

Access Award

Becoming a barrister can be a challenging journey, particularly if you face obstacles that make it difficult to commit extensive time and resources to building your legal career. We recognise that opportunities like mini pupillages and judicial marshalling can be costly and time-consuming.

The Access Award

The Bar may appear intimidating, especially if you lack connections to barristers or anyone in the legal field. In light of these challenges, we are thrilled to introduce the Nine Chambers Access Award. This initiative aims to open doors and create a more inclusive and accessible path to success in the legal profession.

Who can apply?

Our Access Award is open to any adult who is not in Year 12 or Year 13 of their education.

It does not matter if you are working or what stage of education you are at, save for the above.

What will I be awarded?

You can select from the following opportunities:

- A mini-pupillage with Chambers at date to suit candidate (between – days) with reasonable travel expenses covered
- Shadowing a Judge with reasonable travel expenses covered
- A 121 advocacy coaching session with a barrister
- A CV and application clinic with a barrister (not to include specific tips on our pupillage application process)
- A conversation with a Senior Clerk
- A conversation with a King's Counsel (KC)
- A dedicated mentor from our Chambers for a year (this will not to include assistance with applying to our Chambers for pupillage)
- The Memorial Temple Bursary of £500.00

Meet a previous winner

Why did you apply for the Nine Chambers Access Award?

I applied for the Access Award in 2022 after my tutor posted the advert on our University platform. I remember seeing the introductory paragraph, describing the Bar as feeling like a “closed shop”, and that mini-pupillages can be hard to acquire for those lacking resources. The words resonated with me because I was the first member of my family to pursue a law degree; I did not have family contacts to rely on for legal work experience or any general direction. Despite my grades, I felt like I was at a disadvantage.

I was applying for mini-pupillages but unless I approached barristers directly, very often, my application was rejected. It was not for lack of trying, but interview questions such as “why do you want to be a barrister?” cannot realistically be answered when your perception of legal work comes from Law and Order and Netflix series’ like Suits. I felt I was in a “catch 22” situation. I knew I wanted to be a barrister, but I had no real insight into the legal profession to justify why for the purposes of any applications. If I was successful and obtained a mini-pupillage, I panicked about whether I had the means to get to a city by 9am and how I would arrange and afford childcare.

I realised that the Access Award was designed for people like me, someone struggling to overcome multiple barriers to access the Bar, so I decided to apply.

What key things did you learn through the experience of this Award?

The Award included a conversation with Chambers senior clerk Julia Lanza, and a leading Silk, Jaime Hamilton KC. I gained insight into how Chambers functions commercially, the different roles for staff and how it actually works, the way work is allocated and the importance of building successful relationships with clients. Although you hear the term “commercial awareness” a lot, it is hard to know what that means until it is explained to you.

I learnt, through the personalised advocacy session, the importance of adapting your style of advocacy to different scenarios. I was given feedback for both examination in chief and cross examination. I was able to develop my skills outside of the typical mooting competition setting. The experience was not intimidating at all, only helpful and I was given plenty of time to ask any questions and repeat elements.



Emily Freeman
Access Award Winner 2021

Finally, the CV clinic was invaluable. I now understand the importance of using my personal experiences as my strength and to demonstrate my skills rather than telling a Chambers what I think they might like to hear.

How do you think the Award has helped you?

The Access Award has unlocked my confidence. It has also developed some of my practical skills in application writing, advocacy and interview techniques. Since receiving the Award, I secured four mini-pupillages and was successful in my application for a BPC scholarship. I also won a Mooting Competition and became the Head of Mooting at my University.

My mentor also gave me emotional and professional support which was invaluable as I went onto the BPC. They helped shift my mindset, I now feel that "someone like me" could actually go on to succeed at the Bar

At the time I applied for the Access Award, I was feeling quite deflated, with the intensity of full-time study and what felt like no real prospect of securing legal work experience due to my non-traditional background. The Access Award really changed this, it removed some of the things holding me back and gave me lots of opportunities to show my potential.

What advice would you give someone thinking of applying?

Look at the description of the Access Award and if, like me, you think that it describes your position – the barriers you face in entering the legal profession and how hard it feels – then apply. When I made my application, I was honest about why I was applying and what barriers I faced. Whilst I felt somewhat embarrassed, I knew that if the Access Award was to honour its objective, then being honest would only go in my favour. I would encourage anyone who applies to do the same.

I received lots of support from Nine Chambers and I really believe I would not have got to where I am now (with still a long way to go) without it. I was able to ask all my questions, succeed with the advocacy exercise and all the accommodations which could be made for me, were. Nothing was too much trouble for Nine Chambers and I think all successful applicants were able to benefit from the Access Award. And, even if you are not successful, you never know what legal connections you will make along the way.

Meet a previous winner

Why did you apply for the Nine Chambers Access Award?

I applied for the Access Award because I wanted to gain a better understanding of the Bar and the role of a barrister. I am passionate about representation at the Bar and the fact Nine Chambers are committed to strive for equal representation and empower the next generation of aspiring barristers motivated me to apply for the Award. As an unregistered carer, Nine Chambers understood my circumstances, for which I am grateful.

I wanted to have the opportunity to speak with barristers and develop my advocacy skills through the advocacy session provided by the award. My exposure to the Bar was limited, and giving my caring responsibilities I have found it difficult to apply for mini-pupillages or other legal opportunities. This Award allowed me to experience a day in the life of a barrister in different areas of law.

What key things did you learn through the experience of this Award?

I was able to understand the requirements and level of expertise required of a successful advocate as a result of this incredible experience.

The advocacy session allowed me to grow in confidence in my public speaking, it taught me how to construct points in different ways to make them persuasive and gave me practical tips to help improve my skills.

How do you think the Award has helped you?

The award has been valuable in supporting my journey to become a future barrister. From having a mentor to the mini pupillage and support more generally from Nine Chambers, I can now envisage that I can become a successful advocate. The award has boosted my confidence, equipped and built upon my skills and knowledge and I hope, pushed me even closer to realising my goal of becoming a barrister.

What advice would you give someone thinking of applying?

Your background is your strength at the Bar, so I would encourage you not to feel as though these are a weakness. If you have mitigating circumstances or things have happened which make you feel like the Bar is unattainable, make sure you explain these on your application. The Nine Chambers Access Award has opened many doors for me in my journey to become a barrister and there is no doubt that it will for you too.

Fiza Khan
Access Award Winner 2023

How do I apply?




Applications for the Access Award are currently closed.

To apply, we would like you to answer the following question in no more than 350 words:

Why should you be the recipient of the Nine Chambers Access Award?

It is up to you how you split the word count. You must state on your application the number of words you have used. Applications which exceed the 350 word limit will be disqualified.

We are able to receive applications by:

-  Email
-  Audio
-  Video Recording

Here are some helpful things to think about to answer the question:

What is unique about you and your experiences?

What do you hope to gain from this award?

What attracts you to the legal profession?

What are your key skills and weaknesses?

Have you struggled to understand or access a career in law, if so why?



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