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James MacDonald KC

Barrister
Call 2005 Silk 2022

Scope of Practice

• Arbitration • Aviation • Banking and Financial Services • Civil Fraud and Investigations • Commercial Litigation • Company / Shareholder Disputes • Economic Torts • Jurisdiction and Conflict of Laws • Private Equity / Venture Capital • Professional Negligence and Liability • Restructuring / Insolvency • Enforcement of Judgments • Injunctions • Technology / Energy • Norwich Pharmacal and Enforcement

Overview

James is a leading commercial silk. Described in the directories as *"phenomenal", "exceptional", "supremely talented", "incredibly intelligent", "wonderful to work with"* and *"one of the stars of his generation",* James' *"superb reputation and first-class abilities"* see him regularly instructed in many of the most high-profile and valuable commercial disputes and appeals.

James regularly appears in the largest and most complex Commercial Court cases and appeals. His cases are typically high-value and factually and legally complex. Many of his cases have set new legal precedent and a significant number have featured in the Lawyer Top 20 for the relevant year. He has extensive experience of leading teams of juniors as well as appearing as sole advocate.

James is recommended by C&P and L500 as a leading silk in commercial dispute resolution, banking and finance and commercial fraud. He has been rapidly promoted through the tiers since taking silk in 2022. Prior to taking silk, James was a star junior, one of the small handful ranked in C&P band 1 for both commercial litigation and banking and finance.

James' practice encompasses all major areas of commercial law. His experience covers general commercial litigation, fraud, banking and finance, aviation, private equity/venture capital, group litigation, energy, technology, professional negligence, shareholder disputes and restructuring/insolvency, together with jurisdiction, injunctions and enforcement.

James also has extensive arbitration experience under LCIA, ICC, DIAC and/or ICSID rules. He is currently acting in several substantial arbitrations and this is an increasing part of his practice.

He also advises on private law matters relevant to complex and valuable tax disputes.

James works actively to support diversity and retention. For many years he has been involved in mentoring programmes and various COMBAR diversity initiatives. He currently sits on COMBAR's EDI committee. He is also committed to pro bono work, with his recent pro bono work including an important Administrative Court decision

setting new legal precedent as regards the powers of the financial ombudsman to re-open complaints.

Examples of Recent Cases

Banking and Financial Services

James is well-known as a leading banking and finance silk and is ranked in both major directories as a leading silk in this area. Prior to taking silk in 2022, he was ranked for many years in Band 1 of the junior tables.

Notable examples of James' banking cases are set out below (see also James' arbitration, commercial dispute resolution, and civil fraud webpages). James is also acting or advising on many other matters, including a number of very high value claims that are currently confidential.

