

Pupillage and Tenancy

2027 - 2028

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First port of call for chancery
and commercial barristers

THE LEGAL 500

Set of the Year

CHAMBERS BAR AWARDS 2023

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Welcome to Wilberforce Chambers



Foreword from Jonathan Hilliard KC Head of Wilberforce Chambers' Pupillage Committee

This guide explains our pupillage programme. Pupils and junior tenants are the lifeblood of any healthy, modern set of chambers, so we invest significant time and care in our pupillage structure, take on as tenants those who reach our required standard, and pride ourselves on having a high conversion rate of pupils into tenants. I have always found Chambers an open and stimulating environment in which members of all seniorities can bounce ideas off each other, so I commend our mini-pupillage and pupillage programmes to you and encourage you to get in touch at pupillage@wilberforce.co.uk if you would like further details.

About Wilberforce Chambers

Wilberforce Chambers is a set of 88 barristers, including 35 KCs, based in Lincoln's Inn. We are well established as one of the pre-eminent Chancery Commercial sets, with a leading reputation in each area of chambers' work. We offer up to 4 pupillages, with a substantial award of £85,000 and an opportunity to draw down up to £35,000 of that award during the BPTC year.

In our nearly-100-year history, members of our chambers have been involved in:

- landmark cases familiar from law studies, such as *Cavendish v Makdessi* [2016] AC 1172, *Pitt v Holt* [2013] 2 AC 108, *Berrisford v Mexfield Housing* [2012] UKSC 52, *Chartbrook v Persimmon* [2009] 1 AC 1101, *Nestle v Nat West* [1993] 1 WLR 1260, *Bartlett v Barclays Bank* [1980] Ch 515, *McPhail v Doulton* [1971] AC 424, *Barclays Bank v Quistclose Investments* [1970] AC 567, *Vandervell v IRC* [1967] 2 AC 291 and *National Provincial Bank v Ainsworth* [1965] AC 1175;
- high-profile newsworthy disputes, such as the insolvencies of FTX (the cryptocurrency exchange) and Lehman Brothers (and, a decade before, the collapse of Equitable Life), the effect of Covid on leases, the Arcadia/Sir Philip Green BHS collapse and – historically – inquests into the death of HRH Princess Diana and Dodi al Fayed, whether Tony Benn could stand as an MP without renouncing his peerage [1964] 2 QB 257, and the fallout from the divorce of the Duke and Duchess of Argyll [1967] Ch 302 (as seen more recently on TV);
- key and leading cases in more specialist areas (that applicants and even pupils have probably never heard of) such as in our pensions work, and confidential work in arbitrations and other private hearings that cannot be publicised.

We are proud of our record of recruiting pupils who become junior tenants, who are then led by, and hopefully become, silks in chambers, some of whom go on to the Bench. Members of chambers (and in some cases pupil supervisors) have been fortunate enough to have worked with (including being led and in some cases supervised by) former members who go on to the Bench, such as Baron Etherton, Nugee LJ and Joanna Smith J.

Chambers has historically, and continues, to be an industry leader in modern working practices. It has a governance structure that enables chambers to take proactive steps to pursue its strategic plan, rather than simply being reactive to market forces. Central to chambers' governance are internal policies designed to advance equality and diversity and allow members of chambers to develop individual practices which accord with their own aspirations and personal circumstances. We continue to work on making sure we are at the forefront of how the Bar operates.

Members of chambers regularly appear in the full spectrum of domestic courts, from the Supreme Court and Privy Council down to the Business and Property Courts in the High Court, the Administrative Court, the First-tier and Upper Tribunals, various Pensions Tribunals, and the County Courts, as well as in courts in offshore jurisdictions and domestic and international arbitrations.

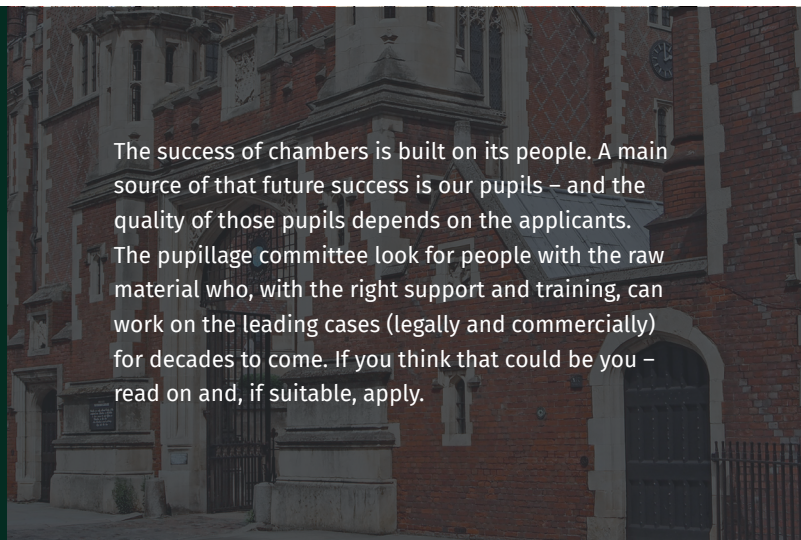


The work that comes into Chambers is just about as interesting, exciting, and occasionally bizarre as you could hope to set your eyes on.

Francesca Mitchell
Junior Barrister

- Winner of 'Set of the Year' at Chambers & Partners 2023 Awards
- Winner of 'Chancery Set of the Year' at Chambers & Partners 2023 Awards and The Legal 500 2022 Awards
- Winner of 'Best Chambers for Quality of Work at the Legal Cheek 2025 Awards
- Winner of 'Clerking/Practice Management Team of the Year' at The Legal 500 2020 Awards
- Top Ranked Chambers Global, 2025 Leading Set
- Top Ranked Chambers UK Bar 2025 Leading Set
- Top Ranked Chambers High Net Worth, 2025 Leading Set
- Top Tier Set The Legal 500 UK 2025

The success of chambers is built on its people. A main source of that future success is our pupils – and the quality of those pupils depends on the applicants. The pupillage committee look for people with the raw material who, with the right support and training, can work on the leading cases (legally and commercially) for decades to come. If you think that could be you – read on and, if suitable, apply.



