

7BR pupillage FAQs from the mini pupillage evening

Below are common questions asked by attendees at our mini pupillage evening, held on 26th November 2020. Please see the [pupillage](#) page of our website for more details on pupillage with us and how / when to apply and our selection and interviewing process.

Questions relating to mini pupillage

1. What does a mini pupillage at 7BR entail?

A mini pupillage with us is normally for three days, but it can be arranged for up to a week. Mini pupils are allocated to different members each day. Every day is different, but typically mini pupils sit in on conferences, attend court, or read and discuss some legal research. This provides the opportunity to experience the day-to-day life of a barrister. Mini pupils have the chance to discuss cases with the members to whom they are attached and to ask questions or chat about life at the Bar generally. We try to allocate mini pupils to members who practise in areas in which they express an interest. Mini pupillages are not assessed.

2. Who is eligible to apply for a mini pupillage at 7BR?

All candidates must be aged 18 or over, and should (a) have completed the equivalent of three A-Levels to Grade B standard, or (b) be enrolled on a degree course or (c) have graduated (in any subject). All students will be expected to sign a confidentiality agreement.

3. Are mini pupillages able to go ahead whilst covid-19 restrictions are in place?

Unfortunately our chambers risk assessment does not permit us to have mini pupils in the building at present, and most courts are limiting physical attendances in person to the absolute minimum number. For a variety of legal and practical reasons we have decided not to offer virtual mini pupillages at present. We look forward to recommencing with our mini pupillage programme once restrictions are lifted.

Questions relating to pupillage

1. As a mixed set do you expect applicants to show a broad interest in all of chambers' practice areas, or is it acceptable to have a particular interest in one or two areas?

We understand that many people will have an initial interest in one or two areas, and we often receive applications that reflect this. This is no bad thing. What is crucial however is an

open-mindedness about the fact you'll be doing a real mix for at least the first 3 years or so if you join us. We expect to see a recognition that this is how our chambers works on an application, and certainly a willingness to give it all a go!

2. I am a mature applicant who has had a previous career before training to join the Bar. Is this a problem and what can I do to help my application?

It is not a problem. Use your career to help your application by highlighting the transferable experience: that might be something bang on point like working with people from different backgrounds; or handling hard deadlines; or turning around written work quickly; or public speaking; or hopefully all of these!

Don't imagine that your old career will mean you can short-cut your new career. It is very unlikely to. So don't overplay how your old career will help you at the Bar; modest, well-reasoned, humble proposals of how your old career will help you is better.

Point up what you've achieved; don't leave it for the reader of your application to know what your job role actually entailed.

Have good reasons as to why you're leaving your career and starting afresh. Be grounded and recognise that you'll start at the bottom but be excited about that! Life at the Bar is all about learning and embracing new experiences. Can your previous career show you have that resilient mindset?

3. Do pupils get to pick the three areas they focus on during pupillage?

We introduced our "bespoke" pupillages in 2011 to allow pupils to tailor pupillage to their interests.

Pupils are asked whether they have any particular interests prior to commencing pupillage and we do what we can to ensure this is accommodated. All pupils spend at least 4 months doing civil law, and at least 4 months doing criminal law. During this 8-month period our pupils also see at least two weeks of family work. Six months into pupillage, once our pupils have a feel for what we do in Chambers, they are given a choice as to how they wish to spend their final four months of pupillage, either choosing a different area of civil or criminal work from that done in the first eight months, or family law, commercial, employment or one of the many other areas in which our members specialise.

4. I have extenuating circumstances which mean I got a lower grade at university/school than I was predicted. Does 7BR look unfavourably on this? Is there an opportunity for extenuating circumstances to be mentioned when applying?

In principle we only accept applications from candidates who have obtained or are expected to obtain at least a 2.1 in their degree. However if you have exceptional and verifiable

circumstances which explain why you did not meet this grade, there is an opportunity to set this out in your application form and we will take this into account.

Academic achievement is only one of several areas which candidates are marked on and we are interested in candidates' other achievements, life experience and potential as an advocate.

There is also a section on our application form where applicants are invited to set out any other special features, such as a unique personal achievement or success in overcoming a particular difficulty.

Please see our website for full details of our selection process.

5. I was called to a first round interview with you last year but was unsuccessful after that. Should I consider reapplying?

We welcome applications from promising candidates who have previously applied to us; however, we would expect that you have considered and acted upon any feedback you received after your interview last year, and would hope to see some progression of your legal interests and understanding in the intervening year.

6. How many pupils do you take on as tenants?

In the past 8 years we have offered tenancy to 15 out of 18 pupils. We do not have a quota, and pupils are not in competition with one another. Quite simply, if they are good enough to become a tenant, we offer them tenancy.

7. What makes a pupillage application really stand out?

We are looking for applicants who have the potential to develop as excellent advocates in a mixed set. So an application which includes a variety of interesting work experience, can link that work experience to an interest in developing a mixed practice, and can show an insight into the realities of life at the Bar, will stand out. We also love to know about you as a person, and how your unique lived experience will make you a great barrister.

Our pupillage application form includes a legal problem question. A response to that question which has been fully-researched, is well-structured, and offers a clear answer to the question asked will often stand out from the crowd.

