



**Queen's Counsel Competition for England and Wales 2021
Guidance for Applicants**

All applications must be received by Queen's Counsel Appointments by 5pm on 31 March 2021. The Panel will not consider applications received after that.

About this Guidance

This Guidance is divided into two parts, together with two appendices.

Part One provides an overview of the way in which the competition will be conducted and what is required for an applicant to be recommended for appointment.

Part Two contains detailed Notes for Guidance on completion of the application form.

Appendix A: The Competency Framework

Appendix B: Guidance on Handling Issues of Character and Conduct

You are advised to read both parts of this guidance and the appendices carefully before starting to complete your application form - and to refer to the individual Guidance Notes as you complete the application form.



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Part One

Introduction

1. The purpose of the QC scheme is to identify for the benefit of users of legal services those advocates who are best qualified to represent clients in legal disputes of particular difficulty, complexity or sensitivity in the higher courts of England and Wales or in equivalent forums.

2. The award of Queen's Counsel is made for excellence in advocacy in cases of substance in the higher courts of England and Wales or in tribunals, arbitrations or other forums. All applicants must hold rights of audience in the higher courts and a current practising certificate. Applicants are judged against a Competency Framework (at Appendix A). In order to recommend appointment, the Queen's Counsel Selection Panel must find strong and consistent evidence of excellence in each of the competencies in cases of substance, complexity, or particular difficulty or sensitivity.

3. For the purposes of the QC appointment scheme, advocacy may be written or oral, though the Selection Panel will look for evidence of both. It must relate to developing and advancing a client's case to secure the best outcome for the client in a dispute. That outcome may, for example, be secured through arbitration, court determination or a settlement agreement.

4. There are no age requirements for applications; however, it is unlikely that an applicant will have acquired the necessary skills and expertise for appointment without extensive experience in legal practice.

5. For the purposes of the QC Appointment Scheme, an excellent advocate is one who, in particularly difficult, complex or sensitive cases in the field in which he or she practises:

- is up to date with the law, and able rapidly to apply the law to the facts of the case concerned;
- demonstrates that understanding through their written and oral advocacy – and is able to be persuasive on matters both of fact and law;
- conducts themselves in relation to their client, their opponents and the court in an exemplary fashion;
- demonstrates an excellent understanding of diversity and a commitment to improving diversity within the legal profession.



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6. The Selection Panel wishes to ensure that excellent higher courts advocates can secure appointment as QC whatever their area of specialism. Accordingly, the Selection Panel is flexible on such matters as the number of cases to be listed by applicants, provided there is a proper explanation for any shortfall, and subject to the over-riding requirement that no applicant can be recommended for appointment unless there is compelling evidence of their excellence in relation to all the competencies.

Selection Process

7. The selection process (i.e. the way the competition will be conducted) was agreed by the Law Society and the Bar Council and approved by the (then) Lord Chancellor. The Summary of Process document is available on our website at www.qcappointments.org.

8. Decisions in relation to applications, and the issuance of guidance for applicants and for assessors, are the responsibility of a Selection Panel, supported by a Secretariat. The Selection Panel and the Secretariat are independent of the General Council of the Bar, of the Law Society and of the Government. The Panel is made up of two retired senior judges, senior lawyers (including both barristers and solicitors) and distinguished lay (not legally qualified) people.

The Panel members who will make decisions in relation to the 2021 competition are:

- Sir Alex Allan (Chair)
- Christina Blacklaws
- Dr Douglas Board
- Rachel Langdale QC
- Sara Nathan OBE
- Dame Anne Rafferty PC
- Rosemary Rollason
- Dr Maggie Semple OBE
- Monisha Shah
- HH Phillip Sycamore CBE
- Andrew Walker QC



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9. The process for selecting QCs is based on evidence. Two Panel members (one lay and one legally qualified) will review each application including the list of important cases, narrative description of practice and self-assessment (from the application form), and the assessments from judicial, practitioner and client assessors, to establish a preliminary view on the evidence. All applicants will then be considered by the full Panel. Only those applicants in respect of whom it appears to the Panel, having considered the evidence from assessors, that there is a reasonable prospect of being recommended for appointment will be invited to interview. The remaining applicants will be notified that they have been unsuccessful. Interviews are conducted by one lay and one legally qualified Panel member. Decisions on which applicants should be recommended for appointment are made by the full Panel after reviewing all the evidence both from the assessments and from the interview. The list of recommended applicants will be passed to the Lord Chancellor. All unsuccessful applicants will receive personal feedback on their application.

10. In order to be appointed, applicants must demonstrate strong evidence of excellence in **both** Competency A (Understanding and Using the Law) **and** Competency B (Written and Oral Advocacy). They must also demonstrate “**strong evidence of excellence**” in either Competency C (Working with Others) or Competency D (Diversity) and “evidence of excellence” in the other competency.

11. The Selection Panel considers evidence from the applicant's self-assessment, from the assessments received from assessors and - for those applicants who are interviewed - from the interview. In respect of Competencies A and B, the evidence from assessments is the most significant element in the Panel's decision making. The Panel does not usually consider it appropriate to give more weight to evidence from a 40-minute interview than to the views of assessors who may have seen the applicant over a considerable time. The interview is thus primarily used to test the evidence from the assessments, and in some cases to resolve uncertainties arising from that evidence. Evidence from assessors is also important on Competencies C and D, but in practice there is often much less evidence from assessors on those competencies, in particular on Competency D. It is thus commonly the case that evidence drawn from the interview plays a more significant part in the Panel's decision making in relation to Competency C and, in particular, Competency D.

12. Applicants may also find it helpful to read the Selection Panel's report on the 2020 QC competition, which is published on the QCA website, www.qcappointments.org.



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Equal Treatment of Applicants

13. The Panel is committed to equality of opportunity in the appointments process. Applicants who meet the standard of excellence required of Queen's Counsel will be recommended for appointment on merit, regardless of age, disability (including mental health), gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality) religion or belief (including lack of belief), gender, or sexual orientation or any other extraneous factor such as educational background, political affiliation, carer responsibilities, career breaks, part-time working or earnings. Any information which is provided for purposes of monitoring data (Section J of the application form) will not be provided to the Panel and will only be used for statistical purposes in evaluating the process as a whole.

14. The Panel is particularly committed to ensuring that potential applicants who have a disability are not disadvantaged in the application process. Any applicant with particular needs should contact the Secretariat, who will make every effort to assist. For instance, QCA will, on request, fund the assistance of a reader, or make the application form and other information available in alternative formats for those who require it.

15. There are no quotas of any kind. All applicants are judged individually against a standard of excellence, supported by evidence.

Demonstration of the Competencies

16. The Panel is looking for evidence of demonstration of the competencies in cases of substance, complexity, or particular difficulty or sensitivity, in relation to the law and courts of England and Wales (or in international courts or tribunals in respect of law applicable in this country). The application form is intended to help applicants to present this effectively and succinctly. It does this by inviting them to provide:

- A list of their most important recent cases, ideally 12 cases;
- A narrative description of their practice;
- A self-assessment of their demonstration of each of the competencies in such cases;
- The names of potential assessors who have seen the applicant in action in such cases.

17. Applicants should note that Panel members consider it inappropriate to have personal contact with applicants in relation to their application for silk once the application has been submitted. Any enquiries an applicant may have should be raised through the QCA Secretariat.



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Applicants Practising Outside the Higher Courts of England and Wales

18. The QC appointment system is designed primarily to identify excellence in advocacy in the higher courts and tribunals of England and Wales, and in arbitrations in which the substantive law is the law of England and Wales. The competency criteria have been devised by reference to the attributes, skills and behaviours required by an excellent advocate in the higher courts of England and Wales. Advocates whose practice is primarily elsewhere are welcome to apply, provided they hold rights of audience in the higher courts of England and Wales. However, applicants can only be recommended for appointment if the Panel is satisfied that they are or would be excellent in relation to advocacy in the **higher courts (including tribunals) of England and Wales** and so evidence which comes from courts or tribunals other than those courts will only be relevant if and to the extent the Panel can be satisfied that it demonstrates competencies which are relevant to practice in England and Wales. (For example, evidence of good advocacy in a jurisdiction where advocacy is exclusively in writing could not provide relevant evidence of competency in oral advocacy; evidence from a jurisdiction in which advocates are rarely if ever asked questions by the tribunal could not provide relevant evidence of ability to handle such questions, which is an important aspect of oral advocacy in the higher courts of England and Wales). Applicants should give careful thought to the extent to which assessors they list drawn from advocacy in a jurisdiction other than the courts of England and Wales would be able to provide evidence which is relevant in demonstrating excellence in relation to advocacy in England and Wales.

