

General pupillage application feedback

We thought it would be useful if we offered some general feedback on the written applications we have received in the past, which is what the following paragraphs are intended to do. We can't tell you what information you should include in your form – that's up to you – so the following deals more with application technique, style and structure.

1. Answer the question you are being asked, not the question you want to answer or the question that it is easy for you to answer because you can copy and paste from another application form. We will not be fooled by you writing out a subtly different question at the start of your answer!

We have asked you specific questions so that we can test you against our recruitment criteria. Answering a different question means that it's difficult for us to judge the merits of your application against those criteria.

2. For the same reason, answer all of the question that's being asked, not just part of it.
3. Answer questions using a sensible structure, so that it is easy for the marker to follow what you are saying and to see how it links back to the question that is being asked. That doesn't mean you need to restate the question in your answer – we know what the question is!
4. Try to keep it reasonably concise. We want to know that you can communicate succinctly and in a relevant and focussed way. For example, we don't need to know every element of a case you have seen/read or an argument you made in an essay in order to be able to mark your application. Similarly, don't waste words on things that are irrelevant to the question or on statements that are so abstract as to be difficult or impossible to understand, or which we are unable to relate to the assessment criteria.
5. Along the same lines, we only need a brief description of previous jobs or work-experience (including mini-pupillages). It definitely is valuable to include them in your application, but we are unlikely to need every element of the role listed. In particular, when discussing legal work experience, be careful that you do not breach client confidentiality or data protection laws. One exception to the 'keep it brief' rule is if you have changed career. In those circumstances, your previous occupation may justify a more detailed explanation so that we understand what transferable skills you have.
6. Write your answers to the main questions in full, properly constructed sentences and **PROOF READ**. Proof reading will help you to make sure that you have answered the question as best as you can and also to avoid embarrassing copy and paste slips (like saying that you would be very excited to join another set of Chambers or that you can't wait to practise at the criminal bar).
7. Try to avoid overblown language or language/phrases that are commonly used within a particular profession, but which can be confusing for outsiders.
8. Remember who is reading your application. We're fairly bright, but we don't know everything, so if you are talking about something that is outside of legal or common knowledge, we are likely to need some kind of brief explanation in order to understand the point you are trying to make. For the same reason, avoid non-legal acronyms or acronyms that are not commonly known.

9. If you received grades outside of England or Wales at school or for your undergraduate degree, please try to explain to us how they compare with English/Welsh grades.
10. We want to hear about your achievements; this isn't the time to be shy or modest about what you have done. On the other hand, please don't exaggerate. We may find it hard to believe, for example that you single-handedly drafted your supervisor's skeleton on a mini-pupillage. We don't say that's impossible, but it's very rarely going to be the case.

If you find that saying nice things about yourself makes you uncomfortable, try to imagine that you are writing about someone else.

11. Finally, remember that your application is the best evidence you can give us that you write well and can be persuasive (i.e. that you will be a good advocate). This is a good opportunity to show us your skills of persuasion at this initial stage and will continue to be important if you make it through to the interviews.