

PANORAMIC

ARBITRATION

United Arab Emirates



LEXOLOGY

Arbitration

Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP

Generated on: June 2, 2026

The information contained in this report is indicative only. Law Business Research is not responsible for any actions (or lack thereof) taken as a result of relying on or in any way using information contained in this report and in no event shall be liable for any damages resulting from reliance on or use of this information. Copyright 2006 - 2026 Law Business Research

Contents

Arbitration

LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS

- Multilateral conventions relating to arbitration
- Bilateral investment treaties
- Domestic arbitration law
- Domestic arbitration and UNCITRAL
- Mandatory provisions
- Substantive law
- Arbitral institutions

ARBITRATION AGREEMENT

- Arbitrability
- Requirements
- Enforceability
- Separability
- Third parties – bound by arbitration agreement
- Third parties – participation
- Groups of companies
- Multiparty arbitration agreements
- Consolidation

CONSTITUTION OF ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL

- Eligibility of arbitrators
- Background of arbitrators
- Default appointment of arbitrators
- Challenge and replacement of arbitrators
- Relationship between parties and arbitrators
- Duties of arbitrators
- Immunity of arbitrators from liability

JURISDICTION AND COMPETENCE OF ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL

- Court proceedings contrary to arbitration agreements
- Jurisdiction of arbitral tribunal
- Distinction between admissibility and jurisdiction of tribunal

ARBITRAL PROCEEDINGS

- Place and language of arbitration, and choice of law
- Commencement of arbitration
- Hearing
- Evidence
- Court involvement

Confidentiality

INTERIM MEASURES AND SANCTIONING POWERS

Interim measures by the courts
Interim measures by an emergency arbitrator
Interim measures by the arbitral tribunal
Sanctioning powers of the arbitral tribunal

AWARDS

Decisions by the arbitral tribunal
Dissenting opinions
Form and content requirements
Time limit for award
Date of award
Types of awards
Termination of proceedings
Cost allocation and recovery
Interest

PROCEEDINGS SUBSEQUENT TO ISSUANCE OF AWARD

Interpretation and correction of awards
Challenge of awards
Levels of appeal
Recognition and enforcement
Time limits for enforcement of arbitral awards
Enforcement of foreign awards
Enforcement of orders by emergency arbitrators
Cost of enforcement

OTHER

Influence of legal traditions on arbitrators
Professional or ethical rules
Third-party funding
Regulation of activities

UPDATE AND TRENDS

Legislative reform and investment treaty arbitration

Contributors

United Arab Emirates

[Afridi & Angell](#)

Afridi
&Angell

[Chatura Randeniya](#)

crandeniya@afриди-angell.com

[Mevan Bandara](#)

mbandara@afриди-angell.com

[Zahra Aziz](#)

zaziz@afриди-angell.com

LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS

Multilateral conventions relating to arbitration

Is your jurisdiction a contracting state to the New York Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards? Since when has the Convention been in force? Were any declarations or notifications made under articles I, X and XI of the Convention? What other multilateral conventions relating to international commercial and investment arbitration is your country a party to?

The UAE is a contracting state to the New York Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards (the New York Convention). The convention was ratified without any amendments in 2006 by Federal Decree No. 43 of 2006.

The UAE is also a signatory to the ICSID Convention, which was ratified in December 1981 and came into force on 22 January 1982.

Other multilateral treaties to which the UAE is a signatory are:

- the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States Hosting Arab Investments and Citizens of Other States 1974 was ratified by way of Federal Decree No. 36 of 1977;
- the GCC Convention for the Execution of Judgments, Delegations and Judicial Notifications 1996; and
- the Riyadh Convention on Judicial Cooperation between States of the Arab League 1983 was incorporated into the UAE's domestic legislation by way of Federal Decree No. 53 of 1999.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Bilateral investment treaties

Do bilateral investment treaties exist with other countries?

As of December 2025, the UAE is a signatory to [123 bilateral investment treaties, out of which 75 have been ratified and a re in force](#), and three have been terminated.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Domestic arbitration law

What are the primary domestic sources of law relating to domestic and foreign arbitral proceedings, and recognition and enforcement of awards?

If the arbitration is seated in any emirate in the UAE (other than in a financial free zone), Federal Law No. 6 of 2018 on Arbitration (as amended by Federal Decree Law 15 of 2023) (the Arbitration Law) will apply. The Arbitration Law is largely based on the UNCITRAL Model Arbitration Law.

The Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in Dubai and the Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) in Abu Dhabi are the two financial free zones that currently have separate legislation on arbitration.

The Arbitration Law considers arbitration to be international, even if conducted in the UAE, in the following circumstances:

- the places of business of the parties are situated, at the time the arbitration agreement is concluded, in two different countries;
- the subject of the dispute is related to more than one country;
- if the parties expressly agree that the subject of arbitration is related to more than one country; or
- if any of the following places are located outside the country where the place of business of a party is located:
 - the seat of arbitration indicated in the arbitration agreement;
 - the place of performance of a substantial portion of the obligations under the contract; or
 - the place with which the subject matter of the dispute is closely connected to.

This chapter covers arbitrations seated in the UAE (onshore) where the Arbitration Law is applicable.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Domestic arbitration and UNCITRAL

**Is your domestic arbitration law based on the UNCITRAL Model Law?
What are the major differences between your domestic arbitration law and the UNCITRAL Model Law?**

The Arbitration Law is largely based on the UNCITRAL Model Law. However, there are some differences between the Arbitration Law and the UNCITRAL Model Law, including, but not limited to:

- the Arbitration Law provides that the signatory of the agreement must be authorised to enter into the arbitration agreement;
- the date of the commencement of arbitration differs between the Arbitration Law and the UNCITRAL Model Law, the Arbitration Law deems the arbitration to have commenced from the day following the formation of the tribunal, and the UNCITRAL Model Law deems proceedings to have been initiated on the date on which notice of arbitration is received by the respondent;
- the Arbitration Law contains provisions regarding the use of technology in arbitration;
- the Arbitration Law also makes provision for the joinder of a third party to the arbitration in certain circumstances. The Model Law does not provide for third-party joinder;
-

the Arbitration Law expressly protects the confidentiality of arbitration hearings and awards; and

- if a party wishes to file an application to set aside an award, the Arbitration Law requires the party to submit the application to the court within 30 days of the notification of the award.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Mandatory provisions

What are the mandatory domestic arbitration law provisions on procedure from which parties may not deviate?

