Fealty Partners Legal Tea:

Key Provisions On The Supreme Court Electronic Filing Practice Directions, 2026



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1.0 Introduction

The Supreme Court (Mandatory Upload of Electronic Copies of Processes, Record of Appeal, and Other Matters) Practice Directions, 2026, signed by the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Kudirat Olatokunbo Kekere-Ekun, GCON, on 30 June 2026 and effective from 1 July 2026, represent a significant milestone in the digital transformation of Nigeria's judicial system. The Practice Directions introduce a mandatory framework for the electronic submission of court processes and records of appeal through the Nigeria Case Management System (NCMS), with the objective of improving efficiency, transparency, and timely justice delivery.

2.0 Overview of the Practice Directive

1. Applicability:

The Practice Directions apply to all matters before the Supreme Court, including both pending cases and those commenced after the coming into force of the Practice Directions.[1] Accordingly, every appeal or application before the Court is required to comply with the provisions of the Practice Directions, irrespective of when the proceedings were instituted.

Mandatory Submission of Electronic Copies: Parties and their counsel are now required to upload electronic copies of all records of appeal and court processes filed in proceedings before the Supreme Court.[2]

For pending matters that is, proceedings commenced before 1 July 2026 each party is required to upload both the processes it has filed and all processes served on it by the other parties. This ensures that complete electronic case files are available for matters that predate the commencement of the Practice Directions.

In contrast, for matters commenced on or after 1 July 2026, each party is only

1 Para. 2 of the Practice Directions.

2 Para. 4 of the Practice Directions.

required to upload the processes it has personally filed, as all subsequent filings will already be made within the electronic case management framework.

2. Timeline for Submission:

Electronic copies of the Record of Appeal and all other court processes must be uploaded no later than thirty (30) days before the scheduled hearing of the matter. In addition, the corresponding hard copies of the electronically submitted documents must be filed at the Supreme Court Registry within seven (7) days of the electronic upload or at least forty-eight (48) hours before the hearing, whichever occurs first.[3] The Practice Directions further provide that no appeal or application will be listed for hearing once the prescribed deadline has elapsed unless all required electronic copies of the filed processes have been uploaded in compliance with the Practice Directions. This underscores the mandatory nature of the electronic filing requirements and reinforces the Court's commitment to efficient case management.[4] So, don't wait until your hearing date. Upload your electronic documents early and ensure the hard copies reach the Registry on time.

3. Direct Compilation of Records of Appeal:

The Practice Directions introduce a significant procedural innovation by permitting an appellant to compile and transmit the Record of Appeal directly to the Supreme Court, without having to await its compilation by the Registrar of the Court of Appeal.[5]

This marks a notable departure from the previous regime under Order 6 Rule 7 of the Supreme Court Rules, 2024, under which an appellant was generally required to wait for the expiration of the mandatory thirty (30)-day period allowed to the Court of Appeal Registry to compile and transmit the Record of Appeal before acquiring the right to undertake the compilation and transmission inde-

3 Para. 10 of the Practice Directions.

4 Paragraph 11.

5 Paragraph 12.

pendently.

By eliminating this waiting period, the Practice Directions are expected to reduce delays in the transmission of records, expedite the hearing of appeals, and promote a more efficient and technology-driven appellate process before the Supreme Court.

4. Declaration of Authenticity:

Each party/counsel making a submission of electronic copies of records/processes on the Nigeria Case Management System portal is required to make a solemn declaration on oath in the manner provided on the portal affirming that the electronic copies represent a true and complete version of the documents filed in court.[6]

5. Use of Legal Mail for NCMS:

The Nigeria Case Management System (NCMS) shall only be accessed through the Legal Mail issued by the Court or any other email system approved by the Chief Registrar i.e., Lawyers cannot use just any email address to access the Supreme Court's electronic case management system. Access must be through: an official Legal Mail account issued by the Court; or another email platform specifically approved by the Chief Registrar. Only authorised email accounts can be used to access the Supreme Court's electronic filing system.

6. Requirements for Electronic Documents:

Every electronic document must be in OCR-enabled PDF format; and contain a hyperlinked table of contents. That is, all documents uploaded to the Court must be saved as searchable PDF documents (OCR-enabled), so the Court can search for words within the document; and contain clickable links in the table of contents to make navigation easier. The Court wants documents that are searchable and easy to navigate electronically.

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6 Paragraph 9.

7. Fees for Transmission of the Record:

Where an appellant compiles, transmits and uploads the Record of Appeal, the following fees apply: pay the sum of ₦500,000 or such other amount as the Chief Justice may prescribe from time to time; Any party requesting the transmission and uploading of additional copies of the Record of Appeal shall pay ₦250,000 or such other amount as the Chief Justice may prescribe from time to time.

