

The pupil experience



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Year of graduation 2012. *Queens' College, University of Cambridge*

Degree Subject *History*

Current position and areas of practice *Junior tenant practising Commercial Chancery Law*



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Year of graduation 2008. *Trinity College, University of Oxford*

Degree Subject *Classics*

Current position and areas of practice *Junior tenant practising Commercial Chancery Law*

Why Maitland?

Amanda: I decided to apply for a pupillage at Maitland after doing a mini-pupillage in Chambers: I really liked the working environment in Chambers and thought that everyone I met was very friendly and welcoming. I particularly liked the broad variety of cases that members of Chambers are instructed on.

The pupillage application process

Chambers is now a member of the Pupillage Gateway, so all applications for pupillage are made centrally through the Gateway and follow its timetable.

Chambers selects 25 to 30 applicants to come into Chambers for first round interviews. These are normally conducted by three members of Chambers, and involve answering some general questions and questions relating to a legal problem. The second round interviews are longer, and are conducted by around five members of Chambers. They focus on answering questions about a legal case study. Although both rounds of interviews involve answering questions relating to legal issues, the interviewers know that not all applicants have studied for a law degree (and that some applicants may have only been studying the GDL for a few months when they are interviewed) and make allowances for this. Chambers has a record of recruiting both pupils and tenants who studied law and other subjects as undergraduates at university.

The tenancy decision process

Ed: I would characterise the tenancy decision process at Maitland as one that is designed to be as fair and objective as possible. There is a certain standard that

pupils are required to meet by the end of their pupillage. Of course, it is not expected that you will be at this level fresh off the BPTC. The focus of pupillage at Maitland is on training up pupils to be ready for tenancy. Provided that you meet the standard at the end of the year, you will be taken on.

Pupils sit in rotation with four supervisors. During each 10-week seat all work is graded by reference to assessment criteria provided at the start of the year, and detailed feedback is given on each piece of work. This allows you to know where you are relative to the required standard, and, importantly, what areas you need to improve on. It is not the case that the pupils are in competition with each other, and equally it is made clear that you are not being assessed on anything that is outside of the criteria.

During the year, pupils undertake six advocacy exercises, designed to practice and improve pupils' oral advocacy. The exercises are modelled on real cases of junior tenants, often in the form of an application. The members overseeing these exercises, together with the person playing the role of the judge, provide detailed and constructive feedback after each exercise. This is designed to help identify areas which could be improved, and allows pupils to show that feedback has been taken on board.

The tenancy decision is based upon the reports of the four supervisors and those running the advocacy exercises, i.e. those who have an extended opportunity to assess each pupil's ability and progress.

Support

Amanda: Chambers is a friendly place and pupils are invited to Chambers' social events during their pupillage year, which include Chambers tea every afternoon, drinks with members of Chambers on Thursday evenings and in the clerks' room on Fridays, as well as the Christmas party. There are also two pupil mentors who take the pupils out for coffee during the pupillage year and who pupils can go and speak to. I have found during my time as a junior tenant that members of Chambers at all levels of seniority are always very willing to help if you have any questions or problems, which is invaluable when you are just starting out in practice.

Life as a junior tenant

Ed: Junior tenants at Maitland can expect to take on a variety of different work across the broad range of Chambers' practice areas. There is also a mixture of "led" work, i.e. work as a junior or baby junior as part of a wider Counsel team on a larger piece of litigation, as well as cases where you are the sole barrister. This has the benefit of allowing you to continue to learn from more experienced practitioners, and also to cut your teeth on your own cases, and develop your own practice and practice management skills.

Although it can really depend, I would estimate that a junior tenant here will be on their feet in Court three or four times a fortnight in anything from a possession claim or an insolvency hearing, through to an application in the High Court, with the odd small claim or fast track trial every now and then.