Compass Chambers

Murdo MacLeod KC



Year called:	1994
Year of silk:	2008
Email:	murdo.macleod@compasschambers.com
Qualifications:	1979 - 1985: Nicolson Institute, Stornoway 1985 - 1989: LLB (Hons), University of Aberdeen 1989 - 1990: Dip. Legal Practice, University of Aberdeen 2004: Dip. Advocacy skills - National Institute of Trial Advocacy (USA)

LEADING SILK
Legal500
UNITED KINGDOM
2025

2027
Chambers
Top Ranked
UK Bar
Murdo Macleod KC

Called to the Bar in 1994 (taking silk in 2008), Murdo MacLeod KC specialises in health and safety and other regulatory matters, where he is instructed for trials and in an advisory capacity. Recent HSWA trials include the defence of a multinational oil company in the sheriff court, the defence of a haulier charged with gross negligence culpable homicide (and HSWA s.3 offences) and reperesenting the Chief Constable in a landmark high court HSWA prosecution following the mishandling of a 999 call (resulting in two fatalities). His expertise has resulted in his repeated ranking as a "star individual" and "leader of the bar" for health and safety in the law directories.

Between 2005 and 2010 he served as Counsel to the Billy Wright Inquiry, a major public inquiry (the first under the Inquiries Act 2005) into the murder of a prominent paramilitary prisoner and the management of HMP Maze. He was vetted to the highest security level (DV) and had sole responsibility for the investigation of control and security matters within the prison including Health and Safety policy and procedures, and operational matters within the prison - such as budgets, refurbishment and relations with trades unions. In 2008 he was appointed senior counsel to the inquiry.

He also defends individual accused. In 2015 he successfully defended Andy Coulson in his trial for perjury. The same year he also successfully defended Yousif Badri, a medical student charged with terrorism offences. Other recent acquittals include: a company director charged with VAT fraud, a developer charged with property misdescription, a solicitor charged with fraud; and a stockbroker charged with domestic assault. Between 1999 and 2001 he was instructed as junior counsel for Lamin Fhimah, the second accused in the Lockerbie/Pan-Am bombing trial in the Netherlands.

Murdo also has considerable experience as a High Court prosecutor. Between 2001 and 2003 he served as Crown Counsel and between December 2003 and April 2005 as Senior Crown Counsel. During this period he appeared for the Crown in numerous high-profile matters, including money laundering, health and safety and terrorist cases. He led for the prosecution in approximately twenty murder trials and appeared regularly in the Court of Appeal.

Since July 2011 Murdo has also practised in England and Wales, where he is a member of Temple Garden Chambers (tgchambers.com) a set specialising in health and safety defence and public inquiries. In October 2011 he was appointed a part-time Sheriff.

He has a Diploma in Trial Advocacy from the National Institute of Trial Advocacy (US) and regularly lectures at the Faculty of Advocates foundation course for pupil advocates. He has presented papers on European Law, public international law, corporate Homicide, health and safety, fatal accident and public inquiries. In 2012 he was appointed the UK delegate to the Criminal Law Committee of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE).

Murdo has served on various Faculty committees and has chaired its complaints committee. He is also a Presenting Officer for the Fitness for Judicial Office tribunal.He has authored and co-authored numerous responses to Government consultations and the House of Lords EU committee on UK government 'opt out' proposals. He has also given evidence to the Scottish Parliament on three occasions.

He is an acccredited mediator.

What the Directories Say

CHAMBERS & PARTNERS

Health and Safety - Leader of the Bar - *STAR INDIVIDUAL*

- ""He is affable and charming with clients but robust and deadly in court - an excellent all-rounder." "He is extremely experienced, highly intelligent and strategically adept. He has diplomacy, discretion and tact. His advocacy is exceptionally persuasive." "He is great on his feet, he is really friendly and he gives sensible advice." "He is very good at building rapport with the jury." [2026]
- Murdo is the premier choice. He has great gravitas, both in meetings with opponents and in court. You can easily see why he is one of the most sought-after and highly regarded silks of his time. "Murdo is pre-eminent in Scotland. He is capable of assimilating vast quantities of information, which only the top people can do. He is terrific with clients. He's calming and authoritative." "Murdo is a fierce defence advocate with a crucial eye for detail in complex, information-heavy cases." [2025]
- "Murdo is our number-one choice for health and safety cases." "Murdo is one of the very best health and safety practitioners at the Scottish Bar." "He brings a wealth of experience and a warm and approachable manner with clients." [2024]
- "His easygoing, calm and practical approach wins clients over as much as his clear, concise advice and encyclopedic knowledge of the law." "Despite the fact that he is the leader, he is also a team player and puts everyone at ease." [2023]
- "His court practice is exemplary." "An extremely capable advocate in the health and safety sphere." "His expertise in both health and safety and crime is a real asset." [2022]
- "Murdo is a careful and thorough public inquiries specialist with good client skills." "His main strength is the way he acts with his clients." "He is very emphatic in tough situations and does not shy away from having to give difficult advice." [2020]
- "Very professional, diligent and dedicated." "A genuine expert in his area who can always be relied on for clear, quality advice and a comprehensive strategy." [2019]
- "An expert criminal silk with extensive experience of health and safety proceedings." "He is regularly instructed to defend major corporate entities in high-profile health and safety prosecutions and fatal accident inquiries. He is also sought out in non-contentious health and safety matters." [2018]
- "His strengths are his ability to communicate with the Bench and how well he works in a team." [2017]
- "He is really quite superb on his feet." [2016]

