



# MDRC Panel of Arbitrators

## Empanelment Criteria and Eligibility Framework

*MediateGuru Dispute Resolution Centre (MDRC)*

**Purpose.** This Schedule sets out the criteria, levels of empanelment, assessment factors and continuing expectations for arbitrators appointed or considered for appointment by MDRC. It is designed to support a merit-based and transparent panel structure while preserving full institutional discretion in appointments.

**Interpretive note.** Empanelment is a quality filter, not a promise of case allocation. Inclusion in any panel does not create a right to appointment, a right to a minimum number of references, or any entitlement to a particular dispute type.

### 1. General principles

1.1 MDRC shall maintain a panel of arbitrators that reflects legal skill, subject-matter depth, neutrality, technological readiness and procedural discipline.

1.2 Appointments may be made from any suitable panel or, where appropriate, from outside the panel, depending on the nature of the dispute and the needs of the case.

1.3 MDRC may create reserved, regular, accredited and senior tiers, together with specialist sub-panels for particular sectors or dispute categories.

1.4 The institution may assess an applicant on the basis of papers alone, by interview, by practical exercise, or by any combination of these methods.

### 2. Panel architecture

#### 2.1 Reserved Panel (Tier 0)

2.1.1 Early-career professionals being developed for future panel progression.

2.1.2 Ordinarily up to five years of post-qualification experience, basic arbitration familiarity and sufficient drafting ability to handle structured case materials.

2.1.3 Used for controlled exposure in low-value, document-only, MSME or ODR matters.



## **2.2 Panel Arbitrator**

2.2.1 Regular panel member with broader professional experience and sound arbitration exposure.

2.2.2 Able to manage routine domestic commercial disputes with procedural discipline and dependable disclosure practice.

## **2.3 Accredited Arbitrator**

2.3.1 Experienced appointment candidate with substantial arbitration exposure and demonstrated reasoned decision-making.

2.3.2 Suitable for medium to high-value disputes, larger evidentiary records and more demanding case management.

## **2.4 Senior Arbitrator**

2.4.1 Lead or presiding candidate with deep professional standing or equivalent recognised distinction.

2.4.2 Suitable for complex, multi-party, cross-border or high-value matters requiring robust tribunal leadership.

## **2.5 Specialist Panel**

2.5.1 Sector-specific appointment pool for technical or heavily regulated disputes.

2.5.2 Membership depends on demonstrable knowledge in the named sector and the ability to translate that knowledge into efficient arbitral management.

## **3. Reserved Panel (Tier 0)**

*3.1 Composition.* The Reserved Panel shall consist of early-career professionals who have shown genuine aptitude for arbitration and who are being developed for future panel progression.

*3.2 Eligibility.* An applicant should ordinarily have up to five years of post-qualification experience, basic familiarity with arbitral procedure, and sufficient drafting ability to handle structured case materials. MDRC may relax the experience threshold in exceptional cases where the candidate demonstrates unusual merit, academic distinction, or relevant specialist exposure.

*3.3 Developmental use.* Reserved Panel members are intended to receive controlled exposure in appropriate matters. MDRC shall endeavour to provide meaningful case exposure to the Reserved Panel of Arbitrators in suitable low-value or document-only matters.

*3.4 Safeguards.* Appointments from the Reserved Panel shall be made only where the dispute type, value, complexity and party profile justify such allocation. MDRC may prefer document-only, MSME, fast-track or ODR matters for



this purpose, and may avoid appointing Reserved Panel members in disputes requiring extensive evidentiary hearings, urgent interim relief, or highly complex multi-party management.

## **4. Eligibility criteria by tier**

### **4.1 Reserved Panel**

- 4.1.1 Demonstrable interest in arbitration and dispute resolution.
- 4.1.2 At least one recognised arbitration or ADR training programme, or equivalent practical exposure.
- 4.1.3 A writing sample such as a note, memorial excerpt, research paper, case comment or draft order.
- 4.1.4 Comfort with digital filing, virtual hearings and structured case management.
- 4.1.5 Willingness to undergo mentoring, observation and periodic review.

#### **4.1.6 PQE of 0-5 years**

### **4.2 Panel Arbitrator**

- 4.2.1 Broad professional experience in law, commerce, engineering, finance, construction, technology or a comparable field.
- 4.2.2 Arbitration training or practical arbitration exposure sufficient to show procedural competence.
- 4.2.3 Ability to draft concise, reasoned and internally consistent orders.
- 4.2.4 Familiarity with disclosure obligations, conflicts, timelines and hearing discipline.
- 4.2.5 Ability to work independently and responsibly within an institutional framework.

#### **4.2.6 PQE of 5-10 years**

### **4.3 Accredited Arbitrator**

- 4.3.1 Substantial arbitration exposure, including appointments as sole arbitrator, co-arbitrator, party-appointed arbitrator or equivalent tribunal role.
- 4.3.2 Comfort with evidence management, issue framing, procedural efficiency and case directions.
- 4.3.3 Track record of reasoned decision-making and professional conduct.
- 4.3.4 Ability to manage larger claims, multiple witnesses, expert material and settlement pressure.
- 4.3.5 Demonstrated appreciation of confidentiality, neutrality and enforceability concerns.

