

Guidance for selection (interview) day

A guide to help candidates prepare for interview day. It contains background information on selection days, including the assessment frameworks used by the panels, example questions and top tips.

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1. The selection day process



The purpose of this document is to **help candidates prepare** for selection day.

Some candidates will have attended a JAC selection day before and will know what to expect, but we recognise that others will be taking part for the first time. This guidance helps familiarise you with the process for each type of judicial role, with an example of the assessment frameworks we use.

We have included both background information and some tips to help you succeed.

After every selection exercise, we send candidates a feedback survey. Please take a few minutes to complete it, as your views help us ensure our processes are accessible and fair.

The table below shows the **likely format on selection day** for different judicial roles, but please check the details of the exercise on the JAC website to be certain:

Selection exercise	Selection day structure
Fee-paid Tribunal Judge Fee-paid Employment Judge Deputy District Judge Recorder	▪ Role play ▪ Competency interview
Salaried Employment Judge Judge of the First-tier Tribunal	▪ Situational questions ▪ Competency interview
Judge of the Upper Tribunal	▪ Situational questions ▪ Skills and abilities interview
District Judge	▪ Situational questions ▪ Competency interview
Circuit Judge	▪ Situational questions ▪ Competency interview
Deputy High Court Judge	▪ Role play ▪ Skills & abilities interview
High Court Judge	▪ Situational questions ▪ Skills & abilities interview

Each element of selection day is explained in more detail on the next page.

Where is selection day held?



At present, in 2023, selection days for fee-paid roles such as Deputy District Judge or Fee-paid Tribunal Judge are being conducted remotely via Teams. Selection days for salaried roles are conducted face to face, often in London.

The vacancies webpage has the latest information on process and locations:
<https://apply.judicialappointments.digital/vacancies>

Who is on the interview panel?

Your invitation to selection day will provide more information about the panel. Interview panels usually have three members: a lay chair, a judicial member and a lay independent member. Lay panel members are briefed ahead of the selection exercise and will therefore have an understanding of the role being recruited for.

Senior appointment panels, such as those for a High Court exercise, usually have a JAC Commissioner as chair, the JAC High Court Commissioner, a judge representing each division being recruited for and a lay member.

Since some of the panel members are lay people (not legally trained), try to avoid too much legal jargon and make sure you explain clearly why a particular case or piece of work was complex and/or challenging.

What are the different parts of selection day?

Situational questions You are given one or more scenarios based on things you may encounter as a judge, and the interview panel will ask you what you would do. You are usually asked to complete some reading before selection day, so please allow ample time for this. You will be assessed against the competency or skills & abilities framework (page 5-7) OR

Role play You are given one or more scenarios and play the role of the judge in a simulation of a court, tribunal or similar setting. Other roles will be played by professional actors. You will be observed by the interview panel and assessed against the competency or skills & abilities framework (page 5-7) AND

Competency interview The panel will ask you for specific examples against each of the competencies (pages 5-6) OR

Skills & abilities interview The panel will ask you for specific examples against each of the skills & abilities (page 7).

How long will that take?

Your invitation to selection day will provide details of timings, but as a rough guide you should allow around 3 hours to include the following elements:

- Registration: usually 10 to 15 minutes to settle you in
- Preparation for role play or situational questions: up to 60 minutes including a break
- Role play or situational questions: usually 30 to 40 minutes
- Break: there is often a short pause for around 5 minutes before the interview begins
- Interview: usually 40 minutes

How will I be marked?



For each part of the process, the panel will grade you on each competency or skill and ability as follows:

A = Outstanding evidence

B = Strong evidence

C = Sufficient evidence

D = Insufficient evidence

At the end of the process, you are also allocated a single overall grade: outstanding candidate (A), strong candidate (B), selectable candidate (C) or not presently selectable (D). You can see a summary of how panels in past exercises graded candidates, by browsing previous Selection Day Reports listed at:

<https://judicialappointments.gov.uk/feedback-and-evaluation-reports/>

What information will I receive beforehand?

You will receive a letter via email to confirm you have been shortlisted for selection day and to ask you for your availability. This letter will confirm whether the selection day will be held remotely or in person. It also gives you the opportunity to request reasonable adjustments. Later, you will receive a second letter via email to confirm the date and time of your selection day. It will provide details on the structure of the selection day (see page 2), the order in which each part will take place and the timings. It will also tell you when and how you will receive any reading materials ahead of selection day.

How do I request reasonable adjustments?

We want to make sure that candidates with disabilities and those with long-term health conditions can participate fully and fairly in all JAC recruitment campaigns and at all stages of our selection processes. To ensure this, we consider all reasonable adjustment requests from disabled candidates and those with long term health conditions. Our approach to reasonable adjustments also extends to individuals who may be experiencing short term injury or temporary illness.

