

Online Mediator Skills Development Course – Programme Overview

ADR Technology Group (ADR-TG) has developed the Mediation Practice Lab, an online course and AI-powered simulation platform designed to address a gap consistently reported by newly accredited mediators: theoretical competence without sufficient practical confidence. This overview responds to your request for detail on the course content, target audience, mode of delivery, assessment approach, and the simulation module specifically.

1. Target Audience

The course is aimed at mediators who have completed foundational accreditation training and want to build the confidence and practical fluency to take on real cases. It is equally suited to:

- Newly accredited mediators preparing for their first mediation
- Practising mediators wanting structured refresher practice across dispute types
- RMO members seeking CPD-aligned, practice-based skills development

The course is designed around the premise that confidence is built through repetition of the moments mediators find hardest in the room. The Practice Lab gives mediators that repetition without needing a real case, a real client, or a real risk.

2. Course Content

The programme is structured across seven modules, combining knowledge-based learning with applied practice. The full module sequence is set out below.

#	Module	Component	
1	Foundations of Mediation	Knowledge	
2	Active Listening	Knowledge Application	+
3	Reframing Techniques	Knowledge Application	+
4	Managing High Conflict	Knowledge Application	+
5	Interest-Based Negotiation	Knowledge Application	+
6	Generating Options	Knowledge	+

#	Module	Component
		Application
7	Drafting Agreements	Application
8	Full Mediation Simulation	Application (Simulation)

2.1 Modules 1–7: Knowledge and Skills Foundation

These modules cover the core competencies required of a confident, capable mediator. Each combines a short video introduction, theory content, a brief formative quiz, and, where relevant, a supporting journal article with reflective assessment questions:

- Module 1: Foundations of Mediation: core principles, process, and the mediator's role
- Module 2: Active Listening. Article: Nasir, Dahlan, Rahman & Saifuddin (2025), International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science – active listening, procedural fairness, and legitimacy in community mediation
- Module 3: Reframing Techniques. Article: Wilson (2021), ResearchGate – revisiting reframing and the impact of 'spin' in mediation
- Module 4: Managing High Conflict. Article: Muller & Swanepoel (2023), Law, Democracy and Development – mediation as a way to de-escalate conflict, with a focus on medico-legal claims
- Module 5: Interest-Based Negotiation. Article: De Villiers (1999), South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences – interest-based bargaining and the role of trust between employer and employee
- Module 6: Generating Options. Article: Keet (2017), Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution – informed decision-making in judicial mediation and the assessment of litigation risk
- Module 7: Drafting Agreements: practical training in drafting settlement and parenting agreements that will hold up to real-world use

2.2 Module 8: Full Mediation Simulation

This is the applied core of the course and the point at which all preceding modules are brought together. Mediators run a complete, branching mediation in role, with AI playing the disputing parties from opening statement through to resolution or impasse. This is detailed further in Section 5 below.

3. Mode of Delivery

The course is delivered fully digitally via ADR-TG's Learning Management System (LMS), with Moodle-based access control. Mediators can work through the content at their own pace, with all video, theory, quiz, simulation, and debrief components hosted within a single, secure learning environment. No physical attendance or fixed scheduling is required, which makes the course accessible to mediators across South Africa regardless of location.

4. Assessment

Assessment is built into the LMS and is continuous rather than exam-based. It consists of:

- Short formative quizzes embedded in each knowledge module, testing understanding of core concepts
- Reflective written assessments linked to the supporting journal article in Modules 2 to 6
- Performance in the Full Mediation Simulation (Module 8), assessed through structured coaching feedback after each session
- A practical drafting exercise in Module 7, producing a settlement or parenting agreement

This combination allows the course to evidence both conceptual understanding and demonstrated practical competence, with all results tracked and recorded automatically within the LMS for CPD or portfolio purposes.

5. The Simulation Module

The simulation module is what distinguishes this course from conventional mediation training. Mediators engage in live, text-based roleplay against an AI system that plays the disputing parties with realistic emotional range, conflicting positions, and resistance, the same dynamics a mediator would encounter in a real session.

Scenarios currently span four dispute streams:

- Commercial disputes
- Family and divorce matters
- Workplace disputes
- Personal injury and Road Accident Fund claims

Within each scenario, mediators can select different difficulty levels, from cooperative parties through to guarded or resistant ones, allowing deliberate practice of the specific moments mediators tend to find hardest: managing impasse, de-escalating high

emotion, reframing entrenched positions, and managing power imbalances between parties.

After each session, the mediator receives structured coaching feedback against recognised mediation competencies, and can repeat the same or a different scenario as many times as needed. Because there is no real client and no real consequence, mediators can practise the moments that would otherwise only be encountered, and risked, in a live case.

6. About the Course Developer

The Mediation Practice Lab has been developed by Mark Collett, Director of ADR Technology Group, drawing on close to 20 years of engagement with mediation in South Africa.

- A research Master's degree from Stellenbosch University, with a dissertation examining the experiences of social workers mediating in terms of the Children's Act
- Research in this area has informed policy-level engagement, including contribution to the South African Law Reform Commission's work on mediation policy reform (Project 100A)
- Approximately 20 years' engagement with the ADR field, including full-time private mediation practice across family, workplace, commercial, property, and community matters
- Three separate 40-hour mediation training completions: MISA (2006), FAMAC (2009), and ADR Group UK (2012)
- Founding member of DiSAC and NABFAM and member of the team that compiled the Framework and Standards for those bodies
- Subsequent senior leadership experience in Learning and Development, applied directly to the design and pedagogy of this course

This combination of academic research, sustained practice experience, and instructional design background underpins both the course content and the realism built into the simulation scenarios.