#### **4.3.6 PQE of 10+ years**



#### **4.4 Senior Arbitrator**

4.4.1 Deep and sustained professional standing, or equivalent recognised distinction in arbitration or a connected discipline.

4.4.2 Capacity to preside over high-stakes, cross-border, multi-contract or multi-party proceedings.

4.4.3 Strong command over hearing management, time allocation, tribunal coordination and drafting quality.

4.4.4 Ability to lead a tribunal with firmness, efficiency and procedural fairness.

4.4.5 High availability and a proven record of timely delivery.

#### **4.4.6 PQE of 20+ years**

#### **4.5 Specialist Panel**

4.5.1 Sectoral expertise in a defined field such as construction, banking, energy, infrastructure, insolvency, technology, intellectual property, logistics or another complex commercial sector.

4.5.2 Ability to understand technical records, regulated environments and industry practice.

4.5.3 A coherent explanation of how the candidate's subject knowledge improves arbitral efficiency and quality.

4.5.4 Where relevant, prior work as a decision-maker, expert, regulator, project manager, in-house counsel, or specialist practitioner.

### **5. Application dossier**

5.1 Completed application form in the format prescribed by MDRC.

5.2 Curriculum vitae and current practice profile.

5.3 Proof of qualifications and any arbitration or ADR training certificates.

5.4 Disclosure statement covering conflicts, disciplinary history, repeated appointments, and any matter affecting independence or availability.

5.5 At least one writing sample; for more advanced tiers, redacted awards or procedural orders may be requested.

5.6 List of relevant appointments, sector experience, publications, teaching, speaking engagements, or institutional roles.

5.7 Proof of Payment of Requisite Fees.

5.7 Contact details of referees or professional references, where called for by MDRC.

### **6. Nature of Fees**



6.1 Empanelment fees payable to MDRC are administrative in nature and are charged towards:

6.1.1 processing of applications; due diligence and screening;

6.1.2 panel administration and maintenance;

6.1.3 institutional infrastructure and digital systems.

6.2 Empanelment fees are non-refundable, irrespective of:

6.2.1 acceptance or rejection of the application;

6.2.2 withdrawal of the application;

6.2.3 suspension, non-renewal or removal from the panel.

6.3 Payment of empanelment fees does not create any right to empanelment or appointment.

6.4 Empanelment fees shall be determined based on the category or tier of the panel to which the applicant is admitted.

6.4.1 For the Reserved Panel (Tier 0), applicable to early-career professionals with limited experience, a nominal one-time empanelment fee of ₹7,500 for applicants resident in India and USD 150 for applicants resident outside India shall be payable, together with an annual renewal fee of ₹2,500 and USD 50 respectively.

6.4.2 For the Panel Arbitrator category, a nominal one-time empanelment fee of ₹15,000 for applicants resident in India and USD 250 for applicants resident outside India shall be payable, together with an annual renewal fee of ₹5,000 and USD 100 respectively.

6.4.3 For the Accredited Arbitrator category, a nominal one-time empanelment fee of ₹20,000 for applicants resident in India and USD 350 for applicants resident outside India shall be payable, together with an annual renewal fee of ₹7,000 and USD 100 respectively.

6.4.4 For the Senior Arbitrator category, a nominal one-time empanelment fee of ₹25,000 for applicants resident in India and USD 500 for applicants resident outside India shall be payable, together with an annual renewal fee of ₹7,000 and USD 150 respectively.



## **7. Assessment and selection process**

7.1 Applications may be screened by the Secretariat for completeness before institutional review.

7.2 MDRC may conduct a document review, interview, practical assessment, or any combination of these methods.

7.3 The institution may ask the candidate to comment on a procedural scenario, draft a short order, identify conflicts, or explain case-management choices.

7.4 Final empanelment shall depend on overall suitability, not on any single factor alone.

7.5 MDRC may place an applicant on a lower tier than the one sought, or require further development before elevation.

## **8. Continuing obligations**

8.1 A panel member shall keep disclosures current and update MDRC immediately on any material change.

8.2 A panel member shall maintain reasonable availability and respond to appointment enquiries without undue delay.

8.3 A panel member shall comply with confidentiality, impartiality, courtesy and diligence standards at all times.

8.4 A panel member may be reviewed periodically, and may be retained, upgraded, moved to a different tier, suspended or removed for good reason.

## **9. Institutional discretion**

9.1 Empanelment does not create any vested right to appointment, any assurance of volume, or any promise of a particular dispute category.

9.2 MDRC shall continue to retain full discretion to appoint any neutral it considers suitable, including a person outside the panel where circumstances justify it.

9.3 The purpose of this Schedule is to raise quality, build a pipeline of neutrals, and keep the panel credible, not to substitute a quota for merit.