

Accepting Pupillage

Throughout the Pupillage application and interview process, chambers will likely differ greatly in their approaches so it is often difficult to know exactly what you will be facing when you arrive at an interview. Throughout my experience of interviews, I was regularly surprised by the format, length, and feel of my interviews. Although this can be daunting, it is important to bear in mind that all candidates are facing the same experience, and that if you feel unprepared, that is likely part of the test. From a preparation perspective, it is important to do thorough research into the chambers to which you are applying, making good use of their online resources and keeping up to date with recent developments and cases within your area of interest. This research is key to the application process but it may also be helpful to remind yourself of the key information and check for any recent changes before an interview.

For first round interviews specifically, it is important that you are very familiar with your application as there will likely be a section where this is examined and you may be asked to elaborate on certain matters raised. This may seem like a simple task, your application being about you after all, but it may be helpful to imagine additional questions that may come up, bearing in mind the criteria examined by the chambers in question and the competences they have asked you to evidence within your application. Also, it may be helpful to think of other examples and experiences, outside of those detailed in your application, that show these competences so you have some original things to discuss in interview.

From my experiences, second round interviews are usually a little more intensive, as you would imagine, and can involve various types of assessments that may involve more legal aspects than first round interviews typically do. In preparation for these interviews it may be that the chambers in question will give you notice of the type of assessment to expect, for example preparing oral submissions to present on the day. Even if this is not the case, it is always a good idea to brush up on the key legal principles and issues within your area of interest and think about how you would approach certain arguments or ideas. It may also be an idea to practice writing about certain legal topics in a short period of time and making oral submissions with friends or family on a chosen topic to make sure you are comfortable assessing unseen cases and discussing them under time constraints.

The final stage of interview preparation comes on the day itself, and however cliché it may sound, the most important part is to stay calm and make sure you are well rested so that you can perform at your best. Chambers want to see how you perform as an individual so it is important to be yourself and remember that these experiences are supposed to be difficult so try to relax and stay calm no matter what comes up. The style of interviews from different chambers can differ immensely so it is good to be prepared for a variety of different approaches and assessment types. Most of all, it is important not to panic and to remember that some chambers will want to see how you cope under pressure so don't be afraid to take your time and think things through when responding to difficult, and sometimes impossible, questions. When it's finally over keep in mind that interviews almost always go better than you think when you first come out.

For those of you with experience of the pupillage application and interview process, the mixture of relief and trepidation that came as I completed my final interview will be very familiar. As the process drew to a close it was tempting to go through an autopsy of my performances, but in the end I knew that I had done my best on the whole, and in any event there was nothing more that I could do. Of course I was glad that the process was over but

there was also the discomfort of knowing that the result was now out of my hands, with nothing to do but wait the days out until Offer day arrived. For some, the interview process may have resulted in multiple final round interviews, leaving you waiting to hear back from a number of chambers. For me, the fast pace of the process, alongside the bar course kept my mind firmly focused on the upcoming assessments and interviews and not so much on the desired result of a pupillage offer. Nevertheless as the process came to a close I wanted to be prepared for the possibility that I might receive multiple offers and have to choose the one for me, however unlikely that felt at the time. With this in mind I thought it a good idea, to make sure to consider my options so as not to leave myself scrambling once any offers landed.

Chambers, like candidates, can differ immensely in approach and style, allowing you to decide which factors are important to you and choose the environment you believe will be the best place for you thrive during pupillage. From my personal experience, there was little time (less than a week) between my final interview and the day the Offers would be extended. Throughout the application process I had decided which chambers I wanted to apply to, and therefore had done thorough research into their various attributes, both online and through visits to chambers through open days and mini pupillage experiences. As offer day approached, it was important for me to focus on the environments I had encountered throughout my visits to different chambers, both previously but also throughout the interview process, which gave me an insight into the mindset of different chambers and the ways they approach assessments and training. Having considered these factors prior to offer day, I felt more empowered to make a choice, if it came to that, however, I know some people were still very glad for the weeks grace built into the offers, meaning anyone who wasn't certain of their choice had a week from the date of the offer to get back to chambers and confirm or reject their place. Most chambers will have a reserve list of candidates to whom offers will be made if you do not accept on time, so it important to make sure you confirm your decision within this deadline.

Generally you will be notified of an offer via phone, and then sent a written offer by email to be accepted in writing. For me, the phone call from Exchange remains somewhat of a blur, leaving me very little recollection of what was said beyond the happy news. I do, however, remember the swift realisation that although I had received that prized offer, there remained the small matter of the upcoming bar course exams I needed to complete before pupillage could actually commence. The whole experience didn't feel real until I received the written offer, reading it repeatedly before I quickly sent back my acceptance. It was only at this stage that the reality of pupillage began to set in and this concept that had felt far removed from the application process became a reality, albeit an awaited one since I had a year and a half to go before I could actually start.