- ***Investec v Protopapa and Chatila*** (2025–): James is acting for Investec (instructed by Sidley Austin) in its claims for substantial loan sums due against two high-net-worth Swiss individuals. James' clients successfully defeated the jurisdiction challenge ([2025] EWHC 3202 (Comm)) in what is now a leading case on contractual estoppel in the context of jurisdiction agreements.
- ***Red UK Holdco Ltd v BPL Holdco S.a.r.l.*** (2025): James acted for a vehicle of Oaktree, instructed by White & Case, in this major expedited trial relating to the €450mn sale of an Italian Bank. The case concerned allegations that the purchaser fund was entitled to terminate the SPA following interventions by the Bank of Italy. Case settled.
- ***Frasers v Morgan Stanley*** (2023–2024): James acted for the defendant bank, instructed by Clifford Chance, in this major piece of Commercial Court litigation relating to a US$1bn margin call made by Morgan Stanley on Frasers PLC, the company owned by the well-known sportswear magnate Mike Ashley. Case settled following a three-week trial.
- ***BNPP v Uro*** (2022-2024): James acted for the defendant (a company owning the title to Banco Santander's European bank branches), instructed by Humphries Kerstetter, in this major case concerning the enforceability of a €250mn 'bond make whole premium' allegedly due under a €1.5bn securitisation issued by Uro in order to refinance its liabilities. Case settled shortly before a three-week trial in late 2024.
- ***Deutsche Bank v Sebastian Holdings Inc & Vik*** (2013–2026): James is acting for Deutsche Bank (instructed by Freshfields) in this long-running and high-profile litigation. Following a 14-week trial, DB defeated US$8bn counterclaims by a Turks & Caicos SPV for alleged breach of contract arising out of FX and equities trading and obtained a US$300mn judgment. Thereafter, James has been involved in numerous follow-on matters relating to Deutsche Bank's attempts to enforce its substantial judgment against the SPV and its beneficial owner, Mr Vik, in multiple jurisdictions. Many of these matters have set market-leading precedent. DB recently succeeded in obtaining a 20-month committal sentence against Mr Vik following his breach of an order requiring him to provide information and documents in connection with the judgment debt.
- ***A v B*** (2022): James acted for a major investment bank (instructed by Clifford Chance) in a substantial arbitration involving a dispute over a note issuance.
- ***PIFSS v Al-Rajaan*** (2019-2022): James acted in this major multi-party fraud litigation (instructed by Slaughter and May) involving various banks. The banks' jurisdiction challenges succeeded: see [2022] EWCA Civ 29.
- ***Lex v Citibank*** (2021-2022): James acted for Citibank (instructed by Clifford Chance) successfully defending a claim against it for €10bn said to arise from uncredited SWIFT transfers.
- ***Helix v Bank of Cyprus*** (2020-21): James acted for Bank of Cyprus (instructed by Allen & Overy) in a multi-million-pound breach of warranty claim relating to the sale of a substantial loan portfolio.
- ***Vestia v BNPP*** (2020-2022): James acted for BNPP instructed by HSF in this c. €300mn claim arising out of derivative transactions entered into by a Dutch social housing association.
- ***Mozambique/Credit Suisse litigation*** (2020-2022): James acted for various funds (instructed by Pallas Partners) in this widely publicised multi-party combined US$2bn litigation involving allegations that substantial loans made by Credit Suisse to Mozambique to fund a tuna fishing protection fleet were procured by bribes.
- ***Alte Leibe v Windpark Fonds*** (2020-2021): James acted for the claimant note issuer (instructed by Allen & Overy) in a claim relating to sums due under a complex refinancing arrangement.

- ***Dove v HBOS*** (2019-2020): James acted for HBOS (instructed by HSF) in connection with this £45mn claim relating to HBOS's impaired lending division.
- ***A v B*** (2018): James acted (unled) for a major financing company in a proposed claim for c. £69m (instructed by Allen & Overy).
- ***Golden Belt v BNP Paribas*** (2017-2018): James acted for BNP Paribas, instructed by Clifford Chance, in this €650mn Financial List case concerning a complex Islamic law financing transaction, and the appeal from that case.
- ***DB v Bittar*** (2017-2018): James acted for DB (instructed by Slaughter & May) in this high-profile Upper Tribunal claim concerning the identification of individuals referred to in FCA Decision Notices relating to alleged EURIBOR and Libor manipulation.
- ***VR Partners v Exotix v CVI*** (2016-2017): James acted for an investment fund (instructed by Freshfields), in an eight-day Commercial Court trial concerning a back-to-back sale of valuable Ukrainian loan interests.
- ***LSREF III Wight Ltd v Millvalley Ltd*** (2016): James successfully acted for the claimant in this important dispute concerning rectification of an ISDA long form confirmation and payment of an early termination amount (instructed by Sidley).
- ***McGraw-Hill International (UK) Limited v Deutsche Apotheker-Und Artzebank EG and Ors*** (2014-2015): This litigation concerned the duties owed by the rating agencies (Standard & Poor and Moody's) when rating financial products. James acted for the Rating Agencies (instructed by King & Wood Malleson).
- ***Barclays v DST and Ors*** *(2015):* James acted for Barclays in a number of LIBOR/EURIBOR related misselling cases.
- ***Clydesdale Bank Plc v Duffy*** (2013-2014). James acted for the claimant bank in the High Court and Court of Appeal; the case concerned an alleged agreement to discharge substantial guarantee liabilities (instructed by Addleshaw Goddard).
- ***Intesa SanPaolo S.p.A; Dexia Crediop S.p.A v Regione Piedmonte*** (2012-2013): James acted for Intesa Sanpaolo S.p.A. and Dexia Crediop S.p.A in the appeal concerning proceedings against Regione Piedmont concerning the enforceability of derivative transactions entered into between the parties in connection with Piedmont's bond issues. Instructed by Cleary Gottlieb.
- ***SCB v CPC / Citibank v CPC*** (2010-2012): This was a $160m claim relating to oil derivative transactions. The case involved questions of capacity, authority, allegedly negligent advice and alleged misrepresentation. The case went to appeal on the question of capacity in May 2012.
- ***Excalibur Funding No. 1 Plc v LB Re Financing No. 3 Ltd*** (2011): James acted for Excalibur Funding in this application in the Lehmans insolvency, for permission to sue administrators of insolvent Lehmans SPV in relation to transfer of €722m subordinated note position in major securitisation.