The Arbitration Law gives parties the freedom to agree on the applicable procedural steps, subject to any procedural requirements that may exist in the agreed rules.

However, there are certain mandatory provisions in relation to evidence given by witnesses in arbitration proceedings. Article 76(1) of Federal Decree-Law 35 of 2022 (the UAE Evidence Law) requires witness evidence to be given under oath. Therefore, if the arbitration is seated in onshore UAE, a witness must take an oath prior to giving their testimony. This requirement was upheld in the Dubai Court of Cassation Case Nos. 78/2022 and 96/2022, where the Dubai Court of Cassation held that parts of an award that relied on the testimony of witnesses who were not sworn in shall be null and void. In another recent case, an award was set aside by the Dubai Court of Cassation as the expert appointed by a tribunal had not taken an oath.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Substantive law

Is there any rule in your domestic arbitration law that provides the arbitral tribunal with guidance as to which substantive law to apply to the merits of the dispute?

Parties are free to agree on the law applicable to the merits. If the parties have not agreed on the substantive law governing the dispute, the tribunal is required to apply the substantive law that it deems to be most closely connected to the dispute. In determining this issue, the tribunal should take into consideration the following:

- the terms of the contract;
- the subject matter of the dispute;
- the usages of the trade applicable to the transaction; and
- past practices between the parties.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Arbitral institutions

What are the most prominent arbitral institutions situated in your jurisdiction?

The UAE hosts a number of arbitral institutions, including:

The Dubai International Arbitration Centre (DIAC)

Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Baniyas Road, Deira

PO Box 1457

Dubai

United Arab Emirates

www.diac.com/en/home/

Email: diac.cases@diac.ae

Sharjah International Commercial Arbitration Centre (Tahkeem)

PO Box 1174

Sharjah

United Arab Emirates

www.tahkeem.ae/en

Email: info@tahkeem.ae

Abu Dhabi International Arbitration Centre (arbitrateAD)

PO Box 3636

Abu Dhabi

www.arbitratead.ae/

Email: info@arbitratead.ae

In addition, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has a case management office for the ICC Court Secretariat at the Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM). The on-site staff at the ADGM representative office are empowered to accept the registration of arbitration cases under the ICC Rules, which is subsequently administered by one of the ICC Court Secretariat's existing case management teams

Dubai Decree No. 34 of 2021, concerning the DIAC, abolished the Emirates Maritime Arbitration Centre (EMAC) and the Dubai International Financial Centre Arbitration Institute (DAI), and all assets, rights, liabilities and obligations of the EMAC and the DAI were transferred to the DIAC.

Dubai Decree No. 34/2021 also led to the DIFC-LCIA being abolished. However, [ongoing DIFC-LCIA arbitration proceedings](#) (cases registered that commenced on or before 20 March 2022) will continue to be administered in accordance with the DIFC-LCIA Rules, and procedural adjustments are available to allow an award to be issued as an LCIA award. For

such proceedings, the DIAC will be responsible for the payments and financial aspects of case-related administration.

The DIAC, ADCCAC and Tahkeem charge their fees and the fees of arbitrators based on the value of the claims (and counterclaims, where applicable) in dispute.

The Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry recently launched the Abu Dhabi International Arbitration Centre (arbitrateAD) to replace the Abu Dhabi Commercial Conciliation and Arbitration Centre. A comprehensive set of arbitration rules were issued on 1 February 2024.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

ARBITRATION AGREEMENT

Arbitrability

Are there any types of disputes that are not arbitrable?

Certain types of disputes are not arbitrable, including labour disputes and matters relating to public policy.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Requirements

What formal and other requirements exist for an arbitration agreement?

The following requirements apply to arbitration agreements:

- the arbitration agreement must be in writing, which includes written or electronic correspondence;
- an arbitration agreement can be incorporated by reference to another document containing an arbitration clause, provided that the reference is clear in that the arbitration clause is being incorporated;
- the person agreeing to arbitration on behalf of a body corporate must have specific authority to agree to arbitration. Ordinarily, this authority must be evidenced by a shareholders' resolution or by the articles of association of a company. That said, although there is no express statutory provision in the UAE Arbitration Law recognising the principle of apparent authority, certain judgments of the UAE courts have recognised the validity of an arbitration agreement signed by a signatory with apparent authority (although the concept of binding precedents is not recognised in the UAE), and, if the agreement is entered into by a natural person, such person must have the legal capacity to dispose of his or her rights.

On 29 October 2024, the Dubai Court of Cassation held that a unilateral arbitration agreement is not a valid arbitration agreement under UAE law. The court emphasised the importance of consent by both parties, without which an arbitration agreement could not exist. By contrast, the ADGM courts and the DIFC courts have upheld unilateral arbitration clauses.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Enforceability

In what circumstances is an arbitration agreement no longer enforceable?

An arbitration agreement will not be enforceable in the following circumstances if it does not fulfil the requirements for an arbitration agreement and relates to a type of dispute that is not arbitrable.

An arbitration agreement does not expire or terminate upon the death of either party unless agreed to by the parties.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Separability

Are there any provisions on the separability of arbitration agreements from the main agreement?

Article 6 of the Arbitration Law provides that an arbitration agreement must be treated as an agreement independent from the other terms of a contract. Article 6 of the Arbitration Law also provides that the rescission, termination or nullification of a contract in which an arbitration agreement is incorporated does not affect the validity of the arbitration agreement unless the reason for the rescission, termination or nullification is a result of the incapacity of either party.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Third parties – bound by arbitration agreement

In which instances can third parties or non-signatories be bound by an arbitration agreement?

