

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

REGISTRAR'S CIRCULAR NO. 3 OF 2020

**INFORMATION ON MEASURES AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO
COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019) FOR COURT USERS AND
VISITORS TO THE SUPREME COURT**

To reduce the local transmission of COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019), comprehensive measures, such as safe distancing measures, have been put in place in the Supreme Court. Information on these measures and other applicable restrictions is available on the Supreme Court website at <https://www.supremecourt.gov.sg>. The information will be updated from time to time. All court users and visitors to the Supreme Court are advised to refer to the Supreme Court website for the latest information.

2 The Honourable the Chief Justice has directed that the use of electronic means of communication to conduct hearings be enhanced. This is to ensure that court services and hearings remain available and uninterrupted as far as possible while reducing the level of person-to-person contact.

3 With effect from 1 April 2020 until further notice, selected hearings in the Supreme Court will be conducted by video conferencing or where appropriate, telephone conferencing. Litigants in person are strongly encouraged to use video conferencing or telephone conferencing, where available. Details on the use of video conferencing and telephone conferencing for the different types of hearings in the Supreme Court are set out in **Schedule 1**.

4 A guide on the use of video conferencing and telephone conferencing to attend hearings can be found on the Supreme Court website. Unauthorised audio or visual recording of hearings is strictly prohibited and in appropriate cases, the Court may require an undertaking that no such recording will be made. Attention is drawn to section 5 of the Administration of Justice (Protection) Act 2016 (Act No. 19 of 2016) regarding contempt of court by unauthorised recordings. Where hearings are conducted by video conferencing, all court rules and practices on dress and etiquette will continue to apply. However, it will not be necessary to stand and/or bow to the Court at the start or end of the hearing or to

stand when addressing the Court, when otherwise required to do so for physical attendance.

5 With effect from 1 April 2020 until further notice, where the Court determines that physical attendance before the Court is appropriate, no more than two lawyers/litigants per party may appear at the hearing. Practice trainees, interns, legal executives and other assistants should not be in attendance. If a party requires additional attendees, it should write in to the Court on its request for an exemption for the named additional attendees, no later than one working day before the hearing date. The Court may, in its discretion, grant an exemption to allow the named additional attendees to attend physically and/or by video conferencing.

6 The cooperation of all court users and visitors to the Supreme Court is essential for the successful implementation of these measures to safeguard the well-being of all court users and visitors.

Dated this 27th day of March 2020.


TEH HWEE HWEE
REGISTRAR
SUPREME COURT

SCHEDULE 1

1. This Schedule sets out the types of hearings which may be conducted by video conferencing or telephone conferencing.
2. Notwithstanding what is provided for below, the Court retains full discretion to decide:
 - (a) whether to conduct any hearing by video conferencing; and
 - (b) whether to conduct any hearing with one or more parties attending by video conferencing and any other party attending physically in Court.
3. Where the Court issues directions for a hearing to be conducted by way of video conferencing, solicitors may write in to the Court to raise any concerns that they may have within 2 days of receiving such directions.
4. For all hearings conducted by video conferencing, the use of video conferencing is optional for litigants in person, who are strongly encouraged to use video conferencing but may inform the Court if they do not wish to do so.

A. Hearings before the Court of Appeal

Type of Hearing	Mode of Hearing
Case Management Conferences conducted by a Registrar	<p>Video conferencing will be the default option for solicitors, unless otherwise directed</p> <p>For hearings which are to be conducted by video conferencing, telephone conferencing may be available to solicitors, where appropriate</p> <p>Video conferencing will be available to litigants in person</p> <p>Directions may be given by correspondence instead of at the Case Management Conference</p>

Type of Hearing	Mode of Hearing
All Hearings (other than Case Management Conferences conducted by a Registrar)	<p>The Court will issue directions for appropriate matters to be heard by video conferencing</p> <p>For hearings which are to be conducted by video conferencing, telephone conferencing may be available to solicitors, where appropriate</p> <p>Video conferencing will be available to litigants in person</p> <p>Certain matters may be dealt with without hearing oral arguments</p> <p>Directions may be given by correspondence</p>

