



PRESS RELEASE

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104 QUEEN'S COUNSEL APPOINTED IN 2008/09 COMPETITION

The third round of appointments as Queen's Counsel was announced today.

These appointments are made by an independent Selection Panel, which recommends who should receive this highly sought-after award. All those appointed have demonstrated excellence in advocacy in the higher courts.

Baroness Butler-Sloss, Interim Chairman of the QC Selection Panel, said today:

I have the pleasure of announcing these 104 names.

All applicants are assessed against a common competency framework and the same standard of excellence and it is encouraging to see that a wide variety of advocates are among those whose appointment is announced today. There are no quotas, and we treat all applications in the same way, but the range of appointments reflects the openness and fairness of the selection process.

On this occasion, the Selection Panel made two significant improvements to the scheme, firstly by inviting applicants to describe the nature of their particular practice in their self-assessment and secondly by looking specifically at both preparation for, and resolution of, disputes in relation to written and oral advocacy.

Although I applaud the achievement of all those whose appointment was announced today there are four categories of applicant which I would like to single out for special mention:

Employed Barristers: I know there have been concerns at the employed bar that the current selection arrangements are not for them. Our process is for any advocate whatever their employment status who can demonstrate excellence in written or oral advocacy in the higher courts. This year only two employed barristers applied, but I am delighted to say that they have both been appointed. I hope that this will encourage other suitable employed advocates to apply in the future.

Solicitor Advocates: This year only 4 solicitor advocates applied, but of these 3 (75%) have been appointed. Again I hope this will encourage solicitor advocates with the appropriate experience to apply in the future

Women: For the third year running the success rate for women applicants is significantly better than for men: 55% for women compared 40% for men. It is particularly disappointing therefore that fewer women seem to be applying for Silk, resulting in fewer appointments.

Ethnic minorities: As last year there are four appointments of applicants declaring an ethnic origin other than white.

I would hope that potential applicants from these groups will be heartened by these successes. I would encourage suitably qualified applicants from under represented groups to apply, and I hope that those who work with well qualified practitioners, whatever their background, to apply for Silk when they judge the time is right.

All our decisions have been based solely on the evidence before the Selection Panel on this occasion. The list is composed as it is because that is where the evidence led us.

I should like to congratulate the new QCs. I also have an important message for those applicants who were not successful on this occasion.

The standard for appointment is very high. If you have not been appointed that does not mean that you are not a valued and perfectly competent advocate.

She added:

We are publishing a short report giving further information about this year's competition, with statistical information relating to successful and unsuccessful applicants. It will be available on our website.

The Selection Panel would also like to express its warm appreciation of the contribution of the 1800 people who provided an assessment on one or more applicants, and without whom the process could not have worked effectively.

On a personal basis I should also like to express my thanks and appreciation to the three Selection Panel members who are now standing down after three competitions and whose contribution to establishing a fair, open and transparent selection system for Queen's Counsel has been outstanding: Roy Amlot QC, Ruth Evans and Christopher Woolley.

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Rt. Hon. Jack Straw MP, announced today (under embargo) the names of 104 Queen's Counsel from 247 applicants.

This compares with 175 appointments (40%) from 443 applications in 2006-07 and 98 appointments (29%) from 333 applications in 2007-08.

The 104 (42% of all applicants) appointed this year included:

- 16 women applicants (55% of the 29 who applied). This was the highest ever success rate for women applicants.
- 4 applicants who declared an ethnic origin other than white (27% of the 15 who applied). There were 4 such appointments in 2007-08 (18% of the 22 who applied).
- 3 solicitor advocates (75% of the 4 who applied). This was the highest ever success rate for solicitor applicants. Previous high was 33% (4 appointments in 2006-07 and 2 appointments in 1997 (33%)
- 2 employed barristers (100% of the 2 who applied). These were the first employed barristers to be appointed by the Selection Panel.
- 5 applicants aged 55 or over (20% of this age group) as at the closing date for applications in April 2008.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. Queen's Counsel are appointed by The Queen, on the advice of the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice. He is in turn advised by an independent Selection Panel which receives and considers each application and makes recommendations as to appointment.
2. Sir Duncan Nichol resigned as Chairman of the Panel on 3rd April 2008. Baroness Butler-Sloss agreed to be the Interim Chairman for the 2008-09 competition on 23rd May 2008. She will be replaced for the next round once a new lay Chair has been recruited.
3. The members of the independent Queen's Counsel Selection Panel are:

Baroness Butler-Sloss GBE (Interim Chairman)
Roy Amlot QC
Ruth Evans
Professor Dame Joan Higgins DBE
Sir Paul Kennedy
Jean Ritchie QC
Lucy Scott-Moncrieff
Karamjit Singh CBE
Christopher Woolley.

The Panel is supported by its own Secretariat.

4. The new scheme was developed by the Bar Council and the Law Society, with the support of the (then) Department for Constitutional Affairs, and approved by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State (Lord Falconer) in November 2004. Refinements to the scheme were similarly agreed in 2006 building on experience of the first year. A copy of the agreed Process and further information is available from the Queen's Counsel Appointments website: www.qcapplications.org.uk

5. Applications closed on 3rd April 2008 and the Selection Panel delivered its recommendations to the Secretary of State for Justice on 11th December 2008. Each applicant has been considered against five competencies:

- Understanding and using the law
- Oral and written advocacy
- Working with others
- Diversity
- Integrity

172 of the 247 applicants were interviewed by the Selection Panel. All unsuccessful applicants are receiving personal feedback on their applications.

6. The new Queen's Counsel announced today will formally become Silks when they make their declaration before the Lord Chancellor at the ceremony on Monday 30th March 2009.

7. Copies of the Selection Panel's report are also available on the QCA website. Further information can also be obtained from David Watts, Head of QC Appointments Secretariat 0207 831 0020.