



My Year in Pupillage

Tom Owen, Tenant (Pupillage 2011/12)

Friends, colleagues and clients still often ask me: “how was pupillage?” My pupillage at Keating Chambers was rewarding, challenging and well-structured. It was invaluable preparation for independent and self-employed practice at the Bar.

During my pupillage I did a mix of “live” work, on which my supervisor was then currently instructed, and also work on “dead papers”, with which my supervisor was previously involved. The work was varied and interesting. It concerned mainly contractual, tortious and statutory claims relating to construction and infrastructure projects. I also went to court with my supervisor and with other junior barristers in Chambers, including attending a case management conference in the High Court, an application for summary judgment of an adjudicator’s decision in the High Court; and an appeal hearing in the Court of Appeal at the Royal Courts of Justice. I was introduced to work from varying levels of call and the breadth of commercial work available within Chambers.

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The pupillage committee monitors the pupils’ progress in Chambers closely during the year. I had a review with them in my second seat, during which we discussed my progress and what I could expect from the second half of my pupillage. As with all formal feedback along the way, the pupillage committee was constructive, forward-thinking and proactive in determining what aspects I could work on for the future.

During my third seat, the majority of my work was for other Members of Chambers. I also started to receive instructions in my own name, to draft statements of case and to attend small claims track hearings and other applications. This was a time of great excitement and pride for me – to be instructed in my own right. It was also a very challenging time, trying to maintain high standards not only in all aspects of my work within Chambers prior to the tenancy decision, but also in building my reputation with professional clients outside of Chambers. The Clerks and my pupil supervisor managed this balance very well, getting the best out of me.

Pupillage is ultimately a time on which I reflect with great fondness. My workload was well-managed by my pupil supervisors and the breadth and depth of work covered was encouraging and reassuring. By the end of it I felt ready for practice and that’s what I was looking to achieve. A great year, but one which I am glad to have completed!