A third party cannot be bound by an arbitration agreement or an award under UAE law. However, pursuant to article 4(4) of the Arbitration Law, unless the parties have agreed to the contrary, in circumstances where a party to the arbitration agreement dies, the arbitration agreement may be enforced against the party's legal successor.

In a Dubai Court of Cassation judgment (Case No. 1603/2022), the Court held that the arbitration agreement was valid and enforceable against the assignee, even though the assignment agreement in this case, did not make specific reference to the arbitration clause; the Court held that the arbitration clause had been assigned to the assignee.

In another judgment delivered by the Abu Dhabi Cassation Court, the court ruled that a party representing another party's rights could rely on the arbitration clause under the original contract between the debtor and creditor. In this case, a third-party respondent, who was not party to the arbitration agreement, was representing the first two respondents who were party to the arbitration agreement, under the context of articles 392 and 393 of the UAE Civil Transactions Law, which allows creditors to exercise the rights of their debtors (essentially step in the place of their debtors, except to exercise rights that are 'personal' in nature) to satisfy debts owed.

Note that there is no system of binding precedent in the onshore UAE courts.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Third parties – participation

Does your domestic arbitration law make any provisions with respect to third-party participation in arbitration, such as joinder or third-party notice?

The arbitral tribunal may permit the intervention of a third party only if the third party is a party to the arbitration agreement.

Provided that the third party is a party to the arbitration agreement and upon a request from a party to the arbitration or the third party, the tribunal may recognise the joinder of a third party in accordance with article 22 of the Arbitration Law. However, prior to making any rulings in relation to the joinder of the third party, the parties to the arbitration proceedings and the third party must be given an opportunity to present their statements and objections. An application for the joinder may be made by the parties to the arbitration proceedings, or by the third party (who, as set out above, is required to be a party to the arbitration agreement). Such an application may be submitted before or after the constitution of the arbitral tribunal.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Groups of companies

Do courts and arbitral tribunals in your jurisdiction extend an arbitration agreement to non-signatory parent or subsidiary companies of a signatory company, provided that the non-signatory was somehow involved in the conclusion, performance or termination of the contract in dispute, under the 'group of companies' doctrine?

The Arbitration Law does not make reference to the inclusion of non-signatories, and the group of companies doctrine is yet to be tested in the jurisdiction. However, the courts appear to be taking a more accepting view of arbitration agreements, and, as set out above in relation to the assignment of an arbitration clause, or in relation to successors of signatories, it appears that courts are more agreeable to enforce arbitration clauses against non-signatories, where the facts and the law support such interpretation. Earlier, the approach taken by the courts was to enforce arbitration agreements only against signatories, given that the arbitration clause was in writing and entered into by those who had the requisite powers to do so.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Multiparty arbitration agreements

What are the requirements for a valid multiparty arbitration agreement?

The Arbitration Law does not specifically recognise or prohibit multiparty arbitration agreements. Certain institutional rules, however, recognise multi-party arbitration agreements, which will be applicable if such institutional rules are adopted (eg, the Dubai International Arbitration Centre Rules and the International Chamber of Commerce Arbitration Rules). The ArbitrateAD Rules contain provisions that deal with multiple parties to a dispute, multi-contract arbitrations and joinder of parties and consolidation of multiple arbitrations or claims into a single arbitration.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Consolidation

Can an arbitral tribunal in your jurisdiction consolidate separate arbitral proceedings? In which circumstances?

The Arbitration Law does not provide for the consolidation of separate arbitral proceedings. Insofar as the relevant institutional rules permit consolidation, consolidation of multiple claims arising from separate arbitration agreements and consolidation of separate arbitral proceedings may be possible. The DIAC Rules of 2022 allow for the consolidation of multiple claims arising from more than one agreement to arbitrate, provided that the conditions allowing consolidation set out in the rules are met. Although there is no concept of binding precedent in the onshore UAE, there are a number of judgments issued by the Dubai Court of Cassation recognising consolidation of arbitrations in certain circumstances. As set out above, the ArbitrateAD Rules make provision for the Court of Arbitration to consolidate two or more arbitrations pending under the Rules into a single arbitration, upon the request of a party and provided that the following are met:

- all parties have agreed to the consolidation;
- all claims asserted in the arbitrations are made under the same arbitration agreement; and
- where the claims are made under more than one arbitration agreement, the relief sought arises out of the same transactions or series of transactions or arising out of the same principal contract and its ancillary contract(s).

Law stated - 19 February 2026

CONSTITUTION OF ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL

Eligibility of arbitrators

Are there any restrictions as to who may act as an arbitrator? Would any contractually stipulated requirement for arbitrators based on nationality, religion or gender be recognised by the courts in your jurisdiction?

The following arbitrator restrictions apply:

- an arbitrator must be a natural person who is not:
 - a minor;

- incapacitated;
 - under a court interdiction order; or
 - deprived of civil rights owing to bankruptcy, committing a felony, misdemeanour or conviction for a crime involving moral turpitude or breach of trust; and
- an arbitrator cannot be a member of the trustees or the administrative body of the institution administering the arbitration (the arbitral institution).

In addition, Federal Law No. 6 of 2018 on arbitration (as amended by Federal Decree-Law No. 15 of 2023) (the Arbitration Law) allows for the parties to agree on the gender and nationality of an arbitrator.

In addition, an arbitrator cannot be a member of the trustees or the administrative body of the institution administering the arbitration (the arbitral institution); although there are some exceptions to this rule, as set out under article 10bis of the Arbitration Law.

Further, the Arbitration Law allows for the parties to agree on the gender and nationality of an arbitrator.

The ArbitrateAD Rules state that where the parties to the arbitration are of different nationalities, the sole arbitrator (or where applicable, the president of the tribunal) shall not have the same nationality as any of the parties (unless expressly agreed otherwise by all parties).

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Background of arbitrators

Who regularly sit as arbitrators in your jurisdiction?

Arbitrators in the UAE come from various backgrounds and fields of work. Lawyers are frequently appointed as are professionals with an engineering or construction industry background, particularly in construction disputes.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Default appointment of arbitrators

Failing prior agreement of the parties, what is the default mechanism for the appointment of arbitrators?