If you wish to request or discuss a reasonable adjustment, please state this in the 'reasonable adjustments' section of your application form or contact the Reasonable Adjustment Officer directly. If you need a reasonable adjustment during the selection process after you have submitted your application, please contact the selection exercise team. If you experience any difficulty on selection day, just tell the chair of your panel and they will assist you.

Full information on reasonable adjustments can be found on the JAC website, here: <https://judicialappointments.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity/diversity-and-equality-measures/reasonable-adjustments/>

Will I get technical support for remote selection days?

Remote selection days are usually conducted using Microsoft Teams. Detailed information on what you need to have ready and how to access Teams is available on the JAC website here: <https://judicialappointments.gov.uk/technical-support-getting-ready-for-your-selection-day-remote/>

This web page also tells you how to access technical support. Technical guidance calls are available if you require further assistance, and these can be booked on the same web page.

2. Competencies, skills and abilities



Throughout the selection process, panels use either a competency framework or a skills and abilities framework to assess your ability to effectively carry out the judicial role. Using a framework with clear selection criteria helps ensure the process is fair and accurate.

You can find the framework that will be used for your specific selection exercise within the information at:

<https://apply.judicialappointments.digital/vacancies>

The frameworks incorporate the judicial skills and abilities used by the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary and the Judicial College: [Judicial Skills and Abilities Framework](#)

Example of a Competency Framework

Exercising Judgement

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

- Applies the relevant law and procedure correctly to progress the case
- Reaches timely decisions which are soundly reasoned and easy to follow
- Demonstrates independence of mind
- Ensures fairness; demonstrates integrity and acts without bias or prejudice, especially in challenging, complex situations

Possessing and Building Knowledge

Possesses a detailed knowledge of own field of law and practice. Demonstrates an ability and willingness to learn new areas of law and procedure when required and develop professionally, encouraging others to do so as well

- Demonstrates a detailed knowledge of the law and procedure in own field(s) of practice and prepared to learn other area(s) of law and procedure where required
- Demonstrates an ability to acquire knowledge rapidly, especially of unfamiliar or complex subject matter
- Keeps abreast of changes in the law and new processes and procedures
- Pursues, and supports others in, continuous learning and professional development, regularly sharing relevant information and knowledge when appropriate

Assimilating and Clarifying Information

Quickly assimilates information to the particular needs of different individuals, communities and groups, develops a clear understanding and clarifies uncertainty where necessary

- Effectively assimilates and processes large amounts of complex information from multiple sources
- Identifies, and ensures the focus remains on, the relevant issues
- Critically analyses information and applies appropriate weight to it in order to reach a reasoned decision
- Works collaboratively with other tribunal members to evaluate and interpret evidence to reach a well-reasoned decision

Working and Communicating with Others

Values diversity and shows sensitivity to the particular needs of different individuals, communities and groups. Demonstrates good communication skills and develops effective working relationships with all

- Remains approachable, is supportive of colleagues and receptive to their contributions
- Establishes authority and demonstrates courtesy, gaining the confidence of others
- Deploys appropriate strategies to defuse conflict and facilitate constructive working relationships
- Communicates effectively both orally and in writing in a manner that ensures understanding by others
- Shows an awareness of the importance of diversity, takes an anti-discriminatory approach and demonstrates sensitivity to the particular needs of different communities and groups

Managing Work Efficiently

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

- Manages time and prioritises tasks to ensure efficient completion of workload
- Utilises available resources, including making full use of the latest technology, to carry out the role in the most efficient way
- Resolves problems independently but seeks advice and offers assistance to others when appropriate
- Demonstrates resilience, responding calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances and pressure
- Engages with colleagues to maintain high levels of professional standards

Example of a Skills and Abilities Framework



Legal and judicial skills

- Exceptional intellect
- Analysis of complex issues, reaching clear reasoned decisions
- Expertise in their chosen field
- Grasp of what underpins a fair hearing

Personal qualities

- Integrity, accountability and independence of mind
- Resilience and calm under pressure
- Attentive listener, clear communicator
- Courteously authoritative even in complex and demanding situations
- Understanding, and treating fairly, different communities

Working Effectively

- A team player, seeking and offering candid advice when needed
- Efficiently despatching business, including by supporting staff
- Supporting change throughout the judiciary
- Aware of the role of the judge in twenty-first century society

[OR Leadership

- A team player, offering candid advice when needed and leading by example
- Efficiently despatching business and organising its delivery, including by supporting colleagues and staff
- Works collaboratively to improve performance
- Supporting and driving change throughout the judiciary
- Aware of the role of the judge in twenty-first century society]

3. Tips for selection day



Managing nerves

Being mentally well-prepared and rehearsing will help you feel more in control and less anxious. Panels are fully aware that candidates are often nervous and they will be supportive and sympathetic to this on the day, as they want you to give a good account of yourself.

