

Judging Your Future

The monthly e-newsletter from the
Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC)



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Welcome to our latest e-newsletter.

Judging Your Future is now sent to more than 4000 people. When we began we only asked for your email addresses. Now we want to make sure the details on our list are accurate and tell us a bit more about each of our subscribers and what you would like from this newsletter.

This month there is a final chance for you to complete a questionnaire giving us your feedback on the Judging Your Future. Please take a few minutes to fill it in and send it back to us as soon as you can, so that we can keep sending you the newsletter.

If we do not receive a response we will assume you no longer wish to be on the list and will remove your name.

You can open the survey via this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=kQyhYa0Nsbo9Dh2CD8C1ZA%3d%3d>

All personal information you provide will be held securely under the provision of the Data Protection Act.

If you want to read Judging Your Future without subscribing, it will be available on our website: <http://www.judicialappointments.gov.uk/>

1. Current selection exercises

Valuation Tribunal for England Part-time Salaried President 2008

Launch date: 23 June 2008

Location: London or one of the other 11 Valuation Tribunal Service offices in England. Frequent travel to London will be required for those based elsewhere.

Closing date: 14 July 2008

For more information and to download an information pack, go to our website:

<http://www.judicialappointments.gov.uk/>

2. Forthcoming selection exercises

We aim to provide as much information as we can about forthcoming selection exercises, but formal announcement of exercises can only be made when final details are fully agreed with our partners. The exercises below are due to begin in July, but please note that the advertisement dates are provisional and may change. Keep checking our website for the latest information, there will be full details of eligibility requirements in the advertisements.

Recorder

Location: Midlands

Vacancies: 65 – various jurisdictions

Fee Paid

Tax Chamber of the First Tier Tribunal Judge

Location: Midlands

Vacancies: 4

Salaried

Tax Chamber of the First Tier Tribunal Member

Location: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Vacancies: 75 non-legal, 14 legal

Fee Paid

Employment Tribunal President

Location: National

Vacancies: 1

Salaried

Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts)

Location: London

Vacancies: 26

Fee Paid

3. Candidate Roadshows

There are still a few places on the latest two candidate roadshows - in Leicester on 2 July and Wolverhampton on 3 July.

The one and a half hour programmes will be an opportunity to hear about the application and selection process including written tests, role-plays and references, and the chance to put questions to experienced JAC staff.

Both events begin at 6pm with registration from 5.45pm.

If you'd like to attend, please ring 020 7210 0177 (Monday to Friday from 0930 - 1700 hrs) to register your interest, or email outreachevents@jac.gsi.gov.uk. If registering by email please include your postal address and telephone number and say which event you would like to attend.

Further candidate roadshows will be held later in the year in other areas. We will advertise them on the JAC website and in Judging Your Future as soon as dates and venues are confirmed.

4. JAC in the news and out and about

In the last edition of Judging Your Future we gave details of the Ministry of Justice's White Paper and draft Constitutional Reform Bill.

The JAC has now given its response.

The Chairman and two Commissioners gave oral evidence to the Joint Committee on the Draft Constitutional Reform Bill on 4 June, and we sent our written evidence to the Committee on 16 June.

We believe it is too early to make significant changes in the existing arrangements. The JAC has only been in existence since April 2006, and only operating its own selection procedures since October 2006.

The White Paper proposes the Lord Chancellor should be given 'powers of direction' over the JAC in operational matters. And it proposes he should have the power to set targets.

We are concerned that there is a lack of detail about the precise nature of the powers of direction. As proposed, they are potentially wide. One of the aims of creating the JAC was to provide for judicial appointments to be made, and be seen to be made, more independently of the Government. We are concerned to ensure we protect that independence.

It is not clear how a power of direction, or the imposition of targets would sit with our independence, or with our duty to select candidates solely on merit.

We believe a better way of judging our performance particularly in relation to diversity is to compare the selections made for each appointment against the eligible pool. We have been working with the Law Society and others to determine the pool for each exercise.

The proposals in the draft Bill give the Lord Chancellor wide powers to apply additional non-statutory criteria to appointments, such as the requirement to have for “fee-paid” experience of sitting in a judicial office.

We regularly challenge that non-statutory criterion, on the basis that it has the potential to restrict the eligible pool of potential candidates and potentially restricts diversity.

The JAC’s full written evidence is on our website:

<http://www.judicialappointments.gov.uk/>

The uncorrected oral evidence to the Committee is available online:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt/jtconren.htm>

Other events:

One of our Commissioners, Judge Frances Kirkham, spoke at a Bar Council Diversity Outreach session on 5 June in Nottingham Crown Court.

A Vietnamese delegation led by the Justice Minister Ha Hung Cuong visited the JAC and met our chairman Dame Usha Prashar on June 17. On June 23 we were visited by a delegation from Nepal, led by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Kedar Prasad Giri.

The following day, James Caldwell from our Business Development team, spoke to judges and senior lawyers from Tanzania, Zambia and Lesotho.

5. Ask the JAC

Q: Why did you introduce qualifying tests in place of written applications and references to sift candidates for the Recorder selection exercise earlier this year? How did it work?

A: We intend to use this shortlisting method for most future selection exercises below Senior Circuit Judge, because tests are more objective than the alternative of a paper sift, and they provide reliable evidence of candidates’ abilities, irrespective of their specialism within the legal profession.

Shortlisting has always been a difficult exercise. Many of our exercises receive very significant numbers of applications, which means that half or more of those who apply will not pass the shortlisting stage.

For the recent Recorder exercise, candidates came in small groups to examination centres in three cities. The test paper presented candidates with questions about a number of scenarios set in a hypothetical jurisdiction, with its own law.

Candidates were being tested on generic skills, including their ability quickly to absorb and analyse information, their independence of mind and sound judgement, and their ability succinctly and clearly to explain procedure and decisions reached.

All candidates were given a bundle of papers: legislation; case law; court papers and witness statements. They were asked to read the papers and give narrative responses. The answers were marked by a group of Circuit Judges who worked together to ensure consistent marking. An additional Circuit Judge acted as a moderator and re-marked 40 per cent of the scripts.

While the results of the test alone determined which candidates would go forward to the second stage, final decisions about the candidates who attended the selection day were based on a wide range of information including references and self-assessments as well as performance in role plays.

Our Advisory Group, which includes representatives from the Council of Circuit Judges, the Bar Council and the Law Society, helped us develop the right test for Recorders.

The group will make sure future selection exercises are tailored to match bespoke requirements for other competitions, to match the requirements for each post. The test for Employment Law tribunals, for example, may include knowledge of employment law.

If you have other questions about any part of the selection exercise process, or the responsibilities of the JAC, please send them to judgingyourfuture@jac.gsi.gov.uk

We will publish answers in the forthcoming editions of Judging Your Future.

6. Any suggestions?

As always, we welcome your comments and questions on this edition. Please send them to judgingyourfuture@jac.gsi.gov.uk

Do pass on details of our *Judging Your Future* e-newsletter to your colleagues. Access and subscriptions to the newsletter are via our website at www.judicialappointments.gov.uk