The Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

The Council of the Inns of Court

JOB DESCRIPTION & PERSON SPECIFICATION

BTAS Panel Secretary

The Council of the Inns of Court and the Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

The Council of the Inns of Court (COIC) is a charity with the object of advancing the sound administration of the law; it does this primarily by promoting high standards of advocacy and by enforcing professional standards of conduct amongst barristers. COIC advances the former through the activities of the Inns of Court College of Advocacy (the ICCA) and the latter through the work of the Bar Tribunals and Adjudication Service (BTAS).

Bar Tribunals & Adjudication Service

BTAS is the body responsible for administering Disciplinary Tribunals, Fitness to Practise and other hearings for barristers. It also organises hearings to consider the conduct of prospective barristers to determine whether they are a 'fit and proper' person to practise.

BTAS does not investigate or prosecute alleged misconduct itself, but instead it performs the vital role of ensuring the fairness and independence of the hearing process. Cases are heard by panels of barristers and lay people carefully selected and trained by BTAS for that purpose. At present BTAS hears around 50 cases each year. Its effectiveness is central to the administration of justice in England and Wales and to public confidence in the system.

The Role

The Panel Secretary will play a vital role in ensuring the smooth delivery of the tribunals and hearings at BTAS. This is two-fold; one is sitting in on hearings, drafting reports and providing active support during the hearing. Two is to provide case management support for hearings including setting directions and provide ongoing and proactive management of hearings, identifying any barriers or risks to effective hearing progression and developing interventions or actions to resolve these. The role holder will work closely with the BTAS Registrar, BTAS Hearings Officer, panel members, BSB and parties to ensure that BTAS hearings are delivered efficiently.

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Key Responsibilities

Reporting to the BTAS Registrar, the BTAS Panel Secretary will have responsibility for:

Tribunal Support and Hearing Delivery

- Provide practical support during tribunals, including ensuring procedural requirements and rules are followed.
- Draft final tribunal decision reports in collaboration with tribunal members.
- Liaise with panel members and parties before hearings to support effective preparation.
- Work with the BTAS Hearings Officer to ensure all relevant administrative processes are completed fully, accurately and on time.
- Work with the BTAS Registrar and BTAS Hearings Officer to identify risks for upcoming disciplinary tribunals and develop practical solutions.
- Provide high-quality, professional support to all users of BTAS's services, including parties, panel members and members of the public.

Case Management and Directions

- Draft and set directions based on information received from parties or liaise with a Directions Judge where required.
- Monitor compliance with directions, including any amendments and readiness for any upcoming hearing.
- Ensure the hearing caseload is managed appropriately and proactively.
- Accurately update information onto the database
- Handle procedural applications from parties appropriately and arrange for a Directions Judge to consider them where required.

Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

- Think beyond the immediate area of responsibility, taking account of wider policy and organisational implications.

- Engage effectively with relevant stakeholders, including liaising with the BSB on the forward planning and effective listing of Disciplinary Tribunals to ensure the best use of the Tribunal's time.

Process Improvement and Project Work

- Work with the BTAS Registrar to identify opportunities for process improvement and update relevant policies and guidance.
- Support BTAS and COIC projects, including panel recruitment exercises and training programmes.

Person Specification

To demonstrate clear independence from the Bar, it is important that the Panel Secretary has not been called to the Bar.

Skills and Competencies

- Excellent written communication skills, with the ability to draft clear and accurate reports, directions, correspondence and guidance.
- Strong oral communication skills, including the ability to engage confidently, sensitively and professionally with panel members, parties, witnesses, colleagues and members of the public.
- Excellent organisational and case management skills, with the ability to manage competing priorities, monitor deadlines and ensure hearings progress efficiently.
- High level of accuracy and attention to detail.
- Sound judgement and confidence in using initiative
- Ability to understand and follow procedural rules
- Strong stakeholder management skills, with the ability to build positive working relationships and collaborate effectively across BTAS, COIC, panel members and external parties.

- Flexible and willing to attend occasional early morning, evening or weekend meetings where necessary.
- Commitment to working collaboratively as part of a small team and supporting the wider objectives of BTAS and COIC.

Experience

- Proven experience in drafting reports/formal decisions.
- Experience in managing a varied caseload effectively with cases being at different stages of the process.
- Experience in providing pro-active high-quality support, including managing varied work loads effectively and prioritising a wide range of activities.
- Confident using initiative and making decision within defined limits
- Ability to maintain positive working relationships with external stakeholders.

The Contract

COIC is seeking to appoint the BTAS Panel Secretary on a full time permanent contract. There will be a three-month probationary period.

- Salary £41,372 per annum
- 25 days paid holiday plus bank holidays
- Flexible / Hybrid working
- Generous Defined Pension Contribution by the employer (after 3 months)
- Private Health Insurance (after completion of probation)
- Death in Service Benefit

BTAS is based at 9 Gray's Inn Square, London WC1R 5JD. COIC values equality and diversity and is committed to ensuring its processes and procedures are fair, transparent and free from unlawful discrimination.