Commercial Dispute Resolution

James is ranked in both major directories as a leading commercial silk. He has been rapidly promoted up the tiers since taking silk in 2022. Prior to taking silk, he was ranked for many years in Band 1 of the junior tables.

Notable examples of James' commercial cases are set out below (see also James' arbitration, banking and finance, and civil fraud webpages).

James is also acting or advising on a number of very high value claims which are confidential and not set out below.

- ***SLTC13 v Qatar Airways*** (2024–): James is acting for the claimant aircraft lessor, instructed by Freshfields, in this US$160mn dispute relating to the effect of US and EU sanctions on aircraft leased to the defendant airline. Trial due in early 2027. James is also acting, instructed by Freshfields, in a number of related high value aircraft leasing disputes arising out of the liquidation of GTLK Europe, a major Russian-owned aircraft and ship leasing conglomerate.
- ***Axios v Symeonides*** (2023-2026): James acted for the defendants to c. £50mn breach of warranty claims arising out of the sale of a technology business, instructed by Burness Paul. 4-week trial listed for June 2026. Case settled.
- ***A v B*** (2025–): James is acting in a > US$100mn complex LCIA arbitration between multinational conglomerates, instructed by a major law firm.
- ***X v Y*** (2023–2026): James acted a highly complex commercial LCIA arbitration involving a US$200mn dispute between a state-owned enterprise and a private entity in connection with liquid petroleum gas.