In the absence of an agreement between the parties, the Arbitration Law provides that an arbitration should be heard by three arbitrators, unless otherwise determined by the respective arbitral institution. Each party is required to nominate an arbitrator, and the chair of the tribunal will be nominated by the parties' nominated arbitrators. If the party-nominated arbitrators are unable to agree on the chair, the appointment will be made by the arbitral institution, upon the request of a party.

In certain institutional rules, the institution is permitted to appoint arbitrators.

Challenge and replacement of arbitrators

On what grounds and how can an arbitrator be challenged and replaced? Please discuss in particular the grounds for challenge and replacement, and the procedure, including challenge in court. Is there a tendency to apply or seek guidance from the IBA Guidelines on Conflicts of Interest in International Arbitration?

The appointment of an arbitrator can be challenged under the Arbitration Law if:

- circumstances exist that give rise to justifiable doubts about the impartiality or independence of the arbitrator; or
- the arbitrator does not possess the required qualifications agreed on by the parties (article 14, Arbitration Law).

The procedure to challenge an arbitrator is as follows (article 16, Arbitration Law):

- a challenge to the appointment of an arbitrator must be made in writing within 15 days of becoming aware of the appointment of the arbitrator or within 15 days of becoming aware of any circumstances justifying the challenge. The challenge must be addressed to the challenged arbitrator, and copies must be sent to the arbitration counterparties and the other members of the tribunal;
- if the challenged arbitrator does not withdraw or if the parties to the arbitration do not agree with the challenge within 15 days, the challenging party may require the arbitral institution to make a decision; and
- the arbitral institution must provide its decision within 10 days. The decision is not subject to appeal.

In addition, there may be separate or different procedures applicable under the institutional rules.

Article 16 of the Arbitration Law provides that an arbitrator can be removed and replaced:

- following the death or incapacity of an arbitrator;
- following a challenge of appointment; or
- if the arbitral institution finds that the arbitrator:
 - is unable to perform their functions or ceases to perform their functions;
 - acts in a manner that leads to unjustifiable delays in the arbitral proceedings;
or
 - deliberately fails to act in accordance with the arbitration agreement.

The party who appointed the arbitrator is permitted to submit a challenge to the arbitrator's appointment only on grounds that became known to the party after the appointment of the arbitrator.

The IBA Guidelines are also considered and sometimes applied by the tribunal in an arbitration. However, these are not applied or considered by the courts.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Relationship between parties and arbitrators

What is the relationship between parties and arbitrators? Please elaborate on the contractual relationship between parties and arbitrators, neutrality of party-appointed arbitrators, remuneration and expenses of arbitrators.

There is no contractual relationship between parties and arbitrators. The arbitrators are remunerated by the institution administering the arbitration from funds received as arbitration costs from the parties. Arbitrators, whether appointed by parties or otherwise, are expected to be neutral. In ad hoc arbitrations, the arbitrators' fees are fixed by the arbitrators and, in these cases, the arbitrators may ask the parties for a deposit at the time of their appointment.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Duties of arbitrators

What are arbitrators' duties of disclosure regarding impartiality and independence throughout the arbitral proceedings?

An arbitrator, once notified of his or her nomination, must disclose, in writing, everything that may raise doubts about their impartiality or independence. This obligation continues throughout the proceedings; therefore, an arbitrator is obliged to notify the parties of any condition that arises throughout the arbitration proceedings that may impact their impartiality and independence.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Immunity of arbitrators from liability

To what extent are arbitrators immune from liability for their conduct in the course of the arbitration?

If a dispute in respect of an arbitration agreement is initiated before the courts, the court will decline jurisdiction if the defendant asserts a jurisdictional objection prior to submitting its arguments on the merits of the dispute. In practice, the jurisdictional objection is asserted at the first hearing in which the defendant appears.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

JURISDICTION AND COMPETENCE OF ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL

Court proceedings contrary to arbitration agreements

What is the procedure for disputes over jurisdiction if court proceedings are initiated despite an existing arbitration agreement, and what time limits exist for jurisdictional objections?

A jurisdictional objection should be raised no later than with the submission of the respondent's statement of defence. The fact that the party seeking to assert a jurisdictional objection appointed or was involved in the appointment of an arbitrator will not preclude it from asserting a jurisdictional objection.

The principle of *kompetenz-kompetenz* is recognised under the Arbitration Law. A tribunal's decision on its own jurisdiction and competence may be appealed to the Court of Appeal within 15 days of the date of being notified of the decision. The Court of Appeal is required to render its decision within 30 days of the date of registration of the request. However, the timeline for rendering the judgment may vary and is at the discretion of the Court of Appeal. The arbitration proceedings will be stayed until the Court of Appeal has rendered its decision, unless otherwise agreed by the parties. If a party requests continuance of the arbitration proceedings, and the court finds that the arbitral tribunal did not have jurisdiction, the party seeking continuance is required to bear the arbitration costs.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Jurisdiction of arbitral tribunal

What is the procedure for disputes over jurisdiction of the arbitral tribunal once arbitral proceedings have been initiated, and what time limits exist for jurisdictional objections?

A jurisdictional objection should be raised no later than with the submission of the respondent's statement of defence. The fact that the party seeking to assert a jurisdictional objection appointed or was involved in the appointment of an arbitrator will not preclude it from asserting a jurisdictional objection.

The principle of *kompetenz-kompetenz* is recognised under the Arbitration Law. A tribunal's decision on its own jurisdiction and competence may be appealed to the Court of Appeal within 15 days of the date of being notified of the decision. The Court of Appeal is required to render its decision within 30 days of the date of registration of the request. However, the timeline for rendering the judgment may vary and is at the discretion of the Court of Appeal. The arbitration proceedings will be stayed until the Court of Appeal has rendered its decision, unless otherwise agreed by the parties. In the event a party requests continuance of the arbitration proceedings, and the court finds that the arbitral tribunal did not have jurisdiction, the party seeking continuance is required to bear the arbitration costs.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Distinction between admissibility and jurisdiction of tribunal

Is there a distinction between challenges as to the admissibility of a claim and as to the jurisdiction of the tribunal?

