

Post Selection Day Evaluation and Feedback Report
00120 Deputy District Judge
June 2023

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an evaluation of the selection days for Deputy District Judge as well as capture general feedback on candidate performance. The report describes how selection days were undertaken by both panels and candidates; including what characterised stronger and weaker demonstrations of the competencies needed to fulfil the requirements of this role.

Competency Framework

The remote selection days were divided into two parts. The first part included a remote, live roleplay exercise, which was designed to assess the following competencies:

- Exercising Judgement
- Assimilating and Clarifying Information
- Working and Communicating with Others
- Managing Work Efficiently

The second part was a competency-based interview, which was designed to assess the following competencies:

- Exercising Judgement
- Possessing and Building Knowledge
- Assimilating and Clarifying Information
- Working and Communicating with Others
- Managing Work Efficiently

The assessment criteria were developed so that candidates could demonstrate their proficiency and capability transferable to the role from other contexts. The specific behavioural indicators under each competency were designed to reflect the aptitude and faculty that an effective Deputy District Judge is expected to possess. This enabled us to assess candidates in a fair and consistent manner.

Performance of Candidates

For this exercise we received a vacancy request to fill 100 posts, which subsequently increased to 116 posts due to business need. Candidates are usually interviewed at a ratio of 2 or 3 candidates for each vacancy. We therefore planned the selection exercise based on inviting around 250 candidates to selection day.

All candidates who applied for this exercise were invited to sit the first stage of shortlisting, the online qualifying test. 2,720 candidates completed the qualifying test. We then invited 639 candidates to the second stage of shortlisting, the online scenario test.

To identify the 250 most meritorious candidates from the scenario test, who were then invited to selection day, the score for each candidate was used to rank all candidates into a merit list, with the highest score at the top of the list, and the lowest at the bottom. Where candidates have the same score at the cut off line, the Equal Merit Provision may be used in line with the JAC's published policy for the purposes of increasing judicial diversity, which is available [here](#).

The Equal Merit Provision was applied at this stage of the selection process. After applying the above process, 25 candidates were identified within the zone of equal merit who had a score of 39%. 17 of these candidates were invited to progress to the next stage of the selection exercise.

261 candidates were invited to complete a full application. Of these, 244 completed their application with one candidate withdrawing and 16 failing to complete an application.

Following selection day, 116 candidates assessed as the strongest on merit were recommended by the Judicial Appointments Commission to the Lord Chief Justice for appointment to the role of Deputy District Judge. In making this decision the Commission took into account all relevant character checks, all the evidence provided by the candidates at selection day, as well as the candidates' independent assessments and self-assessments.

Selection Day

Development of the roleplay

The roleplay was devised and drafted by two District Judges. As with all the selection tools developed for this exercise, the roleplay was designed to simulate a court environment with candidates taking on the role of judicial office holders. As the selection days were held remotely, the roleplay was designed to take place as a remote hearing via MS Teams.

The roleplay assessed how candidates deal with the situations they may face and decisions they would have to make if appointed. Candidates are expected to demonstrate their ability to meet the competency framework and whether they can maintain their performance under challenge and pressure.

The materials developed for this exercise were reviewed internally by JAC Operations, Selection Policy, and Diversity and Engagement teams to quality and equality assure the material to ensure it was an effective and fair tool to assess candidates. The teams also ensured that the materials did not unfairly advantage or disadvantage any potential candidates undertaking the selection days on the basis of their diversity characteristic or professional background.

Following this internal quality assurance, the material was then reviewed by the JAC Advisory Group. The Advisory Group is composed of members of the judiciary and representatives of the legal professions and chaired by a lay JAC Commissioner. It offers advice and guidance on the development of selection material, quality assures the material, and considers – and mitigates – any negative impacts on diverse groups.

A remote dry run took place with volunteers to assess the effectiveness of the roleplay. This provided an opportunity to trial the roleplay material, test the remote process and implement any necessary amendments. Following the roleplay dry run, it was agreed that the use of MS Teams to conduct the remote roleplay was effective.

Structure of the roleplay

The roleplay was designed to assess how candidates deal with decisions they would be asked to make and situations they may encounter if appointed as a Deputy District Judge.

The candidate was cast in the role of a Tribunal Judge conducting a final hearing to determine an application to appeal a housing association's decision not to grant a Dog Licence, where the applicant suffers from a mental health condition. The candidate was expected to make decisions on procedural matters during the hearing and give a final judgment. The candidate was expected to manage the hearing so they could finish in the allotted time.