19. The Selection Panel may be satisfied that applicants satisfy the criteria where it considers that the procedure in the forum in which the applicant predominantly practises is sufficiently similar to the procedure in the higher courts of England and Wales for the inference to be drawn that excellence in that forum is evidence of excellence in the courts of England and Wales, provided there are assessments from assessors on whom the Panel can confidently rely. That may apply, for example, to those who act as advocates primarily in arbitration proceedings conducted under the law of England and Wales, or to applicants practising in certain other common law jurisdictions.

20. Applicants may also be recommended for appointment where there is evidence of some aspects of excellent advocacy from the forum in which they principally practise and evidence of the other necessary attributes of excellent advocacy from some other forum. For example, an advocate who principally practises in a jurisdiction where judges do not generally ask questions of advocates orally may be recommended for appointment if there is also evidence of excellence in relation to that aspect of oral advocacy from the applicant's practice in the courts of England and Wales (if any), or from some other forum in which that skill can be demonstrated. However, **some** evidence in that aspect of advocacy is necessary, since answering questions from the tribunal is an essential element of excellence in advocacy in the courts of England and Wales.



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21. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the assessors listed can between them provide evidence to demonstrate excellence in relation to all the necessary attributes of excellent advocacy in the applicant's field of specialism in proceedings in the courts of England and Wales. Where the Panel cannot be satisfied that an applicant is or would be excellent in relation to proceedings in the higher courts of England and Wales, the Panel will not be able to recommend the applicant concerned for appointment, even if the applicant's excellence in relation to cases in the forum in which they primarily practise is beyond doubt.

22. Where applicants practising primarily outside England and Wales have some experience of work in cases of substance in the higher courts of England and Wales, they should list some such cases, even if their cases dealt with outside England and Wales are of greater substance, and even if the England and Wales cases were concluded more than four years ago.

23. The Selection Panel is not likely to recommend for appointment applicants who have no evident practical connection with the courts or tribunals in England and Wales, or with arbitration work conducted under England and Wales law, even if their performance in the areas in which they do practice is of a very high standard. The Selection Panel is particularly unlikely to recommend applicants in that category where it appears that they have available to them an alternative system for designating excellence as an advocate.

Submitting an Application

24. All applications and the application fee must be received by QCA **by 5pm on 31 March 2021**. The Panel will not consider applications received after this time. Guidance relating to the application form is in Part 2 of this guidance.

Previous Applications and Outstanding Complaints

25. Each competition is separate. Any previous applicant for silk may re-apply. The Selection Panel will not be informed that an applicant has applied previously (although this may become apparent through, for example, comments by an assessor). The Panel will not refer to an application, assessments, or interview record from a previous competition. All assessments will be sought afresh, although assessors may direct the Panel to their assessment in a previous competition if they have not seen the applicant since. However, if there has been a serious unresolved concern relating to character or integrity on a previous application, the Panel may have recourse to the earlier documentation in relation to that issue.



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26. Any applicant who makes a complaint in relation to the 2020 competition may apply on the same basis as any other applicant. Panel members are not informed of the names of applicants with outstanding complaints during the competition (unless that arises from the Complaints Committee's consideration of the complaint). Where an outstanding complaint relates to the action or decision of a Panel member, the Secretariat will ensure that, so far as possible, that Panel member is not directly involved in the new application.

Confidentiality

27. We will not disclose that an individual has made an application without their agreement, except so far as is necessary for the application to be processed. If applicants need to contact us about their application once it has been received, they may be asked to verify their identity. We will not use the information applicants give us except in connection with the processing and consideration of applications or with the consent of the applicant.

28. At the end of the competition, we inform the Lord Chancellor (via his officials in the Ministry of Justice) of the names of unsuccessful applicants. For successful applicants, we inform the Lord Chancellor of the date of birth and basic professional information such as the applicant's chambers, firm or other employer. We may also publish the professional information (but not the date of birth), or disclose it to enquirers. We do not disclose applicants' self-assessments, or the names of their assessors, to anyone.

Handling of Information

29. We will process applicants' details and other information provided about them, in a fair and lawful manner. However, applications for appointment to QC are exempt from the subject information provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. QCA is not subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

30. Information supplied by applicants, assessors or others may be held in electronic and paper form and will be used in relation to the QC competition and for quality control, training, review or audit purposes only. Our IT consultants may also have access to data in electronic form in the course of their work. Once the selection process has been completed the application form, paper copies of assessments and other paper records will generally be retained until after the subsequent competition and then destroyed.

Timetable

31. The Selection Panel is likely to seek assessments from assessors from the middle of April onwards. Those applicants who are invited to interview are likely to be informed on 10 September. Interviews are likely to take place between 20 September and mid-October. There is no set date on which results of the competition will be



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announced but the Panel is aiming to complete the competition in time for the announcement of appointments to be made in December 2021, although this cannot be guaranteed. We will inform applicants of the outcome of their application before the public announcement.

Professional assistance with application and interview

32. The Panel is aware that some applicants seek professional help in preparing their application form and/or for interview. The application procedure, including interview, is intended to allow excellent applicants to be identified without the need for outside assistance. However, the Panel recognises that applicants may have little experience of a competency-based appointments process, or in particular of competency-based interviews and so may well find it helpful to seek advice from colleagues who have applied for appointment in recent years, where such advice is available. Applicants called to interview who do not have access to such advice might gain as much from a short discussion with an HR professional (who need not specialise in the law) or from limited coaching on the nature of such interviews.

33. Expensive, intensive rehearsal can be counter-productive. The Panel seeks an authentic and nuanced picture of the applicant. At interview (if applicable), it does not look for a “word perfect” performance, but an honest and succinct account of skills deployed in professional life. It wishes the applicant to show the same skills as they display in their day-to-day work, albeit in a different forum. “Standard” or “idealised” answers (to provide what it is thought the Panel may want to hear) give a poor impression and may obscure the more positive evidence the applicant has to give.

Problems or Complaints

34. In the first instance, a problem should be referred to the Chief Executive of QCA. If the problem or concern relates to the Chief Executive or cannot be resolved by him, the problem may, once the outcome of the competition has been announced, be addressed to the Chair of the Panel. The Chair will not deal with any problems, complaints or correspondence from applicants until after the results of the competition have been announced. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the way in which the Chief Executive, or (where relevant) the Chair has dealt with a matter, he or she is entitled to refer the matter to the independent Complaints Committee.

35. The Complaints Committee is independent of the Queen's Counsel appointment process. Its role is to consider complaints raised by an applicant about the way in which the Panel and the Secretariat have handled an application, or concerns that the Panel has not applied its procedures properly. It is not able to substitute its opinion or judgement for that of the Panel. The Complaints Committee will consider complaints after the end of the competition. Complaints must be raised in writing no later than 60 calendar days following the announcement of the outcome of the competition.



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Improving the Process

36. Regardless of the outcome of applications, we value feedback on the application form, this Guidance, and on the operation of the process. We welcome feedback in any convenient form at any time and will take all feedback into consideration. It will be provided to the Panel only in anonymous form and will not have a bearing on the outcome of any application. We will also conduct a survey of applicants at the end of the competition.

The Secretariat and further assistance

37. Any prospective applicant who would like further information on anything regarding the application form or the appointments process, should contact:

Queen's Counsel Appointments
16 Red Lion Square, London WC1R4QH.
Telephone: 0207 831 0020
Email: applications@qcappointments.org

38. Further information is also available on our website www.qcappointments.org. Please feel free to contact us at any time if you have any questions about your application. The website will be updated as necessary and as the competition progresses.

Part Two of the Guidance follows. It contains detailed guidance on the completion of the application form.

QC Secretariat
February 2021



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Part Two

Detailed guidance on completing the application form is below. Relevant extracts from the Guidance may also be accessed from the button at the foot of each page of the online form.

- 1. Letters Patent** are issued by The Queen to successful applicants. Please note that (unless you advise the Secretariat otherwise using Section G - *Other Information*) the surname and forename(s) which you provide will be the names which will appear on your Letters Patent if you are successful. Accordingly, your professional surname will appear if you use your professional surname on your application form. If you have middle names which you omit from the application form, these will not appear on the Letters Patent. If we should ever send you correspondence in which there is an error in your name, please let us know so that we can ensure that any error is not carried through to the Letters Patent.
- 2.** To prevent confusion with other applicants, we will use an **ID number** as well as your name. This is your Bar Council Reference or Law Society Roll number. It will help us if you are able to quote it if you telephone or write to us. If you do not know your Roll or Reference number, contact the records section of your professional body.
- 3.** When we contact you, we will use the **forename(s) and surname** and the email you supply on the registration page. If any of these details change during the course of the competition, please inform the Secretariat immediately.
- 4.** Ensure that the **email address** you wish to use is regularly monitored. We will use this when we need to contact you, for example to arrange an interview or to give information from time to time on the progress of the competition. You may also wish to ensure that @qcappointments.org is set as a 'safe sender'.
- 5.** You are invited to indicate your **preferred location for any interview** (if applicable). While your wishes will be taken into account, we cannot guarantee your preferred location. We expect to be holding interviews in London and Manchester. We currently expect interviews to take place from 20 September to mid-October 2021. We will try to avoid any dates on which you have unbreakable other commitments, but we cannot guarantee to do so.



