



Myth Busting the Silk Process

We know that applying for Silk is one of the biggest decisions of your career, but we also know that there are some common misconceptions around the process that can put people off applying. By addressing these misconceptions, our aim is to remove any perceived barriers within the process, so that anyone who wishes to apply is fully confident of what is expected of them.

We hope this information is useful, however if you have a query that is not covered here, do get in touch by emailing enquiries@kcappointments.org or calling 020 7831 0020. The KCA secretariat are always happy to speak to applicants and answer questions on any part of the process, at any time.

The 'twelve cases within the past three years' criterion is a strict rule and I therefore cannot apply if I am unable to provide this.

The panel understands that there are reasons why applicants may not be able to provide twelve cases in the past three years and do not wish to disadvantage those who, for example, have taken a career break, parental leave or have been in long Inquiries over the previous three years. Having fewer than twelve cases is not a bar to application, although it is possible that fewer cases may not cover the breadth of evidence required. Applicants should make clear in their application why they are unable to provide twelve cases and it may be worth them considering whether there are any cases from slightly outside of the three-year window that could be included. However, it should be remembered that the further back applicants go, the less assessors are likely to remember of the case.

There are 'quotas' for the number of applicants who are awarded Silk each year.

There are no quotas within the KC competition. Decisions on who to recommend for appointment are based entirely on evidence of excellence provided by applicants in their self-assessment and at interview, and from assessors. It is therefore important that applicants carefully consider who to list as their assessors so that the panel can obtain sufficient evidence and give applicants the best chance of success.



I need a coach to succeed in the KC Competition.

Feedback from some applicants has been that they genuinely feel they need coaching to succeed in the KC competition. We understand that there is a need for additional guidance and are producing new resources, which will provide additional information for applicants and help level the playing field for those that can't afford or don't want to use coaching. There should be no need to pay for a coach to help with an application; the panel have seen that it certainly does not guarantee a successful outcome and can usually tell when one has been involved. The best way an applicant can prepare is to spend time thinking about the examples from their cases (listed and unlisted), and at interview be honest and authentic.

I was narrowly unsuccessful in a previous competition and therefore will get to the same stage if I apply again.

Every application is considered afresh by the Selection Panel and there is no guarantee that an applicant will get to the same stage as a previous application. It is important to remember that the panel will be seeking new evidence from assessors in each competition and those assessors may be different.

If I have previously been unsuccessful in the KC competition, I should not reapply.

There is no barrier to reapplication and the panel know that many people will reapply for Silk over the course of their career. As set out above, each application is considered afresh by the Panel and every effort is made to ensure that different Panel members both grade and interview an applicant in subsequent applications. Moreover, the panel does not question any applicant's motivation to apply; they are simply interested in the evidence provided. Applicants (and this is seen particularly with women) do not need to explain or justify why they have applied for Silk.



I have a desk-based practice and therefore cannot fulfil the oral advocacy criteria.

The panel understand that for some lawyers, depending on the nature of the work, it is potentially more difficult to satisfy the oral advocacy criteria. The panel must have some evidence of oral advocacy - if the applicant's area of work does not include a lot of oral advocacy that is fine, but having no evidence of oral advocacy is an issue. The panel needs to see a balance between written and oral advocacy, and the outcome for Competency B reflects the Panel's judgement on the written and oral advocacy taken together, bearing in mind the relative importance of the two elements of advocacy in the applicant's practice. Undertaking pro bono work, for example, can provide opportunities for those with a desk-based practice or whose work does not take place in the higher courts, to build advocacy evidence.

The cases applicants select must be long ones. This deters some potential applicants (e.g. those working in criminal law) where their cases could be as short as two weeks.

The panel look for quality, not quantity, and substance over length in terms of the cases listed by applicants. Applicants should not therefore be deterred from listing short cases. So long as they are those of '*substance, complexity or particular difficulty or sensitivity*', a case could be very short.

It can be difficult to draw diversity examples from professional experience; is there a premium placed on using professional examples, as opposed to those outside of the workplace?

The panel do not always receive good evidence from assessors for Competency D and, therefore, lacking evidence in this competency is not a bar to being invited to interview; if the standard for all other competencies are met than an interview will be offered. Overall, this competency is about where the applicant can show they have had the most impact on D&I personally and evidence could be provided from a range of areas including, e.g., as a school governor or within a religious setting. Applicants should remember that the Panel want to hear about actions you have personally taken to improve diversity, not just about your understanding of various initiatives.