

# Guide to Pupillage



**Fountain Court**  
**CHAMBERS**

# Pupillage

Fountain Court competes for the top talent to secure a successful future for our chambers and clients. We want the best people to join us, regardless of background, race or gender. Fountain Court mentors and supports pupils by offering tailored training during pupillage so they gain experience from more senior members. This approach has a formative effect on Fountain Court Chambers: one that is demonstrated in our success in court.

Chambers has a friendly, progressive and modern outlook. Pupillage at Fountain Court is an opportunity to work with some of the brightest advocates based in London, and be a part of precedent-setting cases.

Beyond exposure to the talented people and stimulating work at Fountain Court Chambers, our pupils learn to work together and gain essential communication skills. Pupils are encouraged to cooperate with each other, with a view to this supportive ethos being carried on through tenancy. Each pupil has a supervisor who offers opportunities to collaborate on case work, and our approachable pupillage committee members can provide additional mentoring. This established training system helps pupils become barristers by identifying and nurturing potential for success.



We acknowledge the pressure that pupils may feel during pupillage and we design our training in order to ease the process of transitioning from a pupil to a barrister. We do this by ensuring that pupils are not required to undertake any competitive advocacy exercises against each other, nor are they set the same pieces of assessed work. All work undertaken during pupillage is relevant to the practice of a member of chambers. We evaluate each pupil individually based on their own merit. This allows the pupils to focus solely on improving their own work and abilities.

Fountain Court Chambers is committed to taking on all successful pupils as tenants after evaluation against our standards of excellence. After pupillage, junior tenants are mentored under a mentoring scheme which gives them additional support in the first years of practice.

## **Remuneration**

Each year, we take up to four pupils for a twelve month pupillage. We make our tenancy decisions in the summer of each year.

From October 2020, each pupil will receive a total of £70,000, in the form of a first six month award of £50,000, and a second six month award of £20,000. It would be exceptional not to retain a pupil for the second six month pupillage period. The awards are payable monthly in advance during pupillage. The pupillage year runs from October to September.

Those accepted for tenancy may also have opportunities to do some additional, paid work in the last three months of their pupillage year.



## **What are we looking for?**

In selecting our pupils we assess academic and intellectual abilities as well as oral and written communication skills. We also evaluate each applicant's understanding of and interest in our work.

Fountain Court Chambers welcomes applications from law and non-law graduates alike. Priority is given to applicants with high academic achievements and successful applicants tend to have a first class degrees.

The criteria by which we select our pupils and ultimately our tenants, are:

- Academic and intellectual ability.
- Advocacy and communication skills, including clarity of expression, ability to think and respond under pressure and potential capacity as an advocate.
- Potential to be a successful practitioner at the commercial bar, including interest and understanding in the type of work done by chambers, ability to work with members of chambers, solicitors, clients, staff and other pupils, determination and resilience.

We want to recruit the best and brightest candidates whatever their background and whether or not they originally studied law at university.

We have sought to develop procedures for selecting pupils which, without being unduly onerous and time-consuming for applicants, are fair, and which, in particular, do not



discriminate against any pupil or applicant for pupillage on grounds of race, sex, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age or any other protected characteristic.

Fountain Court's current pupillage policy, which includes details of our pupillage selection procedure, can be downloaded from our website: [www.fountaintcourt.co.uk](http://www.fountaintcourt.co.uk)

## **How do I apply?**

All applicants applying for a pupillage must have completed a mini-pupillage with Fountain Court prior to submitting their application.

Applications should be made through the Pupillage Gateway, which is designed to enable students to apply for pupillage through a central clearing house.

The scheme requires applicants to complete a single standard application form listing their choice of chambers for pupillage. Applicants should, however, arrange for their references to be sent directly to the Pupillage Coordinator, Fountain Court Chambers, Fountain Court, Temple, London EC4Y 9DH.

## **When should I apply?**

We recruit around 18 months in advance. You should therefore think about applying for a pupillage at least two to three years before you wish to start.



You are also required to complete a mini-pupillage before applying for a pupillage. You must therefore also allow enough time to complete a mini pupillage before the Pupillage Gateway opens.



At Fountain Court we have three mini-pupillage intakes: Winter, Easter and Summer, and the deadlines for applying for each are set out on our website.



## Training

During pupillage we aim to give pupils a broad and thorough training in the types of work done by Chambers. This also enables the pupillage committee to make the best possible assessment of the pupil's abilities.



