

Introduction

Between January and August 2023, a staged portfolio has been developed by the Family Mediation Standards Board (FMSB), to provide an alternate, parallel route to accreditation alongside the existing Family Mediation Council (FMC) and Law Society portfolios. This scheme is now ready to be piloted.

The staged portfolio is an acknowledgement that the existing accreditation process can be perceived as confusing, difficult to complete and does not always offer sufficient motivation for trainee mediators to become fully accredited.

In the staged portfolio scheme, trainee mediators produce two shorter portfolios for assessment, one at the end of two distinct stages. This enables them to demonstrate – at an early stage – their initial competence to undertake safe and effective independent practice, while they continue to gather the rest of the evidence to demonstrate they meet the FMC Accreditation (FMCA) requirements in full.

Key benefits

The staged portfolio -

- Builds momentum and motivation into the system and makes working towards accreditation the main focus of the post-foundation training stage.
- Provides a clear framework leading to accreditation for both Professional Practice Consultants (PPCs) and trainee mediators.
- Enables mediators to achieve accreditation more quickly, in two years rather than the usual three.
- Concentrates PPC support into specific periods of time to provide meaningful enhanced support which is linked to achieving accreditation.
- Allows mediators to learn how to evidence their own practice using competencies at an early stage.
- Offers an opportunity to assess and ‘sign off’ trainee mediators as able to undertake safe and effective independent practice before they move from co-worked to solo mediation practice.
- Contributes to raising standards of professional practice and offers a model through which mediators working towards accreditation private practice can align with publicly-funded practice.

The challenges

In creating a staged portfolio, the goal must be to ensure that two submissions, when added together, do not become weightier and more onerous than the current single one, but nevertheless cover the same requirements and are equivalent.

The smaller and less complex first submission aims to demonstrate a safe baseline of initial competence while the second submission builds on this but does not replicate it. The benefits

arise from the two submissions being viewed as time-limited 'works-in-progress', with evidence gathered and recorded right from the start.

These considerations have been incorporated into the pilot.

Overview of pilot

Participation in the staged portfolio pilot is voluntary and participants must have passed an Approved Family Mediation Training Course, be registered with the FMC as working towards accreditation, and be working with an approved test site.

For trainee mediators taking part in the staged portfolio, the path to accreditation will be divided into two distinct stages.

At Stage 1, mediators observe accredited mediators and co-mediate for up to a year. Trainee mediators then submit a portfolio for assessment that demonstrates that they are competent to undertake safe and effective practice with enhanced supervision.

At Stage 2, trainee mediators can mediate solo with enhanced supervision. Within a year of receiving their Stage 1 portfolio result, they must submit a second portfolio demonstrating they meet all the requirements for full accreditation.

Safe and effective to practice solo with enhanced supervision

In order to demonstrate that they can practice safely and effectively with enhanced supervision, trainee mediators must demonstrate an understanding of each of the competences set out in the FMC's Standards Framework at Stage 1. This includes C4 Competences which require mediators to 'Assess and respond to domestic abuse and child or other safeguarding issues' and B4 Competences which require mediators to 'Balance the need for confidentiality with that for safeguarding'.

At Stage 2, trainee mediators remain subject to the rules for conducting MIAMs, meaning they cannot sign court forms or conduct pre-mediation solo meetings where the participants anticipate making an application to court.

Trainee mediators conducting mediation meetings solo at Stage 2 will have demonstrated they have an awareness of their own limits and know when to seek the support of their PPC or another accredited mediator, which will be readily available as this is a condition of test sites participating in the pilot.

Meeting the requirements of full accreditation

The existing accreditation scheme allows that, prior to submission of evidence to demonstrate competence, trainee mediators can co-mediate, or solo mediate where all participants are independently/privately funded.

In the staged portfolio scheme, trainee mediators will **co-mediate all cases until successful completion of Stage 1**, then can solo mediate with enhanced supervision for independently/privately funded participants whilst they are completing the Stage 2 portfolio.

In either scheme, where one or both participants are eligible for legal aid or funded by the voucher scheme, the trainee mediator must co-mediate with an FMCA until they have achieved FMCA or Provisional FMCA.

Mediators will meet the requirements of the full accreditation scheme across Stage 1 and Stage 2. These are described in full at page 6 of the [FMC Manual Professional Standards and Self-Regulatory Framework](#) but can be summarised as follows:

Stage 1	Stage 2
Minimum of 6 hours one-to-one support from their PPC over 6-9 months (or as agreed in the training contract)	Minimum of 8 hours one-to-one support from their PPC over 6-9 months (or as agreed in the training contract)
Post training review with the PPC	Pre- and post- case discussion with the PPC before leading/sole working first case
Register with the FMC as working towards accreditation	
Reflective account of session observed by mediator	
PPC observation and feedback of MIAM and mediation session + mediator reflection on feedback	
Take one case through to completion	Take two or three cases through to completion
Comply with the requirements for continuing professional development and ongoing PPC support	Comply with the requirements for continuing professional development and ongoing PPC support
Attend a Child-Inclusive Mediation Awareness and Understanding course	

The outcomes possible following assessment are:

Stage 1

- Ready to undertake safe and effective independent practice with enhanced supervision – Stage 2 submission to be made within one year.
- Not yet ready. Trainee mediators who are not yet ready to proceed to Stage 2 must remain in Stage 1, observing and co-mediating until they resubmit a Stage 1 portfolio and are assessed as ready to undertake safe and effective practice with enhanced supervision.

