#### THE ATTORNEY GENERAL’S

#### PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW PANEL OF COUNSEL

#### INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS 2025



Thank you for your interest in the Attorney General’s Public International Law Panel of Junior Counsel to the Crown. This sheet provides essential information for all applicants.

**PLEASE READ BEFORE COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM.**

##### General Background

The Attorney General maintains (by means of an open advertisement and application process) panels of junior Counsel to undertake civil and EU work for all Government departments. He has three London Panels, three Regional Panels, and three Public International Law (PIL) Panels.

Members of the Attorney General’s PIL Panels advise the Government on matters of PIL and undertake cases involving PIL in international courts and in the courts of the UK. Membership of the panels is open to suitably-qualified practitioners (barristers, advocates and solicitors with higher rights of audience) from England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

In contrast to the London Panels and the Regional Panels, the PIL Panels are expressly open to UK-qualified lawyers who do not have significant advocacy experience. To reflect this, we have changed the advocacy experience requirement to one of experience in the practical application of international law, whether that be as an advisor or advocate, or a mix of both. Instructions to appear as an advocate would be commensurate with an applicant’s level of advocacy experience. We expect all applicants to have applied, practical experience of advising on PIL, in line with the eligibility criteria set out below.

Please note that this is an invitation to **individuals** to apply. Applications from law firms or other organisations will not be accepted. Applicants are reminded that the present government panels for legal services (including the Trade Law Panel) and the Legal Panel for Government (which, under procurement Lot 4, will cover international trade and investment law) may be more suitable avenues for organisations to undertake government work. All members of the PIL Panels are appointed on an individual basis and, unless otherwise agreed, are expected **not** to delegate the work to other members of their chambers, practice or any other organisation. Further information is set out in the ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ below.

Applicants must apply for appointment to either the PIL A, B or C Panel. Being a member of the PIL Panel does not prevent membership of either the London or the Regional Panels. It is possible to be a member of the PIL Panel without being a member of either the London or Regional Panels.

Prospective members of the PIL C Panel will generally be expected to have at least two years’ experience by 18 June 2025 (starting from the date you become qualified to practice). Those appointed to the PIL C and B Panels will often provide (but not exclusively) the PIL B and A Panel members of the future, and so will be expected to show the potential to join those panels.

Members of the PIL B Panel will deal with substantial PIL matters but which are not in general as complex as those handled by the PIL A Panel. Members of the B Panel will often provide (but not exclusively) the PIL A Panel members of the future and so will be expected to show the potential to join the A Panel. We consider that those who are applying to join the PIL B Panel will generally have had between 5 and 10 years’ experience.

Members of the PIL A Panel will deal with the most complex PIL matters and, when appearing as an advocate, will often appear against KCs. Those who are interested in being appointed to this panel will be of similar experience to the London A Panel, in that they will generally have had in excess of 10 years’ experience.

In choosing which of the panels to apply to, applicants will want to make a careful decision based on which of the three best suits their level of expertise and experience. Relevant experience gained while qualified in another jurisdiction can be taken into account for the purposes of determining the applicant’s level of experience, provided the applicant is now a UK-qualified lawyer.

Appointments will be for a period of five years.

##### Eligibility

**Essential**:

1. Academic strength (2:1 or above) or compensating strength on other factors included in the application.
2. Qualified as a barrister, advocate or solicitor with higher rights of audience in one of the United Kingdom jurisdictions – England and Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland.
3. At least two years’ practice experience **by 18 June 2025** (starting from the date that you become qualified to practice).
4. Experience in the practical application of PIL, either as an academic or a practitioner, or both. Experience as an academic should include applied experience (for instance, working as a legal adviser at an international organisation), and should not be based solely on scholarship and teaching experience. All panellists are expected to understand and to be able to advise on fundamental precepts of international law (such as treaties, customary law and other sources, state responsibility, etc.). We also welcome applications from those with experience in specific areas of international law, including:

- Climate and international environmental law

- European Union law

- International aviation law

- International criminal law

- International human rights law

- International humanitarian law

- International migration and refugee law

- International trade law

- International investment law

- International taxation and international social security law

- International asset recovery

- International law relating to cyberspace

- Law of the sea

- Law on the use of force

- Sanctions

- Space law

- State immunity

PLEASE NOTE – experience in PIL is required though this need not be limited to any particular specialism. Expertise solely in ECHR and associated Human Rights Act matters will **not** be sufficient, as members of the Attorney General’s other panels are able to appear in such cases.