On the day, it's perfectly reasonable to ask the panel to repeat questions or instructions if you feel confused or if you need to hear it again. You are responsible for managing your own time during the interview, but your panel will keep an eye on the time too and might sometimes move you along, so don't be at all put off if that happens.

Preparing for role plays or situational questions

Thoroughly read any materials that are shared in advance of selection day. You can bring these with you on the day if you wish. Be ready to refer to these materials. For roles such as High Court Judge there is likely to be a lot of complex reading in advance, so make sure you have allocated ample time in your diary for this preparation.

Handling role plays and situational questions on the day

You may be given additional reading material on the day. As before, ensure you read this carefully within the allocated time. You can make notes if you wish, and do bring any notes and the reading materials into the interview room with you.

You need to provide evidence of the competencies or skills & abilities in your responses. For example, for evidence of Exercising Judgement, the panel often looks for clear decisions with reasons. For evidence of Assimilating and Clarifying Information, it expects the candidate to refer to specific parts of the pre-reading, and for Working and Communicating with Others it will be watching for clear communication and sensitivity to any vulnerable party.

In the role play particularly, make sure you keep a close eye on the time and leave enough time for (a) final judgment(s). If you run over the allocated time, the panel chair will stop you. You may sometimes be asked for a short judgment in the situational questions too. Watch an example role play by scrolling to the video near the bottom of this page:

<https://judicialappointments.gov.uk/example-roleplay/>

Preparing for the competency / skills and abilities interview

Re-read the job description and the competency / skills & abilities framework carefully. Remind yourself of the examples you gave in your self-assessment but also be ready to give new specific examples (see page 9). Keeping a 'living' note of your best competency examples as you experience them may help you, giving you several to choose from by the time you reach interview. You may also wish to practice answering questions, so you get used to articulating your examples out loud.

At the start of the interview, you may be asked a warm up question, such as why you have applied for the role or how you have prepared. This question is not related to the competencies / skills and abilities, and it is not graded. It aims to find out a bit more about you and to help you relax into the interview. Your answer can be brief, no more than four or five sentences.

Example interview questions



The panel will base its questions on the competency / skills and abilities framework for the role you are applying for, and it will assess your evidence against that framework.

The panel's questions usually start with 'Give us an example of...' or 'Tell us about a time that...'. You can predict the kind of questions you will be asked and consider some suitable examples to give, before you arrive for selection day. Here are a few examples:

For **Exercising Judgement**, if the competency framework includes 'independence of mind', you could be asked....

Tell us about a time that you demonstrated independence of mind

For **Working and Communicating with Others**, if the competency framework includes 'awareness of diversity', you could be asked...

Give us an example of a time that you applied your knowledge of diversity

For **Managing Work Efficiently**, if the competency framework includes 'resilience', you could be asked...

Give us an example of you showing resilience under pressure

For **Legal and Judicial Skills**, if the skills and abilities framework includes 'exceptional intellect' and/or 'analysis of complex issues', you could be asked...

Talk us through a complex piece of work you did, and how you applied your knowledge and intellect

For **Leadership**, if the skills and abilities framework includes 'driving change through the judiciary', you could be asked...

Give us an example of you driving a change or improvement initiative

Choosing the right examples

Panels like to hear some fresh examples, rather than you simply repeating what you wrote in your self-assessment. However, if you can add significant detail to an existing example, that is usually acceptable, and in some instances the panel may even ask you to do that. It helps the panel to hear work-based examples, but we also welcome some examples from your personal or voluntary life if you wish. Try to choose recent examples, ideally no more than 10 years old.

When you answer each question, always choose an example that:

- Is **relevant** to the question asked.
- Is **specific** i.e. describe a particular incident, and say exactly what you did then.
- Shows a degree of **complexity or challenge**, something that's more difficult than your usual, routine, day to day actions.

Examples where something went wrong but on reflection you learned from the experience can be just as evidence-rich as success stories.

You can see a summary of how panels in past exercises graded competency examples by browsing previous Selection Day Reports listed at:

<https://judicialappointments.gov.uk/feedback-and-evaluation-reports/>

Panels take care to value equally examples from candidates with traditional and less traditional backgrounds (e.g. academics or those from overseas). Do not be put off because, for example, you have little direct UK court or tribunal experience to describe. As long as the examples you choose are relevant to the question asked, specific, and show appropriate complexity or challenge for the role applied for, the panel will treat your evidence as transferable experience / a transferable skill.



Structuring your answers

You will usually have 3-4 minutes to answer each question.