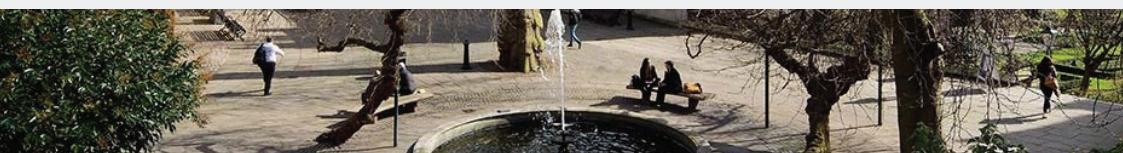
Pupils spend the first three and last three months with the same pupil supervisor (who has overall responsibility for seeing that the pupils are getting proper training) and the middle six months with two different pupil supervisors.



Pupils will also be required to complete specific pieces of work for other members of chambers, particularly the Silks. This allows for the pupils and other members of chambers to familiarize themselves with one another and for the pupils to experience different areas of law.



The pupillage is designed to allow for variety as well as challenges. Much of the work done is of a



commercial nature and the Bar Council's "Commercial-General" pupillage checklist is used at Fountain Court. A pupil will spend much time reading papers and preparing pleadings and advices. Notes on specific questions of law are often required. This work is reviewed and discussed with the pupil supervisor. A pupil can also expect to accompany his or her pupil supervisor to trials and appeals and, more frequently, to interlocutory hearings.

Pupils are not encouraged to undertake any paid advocacy work (or required to undertake any competitive advocacy exercises against each other) prior to the tenancy decision. Our recruitment process is designed to help us select, as pupils, those we think will make good advocates. During pupillage, we feel there are enough pressures on pupils without adding to them unnecessarily. This does not mean there is not a heavy emphasis on small advocacy work for junior tenants, once they have completed pupillage. It is vital that junior tenants get into court on a regular basis on smaller cases at this stage in their careers.

Fountain Court has a clerking team dedicated to the most junior tenants, who have a principal role in obtaining small advocacy work for those barristers.

## **Pre-pupillage support**

Fountain Court is willing to consider making an advance of up to £20,000 of the pupillage award for the vocational course year, and has done so on numerous occasions in the past.



## **What are my chances of tenancy?**

A candidate will only be offered pupillage if we consider that he or she has real potential to be a tenant at Fountain Court. We do not operate a quota system and pupils are not placed in competition with one another. We will make offers of tenancy to all pupils who meet the relevant standard, irrespective of space and room arrangements. Offers of tenancies are generally made in June or July of each year.

Where a pupil is not successful in obtaining tenancy, but intends to pursue a career at the Bar, we recognise our responsibility to them, and will support them in doing so. A number of our former pupils are now practising successfully in other Chambers undertaking high-quality work.

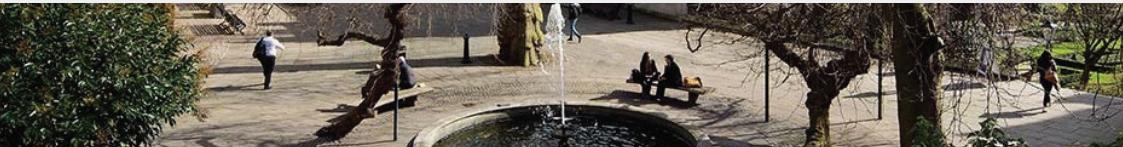
## **What can I expect if I am offered a tenancy?**

Junior tenants at Fountain Court Chambers undertake a mixture of led work (working together on a case with a more senior barrister, often also from Fountain Court) and unled work (where the junior barrister is working alone on the case). This means that a junior tenant's caseload is very diverse as they are likely to be working on very significant commercial litigation at the same time as handling much smaller, discrete matters on their own. Fountain Court Chambers strongly encourages its junior tenants to undertake as much of their own advocacy work as possible in the first few years of practice, so as to hone their advocacy skills and get experience 'on their feet'.



It is a distinguishing feature of life as a junior tenant (as opposed to, say, life as a newly qualified solicitor) that the individual barrister has both a great deal of responsibility from a very early stage and the ability to manage their workload and practice in line with their own commitments and preferences. There are no set working hours, no fixed holiday limits and it is often possible to work from home. All of this gives a junior tenant at Fountain Court a flexibility in their working life which is seldom found in the early stages of other professional roles.

Whilst our junior tenants work hard, and their clients will expect them to produce work of the highest standard, this work is carried out within an environment which is friendly and supportive. Fountain Court Chambers operates a mentoring scheme for junior tenants in the early years of practice. Newly qualified barristers are allocated a more senior member of chambers who meets with them regularly to assess how the junior tenant's practice is developing and to discuss in confidence any concerns that the junior tenant may have.



