances or other bullying, harassment or perceived bullying or harassment shall be treated unfavourably or in any way disadvantaged during their pupillage or in any application for tenancy.

4.5. Chambers' aim is to offer pupils a well-structured pupillage which, as a minimum, meets the training requirements of the BSB as set out in the Professional Statement for Barristers ("the Professional Statement") and which equips its pupils with the skills required for a successful career in Chambers' practice areas. To that end, Chambers has produced a Training Programme, the aim of which is to provide its pupils with the knowledge, skills and attributes required:

(1) to enable them to apply for a full qualification certificate and a full practising certificate at the end of their pupillage; and

(2) to ensure that once pupillage is completed, they are prepared for a successful practice undertaking the high quality commercial and international work in which Members of Chambers are engaged.

4.6. Pupillage within Chambers is formulated so that:

(1) All pupils sit with three different pupil supervisors with whom they can expect to share the supervisor's daily professional life. Pupils will sit with two supervisors for three months each during their first six months in Chambers and thereafter with one pupil supervisor for the remaining six months of pupillage.

(2) Pupils will produce pleadings, written advice and other relevant documents arising out of the preparation and management of disputes tried in various types of dispute resolution forums, both for their pupil supervisors and for other members of chambers.

(3) Pupils will receive constructive feedback as to the extent to which their work meets the Threshold Standard for the competences provided for by the Professional Statement and the standard of "demonstrable excellence" in the matters which will form part of the assessment of any applications for tenancy made by the pupil during the practising period (and which are set out in section 8 below).

(4) Pupils will attend hearings, conferences and mediations with their supervisors or other members of chambers. As such, pupils are required to be dressed appropriately for such opportunities at all times during their pupillage.

(5) Pupils will have an appreciation and understanding of the application of the Bar Code of Conduct to the practising lives of barristers in Chambers.

(6) Pupils will have the opportunity to get to know and understand the Chambers administration team so that they might begin to understand and develop the non-legal skills which will assist in building a successful practice as a junior tenant in Chambers.

(7) Pupils will only use artificial intelligence to assist them in their work with the consent and under the guidance of their pupil supervisor.

4.7. A pupil's training and education is overseen primarily by the designated pupil supervisor and the PRC. Chambers also provides each pupil with a KC mentor throughout the course of pupillage.

4.8. Pupils will work primarily for their relevant pupil supervisors during their period of pupillage. Due to the specialist nature of the work in Chambers, it is extremely rare for pupils to undertake any paid work during the course of their pupillage. Where work is available, it will be distributed fairly amongst the pupils in accordance with Chambers' policy on the allocation of unassigned work.

4.9. Although it is the pupil's responsibility to ensure that, at the end of pupillage, he or she has met the Threshold Standard in relation to each of the competences in the Professional Statement,

pupil supervisors will monitor the pupil's progress in relation thereto and provide guidance as to how performance might be improved.

4.10. At the end of each three-month period comprising the pupillage; the relevant pupil supervisor will complete section A ("Performance") of Chambers' Pupil Appraisal Form and discuss the observations contained within it with the pupil. The pupil and the pupil supervisor will together agree upon the areas of a pupil's work which require future development and complete section B ("Development") of the Pupil Appraisal Form. A copy of the completed Pupil Appraisal Form will be provided to the pupil, the PRC and (where appropriate) the pupil's next pupil supervisor. The pupil supervisor will also prepare a report to the PRC, assessing the pupil's work and progress by reference to the criteria set out in paragraph 8.3 below.

4.11. The Pupillage Appraisal Form is the primary means by which pupils' training records are maintained by Chambers. Copies of these forms will be retained for a period of five years after the pupil has completed pupillage, after which they will be destroyed.

5. Pupillage structure – the first six months

5.1. There are two key objectives of the non-practising period of pupillage:

(1) To allow pupils to obtain a certificate from their pupil supervisor which certifies the satisfactory completion of the non-practising period; and

(2) To develop the skills required which will enable pupils to demonstrate during the practising period that they have satisfied the criteria required to make a successful application for tenancy.

5.2. To that end, and in addition to the work they undertake for their pupil supervisors, all pupils will be required to undertake the following work in this period:

(1) One written exercise to be issued and assessed by the PRC, who will provide feedback in accordance with paragraph 4.5(3) above.

(2) Two advocacy exercises, for which pupils will be expected to produce skeleton arguments in advance of appearing as an advocate in front of a tribunal who will provide oral feedback at the end of the exercise. Further feedback will be provided in relation to pupils' performance in accordance with paragraph 4.5(3) above.

(3) An advocacy course provided in accordance with the BSB's Curriculum and Assessment Strategy during the non-practising period of their pupillage. Chambers will cover the cost of this course.

