

MTYBA PUPILLAGE APPLICATION ADVICE SESSION - 29/01/2020

Summary and 'Top Tips' taken from the event.



PANEL:

William Glover (3 Temple Gardens)

Simon Cridland (Serjeants' Inn)

Zoe O'Sullivan Q.C. (Searle Court)

Tasmin Malcom (Charter)

Tyrone Silcott (Charter)

YOU ARE NOT ALONE:

Some of our Panellists talked about having taken up to four years of applying and making 80+ applications before obtaining the holy grail that is pupillage. Others spoke about having to undertake a third six before obtaining tenancy, and taking different routes to Chambers, including beginning at the Employed Bar. There is space for all at the Bar; we all take different pathways and *you are not alone*.

APPLICATIONS: SELECTIVE OR BROAD BRUSH APPROACH?

The consensus across the Panel was that you should maximise your opportunities by applying to as many sets as you can - *BUT*, make sure they are all brilliant... It is possible to do this, if you afford each of your applications and the entire process the time it deserves.

IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE MANY MINI-PUPILLAGES:

Go to courts sitting in public session (for example, your local Crown Court), and engage with the process. Observe what happens, and if you are able to (and if they aren't clearly busy, or with a client) then talk to the prosecuting barrister afterwards, for example. You can ask them any questions you might have about the case or the process, and you will gain an experience similar to a mini-pupillage.

'WHY THIS CHAMBERS':

Perhaps the most dreaded question on any pupillage application form - and the one many chambers will place most weight on. The Panel agreed that to answer this question well, you must really know which areas of law your chosen chambers specialises in, and be able to explain why you want to do (and would be good at doing) that work.

WHY THE BAR?

Another question applicants often struggle with. The panel were in agreement that your reason for joining the profession has to be solid, and water-tight. It is not good enough to just explain why you might enjoy it or be good at it - for example, because you like to be the centre of attention, or want to be self-employed. You need a 'buoyancy' - something which will motivate and maintain you through the inevitable bad days or weeks.

WHAT STANDS OUT IN A GOOD PUPILLAGE APPLICATION?

- Something different and memorable: someone who shows some personality.
- An application which is written extremely well: vividly and succinctly.
 - Your application should be a fantastic piece of persuasive advocacy.
 - Don't just list the things you have done: persuade the reader why those things make you a good barrister.
 - Make the application perfect: applications with spelling or grammatical errors will not be considered seriously.
 - Keep it simple: write efficiently. Be eloquent, but do not use flowery language.
 - Treat the word limit as a limit, and not a target. Have confidence that what you have written is enough.
 - Be genuine: no one else is you, and your unique character should show. Don't try to sound like what you think people want to hear.

WHAT WILL LAND AN APPLICATION (OR INTERVIEW) IN THE DEFINITE 'NO' PILE?

- The Panel agreed that they didn't like to see 'name dropping' in applications, unless there was a particularly good reason for mentioning that individual.
- Spelling and grammatical errors (watch, for example, practise/practice).
- Talking about an area of law which your chosen chambers doesn't practise in.
- Confidence which spills over into arrogance.
- Answering an ethical question incorrectly.

TOP TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS:

- Turn up early.
- Be prepared for unexpected questions.
- Be prepared for expected questions: have your evidence available to you in your head, so you can summon up an example to most predictable questions.
- Prepare to argue a particular point on a topical issue.
- Practise at home.
- Re-read your CV, application and any notes before the interview: be prepared to expand on all of the points you make.
- Although you will almost certainly feel nervous, fake confidence. Give a firm handshake, maintain good eye contact, give concise answers. Pause before answering, and assume an air of gravitas.
- Sign up for MTYBA and Middle Temple Mock Interviews.

HOW TO DEAL WITH REJECTION:

You need to be thick-skinned in this profession, regardless. Don't take rejection personally: accept that everyone receives rejection, even those at the very top. Think about what you can do to progress next time, consider the feedback you are given, and in the meantime, work as close to your chosen area of law as possible. 'Put on the loser's jacket' for a day or two and allow yourself to feel sad. Then take it off, put it away, and get on with improving your chances in the future.