

OVERVIEW

Educational programs are the cornerstone of each Inn and provide the unique opportunity for all levels of the profession to come together, engage in discussion, and learn from each other. A well-organized slate of programs promotes professional development, collegiality among members of the legal community, and in many cases, satisfies members' CLE requirements in an engaging manner. The most effective way to distribute responsibility for preparing monthly programs is through pupillage teams.

Pupillage teams plan, research and present educational programs at monthly Inn meetings. While not required, a pupillage team structure is the most effective strategy to ensure interesting and informative education for all Inn members. Most Inns have multiple pupillage teams, with a team assigned one program presentation for each meeting throughout the year. The benefits of having pupillage teams not only spreads responsibility for program creation across the membership, but also builds membership engagement and retention, mentoring opportunities, and overall higher member satisfaction.

The following guidelines are designed to help Inns create or restructure pupillage teams, and provide proven ideas to ensure the inclusion of all members and build enduring and positive relationships, which contributes to the long-term health of Inns.

PUPILLAGE TEAMS AND PROFESSIONALISM

Pupillage teams further the American Inns of Court commitment to professionalism in the following ways:

- fostering teamwork between Inn members;
- introducing Inn members to persons of practice levels or areas they may not otherwise meet;
- educating all members of the Inn;
- improving civility and professionalism among local attorneys who litigate against one another; and
- providing opportunities for lasting mentoring relationships.

ASSEMBLING TEAMS

In general, Inns should have as many pupillage teams as there are regular meetings so that each team is responsible for one program per year. Teams are usually comprised of a Master of the Bench who leads the team and a mix of members with varied experience from each membership levels: Masters of the Bench (including a judge), Barristers, Associates, and Pupils. The makeup of each team should be based upon the number of active Inn members roughly divided by the number of meetings your Inn has per year. How you organize the members by team is where it gets fun! We propose a few different methods that have proven to be effective:



- **Practice area:** Teams comprised of members from common practice areas are able to lead in-depth discussions about that area of law. Teams with a variety of practice areas can bring different experiences and perspectives to a common issue.
- **Geographic area:** Grouping members by location can foster more face-to-face meetings. This may be especially useful for those Inns whose members are spread between multiple cities or counties.
- **Years of practice:** Varying the years of practice within teams fosters two-way mentorship. Veteran attorneys provide a broad range of experience and institutional knowledge of different courts and agencies while newer attorneys might contribute information about recent changes in the law, technology, and standards of professionalism and civility among their peers.

PUPILLAGE TEAM LEADERS

The most successful pupillage team structures include a team leader who should focus on communication and engagement among team members. The team leader may be appointed by the executive committee or program committee chair or each team can identify its own team leader. Be sure to provide a job description that outlines the team leader's responsibilities to the pupillage team:

- **Facilitate the topic selection**—If topics are not dictated by the executive committee or program chair, the topic selection should involve the entire team.
- **Communicate**—Team leaders should meet one-on-one with each team member to ensure he or she feels welcome and is aware of his or her obligations. They should also be the point person for communicating with the Inn's executive committee or the committee chair who oversees the pupillage teams.
- **Mentor**—Team leaders should look for opportunities to connect newer and more experienced attorneys for short-term networking or lasting mentoring relationships.

- **Team build**—Teams work best when the leader fosters collegiality through regular interaction outside of the monthly meetings.
- **Cultivate creativity**—Lawyers have many talents outside their legal abilities; team leaders should encourage the individual talents and resources of each team member. The hidden talents of Inn members may be surprising!
- **Foster future leaders**—Identify team members who are committed to the Inn and the American Inns of Court mission, who are eager to assist and exhibit creative approaches to problem-solving and cultivate them into future Inn leaders.
- **Coordinate logistics**—Team leaders are responsible for ensuring that all deadlines are met, communications are timely, and coordinating with members who are responsible for other aspects of the monthly meeting.
- **Submit Programs**—Ensure that programs are documented completely and are in order with the Inn’s continuing legal education chair or your bar association so that members get CLE credit for the education. Submit programs to the American Inns of Court Online Program Library so that other Inns can find inspiration from all your hard work. Programs may also be submitted to be considered for the annual American Inns of Court Program Awards.
- **Delegate**—Team leaders do not have to “do it all.” Find out what interests members of your team, ask for volunteers, and share the responsibilities.

EFFECTIVE MINIMUM GOALS FOR PUPILLAGE TEAMS

- Strive for diversity in the group by age, background, practice years, and Inn years;
- Require teams to meet in person at least once prior to the program presentation;
- Encourage teams to meet outside of regular Inn meetings;
- Provide team leaders with expectations of their role and resources to meet them;
- Seek team sizes that require contributions from all members, but also equitably share responsibilities, thereby ensuring Inn meetings retain their collegial and enjoyable atmosphere for all.



ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR PUPILLAGE TEAMS

- Consider appointing an early career member and an experienced member as co-team leaders.
- Don’t always make the young attorney responsible for the technology and the senior attorney the presenter of the evening—mix it up so team members learn new skills and the audience experiences a variety of perspectives and talents.
- Encourage teams to meet within 30 days after their presentation to review and discuss the program’s successes and improvement opportunities.
- Provide team leaders with any restrictions or restraints on their presentations well in advance of their meeting date such as off-limit topics, time constraints, room size constraints, available technology, etc.
- Try including at least two members from each membership level to add additional experience depth and breadth to each team.
- Ask pupillage teams to sit together during the meal or other presentations to get to know each other better and continue their work. In addition, think about ways to ensure that all Inn members have a chance to meet each other!
- Assign and publish pupillage team groups early in the Inn year so teams can begin to meet and discuss ideas well before their presentation; a minimum of two to three months for preparation is suggested.
- Offer opportunities for Inn members to provide feedback about what worked well and how to improve the pupillage team structure; use both one-on-one conversations and membership surveys to inform the creation of pupillage groups for the next year.

We are here to help! If you would like assistance implementing pupillage groups within your Inn or restructuring your existing structure, please contact your Chapter Relations Director. The director for your region can be found at home.innsocourt.org/CRD.