The Dubai Court of Cassation in its judgment in Case No. 1514 of 2022 upheld the distinction between jurisdiction and admissibility, and held that a failure to comply with contractual pre-conditions to arbitration go to questions of admissibility, and not jurisdiction. While an award may be annulled for want of jurisdiction of a tribunal, the same remedy does not lie with respect to questions of admissibility.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

ARBITRAL PROCEEDINGS

Place and language of arbitration, and choice of law

Failing prior agreement of the parties, what is the default mechanism for the place of arbitration and the language of the arbitral proceedings? How is the substantive law of the dispute determined?

Under article 29 of the Arbitration Law, the default language for arbitration is Arabic and the place of the arbitration will be determined by the tribunal having regard to the circumstances of the case, including the convenience of the parties. The institutional rules also provide the default language and the seat of arbitration if there is no agreement between the parties. For example, the initial seat under the DIAC Rules of 2022 in cases where the parties have not determined the location or venue is the Dubai International Financial Centre. In circumstances where there is no agreement between the parties, the tribunal is vested with the power to determine the seat of the arbitration.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Commencement of arbitration

How are arbitral proceedings initiated?

Under article 27 of the Arbitration Law, arbitration is deemed to commence on the day following the day on which the arbitral tribunal is composed. The requirements for the request are generally contained in the applicable institutional rules. If arbitration is to be commenced by representatives (including lawyers), evidence of authority by way of a power of attorney is usually required. As per the DIAC Rules of 2022, arbitration is deemed to commence on the date on which the DIAC receives the complete request (as defined under the DIAC Rules of 2022). As per the ArbitrateAD Rules, the commencement date of the arbitration is the date on which the case management office receives the request.

Other procedures may apply in initiating proceedings, depending on the applicable institutional rules.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Hearing

Is a hearing required and what rules apply?

Under article 33 of the Arbitration Law, arbitration hearings are held privately, unless otherwise agreed. The arbitral tribunal may decide whether to hold oral hearings for the presentation of evidence, or to continue on the basis of documentary evidence and other materials, unless otherwise agreed between the parties. If any witness or expert evidence is adduced, a hearing is required to administer an oath, which is a requirement under article 76(4) of the UAE Evidence Law.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Evidence

By what rules is the arbitral tribunal bound in establishing the facts of the case? What types of evidence are admitted and how is the taking of evidence conducted?

An adversarial approach is generally used in arbitrations where parties are required to adduce their evidence to establish the facts of the case. Depending on the subject matter of the dispute, party-appointed experts are often engaged. Unless otherwise agreed by the parties, the arbitral tribunal has discretion to determine the rules of evidence to be followed.

The IBA Rules on the Taking of Evidence in International Arbitrations are the most commonly used rules (though as guidance, and not usually as a set of binding rules), and witnesses must be sworn in.

The arbitral tribunal may decide to appoint one or more experts, unless otherwise agreed by the parties. These experts are not party-appointed; instead, they are appointed by the tribunal. The parties may object to the appointment of an expert, but the tribunal will decide whether to accept the objection, and the tribunals' decision in this regard will be binding. Parties are also able to procure their own expert evidence.

A tribunal, on its own initiative or at a party's request, can seek an order from the court for sanctions against a witness who fails to appear or answer questions and direct a third party to procure documents in its possession that are essential to determine the dispute in arbitration (article 36).

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Court involvement

In what instances can the arbitral tribunal request assistance from a court, and in what instances may courts intervene?

Local courts can intervene in limited circumstances, including to:

- assist in the taking of evidence;
- compel a witness to give evidence; and
- direct a third party to produce documents.

Recently, the Dubai Court of Cassation held that the power to amend or vacate an interim order issued by a tribunal lies exclusively with the tribunal that issued such measure (instead of a court), thereby minimising interference in arbitration proceedings.

Local courts can also assist in choosing arbitrators only if the court is the institution administering arbitration, if the parties have agreed to seek the assistance of the court or if the institution does not appoint the arbitrators according to the procedures specified by the agreement of the parties. The court's decision in these circumstances is not subject to an appeal.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Confidentiality

Is confidentiality ensured?

Unless the parties agree otherwise, arbitration proceedings are confidential. Information cannot be disclosed in subsequent proceedings without the consent of the parties. Any court judgments that relate to or mention the arbitral award do not violate the requirements of confidentiality under the Arbitration Law. The DIAC Rules of 2022 provide that all awards and orders in an arbitration and such other documents produced by the parties not already in the public domain are confidential, except to the extent that such disclosure may be required from a party under law by a legal authority to protect or pursue a legal right, or to enforce or challenge an award in legal proceedings before the courts.

The DIAC Rules of 2022 also require an expert witness to sign an undertaking to ensure confidentiality.

While the Arbitration Rules do not make reference to documents already in the public domain, they state that the following exceptions to the rule of confidentiality apply where:

- agreed upon by the parties;
- required under applicable law or regulations binding on the disclosing party;
- required by a party to pursue or enforce a legal right or claim; or
- required by a party to enforce or challenge an award in legal proceedings before a national court or other judicial authority.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

INTERIM MEASURES AND SANCTIONING POWERS

Interim measures by the courts

What interim measures may be ordered by courts before and after arbitration proceedings have been initiated?

Local courts can issue interim measures (eg, attachment orders) before or after arbitration proceedings have been initiated. Interim measures are granted at the discretion of the court.

The court can grant the following interim measures, including orders to:

- preserve evidence;
- preserve goods that constitute part of the subject matter of the dispute;
- preserve assets and funds;
- maintain or restore the status quo; and
- take action that would prevent, or refrain from taking action that is likely to cause, imminent harm or prejudice to the arbitration process.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Interim measures by an emergency arbitrator

Does your domestic arbitration law or do the rules of the domestic arbitration institutions mentioned above provide for an emergency arbitrator prior to the constitution of the arbitral tribunal?