- "He is very personable and approachable." [2016]
- "He has a very well-regarded health and safety practice that encompasses prosecutions, Fatal Accident and Public Inquiries." [2015]
- "Very user-friendly and very good on his feet." [2014]

Public and Fatal Accident Inquiries - ~~Band 1~~ (new category in Scotland as of 2025)

- "He is extremely experienced, highly intelligent and strategically adept. He has diplomacy, discretion and tact. His advocacy is exceptionally persuasive." Murdo is pragmatic and collaborative in his approach." [2026]
- Murdo really knows what he is doing. He's very supportive of the team, great with clients and always οργανισεδ.∀∀Μυρδοэσ ενχψχλοπαεδιχ κνοωλεδγε οφ ιμμενσελψ λαργε ανδ χομπλεξ ματτερσ ισ παρτιχυλαρλψ ιμπρεσσιϖε.∀∀ Μυρδο Μαχλεοδ ΚΧ ισ ϖερψ α φριενδλψ χουνσελ ωηο ισ παρτιχυλαρλψ γοοδ ον ηισ φεετ ιν χουρτ. Ηεэσϖερψ γοοδ ατ θυεστιονινγ ωιτνεσσεσ ανδ εξτραχτινγ κεψ ινφο.∀ ∀Μυρδο προϖιδεσ εξχελλεντ ανδ ωισε αδϖιχεαχροσσ τηε βοαρδ. Ηεэσ ηιγηλψ σκιλλεδ, εφφεχτιϖε ανδ α πλεασυρε το ωορκ ωιτη.∀[2025]

THE LEGAL 500

Health and Safety - Tier 1 KC

- "He is great on his feet, I really like him; he is really friendly and he gives sensible advice. He is very good at building rapport with the jury and he is really down to earth." "He dealt with the case well and very sensitively." "He is affable and charming with clients but robust and deadly in court - an excellent all-rounder." [2026]

- An oustanding advocate" "Murdo is fantastic with a jury - he is able to break down very complex technical matters into concepts juries understand, and he is very persuasive.'" [2024]
- "A class act." "A consummate silk." "Razor sharp, but with a warmth that clients appreciate." "His style is to engage in a calm and measured dialogue with the bench." [2023]
- "A gifted advocate whose advice is always careful and considered." [2020]
- "He has a terrific intellect." [2019]
- "An excellent courtroom performer." [2017]
- "He has an impressive work ethic." [2016]
- "Unwavering commitment to the case and the client." [2015]
- 'Very impressive on his feet." [2014]
- "A highly skilled advocate; robust when required but unfailingly courteous." [2013]
- "Able to explain matters to the client in appropriate terminology." [2012]

Crime - Tier 1 KC

- "His easy manner makes him a pleasure to work with" [2020]
- "A fearless and tenacious cross-examiner." "He is an impressive figure in court." [2019]
- "A first-rate advocate." [2017]
- "Combines an ability to grasp complex detail with a strong sense of strategy."[2016]
- "Top of the list for regulatory issues and complex business crime." [2015]
- "A very strong advocate."[2014]

"A very high quality trial advocate." [2013]

Representative Instructions

Health and Safety/Regulatory

HMA v LHB, 2026: Representing Health Board in unusual HSWA prosecution following fatality from covid-19

HMA v SC, 2026: Representing Norwegian company in HSWA prosecution following offshore fatality

HMA v BM, 2025: Representing major building company in HSWA prosecution following workplace fatality

HMA v VSP, 2025: Representing church in investigation into potential HSWA S.3 offence

HMA v B, 2024: Defending construction company in HSWA prosecution following fatal accident at building site

