



## COVID Adaptation Statement

*Organisations that have existing Certified Mediator Training Programs will be permitted to deliver that training online, given that they both:*

*(a) submit a methodology document indicating how they will ensure they are delivering the same program to the same standards, identifying challenges and how they will be overcome.*

UK Mediation's position on online mediation training is that:

- We consider that mediation trainees cannot be fully trained in interactional skills, taking account of body language, dialogue-building, non-verbal communication, and rapport-building, without being closely observed, encouraged, and coached in an experiential learning environment. Some of the most important elements of mediation training cannot therefore be fully conveyed using online training.
- Our training standards are defined by our curriculum, our assessment criteria, the requirements of our external academic accrediting body, and the components of our ISO 9001 quality standard. To fully deliver the curriculum, allow learners a fair and equal opportunity to meet the assessment criteria, and to satisfy the quality criteria, there must be a face-to-face component of any mediation training.

After discussion with our external accrediting body, we have therefore decided, , to deliver our Mediation Practitioner's Certificate as a **blended** programme, with both online and face-to-face modules. Module one is delivered as three days online, and module two is three days face-to-face. This structure allows us to deliver our full Mediation Practitioner's Certificate programme to the same standards as if it were delivered fully face-to-face.

In the online Module one, we cover most of the *knowledge* elements of the course, with practice sessions and role plays built in. In April 2021 we held online workshops for our course trainers on how to deliver Module one, centring on how to ensure that the programme would, in terms of curriculum, assessment criteria, and quality standards, be the same as if it were being delivered face-to-face.

Design aspects of Module one include:

- The trainers, manuals, exercises, role plays, PowerPoints, and videos are all the same as for our face-to-face course.
- We apply the same aims and objectives and schemes of work as for the face-to-face course.
- Learners get an additional pre-course briefing, by email and optionally by phone, to ensure that they know how to use Zoom, and for us to check that they have a suitable technical set-up to be able to participate fully in the online course.

- Learners receive a pdf of the manual and role plays two weeks in advance and are shown how to have this available during the course.
- On the online course, we run role plays using breakout rooms, share the 'whiteboard' facility for lectures, share the trainers' screen to show PowerPoints and to run videos, and refer to the pdf manual, which is also shown on a shared screen.
- Learners on the Module one, despite the format, can still get *ad hoc* feedback from the TCAs, begin to put their learning into practice, have several goes at most parts of the mediation process, and begin to build their competence and confidence as mediators.
- We complete the *knowledge* input for every stage of the mediation process during the three online days, ready for extensive practice when we get together face-to-face.

Some of the challenges in training mediators online, and some of the solutions we have devised, are:

- Working over video conferencing can be impersonal: all you see is someone's head and shoulders and often an abbreviated screen name. So, we encourage learners during role plays and small group exercises to change their on-screen display name to be that of the role play character. The rest of the time, we ask them to choose a screen name to be their first name.
- The participants and trainers/coaches/assessors alike cannot see the body language, use of notes, and non-verbal communication between the mediators and participants, which slightly limits the rapport-building and the capacity for the mediator to respond to more than just the spoken word. So, mediators and participants are encouraged to move away a little from their camera in order that everyone can see their body language, etc. This also allows the trainer/coach/assessor to see more clearly their performance in mediator role.
- Face to face courses can allow for a greater degree of mingling and chatting between the learners. A lot of learning can take place just by the learners talking about prior experiences, comparing notes about conflict situations they have encountered and/or resolved, and generally swapping stories. So, we look for opportunities to allow this to happen on the Module one. We encourage people to leave cameras and mics on during breaks, so that they can (a bit like being in a tearoom in the live setting) chat and interact. We also open the 'meeting' half an hour before the course formally starts and leave it open for half an hour after it formally ends. That way, people get a chance to chat and to get to know their fellow learners better.
- In breakout rooms, having the coach/assessor drop in to observe can be quite off-putting, as the coach/assessor cannot, as in the live setting, lurk by the door or stay at a discrete distance. So, we have the coach/assessor turn off their cameras while they are observing, which learners tell us makes them less self-conscious and distracted at being watched.
- Online training is tiring and requires quite a lot of concentration when staring into a camera for long periods. So, we deliver Module one over three days of 9.00 am – 4.30 pm, teaching in 1½ hour blocks with breaks in between. This totals around 21 hours for Module one, to be followed by the 24 hours of Module two and thereby exceeding the requisite course duration.

***(b) offer a face-to-face role-play component to be undertaken in future once it becomes possible***

During COVID-19, what we are doing is a blended course of two modules: starting with three days online and later, three days face-to-face. The latter three days are all about practice and assessment, with close-in (albeit currently socially distanced) coaching, feedback, and role play.

All the trainee assessment takes place during Module two. We consider it unfair to assess people online when we cannot give them the same level of encouragement, support, immediate feedback, and coaching that they receive when we get together face-to-face. Also, we wish to ensure that our assessment and practice standards should be fully consistent across time. If we did online assessments, learners who, pre-COVID, did a fully face-to-face course would be in a different position to those now doing a blended course.

With the changing tiers in the UK, we are currently limited with regard to providing Modules two, so we have several groups who have done their Module one but who have not yet completed their training by also completing Module two. We have, however, managed some provision. Feedback has been excellent, and of the same high standard as the feedback from our regular face-to-face courses.

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