



**Republic of the Philippines**  
**Judicial and Bar Council**  
**Manila**

**ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS IN RESPONSE  
TO THE CORONA VIRUS DISEASE PANDEMIC  
(In Compliance with Supreme Court  
Administrative Circular No. 39-2020)**

**BACKGROUND**

On March 16, 2020, the entire Luzon was placed on Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) until April 15, 2020 and guidelines were prescribed for the management of the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19).

Pursuant thereto, all courts nationwide were ordered physically closed by Chief Justice Diosdado M. Peralta in Administrative Order No. 32-2020.

The ECQ was extended to April 30, 2020 and again further extended until May 15, 2020 in select high-risk areas, including the National Capital Region. On May 13, 2020, the entire Luzon was placed under a Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) until May 31, 2020 and a new set of guidelines was prescribed.

Various countries across the globe have implemented their own versions of a quarantine or lockdown. Despite the implementation of certain restrictions, however, the number of COVID-19 positive individuals continued to increase worldwide. The pandemic is yet to be eradicated and the spread has only been managed at best, by select countries.

On May 14, 2020, Chief Justice Diosdado M. Peralta issued Administrative Circular No. 39-2020<sup>1</sup> directing all Supreme Court employees to adopt Work from Home (WFH) as an alternative work arrangement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The provisions of said Administrative Circular are hereby adopted for purposes of translating the goals and objectives of this Policy into an action plan.

Considering the foregoing circumstances and the fact that a vaccine is still forthcoming, it would be in the best

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<sup>1</sup> Administrative Circular No. 39-2020: Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine in Certain Areas Until 31 May 2020.

interest of the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) to tailor its activities, submissions and interviews with social distancing in mind to support the fight against the spread of COVID-19.

The JBC has long planned to veer towards a more technologically advanced and interactive way to reach out to applicants and stakeholders. The current situation has only heightened the need and urgency for the said shift.

## **I. OBJECTIVES**

The project is intended to:

- a) Comply with the directives under Administrative Circular No. 39-2020;
- b) Guarantee that the JBC's work flow and productivity shall continue despite the alternative work arrangement;
- c) Digitize records to ensure that pertinent information and documents will be readily available and accessible to the JBC members, executive officer, chiefs of offices and key personnel remotely;
- d) Secure the access and editing of data with the use of passwords, encryption and user-tracing;
- e) Develop an effective and secure system to conduct meetings, written exams, interviews and other related work online;
- f) Make the public interviews accessible online so that the public can view in real time and suggest questions to be propounded to the applicant;
- g) Management system and health protocols that will minimize the spread of infection among the JBC members, officials, employees, applicants, and other stakeholders.

## **II. EXPECTED OUTPUTS**

The following are the expected outputs:

- a) An alternative work arrangement that shall continue to enforce the JBC Rules and processes and aid the JBC's productivity despite the on-going COVID-19 pandemic;

- b) An electronic file management system that simplifies and enhances the method of tracking and storing records for easy retrieval and which eliminates the probability of losing documents and time in physically locating them;
- c) A digitized system that can be accessed remotely;
- d) A procedure that will ensure that all digitized information and documents will remain confidential and secure;
- e) A new online interview and written exam system that will reduce the exposure of the JBC members and employees, applicants and other stakeholders to the COVID-19.

### **III. DIGITIZATION AND SECURING THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS NECESSARY IN THE ADOPTION OF AN ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENT**

Two (2) key policies, (1) Policy on Digitization of Records for Aging and Archiving Purposes and (2) Policy on Confidentiality of Records and Information, are vital in the JBC's response to the current situation. Both policies will find application in the work arrangements which would eventually be adopted by the JBC during ECQ, MECQ or even under a General Community Quarantine (GCQ).

Digitization of records is the first step to ensure that pertinent data will be accessible by key JBC personnel even if not physically present in the office.

On the other hand, confidentiality of information and documents is as imperative in the shift to digitization. The office protocols stated in the Policy on Confidentiality of Records and Information will be strictly observed to the extent possible. In addition, a secure process utilizing passwords, encryption and user-tracing must be put into place for all types of data access.

The proposed work arrangements under this Policy would essentially entail the conversion of all physical files into electronic files. Each JBC office would be guided by the Policy on Digitization in this undertaking.

