



## PROVIDING YOUR BEST EVIDENCE AT A KC SELECTION INTERVIEW

### How this document will help you

The KC Selection Panel wants you to be confident that you are well prepared and can demonstrate your skills and experience to the best of your ability at the interview. This guide is to help you understand how a competency-based interview is conducted and how to prepare yourself for the interview.

### Competency questions

Competency questions always ask you to show your skills or personal qualities with real examples from your career. Typical questions start with: 'Give us an example of...' or 'How have you dealt with...' Often the main question is followed by shorter ones seeking more detail.

A competency-based interview is more appropriate than ones which are swayed by opinions, hypothetical situations or personal chemistry. This is especially so when, as in the KC competition, we're not considering 'potential'. This process is entirely about the standard which you have already achieved.

We want real life examples which show your excellence in the KC competencies. These will therefore include your understanding and usage of the law, your written and oral advocacy, how you work with others, what you understand by diversity and what you have personally done to widen access and participation. All of these will be covered in a structured way, although not necessarily to the same extent. We will tell you which competency we're focussing on at each stage of the interview although some questions (and your answers) may be relevant to more than one of the competencies.

### Good answers

There are no right or wrong ways to answer a question at interview. However, it may be helpful for you to think about your answers in a structured way.

'STAR' is one of many good models for answering competency questions. Explain the SITUATION you faced; what your TASK was; what ACTION you personally took; and what RESULT was achieved (how did the situation afterwards differ from before).

TASK is not simply a job allocated by somebody else, but how you defined your own responsibility. For example, leadership can be shown in many situations, not just those in which you have a formal leadership role.

A good answer will be not more than two or three minutes long. It will use simple language to show *factually* what was challenging or exceptional, with irrelevant detail stripped out. It won't be a sales pitch: the key facts will be centre stage. We definitely want to understand how you interacted with others, but we want the main focus of the answer to tell us *what you personally did and why*.

It is important not to get distracted by the facts of the case. The interviewers will rarely need to know in detail about the case itself, as opposed to what you did in it.

### **Reassurance**

KC interviews are not looking for perfection. If you stumble or want to start an answer again, just say. On the day, the interviewers' job is surprisingly like yours: helping you to provide your best evidence – that is factual content which brings to life the quality of advocacy which you already deliver. If you would like to bring notes to the interview as an aide memoir you are welcome to do so.

Moreover the interview never stands alone. It adds to, and illuminates, the large body of written evidence that we already have from your application and those consulted. This remains the foundation for every stage of the Panel's deliberations.

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## **ONE WAY TO PREPARE**

**In August:** although you will not know whether you have an interview, waiting until September may not leave you enough time to do the following:

- Re-read the competency framework thoroughly. Each competency is multi-faceted. Unless you have in mind all the facets, you may not choose the most illuminating examples from your practice. For the purpose of interview preparation, treat written and oral advocacy separately. Test your understanding by rating your three most recent cases for the quality of evidence each could provide against each competency.
- Take time to list your two or three best examples for each competency. An example might be a case or a specific stage or incident within a case. Treating written and oral advocacy separately means a list of between ten and fifteen examples across all the competencies. The same case can provide evidence for several competencies.
- You will have done some of this work in your written self-assessment, but the task now is more focussed than identifying your most substantial cases. For each competency except diversity action and understanding you might select two or three examples from your listed cases.
- You are not obliged to draw all your examples from your listed cases. You are also welcome to use some examples from outside your listed cases, especially where the case was too recent to be listed in your application. Where you have several examples of equal weight, choose the one which you can describe most succinctly.
- Some examples of working with others could come from work settings outside of cases, or outside the law. In the case of diversity action and understanding – where the Panel knows not all applicants will have much evidence from their listed cases – you might draw on things you have done in your chambers or your firm, or outside work altogether. We welcome examples of your efforts from your personal life on this competency.

- Put the list away for a couple of weeks and look at it again. As an advocate you are skilled at assessing how persuasive evidence is. Do you have the foundation for presenting your best evidence if you are called for interview?

**In September:** dig out your list and construct STAR answers for a handful of your cases, across the full set of competencies. Get a feel for how to answer questions in two or three minutes at most. *Don't* work out 'scripts' for a large number of examples; in our experience, these often sound stilted and distract from the actual question asked.

Make sure you know your application form backwards. Questions can come from any of the cases listed, and from your self-assessment against the competencies, as well as from the assessments we receive on you.

We encourage you to practice a mock interview with another person. The range of possibilities is wide – someone who has been through the KC process recently may be ideal, but alternatively from those within your network who may have HR or management experience within or outside your sector, or friends or family members with relevant skills. We want to reassure you that we do not expect you to engage professional paid help for the interview. One session of live practice will help most people, but, at a minimum, do record and time yourself giving answers.

There is plenty of sound advice on competency interviews and the STAR model on YouTube. However, these are for the mass market whereas we are looking for professional excellence. So, do test suggestions like “never talk about things going wrong” against how you think leaders of the legal profession should behave.

On the legal competencies, we already have information about your listed cases. Therefore, your main challenge will be to strike the right balance between your expert and detailed knowledge of the subject on the one hand, and answering the question within two or three minutes on the other.

On working with others and particularly on diversity action and understanding, there are often more gaps in the written evidence from the application. Hence, your answers on these competencies will benefit from more detail, and could need more explanation. Time permitting, we will ask supplementary questions to clarify our understanding.

**On the day:** Listen carefully to each question. Most of the questions we ask will be competency-based. You might get one or two other questions, for example as a warm-up or because we want to clarify something in your written material. We aim to sign-post the questions so you know which competency we are primarily addressing, but **if a question or its purpose is unclear, simply ask.**

Try to make eye contact with both interviewers, rather than appearing to respond to only one of them.

Remember that as far as detail is concerned, start your response with the short version and then check if we want more. If we move you on, bear in mind that for some competencies we may already have a lot of evidence, or may only have time to ask a couple of questions. We want you to achieve your best evidence overall.