1. Understanding of working with Government, including an appreciation of government mission and objectives, the special demands of government processes and litigation, and the ability to work effectively with Government lawyers and Law Officers.
2. Written/drafting ability to be evidenced by a recent specimen of written work (an opinion, or nearest equivalent).
3. Willingness to work respectfully as part of a team with professionals from other disciplines, without compromising professional independence, and in a manner that promotes the rule of law in the UK and overseas.

**Desirable**

1. Experience of litigation, including experience advising on procedure and strategy, and experience of disclosure/discovery exercises involving large volumes of documents.
2. Proficiency in the application of international law in UK courts, and the interaction between international and domestic legal frameworks.
3. Ability as an advocate in domestic or international courts and tribunals.
4. Experience of UN processes and procedures, and/or before other multilateral organisations, including advising on or conducting international negotiations.

##### Application

Applications must reach us no later than **noon (GMT)** on **Wednesday 18 June 2025.**

**Late applications will not be accepted**.

**Application Form**

Applicants will need to submit their application in **word format** only. We cannot accept any other format. The final application form should comprise **one word document,** to include your case/matter list and recent specimen of written work (an opinion, or nearest equivalent). Please do **not** submit these as separate documents. You will also need to attach your Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form in **word** format.

Applicants should **email** their completed applications to [PanelRecruitment@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:PanelRecruitment@governmentlegal.gov.uk) to reach us no later than **noon** on **Wednesday 18 June 2025.**

Referees should email their references to [PanelReference@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:PanelReference@governmentlegal.gov.uk) by **noon** on **Wednesday** **18 June** **2025**.

This competition will be administered by staff at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Panel Counsel Secretariat of the Government Legal Department.

###### Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form

The arrangements for the Attorney General’s Panels of junior Counsel follow the Equality Act 2010. Accordingly, all applicants to join a Panel must complete an Equality and Diversity Monitoring Questionnaire. Please **complete the form** and return with your application.

The Attorney General will appoint the applicants who appear to him to be best qualified regardless of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marital and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, or sexual orientation. Women, members of ethnic minorities and those with disabilities are particularly encouraged to apply.

Completing the form will help us in our work to make the range of applications to the Panel truly reflective of all those who might be eligible to apply.

The information you provide will be treated in total confidence.The monitoring form will be kept separate from your application form and will not be seen by anyone involved in assessing your application or selecting the new panel members. The information will be used to compile anonymous statistics during the recruitment exercise and duration of the Panel.

##### Written work

Bearing in mind that the Selection Board does not conduct interviews, it is important that the example of written work that you submit fully reflects your abilities and your range of expertise advising on PIL. Recent examples of well-structured written work dealing with difficult topics in a manner that the reader finds reasonably easy to understand are more likely to create a favourable impression than those which do not.

##### References

### **PIL A PANEL**

Those applying to the A Panel should provide **five** references, two of which should come from members of the judiciary for those applicants intending to be instructed to undertake advocacy. In the case of applicants without advocacy experience who are unable to provide judicial references, we would expect at least two references to be from an independent individual of equivalent standing to a member of the judiciary, for example a senior official from a respected international organisation. If you have undertaken a significant amount of Government work, we would generally expect two references to come from government lawyers who have instructed you.

## **PIL B AND C PANELS**

Those applying to the B and C Panels should provide **three** references.

So far as B Panel applicants are concerned, we recommend that applicants who intend to be instructed to undertaken advocacy to provide at least one reference from a member of the judiciary or, in the case of applicants without advocacy experience, an individual with equivalent standing from a respected international institution or academia.