Questions relating to work and life in chambers

1. How supportive is chambers in assisting you once you become a tenant?

There is a real sense of comradery in chambers and you will find that members are approachable and always willing to share their knowledge and experience. We are also assisted by a very supportive clerking team.

There are both formal and informal support structures in place. For instance, many of our practice teams have mentoring schemes under which our junior members are mentored by more senior members of the team.

We find that new tenants (and indeed more senior members) frequently rely on their former supervisors for advice, but it is also common for requests for advice or information to be emailed to specific practice teams within chambers, or for members to wander into each other's rooms for a chat about a case.

Juniors – and silks! – have various Whatsapp groups in which they share questions and answers (as well as congratulations and commiserations following days in court); in short, there is always someone you can call on when you are in a tight spot.

2. What is 7BR doing to address the lack of diversity at the Bar?

7BR is made up of a diverse group of individuals from a variety of backgrounds, but we recognise that there is more work to do to ensure diversity across the Bar as a whole. Chambers is therefore committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all and widening access to the Bar; we encourage and welcome applications from groups under-represented in the legal sector and are happy to make reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities. Chambers has a clear and comprehensive equality and diversity policy which can be found [here](#). Our diversity policy in terms of recruitment applies to both members and staff.

As part of our efforts to ensure equality within our pupillage application process, all application forms are anonymised and names of educational institutions are removed from the forms before they are marked.

Chambers is a member of [PASS](#) (Pegasus Access and Support Scheme, run by Inner Temple); their aim is to improve access to the profession and to support high achieving students from under-represented backgrounds by providing the experiences they need to be able to thrive at the Bar. We offer mini pupillages to their successful applicants.

We are also sponsors of [Bridging the Bar](#), a charity committed to the promotion of equal opportunities and diversity at the Bar of England and Wales. In addition to providing sponsorship, a number of our members have volunteered as mentors to BTB applicants.

In addition, 7BR runs an annual mentoring and essay competition scheme with Greenwich University.

Several members also act as mentors and advisors through a variety of other active schemes run by various charities and legal organisations.

3. Where do members tend to live? Is it affordable to travel to the midlands for work? Is there a requirement to be in the building every day?

Our chambers is in London. Some areas of chambers' practice involve a good deal of work in the Midlands, in particular criminal work. Other areas are far more London-based. Members live in a range of places, from France to the Midlands to central London – whatever they find works for them, depending on their area of practice. Bear in mind though that as a pupil and junior tenant you will be expected to travel throughout the UK, sometimes long distances, and you will need to manage a demanding schedule.

Chambers has a scheme in place to provide additional financial assistance to pupils in their non-practising six months to help cover the costs of accommodation and travel when accompanying their supervisor. Similarly, we have a reimbursement scheme for junior members travelling long distances to cover preliminary hearings for more senior members to ensure they are not out of pocket.

Most pupils tend to come into chambers after their days in court, if it is reasonable to do so, in order to meet and see other members; this is helpful for them to hear about and gain exposure to other members' practices, and allows them the opportunity to get to know colleagues.

Once a tenant, there is no requirement to come into chambers at any time if members do not wish to / it is not convenient. We recognise that different members have different routines and approaches and no one checks on how frequently members come into the building. However, chambers tends to be well-attended. Our premises have recently benefitted from an extensive refurbishment and members enjoy coming in to work, consult with their colleagues and to attend chambers' frequent professional and social events.

4. Can you describe a day in chambers?

We have a number of 'day in the life' accounts from pupils and junior members available on our website [here](#).

5. Are members encouraged to engage with academic or pro bono work whilst actively practising, and does chambers make time for this?

We are a group of self-employed practitioners, and many of our members enjoy the relative flexibility that the Bar offers and the ability to pursue academic and other passions alongside practice. Currently, for example, one member is studying for a PhD whilst practising, others have co-authored an upcoming text on inquests law, whilst others routinely undertake pro bono work and hold volunteer positions such as Trusteeships. Of course, as a collective it is important that we all contribute, and tenants need to manage any such work alongside a busy court/paperwork practice, but members are encouraged and supported to engage in academic, pro bono or volunteer positions if they wish to.

6. I am interested in a mixed practice, but have heard that certain areas e.g. crime and personal injury do not sit comfortably alongside one another. Is such a mixed practice possible at 7BR?

Yes. Whilst most members usually specialise as they become more senior, we have several senior members who sustain healthy personal injury/clinical negligence practices alongside an impressive criminal practice, as well as other combinations of practice areas.

All of our junior tenants are expected to undertake a mixed practice across civil, crime and family, giving them broad-based advocacy experience at the start of their career. We believe that early experience across practice areas, on our feet and in our written advocacy, provides firm foundations for success in any specialism.

Having a mixed practice requires good communication with the clerking teams; at 7BR, our clerks are very supportive and are well used to working with practitioners who sustain mixed practices so this is entirely manageable.

Many members also found that having a mixed practice was hugely beneficial during the Covid pandemic. Whilst work in some practice areas reduced, members were sustained by other areas of their practice.

7. Do pupils or junior tenants get much inquests work?

All of our junior members who have expressed an interest in conducting inquests have received instructions in that area. A number of them also conduct inquests on a pro bono basis through charities such as INQUEST; this is a helpful way to gain experience rapidly.