The script was designed to test a candidate's ability to appropriately deal with situations and the people appearing before them, as well as process the information and make decisions.

Selection day preparation

On selection day, candidates were given preparation material that provided a background to the roleplay. Candidates were given 50 minutes to familiarise themselves with the material. The preparation material consisted of the following:

- Introduction/ candidate briefing/ background on the present case;
- Supporting papers:
 - The fictional Canine (Social Housing) Act 2023.
 - The fictional Canine (Social Housing) Regulations 2023.
 - A Dog Licence Application Notice.
 - The Housing Association's Dog Licence Rejection Notice.
 - An Appeal Notice.
 - The fictional Canine (Social Housing) Tribunal – Order.
 - Statement by the applicant.
 - Statement by the applicant's mother.
 - Statement by a Dog Rescue Centre Manager.
 - Statement by a neighbour.
 - Statement by the Housing Manager.

Marking of roleplay

A checklist and marking schedule were provided to the selection day panels to guide them on what to look for under each competency.

Assessment of candidates' responses to the roleplay

The evidence for each competency tested in the roleplay was assessed as either outstanding, strong, sufficient, or insufficient. The panels then made a final overall assessment of candidates as either outstanding, strong, selectable, or not presently selectable.

Outstanding evidence included:

- Maintaining control of the hearing and establishing authority.
- Running the hearing smoothly and demonstrating clear consideration of time management.
- Demonstrating a clear grasp of all the information provided and referring to specific sections of the relevant Act and Regulations.
- Giving detailed reasons and making correct decisions in all the judgments required.
- Showing awareness and consideration for the needs of the parties and adapting style and approach accordingly.
- Demonstrating fairness, integrity and lack of bias or prejudice.
- Giving a faultless final judgment supported by critical analysis of all the information.

Strong evidence included:

- Establishing authority and maintaining control of the hearing by utilising the available time appropriately.

- Demonstrating awareness of most of the information provided and referring to some sections of the Act and Regulations.
- Considering most of the needs of the parties and demonstrating empathy at times.
- Challenging some of the inappropriate behaviour.
- Making appropriate decisions and demonstrating rationale in most places.
- Delivering the final judgment on time, with reasoning.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Demonstrating understanding of some of the information provided and some consideration of oral evidence.
- Making some appropriate decisions with limited reasoning and clarity.
- Limited reference to the relevant sections of the Act and Regulations.
- Some consideration towards the needs of the parties with limited adaptation of approach.
- Limited degree of challenging the inappropriate behaviour from characters in the scenario.
- Delivering a final judgment with some reasoning.
- Limited evidence of managing time appropriately.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Not referencing the advance reading material.
- Not explaining the purpose of the hearing and the running order.
- Not providing clear decisions on the procedural matters.
- Failing to tackle the inappropriate comments between the two parties.
- Not showing empathy towards the parties.
- Getting side-tracked on exploring non-essential issues with the parties.
- Making incorrect judgments or having incorrect rationale.
- Lacking consistency and confidence in the approach and decision making.
- Not demonstrating consideration of the needs of the parties or showing the necessary authority.
- Not making a final ruling within the time allowed.

Competency-based interview

Following the role play, each candidate had a competency-based interview. Here, the panel were seeking further evidence by way of examples from the candidates of the required competencies related to the role of a Deputy District Judge. The panel also drew upon evidence provided in the candidates' self-assessments to inform their questioning.

Assessment of candidates' responses to the competency-based interview

The evidence for each competency tested in the competency-based interview was assessed as either outstanding, strong, sufficient, or insufficient. The panels then made a final overall assessment of candidates as either outstanding, strong, selectable, or not presently selectable.

Exercising Judgement

Outstanding evidence included:

- Detailed explanation of balancing competing factors in complex decision making.
- Making legally sound decisions on high profile cases in a confident manner.
- Focused, relevant, and recent examples of showing fairness.
- Demonstrating a high level of integrity in a challenging situation.
- Showing resilience and an ability to withstand pressure in highly pressured situations involving a complex factual matrix and legal nuances.
- Demonstrating a clear, structured and considered decision-making technique.
- Demonstrating a thorough analytical process and a methodical approach in decision-making.
- Delivering clear and detailed examples in a thoughtful and careful manner.

