

Notification for Stakeholders

Adjustments to the Mode of Registry Business at the High Court

Objective

The Judiciary is planning to pilot a new mode of operation in the court registry (starting with the High Court) which seeks to streamline paper filing procedures over the counter, and encourage court users to make greater use of electronic filing and related services. Taking into account the operational experience of coping with the disruptive impact of the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic in the past three years, the Judiciary sees the need for adjusting the mode of registry operations to enable court registries to continue with normal business when court capacity may need to be reduced due to various reasons, such as those arising from public health and security considerations. This will also help promote the use of electronic filing and mitigate the impact of the inevitable reduction in the number of counters during the forthcoming renovation of the High Court Registry (“HCR”)¹.

2. Specifically, we will introduce the following new measures in the HCR from 14 August 2023:

- (a) mandating the use of drop boxes with simplified procedures for paper filing in respect of selected registry business (“drop-box business”) which does not require immediate processing;
- (b) enhancing facilitating measures for migration towards electronic filing²; and
- (c) increasing the use of emails for selected registry business.

Details are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

¹ The Judiciary is undertaking a renovation project for the HCR which will last for a few years. During the period, due to the need for decanting and provision of additional facilities to facilitate the implementation of electronic filing for the High Court, the number of counters will be reduced.

² Electronic filing under the integrated Court Case Management System (“iCMS”) was first rolled out in the District Court in 2022 and targeted to be extended to the High Court incrementally from 2024.

Adjustment Measures

Mandatory use of drop boxes for selected businesses

3. Over the past few years, the Judiciary has been making use of drop boxes for documents submitted from law firms which do not require immediate processing by the registry staff during the periods of General Adjournment of Proceedings (“GAP”) arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Registry users were not required to queue up or get any tickets for the use of drop boxes. The experience has been satisfactory.

4. As some registry business does not require immediate processing, the Judiciary considers it feasible and appropriate to adopt drop box arrangement on normal days. This would enable the registry staff to focus their efforts on handling those paper documents which require urgent and immediate attention. It would in turn reduce court users’ waiting time for paper filing over the counter and submission of paper documents through drop boxes.

5. Under the new mode of registry operation, the registry staff may receive paper filing documents through drop boxes for backroom processing shortly afterwards.

6. Making reference to the practical experience during GAP, we will start with mandating the use of drop boxes for a few types of documents at **Annex** submitted by legal practitioners. To reduce legal practitioners’ efforts, unlike the previous arrangements under GAP, no deposit form would be required to accompany the drop-box submissions. Proof of receipt for documents submitted to drop boxes if required can take the form of acknowledging receipt by registry staff on a copy of the documents (or their backsheets).

7. Subject to clarification by the registries with the depositing party or such other court directions, documents deposited into the drop boxes will be regarded as filed on the same day. These drop box paper submissions will be processed by registry staff within the same day as far as practicable. When iCMS is rolled out at the relevant level of court, this will be in tandem with the handling of the documents filed electronically

under iCMS³. However, owing to the need for handling the paper documents (received through drop box) and scanning them for uploading into the iCMS system, the processing time of each such document may be considerably longer than if the same is filed electronically under iCMS when this option is available in future.

8. We will monitor this mode of registry operation and introduce refinements in light of operational experience.

Enhancing facilitating measures for migration towards electronic filing

9. We will be enhancing facilitating and support measures to assist court users, particularly legal representatives, in switching to electronic filing and related services under iCMS. These would include conducting more hands-on briefings and demonstrations at the Help Centre, and providing self-help kiosks/facilities for registration, filing and scanning of documents with staffing support at or near registries/registration areas where appropriate.

Greater use of emails

Listing of Masters' Hearings

10. The Judiciary is planning to use more emails for registry business. The Judiciary will first introduce a new arrangement to enable legal practitioners to use emails for listing of adjourned hearings heard by HC Masters who have given listing directions with estimated time.