Areas of Expertise

The following are examples of the type of work undertaken by members of Chambers. Please consult our website for further information on our practice areas.

Chambers' work can be grouped into seven main areas, with members providing specialist legal advice and advocacy domestically, in offshore jurisdictions and internationally. We summarise these below (in alphabetical order) with an example of work our most junior tenants do and examples of some of the cases members have been involved in recently.

Trusts, Tax, Probate & Estates

Contentious and non-contentious work involving both private trusts and trusts in the wider commercial context, both in the UK and worldwide; trusts issues in matrimonial cases; drafting and advice on administration of trusts and estates and on construction of trusts and wills; taxation of trusts; personal tax and estate planning (including offshore tax planning); tax litigation; charities; probate and family provision; and art and cultural property.

Junior work: written advice and legal argument both onshore and offshore; reviewing or advising on drafting solutions for trusts, settlements and estates; appearing and advising (whether led, with local offshore barristers, or sole counsel) on disputes.

Example Trusts, Tax, Probate & Estates Cases:

Hinduja v Hinduja (ongoing): Acting for the Deputy for the head of the Hinduja family (one of the wealthiest families in the world) in relation to disputes between separate branches of the family in various jurisdictions.

Halabi v Equity Trust (Jersey) Ltd (Z II Trusts): This is now the leading case on the nature of a former trustee's lien and the proper distribution of assets in the context of an insolvent offshore trust. The matter was heard before a 7-member panel of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The case focuses on the inter-relationship of insolvency and trusts and is arguably the most important chancery decision of recent times.



In the matter of the X Trusts: A multibillion-pound dispute before the Bermuda Court of Appeal concerning the breadth of standard form consent powers of fiduciary protectors of trusts.

Goodrich v AB: A ground-breaking case on the impact of the Human Rights Act 1998, the Civil Partnership Act 2004 and the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 upon older trusts.

Property

Chambers deals with matters concerning all aspects of land law and acts in all types of property litigation. The six core 'themes' to the work are: commercial landlord and tenant; development disputes; title (such as land registration, easements and profits, restrictive covenants, boundaries); mortgages, charges and security; residential landlord and tenant; and rural economy. The property group in chambers deals with some of the most complex, noteworthy and highest value cases within this area of law, with members often acting on both sides of a case.

Junior work: a balance of led and non-led work, advising on and appearing in possession actions, application and case management hearings and short trials (in lower value matters) in the junior's own right, and acting as junior counsel (with a silk) in high-value or complex property disputes, including drafting pleadings and other court documents and appearing at hearings alone or with leading counsel and at trial.

Example Property cases:

Manchester Ship Canal v United Utilities: a Supreme Court case in long-running litigation concerning discharges of sewerage into rivers and sea in times of heavy rain.

Cornerstone Telecommunications v Compton Beauchamp; *Cornerstone v Ashloch*; *On Tower v Ap Wireless*: the first Supreme Court case to consider the Electronic Communications Code which governs the rights of telecommunications operators to place masts and telecommunications apparatus on land (with members appearing for multiple parties).

Waller-Edwards v One Savings Bank: the Supreme Court provided clarification on the circumstances in which a bank is “put on inquiry” that a mortgage has been procured by undue influence.

38 Curzon Lease (Fantasio) v Curzon Cinemas and Curzon Restaurant & Bar: a significant real estate dispute concerning a proposed multimillion-pound refurbishment which will unite the cinema and adjoining restaurant. Meanwhile, Curzon wishes to extend its 90-year tenure at the premises. One of The Lawyer’s Top 20 cases for 2025.

- Company law matters, including shareholder disputes, s.994 petitions, and disputes concerning share and business sale agreements, breach of warranty, financial assistance, directors’ duties and their disqualification, conduct of meetings, restoration of companies to the register, accounting / auditing negligence.

junior work: in large cases, drafting and preparation of court documents (skeleton arguments, particulars of claim etc.), some advocacy at interim hearings such as case management hearings. In other cases, instructions as sole counsel in, for example, urgent hearings for freezing injunctions.

Example Commercial Cases:

Tulip Trading v Van Der Laan - the most important crypto cases concerning a £2-3 billion claim brought in respect of Bitcoin and computer hacking, raising questions of whether developers who look after bitcoin may owe fiduciary duties.

The Public Institution For Social Security v Al Rajaan and ors - a “mammoth multi-party £1.2bn fraud claim”, as described by The Lawyer in 2025.

Arma Partners v Wejo – one of the first SPAC-related cases to come to Court (and one of The Lawyer’s Top 20 cases for 2023).

Jalla v Shell - a landmark Supreme Court decision arising out of one of the largest spillages of crude oil in Nigerian history.

Commercial

This practice area includes:

- Contractual disputes, such as questions of interpretation, misrepresentation, agency, confidentiality, warranties, and joint venture and partnership disputes;
- Civil/commercial fraud cases dealing with claims in deceit, conspiracy, breach of fiduciary duty (or other economic torts) and often involving the assertion of proprietary claims or claims against recipients or those who assisted in the tort, and high-paced applications for freezing orders and other relief designed to safeguard assets;
- Banking and financial services, such as disputes concerning loans and securities, consumer credit, syndicated lending, asset / project finance, asset tracing, preservation and recovery, and professional negligence claims against those advising lenders;



The work I do is incredibly varied... What is consistent is the quality: lots of interesting work for great instructing solicitors. The work mixes real intellectual challenge with human interest.

Emer Murphy

Junior Barrister

Pensions

Chambers' unrivalled expertise in this field covers trusts matters in the pensions context, regulatory and tax issues arising in connection with occupational pension schemes and other employment related trusts, Pensions Ombudsman complaints and appeals, and Pensions Regulator issues. Given the value of large pension funds, this is an area where fundamental questions of trusts law are often litigated.

Junior work: appearing in and advising on smaller-value pension disputes involving individual cases (internal to a scheme or before the Pensions Ombudsman) and working on larger cases where complex commercial and corporate restructurings and other actions need investigating over potentially decades.

Example Pensions cases:

BBC v BBC Pension Trust: a recent case considering the operation of a power of amendment under a pension scheme and whether (subject to a different decision on any appeal) the terms of the amendment power protected members' by preventing a change to future service benefits or contributions unless certain conditions were satisfied.

