

Guide to the Criminal Advocacy Course - Florida

This guide has been put together by those of us who went to Gainesville in July 2019. We were helped enormously in our planning and understanding of what to expect by a document produced by the 2017 cohort and we thought it would be useful for that to be updated for those thinking about going, or indeed who are going, in 2020.

Please note: If you are lucky enough to go on this course, be patient with those organising things from the Florida end. We found that having been 'chosen' to go, there was then a rather long pause before we started to hear any further information about what we should be doing - it was particularly troubling not knowing whether to book flights or not (at what is sadly the most expensive time to fly to Florida!). However, in the last two to three weeks before setting off there will be a flurry of activity from the US, including getting a large bundle of documents in hard copy sent direct to chambers.

The Course

The Florida Bar runs an annual one week intensive advocacy training course in July for young state prosecutors (State Attorneys) and defenders (Public Defenders) drawn from all 20 counties that make up Florida State. The course is held at the University of Florida in Gainesville and they are rightly proud of the fact that it is the only course in the state where both prosecutors and defenders are trained together.

The other part that makes the course unique for them is the inclusion of barristers - 4 juniors and one QC - drawn from the members of the South Eastern Circuit (though the QCs have also been drawn in recent years from the Western Circuit).

The course runs from Sunday lunchtime to the following Friday lunchtime - starting typically at 9 am and ending at 5 pm.

The course takes the form of two mock trials. The course material is extensive and the students (the American lawyers and four junior barristers) are expected to do opening statements, direct examination, cross examination and closing statements. The junior barristers

are assigned roles as either a state prosecutor or public defender in one of four groups (one UK barrister per group so all groups have a chance to be bamboozled by the English accent!). The work for the junior barristers is intense and there is a lot of preparation (although there is one afternoon off when the American students have to attend an Ethics lecture).

The QC becomes part of 'The Faculty' and has a roving brief, going round all of the groups and offering critiques on various aspects of advocacy and also reviewing video recordings with individual students. The Faculty is an amazing mixture of state attorneys, public defenders, private defenders, judges and professors - some retired; some still practicing: all fascinating.

The QC also takes part in a demonstration with two other faculty members - one State Attorney and one Public Defender - examining in chief and cross examining one of the witnesses from the mock trial study. Whilst wearing the wig, gown and jacket is not compulsory, it is much appreciated as it adds to the drama and underlines our differences in advocacy technique!

The expectation is everyone wears formal court wear throughout the course (except the first Sunday afternoon and final morning).

Funding

The Florida Bar will pay for all of the UK contingents hotel rooms (in 2019 - at the Hilton Conference Hotel, Gainesville) with breakfast included. However if you do decide to go over a day early (see below) then the juniors will have to pay for the extra night. There are also one dinner (on the Sunday) and a reception (on the Thursday) which the Florida Bar pay for.

The QC receives an 'honorarium' of \$3000 (taxable in the UK). That is expected to cover the cost of air fare; costs to the hotel; and other general living expenses and 20% of 'The Party' - see below. Expect to do no better than break even for the experience.

Juniors: You don't receive any travel or any allowances but you may be able to apply for a grant/ bursary from the SE Circuit or from the CBA or from the International Legal and Development Grant Programme.

The Party

On the Tuesday night the 'UK 5' throw a reception for all of the Americans - students and faculty. It has always been a Pimms party. The SE circuit is happy to pay up to 80% of a top budget of \$1500 (and the QC pays the remaining 20%). This year we got through 4 x 1 litre bottles of Pimms which we had brought out with us from Gatwick duty free. The hotel is happy to just charge you corkage for the Pimms and will then expect to sell/ provide various other drinks as well. The hotel does need some help with making the Pimms - we discovered American 'lemonade' is translated to home made squeezed lemons rather than the fizzy stuff - and the taste is not so great!

In 2019 we managed to get everything we wanted for just over \$1000 which included cost of hiring the venue (in the Hilton Hotel - \$200 plus tax) plus a barman (\$150 plus tax), extra beers and wine and some crisps and peanuts. In hindsight we wish we had paid a little more for canapés as the crisps (or not very interesting tortilla chips) largely went to waste!

Whilst there is not necessarily any expectation that the 'UK 5' will do something - a skit or a short speech has become a feature. We did a fashion parade of traditional and less than traditional court clothes which seemed to go down very well. We also took bunting with us to decorate the area to brighten up the otherwise non-descript area.

Organising the party is the QC's job (though it can be delegated!). It was probably the most stressful thing leading up to going out to Florida. As long as you have the Pimms though, all else will be well.

Other useful info

By various ways we had all flown out and arrived Friday night/ early Saturday morning. The nearest international airport is Orlando - about 2 hours drive south of Gainesville. It

was great to have the day to acclimatise to the heat, to have a stroll through the University campus which is right opposite the hotel; to find alligators and the Butterfly rainforest; and to do the last minute preparation.

You can either hire a car at Orlando or get an Uber to the hotel which will cost about \$130. We in fact ended up having two cars between the 5 of us. Having a car gave us the freedom to go out and about in the evenings including to three very nice bohemian style restaurants in Gainesville which we can thoroughly recommend: Civilisation, Satchells (for pizza) and Blue Grill.

If you can it would make great sense, certainly financially, to all be on the same flight and to hire one decent size car (SUV) between you all.

The hotel was absolutely fine. Good size rooms, a small gym; a decent size swimming pool (seemingly only used by the Brits); a bar and restaurant.

Whilst the law campus is only about 1.5 miles away from the hotel and it is possible to walk it, the Americans thought us stereotypically mad when we did so on a couple of occasions because of the humidity and the sudden unexpected bursts of rain.

You won't have a great deal of time to relax nor to explore any of Gainesville, let alone the rest of Florida, during the week of the course so we would highly recommend staying in the US for some time after the course is finished if you can.

Take business cards if you have them as the Americans all do and love giving them out and getting them in return.

If you can, it would be a really nice idea to take some small 'legal' or UK gifts with you. We had some daft socks and a spare bottle of Pimms to give by way of thanks but perhaps something from the Inns of Court or RCJ/ SC for the organisers?

We had the most fantastic time. It is such an interesting experience - both as the QC and as juniors and we all would like to go back!

If you want any further information please feel free to contact any of us.

jo.martin@devonchambers.co.uk

sophie.quintoncarter@9kbw.co.uk

alex.cameron@drystone.com

charliec_uk@hotmail.com

bibi.badejo@4bc.co.uk