



Post Selection Day Evaluation and Feedback Report
00227 Recorder
June-July 2025

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an evaluation of the selection days for 00227 Recorder 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

At selection day, the role play and competency-based interview were designed to assess the following competencies:

- Exercising Judgement
- Possessing and Building Knowledge (assessed at interview only)
- Assimilating and Clarifying Information
- Working and Communicating with Others
- Managing Work Efficiently

The assessment criteria were developed so that candidates could demonstrate the proficiency and capability transferable to the role from other contexts. The specific behavioural indicators for each competency were designed to reflect the aptitude and faculty that an effective Recorder is expected to have. This enabled us to assess candidates in a fair and consistent way.

Performance of candidates

1,180 candidates applied for this exercise. Shortlisting involved an online qualifying test, which all candidates were invited to complete. This comprised of two multiple-choice tests: a situational judgement test and a critical analysis test. The 437 most meritorious candidates were then invited to complete a written online scenario test.

Following the shortlisting stages, the 178 most meritorious candidates were invited to selection day. The original vacancy request was increased from 70 to 87 by HM Courts and Tribunals Service due to business need. Therefore, the 87 most meritorious candidates were recommended for appointment by the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) to the Lady Chief Justice for England and Wales. In making this decision, the Commission took into account all relevant character checks, all evidence provided by the candidates at selection day, as well as the candidates' independent assessments and self-assessments.

Selection day

Selection days were held remotely via Microsoft Teams between 30 June 2025 and 11 July 2025. Candidates who took part in remote interviews were provided with technical support to get ready for their selection day as detailed on [our website](#).

Development of the role play

The role play was devised and drafted by two Circuit Judges acting as the drafting judges and reviewed by another Circuit Judge and a Resident Judge in their capacity as the lead judges. As with all the selection tools developed for this exercise, the role play was designed to simulate a court or tribunal environment with candidates taking on the role of judicial office holders.

The role play assesses 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 Operations, Policy, and Diversity and Engagement teams to quality and equality assure the material to ensure it was an effective 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 characteristics 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.

The effectiveness of the role play was assessed by means of two mock assessments, with a range of volunteers from relevant candidate groups. This provided an opportunity to trial the role play material and make any necessary amendments.

Structure of role play

The role play was designed to assess how candidates deal with decisions they would be asked to make and situations they may encounter if appointed as a Recorder.

The role play involved dealing with an appeal in a fictitious case brought by a market trader against a local council's decision. Candidates were required to make reasoned decisions and judgments based on provided materials, without relying on external legal knowledge. There were tests of their ability to manage the hearing and the parties, to provide appropriate support to an unrepresented party, and to identify and handle the parties' errors in their documents. They needed to identify relevant rules, procedures, standards, and facts, and provide well-reasoned answers.

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

Candidates were given information on the background of the role play and any relevant rules and procedures prior to the selection day. This consisted of the Appeal

Rules and the Market Regulations. On the day, they were provided with the particular scenario, four witness statements and two letters.

Marking of role play

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

Assessment of candidates' responses to the role play

The evidence for each competency is assessed as either outstanding, strong, sufficient or insufficient.

Outstanding evidence included:

- Uses judgement to act quickly and decisively; makes sound, reasoned decisions across all areas raised by the scenario.
- Shows fairness to both parties and covers all or nearly all points in the marking guide.
- Fully absorbs and understands the pre-reading material; uses it appropriately during the hearing and decision-making. Covers most, if not all, items.
- Demonstrates calm authority and understanding; maintains good control and defuses tension.
- Communicates clearly and is sensitive to communication difficulties.
- Keeps parties focused and avoids distractions. Sets a good pace while allowing full submissions.
- Allocates adequate time for judgment and stays well within the timetable.
- Provides a full introduction, demonstrating awareness of the purpose of the hearing, the procedure and timings and briefly explaining this to the parties

Strong evidence included:

- Makes the most important decisions and covers most points, though may miss smaller or nuanced aspects.
- Absorbs most key parts of the brief; covers most points but may miss some smaller or nuanced ones.
- Maintains control but may be less confident or clear in communication. Might miss some points.
- Maintains some control over time; keeps the hearing moving and completes it within the allotted time.

Sufficient evidence included:

- Makes some important decisions but omits others. Reasoning may lack detail or clarity.
- Absorbs some key points but misses or misunderstands others.
- Maintains some control; may struggle with interruptions or digressions.
- Communication is effective but less clear.
- Manages the hearing, but less effectively; may rush or cut short parts to finish on time.

Insufficient evidence included:

- Omits many decisions or makes poorly reasoned ones.
- Fails to grasp the basics of the scenario; misses or misunderstands major issues in the pre-reading.
- Shows little authority; communicates unclearly and may be insensitive or impatient.
- Fails to monitor time; spends too much on distractions, leaving insufficient time for judgment or omitting key parts of the hearing.

