

Advice for Aspiring Barristers

Useful Knowledge

ICSA: The Inns of Court Student Association, run for students aiming for a career at the bar.

Inns of Court: A barrister must be a member of one of the Inns of Court (and every student must join one before gaining pupillage), of which there are four: Inner Temple, Gray's Inn, Lincoln's Inn, and Middle Temple. The Inns provide support for barristers and student barristers through a range of educational activities, lunching and dining facilities, access to common rooms and gardens, and provision of various grants and scholarships.

Inns of Court Dining: A student must 'dine' at their Inn of Court for a minimum of *twelve* qualifying sessions, during the year of pupillage, before being called to the bar. These qualifying sessions include talks, lunch-time/evening meals, and banquets. These sessions provide an opportunity for students to interact with Barristers of their respective Inn of Court.

Chambers: Although Barristers are in essence self-employed, they work in 'Chambers', offices, to cut down running costs (sharing clerks, libraries and other facilities).

Mini-pupillage: This is the equivalent of a Solicitor's vac-scheme, and is *essential* work experience for anyone who wants to be a Barrister. 'Mini-pupillages' range from between 3 days to 1 week (depending on the Chambers) and provide an excellent insight into life at the Bar.

BVC (Bar Vocational Course)*: This is a one year vocational course, the bar's equivalent of the LPC, which must be completed by students who wish to be called to the Bar.

Pupillage: A pupillage is a year during which you learn the practicalities of working as a barrister (essentially an extension of a mini-pupillage). It is divided into two six-month sections. The first six you will spend your time shadowing an experienced barrister. The second six you are officially able to take on your own cases and present them in court.

Tenancy: Pupillage doesn't guarantee you a permanent place in chambers (tenancy) upon completion, but you can gain tenancy in other chambers once you have completed your pupillage in the chambers you were taken on in.

Top Tips

1. Grades really count! This includes first year grades, as this may be all you have when you begin to apply for mini-pupillages.
2. Get Work Experiences: Mini-pupillages are essential work experience, and work experience in solicitors firms may also be useful. Be unique and try and

*Now the BPTC (Bar Professional Training Course)

think outside of the box, because applications will look a lot stronger with individual flair (e.g. having sat with a Judge).

3. Get involved in Mooting/Debating and anything similar. Being a barrister requires being a good orator and this only comes with practice. There are mooting competitions each year (as can be seen from the mooting section), and the University has a debating team/society.

4. Do something different. As with the work experience, it doesn't really matter what you do as long as it makes you stand out. Volunteering is a great way to get involved in a variety of interesting activities and looks really good on the CV. Pro Bono work, although hard to get, also looks fantastic on a CV; but if you are finding this hard to get, working in your local Citizens Advice Bureau is also very good.

5. Choose your Inn carefully, and do not join until you have applied for scholarships, you can only join one. As said above, you have to dine for 12 qualifying sessions, and it is important that your Inn suits you; they are not all the same.

7. Network. Whenever you can talk to the Barristers you come into contact with. The best time is usually on mini-pupillage, not just accosting counsel as they leave court for the day. If a Barrister supervisor invites you to keep in touch with them, then do so – but don't harass them. Be confident and polite, and you should meet a few 'contacts' along the way. Dining at the Inns, and talks at University are other ways of meeting Barristers.

8. Proof read – This may seem obvious, and you will hear it time and time again; but proof read your applications yourself, and get one or two people (or more) to read through it and check your grammar and spelling. This is essential for whatever you want to do after university, let alone a profession where entire cases can be based upon grammatical errors.

9. Keep up-to-date. Interviewers may want to know your opinions on current legal and political issues. Read a newspaper, watch the news, subscribe to law related news (e.g. Lawyer2b), and generally try and stay on top of what is happening in both the legal world, and the 'real' world.