

Frederick Wilmot-Smith

YEAR OF CALL: 2018

"Clearly one of the best legal minds of his generation but also very user-friendly and practical."

Chambers & Partners, 2025

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Practice Overview

Frederick's practice is principally in commercial law. He has been described as "probably the best junior for complicated law you can get" and "a hands-on practical litigator".

Fred has been instructed in a number of leading commercial cases including, in the last year alone, *Republic of Mozambique v Credit Suisse International*, a claim in the Commercial Court of over US\$2 billion, *InvestBank v El-Husseiny*, a claim brought under s.423 of the Insolvency Act 1986, and *Azima v RAKIA*, a claim alleging State sponsored hacking. He has acted unled in the commercial court on numerous occasions, often against silks.

He has substantial appellate experience, having appeared before the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court on a number of occasions, and has also appeared in the Privy Council. His experience includes both written and oral submissions: he recently argued (successfully) an issue concerning pleading claims in unjust enrichment before the Court of Appeal.

As well as his practice as a litigator, he provides advice and acts as an expert on all aspects of English private law.

In all his work he is able to draw on his considerable experience as an academic lawyer. He was previously an academic at the University of Oxford, where he is a Fellow of All Souls College. He has published widely on a range of subjects and taught, for example, graduate seminars in commercial remedies and restitution of unjust enrichment. His work has been cited by the United Kingdom Supreme Court, as well as the highest courts in Australia, Canada and Singapore.

Commercial

Cases in which Fred has been or is instructed include:

- *Republic of Mozambique v Credit Suisse International* : a substantial claim brought by the Republic against financial and commercial institutions. Acting for the Seventh – Tenth Defendants, Fred is led by Duncan Matthews KC, Philip Riches KC and Ben Woolgar. The case has been to the Supreme Court already on a section 9 challenge.
- *InvestBank v El-Husseiny* : a claim brought by InvestBank founded upon section 423, Insolvency Act 1986. Led by Tim Penny KC.
- *Azima v RAKIA*: a claim by Mr Azima against a sovereign wealth fund, alleging hacking and the procurement of judgments by fraud. Led by Tim Lord KC and Thomas Plewman KC.
- *Perry v Lopag Trust Reg No 2* [2023] UKPC 16: Fred acted for the successful respondent in an appeal to the Privy Council concerning Cayman, Israeli, Liechtenstein law, and which turned on the proper approach to appeals on facts (including facts about foreign law). Led by Justin Fenwick KC and Graeme McPherson KC.
- *Patisserie Valerie v Grant Thornton* : proceedings brought by Patisserie Valerie alleging negligence by the auditors. Acting for Grant Thornton and led by Simon Salzedo KC, James Brocklebank KC and Ed Harrison.
- *Stokoe Partnership v Patrick Grayson and others*: instructed by the claimant in a case alleging breach of confidence and unlawful means conspiracy. Led by Tim Lord KC, Richard Hill KC and Gerard Rothschild, the case went to the Court of Appeal on a question of cross-examination of a *Norwich Pharmacal* deponent on their affidavit.
- *CVS v Ralph*: led by Thomas Plewman KC, Fred acts for the claimant in a case alleging deceit and breach of contract.
- *Vale v Steinmitz* : led by Stephen Houseman KC, Fred was instructed to argue before the Court of Appeal on a question concerning the scope of equitable rescission in an arbitration context.

Frederick also acts alone in a number of matters, both in the County Court and the High Court, and is happy to take advisory instructions or to act as an expert.

Public Law

Frederick acts for HMRC in various cases concerning restitution of overpaid tax. Current instructions include *Test Claimants in the Franked Investment Income Group Litigation* (where Fred appeared before the Supreme Court twice: [2020] UKSC 47, [2021] UKSC 31, and will be in the Court of Appeal at least twice this year), *Jazztel* ([2022] EWCA Civ 232), and *British Telecom* ([2023] EWCA Civ 1412).

