

Pupillage at Mountford Chambers – Frequency Asked Questions

How long is pupillage?

- Up to 18 months
- Tenancy decisions are not made earlier than 15 months or later than 18 months

Why is the pupillage up to 18 months?

In terms of candidates, benefits include:

- 18 month advocacy programme;
- Unlike Civil sets, once you are on your feet you will be in court every day, so this arrangement gives longer for feedback to filter through from Judges, other advocates and instructing solicitors;
- There is a learning curve over the early months of being on your feet, and experience has shown that the gradient of that curve is not the same for everyone. For many pupils the additional few months allows them time to improve and reach the high standards we expect of our junior tenants;
- The overlap with the pupils in the year above has been found to be of invaluable assistance to new pupils – this fosters a community of support which extends into the junior end of Chambers;
- No rent is charged during this period.

In terms of Chambers:

- Chambers benefits from having ‘working pupils’ for 12 months each year – some Chambers deal with this by staggering start times, but we feel that pupils benefit hugely from going through the experience together.

How is Pupillage at Mountford structured?

- 6 months shadowing; then
- Up to 12 months on your feet, when you can expect to be in court every weekday, and some Saturdays and Bank Holidays.

What does First Six consist of?

- During your first six you will have two pupil supervisors (one after the other);
- Your supervisor will decide where you will be each day;

- The starting point is that you will follow them to court and conferences each day, but they have discretion to ask you to attend court with other members of Chambers or working pupils (for example if they are out of London or out of Court);
- You will see trials, sentences, PTPHs, which could cover anything from fraud to rape to murder;
- You will be given opportunities to see quasi-criminal – inquest, extradition, etc - and regulatory work as and when other members of Chambers are carrying out this work;
- You will be asked to carry out some research and drafting for your supervisor, and may be called on to carry out similar work for other members of Chambers, but all requests for work should have your supervisor copied in so that they can make sure you are not overwhelmed;
- You will be expected to attend advocacy every week, and to carry out any preparation or research required for those sessions;
- In recent years, Mountford Pupils have been invited to take part in mock PTPH, mentions and sentencing hearings at Inner London Crown Court along with pupils from 2 Bedford Row, Furnival and 5KBW;
- If you have to travel out of London your travel will be reimbursed within a week (and can be paid for in advance if cashflow is an issue);
- You are eligible to undertake paid Noting Briefs in your first six – this consists of attending court and keeping a well-formatted, near verbatim note of proceedings;
- **Holiday** - Subject to the discretion of your Supervisor and the Clerks Room, it is anticipated that you will take the same holiday as your supervisor over the Christmas period (the Crown Courts close from Christmas until the first working day in January) and additional days can be requested if required.

What does second six consist of?

- You will be in court every weekday, and most Saturday mornings, and some bank holidays;
- This will primarily be in the Magistrates' Court, but there will be Crown Court work as well;
- Magistrates' Court work includes first appearances, mentions, trials and sentences, as well as forfeiture hearings and enforcement proceedings;
- Crown Court work includes PTPHs, mentions and sentences in the Crown Court, and may include trials once it is felt that you are ready to undertake them;
- You will still be expected to attend advocacy every week, and to prepare for those sessions;
- You may be asked to carry out research, but Chambers is realistic about your court commitments and again all requests must copy in your supervisor;
- You will not be expected to return to Chambers every day – the criminal bar is for the most part digital, with all papers being served online;
- You will be expected to attend all Chambers lectures and events;
- Your earnings will be guaranteed during this period, to help with cashflow and make sure that you are earning enough;
- You will be expected to take ten days' holiday.

What does third six consist of?

- This is your 'Transition to Tenancy' period;

- You will still be working primarily in the Magistrates' Court, and will still be on the Saturday/Bank holiday rota;
- You can expect to undertake more Crown Court work, including Crown Court trials;
- You will be expected to work over most of the Christmas period, when the Magistrates' Court are still open for short hearings;
- You will still attend advocacy, but not every single session, and the emphasis will shift;
- You will not pay any rent during your third six, and in fact we will continue to guarantee your earnings for four months beyond the completion of your second six.

How many supervisors will I get?

- Four:
 - 3 months – from when you start until the end of the year;
 - 4 months – from January through to the end of April, with the aim of providing some continuity as you get on your feet;
 - 5 months – from May until the end September, when you get your full practising certificate;
 - (up to) 6 months – from the start of October.

How are my supervisors allocated?

- Particularly during their first six months - and geography permitting - we try to ensure that all pupils are assigned two supervisors with contrasting styles and approaches to give the pupil greater exposure;
- We ensure that every pupil has a female supervisor at some point of their pupillage.

What is the Pupillage Grant?

- Up to £40k in total;
- We have structured your pupillage grant in a way that provides ongoing support and stability, beyond your second six;
- First six: £2,500 grant per month;
- Next ten months: guaranteed earnings of £2,500 per month;
- We would expect you to exceed this minimum level of earnings by the end of that period;
- If you decide to leave before the end of the 16 months, Chambers ceases to guarantee your earnings at the point of departure;
- We can also assist financially if a pupil encounters particular hardship during their pupillage;
- You will not be charged any Chambers rent during your 'third six'.

Other benefits

- All pupils have access to Westlaw;
- All pupils are given CrimeLine Subscriptions;
- Chambers will subsidise membership of Women in Criminal Law for any pupil that wishes to join;
- Chambers will also pay for additional courses upon request, for example in recent years our Pupils have chosen to do the Youth Justice Legal Centre ‘Youth Justice training for pupils and junior barristers’;
- There may also opportunities for pupils to earn additional income during their first six, for example through Noting Briefs (both private and legal aid)
- Travel outside London is reimbursed/paid for.

What sort of training does Chambers provide?

- The Advocacy Team in Chambers run weekly advocacy sessions for pupils and very junior tenants.
- The programme has been devised and tailored with the aim of preparing pupils in the best possible way for life on their feet in the Magistrates’ Court.
- The weekly sessions combine both theory and practical advocacy where bespoke, individual feedback is provided to strengthen and develop the skills learnt during the Bar Professional Training Course.
- Real life cases are adapted and moulded and used as mock exercises to enable participants to tackle real life legal problems and devise case strategy.
- In addition to the core Advocacy Team, senior members of Chambers regularly deliver advocacy sessions to provide training on more complex topics and provide insight on advocacy in the Crown Court and Court of Appeal - time with successful and experienced members of Chambers provides invaluable training on how advocacy skills can be developed and strengthened.
- Likewise, outside speakers are brought in from time to time, e.g. solicitors on what to put in to an attendance note, accountants to help with the issues that you face as a self-employed practitioner and advice on social media and networking.
- The weekly Advocacy Sessions are a cornerstone of the pupillage process at Mountford Chambers and are an essential step in helping to support, develop and nurture successful tenants of the future.

Do most pupils get tenancy?

- We take our recruitment process very seriously, and it has proven highly effective at identifying high calibre pupils.
- We invest a great deal of time and energy into our pupils, in the hope and expectation that they will prove to be the excellent, friendly barristers we saw the potential for when we selected them as pupils, and an asset to Chambers in the long run.
- There are no guarantees, but Chambers has a strong record of taking on almost all our pupils as tenants over the last five years.