In relation to the C Panel, we recognise that for lawyers with limited post qualification experience, it may not be possible to find a judicial referee. However, the longer the advocacy experience of the applicant for the C Panel, the more the Board might question why a judicial reference was not provided.

If you have undertaken a significant amount of Government work, we would generally expect at least one of the references to come from a government lawyer who has instructed you.

**Choice of Referees – General points**

Having three referees all from your own Chambers is less likely to create a favourable impression than providing a range of referees.

Given the choice, the Selection Board would value more highly a reference from a KC from a different Chambers who has led you than one from a KC in your own Chambers.

The Selection Board values a reference that can speak, in detail, about an applicant’s skills, especially advocacy and other practice skills. All things being equal a reference from an experienced Government lawyer is better than one from an inexperienced one, simply because they will have a better idea of the standards expected from Panel Counsel. Generally speaking, it is preferable to obtain a reference from a higher grade lawyer, where possible. There is, however, no point in choosing a referee purely because of their seniority if this means that they have not seen your work first hand or in detail.

**Choice of Referees – Advocacy**

We do not interview so the choice of referees is very important. Each reference, if chosen well, provides an opportunity to submit new and objective examples of clear and compelling evidence of an applicant’s abilities. Applicants who, if appointed to the PIL Panel, intend to undertake advocacy will be expected to provide at least one referee who is able to speak in detail to their advocacy skills and experience. We are looking for you to provide referees that can give an objective view of your abilities.

Judicial references are particularly important for two reasons. First, for applicants who intend to take instructions as an advocate, such references provide us with information about an individual’s performance as an advocate in a court or tribunal. A judicial reference is one of the best ways we have of gauging this.

Secondly, judicial (and equivalent) references are generally considered to be more objective. We have had judicial references that have addressed an applicant’s weaknesses but we have rarely received a reference from a Head of Chambers that has been less than glowing. For that reason we particularly value judicial references.

For applicants with advocacy experience, the gold standard is therefore a reference from a Judge who has seen you on a number of occasions in a court or tribunal. A reference from a Circuit Judge who has clear experience of your ability in court is of greater assistance to the Selection Board than a reference from a Supreme Court Justice who has not seen your advocacy skills in practice.

If you cannot get such a reference then get as close to it as you can. For example, you may be able to supply a reference from someone who has led you, appeared against you or otherwise seen you in court. A reference from your Head of Chambers who has not seen you recently in court is not as good as a reference from someone who has.

**Referee proforma**

You should provide the referees’ proforma to your referees. References from a single referee are better than composite references assembled by someone who does not know you. In general, single word responses to the questions in the pro forma are not as helpful to the Selection Board as a more detailed explanation with examples as to why the referee considers the applicant to be “good” or “excellent”.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that your referees return the proformas by the deadline of noon, 18 June 2025. Please stress to them the importance of doing so. The late receipt of a reference may adversely affect your application.**

##### Selection

A Selection Board will consider applications. The Attorney General will appoint the applicants who appear to him to be best qualified regardless of disability, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, religion/belief or political affiliation. Women, members of ethnic minorities and those with disabilities are particularly encouraged to apply.

##### Further Information

If you have any queries, please feel free to contact the Panel Counsel Secretariat in the Government Legal Department via email:

[PanelCounsel@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:panelcounsel@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

Those Government Departments that make use of the Panels take information security very seriously. Successful applicants will be expected to safeguard government information in their possession, to adhere to government information security requirements and, where necessary, to complete various questionnaires regarding compliance with those requirements during their membership of the panels.

##### Frequently Asked Questions

**I am already on the London Panel and one of my specialisms is PIL, do I have to apply for the PIL Panel?**

Yes, you must apply for the PIL Panel if you want to be instructed in the future on matters concerning PIL. You do not have to apply at the same level so if you are on the London B Panel you can apply for either the PIL A, B or C panels.