The Arbitration Law does not provide for an emergency arbitrator. However, the DIAC Rules of 2022 as well as the ArbitrateAD Rules provide for a mechanism for the appointment of an emergency arbitrator.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Interim measures by the arbitral tribunal

What interim measures may the arbitral tribunal order after it is constituted? In which instances can security for costs be ordered by an arbitral tribunal?

Article 21 of the Arbitration Law empowers a tribunal to grant interim or conservatory measures that it considers necessary given the subject matter of the dispute, including orders to:

- preserve evidence;
- preserve goods that constitute part of the subject matter of the dispute;
- preserve assets and funds;
- maintain or restore the status quo; and
- take action that would prevent, or refrain from taking action that is likely to cause, imminent harm or prejudice to the arbitration process.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Sanctioning powers of the arbitral tribunal

Pursuant to your domestic arbitration law or the rules of the domestic arbitration institutions mentioned above, is the arbitral tribunal competent to order sanctions against parties or their counsel who use 'guerrilla

tactics' in arbitration? May counsel be subject to sanctions by the arbitral tribunal or domestic arbitral institutions?

While the Arbitration Law does not specify arbitral tribunals' powers in relation to sanctions against parties involved in guerrilla tactics, the courts in the jurisdiction continue to take a more positive approach towards arbitration, and have looked unfavourably of late at attempts to use guerrilla tactics. In Dubai Court of Appeal Case No. 1514 of 2022 (subsequently upheld by the Dubai Court of Cassation), a contractor attempted to bring the dispute within the jurisdiction of the Dubai Court, by joining the employer's manager (who was not party to the arbitration agreement) as co-defendant. The court dismissed the contractor's attempts to subvert the arbitration agreement, and held that the local courts lacked jurisdiction, as a result of an arbitration agreement contained in the main contract. However, no sanctions were imposed.

As per the DIAC Rules of 2022, the Arbitration Court may, upon receiving a reasoned request from the tribunal, and after inviting comments from the parties, communicate any attempts by any of the parties' representatives to unfairly obstruct the arbitration or that otherwise amount to misconduct, to the representative's supervising authority.

Under the ArbitrateAD Rules, tribunals have the power to issue order and awards for sanctions, damages or costs where the parties fail to apply appropriate measures to protect confidentiality and trade secret, and any award on costs is apportioned by having due regard to the outcome of the case, each party's contribution to the efficiency and the expeditiousness of the arbitration and any other relevant circumstances.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

AWARDS

Decisions by the arbitral tribunal

Failing party agreement, is it sufficient if decisions by the arbitral tribunal are made by a majority of all its members or is a unanimous vote required?
What are the consequences for the award if an arbitrator dissents?

It is sufficient if the decisions made by the arbitral tribunal are made by a majority of its members, unless the parties agree otherwise. In the event of a dissent, the majority opinion prevails. It is common for the parties and the tribunal to agree that the chair of the tribunal may issue procedural decisions on his or her own.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Dissenting opinions

How does your domestic arbitration law deal with dissenting opinions?

Dissenting opinions are permitted and, as per the Arbitration Law, form an integral part of the award. However, unless the parties agree otherwise, the majority opinion will prevail.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Form and content requirements

What form and content requirements exist for an award?

The following legal requirements apply for the recognition of an award:

- the award must be in writing and signed by the arbitrators. The signatures of the majority of the arbitrators are sufficient, provided that the reason for any omitted signature is stated. While not expressly required by law, the practice remains that the arbitrators will sign each page of the award;
- unless the parties have agreed to the contrary, the award must include the reasons for the decision; and
- the award must include specific information, including:
 - the names and addresses of the parties;
 - the names, nationalities and addresses of the arbitrators;
 - the text of the arbitration agreement;
 - a summary of the parties' claims, statements and documents;
 - reasons for the tribunal's decision;
 - dissenting opinions, if any; and
 - the date and place of issue of the award.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Time limit for award

Does the award have to be rendered within a certain time limit under your domestic arbitration law or under the rules of the domestic arbitration institutions mentioned above?

The final award must be issued within the period agreed by the parties. If there is no such agreement, then article 42 of the Arbitration Law provides that the final award must be issued within six months of the date of the first hearing of the arbitration (which is generally the preliminary hearing). The tribunal may extend this period by up to six additional months, unless the parties agree to a longer extension. If the award is not rendered within this period, the tribunal or either party may apply to the court to extend the period or terminate the proceedings. The foregoing is the position under the Arbitration Law, which must be read with the provisions on time limits under the applicable set of institutional arbitration rules, if any.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Date of award

For what time limits is the date of the award decisive and for what time limits is the date of delivery of the award decisive?

The date of serving the arbitral award is decisive, as an application to set aside the award must be made within 30 days. Additionally, a request for correction of the award must be made before the lapse of 30 days following the serving of the award, unless agreed otherwise (article 50, Arbitration Law). The tribunal is required to correct the award within a period of 30 days (which may be extended by an additional 15 days) following the receipt of the application. The decision in relation to correction shall be considered supplementary to the arbitral award.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Types of awards

What types of awards are possible and what types of relief may the arbitral tribunal grant?

Tribunals may grant final awards, partial awards, interim awards, awards on agreed terms and additional awards (issued after the final award, pursuant to a party's request that the tribunal issues an additional award if claims submitted during the proceedings were omitted in the final award). Final awards are ordinarily awards granting declaratory relief and damages since orders for specific performance are difficult to enforce in the UAE. Partial awards are ordinarily granted where there is a bifurcation of proceedings (eg, merits versus quantum).

The Arbitration Law empowers the tribunal to grant interim or conservatory measures that it considers necessary given the subject matter of the dispute, including orders to:

- preserve evidence;
- preserve goods that constitute part of the subject matter of the dispute;
- preserve assets and funds;
- maintain or restore the status quo; and
- take action that would prevent, or refrain from taking action that is likely to cause, imminent harm or prejudice to the arbitration process.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Termination of proceedings

By what other means than an award can proceedings be terminated?