Strong evidence included:

- Demonstrating independence of mind, integrity, and an ability to apply the relevant law and procedure correctly.
- Applying the relevant legal and procedural considerations and making a sound decision in moderately complex situations.
- Demonstrating an ability to reflect and learn.
- Demonstrating strong independence and fairness in listening carefully and explaining legal concepts calmly.
- Showing an ability to make clear and confident decisions without prejudice and when under pressure.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Showing independence of mind and an ability to make the correct decision in less legally complex situations.
- Demonstrating an ability to apply relevant law and procedure without giving a thorough explanation of the balancing exercise.
- Demonstrating integrity and fairness in routine work situations.
- Providing relevant examples in a less structured and clear way.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Failing to provide a convincing example of making a finely balanced decision.
- Providing unclear and unfocused answers which did not address the relevant questions.
- Failing to demonstrate independence of mind or integrity.
- Providing underdeveloped examples, lacking in contextual information or depth.
- Providing examples which are too generic, routine, or simplistic.

Possessing and Building Knowledge

Outstanding evidence included:

- Demonstrating detailed knowledge of law and procedure in own field of expertise.
- Demonstrating an ability to acquire further knowledge in complex areas efficiently at short notice.
- Providing an example of complex piece of unfamiliar legal work and explaining in detail a systematic approach of learning and reflecting.
- Demonstrating an ability to keep abreast of changes in law.
- Showing a willingness to learn and develop and to support others.
- Demonstrating an ability to translate knowledge into a format that can be shared with others in a clear and accessible manner.
- Showing a commitment to sharing relevant knowledge and information with others through proactive involvement in professional associations and other activities.
- Providing clear and in-depth answers, which were delivered carefully and thoughtfully throughout.

Strong evidence included:

- Demonstrating detailed knowledge of own field of expertise.
- Providing a clear example of ability to acquire further knowledge in unfamiliar area rapidly.
- Keeping abreast of changes in own field.
- Demonstrating commitment to own continuous learning and development.
- Showing willingness and enthusiasm to share developments and changes in the law with colleagues.
- Providing examples which were wide-ranging in scope but not developed enough to constitute outstanding evidence.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Demonstrating an ability to acquire new knowledge with limited details on the complexity of the new information.
- Keeping abreast of changes in law and applying that knowledge.
- Developing knowledge in a new area of law within or closely within own area of specialism.
- Ability to share information with others.
- Providing examples which demonstrated elements of the competency but were considered too routine or straightforward.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Failing to demonstrate an effective ability to learn new areas of law or retain them.
- Failing to clearly describe the new knowledge that has been acquired.
- Failing to show the complexity of information and research methods.
- Getting side-tracked and failing to provide a clear and focused answer to the specific questions.
- Providing examples which were too routine and lacking in detail.

Assimilating and Clarifying Information

Outstanding evidence included:

- Demonstrating an ability to assimilate a large amount of information using a highly organised approach and robust methodology to identify the important aspects.
- Demonstrating an ability to carefully cut through, rationalise and weigh up conflicting information to form a view in a limited timeframe.
- Describing a clear, methodical, and analytical approach in reaching a decision.
- Demonstrating an ability to work in a fast moving and changing environment.
- Providing highly complex examples rich in evidence and detail.

Strong evidence included:

- Demonstrating an ability to seek out and assimilate information from a wide range of sources.
- Demonstrating an ability to weigh up conflicting information to reach a decision.
- Demonstrating an ability to apply a rigorous and robust process to ensure grasp of key issues.
- Demonstrating an ability to use technology to categorise and organise information.
- Providing examples of considerable complexity and varying levels of detail.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Demonstrating an ability to assimilate a large amount of information in a fairly routine example.
- Demonstrating limited evidence of ability to analyse information and identify important issues.
- Providing examples with limited but sufficient complexity, depth and details about strategies and processes.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Failing to focus on the important points of the questions asked.
- Failing to provide examples of sufficient complexity.
- Failing to provide examples of detailed or extensive critical analysis.
- Failing to demonstrate ability to give due weight to conflicting evidence.
- Failing to provide examples in a structured and confident manner.

Working and Communicating with Others

Outstanding evidence included:

- Demonstrating a clear approach to simplifying complex concepts and making them accessible to different audiences in clear and simple terms.
- Demonstrating an ability to adapt communication style and language and use various communication tools to check understanding of audience.
- Demonstrating a high-level awareness of diversity and the requirement to take account of the needs of different individuals.
- Showing a high level of empathy and sensitivity to others, coupled with an excellent ability to build rapport.