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The interview (if applicable) will be conducted by two members of the Panel (one lay and one legally qualified). The interview will seek further evidence as to the competencies to add to, or to help the Panel assess, the information already available from your application form and assessments. The Panel will probe for examples of excellence. The interview provides applicants with a further opportunity to 'shine'. It is not determinative, but one part of the evidence which will then be considered as a whole before the Panel reaches a decision.

Applicants who are interviewed but are unsuccessful will receive written feedback at the conclusion of the competition.

6. Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for Queen's Counsel, you must either:

- (a) Have been called to the Bar of England and Wales and hold a current practising certificate; or
- (b) Be a solicitor of the Senior Courts of England and Wales and hold higher court rights of audience and a current practising certificate.

7. Your **date of call or admission** may be used in determining the order in which you are called to make the declaration before the Lord Chancellor (if appointed to silk). If you cannot provide the exact date, you will be regarded as being called or admitted on the last day of the month or year given. The list of successful applicants published by QCA will be in alphabetical order.

8. We will inform all interviewed applicants of the outcome as soon as we are able to do so. The list of successful applicants will be published after The Queen has given her approval. That publication will also indicate the broad field(s) of law in which each successful applicant practises. Publication of this information is not intended to restrict the fields in which the applicant appointed as QC may practise.

9. Character Issues

Before completing Section C, you should read Appendix B, which sets out the Panel's approach to handling issues of character and conduct.

Those appointed QC are expected to conduct themselves at all times in their personal and professional lives in a manner which will maintain public confidence. Section C requires you to declare any findings or pending matters relating to criminal convictions, complaints of professional misconduct, or other similar issues. The Panel may take any such matters into account together with the evidence available to it on the competencies. You should inform the Secretariat as soon as the prospect of criminal proceedings, a complaint, or another issue arises.



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As regards **criminal convictions**, the Panel has agreed the following:

- (a) Minor motoring offences where the applicant was not obliged to appear in court should be disregarded. However, any motoring offence resulting in disqualification, including under totting up, should be disclosed.
- (b) Any conviction for an offence of dishonesty or resulting in a term of imprisonment will be of serious concern and is likely to preclude appointment.
- (c) Any other unspent conviction or bind over will be considered on its individual merits.

10. The Panel will only consider **cases of professional negligence** where an applicant has been at fault. Where a claim against you has been dismissed, it should not be disclosed. Where a claim has been settled, you should disclose the terms on which it was settled and indicate clearly whether and to what extent you have accepted liability.

Findings of negligence and cases where the applicant appears to have been at fault will be assessed taking into account the degree of loss and the importance of the matter to the client, along with any other relevant factors.

11. Findings of professional disciplinary fault may be relevant to Competency E (Integrity), as showing prima facie a failure to honour professional codes. They will be treated on a case-by-case basis having regard to factors such as the penalty imposed; how recently the conduct occurred; and whether the client or any other person suffered loss or harm.

12. Wasted costs orders will be considered with regard to the reason given for the order being made, the amount involved and the length of time since the order was made.

13. Other matters dealt with by a professional body. If you are unsure whether or not to include a possible character issue, please contact the QCA Secretariat.

14. Complaints which have been referred to the Legal Ombudsman do not need to be disclosed unless the Legal Ombudsman has made an adjudication which is adverse to you.

15. A current or recent (i.e. within five years of discharge) Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA) or bankruptcy or other order will be of concern. An undischarged order may well preclude appointment. An order which has been discharged may still be a bar to appointment, particularly where there is an indication of reckless conduct leading to the bankruptcy or IVA. However, all such cases will be considered with regard to the totality of the circumstances (of which the Panel will require full details to be submitted).



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16. You should disclose any matter not covered by the above categories but which a reasonable person would regard as material to your application, having regard to the general criteria mentioned above. An example would be a foreign criminal conviction, or an order of a court or tribunal outside of the UK.

17. You should disclose anything else whether related to your professional or personal life, which could affect your standing or reputation, or could affect your suitability for appointment as QC.

18. Panel member recusals

You should complete Section D and mark the box if you consider that a member of the Panel should be recused from considering your application. Applicants' reasons for suggesting recusal will be carefully considered, but it is for QCA to determine whether a Panel member should be recused. If a matter arises in the course of the competition which might make a recusal appropriate, please contact the Secretariat promptly.

You should be aware that Panel members will also recuse themselves from dealing with a particular application if they feel it appropriate to do so by virtue of a close connection with an applicant, such as through being a member of the same chambers or firm, being a personal friend, or through significant close contact in the course of their recent professional life.

19. Section E: Summary Description of Practice

The award of silk is for advocacy in the higher courts of England and Wales. To merit recommendation for appointment, the competencies must be demonstrated to a standard of excellence in the applicant's professional life in cases of substance, complexity, or particular difficulty or sensitivity ('cases of substance').

The summary description of practice should set out your recent practice so that the Panel can understand the context in which it is considering your readiness for silk. The narrative description of practice, the case list and the self-assessment will be considered by the Panel. They are your opportunity to 'speak' directly to the Panel members to ensure that they have a clear picture of your practice and to show how you consider that you meet each of the competencies.



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Do include:

- What you consider are your specialism(s) and what proportion of your professional time these represent.
- In which jurisdiction and/or court(s) you most regularly appear.
- An overview of the main types of cases you have been involved with in the last four years, including any cases of substance which are not amongst your listed cases.
- The frequency with which you attend court as an advocate.
- Why you consider the 12 cases you have named to be particularly important or noteworthy, with an indication of their outcome.
- A brief explanation if you need to go back further than the last four years (i.e. before 2017) to name your 12 important cases or if you are able to name fewer than 12 cases.
- Whether you normally appear for a particular party e.g. prosecution/defence.
- If you have not identified a judicial or a practitioner assessor in any of your listed cases, please briefly explain why.
- Any reasons why your practice in the last few years may have been atypical.
- Any other relevant factual information.

Do not include in your narrative summary:

- References to you in legal directories or elsewhere.
- Assertions about your standing or reputation in the profession.
- Any reference to sitting as an arbitrator or in a judicial capacity.
- Details of your earnings.
- Any issues of character. (These should be identified in Section C.)

20. Competencies

General

The Competency Framework for the 2021 competition is at Appendix A. In order to be recommended for appointment, you must demonstrate strong and consistent evidence of excellence across all of the competencies. The Panel reaches its conclusions on the *evidence* of the degree to which excellence in each competency is demonstrated.

The Panel require your own assessment of how you demonstrate the competencies. Your self-assessment forms part of the evidence the Panel will consider in determining the outcome of your application.



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Except in relation to the diversity competency, the Panel will in general wish to consider primarily examples drawn from your work as an advocate, rather than in any other capacity, including sitting as a judge or arbitrator, work on behalf of your professional body or similar, or work on legal textbooks.

It is important that you do not just re-state the competencies and the corresponding examples. Specific instances are required, not generalities. Merely asserting that you are always good at something or making reference to your reputation or the opinion of others is not of assistance. Instead, give examples that demonstrate your abilities, and explain how you did something and with what result.

The space in respect of each competency (and in respect of each of the written and oral advocacy aspects of Competency B) is restricted. You should be aware that each text box provided has a capped character limit to the size of the box shown, and this cannot be exceeded. **The Panel will not consider information continued on a separate sheet or elsewhere in the form.**

The self-assessment will not be shown to assessors.

21. Competency A: Understanding and using the law

Understanding and using the law requires applicants not only to have up-to-date legal knowledge and to use it accurately and relevantly, but also to become familiar with new areas of law quickly and reliably. It is important that applicants should to the extent possible provide evidence in their self-assessment of their ability to deal with new areas of law, or new developments in their specialist field.

Where applicants practise in a field of law on which the Welsh Assembly has the authority to legislate, applicants will need to demonstrate knowledge of any relevant differences in the law between England and Wales.

22. Competency B: Written and Oral Advocacy

Advocacy may be in written or oral form but must relate to developing or advancing a client's or employer's case to secure the best outcome in the dispute. That outcome may, for example, be secured through arbitration, court determination or a settlement agreement. Oral advocacy includes advocacy in a court or tribunal, mediation, arbitration or in negotiation.