Virgin Media Limited v NTL Pension Trustees II: Ongoing litigation on the operation of statutory, and regulatory protection of, certain pension scheme rights (whether a written confirmation from an actuary is required in particular circumstances) that could affect the position for a very large number of defined-benefit pension schemes.

Insolvency

Members cover all aspects of corporate and personal insolvency litigation and advice in the UK (and in some offshore jurisdictions) including administration, bankruptcy, cross-border insolvency, CVAs and IVAs, liquidation, misfeasance, preferences and other antecedent transactions, property and trusts-related insolvency, receiverships, restructuring, transactions defrauding creditors, wrongful and fraudulent trading.

Junior work: appearing and advising on bankruptcy and other corporate insolvency petitions, investigations of debtor's financial affairs before the Court, acting as a junior in major insolvency cases.

Example Insolvency cases:

Re FTX Bahamas: advising the joint provisional liquidators in the provisional liquidation of FTX Digital Markets Ltd in the Bahamas.

Re BHS Group Limited: Liquidators' claim against former directors of BHS for breach of fiduciary duty, negligence and wrongful trading. One of The Lawyer's Top 20 cases of 2023.

Lehman Brothers Holdings Scottish LP 3 v Lehman Brothers Holdings Plc (known as 'the waterfall II litigation'): a dispute concerning the ranking of claims between competing creditors in the administration of the Lehman Brothers banking group.

Steenbok Newco v Formal Holdings: South Africa's largest ever private sector accounting fraud scandal arising out of the collapse of the Steinhoff Group into insolvency amid an alleged accountancy fraud, raising issues of German, Austrian, Swiss and BVI law.

“ I particularly enjoyed working on live cases, where I would produce a first draft of a skeleton argument or pleading which could then be used by my supervisor. It was an incredibly rewarding experience to see elements of my own work in the final versions put before the judge.

Theo Dixon
Junior Barrister

Professional Liability

Negligence matters and other disputes relating to the liability of accountants, actuaries, auditors, company directors, construction professionals, financial advisors, insurance brokers, investment managers, IT consultants, barristers, solicitors, surveyors and trustees and other professionals.

Junior work: first draft court proceedings and giving advice on liability and quantum, drafting or reviewing settlement agreement, settling witness statements. Attending hearings including as junior on a large case and as trial counsel in smaller claims.

Example Professional Liability Cases

Aurium Real Estate v Mishcon de Reya: successfully defending solicitors' accused of professional negligence in respect of a claim land purchase and redevelopment exercise. One of 'The Lawyer's' Top 20 cases of 2022.

Yee Shi Yin v 174 Solicitors Limited: a Court of Appeal decision arising out of an alleged failure of solicitors to have released funds in respect of a development.

Arbitration & Alternative Dispute Resolution

Members provide advice and representation in both domestic and international arbitrations in various forums. Several members are accredited mediators and are able to act as arbitrators and experts in mediations, expert determinations, and early neutral evaluations.

Junior work: first drafts of arbitration and other documents, considering underlying papers, appropriate legal research.

Example Arbitration & Alternative Dispute Resolution cases:

Most arbitrations are confidential but members are involved in a c.£9 billion arbitration relating to the Ministry of Defence's leases of the armed forces marital quarters estate (a related judicial review members were involved in was reported: *R(Annington Property) v SoS Defence* [2023] EWHC 1154 (Admin)).





We are committed to promoting and achieving equality and diversity in Chambers, so we want to receive applications from anyone who has the qualities and skills we are looking for, no matter what university they have attended, no matter what age, race, gender or sexual orientation. It is with that commitment in mind that we joined the Pupillage Gateway a few years ago, as we consider the process to be beneficial to pupillage candidates.

What we look for in our pupils

Wilberforce Chambers looks to offer up to four 12-month pupillages each year, with substantial funding. Chambers has an excellent retention record. It is unusual for pupils not to be recruited as tenants at the end of their 12-month pupillage.

There is no limit to the number of tenancies we offer at the end of the pupillage process. **Chambers offers pupillage with a view to taking on all pupils as tenants**

at the end of their time with us, so we take great care in our selection process to identify candidates who have real potential to join Chambers at the end of their pupillage. Importantly, **our pupils are not in competition with one another for a tenancy** but are assessed solely on their own abilities and performance.

In addition to the substantial pupillage award, substantial amounts of barrister time (both of supervisors and others) are spent on pupils, and we look to give pupils a structured and comprehensive introduction to life at the Bar. That includes:

- sitting with at least five different pupil supervisors during their 12 months with us;
- sharing the daily professional life of their pupil supervisor;
- seeing a spread of chambers' work;
- producing pleadings and opinions in their pupil supervisor's cases;
- attending conferences with their pupil supervisor, the solicitor and the lay client;
- attending Court with their pupil supervisor and other members of Chambers;
- receiving regular feedback on their work from their pupil supervisor;
- having their work-load monitored by their pupil supervisor;
- having an opportunity to work with a variety of junior tenants and silks;
- getting to know our clerks and begin to learn what skills and approaches will assist in building a successful practice; and
- having an opportunity to contribute to life in chambers.

We are looking for pupils with (i) high intellectual ability, (ii) good oral and written communication skills, (iii) an interest in Chancery Commercial work, who are (iv) mature and confident, (v) have the ability to work with others, and who (vi) can analyse legal problems well, demonstrating (vii) good practical and commercial sense. We have a minimum requirement of a 2:1 degree in law or another subject.

We have a strong record of recruiting non-law/GDL students and as explained below we take care to ensure that our interview process does not disadvantage those who have only recently commenced their legal studies.

We use contextual recruitment (specifically, RARE Contextual Recruitment) as part of our recruitment process, if a candidate wants us to have that information. The RARE contextual recruitment system provides us with information about applicants which assists us to select candidates with the potential to become pupils. We take account of the contextual data acquired via the system at the first stage of our application process (see further below). Provision of the information is voluntary and no candidate will be marked down for choosing not to supply it.

The application process: how do we decide who to offer pupillage?

Applications for pupillage must be made through the Pupillage Gateway, the online pupillage application scheme, except where an applicant is exempt under the applicable rules. Visit www.pupillagegateway.com for full details of how the Gateway operates and to find our application form.