Feedback from panels on the role play

What successful candidates did well:

- Structured their hearings: Set out clear purpose, process, timings, and ground rules; checked identities and documents.
- Fair and rule-based: Decisions were clearly linked to rules; managed discussions fairly and firmly.
- Empathetic and inclusive: Acknowledged the reading difficulties and personal circumstances; offered or suggested accommodations.
- Prepared and probing: Demonstrated strong grasp of facts; asked insightful questions; understood the rules and regulations for the scenario.
- Clear judgments: Delivered thorough, reasoned decisions with accessible language; explained implications for parties.
- Controlled and calm: Maintained authority without being harsh; balanced participation and control.
- Adaptable: Responded to new information during the hearing; didn't rigidly follow pre-prepared scripts.

Where unsuccessful candidates struggled:

- Lack of structure and clarity: Failed to explain process or decisions; judgments lacked linkage to facts or rules.
- Bias and poor control: Showed favouritism or were overly harsh; lost control or raised voices.
- Misunderstood key issues: Misinterpreted rules (especially the 12-month rule); ignored bias or hearsay/documentation errors.
- Inflexible and unprepared: Stuck to scripts; missed new evidence; read pre-written judgments without adapting.
- Poor time management: Rushed or overran; didn't leave time for proper judgment.
- Inaccessible communication: Used jargon or overly formal language; failed to engage effectively with the litigant-in-person.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Preparation: Know the materials thoroughly; mark up evidence for easy reference.
- Observation and practice:
 - Observe judges in challenging hearings.

- Shadow a judge if possible.
 - Practice timed case reading and judgment writing.
- Adaptability: Be ready to adjust plans based on what happens during the hearing.
- Communication: Use clear, accessible language; ensure parties feel heard and understood.

Competency-based interview

Each candidate then undertook a competency-based interview. Here the panel was seeking further evidence and examples from the candidate of the required competencies, in the context of the role of Recorder. The panel drew upon evidence provided in the candidate's self-assessment and career history to inform their questioning.

Exercising Judgement

Outstanding evidence: Candidates provided examples involving complex and finely balanced decisions for which they were directly responsible. They clearly explained the context and outlined how they weighed competing issues to reach a decision. These examples demonstrated resistance to external pressure, a strong focus on legal and ethical considerations, and integrity throughout their approach.

Strong evidence: Candidates gave examples that were slightly less complex or involved less intense pressure. Nonetheless, they showed independence of mind, integrity, and applied the law to make well-reasoned judgements. Their decision-making process was clear and demonstrated sound judgement.

Sufficient evidence: Candidates presented routine examples involving standard legal applications. They showed some independence and integrity but often struggled to clearly articulate their reasoning or the process they followed. Their judgement was evident but lacked depth or clarity.

Insufficient evidence: Candidates provided basic or less relevant examples, often involving group decisions rather than independent ones. They made limited reference to legal or ethical considerations and sometimes showed unwarranted hesitancy or deferred decisions to others.

Possessing and Building Knowledge

Outstanding evidence: Candidates demonstrated deep legal expertise and the ability to rapidly acquire and apply knowledge in unfamiliar, complex areas. They used diverse sources to keep their knowledge up to date and showed initiative in sharing their learning with others through training, publications, and wider engagement. Their examples were well-developed, clearly aligned with the competency, and showed impact beyond their immediate role.

Strong evidence: Candidates presented complex or challenging examples, such as working in areas with no precedents or handling tricky test cases. Their actions were described in detail, clearly outlining what they did, why, and how.

Sufficient evidence: Candidates shared interesting but more routine examples, such as using LexisNexis to follow case law or attending training when first appointed in a judicial role. Some also demonstrated sharing knowledge with colleagues. However, the examples lacked legal complexity and the descriptions of their actions were limited, often missing depth in how they handled the cases.

Insufficient evidence: Candidates provided examples with excessive background and minimal detail on their own actions. Some failed to answer the question directly. Additionally, there was a lack of detailed or complex understanding of law or procedure, and limited demonstration of transferable skills across a wider range of situations.

Assimilating and Clarifying Information

Outstanding evidence: Candidates demonstrated exceptional ability to assimilate and critically analyse large volumes of complex information under significant time pressure. They effectively weighed conflicting evidence, focusing on credibility and relevance while disregarding superficial factors. Their structured approach enabled efficient decision-making in high-pressure contexts. Examples were well-developed, clearly aligned with the competency, and showed impact beyond their immediate role.

