Practice Overview

“One of the most impressive barristers of his generation” (The Legal 500)

“He gets the results I need” (Chambers UK)

John Passmore QC has a commercial litigation and arbitration practice, involving a wide range of business sectors, with emphasis on aviation, banking, insurance, energy, commodities and derivatives, professional negligence, shipbuilding and offshore construction, and wet and dry shipping.

John is first and foremost an advocate, with experience in a wide variety of courts and arbitrations in the UK, including the UK Supreme Court, and internationally. He is particularly known for his cross-examination skills, and has carried out successful cross-examinations of a Head of State, an Attorney General, heads of civil service departments, senior diplomats, oligarchs, underwriters, derivatives traders, fraudsters, and schoolchildren, as well as some of the most prominent experts in fields of science, engineering, medicine, business, accountancy and foreign laws.

John is an experienced team-leader. His inclusive approach ensures that all members of the team, from the business, in-house counsel and partners, to associates, para-legals and trainees, as well as junior Counsel, can contribute to strategy and tactics.

In the legal directories, John is consistently ranked as a leading aviation practitioner, a leading insurance practitioner, and a leading shipping practitioner.

What the directories say

“He’s good on his feet and on paper, and he’s able to process enormous amounts of information while retaining focus on the key issues.”
(Chambers UK, 2020)

“He’s intellectually solid and is a great performer.”
(Chambers UK, 2020)

“Very practical and provides excellent legal insight.”
(Legal 500, 2020)
"He exhibits fantastic attention to detail, especially in technical matters, and has a very quick turnaround time for written advice."
(Legal 500, 2020)

"He has an impressive ability to engage with large amounts of detailed technical material."
(Legal 500, 2020)

‘He is immediately approachable and provides concise, useful advice.’
(Legal 500 2019)

‘He exhibits fantastic attention to detail, especially in technical matters, and has a very quick turnaround time for written advice.’
(Legal 500 2019)

Very good on paper and very measured in his approach.’
(Legal 500 2019)

"Committed, highly intelligent and commercially minded." "He is able to present complex issues with clarity and precision."
(Chambers UK 2019)

"Very good to work with and very bright.”
(Chambers UK, 2018)

"John is technically gifted and really grasps complex legal and factual claims, whilst understanding the commercial imperatives."
(Chambers UK, 2018)

"...He gets to the core issues quickly to provide excellent guidance on how to address them...”
(Legal 500, 2017)

"...Exceptional on technical matters, he is a match for any expert in cross-examination and his advocacy has great force...”
(Legal 500, 2017)

"...Very good on paper and very measured in his approach..”
(Legal 500, 2017)

"...Proactive and imaginative...”
(Legal 500, 2016)

"...incisive and reliable with a good grasp of commercial realities...”
(The Legal 500)

"...one of the most impressive barristers of his generation...”
(The Legal 500)

"...exceptionally forthright yet amiable....”; "...Responsive, practical and precise...”
(Chambers UK)

"...he is a forceful, no nonsense advocate who appreciates the importance of client relations...”
International Trade & Commodities

John deals with sale and purchase of physical commodities, both exchange traded and OTC, including hydrocarbons, metals, minerals and agricultural products, and all aspects of related trade finance. John also has extensive experience in derivatives trading, again both on exchanges and OTC (including under ISDAs). He is currently dealing with a range of metals trading and pricing disputes, both on and outside the LME.

Shipping & Maritime

Dry Shipping

John deals with sale and purchase, charterparty, COA and bill of lading and COA disputes, in relation to all types of vessels and all types of cargoes. His work covers the full range of charterparty matters, such as contamination of cargoes including oil, dangerous cargoes, unsafe ports, poor stowage, stevedore damage, and liens over cargoes and sub-freights. He also has experience in cases where charterparties have been made fraudulently, and thefts of containerised and liquid bulk cargoes. John deals with sale and purchase of physical commodities, both exchange traded and OTC, including hydrocarbons, metals, minerals and agricultural products, and all aspects of related trade finance matters. His work also extends to CMR, carriage of goods by rail and air, combined transport and freight forwarding.