11. Under the new arrangement, law firms may send emails to the Masters Clerk's Office of the HCR at hcmlisting@judiciary.hk with their lawyers' available dates. Upon fixing the hearing dates, the Masters Clerk's Office would send emails to the law firms for confirmation.

Special Email Accounts

12. Since 2020, the Judiciary has set up special one-way email accounts to facilitate remote lodgment of documents to the HC, the District Court, the Family Court and the Lands Tribunal, especially during the GAP

³ Under the arrangements for the iCMS for the District Court, our registry staff aim at completing the processing of time-critical documents within the same working day.

period. At present, these email accounts are exclusively used for receiving documents for purposes specified by the court.

13. To enhance the efficiency of communications between the court and legal practitioners, the Judiciary will turn these one-way email accounts of the HC into two-way ones such that the court may send out messages or documents to legal practitioners as well.

14. To prevent the misuse of the email accounts for purposes other than those as specified above, submission of documents will only be restricted to those specifically invited or permitted by the court. All other documents received will **not** be entertained.

Next Steps

15. The above new arrangements shall take effect on 14 August 2023 and may be refined in light of operational experience and feedback from court users. We intend to subsequently extend the new arrangements to other court levels with suitable modifications as appropriate. We will keep legal practitioners, court users and stakeholders updated as necessary.

Enquiries

16. For general enquiries, please contact Ms Wendy Chui, Chief Judicial Clerk of the HC Registry, at 2825 4571.

Judiciary Administration
July 2023

**List of Documents for the
Mandatory Use of Drop Box in the High Court Registry**

Document Types for general civil cases	
1.	Affidavit/Affirmation (For Filing/ Hearing)
2.	Affidavit/Affirmation of service (O.62)
3.	Certificate of No Intention To Defend
4.	Certificate of claiming fixed costs
5.	Certificate of Service
6.	Certificate of Service O.22, r9
7.	Certificate of Service O.62A,r9
8.	Certificate re Time Estimates for Trial (Para. 25 of PD 5.2)
9.	Listing Questionnaire
10.	Mediation Certificate
11.	Mediation Notice
12.	Mediation Response
13.	Notice of Discontinuance
14.	Notice of Change of Address/ Name of Solicitors
15.	Notice of Intention To Proceed
16.	Notice of Intention To Enter Judgment
17.	Notice To Admit
18.	Notice To Insurer
19.	Notice To Occupants
20.	Questionnaire for PI Actions, PD 18.1
21.	Request For Further & Better Particulars Of Pleading / Document
22.	Solicitors' Certificate
23.	Statement of Truth
24.	Timetabling Questionnaire
Document types related to Insolvency Cases	
25.	Annual Accounts
26.	Certificate the Liquidators have given security
27.	Form 28A (Statement of Affairs)
28.	Form 66 (List of Proofs to be filed under rule 10)
29.	Liquidators' Statement of Accounts of the Company under Section 203(4) of the Company (Winding Up and Miscellaneous Provisions)
30.	Memorandum of Advertisement

31.	Memorandum of Proceedings of the Adjourned First Meeting of Creditors/Contributories
32.	Notice of Change of Name / of Company's Name
33.	Notice of Creditors of Intention to apply for release
34.	Notice of Intention to Appear on Petition
35.	Nominee's Notice of Creditors' Meeting Adjournment
36.	Nominee's Report and Comments
37.	Provisional Liquidator's Section 191 Preliminary Report
38.	Proposal for a Voluntary Arrangement (HCBI)
39.	Supplementary Report (HCB)
40.	Statement of Account (Cap 6, S93)
Document types for related to Legal Aid matters	
41.	Legal Aid Memorandum of Notification That A Party Has Been Refused Legal Aid
42.	Legal Aid Memorandum of Notification that a party has applied for Legal Aid
43.	Legal Aid Memorandum of Discharge/Revoke
44.	Legal Aid Certificate/ Notification of Change of Solicitor/counsel
45.	Notice of Amendment of Legal Aid Certificate
Document Types related to Matrimonial cases	
46.	Form E Financial Statement pursuant to PD15.11 (sometimes in a sealed envelope)