There are then three stages during which your application will be considered:

1. Consideration of the application form;
2. Long-list interview; and
3. Short-list interview.

At the first stage, we are looking for evidence of outstanding intellectual ability, excellent written and oral communication skills, and an interest in and commitment to the Chancery Commercial Bar.

There is no 'set' way in which to demonstrate this, but a few tips are as follows:

- First, please make sure you provide us with as much information as you can regarding your academic achievements, or other indications of intellectual ability (such as information about your work in a previous career, if you are a career-changer).
- Secondly, when giving evidence of your communication skills, candidates often focus on their experience of mooting: that is great and please include it if you have done mooting, but also think beyond it as mooting or debating is not the only way to show you have had occasion to speak to people and tried to persuade them to think in a particular way.
- Thirdly, take time over the questions on the application form. Substantively, these provide you an excellent opportunity to show yourself in the best light, and in particular to show us your interest in the types of law

involved in our areas of practice. Presentationally, they are an excellent opportunity to demonstrate your written communication skills – the best answers tend to be structured, easy to read and concisely expressed.

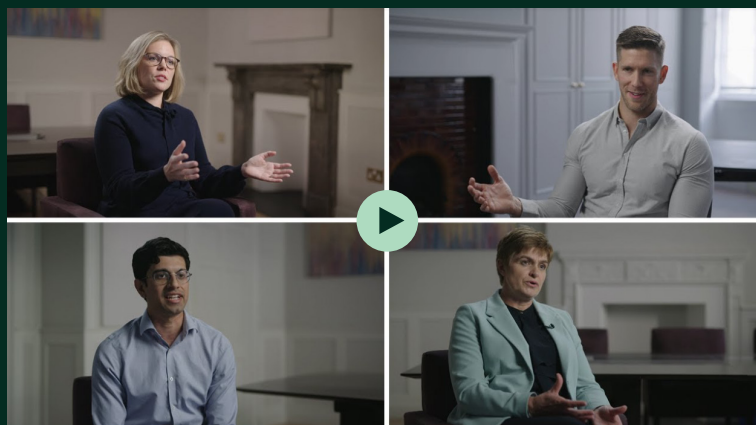
- Fourthly, candidates often proceed on the basis that the number of mini-pupillages they have done at chancery commercial sets directly correlates to their interest in and commitment to practice at the Chancery Commercial Bar. Mini-pupillages are certainly one way to demonstrate that, but a multitude of mini-pupillages at these sets is usually not necessary. We are also interested to hear what areas of law have interested you in your academic study (and why), what you have learnt from any mini-pupillages you have as to why chancery commercial practice is likely to suit you, and what wider interests you have that lead you to want to practice at Wilberforce Chambers.

In addition to our application form, all candidates will have the opportunity to provide us with contextual information using the RARE Contextual Recruitment system. Provision of this information is entirely voluntary, and no candidate will be marked down for not supplying it. Where that information is provided, we use it in two ways:

- First, we will use it at the first stage in cases where there are more candidates 'tied' on a particular score than there are remaining interview slots. The assessors will consider whether contextual information provides a basis for preferring one or more of those candidates over others.
- Secondly, once all our first-round interview spaces are filled (there are generally 36 spaces available), we then offer a further 4-6 interview spaces to applicants who have not been offered an interview, but who have recorded one or more 'flags' on the contextual recruitment system.

Wilberforce Chambers: Pupillage

Hear from our barristers and staff about life at Wilberforce and our pupillage process in this short video.



Pupillage – October 2027

Please consult the table below for timings regarding applications for pupillage commencing October 2027. Note that exact dates are to be confirmed.

All our interviews are carried out in person, subject to exceptional circumstances.

Number of places Up to 4

Deadline for chambers to submit adverts for pupillage on the Gateway; applicants may log in to browse vacancies November 2025

Gateway submissions window opens; applicants may start, edit and submit their applications January 2026

Submissions window closes; no further applications or amendments to applications will be allowed February 2026

Shortlisting and interview period February – May 2026

Offers of pupillage made through the Gateway May 2026

If you are invited to a first-round interview (the 'long-list'), there will be a c.20-25 minute interview with two members of chambers which involves the discussion of a problem question. You will be invited to attend chambers half an hour before the interview time to consider the problem. The questions are deliberately designed to focus on real-life practical issues and the application of general legal principle, rather than knowledge or recall of detailed provisions and cases. We are most interested in how you reason and present your argument/reasoning.

Around 12-15 candidates proceed to the shortlist interview. Up to four members of chambers attend this interview, which is longer at around 35 to 40 minutes. A substantial part of the interview is set around discussion of a problem question which, at this short-list stage, will be more complex and involved than at long list.

Thereafter, successful candidates will be notified of an offer of pupillage or of a reserve offer in accordance with the pupillage gateway timetable.

We believe that using problem questions is fairest to our applicants because it allows for the most direct assessment of the key skills we are interested in measured against the application criteria. It is important to stress that they are emphatically not tests of legal knowledge. We will neither mark you up nor down for knowing or not knowing the names of any cases that may be relevant. What we are looking for is your ability: (i) to identify the issues arising from the problem questions; (ii) to take a view on those issues which is backed up with logical reasons; (iii) to explain that view to us in interview analytically and clearly; (iv) to respond to and follow through the implications of the various challenges the panel will put to your view; (v) to be flexible in identifying arguments to the contrary and in advancing those arguments; and (vi) to display practical and commercial awareness.

We want all candidates to do their best at interview and our aim is always to help you to display these qualities. We want you to enjoy the to-and-fro of the discussion with the panel, and to leave feeling you have had the chance to display yourself at your best. Displaying yourself at your best does not always mean sticking doggedly to the position you adopted when you came in. Almost all candidates find themselves presented with new information or lines of argument at some point in an interview: the whole point of our problem questions is that any answer you give to them creates further points for discussion, prompted either by the candidate's answer or by questions from the interviewer. This reflects practice and dealing with, for example, questions from a judge. We are interested in seeing how you respond to and adapt to the new information: whether this means adapting the line of argument to incorporate it, changing your view entirely, or explaining why the new information does not affect your view.