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The Panel looks both at the written (Competency B1) and oral (Competency B2) aspects of advocacy in deciding its view of the competency overall. The outcome for Competency B overall is not reached through aggregating or averaging the scores for the two aspects, but reflects the Panel's judgement on the applicant's written and oral advocacy taken together, bearing in mind the relative importance of the two elements of advocacy in the applicant's practice.

There needs to be **some** evidence of excellence demonstrated in oral advocacy before an applicant can be recommended for appointment. However, the Panel recognises that not all applicants will have had the opportunity to undertake a great deal of oral advocacy and takes into account the type of practice in coming to its decision.

Except for applicants whose specialist area does not involve examination of witnesses, the Selection Panel places particular importance on applicants being able to demonstrate excellence in examination-in-chief and cross-examination of witnesses. It is unlikely to be sufficient for the applicant simply to state that they do not intend to deal with cases involving examination of witnesses.

There is no specific requirement as to the amount of written or of in-court advocacy so long as there is sufficient evidence for the Panel to reach a conclusion as to the extent to which an applicant demonstrates excellence in each of the competencies.

23. Competency C: Working with Others

Working with Others covers establishing productive relationships with others involved in the case; leading the legal team; and demonstrating the behaviours expected of advocates in their dealings with others involved in the case. This includes high standards of professionalism and appropriate collaboration with and respect for all others involved in the case.

The Panel's experience is that applicants often deal with the first element of the competency in their self-assessment to the virtual exclusion of evidence about leadership. It is important for applicants to cover leadership in their self-assessment.

The Panel is looking for evidence of leadership of the legal team of the sort which would normally be expected of Queen's Counsel. Experience of leading other advocates is potentially particularly helpful, but the Selection Panel recognises that in many fields of law it is difficult for junior counsel to get the opportunity to demonstrate that. Leadership of a small team, together with a clear understanding of what is required to lead a larger team effectively, can be sufficient to meet the requirements of this competency.



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24. Competency D: Diversity

The purpose of the **Diversity** competency is to ensure that all those recommended for appointment have a good understanding of diversity issues, that they demonstrate appropriate behaviours in their professional life, **and** that they are proactive on diversity matters. The competency is not of itself intended to promote the appointment of under-represented groups. Accordingly, being a member of an under-represented group is not of itself evidence (or even an indication) that an individual meets the standard required on this competency.

In providing evidence on diversity, please provide **both** evidence of an understanding of diversity issues, including those affecting the profession as well as those affecting users of legal services, **and** evidence of proactivity. You are not required to rely simply on your listed cases. You may draw on the wider aspects of your professional life, including work in chambers or your firm, or outreach work with schools from which pupils have not often entered the legal profession in the past, but evidence should still come primarily from your professional life.

Pro bono work can provide useful evidence in relation to the diversity competency, and you are welcome to include one or more pro bono cases within your 12 listed cases if they provide good evidence in respect of one or more of the competencies.

25. Competency E: Integrity

The highest standards of **integrity** are expected of all advocates. Whether or not seeking appointment as Queen's Counsel, all advocates should meet these standards, and should expect to do so as a matter of course as part of their professional life. The Selection Panel regards the integrity competency as being satisfied unless there is evidence to the contrary. There is thus normally no need to set out examples of how you meet this competency.

26. Section G: Other information

If you consider the Panel should be aware of your personal circumstances in order fairly to consider your application, you should outline all relevant circumstances in Section G. Please do not include information concerning character matters in this section.

You should also include here details of the name in which Letters Patent should be issued if you are successful in the competition where this differs from the name by which you are generally known in your professional life which you gave at the start of the form.

This section must not be used to circumvent the character limit in other boxes. Material in this section which should have been included in other sections of the application form will not be passed to Panel members.



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27. If you have a disability and wish the Panel to take this into account in considering your application, you should include information at Section G about the impact of your disability on your practice as well as information about the adjustments which could mitigate this impact. Referring to a disability on the monitoring form is not sufficient – the monitoring forms are not seen by members of the Selection Panel and are used for statistical purposes only. You can withdraw your consent to the use of any information about disability you provide in Section G, or on the monitoring form, at any time.

28. The Panel will wish to make adjustments to ensure that any shortage of cases arising from the impact of a disability is not counted against an applicant, provided there is enough evidence to make a proper judgement about the extent to which the applicant demonstrates the competencies. The Panel will also wish to make any adjustments to the interview process necessary to ensure that an applicant is not disadvantaged by a disability.

29. The Competency Framework for appointment as QC is a competency standard within the meaning of the Equalities Act, and the Selection Panel will not generally make an adjustment in respect of any impact which a disability may have on the **quality** of an applicant's work, as defined in the Competency Framework. However, where a disability has had an adverse impact on the quality of performance in some cases in the past, but the Panel is confident that that adverse impact is unlikely to recur in the future (for example if the issue is now effectively treated by medication), the Selection Panel may well be willing to recommend the applicant for appointment if the evidence from other cases and assessors is sufficiently strong. Where an applicant considers that this may be the case, they should specify in Section G the nature of the impact and the cases to which it is relevant.

30. Section H: List of Important Cases

In this section, you should provide a list of the 12 (if possible) cases of substance that you have dealt with, generally in the **past four years**, which provide the best evidence of your excellence in relation to the competencies, together with information about your role as an advocate in the case and the names of potential assessors drawn from the case. (The Panel usually asks for evidence drawn from the past three years, but for 2021 has extended the preferred period to four years because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.)

This will not be shown to assessors.

If you wish to list a case, but its name or details are not in the public domain (e.g. because of security issues) or is confidential for other reasons, you should refer to the case details in such a way that it may be identified by your assessors, and so that the Panel can be clear when you are referring to that case.



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The Panel is looking for your demonstration of the competencies in cases of substance. The Panel will have regard to the case, and your role in it, and the degree of challenge and how you dealt with it. The Panel draws a distinction between “run of the mill” cases (which may have important consequences for the immediate client, but may present limited legal or other professional challenge) and those cases which present unusual, novel or unforeseen complexities or have consequences beyond the case.

Not all hearings in self-evidently important or substantial cases will themselves necessarily raise the same challenge or substance as the case as a whole. In order to provide useful evidence for the Panel it is necessary **both** for the case as a whole to be an important or substantial matter **and** for your role in it to have involved challenging and substantial work. It is important that you describe **your** role in the case, rather than merely explaining why the case itself was substantial.

Applicants are not excluded from consideration just because one or two of their cases do not appear to be “substantial” in this sense. However, evidence from cases which are not regarded as substantial will not be given as much weight as evidence from substantial cases, and if a significant amount of the evidence on a particular applicant comes from cases which are not regarded as cases of substance, the Panel is not likely to feel able to recommend the applicant concerned for appointment.

Examples of the types of case which may present the characteristics of a case of substance are listed below.

- A substantive appeal before the Court of Appeal;
- A case that has been reported in a series of law reports;
- A test case on a point of law, or one that sets a precedent;
- A serious, demanding or sensitive criminal case involving, for example, a fatality, or complex forensic evidence;
- A contested case determining the removal of a child from one or both parents;
- A case on which the employment of a workforce of a significant size depends;
- A planning or other public inquiry of national importance or raising complex issues of law.

However, the fact that a case includes one or more of the features above will not necessarily make it a matter of substance. The question of substance is a matter for the judgement of the Selection Panel, informed by the views of the assessors from the case.

It is important for the Panel to gain a rounded picture of your practice as a whole. It is therefore important that you should if possible list 12, rather than fewer, of the most important cases you have dealt with over the last four years.



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The Panel is aware that in some areas of specialism applicants may well have been engaged as advocate in fewer than 12 cases of substance over the previous four years. The Panel also recognises that some applicants may have had a career break for all or part of the period concerned. The Panel wishes to ensure that applicants in those categories are not disadvantaged, subject to the over-riding need for the Panel to satisfy itself that there is sufficient evidence of excellence in each of the competencies before recommending an applicant for appointment. Accordingly, applicants may list cases which were concluded more than four years ago when they would otherwise be unable to list 12 cases of substance. However, applicants need to be aware that assessors' memories of cases from earlier cases may have faded.

Applicants may also list a case which is more than four years old (at applicants' own risk as to the memory of the assessors listed in respect of the case) if the case provides particularly powerful evidence of advocacy in a substantial case which cannot readily be replicated by a more recent case.

Applicants should explain the reasons if they are unable to list 12 cases. If no satisfactory explanation is given for any shortfall in cases, the Panel may conclude that the applicant prefers the Panel not to see a rounded picture of their practice. If you are likely to list far fewer than 12 cases it may be helpful to discuss the matter with the Chief Executive before submitting your application.