**I am already on the PIL Panel, do I need to reapply?**

Yes, you must reapply for the PIL Panel if you want to be instructed in the future on matters concerning PIL. If you were appointed to the PIL Panel in 2020, you can reapply to the same panel to extend your tenure during this refresh exercise, or you can reapply for a higher panel.

**I am already a member of the London C Panel and want to apply to the PIL C Panel; do I need to find 6 different referees (i.e. the 3 used for the London C Panel and another 3 for the PIL Panel)?**

You can choose the same 3 referees for each application or you could choose a different 3 for each. It is up to you and the patience of your referees.

**When will I hear about my application?**

All applicants will be notified of the outcome once the Attorney General has decided whom to appoint in light of the Selection Board’s recommendations. Our target is to notify applicants of the outcome of their application by the end of November 2025. Appointments will commence on 1 January 2026.

**Can I appeal if my application is unsuccessful?**

No.

**Will I receive feedback if my application is unsuccessful?**

We are unable to provide individual feedback to applicants, whether or not they are successful. The Selection Board will provide more general feedback for unsuccessful applicants on request, after the conclusion of the competition.

**What happens if one of my referees is late sending in their reference?**

If reference forms have not arrived, the applicant would be contacted and asked to follow-up with their referee. Information contained in references is important to the Selection Board and the late receipt of references may adversely impact your application. Your application is very likely to be unsuccessful if, after chasing, we do not receive the requisite references. ***It is ultimately your responsibility to ensure that your referees return the proformas by the deadline. Please stress to them the importance of doing so.***

**Who sits on the Selection Board?**

The Selection Board is chaired by a senior Government lawyer and is expected to include an independent member, as well as lawyers from various Government Departments, including the Attorney General’s Office. The Attorney General will take the final decision on recommendations proposed by the Selection Board.

**Do I have to be a member of a particular set of chambers to get on the Panels?**

No. Each applicant is considered on his/her individual merits and not on the chambers from which they practise, if they practise from chambers at all.

**I did not get a 2.1. Will I be considered?**

Applicants who did not get a 2.1 will be judged on any compensating factors that they have set out in their application forms. The Board will be looking for something over and above ‘a successful career at the Bar’. A non-exhaustive list of factors that might be considered as compensating would include a postgraduate qualification, excellent results in Bar Finals or advocacy examinations, or other examples of corresponding intellectual achievement.

**How much will I be paid?**

Members of the PIL Panel are paid at the standard rates for members of the Attorney General’s London panels:

* A Panel - £150 per hour
* B Panel - £125 per hour
* C Panel - £100 per hour if over 5 years’ call. £75 per hour if under 5 years’ call.

The rate of pay rises if/when you are promoted from C Panel to B Panel, or from B to A. The change in rate is immediate.

**Do I have to be a UK qualified lawyer?**

Yes.

**I am an employed barrister, solicitor or academic – can I still apply?**

All members of the PIL Panel are appointed on an individual basis and, unless otherwise agreed, are expected not to delegate the work to other members of their chambers, practice or any other organisation. If you are employed and are successful in your application, you will need to confirm the following in writing before your appointment takes effect:

* You will undertake PIL Panel on an individual basis.
* Permission from your employer to take on work from outside your employer’s practice.
* A commitment from your employer to allow you sufficient time to work on any instructions through the Panel.
* You have appropriate insurance for your work as a Panel member.
* You have adequate clerking-style administrative support (either provided by your employer or yourself separately).
* If you intend to take instructions as an advocate, that you have the necessary rights of audience to represent government.
* A clear conflicts policy and process for considering potential conflict with your organisation’s other clients and work.

##### Checklist

* Am I qualified as a barrister, solicitor with higher rights of audience, or advocate in England and Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland?
* Will I have 2 years’ practice experience by 18 June 2025 (starting from the date that I became qualified to practice)?
* Have I completed the application form fully and ensured that I am emailing ***one word document*** to include my case/matter list and a recent specimen of written work?
* Have I completed the Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form?
* Have I made arrangements for my references to be submitted on time (5 for A Panel, 3 for B/C Panel)?