

*Having recently finished 6 years as a JAC Commissioner (Solicitor), I wanted to share some advice about how to approach preparing for judicial applications, highlight some of the resources that are available and to share some insights into the JAC selection processes.*

The [Judicial Appointments Commission](#) (JAC) was established in 2006 following the introduction of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005. Our mandate is to ensure judicial appointments are independent, transparent, and fair.

The Diversity of the Judiciary [combined statistical report](#), published annually by the [Judicial Diversity Forum \(JDF\)](#), demonstrates that since the JAC's inception in 2006, it has overseen positive strides towards increased diversity in applications and appointments across all groups. Increasing judicial diversity is a collective effort that cannot be achieved by one organisation alone. There are various stakeholders and bodies that play crucial roles in this endeavour.

The JDF has launched collaborative initiatives that members work on together, including the:

- [Pre-Application Judicial Education programme \(PAJE\)](#)
- [Judicial Work Shadowing scheme](#)
- [Judicial Mentoring scheme](#)
- [Targeted Outreach programme](#)

In January 2024, the JDF published its [2024 action plan](#), outlining key actions the activities its partners will undertake throughout the next year and the measures to evaluate the impact of each initiative.

### **Supporting increased diversity**

The JAC Targeted Outreach programme, co-badged with the Judiciary, is designed to deliver even more in support of our statutory duty. We aim to help candidates overcome some of the barriers to judicial appointment that we know exist for underrepresented groups. By providing tailored resources and support, we strive to create a more inclusive and representative judiciary.

As of April 2024, the Targeted Outreach programme has received almost 1000 applications. Candidates accepted on to the programme benefit from personalised support, guidance, and mentorship from Targeted Outreach Team of former Commissioners and/or experienced judicial guides. This comprehensive support system aims to empower underrepresented candidates, equipping them with the necessary resources and knowledge to navigate the judicial process successfully.

### **Top tips for your judicial appointment applications**

We advise you to:

- **Prepare.** Start early. Not being prepared or fully understanding the role of a judge is one of the common mistakes candidates make. Candidates are encouraged to take part in shadowing/mentoring schemes. Or sitting in with judges to get a broader understanding of the role of a judge. Or observing a public hearing to see how a judge manages a courtroom.
- **Reflect.** Invest time in thinking about your competency examples. Every specific role will have a competency framework which you should carefully review so you understand the requirements thoroughly. Dedicate time to reflect on your professional experiences and identify the best examples that demonstrate your proficiency in the specific competencies. Thoughtful preparation of the examples that evidence the competencies can significantly

enhance your application and highlight your suitability for the judicial position. Keep a notebook or spreadsheet and capture examples as they happen, or you think of them.

- **Focus.** Carefully review the bullet points listed under each competency heading. They offer guidance on what the examples you provide should evidence. However, remember you do not need to provide an example for every single bullet point. If, for example, you provide five examples, you may well run out of word count to adequately explain any of your examples. It is better to provide a few well-developed examples that succinctly and directly address the core competencies.
- **Think.** “Know your skills” that you have from your career history that are transferable to a judicial role. Additionally, consider drawing on experience outside your professional career if they aptly demonstrate the relevant competency. It is crucial to select examples that showcase complexity and depth, as these will more effectively highlight your suitability for the judicial position.
- **Structure.** When [presenting your examples](#), either during the written application phase or at the selection day, consider employing the SOAR (Situation, Objective, Action and Result) model for answering competency questions. Aim for the Situation to take no more than 10-15% of your word count. Place the greatest emphasis on the Action. Do not forget the Result. The panel is primarily interested in understanding what specific actions you took and how you achieved the desired outcomes, as these elements evidence or demonstrate your competencies.

#### Things to avoid:

- **Generalities.** For example, “my work requires me to make sound judgements across a range of areas of law.” Such broad statements do not constitute evidence and will unnecessarily consume your word count without effectively demonstrating competencies.
- **Jargon and overly technical language.** Remember that at least one, but often two, of your panel members will be lay members who may not be familiar with highly specialised terminology. A good Judge can explain complex legal topic to lay people in their Court.
- **Hyperlinks or case reference numbers.** These may not be understood by the panel members, and any included links will not be accessed during the evaluation process.

In summary, it is advisable to provide clear, concise, and specific examples tailored to the competencies required for the judicial role, using plain language that can be easily understood by both legal professionals and lay members of the panel.

#### **Support for Candidates**

Please do make full use of the resources available. The JAC is committed to providing comprehensive guidance and support for individuals considering applying for judicial positions. The JAC website is continually enhanced with valuable resources, including:

- Our [Prepare before you apply](#) section provides details on our good character guidance and an overview of the different stages involved in the selection processes.
- A [Practice qualifying test tool](#) to help you familiarise yourself with the format, software and question style used in actual qualifying tests.
- [Guidance on the JAC selection process](#), containing background information, top tips, and anonymised real examples.

- The [Selection day guide](#), published in October 2023, which offers insights and advice to candidates in preparing for their selection day.
- An interactive video featuring an [Example role play](#), allowing prospective applicants to gain a realistic understanding of the dynamics involved in judicial selection.
- You can apply to become a [JAC Mock Candidate](#), which allows you to practice with the real selection materials, sometime with real panellist and the option to have some judicial feedback.

With [frequent vacancies](#) arising, there are numerous opportunities to apply once you feel ready. Should you be unsuccessful on your first attempt, there will be many future opportunities to apply for the same or similar roles. Sign up to the [Judging Your Future](#) newsletter to receive updates about open and forthcoming vacancies.

It is important to remember the following. Being a Judge is an important role in our Society. The selection process is rightly hard and testing. There are a specified number of vacancies in any competition. We aim to see more than twice the number needed at selection days. Most people apply more than once. Not being appointed is not failure. It is one step nearer to the time you will be appointed.

Good luck!