



Pupillage Application Form: Assessment Criteria and Marking Scheme 2026

Background

- The maximum possible total score for Serle Court's selected narrative questions and the application form as a whole, is 100. The marks available per component are as follows:
 - Narrative question 1: 20 marks
 - Question 2: 15 marks
 - Question 3: 15 marks
 - Question 4: 20 marks
 - Application form: 30 marks
- The "Extenuating circumstances" answer is taken into account in the overall scores given, rather than marked separately.
- References are not taken into account at this stage.
- The guide below explains the standard that markers will apply when awarding the allocated marks for each of Questions 1 to 4 and to the application form itself:
 - 90-100% = Outstanding (in the case of Questions 1 to 4, completely aligned with the descriptions below of an outstanding answer)
 - 75-89% = Very good (closely aligned)
 - 60-74% = Good (well aligned)
 - 30-59% = Satisfactory (somewhat aligned)
 - 10-29% = Below standard required
- All applications are anonymised and reviewed separately by at least two members of chambers.
- Markers are encouraged to use the full range of marks, including half marks where appropriate.
- Markers assess the narrative answers before assessing the rest of the application form.

Assessment criteria for the application form and narrative questions

- Applicants will be assessed against the following five competencies in the application form and narrative questions 1-3:
 - Written advocacy and communication skills
 - Potential for outstanding oral advocacy and communication
 - Intellectual ability and capacity for legal reasoning
 - Organisation
 - Personal qualities and interpersonal skills
- More detailed information about the criteria included within each competency can be found in the competency matrix ([available here](#)).



In narrative question 4 and the application form, applicants will be assessed based on evidence of their interest in, and commitment to, a career at the commercial Chancery Bar.

Guidance and marking scheme for the application form and narrative questions

Application form

- The application form requires applicants to provide the following information:
 - Employment and work experience history
 - Education history
 - Further education history, scholarships, awards, and prizes
 - Additional skills, hobbies and interests

A maximum of 30 marks is available for the application form itself and how strongly it evidences the criteria stated in the competency matrix ([available here](#)), as well as an interest in and commitment to a career at the Commercial Chancery Bar.

Following the indications in the relevant column in the competency matrix, these marks will be awarded for:

- Written advocacy and communication skills: these can be demonstrated by an application form that evidences overall the defining characteristics listed in the matrix of clarity, persuasion and appropriate style and tone, and by any particular examples on the application form of these skills being used by the candidate (eg, drafting a paper for discussion or publication).
- Oral advocacy and communication skills: these can be demonstrated by examples being given on the application form of experiences of formal or informal advocacy, mooting, debating, giving presentations, teaching, or other instances of deploying listening skills or cognitive flexibility.
- Intellectual ability and capacity for legal reasoning: these can be demonstrated by evidence of academic achievements, which can include A-level results, degree, postgraduate, GDL, and/or BPTC results, prizes and/or scholarships, and/or relevant work experience, such as judicial assistantships, university teaching, or other experience at work or in life which was intellectually demanding in some way, or where strong reasoning (not necessarily legal) was required.
- Organisation skills, personal qualities and interpersonal skills: see the defining characteristics listed in the matrix at 6(a) and (b) and 7(a) to (h). Participation in activities or teams inside or outside law/work, assumption of positions of responsibility or leadership, or evidence of commitment and perseverance in any form, may be relevant in showing these.

Further, we will assess through the application form (as well as Question 4) your commitment to the Commercial Chancery bar. This might involve your evidencing knowledge of or interest in the practice areas and/or specific work of Chambers; or having undertaken relevant academic study, mini-pupillages, work experience, shadowing or volunteering.



Narrative questions

A maximum total of 70 marks is available for the 4 narrative questions. Each of these 4 questions has a different focus, as outlined below.

Question 1 (20 marks):

A clause in a commercial (business to business) contract provides:

"The seller's maximum aggregate liability to the buyer under or in connection with the contract, including any liability arising out of or relating to the performance and/or breach and/or termination of the contract, shall in no case exceed £1 million."

The clause is expressly stated not to apply to claims for personal injury or death caused by the seller's negligence or breach of statutory duty. Assume that the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977 does not apply.