- ***Sousa Enterprises v Aspire Global*** (2024-2026): James acted for the claimants, instructed by Sidley Austin, in €50mn claims relating to breach of earn-out provisions in an SPA providing for the sale of an e-gambling business. Four-week trial in March 2024. Case settled.
- ***Red UK Holdco Ltd v BPL Holdco S.a.r.l.*** (2025): James acted for a vehicle of Oaktree, instructed by White & Case, in this major expedited trial relating to the €450mn sale of an Italian Bank. The case concerned allegations that the purchaser fund was entitled to terminate the SPA following interventions by the Bank of Italy. Case settled.
- ***Entain Holdings v Sports Entertainment Media and 7 others*** (2024): James acted for the defendants, instructed by Sidley Austin, in this major piece of commercial litigation relating to the €850mn sale of the betting platform Betant by the defendant shareholder to the claimants. The claimants alleged breach of warranty, and the defendants alleged the claimants were liable for failure to pay earn out amounts exceeding US$100mn. Case settled.
- ***BM Brazil & Ors v Sibanye*** (2022–2025) James acted for the defendants, instructed by Clifford Chance, in this major commercial claim relating to a >US$1bn Brazilian mine acquisition. The case concerns whether the defendants were entitled to invoke a MAE clause to terminate the acquisition contracts following the occurrence of a geotechnical event at one of the mines subject to the acquisition. Case settled shortly before the quantum trial.
- ***Frasers v Morgan Stanley*** (2023–2024): James acted for the defendant bank, instructed by Clifford Chance, in this major piece of Commercial Court litigation relating to a US$1bn margin call made by Morgan Stanley on Frasers PLC, the company owned by the well-known sportswear magnate Mike Ashley. Case settled following a three-week trial.
- ***X v Y*** (2023–2025): James acted for the defendant SOE, instructed by a major law firm, in related high value LCIA arbitrations linked to commodities imports and trading.
- ***Deutsche Bank v Sebastian Holdings Inc & Vik*** (2013–2026): James is acting for Deutsche Bank (instructed by Freshfields) in this long-running and high-profile litigation. Following a 14-week trial, DB defeated US$8bn counterclaims by a Turks & Caicos SPV for alleged breach of contract arising out of FX and equities trading and obtained a US$300mn judgment. Thereafter James has been involved in numerous follow-on matters relating to Deutsche Bank's attempts to enforce its substantial judgment against the SPV and its beneficial owner, Mr Vik, in multiple jurisdictions. Many of these matters have set market-leading precedent. DB recently succeeded in obtaining a 20-month committal sentence against Mr Vik following his breach of an order requiring him to provide information and documents in connection with the judgment debt. A recent two-day hearing in March 2026 in the Court of Appeal considered the scope of the Court's inherent jurisdiction to enforce its own orders.
- ***ENRC v Dechert/SFO*** (2019–2022): James acted for ENRC, instructed by Hogan Lovells, in this high-profile litigation in which ENRC is seeking substantial damages from Dechert and the SFO in connection with an investigation into alleged fraud. Following a 12-week trial, the judge held that ENRC had succeeded in substantially all its claims against Dechert, including allegations that Dechert's lead partner, Neil Gerrard, had leaked ENRC's privileged and confidential information to the press on three occasions and made multiple unauthorised disclosures to the SFO in order to expand the scope of Dechert's investigation.
- ***Mozambique/Credit Suisse litigation*** (2020–2022): James is acting for various funds (instructed by Pallas Partners) in this widely publicised multi-party combined US$2bn litigation involving allegations that substantial loans made by Credit Suisse to Mozambique to fund a tuna fishing protection fleet were procured by bribes. The case is due for a 13-week trial next year.
- ***PIFSS v Al-Rajaan*** (2019–2022): James acted for a group of Swiss banks in this major multi-party fraud litigation (instructed by Slaughter and May). The banks' jurisdiction challenges succeeded: see [2022] EWCA Civ 29.
- ***Travelport v WEX*** (2020): James acted for WEX, instructed by Freshfields, in this claim concerning a US$1.7bn corporate acquisition in which WEX has invoked a material adverse effect clause following the Covid-19 pandemic. Following an expedited trial of preliminary issues this summer, this is now the leading case on MAC clauses in this jurisdiction.
- ***AVX v TTE*** (2019–2020): James acted for TTE in this substantial multi-£m claim relating to alleged breaches of warranty in connection with automotive technology (instructed by Allen & Overy).
- ***Alafco v Hong Kong Airlines*** (2019–2020): James acted in this multi-£m Commercial Court claim concerning aircraft leasing contracts (instructed by Milbank).
- ***Force India v Diageo*** (2018–2019): James acted for Diageo, instructed by Slaughter & May, in this $45mn claim for sums allegedly due under a Formula 1 sponsorship agreement.

- ***William Hill v NYX Gaming*** (2019): James acted for NYX (instructed by Simmons & Simmons), in connection with a major corporate acquisition which led to a contested anti-suit injunction.
- ***Tchenguiz v Grant Thornton*** (2014–2018): James acted for Grant Thornton, instructed by Simmons & Simmons, in the 12-week Commercial Court trial concerning the SFO investigation into Robert and Vincent Tchenguiz's business affairs. Robert Tchenguiz discontinued the case one week into trial.
- ***Edgeworth v Aabar*** (2016–2018): James acted for Aabar, instructed by Freshfields, in the five-week Commercial Court trial concerning Robert Tchenguiz's claims that his investment vehicle had entered into oral contracts with Aabar in relation to the ownership of the headquarters of Santander Bank in Spain. Edgeworth's claims were dismissed by Popplewell J with indemnity costs.

