



WILL REGISTRATION IN THE UAE: WHAT MOST PEOPLE OVERLOOK

A. INTRODUCTION

There is a common assumption that drafting a Will is a relatively straightforward exercise – you decide who receives your assets, sign the document and register it. In the UAE, the process itself can indeed appear simple. With various registration options available, and a growing number of service providers offering fixed-fee packages, putting a Will in place has become more accessible than ever. However, what is often less visible at the outset is that not all Wills are created equal. While the registration process may be procedural, the content of the Will and the thought process behind it can vary significantly depending on how and by whom it is prepared.

B. UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Many individuals understandably opt for lower-cost or standardised Will drafting services. These offerings are typically designed to be efficient, accessible and suitable for individuals with relatively straightforward circumstances. However, these services often operate within a more structured framework, relying on templates or predefined formats. While practical, this can sometimes limit the degree to which the Will is tailored to a client's specific personal, financial or cross-border circumstances.

By contrast, a well-considered Will typically involves a more advisory-led process. This usually includes:

- A detailed review of the client's asset profile (including assets across multiple jurisdictions)

- Consideration of family dynamics, including guardianship, dependents and future planning
- Guidance on structuring provisions within the Will (rather than simply recording instructions)
- Ongoing discussions to refine and stress-test the proposed arrangements

In this sense, the process is not limited to producing a document but rather focused on ensuring the document works as intended.

C. WHERE THE DIFFERENCES BECOME MATERIAL

The distinction between these approaches often becomes more relevant in situations where a client's circumstances extend beyond the most straightforward scenarios. This may include individuals with assets in multiple jurisdictions, families with minor children and guardianship considerations or those looking to control how and when assets are distributed rather than simply identifying beneficiaries. In such cases, a Will is not simply about "who gets what," but also about how, when and under what conditions assets are transferred.

An often-overlooked aspect of Will preparation is practical experience in probate. Those involved in both estate planning and probate proceedings can see, first-hand, how Wills may be interpreted. This provides valuable insight into how certain clauses operate in practice, which provisions may give rise to ambiguity or delay and how courts and registries apply the terms of a Will. Drafting that is informed by this experience tends to reflect a clearer understanding of how the document will function when it is ultimately relied upon.

D. IMPLICATIONS IN PRACTICE

None of this suggests that one approach is universally "right" and the other "wrong." For individuals with straightforward assets and circumstances, a standardised Will may well be sufficient. However, where greater complexity exists – or where a client is seeking a higher degree of certainty – the differences in approach can have tangible implications

These differences may affect how smoothly the probate process is carried out, whether the Will accurately captures all assets (including future acquisitions) and the clarity of provisions relating to guardianship and dependents. They can also influence the likelihood of disputes or administrative delays, as well as the overall ease with which the client's wishes are ultimately implemented. A Will is, at its core, a forward-looking document – one that only takes effect when it is no longer possible to clarify intent.

Understanding the differences in how that document is prepared is what allows individuals to make an informed choice about the level of support they require. If you or someone you know would like to explore estate planning or register a UAE Will, our team at [Meyer-Reumann & Partners](#) will be pleased to help and assist. Get in touch with us by emailing our lawyer Natacha El Azar at natacha@meyer-reumann.com.

For those looking to better understand the available Will registration options in the UAE, including the differences between the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department and DIFC Courts, we have explored this in more detail in a separate article [here](#).

**Please note this article is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.*

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