- Showing an ability to inspire respect and confidence in own decisions.
- Demonstrating an ability to manage a challenge to own authority.
- Overall clear, succinct, and well-structured approach to answering the interview questions whilst providing very comprehensive examples.

Strong evidence included:

- Showing an ability to diffuse a challenge to own authority.
- Demonstrating a strong sense of understanding and empathy in dealing with cultural differences.
- Demonstrating an ability to explain difficult concepts in simple language.
- Demonstrating an ability to validate understanding of other parties involved.
- Demonstrating an ability to build rapport.
- Strong communication throughout interview.
- Providing well-structured and clear examples of varying levels of complexity.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Demonstrating an ability to explain a difficult legal concept to lay people.
- Demonstrating an ability to diffuse tension.
- Demonstrating an understanding of diversity.
- Demonstrating an ability to focus on the important aspects of the questions in most cases.
- Demonstrating a clear communication style throughout the interview.
- Providing less complex and challenging examples with limited but sufficient levels of detail.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Failing to show ability to communicate a complex legal concept.
- Failing to explain the management of challenges to authority.
- Failing to demonstrate the ability to adapt a communication style.
- Failing to show awareness of diversity.
- Providing examples which were lacking in detail, clarity, or focus.
- Lacking confidence in communicating answers throughout interview.

Managing Work Efficiently

Outstanding evidence included:

- Demonstrating an ability to juggle work and personal commitments by using various techniques to reallocate, reschedule and prioritise tasks.
- Demonstrating resilience under pressure in particularly challenging situations and high-profile cases.
- Showing flexibility and responsiveness to changing circumstances.
- Demonstrating enthusiasm and creativity in utilising IT resources to improve efficiency and productivity.
- Providing well-explained, detailed examples with particular focus on the complexity of the situation, the decision-making process, and the reasoning behind it.

Strong evidence included:

- Demonstrating a detailed method for managing commitments and ensuring timely delivery.
- Showing resilience when dealing with challenging work at short notice.
- Demonstrating an ability to remain calm and to adapt to changing circumstances.
- Showing a capacity for self-reflection.
- Demonstrating an ability to utilise technology to enhance efficiency and respond to new ways of working.
- Providing multifaceted examples with varying levels of depth and detail.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Demonstrating an ability to manage time effectively.
- Showing resilience and calmness under moderate pressure.
- Showing competence in using IT in everyday scenarios.
- Providing examples with limited but sufficient complexity, detail, and depth.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Failing to demonstrate resilience under pressure.
- Failing to show ability to manage workload efficiently.
- Failing to demonstrate awareness and utilisation of technology.
- Failing to provide succinct answers throughout interview.
- Providing examples lacking in complexity and depth.

Welsh Questions

Candidates for posts in Wales were required to have an understanding, or the ability to acquire the understanding, of the administration of justice in Wales, including legislation applicable to Wales and Welsh devolution arrangements. This requirement was assessed separately via a third-party platform through a series of questions. Candidates were assessed as having either No, Basic, Medium, or High understanding of the administration of justice in Wales depending on their responses to the questions. This determined their suitability for posts in Wales.

Moderation

To ensure there was a consistency in the marking across all the panels, a random sample of candidates were moderated.

Candidates who experienced technical issues at selection day were also moderated.

Feedback from Candidates

After the selection days, candidates were invited to complete an anonymous candidate survey. 100 candidates responded to the survey. The results are captured below:

How would you rate the quality of customer service you received from JAC staff on your selection day?

- 95% of candidates selected either good or excellent.
- 3% of candidates selected fair.
- 2% of candidates selected not applicable.

The instructions provided beforehand enabled me to prepare for the remote selection day.

- 87% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 9% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 5% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

I was confident I knew how to use Microsoft Teams before the selection day.

- 98% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 2% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.

I understood what was expected on the selection day.

- 90% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 6% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 4% of candidates either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The live role play, including the setting, scenario, and actors, created a convincing situation.

- 80% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 8% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 12% of candidates either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The role play enabled me to demonstrate my suitability for the role.

- 79% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 14% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 7% of candidates disagreed.

I am confident in the role play as a JAC selection tool.

- 80% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 15% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 5% of candidates either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The interview questions gave me the opportunity to demonstrate my skills, abilities, and competence for this role.

- 62% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 10% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 28% of candidates either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The panel behaved professionally and treated me with respect.

- 96% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 1% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 3% of candidates either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

I am confident in the interview as a JAC selection tool.

- 67% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 16% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 17% of candidates either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