Arbitration

James has substantial arbitration experience, particularly in the fields of commodities, energy and food supply. Arbitration is now a significant and increasing part of his practice. Examples are below:

- ***LCIA proceedings***: James is acting for a privately owned company in a high value arbitration relating to an alleged improper contract termination.
- ***LCIA proceedings***: James is acting for a multinational company in a high value arbitration relating to food supply chains.
- ***LCIA proceedings***: James is acting for a state-owned enterprise in a major arbitration concerning liquid natural gas.
- ***LCIA proceedings***: James acted for a substantial energy company in a major energy related dispute.
- ***LCIA proceedings***: James acted for a state-owned enterprise in a series of high value LCIA proceedings relating to commodities agreements.
- ***ICC proceedings***: James advised a substantial pharmaceuticals company on a dispute relating to licensing royalties.
- ***DIFC-LCIA proceedings***: James acted for a major restaurant chain in a DIFC-LCIA arbitration relating to franchising arrangements.
- ***ICC Proceedings***: James acted for an international aircraft lessor in ICC proceedings relating to a substantial aviation dispute.
- ***LCIA proceedings***: James acted a major investment bank in an LCIA arbitration relating to a dispute over a substantial Eurobond issuance.
- ***LCIA proceedings***: James acted in a LCIA arbitration concerned with dispute over solicitors' fees payable by engineering conglomerate.
- ***LCIA proceedings***: James acted in a substantial LCIA arbitration concerned with a corporate restructuring.
- ***ICSID proceedings***: James acted in a major ICSID arbitration concerned with alleged state expropriation of financial investments.
- ***LCIA proceedings***: James acted for a state-owned commodity importer in a US$250m LCIA arbitration concerned with complex derivative transactions.
- ***ICC proceedings***: James acted for a major bank in an ICC arbitration relating to the sale of a subsidiary.

Civil Fraud and Investigations

James is ranked as a leading silk in civil fraud in both major legal directories. He has acted in some of the largest fraud cases in recent years and has extensive experience of substantial civil fraud work. Notable examples of James' current and previous civil fraud cases include:

- ***Magomedov v FESCO, Transneft:*** James acted for Transneft, instructed by Enyo in this US$18.3bn conspiracy claim. Butcher J's decision [2023] WLR(D) 522 is now the leading case on the test for good arguable case for freezing injunctions
- ***BCEGI v Bradwell and 13 others:*** James is acting for BCEGI, the substantial Chinese construction and engineering conglomerate, in substantial fraud claims against 14 defendants whom it alleges held undisclosed interests in a substantial construction project.
- ***PIFSS v Al-Rajaan***: James acted for a group of banks in this major multi-party fraud litigation (instructed by

Slaughter and May). The banks' jurisdiction challenges succeeded: see [2022] EWCA Civ 29.

- ***ADS v Windhorst:*** James acted for ADS, instructed by Alston & Bird, in contempt proceedings associated with multimillion Euro debts owed by companies associated with Lars Windhorst to ADS. He recently obtained an order committing Mr Windhorst to prison for 18 months suspended on terms Mr Windhorst attend a CPR 71 hearing as to the whereabouts of the funds.
- ***ENRC v Dechert/SFO***: James acted ENRC, instructed by Hogan Lovells, in this high-profile litigation in which ENRC is seeking substantial damages from Dechert and the SFO in connection with an investigation into alleged fraud. Following a 12 week trial, the judge held that ENRC had succeeded in substantially all its claims against Dechert, including allegations that Dechert's lead partner, Neil Gerrard, had leaked ENRC's privileged and confidential information to the press on the three occasions and made multiple unauthorised disclosures to the SFO in order to expand the scope of Dechert's investigation.
- ***DuPuont & Ors v Yuksel & Ors***: James acted for Yuksel (instructed by QE) in this substantial multi-party claim relating to alleged fraudulent inducements to enter into loan note restructuring arrangement.
- ***Deutsche Bank v Vestia***: James acted for DB, instructed by Clifford Chance, in this widely publicised 10-week €850m Financial List trial concerning derivative transactions entered into by a Dutch social housing association with DB. Vestia alleged that the transactions were allegedly procured by the bribery of its agent by an intermediary. The case settled on week 9 of the trial.
- ***Tchenguiz v Grant Thornton***: James acted for Grant Thornton, instructed by Simmons & Simmons, in the 12-week commercial court trial concerning the SFO investigation into Robert and Vincent Tchenguiz's business affairs. Robert Tchenguiz discontinued the case 1 week into trial.
- ***McGraw-Hill International (UK) Limited v Deutsche Apotheker-Und Artzebank EG & Ors***: James acted for the rating agencies, instructed by KWM) in this case concerning allegations relating, amongst other things, to alleged fraud and negligence in the rating of financial products.
- ***AG Zambia v Meer Care & Desai:*** James acted for the Republic of Zambia in this substantial and high- profile fraud claim concerning US$ multi-million funds embezzled from Zambia by its former president and other senior officers.