All our interviewers have been trained to interview fairly and properly, and this includes taking account of the whole interview. So, taking two hypothetical candidates, a weak or nervous starter can compensate by taking on board new information and dealing with it well, and conversely, a strong starter can be undermined by failing to engage with developments during the interview. A 'wobble' in the interview is not necessarily fatal.



I could not have asked for a more supportive and welcoming environment.

Ram Lakshman
Junior Barrister



The pupillage year

We recognise that pupillage is an inherently stressful year and, so far as possible, we strive to create an environment where pupils can perform at their best; it is that standard against which we want to assess them. Our pupil supervisors are generally drawn from the ranks of middle and senior juniors in chambers – and they remember what it was like to be in the other position.

On that basis:

- We assess pupils for their suitability as tenants throughout their time in Chambers by means of a process of continual assessment, rather than by a separate, formal assessment procedure at the end of pupillage.
- That continual assessment takes into account where pupils are in the year – we expect to see progression and are well aware that the first time a pupil sees a particular piece of work in say October will be very different to the work produced in April and May after the pupillage year.
- While each supervisor will have their own methods of working, pupils are assessed against a common standard, and each supervisor gives detailed feedback on how to improve during the seat.
- There is oversight with direct meetings with the head of the Pupillage Committee around halfway through the (pre-decision) pupillage process.
- There is a pupil mentor, who is a junior who is not involved in the formal pupillage process, available to discuss informally and confidentially with any pupils, as well as the more formal process to raise any issues.

- Save in exceptional circumstances such as impending urgent hearing or perhaps during trials, there is a firm expectation that pupils will not work beyond 9am-6pm and not expected to work at weekends.
- As part of the pupillage process we have a small number of advocacy assessments. These are however assessed on a pass/fail basis only, and are treated principally as learning exercises to give pupils a sense of the reality of early-years Chancery commercial advocacy.
- We frequently offer tenancy to all pupils in a given year.

Prior to the tenancy decision, even though pupils are in their second six, they will not carry out work in their own right. We take the view that the complexity of our work and the breadth of our practice is such that the pupils' focus should be on learning and experiencing chambers' practice areas. Even after the decision, while there is likely to be the opportunity to do some of their own work, it is rare and the focus remains on exposure to our practice areas.

We pay for our pupils to attend the compulsory courses which they are required by the Bar Council to undertake. **We offer a generous pupillage award.** This is reviewed annually and is intended to be in line with the highest awards available for our sector. The award for a 12-month pupillage commencing in October 2027 will be £85,000 and will be paid monthly. A proportion of the pupillage award (currently up to £35,000) can be drawn down during the BPTC year.

Mini Pupillages

Wilberforce Chambers is committed to giving those interested in the Bar an idea of how Chambers operate, and what life as a practising chancery barrister might be like. We run a series of non-assessed mini-pupillages each year in four 'sessions' and we offer 40 mini-pupillage places. So, while obtaining a space is often competitive, there is plenty of opportunity to do a mini-pupillage at Wilberforce.

While we were an early adopter of remote mini-pupillages during the pandemic, we believe that mini-pupillages in person in chambers are the best way to gain the greatest insight into the Bar and Chambers, and the richest occasion. A mini-pupil visits Chambers and spends two days participating in various talks and discussions with members of Chambers and staff, and visiting Court or otherwise shadowing members of Chambers as they go about their work. The talks include sessions with the Head of Pupillage, our current pupils and other juniors, as well as a member of the clerking team to get a true insight to chambers. There is also a more casual opportunity to speak to members of chambers.

Should a session be held remotely, a mini-pupil can expect the same talks and discussions with members of Chambers and staff, and to shadow members of Chambers, across two days.

Who will I get to meet?

A mini-pupil can expect to meet Head of Pupillage (or another member of the pupillage committee), members of the clerking team, our current pupils and junior tenants, as well as other more senior members of Chambers. In addition to seeing Court work and meetings, each mini-pupil will be assigned to a member of Chambers who will act as a mini-pupil supervisor outside designated trips to Court or in Wilberforce. There will be opportunities to discuss with that person, and with other members of Chambers, practice at the Bar generally and in Chambers in particular.

How to apply

Please visit our website (www.wilberforce.co.uk/join/mini-pupillage) for a link to the application form.

If you need further assistance, please email us at pupillage@wilberforce.co.uk

What will I see and do?

The content of each mini-pupillage will vary depending on the work being undertaken in Chambers at the time, but the programme will include reading and discussing paperwork and participating in various talks and discussions with members of Chambers and staff. While it is dependent on events and the Court listings, we strive to ensure that mini-pupils can attend conferences with clients and hearings in Court with members of Chambers.

Our mini-pupillages are not usually assessed, and this programme is no different, but you may be asked to consider a problem question or some papers with a mini-pupil supervisor. If you are given some work of this sort, it is a great opportunity to discuss and get into the meat of a piece of work with a member of chambers, and understand the reality of the work, and is not taken into account in any pupillage application.

Equality and diversity

We are committed to the promotion of equality and diversity across all aspects of our practice. Please visit our website (www.wilberforce.co.uk/join/mini-pupillage)

Session	1
Max number of places	10
Applications by	21 October 2025
Notification by	31 October 2025
Dates	18-19 November 2025
Session	2
Max number of places	10
Applications by	21 October 2025
Notification by	31 October 2025
Dates	2-3 December 2025
Session	3
Max number of places	10
Applications by	3 March 2026
Notification by	13 March 2026
Dates	24-25 March 2026
Session	4
Max number of places	10
Applications by	16 June 2026
Notification by	26 June 2026
Dates	7-8 July 2026

Tenancy

Tenancy Offers

We regard the recruitment of exceptional pupils and junior tenants as crucial to our continuing success: for every pupillage we offer, there is a tenancy available. We aim to reach a decision about tenancy after approximately 9-10 months of pupillage. All pupils, whether or not they are offered a tenancy, are entitled to remain with us for the remainder of their pupillage on a full pupillage award. We make every effort to assist those who are not offered tenancy to find pupillage and eventually tenancy elsewhere (and have a track record of success in placing such pupils). Any money earned by pupils during their second 6 months will be in addition to the pupillage award and expense-free.