In listing cases, you need to consider the ability of the Selection Panel to obtain useful evidence about your performance in the case concerned. It is particularly important that there should be a judicial or a practitioner assessor (and preferably both) who will have enough information about your performance to provide a worthwhile assessment.

It is also important that your listed cases should enable you to name at least six different judicial and six different practitioner assessors. If the nature of your practice makes that impossible because your significant cases are all heard by a very small number of judges, please explain that on the application form.

You may include cases of substance which settle or are otherwise resolved without a court determination, provided that they potentially provide evidence from assessors as to the degree to which you meet some of the competencies.

In addition to the names of your cases, give the dates of your involvement and indicate the role you played. A drop-down menu provides for three options: 'was led', 'case leader' or 'alone' (e.g. sole advocate). Select the description that best matches the role you predominantly played. The Panel accepts that it is often difficult to reflect the



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complexities of the conduct of litigation in such brief terms. You can elaborate on your role if necessary in the narrative description of practice.

Cases should in general each be listed only once: you should not, for example, list a case separately for a first instance hearing and an appeal unless substantially different issues arose. However, where different issues heard by different judges **did** arise at the various stages of a case, it may be appropriate to list the case twice.

You should not list a case unless there will have been, by the time assessments are sought in April-May 2021, a sufficiently substantive hearing or other development to enable assessors to give a worthwhile assessment.

Please feel free to contact the Chief Executive if you are uncertain as to the best approach to take to the listing of cases in your particular circumstances.

31. Section I Judicial, Practitioner and Client Assessors

General

You need to provide the names of assessors in three categories: judicial, practitioner, and client. (The meanings of these terms are explained below.) In all, the Panel will be seeking nine assessments; four from judges/arbitrators, three from practitioners and two from clients, all in writing. Your assessors will be selected in connection with your 12 major cases, as set out in your list of cases (Section E). You may not subsequently put forward the names of additional assessors who were not named in your application form.

If any of your assessors informs us they are unable to give an assessment, another assessor from the same category will be approached.

Assessments will only be accepted in English.

32. Number of assessors

Applicants are expected to name a judicial and a practitioner assessor from each of their listed cases; and at least six client assessors from those cases. It is important to explain if you are unable to provide a judicial or a practitioner assessor in respect of a particular case. It is not acceptable to fail to list a judicial or a practitioner assessor in a case because you do not consider they are in a good position to provide an assessment, or because you believe they may be unwilling to provide an assessment. You must list a judicial and practitioner assessor for each case unless there was no judge or fellow advocate (as the case may be) involved in the case, or if you know the potential assessor to be deceased. The Panel is likely to regard failure to list a judicial or practitioner assessor without good reason as indicating a wish to prevent the Selection Panel hearing from potentially relevant assessors.



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The Panel recognises that in some fields of practice a case may be of considerable substance and thus merit listing even if there was no substantial court or arbitration hearing in the case. It is entirely legitimate for such cases to be listed even though there will be no judicial assessor. The Panel also recognises that there will on occasion be no professional advocate in the case apart from the applicant; it is legitimate for those cases to be listed as well.

However, applicants should seek to avoid listing a large number of cases in which it is not possible to list an assessor in one category or another. The Panel needs to collect four judicial, three practitioner and two client assessments on every applicant and it is important that the Panel should where possible have a number of potential assessors to choose from, since the Panel may otherwise get the impression that the applicant is seeking unduly to constrain the Panel's choice of assessor. It is preferable to list some cases in which a judge has seen you in a substantial matter more than three years ago, rather than listing a large number of cases in which there is no judicial assessor.

Where for any reason the Panel is not able to obtain sufficient assessments the applicant is likely to be at a disadvantage.

Naming of Assessors

Assessors are not asked to be supporters of an applicant, but to give evidence as to how the applicant demonstrates the competencies. Assessments are a crucial component of the evidence to inform the Panel's decision.

Assessors will be selected from among those you list on the basis of their experience of your work as an advocate. Apart from provisions set out in the agreed Process for checks with the professional bodies about disciplinary matters and with the senior judges in relation to the integrity competency, the Panel will not seek, and would not consider, any input from any other source.

All assessments will be taken on the basis that they are confidential to the assessor, the Selection Panel, and the Secretariat. Assessments are given in confidence and no applicant will be entitled to see any assessment, or be informed of the names of those who provided assessments, whether or not the application is successful. **The Panel regards it as improper for applicants to ask assessors for sight of any assessment the assessor may provide on them.**



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Informing your Assessors

There is no need to seek an assessor's permission before listing them on the form. You are in any event required to list both a judicial and a practitioner assessor from each listed case irrespective of whether the individual concerned is willing to provide an assessment.

It is helpful for assessors to have available to them copies of any written submissions which you may have made in the course of the case, in order to refresh their memory. Accordingly, the Selection Panel suggests that once you have submitted your application, you might let assessors know that you have listed them as a potential assessor and enclose a copy of any written submissions in the case concerned.

You should not lobby assessors for support. The Panel regards it as improper for applicants to seek to influence assessors' views, including by providing suggested wording to use in an assessment. Assessors have been asked to inform us if they should receive any approaches of that sort.

The Panel does recognise that, prior to applying, you may wish to seek advice on whether you are ready to apply for silk, and that those best placed to provide such advice may well be potential assessors. There is no objection to such contact.

Please do not chase assessors to check whether they have been asked for, or have provided, an assessment. QCA will carry out any necessary chasing of assessors. QCA has in recent years obtained well over 99% of the maximum possible number of assessments. You should however notify QCA if you become aware after submitting your application that the contact details for an assessor have changed.

Assessors Selected by the Panel

Other assessors (i.e., not nominated ones) will be chosen from among those listed on the application form. The Panel will be looking for those assessors who appear most likely to be able to provide useful evidence for the Panel. Assessors will be asked to speak in particular to your demonstration of the competencies in the cases listed on the application form, but they will also be asked to draw on any other first-hand evidence they may have of your performance as an advocate.



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Other Considerations in relation to Assessors

You should not list as an assessor:

- (a) Any current or former family member or partner.
- (b) A godparent.
- (c) The Attorney General or the Solicitor General for England and Wales.
- (d) Any person whom you know to be unable to give an assessment for reasons of ill health.

Unless there is no sensible alternative, you should not list as an assessor a member of the Panel who will deal with the 2021 competition. However, if such an individual has experience of your work which cannot be replicated by a different assessor, it is acceptable to list them. A Panel member who provides an assessment of an applicant in the competition will play no part in the Panel's discussions or decision making about the applicant concerned.

It is also preferable not to list persons with whom you have a close personal relationship. However, if you consider that because of their role in relation to the listed cases it is necessary to do so, you should state the nature of the relationship.

You should also indicate whether a prospective assessor has or has had a close professional relationship with you.

Examples of relationships that must be disclosed as "own chambers" assessors on the application form include:

- someone who has been in your chambers or firm at the same time as you.
- a partner, employee or associate of your firm, or any organisation that employs you.
- an arbitrator appointed by your firm (whether in the case concerned or not, and whether or not you were involved in the appointment).
- your former pupil master, pupil supervisor or training principal.

33. We normally contact assessors by email, but sometimes by post. We therefore need current direct email addresses. Current direct telephone numbers are also helpful.

If you are unable to obtain a direct email for a judicial assessor please add dummy@qcappointments.org and we will make every effort to obtain the email address. Please ensure you tell us in which court the judge was sitting, if possible.



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Assessors will be asked to provide a confidential written assessment including examples in relation to each of the competencies. A copy of the assessment form and the Guidance for Assessors will be available on the QCA website in due course. Assessments will be accepted only in response to a request from us; unsolicited references and testimonials will not be accepted.

34. Nominated Assessors

You are asked to nominate two assessors in each category of assessor (judicial, practitioner and client). The first choice of nominated assessor in each category will be invited to provide an assessment. If it is not possible to obtain an assessment from the first nominated assessor, the second choice will be approached instead. In practice, we almost always obtain assessments from one of the two nominated assessors in each category for all applicants.

If we secure an assessment from the first nominated assessor in a particular category, the second nominated assessor will be treated in the same way as the other listed assessors; the second nominated assessor is neither more likely nor less likely than the other potential assessors listed to be asked for an assessment.

Please note that we will **not** approach a nominated assessor who is not eligible (for example, a spouse, or someone who does not have first-hand experience of an applicant in a relevant case, or someone is not a valid assessor in the category in which they were listed).