Professional Negligence and Liability

James has acted in some of the largest and most substantial professional negligence claims in recent years. Notable examples include:

- ***ENRC v Dechert/SFO:*** James is acting for ENRC (with Laurence Rabinowitz KC and Anna Boase KC), instructed by Hogan Lovells, in this high-profile litigation in which ENRC is seeking substantial damages from Dechert for the SFO. The claims are due to go to trial for eight weeks next year and involve allegations of negligence by Dechert in their conduct of an internal fraud investigation.
- ***Golden Belt v BNP Paribas*** (2017-2018): James acted (with Robin Dicker KC and Sonia Tolaney KC) for BNP Paribas, instructed by Clifford Chance, in this €650m Financial List case concerning a complex Islamic law financing transaction, and the appeal from that case. The case concerned allegations of negligence by the bank advising the issuer to the transaction.
- ***McGraw-Hill International (UK) Limited v Deutsche Apotheker-Und Artzebank EG & Ors***: James acted for the rating agencies (with Sonia Tolaney KC, instructed by KWM) in this case concerning allegations relating, amongst other things, to alleged fraud and negligence in the rating of financial products.
- ***SCB v CPC***: substantial claim relating to oil derivative transactions and allegedly negligent advice given by the bank.
- ***JP Morgan v Springwell***: James acted for JP Morgan (instructed by Clifford Chance, led by Mark Hapgood KC) in this high profile and precedent setting claim of c. $700m for negligent advice and misrepresentation in relation to the sale of various Russian bonds and pass-through notes.

Insolvency and Restructuring

James has significant insolvency and restructuring experience, typically in an advisory context. Examples include:

- Advising advisor to security agent on proposed complex corporate restructuring.
- Acting in claims involving recovery of distressed debt.
- Advising a significant organisation on corporate restructuring.

- Advising a sovereign nation on a potential restructuring / rescheduling of debt.
- Advising on potential insolvency and enforcement remedies in connection with the recovery of assets of insolvent estates.
- James was also involved in an action in the Lehmans insolvency (***Excalibur Funding No. 1 Plc v LB Re Financing No. 3 Ltd***) for permission to sue administrators of an insolvent Lehmans SPV in relation to the transfer of a €722m subordinated note position in a major securitisation.

Norwich Pharmacal and Enforcement

James has substantial experience of *Norwich Pharmacal* and enforcement related matters such as committal, CPR 71 examinations and related matters. Examples include:

- Acting for a corporation in urgent *Norwich Pharmacal* application related to a substantial alleged multi-jurisdictional fraud.
- Acting for large corporation in committal proceedings for non-attendance at a Part 71 hearing, secured 18 month suspended committal order upheld by the Court of Appeal.
- Acting for fund in *Norwich Pharmacal* application related to payment fraud.
- Advising major conglomerate on response to potential *Norwich Pharmacal Application.*
- Acting for bank in substantial 3-week committal application, resulting in a 20 month suspended sentence for the contemnor.
- Advising corporation on substantial CPR 71 examination.
- Acting for a corporation in *Norwich Pharmacal* application related to online fraud.
- Acting for bank in substantial *Norwich Pharmacal* application related to misappropriated judgement funds; also acting in relation to application for appointment of equitable receivers over judgment assets;
- Acting for bank in substantial CPR 71 examination.