New Tenants: Financial Support

Members of Chambers share the expense of administering Chambers. For established members, contributions are based in part upon the rent of the room occupied and in part upon income received. We have a series of measures of financial support in place for new tenants:

- In the first year of practice, tenants are not required to pay room rent and only pay general expenses on income received over £75,000.
- In the second and third years of practice, the property element of the expenses are capped.

To assist with any financial constraints at the start of practice, junior tenants are able to draw funds in their first year against fee notes issued (up to a maximum amount of £15,000). They then have up to two years to repay this interest-free loan to Chambers.

New Tenants: Allocation of Work

In order to ensure that every new tenant has a fair start to practice, chambers' allocation of work policies apply to pupils during their second six and all members of chambers upon starting practice. This means that both other members of chambers (including your supervisors and any potential leaders) and the staff apply fair policies in determining who is put forward for work. As a result, we are confident that all new members will have the opportunity to get their career off to a flying start.

On starting tenancy, pupils will enter the juniors team (we have four clerking teams). The senior practice manager and practice managers in the juniors team have years of experience in helping members become established.

Equal Opportunities

We are committed to the promotion of equality and diversity across all aspects of our practice. Equality of opportunity is essential for the maintenance of high standards and the provision of a quality service to clients. It also ensures a harmonious working environment for members of Chambers and staff. In particular we adopt best practice equality and diversity procedures in our pupillage recruitment which involves the use of application forms, a two-tier interview process and the use of objective selection criteria in accordance with the recommendations of the Equality and Diversity Rules of the Code of Conduct. Applicants with a disability are encouraged to contact the Secretary to the Pupillage Committee in confidence if there are any reasonable adjustments that may be made in relation to their applications.

“

My supervisors, and Chambers as a whole, did everything they could to build my confidence and foster my development.

Benjamin Slingo

Junior Barrister

Community Impact

Wilberforce maintains a strong commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR). Through our Bar Access Programme we are actively involved in outreach and access initiatives to encourage and support people from diverse backgrounds in developing a career at the Bar. An important element of the Bar Access Programme is our on-going partnership with the Sutton Trust (the well-known charitable foundation whose aim is to promote social mobility) through which we support their various initiatives in the legal arena.

We have also built strong relationships with the Legal Social Mobility Partnership, and the Pegasus and Bar Placement (Social Mobility Foundation) programmes and provide support to the Barristers' Benevolent Association.

Wilberforce is recognised as a Silver Pro Bono Patron by Advocate (the pro bono charity of the Bar that finds free legal assistance from volunteer barristers). This is a reflection of the organisational support we provide Advocate to help hundreds of people achieve fair and equal access to justice.

In May 2024, The Bar Council awarded Wilberforce Chambers a Wellbeing Certificate of Recognition for

"invaluable work demonstrating commitment to wellbeing in the barristers' profession".

Wilberforce Chambers also recently received a Chancery Bar Charter for Fairness accreditation, which recognises our formal commitment to seeking to achieve fairness in work allocation, career development, marketing and earnings for female barristers.

We are proud signatories to the Women in Law Pledge created by the Bar Council of England and Wales, The Law Society, and the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx). We are committed to the progress of equality, elimination of sex discrimination and pledge to make positive change for the legal profession.

Continuing Development

Wilberforce Chambers recognises that the need for training and support does not end with the acceptance of the offer of tenancy and the beginning of practice. We pride ourselves on providing a supportive environment in which all barristers can thrive. All junior tenants are encouraged to discuss their cases with other members of Chambers and appropriate members of staff where possible. All barristers, regardless of seniority, have regular meetings with their clerking team in order to monitor practice development and work-load.





Emer Murphy, 2009

Junior Barrister

“Wilberforce is a great place to work. The work is varied, interesting and challenging. As my practice developed, I decided to focus more on property disputes and they now form the vast majority of my cases. Even within that area, the work I do is incredibly varied, as are the lay clients for whom I work. They range from large developers and telecoms operators to individuals. What is consistent is the quality: lots of interesting work for great instructing solicitors. The work mixes real intellectual challenge with human interest; the matters I work on can make a real difference to the businesses and individuals for whom I act.

The atmosphere in Chambers is supportive and friendly. There are lots of very clever people but no-one takes themselves too seriously. There are frequently Chambers social events, which are a lovely opportunity to catch up with colleagues. Other barristers are always willing to act as a sounding board or a source of advice.

Our practice managers (the clerks) are second to none, and that is so important for a successful practice. Our clerks are on the ball, supportive and genuinely interested in your career. They have helped me return to practice following two periods of maternity leave and have worked with me to help me achieve the kind of practice and work/life balance I want. As a barrister, you are in the driving seat, but the clerks at Wilberforce will help you every step of the way. They are in it for the long haul.

All in all, it is simply a great set from which to build a practice at the Bar.”



Francesca Mitchell, 2017

Junior Barrister

“Pupillage at Wilberforce was an experience I genuinely enjoyed. Whilst the year was challenging and the learning curve steep, my overwhelming impression was that my supervisors (and chambers as a whole) were thoroughly invested in creating an environment in which pupils would excel. I remember reading a testimonial that championed Wilberforce as home to some of the best and brightest at the bar, but added that Wilberforce barristers “wore it very lightly.” It couldn’t be more accurate. As a pupil I would read my supervisors’ work or watch them in court and it would dawn on me that I really was learning from the very best. And yet these same people cared to help me progress, would never try to trip me up and would routinely insist that I go home at 6pm. Wilberforce hosts a chambers lunch or drinks every week, so there was always something social going on and people to meet. Members of chambers made a real effort to meet the pupils, and it would amaze me how many barristers would insist that we knock on their doors if we ever had any questions or wanted to pick their brains about something. The work that comes into chambers is just about as interesting, exciting, and occasionally bizarre as you could hope to set your eyes on. Not only are the cases engaging, but as a pupil you’re immediately set to task on chunky and challenging work. Typically, that involved producing a first draft of a document that your supervisor would ultimately send to the client or to court, or putting together a note that would work its way into the submissions or cross examination that you’d subsequently watch your supervisor deliver. All in all, I couldn’t recommend Wilberforce highly enough.”