(4) At some point in the future, all pupils will be required to attend and satisfactorily complete a negotiation skills course, the cost of which will be covered by Chambers. Confirmation of the requirement to complete this course in the non-practising period will be provided once the BSB confirms a course is available.

5.3. Based on current BSB estimates, pupil supervisors will be unable to provide a certificate of satisfactory completion of the non-practising period of pupillage unless and until the pupil has satisfactorily completed:

(1) The new advocacy course
(2) A negotiations skills course (confirmation of this requirement to be provided once the BSB has a course available.)

6. The six-month review

6.1. Pupils' progress will be formally reviewed by the PRC at around the expiry of the first six months of pupillage. As part of this review, the PRC will consider:

(1) The Pupil Appraisal Forms;
(2) The pupil supervisors' written reports;
(3) The written exercise undertaken by the pupils as set out in paragraph 5.2(1) above and the feedback provided in respect of the same; and
(4) The pupil's performance in the advocacy exercises described in paragraph 5.2(2) above and the feedback provided in respect of the same.

6.2. Each pupil will meet with the Head or Deputy Head of the PRC and at least one other member of the PRC to discuss their progress and performance to date. The review is intended as an opportunity to provide feedback for each pupil in relation to progress made towards:

(1) Meeting the Threshold Standard required by the Professional Statement; and
(2) Meeting the standard of demonstrable excellence in the matters which will form part of the assessment of any applications for tenancy made by the pupil during the practising period (and which are set out in section 8 below).

The review is also intended as an opportunity for the pupil to raise any concerns about pupillage or Chambers generally.

6.3. As part of the review process, the PRC has the discretion to terminate pupillage at the expiry of the non-practising period. The PRC's discretion in this regard is exercised only rarely and only in circumstances in which:

(1) The pupil has failed to apply himself or herself with reasonable diligence during their time in Chambers;
(2) A pupil's current pupil supervisor states that he/she is unable to provide a certificate certifying satisfactory completion of the non-practising period of pupillage;
(3) Once a Negotiation Skills course is available, where the pupil has failed to attend and complete an approved negotiation skills course; or
(4) Where the quality of the pupil's work falls significantly below the standard expected of first six-month pupils and the PRC considers that there is no realistic possibility of the pupil being offered a place in Chambers at the end of the pupillage.

7. Pupillage structure – second six months

7.1. During their practising period, pupils will undertake work and receive feedback so as to enable them to continue to acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes required to reach the Threshold Standard for the competences prescribed by the Professional Statement.

7.2. At the end of the practising period pupils must demonstrate that they have reached the Threshold Standard required for each of the competences set out in the Professional Statement in order that their pupil supervisor can complete the practising period completion form to confirm the same. It is the pupil's responsibility to submit such a form to the BSB so that they might obtain their Full Practising Certificate.

7.3. In addition to the matters set out in paragraph 7.2 above, such a form can only be completed where pupils can demonstrate that they have successfully completed and passed the BSB professional ethics course and examination. The cost of the examination and the first resit will be funded by the practising certificate fee. If any further resit is required, the pupil will fund the cost thereof.

7.4. All pupils who wish to be considered for a tenancy in Chambers will be required to participate in a formal assessment procedure undertaken as part of their practising period.

7.5. Shortly after the start of their practising period, pupils who wish to apply for tenancy will be informed of the timetable which will apply to the formal assessment period and the notification of the results of that assessment.

7.6. The formal assessment procedure will consist of the following elements:

(1) ***An advocacy exercise*:** This will typically take place before a former or current judge, with PRC members and pupil supervisors attending as observers. Pupils will also be required to draft skeleton submissions for exchange in advance, which will also be assessed as part of this exercise.

(2) ***Panel Work:*** Pupils will be required to undertake work for a panel of Members of Chambers (typically five, drawn from all levels of seniority in Chambers). Panel work is typically spread across a five or six-week period in May and June of the pupillage year. Panel members will ask each pupil to undertake the same piece of work. Members of the panel typically (but not always) choose to discuss pupils' written work with them after submission. Each panel member will provide a written report to the PRC on each pupil's work the purpose of which is to provide that panel member's assessment of such work against the criteria set out in paragraph 8.3 below.

(3) ***A "Test Paper"*:** Typically provided to all pupils in mid-June at the conclusion of the Panel Work. Pupils will be given one week to complete the exercise which will then be assessed by the PRC against the criteria set out in paragraph 8.3 below.

7.7. The PRC retains the discretion to amend the application process described above (including the discretion to require pupils to undertake additional assessments). Such discretion is exercised rarely and, if exercised, amendments will be notified to all pupils in a timely manner and so as to ensure that all pupils who wish to make an application for tenancy have that application determined before the end of their practising period.

