
The CIMA Arbitration and Mediation Rules 2025 in Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

The *CIMA Arbitration and Mediation Rules 2025* represent a landmark development in the global architecture of dispute resolution. The Rules combine efficiency, digital readiness, and cultural sensitivity to create an accessible, credible, and technologically forward-looking arbitral regime. This article examines the principal advantages of the CIMA Rules, analyses their normative innovations, and situates them within a comparative framework alongside the ICC, LCIA, DIFC, and UNCITRAL Rules. The paper argues that CIMA's approach heralds a new arbitral paradigm—one that bridges global sophistication and regional authenticity.

1. Introduction

For decades, international arbitration has been dominated by institutions such as the **ICC**, **LCIA**, and **SIAC**, whose frameworks reflect the procedural traditions and economic realities of developed jurisdictions. While effective, these systems often marginalise regional perspectives, particularly those of developing economies. The *Center for International Mediators and Arbitrators (CIMA)*, headquartered in Oxford and Accra, seeks to reverse this imbalance by creating rules that reflect the **Global South's realities** while remaining globally enforceable.

The **CIMA Arbitration and Mediation Rules 2025** (hereinafter *CIMA Rules*) promote procedural integrity, technological integration, and ethical governance in dispute resolution. They blend local **pragmatism** with **international best practice**.

2. Structural and Conceptual Innovations in the CIMA Rules

The *CIMA Rules 2025* are structured into five core parts, encompassing general provisions, tribunal constitution, proceedings, awards, and mediation. Beyond structure, their conceptual innovations stand out:

- **Hybrid Dispute Resolution Framework:** The Rules harmonise arbitration and mediation, allowing parties to transition seamlessly between both mechanisms (Rule 32).
- **Digital Integration:** Explicit provisions recognise online hearings, AI-assisted management, and e-filing, reflecting post-pandemic realities.
- **Ethics and Cybersecurity:** A distinct CIMA Code of Ethics establishes cybersecurity and independence standards absent in many existing frameworks.
- **Procedural Efficiency:** The Rules set enforceable timelines for pleadings, awards, and costs, curbing delays endemic to traditional arbitration.
- **Accessibility:** They are cost-transparent, inclusive, and designed to accommodate regional linguistic and infrastructural diversity.

These innovations are not merely procedural refinements—they represent a philosophical shift towards **accessible arbitral justice** for developing economies.

3. Fifteen Distinct Advantages of the CIMA Rules

The *CIMA Rules* present at least fifteen unique advantages that underscore their relevance in contemporary arbitral practice:

- Integration of Arbitration and Mediation (Med-Arb).
- AI and Digital-Readiness for ODR proceedings.
- Expedited and Emergency Arbitration Procedures.
- Regional Authenticity Coupled with Global Standards.
- Streamlined Arbitrator Appointment Process.
- Transparent and Predictable Cost Structure.
- Enforceable Procedural Timelines.
- Flexible Seat and Language Determination.
- Enhanced Ethics and Independence Requirements.
- Comprehensive Tribunal Powers.
- Joinder and Consolidation Provisions.
- Confidentiality Protection.
- Merit-Based Cost Allocation Principles.
- Incentivised Mediation Mechanisms.
- AI and Crypto-ready Provisions

Together, these provisions make CIMA the most forward-looking arbitral institution operating within the Commonwealth and Africa, while retaining enforcement credibility under the New York Convention.

4. Comparative Analysis: CIMA, ICC, LCIA, DIFC, and UNCITRAL

4.1 Institutional Character

CIMA functions as a **regional-global hybrid**, registered under Ghanaian law and operating under the oversight of **CIMA Global (UK)**. The ICC and LCIA are private institutions, whereas UNCITRAL is ad hoc and state-based. The CIMA model balances institutional supervision with party autonomy.

4.2 Technological Integration

While ICC and LCIA permit remote hearings, CIMA is **AI-native**, embedding e-filing, online evidence management, and cybersecurity duties directly into its Rules. The DIFC-LCIA hybrid partially mirrors this innovation, though without CIMA's explicit AI language.

4.3 Appointment and Diversity

CIMA's approach ensures **geographical and gender diversity** in appointments, avoiding the Western-centric tendencies of the ICC and LCIA rosters. Its *Regional Appointment Framework* prioritises inclusivity and equitable representation.

4.4 Procedural Economy

Unlike UNCITRAL, which leaves timelines to party discretion, CIMA enforces defined limits for tribunal constitution and award delivery—**three months post-hearing closure**—thereby enhancing predictability.

4.5 Costs and Accessibility

The ICC calculates fees as a percentage of the amount in dispute, while LCIA and DIFC-LCIA use hourly models. CIMA's **fixed fee schedule** is transparent, predictable, and accessible for SMEs and state entities alike.

4.6 Ethical and Cybersecurity Regime

CIMA alone codifies a **Cybersecurity and Ethics Charter**, addressing data protection, independence, and AI governance—issues largely implied but not explicit in ICC or UNCITRAL frameworks.

4.7 Integration of Mediation

Whereas ICC and LCIA maintain separate mediation frameworks, CIMA embeds mediation within its arbitration architecture, promoting early settlement and procedural flexibility.

5. CIMA's Normative Contribution to the Global Arbitral Order

CIMA's contribution transcends procedural reform—it represents an **ideological rebalancing**. The CIMA Rules promote equity, participation, and self-determination. They redefine legitimacy not by geography, but by **competence, innovation, and accessibility**.

CIMA's digitalisation agenda—anchored in AI and Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)—signals a decisive shift towards what may be termed **Arbitration 4.0**: a model where technology, sustainability, and inclusivity converge to redefine justice delivery in cross-border disputes.

6. Conclusion: A New Standard for the Global South

The *CIMA Arbitration and Mediation Rules 2025* mark a historic step in the evolution of international dispute resolution. They reflect Africa's readiness not only to participate in but to **lead the global discourse on arbitral innovation**. While ICC and LCIA remain established arbitral pillars, the CIMA Rules inject a long-needed balance—modern, accessible, ethical, and technologically intelligent.

As cross-border commerce expands and digital transactions multiply, institutions like CIMA will determine whether the next era of arbitration will remain Eurocentric or evolve into a **truly global, pluralistic, and digitally empowered system of justice**.

Keywords:

CIMA Rules 2025, International Arbitration, Mediation, ODR, Africa, ICC, LCIA, UNCITRAL, DIFC, ADR Reform, Legal Technology