Stage 2

- FMCA
- Provisional FMCA. If a provisional award is made, the assessors will specify the additional work that must be submitted and the identification of the competences that need to be demonstrated in order for full FMCA to be awarded. Resubmission requires payment of a resubmission fee.

- Not Yet Proven. An entirely new portfolio will be required and the first-time submission fee charged.

Dividing the requirements of the full portfolio across Stage 1 and Stage 2

Two portfolio templates for the staged scheme have been developed out of the existing full portfolio.

Some modifications and updated materials have been incorporated into the new Stage 1 and Stage 2 portfolios, but care has been taken to ensure they remain equivalent to the full portfolio. Some modifications are simply updates or additions to the existing format and would be transferrable between the two schemes if so desired.

The construction of the two new portfolios in comparison with the existing full portfolio is outlined in full in **Appendix 1**. In summary the main differences are:

- **Updated PPC documents and proformas**

This is particularly relevant at Stage 1 where the PPC's observation of the mediator and PPC statement are linked more clearly to the competencies. This contributes to the PPC's endorsement of the trainee mediator's ability to demonstrate safe and effective practice. New and streamlined proformas for the observations have been incorporated into the Stage 1 portfolio and PPCs are asked to observe a MIAM as well as a mediation session. (The previous versions of the observation proformas are optional in the full portfolio.)

- **Updated Training and Development Plans at each stage, aligned to the new FMC framework for re-accreditation**

At Stage 1, the focus is on applying theory and knowledge to practice. For each area, the trainee mediator is asked to reflect on how he or she has put theoretical learning into practice, what gaps he or she has identified, including through feedback and observation from the PPC and how they will be addressed as the trainee mediator progresses to full accreditation.

At Stage 2, the focus is on the trainee mediator's progress and how they addressed gaps in their learning identified at Stage 1, plans for future CPD activities and the benefits to clients. It forms the foundation of his or her first reaccreditation after three years as a fully accredited mediator.

**Family Mediation Standards Board
January 2024**

Appendix 1 (NB This Appendix was updated in April 2024)

Staged Portfolio – amendments to main portfolio (v4)

Current contents – full portfolio	Contents Stage 1 portfolio	Contents Stage 2 portfolio	Changes/updates made
Documentation – Section 1	Documentation Section 1	Documentation Section 1	
Application form	Yes	Yes	Modified only to match new versions
Contents page (i.e. this page, completed)	Yes	Yes	Modified only to match new versions
Completed FMC Competences Grid	Yes Suggest two good examples of each competence using range of sources of evidence	Yes Suggest two good examples of each competence relying mostly on case material	Number of examples of each competence agreed in discussion with Chief Assessors/assessors
Three or four case commentaries covering your three or four main submitted cases.	One MIAM commentary template One case commentary template (not AIM)	One MIAM commentary template Two or three case commentary templates	Modified only to match new versions
Responses to three of the five case study questions	Yes Three case studies offered - Two to be completed.	Yes Two case studies offered – One to be completed	Five case examples in full portfolio shared across Stage 1 and Stage 2
Reflective account (between 1,500 – 2,000 words)	No	Yes	Stage 2 requirement only
Optional Additional Evidence	Yes	No	Optional for Stage 1 only – to address any gaps in evidence if needed

Current contents – full portfolio	Contents Stage 1 portfolio	Contents Stage 2 portfolio	Changes/updates made
Documentation – Section 2	Documentation Section 2	Documentation Section 2	
Your Personal Training and Development Plan	Yes Replaced with new Training and Development Plan for Stage 1	Yes Replaced with new Training and Development Plan for Stage 2	T&D plans updated and aligned to FMC reaccreditation framework with more specific links to development while working towards accreditation.
Copies of certificates of relevant training undertaken including family mediation Foundation Training and attendance at CIM Awareness and Understanding Course	Yes	No	Stage 1 requirement only
Statement from your PPC	Yes Replaced with new PPC docs Stage 1	Yes Replaced with new PPC docs Stage 2	PPC statement updated at Stage 1 especially to give more specific feedback related to competencies
Account of session observed by the mediator	Yes Updated	No	Streamlined proforma for this now included in Stage 1 portfolio
Feedback from PPC of observed MIAM and mediation session	Yes Replaced with new template that covers both elements	No	Streamlined proforma for both elements now included in Stage 1 portfolio
Mediator account of feedback and reflection of sessions observed by PPC		No	
PPC log	Yes Replaced with updated log Stage 1	Yes Replaced with updated log Stage 2	Updated to reflect changes in when FMC requirements will be met - Stage 1 or Stage 2

Current contents – full portfolio	Contents Stage 1 portfolio	Contents Stage 2 portfolio	Changes/updates made
Documentation – Section 3	Documentation Section 3	Documentation Section 3	
Outcome statements for each of the case commentaries submitted, including an MOU and OFS for at least 2 financial cases	Outcome statements for the case commentary submitted, including MOU and OFS if case is P&F	Outcome statements for each of the case commentaries submitted, including an MOU and OFS for at least 2 financial cases (or one financial case if one financial case submitted at first submission)	Modified only to match new versions
Documentation – Section 4	Proposed documentation Section 4	Proposed documentation Section 4	Changes/updates made
Full case paperwork for an AIM case (or P&F where 4 case commentaries are being submitted) and two MIAM records.	One full MIAM record for MIAM commentary submitted	Full case paperwork for an AIM case (or P&F where 4 case commentaries are being submitted) One full MIAM record for MIAM commentary submitted	Modified only to match new versions