He has also acted *pro bono* in the First-Tier Social Security Tribunal and the Upper Tribunal in

cases involving Human Rights Act 1998 and Child Tax Credits. He also acts unled in matters before the Employment Tribunal.

Other information

Education

- D.Phil, All Souls College, Oxford
- M.Phil, Balliol College, Oxford (Distinction)
- B.C.L., Balliol College, Oxford (Distinction)
- Undergraduate, Christ's College, Cambridge (Double First Class)

Professional experience

Fellow of All Souls College (2011–2018, 2019–present)

Scholarships and prizes

- Eldon Scholar (most promising Oxford graduate intending to practise at the Bar)
- Prize Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford
- Vinerian Scholar (top mark on the Bachelor of Civil Law)
- Scholar of Christ's College, Cambridge
- Various prizes in Cambridge and Oxford for performance in examinations

Selected publications

- 'Express and Implied Terms' *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, (2023) 43(1), p. 54–75
- 'Justice for Foxes' *Law Quarterly Review* (2022) 138 (Oct), 588 (co-authored with Lord Sales)
- *Equal Justice: Fair Legal Systems in an Unfair World* (Harvard University Press, 2019)
- 'Termination After Breach' *Law Quarterly Review* (2018) 134 (Apr), 307–325
- 'Should the Payee Pay?' *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, (2017) 37(4), p. 844–861
- 'Reconsidering "Total" Failure', *Cambridge Law Journal* (2013) 72(2), 414
- 'Replacing Risk-Taking Reasoning', *Law Quarterly Review* 2011, 127, 610–630
- Co-editor of three edited collections: *Defences in Contract* (Oxford: Hart, 2017) ; *Defences in*

Unjust Enrichment (Oxford: Hart, 2016) and *Defences in Tort* (Oxford: Hart, 2015)

- Part of the advisory group (with a number of judges, practitioners and academics) which assisted Professor Andrew Burrows in producing *A Restatement of the English Law of Contract* (OUP, 2016)

directory quotes

"Fred's sheer intellect is what stands out." (Chambers & Partners 2025)

"He's clearly one of the best legal minds of his generation but also very user-friendly and practical. He brings the highest possible intellect to play for his clients." (Chambers & Partners 2025)

"Fred is whip-smart, diligent and a pleasure to work with. His drafting is as crisp as a morning breeze and he is both clear and measured when on his feet." (Chambers & Partners 2025)

"No one can match Fred in his legal research skills. His strength is the law – his depth of understanding far outstrips other juniors." (Chambers & Partners 2025)

"Fred is extremely easy to work with. He's very collaborative and happy to get stuck in and work alongside us." (Chambers & Partners 2025)

"Fred is a very strong advocate – judges love hearing from him." (Chambers & Partners 2025)

"His intellect is just fierce. He is charming with clients and solicitors, and a real team player." (Legal 500 2025)

"Fred is extremely bright but also humble. His technical ability is outstanding and he comes up with clever and novel ideas yet he is also always open to suggestions and discussion." (Legal 500 2025)

"He is an unbelievably clever man and wise beyond his years. He does not miss a single point and will be a total star." (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"He is probably the best junior for complicated law you can get." (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"Fred provides impeccable analysis, always adapts himself to the circumstances of the case and plays his role within the team beautifully." (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"Fred is extremely bright – he has ideas no one else will think of." (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"Fred is definitely one to watch. He is so bright and a hands-on practical litigator." (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"Frederick is an excellent advocate. He is thoughtful of the wider picture and attentive to the granular detail, in equal measure. He has the ability to take one through complex areas of fact and

law quickly but carefully and sum up the heart of the matter." (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"Fred is incredibly good, academically brilliant and super nice." (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"Fred is incredibly clever, even by London commercial Bar standards. He has an academic's in-depth understanding of complex legal theories and concepts, but manages to be an extremely practical barrister nonetheless." (Legal 500 2024)