B. Hearings before a High Court Judge

Type of Hearing	Mode of Hearing
Civil Pre-Trial Conferences	<p>The Court will issue directions for appropriate matters to be heard by video conferencing</p> <p>For hearings which are to be conducted by video conferencing, telephone conferencing may be available to solicitors, where appropriate</p> <p>Video conferencing will be available to litigants in person</p> <p>Directions may be given by correspondence instead of at the Pre-Trial Conference</p>
Civil Hearings (other than Trials and hearings involving the examination of witnesses)	<p>The Court will issue directions for appropriate matters to be heard by video conferencing</p> <p>Video conferencing will be available to litigants in person</p> <p>Certain matters may be dealt with without hearing oral arguments</p> <p>Directions may be given by correspondence</p>
Civil Trials and hearings involving examination of witnesses	<p>The Court may order that the entire trial or hearing, or part of a trial or hearing, be conducted by video conferencing (e.g. where only certain witnesses will appear by video conferencing)</p>

Type of Hearing	Mode of Hearing
Criminal Pre-Trial Conferences	The Court will issue directions for appropriate matters to be heard by video conferencing
Magistrate's Appeals	The Court may order that the hearing be conducted by video conferencing
Criminal Trials (including proceedings to record a plea of guilty from and convict an accused person, and sentencing proceedings)	The Court may order that the entire trial, or part of a trial, be conducted by video conferencing (e.g. where only certain witnesses will appear by video conferencing)

C. Hearings before the Singapore International Commercial Court ("SICC")

Type of Hearing	Mode of Hearing
Case Management Conferences	<p>The Court will issue directions for appropriate matters to be heard by video conferencing</p> <p>For hearings which are to be conducted by video conferencing, telephone conferencing may be available to solicitors, where appropriate</p> <p>Video conferencing will be available to litigants in person</p> <p>Directions may be given by correspondence instead of at the Case Management Conference</p>
Hearings (other than Trials)	<p>The Court will issue directions for appropriate matters to be heard by video conferencing</p> <p>For hearings which are to be conducted by video conferencing, telephone conferencing may be available to solicitors, where appropriate</p> <p>Video conferencing will be available to litigants in person</p> <p>Certain matters may be dealt with without hearing oral arguments</p> <p>Directions may be given by correspondence</p>
Trials	The Court may order that the entire trial, or part of a trial, be conducted by video conferencing (e.g. where only certain witnesses will appear by video conferencing)

D. Hearings before a Registrar

Type of Hearing	Mode of Hearing
Civil Pre-Trial Conferences	<p>Video conferencing will be the default option for solicitors, unless otherwise directed</p> <p>For hearings which are to be conducted by video conferencing, telephone conferencing may be available to solicitors, where appropriate</p> <p>Video conferencing will be available to litigants in person</p> <p>Directions may be given by correspondence instead of at the Pre-Trial Conference</p>
Civil hearings (other than Trials and hearings involving the examination of witnesses)	<p>Video conferencing will be the default option for solicitors, unless otherwise directed</p> <p>Video conferencing will be available to litigants in person</p>
Bankruptcy hearings (including Originating Summons (Bankruptcy))	<p>Certain matters may be dealt with without hearing oral arguments</p> <p>Directions may be given by correspondence</p>
Assessment of damages and other hearings involving examination of witnesses	<p>The Court may order that the entire hearing, or part of a hearing, be conducted by video conferencing (e.g. where only certain witnesses will appear by video conferencing)</p>
Criminal Pre-Trial Conferences and Criminal Case Disclosure Conferences	<p>Video conferencing will be the default option for prosecutors and remanded accused persons, unless otherwise directed</p> <p>Legally-represented accused persons need not attend if their counsel are already in attendance</p> <p>Video conferencing will be available to defence counsel</p>
Committal Hearings	<p>The Court may order that the entire hearing, or part of a hearing, be conducted by video conferencing (e.g. where only certain witnesses will appear by video conferencing)</p>

E. Hearings before Duty Registrar and Duty Judge

(Attention is drawn to paragraph 12(4) and (6) of the Supreme Court Practice Directions)

Type of Hearing	Mode of Hearing
Attendance before Registrar	<p>Video conferencing will be the default option for solicitors, unless otherwise directed</p> <p>For hearings which are to be conducted by video conferencing, telephone conferencing may be available to solicitors, where appropriate</p> <p>Video conferencing will be available to litigants in person, except where the litigant in person is to execute documents (e.g. bail forms) before the Duty Registrar</p> <p>More information on attendance before Duty Registrar may be found on the Supreme Court website at https://www.supremecourt.gov.sg</p>
Attendance before Judge	The Court will issue directions for appropriate matters to be heard by video conferencing