



Guidance for Candidates

The Inn is an inclusive and diverse professional community, the purpose of which is to support the rule of law and the effectiveness of the Bar through education, scholarships, qualification and other services. The Inn aims to achieve the highest standards in its operations and Benchers play a large part in the planning and delivery of these activities. Benchers are also expected to make an equally positive contribution to the affairs and the ethos of the Inn.

The Advisory (Benchers) Committee ('A(B)C') have been working to establish fair, transparent and auditable criteria and processes for the selection of candidates for Council's consideration for election. As part of this, all members of the A(B)C undergo fair selection training with a focus on conscious and unconscious bias.

The purpose of this guide is to enable members to better understand the criteria applied and the process followed by the A(B)C and by Council.

Applications

A Bench Register form can be completed electronically by clicking [here](#). If you require the Bench Register form in a different format please contact Amy Higgins, Manager, Bench Administration.

Your online application plays a key part in the selection process and it is important that they are kept up to date. You are strongly encouraged to create an account so that your form can be revised.

You will be assessed on the evidence provided on the form so please ensure you complete all required sections, ensuring the information you provide is clear and accurate.

Any information which is provided for purposes of monitoring data (page 2 of the Bench Register form) will only be used for statistical purposes in evaluating the process as a whole.

Eligibility

A member of the Inn is eligible if in practice as a self-employed barrister or as an employed barrister (as defined in the Bar Standards Board Handbook), a judge or a legal academic.

A member of the Inn is eligible for election as an ordinary bencher if he or she is of at least 15 years call. If admitted ad eundem a member must (in addition) have been a member for at least five years.

Timetable

Bench Register forms can be submitted and revised throughout the year. However, new and revised Bench Register forms are assessed by the A(B)C ahead of each election. To be considered ahead of the May 2020 election forms must be submitted by Friday 6 December 2019.

There are two elections held in each year. Vacancies for ordinary benchers are declared in January for the May election and July for the November election. The A(B)C select twice the number of candidates for consideration by Council. The A(B)C can put forward up to two non-practising (i.e. judicial or academic) candidates for each election.

Successful candidates will be notified after May or November Council.

Feedback

The A(B)C continue to monitor and review their processes annually and have made recommendations to the Governance Working Group as part of a wider review of the Inn's governance.

We welcome feedback from candidates on the application process. Any suggestions should be sent to [Amy Higgins](#), Manager, Bench Administration.

Criteria

The A(B)C have amended the criteria for selection to provide a more transparent system for those applying and to enable the Committee to apply an auditable marking process.

Primary Criteria

Standing in legal profession

Candidates are asked to provide a detailed history of their standing in the legal profession. Please give specific examples where relevant.

Promotion of Diversity

Given the Inn's commitment to recognising and encouraging diversity in all its fields of activity, we are asking the candidate to evidence a good understanding of diversity issues and their commitment to promoting diversity and equality of opportunity.

Examples could include sustained and significant conduct promoting diversity within the profession, an institution, or more generally. Membership of committees/organisations concerned with furtherance of diversity within the Bar, outreach work with schools, being involved in outreach initiatives such as mentoring students for the Social Mobility Foundation, the Sutton Trust; acting as a Networking Champion; organising events such as the Women's Forum.

Whilst a candidate's own background or characteristics might be a reason for their proactivity, being a member of an under-represented group is not of itself evidence.

Past contribution to the Inn/ legal profession

Candidates are asked to evidence work for the Inn/ legal profession. Example may include education activities for the Inn/ legal profession, pro-bono work, work for the Inn/ Inn Committees, the Bar Council, the BSB, Circuits, disciplinary tribunal work, Fees Committees, Chambers/ Organisation Committees, Specialist Bar Association Committees and Court/ HMCTS committees.

Assessors take into account length, nature and depth of service so candidates are asked to evidence effective involvement in their contributions, i.e., detail the specifics of the work under-taken with dates, where possible.

Secondary Criteria

Experience demonstrating suitability to be a Bencher

Evidence of:-

- Involvement and assistance outside of the Inn in other governance roles e.g. as a trustee or governor
- Positive ambassador for the Bar, the Inn and/or the wider legal profession.

Ability and willingness to serve the Inn

A strong likelihood that a candidate will make a positive contribution to the affairs of the Inn is best evidenced by previous participation in the affairs of the Inn or the legal profession. However, it is recognised that, on occasion, circumstances may have prevented the candidate from such previous participation. In such cases, the Committee take the candidate's particular circumstances fully into account and will look for evidence of a serious intention on the part of the candidate, if elected, to play an active part in the Inn's affairs.