Ram Lakshman, 2020

Junior Barrister

“Pupillage at Wilberforce has been an overwhelmingly positive experience. Although the learning curve is steep, and the work continuously challenging, I could not have asked for a more supportive and welcoming environment in which to develop the skills involved in being a barrister. From the first day of pupillage, members of chambers went out of their way to make us feel welcome. I found that everyone who I came across was encouraging and friendly, regardless of seniority. Although the social life of chambers was somewhat affected by the pandemic, we thoroughly enjoyed being taken out for drinks, lunches and coffees when restrictions allowed. We were told from the outset that pupils were not in competition with each other, and that we would both be taken on as tenants if we met the standard. This prevented any sense of competition between us and allowed us to rely on each other for reassurance and support. Sitting with five different supervisors has enabled me to experience the immense breadth and quality of work in chambers. As a pupil, my tasks typically involved doing first drafts of opinions, pleadings, or skeleton arguments. On every piece of work, I would be given extremely detailed feedback as well as the opportunity to discuss points for improvement with my supervisor. This meant that my work improved at a very fast rate. The highlight of my pupillage was definitely being involved in trials and preparation for trials. As a pupil, I prepared notes for cross-examination and closing submissions, as well as conducting legal research. It was incredibly rewarding to see the work I had done being used as part of submissions before the judge.”



Benjamin Slingo, 2020

Junior Barrister

“During pupillage at Wilberforce I was given every opportunity to flourish. My supervisors, and Chambers as a whole, did everything they could to build my confidence and foster my development. Pupillage is an inevitable testing experience, with a steep learning curve; but at Wilberforce the interest of the work and the rewards of mastering a set of skills far outweighed any stress. That I was not in competition with my fellow pupil helped, and so did the friendly, sociable atmosphere in Chambers. Many members of Chambers went out of their way to make me feel at home, and my supervisors were brilliant at helping me get to know everyone. I sat with six different supervisors and saw an enjoyably wide spectrum of work. The cases I was involved in ranged from the interpretation of pension fund deeds and the administration of large trusts to rights to quarry rock in the remote countryside and the impact of coronavirus on commercial leases. I was lucky enough to work on a three-week trial in the High Court, and the equally interesting process of preparing in the run-up; I also saw an appeal in the Court of Appeal. Outside court, I learnt to draft statements of cases in litigation that was underway, and to give written advice on the chances of success in prospective cases. All this involved delving into subtle questions of law, and combing through bundles of evidence. I was able to gain a sense of day-to-day work on a case: I saw my supervisors advising their clients and solicitors over the phone as the situation developed quickly and strategizing over what to put in a letter to the representatives of the other side. After the tenancy decision, I had the opportunity to work on smaller cases of my own. This was hugely exciting, and it was a great help that my supervisor was always deft in pointing me in the right direction and calming the anxieties I felt as I acted for a client for the first time.”



Theo Dixon, 2021

Junior Barrister

“My pupillage at Wilberforce was a challenging but genuinely enjoyable experience. Whilst it was necessarily a steep learning curve, the experience was made easier by the friendly and inclusive environment that chambers fosters, and the emphasis Wilberforce places on developing, rather than testing, pupils.

From the outset, it was made clear that I was not in competition with my co-pupil, which meant that we could support each other through the process. I was also invited to a number of social events throughout pupillage, ranging from chambers lunch or drinks every week, to being taken out for coffees with members. I found that everyone who I came across was encouraging and friendly, regardless of seniority, which made the whole pupillage experience less stressful and allowed me to focus on my work. I sat with six different pupil supervisors over the course of my pupillage, which enabled me to experience the depth and quality of Wilberforce’s work. As a pupil, my tasks typically involved doing first drafts of opinions, pleadings, or skeleton arguments. I was given detailed feedback on every piece of work and I would often go through my drafts line by line with my supervisors. I particularly enjoyed working on live cases, where I would produce a first draft of a skeleton argument or pleading which could then be used by my supervisor. It was an incredibly rewarding experience to see elements of my own work in the final versions put before the judge.

Overall, pupillage at Wilberforce has definitely fostered my development and provided me with the confidence necessary to start my career at the Bar. I couldn’t have asked for a more positive or supportive experience.”



Ernest Leung, 2022

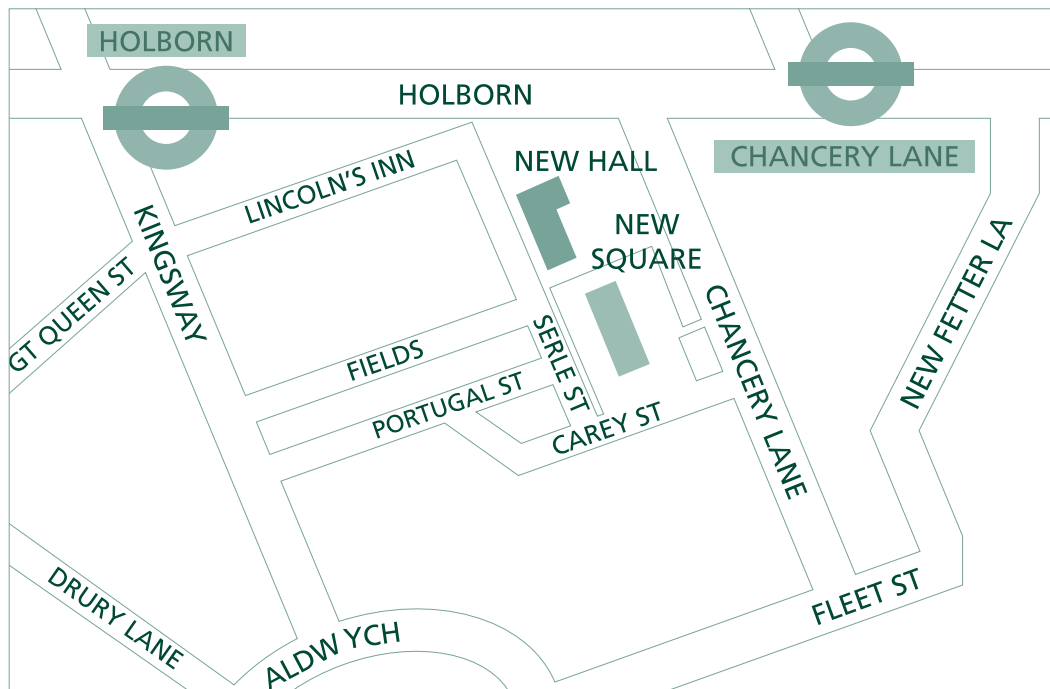
Junior Barrister

“Pupillage at Wilberforce was a genuinely enjoyable experience. Although the year was challenging and the learning curve was undoubtedly steep, everyone in chambers made sure to create a welcoming and supportive environment for pupils. Chambers organise weekly lunches or drinks and members of chambers often initiate impromptu visits to the Hall and the local pub. This ensured that pupils had plenty of opportunities to meet various members of chambers.