Please note that if you name your nominated assessor more than once, you can only check "nominated" on the first occasion. On any subsequent listings you will need to check "not nominated". The assessor will nevertheless be sent details of all the cases for which you have listed them.

35. Information for Assessor

The pages in Section I contain the information that will be sent to the assessor. The Panel will use it to understand your role in relation to the assessor and the case, and the assessor will use it to understand the context in which they have been named and to help recall their experience of your work. This is the only information from the application form that the assessor will see. You should give the dates on which your involvement in each case began and ended. Approximate dates (month and year) are sufficient.



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The case description should explain briefly the nature of the case, including any especially difficult or challenging aspects, and any special considerations, for example if the law applied by the court or tribunal in the case was not that of England and Wales.

In the box below the “description of case” you should

- Indicate to what extent you were led, were alone (e.g., sole advocate) or were the case leader;
- Give the role of the assessor (unless obvious e.g., trial judge);
- Set out the nature of your role (including the extent of your written and oral advocacy, or contribution to documentation);
- Say how long the assessor observed you in this role, in particular how much of your oral advocacy the assessor saw;
- Say how frequently this assessor sees you “in action”;
- Mention any relationship you have with this assessor.

The explanation of your role should clearly show what **you** did in the case in relation to the assessor. For example, in the case of a judge, you should state whether he or she would have read your written submissions or heard oral argument from you, or observed your cross-examination, and over what period.

Each text box provided has a capped character limit which cannot be exceeded. **The Panel will not consider information continued on a separate sheet or elsewhere in the form, nor will it be forwarded to assessors.**

The assessors' names and judicial office (if any) for judicial and practitioner assessors, and the firm or organisation for client assessors, on the *Information for Assessor* pages in Section I will be completed automatically for you, based on information you have entered on the *Contact Details* page for that assessor. You will not be able to overwrite or alter the information in these fields, except by amending the original entry on the previous page.

36. Judicial Assessors

You are asked to list at least one judicial assessor from each of your listed cases.

All persons acting in a judicial capacity are eligible to give judicial assessments. However, the award of Queen's Counsel is made for excellence in advocacy in the higher courts and tribunals of England and Wales, or in arbitrations or other forums in which the substantive law is the law of England and Wales. It follows that the assessors to whom the Panel can attach most weight are those with best experience of advocacy in cases of substance or complexity in those forums. Accordingly, the Panel may well



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give more weight to assessments provided by assessors who have good experience of what is expected of advocates in those forums, particularly judges from the higher courts in England and Wales. If you are considering listing one or more judicial assessor from outside England and Wales, you should give careful thought to the extent to which the prospective assessor(s) are likely to be able to give evidence of excellence in relation to the competencies required for recommendation for appointment as QC in England and Wales.

You should name at least one judicial assessor from each listed case unless no judge was involved. Where there is more than one possible judge who could be listed, please list whichever judge has the most exposure to your work in cases of substance.

Although because of their particular familiarity with what is expected of QCs, assessments from High Court Judges or more senior judges can be particularly helpful, it is not sensible to list a senior judge who has only a fleeting acquaintance with your work in preference to a more junior judge who has had much greater exposure to it. Each year, a significant number of applicants have been appointed without any assessments on them from High Court or more senior judges – last year there were 16.

Where possible, you are expected to name amongst your judicial assessors a leading judge in your specialism or local area before whom you have appeared.

The Panel is looking for assessments which can reflect your demonstration of the competencies in a number of cases and circumstances. You should not list more than one judicial assessor from amongst those hearing the same case (e.g. in the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeal) unless the second assessor has other experience of you drawn from a different case of substance.

Keep in mind that judges are unlikely to have a clear recall of brief hearings, especially if those were some years ago.

Judicial assessments can only be provided by those exercising a judicial function. Accordingly, assessments from a mediator are not acceptable as judicial assessments, but the Panel will accept an assessment from a mediator as a practitioner assessor.

37. You do not need to give the addresses of serving High Court and more senior judges in England and Wales. Nor do you do need to give the addresses of retired full-time judges of England and Wales. We will contact them via the Ministry of Justice. Similarly, we will contact planning inspectors directly through the Planning Inspectorate in England or in Wales.



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For part-time judicial office holders, please if possible give their chambers or other professional address in the contact details.

38. Practitioner Assessors

Practitioner assessors are generally lawyers acting as fellow advocates in the case in question. Mediators, or legal assessors to tribunals, may also be listed as practitioner assessors. However, instructing solicitors are client assessors rather than practitioner assessors, even if they hold higher courts rights of audience, unless they are also an advocate in the case concerned.

You are asked to list as assessors at least one practitioner from each of your listed cases. In deciding which practitioner(s) to list, it is desirable to consider the potential assessor's ability to provide persuasive evidence about the competencies, especially oral advocacy. In a case in which you conducted most of the oral advocacy, it will generally be desirable to list an opposing advocate, especially if the opponent was a QC. If you did not conduct most of the oral advocacy, and were led, it will generally be desirable to list your leader. Practitioners who have since been appointed to full-time judicial office should still be listed as practitioner, not judicial, assessors if it was as practitioner that the assessor had experience of your work in the case concerned.

The Panel has indicated that, subject to the nature of the practice, it will normally wish to obtain practitioner assessments from QCs, although the Panel recognises that that is not always possible.

It is helpful to the Panel for assessors to be drawn from a number of chambers. In deciding how much weight to give to a practitioner assessment, the Panel may have regard, amongst other things, to the fact that an assessor is or has recently been in the same chambers or firm as you or is an arbitrator who has in the past been nominated by your firm. Although the Panel recognises that senior members of your firm or chambers may be particularly well placed to provide an assessment of an applicant, you are asked where possible to avoid naming a majority of assessors with this sort of connection, although the Panel understands that in some specialised practice areas this may be unavoidable.

39. Client Assessors

You are asked to list at least six professional clients, clients or client proxies from your listed cases. In many cases the 'client' will be the instructing solicitor. However, it may include a senior legal officer in a company or other body. A 'client proxy' is an experienced professional person who is in a position of authority in connection with a client and who is able to comment with authority on the applicant's abilities. Examples might include guardians *ad litem*, police officers, medical professionals, certain expert witnesses, and professionals from social services departments.



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Each individual listed will count as a separate professional client, client or client proxy, even if the individuals are from the same firm, institution or organisation. However, it is undesirable for all your client assessors to come from only one or two different firms or organisations unless the nature of your practice makes that unavoidable.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has advised that individual Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) lawyers (not paralegal officers) may be listed so that they may be asked to be assessors. However, the assessment will be given by the Chief Crown Prosecutor (or equivalent) to whom the assessor reports, in consultation with his or her colleagues. You should if possible not name more than one CPS lawyer from any one CPS Area.

It has been agreed with the Treasury Solicitor's Department that to ensure consistency in the assessments provided by Government lawyers, assessments will be considered by the relevant Head of Division (or equivalent) to whom the assessor reports. The assessment may be prepared by the named Government lawyer, in consultation with his or her colleagues, and, after consideration by the Head of Division, signed by that Government lawyer. In some cases the assessment may actually be given by the Head of Division, in consultation with his or her colleagues. You should therefore try to avoid naming more than one Government lawyer in the same team or Division as that could result in a single potential assessment.

If you are an **employed advocate**, you are expected to include among your client assessors at least one partner or representative from your employing firm, company or institution. If you are instructed by different individuals in your employer's business, each may be listed as a client assessor. If you are not able to list an assessor from your employer's business, an explanation should be provided.

Client assessors, like other assessors, need to be in a good position to give an informed view of your demonstration of some or all of the competencies required. In general, it is more likely that a professional client than a lay client will have the requisite knowledge or standing to provide an assessment of assistance to your application, although the Selection Panel appreciates that some applicants will not have a professional client in all of their cases. As with all assessments, it is for the Panel to determine the weight to be given to each assessor's evidence. Please feel free to contact the Secretariat if you are unsure about naming potential client assessors.

Client assessors may be based in any locality and be of any national background, so long as the assessment is given in English.



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40. At **Section J**, you are invited to provide monitoring information. Promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in the legal professions is important to the Panel; Section J will be retained in the office and will not be provided to the Panel. The information you provide will only be used on an anonymised basis for statistical or research purposes, and for evaluating the process as a whole. It will not be used when considering your suitability for the award of Queen's Counsel.

41.

If you have particular needs, including those arising from a disability, please contact the Secretariat, and we will endeavour to make arrangements to meet your needs. The application form and other information can be provided in alternative formats on request.

If you are invited to interview (irrespective of whether you have indicated that you have a disability), you will be asked to let us know of any particular arrangements which you wish us to make to enable you to participate fully in the interview (such as seating arrangements, access etc.). However, you are under no obligation to disclose details of a disability at any stage in the selection process.