HMA v GGC, 2024: Defending Health Board charged with causative HSWA S.3 offence

HMA v AG, 2021-2023: Defending company owner charged with Culpable Homicide/HSWA offences following death of motorist

HMS v LHB, 2023: Defending Health Board charged with causative HSWA S.3 offence

HMA v BP, 2023: Defended multi-national oil company in HSWA trial

HMA v D, 2023: Representing hotel group in HSWA matter involving legionella-related fatalities

HMA v EP, 2023: Representing multinational oil company in various HSE/SEPA matters

HMA v Akela, 2022: Represented construction company in fatal HSWA case on buiding site

HMA v Chief Constable, 2019 - 2021: Represented Chief Constable in landmark fatal HSWA prosecution arising from missed '999' call

HMA v BAM Nuttall, 2021: Represented construction company in fatal HSWA case

HMA v J Murphy and sons, 2021: Represented construction company in HSWA case involving major gas leak on M9

HMA v HC-One, 2019: Represented care home provider in fatal HSWA prosecution following death of resident

HMA v The North British Distillery, 2019: Represented distillery in HSWA prosecution for various legionella-related offences

HMA v Dow Management Services , 2017-2018: Represented director of waste management company in environmental pollution case

HMA v Dandara Homes, 2017-2018: Represented property developer in unusual property misdescription prosecution

Geddes v Johnson, 2017: Represented health and safety advisers in commercial court action

HMA v Siemens, 2017: Represented multintional energy company in HSWA case involving workplace fatality at windfarm

Inquiries

Scottish Hospitals Inquiry, 2021- 2024 : Representing core participant (the architects of both hospitals)

Areceloch FAI, 2024: Representing multinational energy company

Whitchester FAI, 2024: Representing overhead powerline company

Undercover Policing Inquiry, 2022 - 2024 : Representing core participant (senior police officer)

UK Covid Inquiry, 2022 - 2024 : Representing core participant (Care Inspectorate)

Sheku Bayoh Inquiry, 2021 - 2024: Representing core participant (acting Assistant Chief Constable)

Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry, 2021 - 2024 Representing core participant (Care Inspectorate)

Edinburgh Tram Inquiry, 2017-2020: Representing international construction company in inquiry (under the Inquiries Act 2005) into delay and over-spend of Edinburgh tram project

"M9" Inquiry, 2018-2020: Advising Chief Constable in ongoing inquiry into call-handling issues following alleged missed "999" call

Cameron House Inquiry, 2022: Representing H&S director in Inquiry into fatal fire at luxury hotel

Re "AM" Inquiry, 2018-2019: Represented Prison Service in important inquiry into preventable death of prisoner

Re Queensferry Crossing Inquiry, 2017: Representing bridge-building consortium in FAI into the death of an employee on the new Forth Bridge

Re "JP" Inquiry, 2017: Representing Local Authority in FAI into death of employee killed while transporting care user

Re Superpuma Inquiry, 2013-2014: Represented core participant in FAI into the deaths of 16 passengers and crew in major North Sea helicopter accident

Re Billy Wright Inquiry, 2005-2010: Counsel to the Inquiry in Public Inquiry (under the Inquiries Act 2005) into alleged government collusion in murder of terrorist prisoner and management of HMP Maze. Vetted to highest level (DV)

Financial crime

HMA v JA: 2022-2024: representing well-known entrepreneur in ongoing police investigation

HMA v SB, 2019-2021: Representing company director in VAT fraud

HMA v G & R, 2017-2018: Defending accused in case involving complex insurance fraud and associated crimes

HMA v R, 2018: Representing solicitor charged with fraud

Re Rangers FC, 2013 - 2015: Advising City law firm in major financial crime investigation *re* recovery of documents, execution of warrants and privilege

FCL v HMRC, 2013: Advising company in appeal against HMRC decision on Customs Warehousing

HMA v Bruce, 2012: Advising finance director in alleged commercial fraud/ money laundering(£32,000,000)

HMA v SC Ltd, 2012: Substantial proceeds of crime case

HMA v Cameron, 2011: Proceeds of crime

Restorick v HMA, 2003: Fraud

HMA v M 2002: Breach of money laundering regulations

HMA v Armstrong-Hanies + 1, 1998 - 1999: Commercial mortgage fraud

HMA v Khan + 2, 1996 - 1997: Scotland's longest VAT fraud trial

Terrorism

HMA v Yousif Badri, 2015: Defended medical student charged with plotting to commit terrorist act and possessing material of assistance to terrorists

HMA v Wilson + 4, 2003: Prosecuted 5 accused for armed robbery and membership of proscribed terrorist organisation (Red Hand Commando)

