

DIFC COURTS INTERNAL PRACTICE DIRECTION NO. 1 OF 2026: Guidelines for Registration on the Panel of Mediators

This Practice Direction will come into effect on the date of signature. It may be cited as Practice Direction 1 of 2026 – **Guidelines for Registration on the Panel of Mediators** and may be abbreviated to PD 1/2026.

1. Purpose and Authority

- 1.1 This Practice Direction sets out the eligibility criteria, procedure, terms and ongoing obligations governing the registration of individuals on the Mediation Service Centre’s Panel of Mediators (“the **Panel**”).
- 1.2 This Practice Direction is issued pursuant to Article 5 of Resolution No. 5 of 2025, in respect of Issuing a Regulation of the DIFC Courts Mediation Service Centre and Article 13 of DIFC Courts’ Law No. 2 of 2025. This Practice Direction should also be read together with the Mediation Service Centre Rules and any guidance issued by the DIFC Courts from time to time.
- 1.3 The objectives are to ensure transparency, consistency and integrity in appointments, to safeguard users, and to promote high professional standards in mediation before the Courts.

2. Application and Interpretation

- 2.1 This Practice Direction applies to all applications for initial registration, renewal, variation, suspension and removal from the Panel.
- 2.2 In this Practice Direction:
 - (a) “**Applicant**” means an individual applying for registration on the Panel.
 - (b) “**Registered Mediator**” means an individual entered on the Panel.
 - (c) “**Mediation Service Centre**” means the administrative unit of the DIFC Courts supporting mediation services.
 - (d) “**CPD**” means mediation-specific Continuing Professional Development.
- 2.3 Unless the context requires otherwise, words and expressions bear the meanings given in the Mediation Service Centre Rules.

3. General Principles

- 3.1 Entry on the Panel is personal to the individual mediator.

- 3.2 The Mediation Service Centre retains the sole and absolute discretion to accept, refuse, suspend, renew or remove registration in the interests of justice and the effective administration of the mediation framework.
- 3.3 Nothing in this Practice Direction fetters the Centre's discretion to appoint a mediator in a particular case, including a person not on the Panel, where appropriate.

4. Eligibility and Minimum Standards

- 4.1 An Applicant must declare and, upon request, evidence that he or she:
 - (a) has conducted at least five (5) mediations (as lead or co-mediator), with a schedule of representative matters.
 - (b) has undertaken at least six (6) hours of mediation-specific CPD in the twelve (12) months preceding the application.
 - (c) has sufficient knowledge of the DIFC Courts' Mediation Service Centre Rules and procedures; and
 - (d) is a member of, or registered with, a recognised professional mediation institution.
- 4.2 The Mediation Service Centre may, in exceptional circumstances, admit an Applicant who does not fully satisfy all formal criteria where the Applicant's participation is, in the Centre's reasonable judgment, essential or materially beneficial to the mediation process.
- 4.3 Documents submitted in support of the Panel application in a language other than English must be accompanied by a certified legal translation into English.

5. Supporting Documents

- 5.1 Each application must include:
 - (a) curriculum vitae or résumé.
 - (b) copy of degree or professional qualification.
 - (c) proof of registration/membership with an accredited mediation institution.
 - (d) proof of completion of an accredited mediation training course.
 - (e) proof of completion of at least six (6) hours of mediation-specific CPD within the prior twelve (12) months.
 - (f) copy of passport and (for UAE residents) copy of visa page.
 - (g) passport-size photograph (for publication on the public register).

- (h) schedule of mediation experience identifying representative cases, approximate value(s) and nature of disputes; and
 - (i) a declaration of any disciplinary, regulatory or code-of-conduct proceedings past or pending.
- 5.2 The Mediation Service Centre may request additional information or verification, including evidence or findings issued by a court, regulatory or disciplinary body, if deemed necessary.

6. Procedure for Application and Assessment

- 6.1 Applications shall be submitted through the online form published on the DIFC Courts' website.
- 6.2 Upon receipt, the Mediation Service Centre will review the application for completeness and suitability. The Applicant may be invited to an interview.
- 6.3 Where the application is refused, the Applicant may file a written, reasoned appeal to the Head of Ancillary Services within fourteen (14) calendar days of notification.
- 6.4 The Head of Ancillary Services shall determine the appeal within fourteen (14) calendar days of receipt and notify the decision with brief reasons.
- 6.5 If dissatisfied, the Applicant may within sixty (60) calendar days file a further written, reasoned appeal addressed to the Director of the DIFC Courts (by email to Mediation@difccourts.ae). The Director's decision is final.
- 6.6 The Mediation Service Centre may prescribe application and renewal fees, published on the DIFC Courts' website.

7. Registration, Term and Renewal

- 7.1 Registration takes effect on the date stated in the notice of acceptance.
- 7.2 Registration remains in force subject to ongoing compliance with this Practice Direction and may be reviewed at any time under section 8.
- 7.3 A Registered Mediator must submit annual confirmation of compliance, including evidence of at least six (6) hours of mediation-specific CPD in the preceding twelve (12) months. Failure to do so may result in suspension or removal.
- 7.4 The Mediation Service Centre may require refresher training, mentoring or other conditions, as part of the renewal process.

8. Monitoring, Variation, Suspension and Removal

- 8.1 The Mediation Service Centre may reassess a Registered Mediator's status at any time.
- 8.2 Where concerns arise as to competence, conduct or compliance, the Centre may:
 - (a) issue an advisory notice.
 - (b) impose conditions (including training, mentoring or reporting).
 - (c) suspend registration; or
 - (d) remove the mediator from the Panel.
- 8.3 Before suspension or removal, the mediator will ordinarily be given brief particulars of the concerns and an opportunity to respond in writing within a reasonable period, unless urgency or the interests of justice require immediate action.
- 8.4 A mediator whose registration is suspended or removed may apply for re-registration. The Mediation Service Centre may require the Applicant to undergo the full registration process anew.

9. Professional Obligations

- 9.1 Registered Mediators must:
 - (a) adhere to the Mediation Service Centre Rules, any applicable Code of Conduct, and directions issued by the DIFC Courts.
 - (b) maintain professional independence, avoid conflicts of interest, and make timely disclosures of any actual or potential conflict.
 - (c) respect confidentiality and without prejudice privilege, save as required or permitted by law or Court order.
 - (d) maintain appropriate professional competence and CPD; and
 - (e) promptly notify the Mediation Service Centre of any material change affecting eligibility, including any disciplinary, regulatory or criminal matters.
- 9.2 A mediator must not hold him or herself out as a judge, officer or employee of the DIFC Courts.

10. Data Protection, Publication and Communications

- 10.1 Personal data will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection law, including the DIFC Data Protection Law (as amended). A privacy notice will be made available on the application portal.
- 10.2 The Mediation Service Centre may publish and maintain a public register of Registered Mediators (including name, photograph, jurisdiction, contact information and areas of practice).
- 10.3 Official communications concerning applications and registrations shall be sent to the email address nominated by the Applicant or Registered Mediator.

11. Fees and Costs

- 11.1 The Mediation Service Centre may fix and publish a schedule of fees for application, renewal and other services related to the Panel.
- 11.2 Fees are non-refundable unless otherwise stated.

12. Transitional Provisions

- 12.1 Ongoing mediations are unaffected by changes to a mediator's registration status unless the Court orders otherwise in the interests of justice.

13. Commencement

- 13.1 This Practice Direction comes into force on the date it is signed by the Director.

Issued this 20th of January 2026

H.E. Omar Al Mheiri
Director