### **IV. WORK FROM HOME IN THE JBC AS AN ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENT TO ADDRESS THE PANDEMIC**

Under Administrative Circular No. 39-2020, all Supreme Court Chiefs of Offices were directed to devise and develop their respective WFH schemes and operating procedures for May 18, 2020 until May 29, 2020.<sup>2</sup> This Policy serves to address the abovementioned directive.

Work from home (WFH) is an alternative work arrangement which refers to an output-oriented work arrangement that authorizes the workers to produce outputs/results and accomplishments outside the office.<sup>3</sup>

To fulfill its constitutional mandate even under the present circumstances, WFH scheme shall be implemented in all JBC Offices unless urgent matters arise which require physical presence of the personnel in the office. Considering the circumstances and limitations on travels, a WFH scheme will produce faster results as JBC personnel are on call even beyond regular working hours and even on weekends and holidays. It likewise provides for a safe and healthy working environment consistent and compliant with government protocols during this period of pandemic.

Chiefs of Offices shall devise and develop their respective WFH schemes and operating procedures. They shall ensure that every personnel is assigned certain tasks to the extent possible to effectively and efficiently implement JBC's mandate and serve to measure both Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR) and Office Performance Commitment and Review (OPCR) in compliance with Civil Service Commission (CSC) quality standards.

Chiefs of Offices shall establish an online office with the use of advanced applications and systems. All meetings, interviews, and all other work are to be held online. WFH shall be enabled through digital tools like video conferencing, e-mail, mobile collaboration applications, and virtual event platforms. JBC key personnel shall be required to sign-up and maintain an account with the chosen application to be used for said online work. The Office of Policy and Development Research (OPDR) shall assist, facilitate and record the meetings.

Research work, writing, reviewing and preparation of various policies, reports and other JBC materials shall be done by the JBC key personnel in their respective homes. Other

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<sup>2</sup> Administrative Circular No. 39-2020, page 2, number 10.

<sup>3</sup> CSC Memorandum Circular 10, S. 2020, Section 2.0, par 2.1.

means of enabling other JBC staff, who are unable to employ a WFH scheme, to be able to WFH shall be explored to the fullest and shall be implemented as soon as feasibly possible.

Inter-office memoranda shall be transmitted to the intended recipient/s via e-mail or mobile applications. Physical follow-ups are discouraged.

JBC personnel shall make themselves available anytime via tele or videoconferencing, e-mail, online messaging, and other means of communication.

### **Online Written Exam and Interview**

The JBC's current process in the screening and selection of applicants includes the giving of written exams as well as conducting one-on-one or panel interviews. The conduct of these exams and interviews shall be done remotely through the use of online conference platforms during the MECQ.

Applicants shall be apprised of the chosen online conference application to be used so that he or she can sign up for an account. The applicant shall be given the meeting ID, password and other details at least two (2) days prior to the scheduled interview or written exam.

### **Online Written Exam**

Through the chosen application, the written exam shall be completed by the applicant within four (4) hours and shall be supervised by a JBC Member's Court Attorney and the OPDR.

Applicants are strictly enjoined from soliciting or obtaining aid from other persons in any manner in the drafting of the output to be submitted to the Council. An applicant later found out to have obtained assistance from any person in the course of the written examination shall be disqualified from being nominated, or if already appointed may be subjected to disciplinary action.

Applicants who will take the written exam shall be required to make visible their faces and their screens in the chosen application, and the exam shall be under oath. At the end of the four (4) hours, the applicant shall send the accomplished exam via email to the official JBC email account ([jbc87supremecourt@gmail.com](mailto:jbc87supremecourt@gmail.com)).

## **Online Interview**

The JBC Members shall use the court-issued laptops that have been set up with the online conference software application for both the online one-on-one and public interviews.

The OPDR shall assist in the conduct of online public interviews and coordinate with the Supreme Court Public Information Office (SC-PIO) for the live-streaming of the interviews so that questions can still be sent through the JBC's official Twitter and Facebook accounts in real time.

## **V. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

In compliance with the directive of Administrative Circular No. 39-2020, the Chiefs of Offices and their respective skeleton staff will be ready anytime the Chief Justice requires them to report to the Court on any of the days from 18 to 29 May 2020.

The OPDR, in coordination with the OAFS, shall be responsible for monitoring the overall implementation of the project in coordination with all operating offices and offices of the regular and ex-officio JBC members. The OPDR will ensure that each office is well-equipped and personnel are adequately briefed to mobilize said project.

Adopted this 18<sup>th</sup> day of May 2020.

APPROVED:



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