

Guidelines for DIFC Courts' Register of Legal Practitioners

The DIFC Courts' Register of Legal Practitioners is in two parts:

Part I: Law firms

Part II: Individuals with rights of audience before the DIFC Courts

Entry on the DIFC Courts' Register of Legal Practitioners (the 'Register') is governed by DIFC Courts Order No. 1 of 2025 in respect of issuing and conducting proceedings, rights of audience and registration in Part I and Part II of the DIFC Courts' Register of Legal Practitioners (the 'Order').

Part I: Law Firms

1. Entry in Part I shall be in the name of a law firm. The law firm shall provide a list of practitioners employed by the firm (the branch which is being registered) who are authorised to issue and conduct proceedings on behalf of the law firm. Issuing and conducting proceedings involve practical steps which progress a case. On this basis, only a practitioner who is authorised by their law firm (and listed as such under Part I) can issue and conduct proceedings by:
 - i. signing Statements of Truth;
 - ii. submitting case related documents with the DIFC Courts;
 - iii. corresponding with the Registry regarding a case or the progression of a case; and
 - iv. corresponding with opposing lawyers.
2. Supporting documents required for Part I registration:
 - a. copy of the law firm's professional license (and a copy of the Dubai Legal Affairs Department license, if the firm is located in Dubai)
 - b. for each lawyer authorised to issue and conduct proceedings on behalf of the law firm, the following documents must be provided:

- i. copy of their current Practicing Certificate, or a letter of Good Standing from their Bar Association or Law Society issued at least three (3) months preceding the date of application¹;
 - ii. copy of the Dubai Legal Affairs Department Card (if the practitioner is practicing in Dubai);
 - iii. copy of passport;
 - iv. passport size photo (which will be used for the online public Register); and
 - v. copy of visa page (for UAE Residents only – if the visa has not been issued by the respective law firm, a signed letter of undertaking by the Managing Partner of the firm must be provided confirming that the concerned lawyer is employed by the respective law firm)
3. The registration of law firms under Part I of the Register does not constitute as carrying on a business in Dubai. Additionally, it also does not authorise law firms to carry out business within the Emirate of Dubai. The Dubai Legal Affairs Department must be contacted separately to obtain the appropriate licensing and authorisations required.
4. A law firm may add up to one (1) non-lawyer and seven (7) lawyers under Part I for no additional fees. Any additional lawyer added will incur a fee of USD 100 each.
5. In order for a practitioner to be removed under the law firm's Part I registration, the firm must provide a letter signed by the Managing Partner/Senior Partner addressed to the DIFC Courts by e-mail to registration@difccourts.ae requesting the same. There are no fees associated with the removal of practitioners in Part I.
6. In the event of refusal of a Part I application or registration, the Managing Partner/Senior Partner of the law firm may lodge a written and reasoned appeal with the Committee via

¹ For jurisdictions with Bar Associations that maintain a public register for legal practitioners, the Practicing Certificate/letter of Good Standing shall be verified through the public register. For jurisdictions with Bar Associations that do not maintain a public register for legal practitioners, the Practicing Certificate/letter of Good Standing may be verified through a primary source verification partner.

email to RoPCommittee@difccourts.ae within fourteen (14) calendar days. The Committee shall deliberate on the appeal and provide a decision within twenty-one (21) calendar days of receiving the appeal.

7. If the Managing Partner/Senior Partner is still not satisfied with the Committee's decision and reasoning, they may lodge a written and reasoned appeal, within sixty (60) calendar days, with the Chief Justice. The letter must be addressed to the Chief Justice, emailed to RoPCommittee@difccourts.ae, which will be shared with the Chief Justice internally.
8. The decision of the Chief Justice will be final and there will be no further avenues to appeal the decision.

Part II: Individuals with rights of audience before the DIFC Courts

1. Entry in Part II can only be in the name of an individual. The applicant must provide a declaration (as stated on the online application form) as to whether:
 - a. they have at least five (5) years post-qualification experience immediately preceding the date of application as an advocate in Courts, Arbitrations or Tribunals which grants upon the practitioner full rights of audience; OR
 - b. they have at least two (2) years post-qualification experience immediately preceding the date of application as an advocate in Courts, Arbitrations or Tribunals which grants upon the practitioner limited rights of audience;
 - c. they possess the right to conduct litigation or a right of audience before the superior courts of the jurisdiction in which they qualify
 - d. they have sufficient command of the English language; and
 - e. sufficient knowledge of the Common Law system and the DIFC Courts' rules and procedures in order to conduct proceedings before the DIFC Courts, supported by evidence.