What the Directories Say

James is highly ranked in both major directories in commercial dispute resolution, banking & finance and civil fraud. Examples are given below.

"...a fantastic advocate with a knack for making judges see his client's point of view." "...a really good team player and is able to find important points quickly." "James has the ability to master the hardest and most technical of subjects." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"...exceptionally clever, handles pressure very well and is a persuasive advocate." "His quality of thought is second to none." "James provides a thoughtful confidence which is reassuring to clients facing some of their most difficult and complex decisions." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"James has a brilliant legal mind, which he applies creatively to commercial problems. He is very willing to pick up difficult matters and run with them." "...very effective in court." "A very effective advocate, who is tough without being overly aggressive." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"He is a superstar." "James' command of the law is very impressive. He works fast and is highly articulate." "A classy advocate with a stupendous intellect" (Legal 500 2026)

"James can be relied upon to provide pitch-perfect advice in any situation. He's an incredibly gifted advocate and a great team player" (Chambers & Partners 2025)

"...just brilliant on his feet. Incredibly smooth and calm, he holds people's attention" (Chambers & Partners 2025)

...a brilliant draftsman. His advocacy is exceptional. He's extremely responsive and gains clients' trust" (Chambers &

Partners 2025)

"a superstar" "a classy advocate with a stupendous intellect" (Legal 500 2025)

"an exceptional advocate" (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"a future star who produces exceptional work" (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"an encyclopaedic knowledge and photographic memory – a go to junior silk" (Chambers and Partners 2024)

"cerebral, user-friendly, accessible and a true strategic thinker." (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"absolutely stellar across the board" (Chambers & Partners 2023)

"one of the stars of his generation" (Legal 500 2023)

"an excellent lawyer, who is extremely smart and great on his feet" (Chambers & Partners 2023)

"a fantastic communicator both orally and in terms of his written work" (Chambers & Partners 2023)

"calm in a storm...commercially minded and extremely client friendly" (Legal 500 2023)

"a phenomenal barrister... a terrific legal mind, phenomenal work ethic and also incredible caseload of work." (Chambers & Partners 2022)

"calm, collected and supremely talented. Wonderful to work with, and charming with clients. Intellectually excellent." (Legal 500 2022)

"lovely to work with and an excellent advocate. He is intelligent and pragmatic when giving advice, and persuasive, calm and collected when in court." (Legal 500 2022)

"Obviously clever, as well as measured and strong, but he does it with real style and panache and understanding of the issues." "He is incredibly intelligent, very responsive and practical. He is also very dependable." (Chambers & Partners 2021)

Education

BA History, Oxford - double-first
MA in Philosophy, King's College, London
CPE, BPP Law School, London - distinction
BVC, Inns of Court School of Law - outstanding

Awards/Nominations

2021 – nominated for commercial junior of the year (Chambers & Partners)
2017 – nominated for banking junior of the year (Chambers & Partners)
2015 – nominated for banking junior of the year (Chambers & Partners)
2013 – nominated for commercial junior of the year (Chambers & Partners)
2010 – identified as "future star of the bar" (Times Online)
2009 – identified as "future star of the bar" (Legal Week)
2005 – Inner Temple prize for outstanding performance on the BVC
2005 – Barstow Scholarship, Inns of Court School of Law
2003-2005 – Princess Royal CPE and BVC Scholarships, Inner Temple
1999-2001 – Academic scholarship, Magdalen College, Oxford

Professional Memberships

Inner Temple
COMBAR

Publications

James is a regular contributor to Butterworths' Journal of International Banking & Financial Law and contributed to the recent 14th edition of Paget's Law of Banking.

Awards

Chambers RANKED IN UK Bar 2026 James MacDonald KC

LEADING SILK Legal500 UNITED KINGDOM 2026

ONE ESSEX COURT

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