Wet Shipping

John deals with collision and limitation claims, and all aspects of Admiralty practice and procedure such as general average, liens, arrest, judicial sale and priorities. His collision cases range from collisions between VLCCs to collisions between dredgers and yachts. John also deals with salvage claims, including SCOPIC. He deals with fatal accidents, and injury and property claims, arising out of collisions, capsizes, machinery failures, and towing, fishing and cargo operations. He is experienced in cases involving injuries of utmost severity such as tetraplegia, brain damage, psychiatric damage and amputations, brought by adult and child claimants. As well as the liabilities of ship-owners, operators, Masters and crew, John deals with the liabilities of ports and statutory authorities. Much of John's Admiralty work involves proceedings in multiple jurisdictions.

Shipbuilding
John deals with ship building disputes, including technical quality disputes, complex cases of delay, and finance and insurance relating to shipbuilding. He has recently been involved in a €50m claim for delay and cancellation of the construction of 2 offshore supply vessels, and a quality dispute and cancellation relating to a bulk carrier.

Aviation & Travel

John's aviation case-load extends to wet and dry leases (particularly repossessions), aviation finance, sale and purchase and brokerage disputes. He is involved in obtaining freezing injunctions over passenger aircraft and related documents, including aircraft in scheduled service. His cases include a long-running US$150m dispute involving issues of conflict of laws, foreign law, trusts, leases, bills of sale, mortgages, interference with goods and contempt of court. He has recently been involved in a disputed assignment of a substantial flag-carrier operated fleet. John also deals with substantial travel cases, including fatal accidents and very serious injuries under the Athens Convention.

Banking & Financial Services

John is experienced in asset finance and trade finance, including ship and aircraft mortgages and all other forms of security. He has particular experience in relation to conflicts of law issues. He has recently been involved in the refinancing of an entire state-owned fleet of tankers, letters of credit disputes worth up to US$ 70m, the disputed re-financing of an Indian industrial company with insolvency jurisdiction and universality issues, and the repossession of a fleet of supply vessels. He deals with cases involving finance which has been fraudulently obtained. He is also experienced in securities trading and fund management matters, such as disputes arising out of ISDA Master Agreements (including FFAs), ABSs including CDOs, stock-lending, options, forwards and futures, currency trading, swaps, securities brokerage, and investment management and advisory agreements (including mis-selling). He has advised in relation to warehousing risk for a US$490m CDO portfolio. John has dealt with legal and regulatory issues (including EMIR) in derivatives trading by energy plants. He also deals with professional liability in the financial services industry.

Commercial Dispute Resolution

John deals with a range of commercial litigation, particularly relating to the shipping, aviation, insurance, commodities trading and financial services. He is regularly involved in obtaining or resisting emergency relief such as freezing injunctions and anti-suit injunctions (and anti-anti-suit injunctions). His experience extends to insolvency jurisdiction disputes. He regularly advises and appears in disputes in foreign courts and tribunals, such as the High Court of Singapore, the Dubai World Tribunal (involving English and UAE law), the High Court of Northern Ireland, and all the major arbitration centres.

International Arbitration

Much of John's work involves international arbitration proceedings, under ICC, LCIA and LMAA rules, and the rules of all other major arbitration centres. John is an experienced arbitration advocate, and he is very regularly instructed in arbitration appeals in the Commercial Court and Court of Appeal.

Insurance & Reinsurance
John regularly advises on and appears as an advocate in policy disputes, with issues such as scope of cover, misrepresentation, non-disclosure and breach of warranty. Much of his insurance work concerns hull & machinery cover, including scuttling and other cases of fraud, and cover relating to industrial plant and construction. He also deals with all other types of marine and non-marine insurance, such as P&I, cargo, war risks, general average, salvage guarantee insurance, professional indemnity, CAR, fidelity, property (including docks), product liability, business interruption, accident and reinsurance. John is periodically instructed to act in foreign court and arbitration proceedings as an expert in English insurance law.

**Alternative Dispute Resolution**

John is regularly instructed to act as a representative/negotiator at mediations and settlement meetings. He is qualified as a CEDR-accredited mediator.

**Academic**

LLB (Hons)

**Appointments**

Also called to the Bar of Northern Ireland and a CEDR-accredited mediator.

**Presentations**

John regularly speaks and writes about commercial law. He was previously an examiner and occasional lecturer in commercial law at the College of Law.

**Memberships**

Commercial Bar Association, London Common Law and Commercial Bar Association, London Maritime Arbitrators’ Association (Supporting Member), London Shipping Law Centre.

**Memberships**

Member of the Bar Pro-Bono Unit.

**Interests**

Travelling, running, cinema, food.