## Award-winning clerking team

The relationship between barristers and their clerks is an important one and at Fountain Court we are proud to have a successful, award-winning practice management team. The Fountain Court Clerks' Room is consistently recognized in the major legal awards seasons and won the Halsbury Legal Award 2016 for the Best Business Development Team. This means that clients and solicitors enjoy working with our clerking teams, which translates into stronger relationships, repeat instructions and, ultimately, more opportunities for our members.



In terms of the clerking structure, each member of Chambers has two dedicated clerks, a Team Leader and a Team Leader's Assistant, who are responsible for a specific team of barristers (often around a similar level of seniority). The team system is designed to ensure that each of the clerks has a good knowledge of the practices of the barristers they clerk. It also helps to foster strong working relationships between each of the clerking teams and their respective barristers and clients. In addition, there are regular individual Practice Review Meetings, which provide an opportunity for members to take stock and to discuss targets, aspirations and areas of interest going forward.



## **Financial support for new tenants**

Fountain Court operates a loan/income supplement scheme to ensure that new tenants receive an income of at least equal to the pupillage award during their first year of tenancy. In our experience tenants generally receive more than this and are soon earning more than a solicitor in a City firm at a comparable stage.

Members of Chambers share the expenses of administering Chambers. Contributions are proportionate to income so that the senior members of Chambers pay the greater part of the costs. Details of our maternity and paternity policy can be found on the Fountain Court website.



In their first year of practice tenants are not required to pay any contribution to Chambers' expenses. Instead they may be asked to undertake a modest amount of unpaid legal work, for example, for voluntary or charitable organisations.

Chambers encourages, and pays for, new tenants to attend the week-long advanced advocacy course run by the South-Eastern Circuit at Keble College, Oxford.



# **Mini-pupillage**

**Please note: It is a requirement at Fountain Court that all applicants applying for a pupillage, must complete a 3 day mini-pupillage including an assessed piece of work prior to submitting their application.**

## **What is a mini-pupillage?**

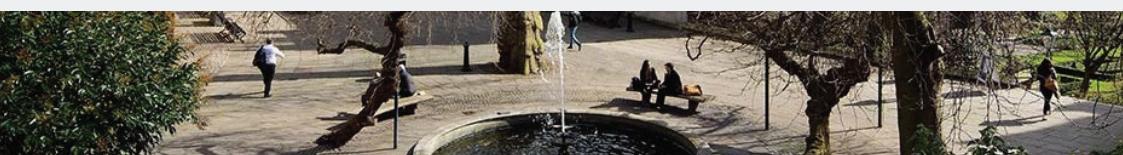
A mini-pupillage is an opportunity for those who are intent upon pursuing a career at the Commercial Bar and have the potential to be pupils at Fountain Court to spend some time in Chambers. Mini pupils will meet some of our members and get an introduction to the type of work we do and an insight into the life in Chambers. It also forms a key part of the application for pupillage.

## **How do I apply for a mini-pupillage?**

Applications for a mini-pupillage should be made using the form available on the Fountain Court Pupillage Website: [www.fountaintcourt.co.uk/pupillage/your-mini-pupillage](http://www.fountaintcourt.co.uk/pupillage/your-mini-pupillage) and should be addressed to the Pupillage Co-ordinator. All information can be found on the website.

## **Selecting mini pupils**

We have developed procedures for selecting mini-pupils which are fair and do not discriminate against any applicant on grounds of race, sex, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age or any other protected characteristic. We positively encourage mini-pupillage applications from



groups who are currently underrepresented in Chambers such as women and those from ethnic minorities. We would be grateful if applicants would also complete and return the diversity questions at the end of the application form. This information is used for monitoring purposes only and is not considered as part of a candidate's application.



# Sources of Information

The Bar Council publishes a brochure called ‘Becoming a Barrister’, setting out the precise requirements and giving much information about the GDL and BPTC. This is available on the Bar Council’s website: [www.barcouncil.org.uk/](http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/)

For information on joining an Inn, dining, pupillage, or guides to scholarship and awards, you should browse the Inn’s web pages:

Middle Temple: [www.middletemple.org.uk](http://www.middletemple.org.uk)

Inner Temple: [www.innertemple.org.uk](http://www.innertemple.org.uk)

Lincoln’s Inn: [www.lincolnsinn.org.uk](http://www.lincolnsinn.org.uk)

Gray’s Inn: [www.graysinn.org.uk](http://www.graysinn.org.uk)

See also the careers guide published by the Commercial Bar Association at: [www.combar.com/careers/](http://www.combar.com/careers/)

The Bar Standards Board also publishes information about the formal qualification requirements at  
[www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/qualifying-as-a-barrister)



# Your Notes:



**Fountain Court Chambers  
Fountain Court  
Temple  
London  
EC4Y 9DH  
[www.fountaincourt.co.uk](http://www.fountaincourt.co.uk)**