8. Assessment of pupils' applications for tenancy

8.1. Upon the conclusion of the formal assessment procedure described in paragraph 7 above, the PRC will meet to consider each pupil's application for tenancy which is before it.

8.2 In considering the applications, the PRC will have regard to the pupil's performance in the assessments referred to in paragraph 7.6 and to the content of the Pupil Appraisal Forms and reports prepared by each pupil supervisor in relation to each pupil.

8.3. Each application is judged on its own merit. The criteria which will be applied by the PRC in order to assess applications for tenancy is demonstrable excellence in the following categories:

(1) Legal Analysis (including the quality of legal research, an understanding of recent developments in substantive and procedural law, and the ability to analyse and apply case law to fact sensitive disputes).

(2) Intellect/Intelligence (including the ability to absorb and understand complex technical information and identify its relevance to disputes).

(3) Potential as a written and oral advocate (including the ability to present arguments clearly and persuasively, to anticipate and address opposing arguments, and the ability to think and respond under pressure).

(4) Potential capacity to build a successful practice in Chambers (including the ability to interact with professional and lay clients, Chambers administration team & other members of Chambers; potential to generate repeat work; commitment, drive and efficiency).

(5) Integrity, professionalism and a sense of responsibility.

8.4. At the conclusion of the PRC's considerations the PRC produces a written report to Chambers in which it sets out its recommendations in relation to the applications for tenancy that it has received (together with a summary of its reasons in respect of the same).

8.5. The PRC's written report is provided to Members of Chambers. A vote of Members of Chambers is then taken in accordance with the provisions of Chambers' constitution in relation to each pupil's application.

8.6. Decisions reached by Chambers in accordance with paragraph 8.5 above are communicated to pupils immediately after they have been taken.

8.7. Chambers is committed to assisting any pupil whose application for tenancy is unsuccessful in securing a third six pupillage or in securing other suitable positions. If Chambers decides not to offer a pupil tenancy, this has no impact on the continuation of the pupillage or of the pupillage award (so long as the pupil remains in Chambers) and the pupil remains entitled to complete their pupillage which will be continued in the manner set out in paragraphs 7.1-7.3 above.

9. Third Six Pupillages

9.1. Chambers occasionally invites applications for "third six pupillage" from pupils who, through pupillage at another chambers, have met (or are shortly expected to meet) the Threshold Standard for the competences provided for by the Professional Statement but have yet to secure tenancy. A "third six pupillage" is a period of six months in which pupils are trained in Chambers' specialist practice areas with a view to applying for tenancy in Chambers. The Bar Standards Board refers to these as "probationary periods prior to tenancy". They not part of the regulated period of pupillage and are therefore not overseen by the Bar Standards Board.

9.2. Vacancies for third six pupillage will be advertised on Chambers' website and on the "Third Six vacancies" page of the Bar Council website. Details of how to make such application and the documents required in support of the same will be set out in the advertisements, but the latter may include.

(1) The applicant's CV and a covering letter of no more than two pages in length.
(2) References from a previous pupil supervisor and the head of the pupillage committee of the chambers at which they completed their 12-month pupillage.
(3) A confidential equality and diversity monitoring form.

9.3. All applications will be considered on paper by a minimum of two members of the PRC. In addition to the criteria set out in paragraph 3.13 above, the PRC will also consider the extent to which the Applicant has met (or is expected to meet) the Threshold Standard for the competences provided for by the Professional Statement.

9.4. Chambers operates a single round interview process for third six pupillage applications. Not all applicants will be invited for interview.

9.5. Where Chambers offers a third six pupillage, they are for a period of six months (which period will commence upon and be conditional upon the applicant having obtained a practising period completion form confirming that they have met the Threshold Standard for the competences in the Professional Statement together with a Provisional or Full Practising Certificate).

9.6. All third six pupillages are funded. The current amount of funding is £45,000 which is paid in equal monthly instalments in advance.

9.7. Third six pupils will sit with two supervisors, each for a period of three months. The third six pupillage will otherwise be as set out in paragraphs 4.5 to 4.10 above, save that the focus of third six pupillage is to ensure that the pupil is trained in Chambers' specialist practice areas rather than to ensure that the pupil meets the Threshold Standard for the competences provided for by the Professional Statement.

9.8. During the second half of the third six pupillage, applicants for tenancy will be required to participate in a formal assessment process which will be as set out in paragraph 7.6 above, save that panel work will comprise three pieces of work carried out over two or three weeks. Applications for tenancy are assessed in accordance with section 8 above.

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