

The role of the High Court Judge

About the role

Those seeking appointment as a High Court Judge should have exceptional intellectual ability, expertise and experience to deal with the very heaviest cases. High Court Judges can be expected to deal, immediately upon appointment, with the most complex and high-profile cases in England and Wales of the kind which require the deft management of matters of important legal principle and issues of wide significance at the very cutting edge of the law. High Court work can be regarded as fundamentally important not just to those parties immediately and directly affected but to society as whole.

About the competency framework

The competency framework and behavioural indicators (bullet pointed statements) within it have been designed to describe what effective behaviour looks like once *in* the role of High Court Judge. This framework is aligned to the Judicial Skills and Abilities framework.

When considering your application and taking part in the selection process you should consider the following:

- **The competency framework lists the behaviours of a judicial office holder who is performing the role effectively. It is not expected that you will necessarily be able to demonstrate all of these individual behaviours in your application.**
- Ensure you cover the breadth of the competency area instead of trying to address each behavioural indicator, as it may not be possible, within the word limit, to provide evidence in sufficient detail against every indicator for each competency area.
- Your examples must relate to the behaviours as closely as possible - think about how your experience is transferrable into the specific judicial role.

Although the behaviours within the competency framework apply across all divisions of the High Court there are certain behaviours which require a particular focus at differing levels across the three Divisions. For example:

- flexibility to adapt to the wide range of work in the Queen's Bench Division, additional to your specialist area
- use of particularly specialist language and law as is frequently employed in the Chancery Division
- a special capacity for demonstrating empathy and combining decisiveness and sensitivity as is frequently needed in the Family Division

Exercising Judgement

Demonstrates integrity and applies independence of mind to make incisive, fair and legally sound decisions

- Makes important decisions by applying the relevant law, principles and procedure to facts and submissions
- Shows appreciation of the impact, including wider consequences, of decisions
- Acts with integrity in making appropriate decisions in very challenging, complex situations
- Demonstrates independence of mind
- Ensures fairness; is neither biased nor prejudiced
- Makes decisions with confidence, in a timely and appropriate manner

Possessing and Building Knowledge

Possesses a detailed knowledge of the jurisdictional law and practice and demonstrates an ability and willingness to learn and develop professionally

- Demonstrates extensive knowledge of one or more areas of law and procedure
- Demonstrates a high ability to acquire knowledge, especially of highly complex subject matter
- Keeps abreast of changes in the law and in wider society
- Is motivated towards, and actively pursues, continuous learning and personal development
- Encourages a shared learning approach, communicating knowledge and developments to relevant others

Assimilating and Clarifying Information

Quickly assimilates information to identify essential issues, develops a clear understanding and clarifies uncertainty through eliciting and exploring information

- Demonstrates speed and flexibility in assimilating and processing large amounts of complex information from multiple sources
- Does not prejudge; remains open to further developments in the case
- Identifies information gaps and focuses on the relevant issues, encouraging others to do so
- Evaluates and balances the evidence in order to reach a reasoned decision

Working and Communicating with Others

(‘Others’ refers to all court users, colleagues, court staff, parties, advocates, witnesses and members of the public)

Conducts proceedings appropriately, values diversity and shows an appreciation of the wider impact of communications. Demonstrates empathy and sensitivity in building relationships. Demonstrates good communication skills and authority

- Demonstrates courtesy and authority, instilling confidence in others by using effective verbal and non-verbal communication
- Provides all parties with a fair opportunity to present evidence and participate fully in the hearing
- Shows an awareness of the diversity of different communities, and sensitivity to their particular needs
- Communicates succinctly and in a well-reasoned manner, using technical language only when required and ensuring that complex information is understood
- Provides direction, using appropriate strategies to maintain control and defuse tension
- Listens attentively throughout, only intervening when required to ensure a fair hearing

Managing Work Efficiently

Works effectively and plans to make the best use of resources available

- Actively takes responsibility for efficient completion of heavy workload, minimising delays and resolving problems independently
- Demonstrates resilience and deals with high pressure situations
- Responds calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances
- Utilises available resources, including the latest technology, to carry out the role
- Seeks guidance from and offers assistance to others as appropriate

Leadership

Demonstrates the ability to provide professional leadership to meet existing and future needs. Ensures the efficient and effective discharge of judicial business and acts as the public face of the judiciary for all court users

- Works effectively with others, leading through personal example
- Supports and encourages fellow Judges, offering advice where appropriate
- Supports and implements change effectively within the judiciary
- Encourages a shared sense of responsibility out of court, among judiciary and court staff
- Supports and engages with court staff to ensure efficient dispatch of business