42. Please state whether there is anything in your personal or professional background which, if brought into the public domain, could affect your suitability for appointment or bring the legal profession or Queen's Counsel into disrepute.

You should be aware that if you fail to declare something which later comes to light, and could have had a bearing on its decision, the Panel may need to consider whether to recommend to the Lord Chancellor the removal of silk.

43. As part of the agreed process for QC appointments, the Secretariat will send lists of all applicants to the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals who are asked to let QCA know if they are aware of any applicant in respect of whom a judge may have a concern from the perspective of the integrity competency. The lists will also be sent to the relevant professional body with responsibility for professional conduct. For this reason we seek your authority to check your disciplinary record with your professional regulator or other body. If, as a result of these enquiries, a judge or a professional regulator raises any matter of concern touching on integrity or professional conduct, you will be given an opportunity to provide an explanation before the matter is considered by the Panel.



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44. The Panel expects that the information you provide in your submitted application will be complete, true and factually accurate. It is your responsibility to ensure that the information is correct and complete. You should check carefully that all parts of the form are fully complete and accurate before you submit your application. **You will not be allowed to add to or amend your application form once the closing date has passed.** However, if you subsequently become aware of any factual inaccuracies or changes to contact details please notify the Secretariat as soon as possible and provide the amended details.

In all cases the signature box on page 52 of the application form must be completed. This is your 'electronic signature' and acts as your declaration and authority.

Your application must be accompanied by the fee. The standard fee is £2,160 (£1,800 plus VAT) payable in full by the application deadline, except for those entitled to claim the concessionary fee for low incomes, which is £1,080 (£900 plus VAT).

The concessionary fee is available to those with gross fees, drawings or earnings of £60,000 or less in the most recent year. For barristers in private practice, that is the period relevant to the 2021 practising fee renewal; for other applicants it is the 2019-20 tax year. QCA reserves the right to seek verification of entitlement to a concessionary fee. If you are uncertain about whether you are entitled to claim the concessionary fee, please contact the Secretariat as soon as possible.

The QCA Directors have decided that for the 2021 competition the concessionary fee should also be available to applicants whose earnings in 2021 are expected to be below £60,000. If applicants are concerned that as a result of the disruption caused by COVID-19 that may apply to them, they may pay the concessionary fee at this stage.

After applications for the competition close, the QCA Secretariat will write to all applicants who have paid the concessionary fee to establish whether that arises from the applicant's 2020 earnings or from their anticipated 2021 earnings. The QCA Secretariat will write again to those applicants at the end of the competition to check whether their earnings were in fact below £60,000, or whether they now need to pay the balance of the fee.

The preferred option for payment is to be made online after you have uploaded your application form to the submission page. Please follow the steps provided to pay by debit card. Payment by credit card is not accepted.



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You may also pay by electronic payment direct to our account

Bank: Royal Bank of Scotland, Child & Co Branch,
1 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1BD
Sort Code: 15-80-00
Account: Queen's Counsel Appointments
Account No: 10578135

You must quote your surname and ID number as the reference for your payment. You may wish to ask your bank for confirmation of payment.

You should receive by email a VAT receipt for your fee once payment is confirmed online. If payment is by electronic transfer it is likely to take a few days before the VAT receipt is sent.

If your application is successful, a further appointment fee of £3,000 plus VAT will become payable, in addition to the cost of Letters Patent.

Queen's Counsel Competition for England and Wales 2021 Competency Framework

The Panel will judge how far an applicant meets the competencies as described by the passage in italics. The examples provided are intended to assist applicants, assessors and others. Consideration of the demonstration of the competency is not limited to the examples quoted.

To merit recommendation for appointment all competencies must be demonstrated to a standard of excellence in the applicant's professional life. In general the Selection Panel will be looking for the demonstration of the competencies in cases of substance, complexity, or particular difficulty or sensitivity. Competency B (Written and Oral Advocacy) *must* be demonstrated in such cases.

A. Understanding and using the law

Has expert, up-to-date legal knowledge and uses it accurately and relevantly, and becomes familiar with new areas of law quickly and reliably.

Examples:

- ✓ Is up to date with law and precedent relevant to each case dealt with, or will quickly and reliably make self familiar with new areas of law.
- ✓ Draws on law accurately for case points and applies relevant legal principles to particular facts of case.

B. Written and oral advocacy

Subject to the advocate's duty to the court, develops and advances client's case to secure the best outcome for the client by gaining a rapid, incisive overview of complex material, identifying the best course of action, communicating the case persuasively, and rapidly assimilating the implications of new evidence and argument and responding appropriately.

The Panel will be looking both at the written and oral aspects of advocacy. Oral advocacy includes advocacy in a court or tribunal, mediation, arbitration or negotiation.

Examples (Written advocacy):

- ✓ Writes arguments accurately, coherently and simply, and in an accessible style.
- ✓ Presents facts and structures arguments in a coherent, balanced and focused manner.
- ✓ Deals effectively with necessary preliminary stages of legal disputes.
- ✓ Gains and gives an accurate understanding of complex and voluminous case material.
- ✓ Appreciates aspects of the case that are particularly important, sensitive or difficult and appreciates the relative importance of each item of evidence.
- ✓ Prepares thoroughly for the case by identifying the best arguments to pursue and preparing alternative strategies.
- ✓ Anticipates points that will challenge an argument

Examples (Oral advocacy)

- ✓ Deals responsibly with difficult points of case management and disclosure.
- ✓ Presents facts and structures arguments in a coherent, balanced and focused manner.
- ✓ Assimilates new information and arguments rapidly and accurately.
- ✓ Immediately sees implications of answers by witness and responds appropriately.
- ✓ Listens attentively to what is said paying keen attention to others' understanding and reactions.
- ✓ Accurately sees the point of questions from the tribunal and answers effectively.
- ✓ Gives priority to non-court resolution throughout the case where appropriate, identifies possible bases for settlement and takes effective action.
- ✓ Prepared and able to change tack or to persist, as appropriate.
- ✓ Deals effectively with points which challenge an argument.

C. Working with others

Uphold the standards of behaviour expected of advocates and establishes productive working relationships with all, including professional and lay clients, the judge and other parties' representatives and members of own team; is involved in the preparation of the case and leads the team before the court or other tribunal

Examples:

- ✓ Behaves in a consistent and open way in all professional dealings.
- ✓ Establishes an appropriate rapport with all others in court and in conference.
- ✓ Advances arguments in way that reflects appropriate consideration of perspective of everyone involved in the case.

- ✓ Helps the client focus on relevant points and is candid with the client.
- ✓ Explains law and court procedure to client and ensures the client understands and can decide the best action.
- ✓ Keeps lay and professional clients informed of progress.
- ✓ Is prepared to advance an argument that might not be popular and to stand up to the judge.
- ✓ Responds to the needs and circumstances of client (including client's means and importance of case to client and bearing in mind duty to legal aid fund) and advises client accordingly.
- ✓ Meets commitments and appointments.
- ✓ Accepts ultimate responsibility for case when leading the team.
- ✓ Motivates, listens to and works with other members of own team.
- ✓ Aware of own limitations and seeks to ensure that they are compensated for by others in team.
- ✓ Able to take key decisions with authority and after listening to views.
- ✓ Identifies priorities and allocates tasks and roles when leading the team.

D. Diversity

Demonstrates an understanding of diversity and cultural issues, respects the needs and cultural wishes of others and is proactive in addressing the needs of people from all backgrounds and promoting diversity and equality of opportunity

Examples:

- ✓ Is aware of the diverse needs of individuals resulting from differences in gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, age and educational attainment and physical or mental disability or other reason, and responds appropriately and sensitively.
- ✓ Is aware of the impact of diversity and cultural issues on witnesses, parties to proceedings and others as well as on own client, and adjusts own behaviour accordingly.
- ✓ Takes positive action to promote diversity and equality of opportunity.
- ✓ Understands needs and circumstances of others and acts accordingly.
- ✓ Confronts discrimination and prejudice when observed in others; does not let it pass unchecked.
- ✓ Acts as a role model for others in handling diversity and cultural issues.

E. Integrity

Is honest and straightforward in professional dealings, including with the court and all parties

Examples:

- ✓ Does not mislead, conceal or create a false impression.
- ✓ Honours professional codes of conduct.
- ✓ Where appropriate refers to authorities adverse to the client's case.
- ✓ Always behaves so as to command the confidence of the tribunal and others involved in the case, as well as client.
- ✓ Acts in professional life in such a way as to maintain the high reputation of advocates and Queen's Counsel.