2. Supporting documents required for Part II registration:
 - a. copy of current Practicing Certificate or letter of Good Standing from the applicant's Bar Association or Law Society issued at least three (3) months preceding the date of application²;
 - b. copy of passport;
 - c. passport size photo (which will be used for the online public Register);
 - d. copy of visa page (for UAE Residents only – if the visa has not been issued by their respective law firm, a signed letter of undertaking by the Managing Partner of the firm must be provided confirming that the concerned lawyer is employed by the respective law firm);
 - e. copy of the Legal Affairs Department Card (if the practitioner is practicing in Dubai); and
 - f. a schedule of oral advocacy experience in either Courts, Arbitration or Tribunals. The schedule should highlight the practitioner's experiences in oral advocacy, outline the current practice of the practitioner with a list of (representative) cases and interlocutory motions and descriptions of the practitioner's involvement in each. The schedule will serve as a basis for the interview which is conducted prior to the confirmation of registration.

3. The DIFC Courts reserves the right to request for additional documents if deemed necessary on a case-by-case basis.

4. The procedure for Individuals applying for registration in Part II of the Register will be as follows:
 - a. The application, along with the supporting documents, must be submitted online.
 - b. Qualifying applicants must appear for an interview in front of the DIFC Courts' Registration of Legal Practitioners Committee (the 'Committee'), either online or in-person.

² For jurisdictions with Bar Associations that maintain a public register for legal practitioners, the Practicing Certificate/letter of Good Standing shall be verified through the public register. For jurisdictions with Bar Associations that do not maintain a public register for legal practitioners, the Practicing Certificate/letter of Good Standing may be verified through a primary source verification partner.

- c. Upon a successful interview, registration in Part II of the Register will be accepted on a provisional basis until the individual concerned appears before a Judge for the first time.
 - d. The Committee shall attend the first hearing, or review the recording of the hearing, and either: (i) confirm the applicant's registration as permanent; (ii) refuse the registration; or (iii) request that the applicant considers further training on DIFC Courts' laws and procedures and/or advocacy training provided by the DIFC Courts or other recognised training provider(s) in which case the individual's registration shall remain provisional until the next hearing.
 - e. The decision will be based on the individual's oral advocacy skills and familiarity of the DIFC Courts' laws and procedures.
 - f. Should the Committee reject a Part II application or registration, either at the time of reviewing the application online, or following the observation of a practitioner during their appearance in Court, it must provide reasons for the refusal in writing.
 - g. In the event of refusal of a Part II application or registration, the individual concerned may lodge a written and reasoned appeal with the Committee via email to RoPCommittee@difccourts.ae within fourteen (14) calendar days.
 - h. The Committee shall deliberate on the individual's appeal and provide a decision within twenty-one (21) calendar days of receiving the appeal.
 - i. If an Individual is still not satisfied with the Committee's decision and reasoning, they may lodge a written and reasoned appeal, within sixty (60) calendar days, with the Chief Justice. The letter must be addressed to the Chief Justice, emailed to RoPCommittee@difccourts.ae, which will be shared with the Chief Justice internally.
 - j. The decision of the Chief Justice will be final and there will be no further avenues to appeal the decision.
5. First appearance in front of the DIFC Courts:
- An individual with provisional registration in Part II of the Register should give the DIFC Courts not less than seven (7) days' notice of their intention to appear before a

Judge, so that the necessary arrangements can be made to ensure the presence of the Committee during the hearing. In situations where the Committee is unable to attend a hearing, a recording of the hearing may be used to review a Practitioner's skills in the said hearing. If it is not possible to give sufficient notice, or if the Committee is not available to attend the first hearing, the individual will need to seek permission of the hearing Judge to proceed with the hearing in the absence of the Committee and the individual's registration in the Register shall remain provisional until the next hearing, or until the Committee has reviewed the recording of the hearing, at which time the Committee shall attend and either: (i) confirm the applicant's registration as permanent; (ii) refuse the registration; or (iii) request that the applicant considers further training on DIFC Courts' laws and procedures and/or advocacy training provided by the DIFC Courts or other recognised training provider in which case the individual's registration shall remain provisional until the next hearing.

6. Part II Practitioners with limited Rights of Audience may conduct the following advocacy in the DIFC Courts:
 - i. all Court of First Instance (CFI) applications;
 - ii. any application before a Registrar;
 - iii. case management conferences;
 - iv. hearings for progress monitoring; and
 - v. Small Claims Tribunal (SCT) Cases.

7. Part II Practitioners with full Rights of Audience may conduct, in addition to the above, the following advocacy in the DIFC Courts:
 - i. CFI trials;

- ii. appeal to the Court of Appeal;
- iii. application for injunction; and
- iv. application to strike out a claim or a defence (including want of jurisdiction)

Renewals

1. Part I and Part II registrations are valid for a period of one (1) year and may be renewed annually. Reminder emails, with renewal instructions, are sent to the registered email address thirty (30) calendar days before the date of expiry. The renewal documents must be submitted, and payment must be received, before the date of expiry to avail the renewal fee. If the renewal steps are completed after the date of expiry, or the payment is not received before the date of expiry, the full registration fee may be payable to maintain the desired registration. If the renewal steps are completed before the date of expiry, the new registration expiry date will still be calculated once the original registration expires.
2. If a Part I law firm or Part II practitioner does not wish to renew their registration before the expiry date, their registration will be suspended. The firm or practitioner will need to pay the full registration fee in order to re-register.
3. Requirements for Renewal:
 - a. Part I Renewals:
 - i. copy of the law firm's professional license (and a copy of the Dubai Legal Affairs Department license, if the firm is located in Dubai)
 - ii. for each lawyer authorised to issue and conduct proceedings on behalf of the law firm, the following documents must be provided:

- copy of their current Practicing Certificate, or a letter of Good Standing from their Bar Association or Law Society issued at least three (3) months preceding the date of application;
 - copy of the Dubai Legal Affairs Department Card (if the practitioner is practicing in Dubai);
- b. Part II Renewals:
- i. copy of current Practicing Certificate or letter of Good Standing from the applicant's Bar Association or Law Society issued at least three (3) months preceding the date of application;
 - ii. copy of the Legal Affairs Department Card (if the practitioner is practicing in Dubai);

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. Pursuant to Part II(1)(c) of these Guidelines, it is required that a Part II applicant possesses the right to conduct litigation or has rights of audience before the superior courts of the jurisdiction in which they practice (the 'Jurisdiction'). The interpretation of Part II(1)(c) remains that the registration with the home Bar Association is in present tense and therefore, a current Practicing Certificate must be submitted in order to maintain registration with the DIFC Courts. In the event that a letter or certificate of Good Standing is provided, it must clearly identify that the applicant is currently actively registered within their Jurisdiction (including participating in the mandatory Continuing Legal Professional Development (CLPD) requirements, if any).
2. Solicitors who have qualified in the UK, and have completed additional training and qualification to obtain Higher Rights of Audience, may present their relevant Practicing Certificate as part of their Part II registration application/renewal in order to be considered for full rights of audience at the DIFC Courts.

3. Pursuant to Part I(2)(b)(i) of these Guidelines, it is required that a Part I lawyer provides a current Practising Certificate in order to maintain registration with the DIFC Courts. In the event that a letter or certificate of Good Standing is provided, it must clearly identify that the applicant is currently actively registered within their Jurisdiction (including participating in the mandatory CLPD requirements, if any).
4. Qualified lawyers from the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Republic of Ireland, and Canada who are appointed as King's Counsel/Queen's Counsel or Senior Counsel are exempt from the Part II interview and observation during the first appearance.
5. Lawyers with a civil law background who apply for Part II registration, and who have more than five (5) years of advocacy experience but minimum knowledge of the Common Law system, will only be granted limited rights of audience.
6. An upgrade from limited to full rights of audience for lawyers as set out in paragraph 4 above shall be granted at the discretion of the Committee once the following criteria have been met:
 - the lawyer has been registered with the DIFC Courts in Part II for a minimum of three (3) years at the time of the application of the upgrade; and
 - the lawyer has conducted advocacy in the DIFC Courts in a minimum of five (5) applications at the time of the application of the upgrade.
7. A Part II practitioner may appear before the DIFC Courts without a Part I on the record. However, they are not authorised to file documents on behalf of the client or communicate with the Registry (unless directed otherwise by the DIFC Courts).
8. The Committee may at any time, after a Part I (law firm or lawyer) or Part II registration has been confirmed, re-assess and recommend that the registration be re-considered. In this case, the concerned law firm or practitioner may be subject to a probationary period of 6 months or until the next appearance before the DIFC Courts, after which the registration shall be either suspended or confirmed. The concerned practitioner may be required to consider undertaking certain training, or a test designated by the DIFC Courts, in order to maintain their registration.

9. The Committee may initiate an investigation or review of any of the Part I and/or Part II registrants, confirmed or provisional, at any time, based on the feedback received from a Judge or Registrar of the DIFC Courts following an individual's conduct within and/or outside the courtroom.
10. In the event that a (Part I or Part II) registration has been suspended, and the applicant applies to renew/re-register, the Committee may request that the applicant follow the full registration process (including filing the required documents) and re-assess whether the applicant remains eligible for registration with the DIFC Courts.
11. Part I and Part II registered practitioners must inform the DIFC Courts, at the time of registration, whether there is (or has been) any code of conduct proceedings against them – the DIFC Courts shall then decide if any further steps should be taken in terms of the registration. The DIFC Courts reserve the right to vary the set-out procedures relevant to registration in the interest of justice. Further, the DIFC Courts may request evidence or a finding by a court, disciplinary or regulatory body including the facts relied upon in connection with the current proceedings or the decision found by the regulator.
12. A Part I and Part II practitioner has an ongoing duty, owing an obligation to inform the DIFC Courts promptly about anything related to breaches of code of conduct, or any change to information previously disclosed to the DIFC Courts in support of their application, after it has been made. The obligation continues once the practitioner has been registered.
13. Registered Part I and Part II practitioners should refer to the DIFC Courts' Code of Conduct when they retain clients in DIFC Courts related matters.
14. A Part I registration of a law firm cannot be maintained active without at least one (1) qualified lawyer being listed.
15. Documents in a language other than English must be accompanied by a certified legal translation in English.

NOTE: These guidelines apply to all existing and new registrations/renewals.