In your view, does this clause cap liability for a negligent misrepresentation made by the seller that induced the buyer to contract? Please explain the basis for your view in no more than 500 words.

- **The purpose of this question is to assess the following competencies:**
 - Written advocacy and communication skills
 - Intellectual ability and capacity for legal reasoning
- **An outstanding answer to this question:**
 - Is clearly, logically and succinctly expressed
 - Applies the relevant legal principles with a level of explanation appropriate for the word limit
 - Is focused on the most important points
 - Makes a persuasive case for the conclusion reached
 - Is communicated clearly, in a way that can be easily understood by both lay and professional readers

Question 2 (15 marks):

Please explain in no more than 500 words how you have the potential to become an outstanding oral advocate. Please provide examples to support your answer to this question. You may wish to structure your answers using the STAR (Situation, Task, Action Result) method, which you can read about online.

- **The purpose of this question is to assess the following competency:**
 - Potential for outstanding oral advocacy and communication
- **An outstanding answer to this question:**
 - Uses 2-3 examples drawn from the candidate's personal experience that provide compelling evidence that the candidate has the qualities required to become an outstanding oral advocate, as outlined by the criteria included within the competency matrix.



Please note:

- *while you should choose examples that evidence a range of qualities required of an oral advocate, you do not need to refer directly to the competency matrix as part of your written answer.*
- *Examples do not necessarily need to be from a legal setting. For example, you could describe a situation in which you orally persuaded someone of something important in a different context.*
- Gives examples that are structured using the “STAR” answer model:
 - Describes the situation the candidate faced
 - Explains the task the candidate was required to complete
 - Explains the action the candidate took
 - Describes the result of the candidate’s action
- Explains how they made their oral argument effective or how they responded to hostile interventions in a persuasive way. By describing the approach taken, candidates provide more evidence of their competence. This is more effective than simply stating an achievement (e.g. achieving a certain result in a competition).
- Avoids generic examples or, if generic examples are chosen, will demonstrate a unique perspective and offer genuine insight as to the candidate’s outstanding quality. For example, if describing a common experience (such as making oral presentations at university), clarify what was unique about the approach and why it was especially effective.

Question 3 (15 marks):

Please explain in no more than 500 words how you have the organisational skills, personal qualities and interpersonal skills to become an outstanding barrister. Please provide examples to support your answer to this question. You may wish to structure your answers using the STAR (Situation, Task, Action Result) method, which you can read about online.

- **The purpose of this question is to assess the following competencies:**
 - Organisation
 - Personal qualities and interpersonal skills
- **An outstanding answer to this question:**
 - Uses 2-3 narrative examples drawn from the candidate’s personal experience that provide compelling evidence that the candidate has outstanding organisational skills, personal qualities and the interpersonal skills required to become an outstanding barrister.

Please note:

- *while you should choose examples that evidence the relevant competencies, you do not need to refer directly to the competency matrix as part of your written answer.*
- *Examples do not necessarily need to be from a legal setting. For example, you could describe a situation in which you demonstrated integrity in a different context.*



- Gives examples that are structured using the “STAR” answer model:
 - Describes the situation the candidate faced
 - Explains the task the candidate was required to complete
 - Explains the action the candidate took
 - Describes the result of the candidate’s action
- Details how they approached the situation given, describing what was unique about their approach. This is likely to provide more evidence than simply stating an achievement factually (e.g. holding a position of responsibility).
- Avoids generic examples or, if generic examples are chosen, will demonstrate a unique perspective and offer genuine insight as to the candidate’s outstanding quality. For example, if describing a common experience (e.g. meeting academic deadlines), clarify what was unique about the approach and why it was especially effective.

Question 4 (20 marks):

Please explain in no more than 500 words why you are interested in a career at the Commercial Chancery Bar? Please provide specific examples which demonstrate your interest.

- **The purpose of this question is to assess the candidate’s interest and commitment to developing a career at the Commercial Chancery Bar, and at Serle Court in particular.**
- **An outstanding answer to this question:**
 - Will demonstrate the candidate’s understanding of what commercial Chancery practice involves
 - Will give some convincing personal examples or reasons as to why the subject-matter interests and engages them. This could be academically, practically or both.
 - Will provide convincing evidence of a commitment to practice in this sector of the Bar.