QC Secretariat

APPENDIX B – GUIDANCE ON HANDLING ISSUES OF CHARACTER AND CONDUCT

Introduction

- A1 This Appendix gives guidance as to how the matters referred to in Section C of the application form (*Character*) will be handled by the Panel. You should read this before completing that section. It will help you to decide whether an issue is material to your application and needs to be disclosed.
- A2 If, having read this Appendix, you are still in doubt as to whether to disclose a matter, you should do so, so that the Panel can make the appropriate decision. You should be aware that if you fail to declare something which later comes to light, and could have had a bearing on its decision, the Panel may need to consider whether to recommend the removal of silk.
- A3 The Panel expects to be notified immediately of any change of circumstances in relation to matters of character in the course of the competition. This includes:
- Where any complaint against you is dismissed;
 - Where a finding is made against you;
 - Where a new issue arises (e.g. a complaint);
 - Where other action is in prospect (such as criminal proceedings, a wasted costs order, bankruptcy or voluntary arrangement, or any kind of investigation by any professional, or regulatory authority).

Handling of issues of character

- A4 The Panel will consider an issue of character only where it could affect the decision whether or not to recommend you for appointment. In other words, the Panel will generally assess your application based on the self-assessment, summary description of practice, assessments and (where applicable) interview alone, without regard to any matter disclosed by you in Section C of the application form or otherwise, or in response to the professional conduct check. Only if it appears that a character issue is of sufficient seriousness to affect any eventual decision as to recommendation for appointment will the Panel be made aware of an issue of character in relation to a particular applicant. If you are invited for interview, the interviewers will not generally be aware of a character issue and you should therefore not mention such a matter during the interview, unless raised by the interviewers.

Professional conduct and integrity checks

- A5 The Secretariat will send lists of all applicants to senior members of the judiciary and to the relevant professional body with responsibility for professional conduct. For this reason we seek your authority to check your disciplinary record with your professional regulator or other body. We will also seek to make enquiries of any professional bodies in other jurisdictions where you may have practised.

- A6 If any of the senior judges who has received the list has reason to believe that an issue concerning integrity as it relates to the Competency Framework is known to another judge, the senior judge may invite the Panel to seek comments from the judge concerned. If comments are sought from the judge concerned, the comments will be directed at the integrity element of the Competency Framework. Concerns will have to be fully particularised. If any concerns about integrity are identified in this way they will be put to you, so that you have an opportunity to provide an explanation to the Panel.
- A7 If checks with the professional bodies reveal that you are or have been subject to a disciplinary finding or pending matter, the Secretariat will contact you for a full explanation, unless you have already given a full explanation in the application form or otherwise. If any matters of concern are identified in this way they will be put to you in writing by the Secretariat on behalf of the Panel, so that you have an opportunity to provide an explanation. If a finding or complaint is reported which you have not disclosed in your application form, the Secretariat will write to you to give you an opportunity to address in writing (a) the question of non-disclosure and (b) the materiality of the finding or complaint to your application.

Consideration by the sub Panel

- A8 Where a character issue is reported (including self-reported) in respect of any applicant, then the relevant part of the application form and/or correspondence (with any details identifying the applicant removed) is placed before a sub Panel made up of members of the Panel. The sub Panel, reporting to the full Panel, then forms a view as to whether the issue is serious enough potentially to affect any eventual decision to recommend an applicant who otherwise appears suitable for appointment. If the sub Panel requires further information or clarification from the applicant, it will ask the Secretariat to write to him or her. The sub Panel will reach its conclusions independently of the Panel's consideration of the other evidence relating to each applicant.
- A9 Only issues which the sub Panel considers to be of such seriousness as potentially to affect any eventual recommendation will be brought to the full Panel's attention in relation to an applicant. This will normally be done prior to the Panel's decisions as to whether each applicant has demonstrated the competencies sufficiently to be invited to interview. Where the Panel concludes that an issue on an (anonymised) applicant is not sufficiently serious to impact on any eventual decision on the application, the Panel will not be made aware of the matter when considering whether the applicant concerned should be interviewed or recommended for appointment.

Considerations in determining issues of character

- A10 The following considerations will be borne in mind.
- A11 Applications are assessed against the Competency Framework. All advocates, whether QCs or not, are expected to maintain the high standards of the legal profession.

- A12 Character is considered as a whole. If more than one issue is presented by an applicant, then the Panel will consider:
- a. Whether any one issue by itself is or may be of concern; or if not
 - b. Whether all issues taken together are or may be of concern, disregarding any that may not be taken into account (see paragraph A16 below).
- A13 In other words, one relatively minor instance may not be considered serious enough to be a bar to recommendation, but the sub Panel will consider whether there is evidence of a pattern of behaviour that the full Panel needs to take into account.
- A14 In the case of pending criminal proceedings, complaints and professional negligence claims, or other pending matters, the sub Panel will consider whether the complaint or claim, if substantiated, would be of sufficient seriousness to provide grounds for the Panel to wish to defer any recommendation.
- A15 Unless the applicant has provided a satisfactory explanation in correspondence, non-disclosure of an issue by an applicant may be treated as being of sufficient seriousness to require consideration by the full Panel.
- A16 The following need not be disclosed:
- a. Criminal convictions that are 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. The Panel takes the view that under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 an applicant need not disclose a spent conviction and the Panel will not take a spent conviction into account when considering an applicant,
 - b. Complaints, professional negligence claims and other proceedings against an applicant that have been dismissed.
- A17 Subject to other factors described in this Appendix, character issues will be assessed by the Panel in the light of the following criteria:
- a. Seriousness,
 - b. Time elapsed since the incident occurred,
 - c. Experience at the time of the incident, in the sense that 'youthful indiscretions' are more likely to be disregarded. In particular, matters predating the applicant's call or

admission to the profession will normally be ignored (although they should still be disclosed, except as specified above),

- d. Relevance of the incident to the Competency Framework,
- e. Any other feature that might cause concern, e.g. as potentially bringing the position of QC into disrepute, having an adverse impact on the client, or failure to disclose a finding or pending matter of professional disciplinary fault.

Criminal convictions

A18 Particular considerations apply in the following cases:

- a. Minor motoring offences where the applicant was not obliged to appear in court should be disregarded. However, any motoring offence resulting in disqualification, including under totting up, should be disclosed.
- b. Any conviction for an offence of dishonesty or resulting in a term of imprisonment will be of serious concern and is likely to be a bar to appointment.
- c. Any other unspent conviction or bind over will be considered on its individual merits.

Findings of Professional Negligence

A19 Where a claim against you has been dismissed, it should not be disclosed. Where a claim against you has been settled, you should disclose the terms of the settlement, and indicate clearly whether and to what extent you have accepted liability.

A20 Findings of negligence and settlements where the applicant admits to being or appears to have been at fault will be assessed taking into account the degree of loss and the importance of the matter to the client along with any other relevant factors.

Professional disciplinary fault

A21 Findings of professional disciplinary fault will be relevant to Competency E – Integrity, as showing prima facie a failure to honour professional codes. They will be treated on a case-by-case basis having regard to factors such as the penalty imposed. Generally, a penalty such as a suspension from practice is likely to be treated as indicating that the profession regarded the offence as serious, while admonishment or a reprimand, or an order to compensate the client, may suggest that it was less serious in professional conduct terms. However, that is not to be regarded as an absolute rule and each case is considered on its merits.

A wasted costs order

A22 Wasted costs orders will be considered with regard to the reason given for the order being made, the amount involved and the length of time since the order was made.

A complaint to the Legal Ombudsman

A23 A complaint to the Legal Ombudsman is unlikely to be regarded as significant in itself. However, a direction from the Legal Ombudsman which indicated gross neglect of the interests of a client might well be regarded as significant.

An intervention by the Solicitors Regulation Authority

A24 An intervention into a solicitor's practice is likely to be regarded particularly seriously.

A bankruptcy order, debt relief order, individual or partnership voluntary arrangement or a director's disqualification order

A25 A current or recent (ie within five years of discharge) Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA) or bankruptcy or other order will be of concern. An undischarged IVA or bankruptcy order may well preclude appointment. An IVA or order which has been discharged may still be a bar to appointment, particularly where there is an indication of reckless conduct leading to the IVA or bankruptcy. However, such cases will be considered with regard to all the circumstances.

Any other form of order or proceeding that may be material to the Panel in considering your application to be appointed Queen's Counsel

A26 You should disclose any matter not covered by the above categories but which a reasonable person would regard as material to your application, having regard to the general criteria mentioned above. An example of such a matter would be a foreign criminal conviction or an order of a court or tribunal outside of the United Kingdom.

Further assistance

A27 If you have any doubts about the application of this guidance to your own circumstances you may discuss the matter in confidence with the Chief Executive.