Article 45 of the Arbitration Law provides that arbitration proceedings may be terminated if:

- the parties agree to terminate the proceedings;
- the claimant discontinues the arbitration proceedings (unless the respondent requests for this to be continued); or
- if the tribunal deems the proceedings unnecessary or impossible.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Cost allocation and recovery

How are the costs of the arbitral proceedings allocated in awards? What costs are recoverable?

The successful party will ordinarily be able to recover its arbitration in the form of recovery of institutional fees, arbitrators' fees and expert's fees. The allocation of costs is at the tribunal's discretion. Generally, the percentage of costs recovered is commensurate with the success of the claims asserted.

While article 46 of the Arbitration Law states that arbitration costs are recoverable, it does not include express language in relation to legal costs. The previous status quo was that a tribunal would only have the power to award legal costs where an express agreement to that effect exists or if the arbitral rules, which the parties have consented to, allow the tribunal to grant legal costs. Recent decisions of the courts have confirmed that the DIAC Rules of 2022 grant tribunals the requisite power to grant legal costs. Arbitral tribunals, however, tend to be circumspect in awarding legal costs absent evidence of express agreement.

A party's management costs are generally not recoverable.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Interest

May interest be awarded for principal claims and for costs, and at what rate?

Interest may be awarded. If the interest rate is not agreed between the parties, UAE law permits a maximum rate of 9% under the Commercial Transactions Law. In Dubai, the interest rate awarded by the court was recently revised to 5%, and arbitrations seated in Dubai tend to adopt this rate.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

PROCEEDINGS SUBSEQUENT TO ISSUANCE OF AWARD

Interpretation and correction of awards

Does the arbitral tribunal have the power to correct or interpret an award on its own or at the parties' initiative? What time limits apply?

The tribunal may correct any material errors in the award that are clerical or computational on its own initiative or following the request of a party (article 50, Arbitration Law). A request to correct such errors should be made within 30 days of receiving the award.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Challenge of awards

How and on what grounds can awards be challenged and set aside?

Arbitral awards issued under the Arbitration Law can be challenged and set aside on very limited grounds, barring which the arbitral awards are final and binding on the parties. Awards can be set aside on the following grounds (article 53, Arbitration Law):

- there is no arbitration agreement or the agreement is void or has lapsed;
- a party agreeing to arbitration does not have the capacity to agree to arbitration;
- a party was unable to present its case in the arbitration because it was not given proper notice of the appointment of an arbitrator or of the arbitral proceedings or for any other reason beyond its control;
- the award excludes the application of the parties' choice of law for the dispute;
- the composition of the tribunal or the appointment of the arbitrator was not in accordance with the law or the agreement between the parties;
- the arbitral proceedings were marred by procedural irregularity or the arbitral award was not issued within the specified time frame;
- the award goes beyond the arbitrator's scope or the arbitration agreement; however, if those matters can be separated from those on which the tribunal had the authority to rule, only the portion of the award addressing issues on matters not submitted to arbitration may be set aside;
- the subject matter of the dispute cannot be settled by arbitration; or
- the arbitral award conflicts with the public policy and public morality of the state.

In certain instances, parties made tactical challenges and sought annulment of an award on a formalistic ground that the award was not signed by the tribunal on each page (instead of the award being signed on the final page). In such cases, parties contended that this constituted a breach of public order. Recently, in August 2025, the UAE's Federal-Local Judicial Principles Unification Authority confirmed that a signature on the final page of the award is sufficient, and that the absence of signatures on each page is not contrary to public order.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Levels of appeal

How many levels of appeal are there? How long does it generally take until a challenge is decided at each level? Approximately what costs are incurred at each level? How are costs apportioned among the parties?

There is only one level of appeal to determine a challenge to an award (ie, from the Court of Appeal to the Court of Cassation). However, the award debtor may make the same arguments (ie, in support of setting aside the award) in defence of an application made to ratify the award.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Recognition and enforcement

What requirements exist for recognition and enforcement of domestic and foreign awards, what grounds exist for refusing recognition and enforcement, and what is the procedure?

A party seeking ratification and enforcement of a domestic award must file suit in the Court of Appeal to ratify the award. On ratification, it can be enforced through the local enforcement courts. Since the UAE has ratified the New York Convention, a foreign award may be enforceable in the country provided that the award was rendered in a country that has ratified the New York Convention. The UAE courts generally apply the provisions of the New York Convention in the enforcement of a foreign arbitral award. New regulations have recently been introduced for the recognition and enforcement of foreign arbitral awards, which make the enforcement of foreign arbitral awards faster and easier than the enforcement of local arbitral awards. The UAE courts, and in particular the Dubai courts, tend to look favourably on enforcement of awards.

In order to enforce a domestic award, the following documents are to be submitted to the courts:

- the original award or a certified copy of the award;
- a copy of the arbitration agreement;
- a translation into Arabic of the arbitral award prepared by a translator certified by the UAE Ministry of Justice if the award is delivered in a language other than Arabic; and
- a document evidencing the filing of the arbitral award with the court.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Time limits for enforcement of arbitral awards

Is there a limitation period for the enforcement of arbitral awards?

No.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Enforcement of foreign awards

What is the attitude of domestic courts to the enforcement of foreign awards set aside by the courts at the place of arbitration?

It is unlikely that a local court will enforce an award if it has been set aside by the courts in the seat of arbitration. Article V(1)(e) of the New York Convention states that the recognition or enforcement of an award can be refused if the award has been set aside.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Enforcement of orders by emergency arbitrators

Does your domestic arbitration legislation, case law or the rules of domestic arbitration institutions provide for the enforcement of orders by emergency arbitrators?

The Arbitration Law does not specifically provide for such a mechanism. In theory, however, the enforcement of an order by an emergency arbitrator is possible under the same procedure to enforce interim orders.

