

# inBrief



## Measures implemented by the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in response to COVID-19

By Charles Laubach | 11 April 2020

Below is a summary of key relief and operational measures implemented by the DIFC since 1 April 2020 and the time of this inBrief, 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, 11 April 2020.

### Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA) announces relief measures

On Tuesday, 7 April 2020, the DFSA announced a number of relief measures to support their clients during this time of stress and uncertainty. These measures are aimed at both new firms setting up in the DIFC as well as existing authorised firms.

Regulatory relief measures for new firms setting up in the DIFC include:

- More time to complete the application and authorisation processes
- A 50 per cent reduction in application fees for the remainder of 2020 and flexibility in requirements for permanent premises
- A waiver of registration fees for domestic funds for the remainder of 2020

Regulatory relief measures for existing authorised firms include:

- An extension of time for filing a number of returns and reports
- Additional time, where reasonable, for submitting annual accounts and financial statement auditors report (with the exception of reporting entities)
- Flexibility in meeting authorised individual obligations
- A waiver of fees for applications relating to authorised individuals
- Temporary relief from capital requirements

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- A waiver of fees for applications for waivers and modifications and all automated late return fees for the remainder of 2020
- A waiver of the listing fees for new SME issuers in the DIFC for the remainder of 2020

In addition, the DFSA has agreed to extend policy consultation periods as well as the time periods within which entities must meet new requirements.

[Click here](#) to access a copy of this announcement on the DFSA website.

### **DIFC Courts**

While DIFC Courts' (**the Courts**) employees are operating on a work-from-home remote basis, the Courts is fully operational with no interruption to service. Remote access is available to all services through the Courts' fully integrated digital eCourt platforms including e-Registry, e-Bundling and e-Hearings.

Practitioners and Courts' users are encouraged to email the e-Registry for all enquiries. They are also encouraged to take advantage of the e-Bundling platform which is available through the e-Registry. Hearings will be conducted by judges remotely via teleconference or video conference, as appropriate.

Doors of the Courts and Registry offices will remain physically closed until 26 April 2020 (or, pending further notice).

### **DIFC Wills Service Centre**

Through a press release on 5 April 2020, the DIFC Courts confirmed that it has developed a new system for the registration of Wills via video conference. The new system allows the testator and two witnesses to join on the video conference call from different locations. The system also allows an approved Will to be directly uploaded on the system and to be signed electronically.

Upon booking the appointment, the testator will have to upload the following documents:

1. Approved draft Will
2. Clear copy of the testators' passport (and Emirates ID if applicable)
3. Clear copy of the witnesses' ID's (passport or any other form of ID; front and back if using Emirates ID)
4. Signed and dated Guardianship Witness Statements (if applicable)

The Will to be registered should be sent at least two working days before the appointment. All information of the Will should be complete as they cannot be added once the Will has been uploaded except the signature sections for the testator and witnesses. The Will will be electronically signed during the video conference.

All Will registrations can be booked on the [appointment portal](#).

### **DIFC Business Stimulus Initiative**

On 1 April 2020 the DIFC has announced a new Business Stimulus Initiative (Initiative) in line with Dubai Government's economic stimulus programme. The Initiative took effect on 1 April 2020 for a period of three months until 30 June 2020. Relief measures contained in the Initiative include:

- All lease payments are deferred for three months with a six-month payment plan.
- Annual licensing fees for new entities that submit the Application for Incorporation / Registration during the three-month period from 1 April 2020 until 30 June 2020 will be waived.
- A 10 per cent discount of the total license renewal fee for all DIFC registered entities that are due for renewal during the three-month period from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020. The discount does not include data protection fees and DFSA fees (if applicable).

- A reduction of freehold transfer fee from 5 per cent to 4 per cent, for all properties within the DIFC jurisdiction, for sale or purchase of property (or any part thereof) that takes place within the period from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020 where the transfer is registered with the DIFC Registrar of Properties within 30 days, at the latest, after the expiry of the said three-month period.

More on the DIFC Business Stimulus Initiative and a list of FAQs can be accessed [here](#).

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Afridi & Angell is the exclusive member firm in the UAE of top legal networks and associations, most notably Lex Mundi, the world's leading network of independent law firms, and World Services Group.

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