

**Judicial Assistants  
Briefing note  
May 2019**

Applications for a new Judicial Assistants (JAs) Scheme for the High Court of England and Wales will open on 20 May 2019.

The new scheme is extending the previous separate arrangements for judges in the Commercial Court and Chancery Division in the Business and Property Courts to all three Divisions of the High Court. The key principles of the new scheme are to continue to attract the most talented and motivated candidates from all sectors of the legal community through a fair and open recruitment process.

The application process will open on 20 May 2019 and close on 1 July 2019 for placements lasting between three and five months during the 2019 – 2020 legal year. Interviews will be held during the week beginning 15 July 2019.

Aimed in particular at recently qualified barristers and solicitors in the early stages of their legal career, applications will be invited from those able to demonstrate an outstanding intellectual ability, excellent organisational skills and the ability to manage large and complicated workloads, as well as a high level of professional integrity.

Candidates will be asked to express their preference(s) in terms of the jurisdiction and courts in which they would wish to be placed, and as to the duration and timing of their placement.

**Number of positions**

This recruitment is for the equivalent of 12 full-time appointments for the 2019/2020 legal year. The exact number of appointments will depend on the preferences of the candidates for a placement lasting three or five months (for example, if all successful candidates request a placement of three months, there will be capacity for 36 individual appointments for that period during the course of the year.)

**Length and periods of placement**

Candidates will be asked to express a preference for a placement of three or five months.

The three month appointments will correspond to the legal terms between:

- 1 October – 20 December 2019,
- 13 January – 8 April 2020, and
- 21 April 2020 – 31 July 2020.

The five month appointments will be for the periods:

- 1 October 2019 – 28 February 2020, and
- 2 March 2020 – 31 July 2020

Successful candidates will be expected to make themselves available for work during the relevant legal vacations (though not public holidays).

**Assignment**

Candidates will also be asked if they have any preference for the Court or Division to which they will be assigned, namely:

- Chancery Division (Business and Property Courts)
- Family Division
- Queen's Bench Division:

- Commercial Court (Business and Property Courts)
- Technology and Construction Court (Business and Property Courts)
- Administrative Court
- QB Civil
- No preference

Applicants will be free to select as many or as few of these specialisations as they wish. Candidates will be informed of the Court to which they have been assigned at the point at which they receive the offer. While every effort will be made to assign successful candidates to their Court or Division of choice, there may be occasions on which a degree of flexibility will be required, and judicial assistants will be asked to lend support to a judge in another part of the High Court.

### **Nature of the work**

Depending on the preferences expressed by applicants, it is intended that there will be JAs assigned to Judges of the High Court across the three Divisions of the Court.

JAs will be placed with a judge or judges working in their chosen specialisation or one of their chosen specialisations. JAs will assist the judge(s) to whom they are allocated, for example by carrying out research, marking up and summarising case documents and transcripts, summarising submissions and discussing cases and hearings and providing general support for the judge(s) in the organisation of their work and hearings.

The role of judicial assistant offers those in the early years of their professional practice a ringside view of the trial process and first instance decision-making from the perspective of the judge, for the most complex, high value and often high profile civil and family cases.

The majority of the work will be based in London, but JAs may have the opportunity (but will not be required) to go on circuit.

### **Suitability**

There is no fixed profile for a successful candidate, but typically the candidate will have graduated with an excellent degree (2:1 or above) and have practical experience in legal research and writing. Experience gained in the early years of practice – from either arm of the legal profession - is also desirable, though candidates with comparable early years' experience (for example in academia) are also eligible to apply.

Candidates should understand that a judicial assistant works full-time. It is not possible to conduct professional practice or to devote significant time to external study while working as a judicial assistant.

### **Skills and qualifications**

Excellent intellectual and legal ability is essential. The role will involve discussions with High Court judges on difficult points of law and procedure. Successful candidates will also have demonstrated an ability to formulate detailed legal arguments and opinions based on research and excellent written and oral communication skills

The role of judicial assistant will also require candidates to manage involvement in multiple cases, some of them very large and involving extensive evidence. JAs will also be expected to provide assistance to their assigned judge(s) to tight deadlines. Successful candidates will therefore have demonstrated a capacity to work effectively under pressure of time.

IT skills, including in research, are also necessary criteria.

**Salary**

The salary offered to candidates employed by HMCTS is the pro rata equivalent of an annual salary of £30,389, payable monthly in arrears.

Successful candidates in private practice may invoice for a monthly fee, reflecting the rate paid to employed candidates and an adjustment to reflect the fact that they will not benefit from NI and pension contributions.

A secondment fee equivalent to the rate paid to employed candidates will be paid to the employer of successful candidates who are already in employment.