

CEDR Information for IMI on Virtual Courses

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;

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

CEDR's methodology for our Virtual Mediator Skills Training is to replicate as closely as possible the face to face course and adapt where necessary without losing focus, purpose and integrity of the course.

Our work converting the Mediator Skills Training course for online delivery began in April and was completed and delivered for the first time in June 2020. In the process of adapting this programme a number of practice sessions internally were held. In May we received the recognition from the CMC (Civil Mediation Council, UK) that our virtual Mediator Skills course is equivalent to our face to face training regarding all requirements - such as delivery, skills transfer and training method efficiency – and meeting the additional requirements, including one face to face follow up day whenever the situation allow it. Based on the training outcomes and the feedback we've received so far from our clients, we are confident in our ability to deliver the entire course online to the same high standard as our renowned face to face training.

Our method of delivery is consistent in our virtual format, including the knowledge input/presentation-oriented sessions, presentation of PowerPoints and videos, the exercises and discussion, role-playing, coaching and feedback.

In the face to face training course, participants receive hard copies of the participant workbook and our Handbook. They also have access to a personalised online folder with further course materials. Participants in the online delivery of the MST will receive these same materials and access before the course.

Detailed supplementary notes for online delivery of the virtual course were developed to support the existing Faculty Manual for delivery of the MST course. These supplementary notes detail each topic covered within the module, including the method used by the trainer and also the producer who is managing the technical support. These supplementary notes are a supporting document to the Faculty Manual.

The teaching will be delivered by our existing experienced CEDR trainers who will be assisted by an experienced technical producer. In this way the trainers can focus on the delivery of the course content, as well as the coaching and assessment; the producer will manage all the technical aspects of the delivery such as showing PowerPoints and videos, allocating breakout rooms, managing technical challenges.

The producer also conducts a pre-course technical briefing session with the participants to ensure that their systems meet the requirements for online delivery and also to familiarise them with the protocols of operating Zoom.

The teaching modules are spread over 3-days and be delivered in sessions of approximately 90 minutes. These sessions are dispersed with breaks, so that participants are not seated at their screens for long periods of time. It is possible using Zoom facilities to teach the knowledge input/presentation-oriented sessions using the video features and the share screen features for the presentation of PowerPoints and videos. We can conduct the usual exercises and discussions in the 'main room' using the chat, audio and video features, as well as the breakout room functionality.

The roleplay, coaching and assessment modules are spread over a further 3-days. Each participant has the usual

three opportunities to mediate sessions of between 50 and 60 minutes long, and to play party and representative characters. Mediators will receive 1:1 feedback from the coach or assessor following their session. The breakout functionality on Zoom works well for roleplays and private 1:1 feedback.

These are four additional interventions we apply in order to enhance the experience of roleplaying online:

- give the mediators guidance on how to establish and build rapport online. For example, how to appear on screen to best effect, where to sit in relation to the camera so that the parties, coach or assessor can read body language, the impact of micro-expressions, and such like
- 'hide' the coach and assessor from the screen while the roleplay is taking place so that the mediator is clear who the parties are
- the host/producer will also name the breakout rooms and the participants using the actual names in the roleplay so that mediators aren't confused about who is who on the screen
- the assessed roleplays will be recorded as they happen so that they can be debriefed with the participants later if that would be helpful

A challenge in virtual courses can be to create a space conducive to have informal conversations that take place between the trainers and participants over coffee or during a break. We feel that it is really important to ensure that participants take a break from the screen, walk and stretch in between modular sessions.

We have been addressing the informal conversation element by allowing for time at the beginning of each module to get to know the participants on a more informal basis. Also on our assessment days, whilst participants are not in private session with the mediator, the producer and trainers engage with the participants and ensure a lively and friendly conversation is taking place. We have found that we have been able to build very strong relationships with participants from our online courses this way.

We also will offer all participants the opportunity to attend a face-to-face roleplay session, when this is possible at International hubs (for each region of the world). The purpose of these sessions is for them to meet us and connect with their fellow participants, and to experience what it is like to mediate face-to-face. We will debrief the differences between face-to-face and online mediation with them.

In conclusion, a real strength that we have observed in this virtual format – also being able to deliver our courses in different time zones and languages - has been the diversity of participants and faculty. This virtual format has allowed those from different parts of the world, who may have not been able to travel to a face to face course, to attend and engage. This has enriched the experience that participants can bring to their different mediation culture and professional experience.

We have so far conducted 14 Mediation courses, both Civil/Commercial and Employment/Workplace since we moved to virtual training in June of this year. Since June and of those courses that were for accreditation, our accreditation pass rate averages at 89%. This is consistent with our face to face courses which averages, over a longer period, between 75-80% pass rate.