The panel wants to hear what you did, how you did it and why you did that, plus the impact / result.

We encourage you to use the **SOAR structure**:

- Briefly talk about the **Situation** to give the panel some short context.
- State your **Objective** – what were you trying to do?
- Spend most of your answer talking about the **Action** you took.
- Finally, briefly describe the **Result** or outcome or impact of what you did.

The panel may interrupt you if they feel you are starting to go off track or if they are not getting the evidence they need. They may prompt you to focus on a particular aspect of your answer or ask you to be more specific about something. If this happens, listen carefully to their request and do not worry, as they are simply trying to help you give the best evidence you can.

Common mistakes

Too much background: Make sure you are brief when you outline the situation at the start of your answer. Too many candidates take far too long on this part, and it rarely provides gradable evidence. It is your action, specifically what you do, how and why, and the result, which provide the evidence.

Too generic: The panel wants to hear specific examples of a particular time that you did something relevant to the competency or skill mentioned in the question. Describing your general approach to a type of situation / case / person will not get you marks, so avoid answers that focus on a description of what you 'always', 'generally' or 'never do', as this is too vague. Instead pick one specific incident and describe your actions in detail.

Talking about 'we': Always use the term 'I' not 'we', as the panel needs to know what you personally did. If you say 'We...' then the panel cannot attribute the action or result to you.

Taking detailed competency / skill notes into the interview: You may bring summary notes or prompts into the interview if it assists you, but be aware that candidates who rely heavily on their notes don't usually benefit. These candidates often fail to listen carefully to the panel's questions, so they offer examples that don't provide relevant evidence.

Insufficient preparation: Candidates who do little preparation often struggle to provide fresh, new examples to the panel. Some of these candidates also cannot recall what they wrote in their self-assessment, and therefore cannot answer when the panel asks them to expand on something in their application. Make sure you set aside time to re-read your self-assessment before selection day, consider what questions you may be asked and practise speaking your answers out loud.

4. Useful JAC resources



The JAC website includes tools to help you decide whether a judicial career is right for you, and understand what types of roles are available and what we're looking for in an application.

Am I ready?

There are a number of short surveys that you can use to check your readiness:

- Do I meet the statutory eligibility requirements for fee-paid judicial roles?
[JAC Eligibility Survey](#)
 - Do I satisfy the JAC's guidance on good character?
[JAC Good Character Survey](#)
 - Do I understand what sort of decisions I would need to make as a judge?
[JAC Suitability Survey](#)
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Completing a self-assessment

Self-assessment is a critical part of the application. We provide guidance on the competency framework and on how to structure your written competency examples:

[Completing your self-assessment](#)
[Choosing the best examples](#)

Preparing for judicial selection exercises

This guide will help you prepare for JAC selection exercises. It has some overlap with what you are reading here, but it contains more detail on how to fill in your self-assessment and how panels graded real candidates on selection day.

[Guidance on preparing for Judicial Selection Exercises](#)

High Court Pathways guidance

This document sets out the various pathways to the High Court and Deputy High Court, and guidance on the application process.

[Guidance on High Court application process](#)

Judicial Diversity partner programmes



COURTS AND TRIBUNALS JUDICIARY



The Judicial Careers Portal at www.judicialcareers.judiciary.uk/ has a range of useful information, including:

The Judicial Work Shadowing Scheme gives eligible legal practitioners who are considering a career in judicial office an insight into the work of a judge. For full information on who can apply and how to apply, please use this link:

[Judicial Work Shadowing Scheme](#)

The Judicial Mentoring Scheme is open to barrister, solicitors, Fellows of the Chartered Legal Executives and professionally qualified legal academics who are:

- Female and/or
- From an ethnic minority background and/or
- Attended a (non-fee paying) state school and/or
- The first generation in their family to attend university

For full information, please use the following link: [Judicial Mentoring Scheme](#)



The Pre-Application Judicial Education (PAJE) programme is designed to give direct insight into the skills involved in becoming a judge. PAJE has been developed by the Judicial Diversity Forum to support lawyers from under-represented groups such as ethnic minority lawyers, women lawyers, and lawyers with disabilities.

To find out more or apply, click here: [The PAJE programme](#)

For more information call 020 7611 4690 or email PAJE@judiciary.uk

PAJE resources

The following open resources have been created by the Judicial College to provide an introduction to becoming a judge:

[PAJE videos on YouTube](#)

[PAJE podcasts on SoundCloud](#)

PAJE judge-led workshops

PAJE is primarily a course in judge craft, rather than completing an application. By the end of the course participants will have a deeper understanding of the work of a judge, and the qualities sought in judicial applicants. More details and dates can be found by clicking on the PAJE programme link above.