Article 2(13) of Appendix II of the DIAC Rules of 2022 provides that an order issued by an emergency arbitrator shall cease to be binding if:

- the tribunal discharges the preliminary order upon the application by a party or on the tribunal's own initiative in accordance with article 1(6) of Appendix II;
- the underlying arbitration proceedings is terminated before the issuance of the final award; or
- the final award does not include or give effect to the preliminary order granted by the emergency arbitrator.

However, since the orders issued by emergency arbitrators are not strictly awards and may be varied or discarded by the tribunal in the final award, parties may face certain challenges at the enforcement stage.

Under the ArbitrationAD Rules, a decision of the emergency arbitrator shall cease to be binding if:

- the emergency arbitrator or the tribunal so decides;
- the tribunal makes a final award; and
- a request is not filed within 30 days of the date of the emergency arbitrator's decision.

Under these Rules, tribunals are not bound by an award or order made by an emergency arbitrator.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Cost of enforcement

What costs are incurred in enforcing awards?

The costs involved in enforcing awards depend on the court where enforcement proceedings are initiated. The costs are not recoverable in the on-shore UAE courts (other than the court fees), but court fees and legal fees are recoverable in DIFC Court proceedings.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

OTHER

Influence of legal traditions on arbitrators

What dominant features of your judicial system might exert an influence on an arbitrator from your jurisdiction?

Pursuant to article 5 of the UAE Evidence Law, the parties can agree to the applicable rules of evidence in writing, as long as it is not contrary to public policy.

Pursuant to articles 33 to 35 of the UAE Evidence Law, the court has the power to order a party to produce a specified document upon the request of a party. If the party fails to produce the document (and there is no copy of the document), the court may accept a statement from the party requesting production in relation to the content contained in the document. Further, the court is entitled to draw adverse inferences if a party refuses to produce a document. However, given the recent introduction of these provisions in the UAE Evidence Law, it is difficult to ascertain the practical application of these provisions.

The IBA Rules on the Taking of Evidence are also often used in the UAE for matters concerning production of documents.

It is common to have expert and witness evidence.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Professional or ethical rules

Are specific professional or ethical rules applicable to counsel and arbitrators in international arbitration in your jurisdiction? Does best practice in your jurisdiction reflect (or contradict) the IBA Guidelines on Party Representation in International Arbitration?

The Arbitration Law provides that a code of conduct for arbitrators will be issued by the Ministry of Economy, although this has not yet been issued. Counsel will be subject to the relevant codes of conduct that apply in the jurisdictions in which they are licensed to practise. The Dubai Legal Affairs Department has a draft charter for the conduct of advocates and legal consultants.

Articles 275 to 280 of the UAE Penal Code state that any arbitrator accepting or partaking in an act of bribery is subject to criminal penalties.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Third-party funding

Is third-party funding of arbitral claims in your jurisdiction subject to regulatory restrictions?

There are no rules on third-party funders in the onshore UAE. Both the DIFC and ADGM have specific rules on third-party funding. A number of third-party funders are active in the UAE market.

DIAC has addressed third-party funding arrangements in article 22 of the DIAC Rules of 2022, which expressly recognises and sets out the provisions regarding third-party funding in arbitrations conducted under these rules. Any party that has entered into a third-party funding arrangement must disclose the third-party funder, information regarding the arrangement to other parties and to DIAC, and whether the funder has undertaken liability in the event of an adverse costs order.

Similarly, the Arbitration Rules also make reference to third-party funding arrangements and requires any party who has entered into such an agreement to as soon as reasonably possible, inform the case management office, the tribunal and all other parties of the existence and the identity of the third-party funder.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

Regulation of activities

What particularities exist in your jurisdiction that a foreign practitioner should be aware of?

The UAE is an Islamic country and adheres to the teachings of Islam. Expatriates are reminded to be respectful of the religion when visiting, working and living in the UAE.

Arbitrators must follow the rules applicable to the specific arbitration proceedings they are involved in, and remain impartial and independent.

On 1 January 2018, the UAE introduced 5 per cent VAT.

In the event a foreign legal practitioner intends to represent a party in an arbitration hearing seated in the Emirate of Dubai, the foreign legal practitioner would be required to submit an application to the Dubai Legal Affairs Department and obtain a no objection certificate.

Law stated - 19 February 2026

UPDATE AND TRENDS

Legislative reform and investment treaty arbitration

Are there any emerging trends or hot topics in arbitration in your country? Is the arbitration law of your jurisdiction currently the subject of legislative reform? Are the rules of the domestic arbitration institutions mentioned above currently being revised? Have any bilateral investment treaties recently been terminated? If so, which ones? Is there any intention to terminate any of these bilateral investment treaties? If so, which ones? What are the main recent decisions in the field of international investment arbitration to which your country was a party? Are there any pending investment arbitration cases in which the country you are reporting about is a party?

Federal Decree Law 15 of 2023 amended various provisions of the Arbitration Law, including provisions relating to hearings being conducted in person or remotely, in line with the integration of technology in arbitrations as a response to the pandemic. It further expanded the powers of the arbitral tribunal to decide (absent agreement between the parties) on the mode and place of arbitration and determine the procedures and rules of evidence, where an agreement is not reached by the parties.

Further, following the amendment, the Arbitration Law now provides for the appointment of arbitrators from among members of the supervisory or controlling bodies of the arbitral institutions (subject to certain controls), which was previously not permitted.

The India–UAE BIT (2013) was terminated on 31 August 2024, and replaced with the India–UAE BIT (2024), which came into force on the same day.

The Maldives–UAE BIT was signed on 17 October 2024 and entered into force on 12 December 2024. The South Sudan–UAE BIT was signed on 23 April 2019 and entered into force on 17 September 2025. The Equatorial Guinea–UAE BIT was signed on 19 October 2016 and entered into force on 8 December 2025.

Further, the Australia–UAE BIT was signed on 6 November 2024, and it came into force on 1 October 2025. The New Zealand–UAE BIT was signed on 14 January 2025, and it came into force on 14 November 2025. In 2025, the UAE has also signed investment treaties with Eswatini, Sri Lanka and Central African Republic, but the treaties are yet to enter into force.

Law stated - 19 February 2026