Supervisors were given a pupillage checklist which ensured that pupils were given the chance to see all types of documents and procedural hearings. Detailed line-by-line comments were given to each and every piece of work I have submitted and feedback was geared towards helping me improve and excel. My supervisors never shied away from pointing out key areas for improvement but were no doubt kind in reassuring me that I was on the correct learning trajectory. It was also made crystal clear at the outset that we were not in competition with each other such that we could genuinely rely on each other for support. Chambers also made sure that pupils were exposed to each of chambers’ core practice areas by arranging for pupils to sit with a range of supervisors. In my case, sitting with five different supervisors who each had their own unique practice meant that I was exposed to a range of work, from the most obscure and forgotten points of land law to the most complex trust structure and from the high-value commercial disputes to the more common-place but by no means mundane neighbour disputes.

One of the highlights of my pupillage was definitely being invited by one of my supervisors to attend a hearing in the Court of Appeal of the Isle of Man concerning a complex insolvency matter. As a pupil, I conducted legal research, prepared the notes for oral submissions and debated the law with my supervisor. It was particularly satisfying to see some of those legal submissions being deployed, advanced, and tested before the judges.”

Contact Details



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Members of Chambers

Brian Green KC Head of Chambers	KC 1997	Call 1980	John Child		Call 1966
Jonathan Seidler KC Deputy Head of Chambers	KC 2003	Call 1985	David Pollard	Solicitor 1980	Call 2017
John Martin KC	KC 1991	Call 1972	Gabriel Fadipe		Call 1991
Stuart Isaacs KC	KC 1991	Call 1975	Graeme Halkerston		Call 1994
Lawrence Cohen KC	KC 1993	Call 1974	Edward Sawyer		Call 2001
Ian Croxford KC	KC 1993	Call 1976	Stephen Brown	Solicitor 1991	Call 2013
Robert Ham KC	KC 1994	Call 1973	Daniel Lewis		Call 2003
Terence Mowschenson KC	KC 1995	Call 1977	Emily McKechnie		Call 2005
David Phillips KC	KC 1997	Call 1976	Sebastian Allen		Call 2006
Michael Furness KC	KC 2000	Call 1982	James Walmsley		Call 2007
John Wardell KC	KC 2002	Call 1979	Jennifer Seaman		Call 2007
Alan Gourgey KC	KC 2003	Call 1984	Benjamin Faulkner		Call 2008
John McGhee KC	KC 2003	Call 1984	Anna Littler		Call 2008
Gilead Cooper KC	KC 2006	Call 1983	James McCreath		Call 2009
Michael Tennet KC	KC 2006	Call 1985	Emer Murphy		Call 2009
Thomas Lowe KC	KC 2008	Call 1985	Tom Roscoe		Call 2010
James Ayliffe KC	KC 2008	Call 1987	Jonathan Chew		Call 2010
Lexa Hilliard KC	KC 2009	Call 1987	Harriet Holmes		Call 2011
Paul Newman KC	KC 2009	Call 1991	Alice Hawker		Call 2011
Joanne Wicks KC	KC 2010	Call 1990	Bobby Friedman		Call 2011
Martin Hutchings KC	KC 2011	Call 1986	Simon Atkinson		Call 2011
Thomas Grant KC	KC 2013	Call 1993	Sri Carmichael		Call 2012
Fenner Moeran KC	KC 2014	Call 1996	Jack Watson		Call 2012
Marcia Shekerdeman KC	KC 2015	Call 1987	Jessica Brooke		Call 2012
Clare Stanley KC	KC 2015	Call 1994	Michael Ashdown		Call 2013
Tim Penny KC	KC 2016	Call 1998	James Goodwin		Call 2013
Jonathan Davey KC	KC 2016	Call 2003	Rachael Earle		Call 2013
Jonathan Hilliard KC	KC 2016	Call 2003	Elizabeth Houghton		Call 2014
Max Mallin KC	KC 2017	Call 1993	Tim Matthewson		Call 2014
Julian Greenhill KC	KC 2018	Call 1997	Jamie Holmes		Call 2014
Tiffany Scott KC	KC 2018	Call 1998	Joseph Steadman		Call 2015
Nikki Singla KC	KC 2018	Call 2000	Tara Taylor		Call 2015
James Bailey KC	KC 2019	Call 1999	Mark Galtrey		Call 2015
Zoë Barton KC	KC 2020	Call 2003	Daniel Scott		Call 2016
Andrew Mold KC	KC 2020	Call 2003	Jia Wei Lee		Call 2017
Thomas Robinson KC	KC 2025	Call 2003	Francesca Mitchell		Call 2017
			Roxane Reiser		Call 2017
			Daniel Petrides		Call 2018
			Lemuel Lucan-Wilson		Call 2018
			Caspar Bartscherer		Call 2019
			Ram Lakshman		Call 2020
			Benjamin Slingo		Call 2020
			John Grocott-Barrett		Call 2021
			Samuel Cathro		Call 2021
			Theo Dixon		Call 2021
			Daniel Jukes		Call 2021
			Andreas Giannakopoulos		Call 2022
			Ernest Leung		Call 2022
			James Man	(HK Bar: 2014)	Call 2023
			Benedict Evans		Call 2024
			Allison Wu		Call 2025
			Naomi Kilcoyne		Call 2025
			Zihang Liu		Call 2025
Full-Time Arbitrators:					
Jules Sher KC	KC 1981	Call 1968			
Sir Paul Morgan	KC 1992	Call 1975			
Associate Members					
Professor Lionel Smith					
Professor Ben McFarlane					
Caroline Furze (unregistered barrister) Door Tenant					
		Call 1992			