HMA v Baird +3, 2002: Prosecuted 4 accused for supply of explosives and posssession of items to be used in an act of terrorism (Ulster Volunteer Force)

General Crime

re SS, 2018: Advising company director on aspects of extradition request to USA

HMA v Andrew Coulson, 2015: Defended former newspaper editor in perjury trial

PF v LT, 2019: Defended company director charged with various IT offences

PF v M, 2015: Defended owner of equestrian centre charged with indecent assault

PF v T, 2015: Represented stockbroker charged with domestic assault

HMA v Harrison, 2012: Defended schoolboy charged with murder

HMA v Pawel Rodak, 2012: Represented Polish youth charged with murder of university Professor

HMA v Clark, 2004: Prosecuted schoolboy charged with murder

HMA v Hynes + 6, 2004: Prosecuted drugs gang for largest heroin seizure in North of Scotland

HMA v Murphy + 2, 2003: Prosecuted landmark child abuse case at list 'D' school

HMA v Megrahi and Fhimah, 1999 - 2001: Junior counsel (to Richard Keen QC) for second accused in Lockerbie/Pan-Am bombing trial, Camp Zeist, Netherlands - acquitted

Reported cases etc

Geddes v Johnson, [2017] CSOH 42: whether a convicted company can recover a fine where it had relied on H&S advisors

Coulson v HMA, 2015 HCJAC 49, 2015 S.L.T. 438: Landmark appeal on use of Parliamentary privilege

HMA v Coulson, 2015 HCJ 49; 2015 SCCR 254: Definition of perjury

SCCRC petitioners, 2010, HCJAC 49, 2010 SLT 976: Represented SCCRC in landmark case on scope of Contempt of Court Act

Experience

1990-1993: Solicitor in Crown Office and in private practice

1994: Admitted to Faculty of Advocates

1998: Appointed *ad hoc* Crown Counsel

1999 - 2001: Junior Counsel for 2nd accused in Lockerbie trial (instructed by McGrigor Donald)

2001 - 2003: Appointed Crown Counsel

2004 - 2005: Appointed Senior Crown Counsel

2005 - 2010: Appointed Counsel to Billy Wright Inquiry (Senior counsel from 2008)

2008: Appointed Queen's Counsel

2011: Called to Bar of England and Wales (Middle Temple)

2011: Appointed Special Counsel

2011: Appointed Part-time Sheriff

2012: Appointed UK delegate to CCBE Criminal Law Committee

2013: Appointed to the Criminal Court Rules Council

2014: Appointed to Bonomy post-corroboration review group

2015: Appointed to Faculty of Advocates Complaints Committee

2017: Appointed to Faculty of Advocates Law Reform Committee

2018: Appointed Presenting Officer - Fitness for Judicial Office Tribunal

Recent lectures and seminars

February 2013: UK Association of European Lawyers (UKAEL) conference on EU law, Edinburgh. *A leap in the dark? The risks of opting out of EU criminal justice*

April 2013: Law Society of Ireland, Dublin: *The war on terror and the ICC*

April 2014: Scottish Medico-legal Society (SMLS), Glasgow. *The murder of Billy Wright*

April 2014: Society of Advocates, Aberdeen: *Update on FAI law and practice*

May 2014: Four Jurisdictions Conference, Belfast. *Public inquiries*

August 2014: Seminar for Chinese prosecutors, Edinburgh. *The detention and questioning of suspects in Scotland*

November 2015: Compass chambers annual conference, Edinburgh. *Fatal accident inquiries, a new landscape?*

October 2015: Judicial Institute for Scotland, seminar on cybercrime and data protection. *Terrorist legislation: a personal view*

June 2016: CLT Health and Safety seminar, Glasgow. *Public and fatal inquiries: a common approach*

June 2017: CLT Health and Safety Conference, Murrayfield, Edinburgh*: Aspects of sentencing*

June 2018: Compass Chambers, Glasgow conference. *The roof, the whole roof and nothing but the roof. The prosecution of property misdescription*

September 2018:UK Oil and Gas Conference, Aberdeen. *Bribery and Corruption Update*

November 2018: Compass Chambers Annual Conference. *Privilege, a principle under threat?*

June 2019: CLT Conference, Glasgow Hilton. *Justice Denied? Dealing with delay in Health and Safety cases and FAIs*

October 2023: Glasgow Sheriffs' conference. *Fatal accident Inquiries - the golden rules*

Dual qualified

Yes. Practising member of Temple Garden chambers, London (tgchambers.com)

Memberships

Health and Safety Lawyers Association

Criminal Bar Association

Scottish Criminal Bar Association