

Court registries to resume normal operating hours and special ticketing arrangements to cease shortly

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary announced today (April 16) that taking into account the latest public health situation and the surge in court business upon reopening these few days, the registries at different levels of court will progressively resume their normal operations from next week. From April 20, the operating hours of the registries and accounts offices of all levels of court will return to normal and the special ticketing arrangements at the High Court Registry will cease. Ticketing arrangements for a few remaining courts will also be ceased as soon as practicable.

Resumption of normal registry operating hours

In light of the normal resumption of most public services, with effect from April 20, the operating hours of all registries and account offices will resume as normal, i.e. from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 5.30pm (Monday to Friday, except public holidays) or as from their relevant dates of reopening. The operating hours of other offices which provide support services to court users will also resume as normal as set out in the Annex.

Special queuing and ticketing arrangements for registry business upon the first few days of reopening

In anticipation of a surge in registry business during the initial period of reopening after the General Adjournment of Proceedings (GAP), the Judiciary expanded the scope of registry business during the last week of the GAP (i.e. from April 4 to 11) to clear part of the accumulated backlog during the GAP period. This has been effective in reducing a substantial volume of court documents which would have otherwise been filed to court during the first few days of registry reopening from April 12.

Taking into account past operational experience (from 2020 onwards) of coping with the upsurge in service demand which may stretch beyond the daily handling capacity of registry services during the initial period of reopening, it is necessary to put in place special queuing and ticketing arrangements at individual registries during the first few days of reopening to avoid crowding, regulate people flow and ensure orderly admission of court users. These special ticketing arrangements for individual services will be adjusted or ceased as soon as the upsurge in service demand has subsided.

High Court Registry

For the High Court Registry, the above arrangements have effectively mitigated the impact of the surge in demand of registry services since its reopening on April 12. Tickets were still available until later in the morning on April 14. It is expected that the situation will continue to improve on April 19. The Judiciary will cease the special ticketing arrangements from April 20. Court users will be able to go to the Registry for service any time during the operating hours. They are also encouraged to make use of the "drop box" services where appropriate.

District Court Registry, Family Court Registry and Lands Tribunal Registry

For the District Court Registry, tickets were still available until late morning on the first day of reopening on April 14. While special ticketing arrangements will remain on April 19, the Judiciary will monitor the situation closely with a view to ceasing such arrangements if the surge in demand subsides in a few days' time. Court users are also encouraged to make use of the "drop box" services where appropriate.

The Family Court Registry and the Lands Tribunal Registry will reopen on April 20 and 21 respectively with the special ticketing arrangements during their initial reopening period. The ticketing arrangements will cease in a few days' time after reopening once the demand for registry services resumes as normal.

Despite the gradual cessation of the special ticketing arrangements, appropriate queuing and other crowd management arrangements will be put in place to regulate people flow of the registries, where appropriate. To maintain social distancing, capacity limits will also remain in force.

Other courts and tribunals

For other courts and tribunals, there are no more special ticketing arrangements.

"Drop Box" arrangements

To reduce queuing pressure, the Judiciary has introduced "drop box" arrangements at the various registries of the High Court and the District Court for filing court documents which do not require immediate processing any time during the registry operating hours without the need for ticketing. Extra registry staff have been deployed to provide on-site guidance and assistance for court users so that most of those court documents not requiring immediate counter service can be filed to the court efficiently during this initial period of reopening when the volume of registry business is exceptionally high.

The Judiciary intends to extend the use of drop boxes for around two

weeks after the first few days of reopening. Court users are highly encouraged to make good use of this service instead of queuing for counter services.

Taking into account the demand for registry business, the need for crowd management and social distancing requirements, the Judiciary will continue to closely monitor the situation and adjust the arrangements where appropriate.

Court users are advised to check the updated information on the Judiciary website (www.judiciary.hk) and follow the advice of Judiciary staff and security personnel when they attend for court business.