Strong evidence: Candidates provided clear and relevant examples of assimilating large volumes of complex information and managing conflicting data. They demonstrated structured approaches to distilling key issues and weighing evidence, often under time pressure. While the examples were strong, candidates could have achieved a higher grade with more detail on how decisions were reached or how information was weighted.

Sufficient evidence: Candidates provided low-level examples lacking complexity. They often gave excessive background on the case with minimal detail on their own actions. There was limited evidence of how they assimilated, clarified, or shared information. Many required significant prompting to stay focused on the question and relate their example to the specific aspects of the competency.

Insufficient evidence: Candidates did not provide any clear account of what they did or how they did it. Their responses consisted of generic commentary or unsupported assertions, even after probing by the panel. They did not engage with the specific criteria for the competency or demonstrate relevant behaviours.

Working and Communicating with Others

Outstanding evidence: Candidates answered the specific question posed directly, rather than relying on pre-prepared responses. They provided complex and challenging examples that were clearly aligned with the competency criteria.

Strong evidence: Candidates generally responded to the specific question, though their examples sometimes could have provided higher complexity or challenge. In

some cases, it was unclear to the panel whether the candidate handled the situation entirely independently or with support from others.

Sufficient evidence: Candidates typically answered the question but occasionally overlooked key elements asked, such as "rapidly," resulting in incomplete responses. Some successfully adapted existing examples to fit the question, though the alignment was not always seamless.

Insufficient evidence: Candidates failed to answer the question directly, demonstrated insensitivity or a lack of awareness of others' vulnerabilities, and often described routine aspects of their day job without showing complexity or challenge.

Managing Work Efficiently

Outstanding evidence: Candidates demonstrated a strong ability to improve efficiency through procedural innovation and proactive planning. They simplified communications to enhance clarity and accountability and leveraged resources and networks to respond swiftly to urgent legal matters. They addressed team inefficiencies through targeted training and support and showed excellent prioritisation and delegation under pressure. Examples were succinct, well-developed, and clearly aligned with the competency.

Strong evidence: Candidates provided specific and relevant examples that directly addressed the questions. These included developing proforma judgments and mind maps for remand cases, responding swiftly to changing trial requirements, and using AI tools to process large volumes of information efficiently. Their actions were well described and often illustrated multiple elements of the competency.

Sufficient evidence: Candidates provided examples which lacked complexity or challenge, and some were drawn from much earlier stages in their careers. Examples included managing personal responsibilities alongside judicial duties, creating libraries of authorities, and using OneDrive for case preparation. Some showed resilience, but the scope and depth of their actions were limited.

Insufficient evidence: Candidates gave generic or routine examples with little detail on their actions. Scenarios often focused on ordinary work-life balance matters, without demonstrating complexity. Examples included working from home due to interruptions, introducing standard letters without understanding their impact, and last-minute remote court arrangements. Many responses lacked intellectual challenge or failed to show how workloads were managed effectively.

Feedback from panels on the competency-based interview

Collectively the feedback from panels was that generally candidates benefitted from thoughtful interview preparation which balances readiness with flexibility. Whilst having a range of examples can be helpful, over-preparing and forcing pre-written answers into responses can be less effective. Stronger candidates listened carefully, answering the specific question, focusing on what they did and how they did it, rather than providing overly detailed context or background details.

Common issues included:

- Using outdated or overly generic examples.
- Reading from notes and losing engagement with the panel.
- Failing to answer questions directly.
- Providing routine or low-complexity examples that did not reflect the level of the role.

Candidates are encouraged to:

- Prepare a broad set of examples that can be adapted to different questions.
- Focus on demonstrating the competency through their own actions.
- Use concise, relevant detail to show complexity and challenge.
- Make use of available resources (e.g. JAC guidance) and consider shadowing judicial post holders for insight.

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 via an online video assessment through a series of questions. Candidates were assessed as either suitable or not suitable for posts in Wales, based on their answers to these questions.

Feedback from Candidates

After the selection days, candidates were invited to complete an anonymous candidate survey, for which 78 candidate responses were received. The results of the survey are as follows:

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

- 94.9% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 3.8% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.3% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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

- 94.9% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 1.3% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 3.8% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

I understood what was expected on the selection day.

- 93.6% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 5.1% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.3% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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

- 71.8% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 9.0% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 19.2% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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

- 65.4% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 9.0% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 25.6% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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

- 69.2% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 7.7% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 23.1% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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

- 46.2% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 17.9% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 35.9% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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

- 47.5% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 21.8% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 30.7% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The panel behaved professionally and treated me with respect.

- 91.0% of candidates either agreed or strongly agreed.
- 3.8% of candidates neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 5.2% of candidates disagreed or strongly disagreed.

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

- 94.9% of candidates rated it good or excellent.
- 3.8% of candidates rated it fair.
- 1.3% of candidates rated it poor or very poor.