3.0 Advantages Of The Directives On Our Legal System

The introduction of the supreme court's electronic filing system represents a significant step towards the effective integration of technology into the administration of justice. Others include:

1. Expedited Disposal of Appeals:

The mandatory electronic submission of court processes and records of appeal enables Justices and court officials to access case documents more quickly, thereby reducing administrative delays and facilitating the timely determination of appeals.

2. Reduction in Case Backlog:

The digitisation of court records streamlines case management and minimizes delays associated with the preparation, transmission, and retrieval of physical files. This is expected to contribute to reducing the backlog of cases before the Supreme Court.

Improved Case Management: The integration of electronic filing with the Nigeria Case Management System (NCMS) enhances the Court's ability to organise, monitor, and schedule cases efficiently, thereby improving overall judicial administration.

4.0 Challenges

In spite of these advantages, the Practice Directions retain certain provisions which may prejudice the interests of litigants as well as impede the delivery of justice. These challenges will be highlighted in subsequent paragraphs.

1. Transmission and Default Fees:

The Directions mandate an appellant to pay a sum of five hundred thousand naira (N500,000) or an otherwise prescribed amount for compilation and transmission of a record of appeal. A request for the transmission and upload of additional copies is also subject to a fee of two hundred and fifty thousand naira (N250,000) or some other prescribed amount.[7] Though indigent parties may be exempt from this fee,[8] this is however subject to a formal application to the court, as well as a probability of the success of their case.[9] Further, there shall be an additional fee for default to file processes within the stipulated time,[10] and this is a fine of ten thousand naira (N10,000) for each day after the deadline.[11]

The fairness of the quantum of these fees cannot but be re-evaluated, in a country where the minimum wage is seventy thousand naira (N70,000),[12] and over 63% of the population is estimated to live below the poverty line.[13] Thus, though these fees are intended to aid the administration of justice, they may conversely impede the right to access justice, not only of the ultra-poor, but also

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7 Paragraph 15.

8 Paragraph 17.

9 Supreme Court Rules 2024, order 5 rule 3.

10 Paragraph 18 of the Practice Directions.

11 Amendment to Second Schedule of the Supreme Court Rules 2024.

12 Olalekan Adigun, 'Minimum Wage 2026: What every state in Nigeria pays' (Nairametrics, 1 May 2026) <https://nairametrics.com/2026/05/01/minimum-wage-2026-what-every-state-in-nigeria-pays/> accessed 15 July 2026.

13 The World Bank, 'Nigeria's Tomorrow Must Start Today: The Case for Early Childhood Development' (Nigeria Development Update, World Bank 2026) <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099040726024529229/pdf/P513192-aac8242c-b971-4654-bb1c-009497fba827.pdf> accessed 15 July 2026.

of the average Nigerian.

2. Commencement Date:

The Practice Directions were unveiled on 1 July 2026,[14] and came into force on the same day. Upon the commencement of the Directions, they are applicable to all cases pending or initiated before the Supreme Court, as no provisions were made for a grace period. Thus, this may pose a challenge to litigants who have already instituted their cases, as they would not only have to upload the electronic copies of their records within the stipulated period, but also pay higher fees than they would previously have.[15] Further, in the event of a default in filing, occasioned by the short notice of implementation of the new rules, the party would be liable to a fee of ten thousand naira (N10,000), and this is twice the previous penalty.[16]

3. Physical Submission:

Hard copies of documents filed electronically are to be submitted to the registry.[17] This, however is contradictory to the entire aim of digitalisation of the filing process, and the legal provision is unlike the case in countries like China, where e-filing is entirely electronic.[18]

4. Immediate Compulsion:

The Practice Directions are applicable to all matters before the Supreme

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14 Eric Ikhilae, 'Supreme Court begins mandatory electronic filing of documents' The Nation Newspaper (Abuja, 2 July 2026) <https://thenationonlineng.net/supreme-court-begins-mandatory-electronic-filing-of-documents/> accessed 15 July 2026.

15 Supreme Court Rules 2024, Second Schedule.

16 Supreme Court Rules 2024, Second Schedule, 14B.

17 Paragraph 10(2) of the Practice Directions.

18 Nick Beckett and Kelly Chen, 'CMS Expert Guide to Digital Litigation in China' (CMS Law, 11 May 2023) <https://cms.law/en/int/expert-guides/cms-expert-guide-to-digital-litigation/chinahttps://www.adobe.com/in/acrobat/roc/blog/what-is-ocr.html?msockid=1c87712c565467b50fe5640c570166b2> accessed 15 July 2026.

Court,[19] and while this is a good initiative, it also poses certain difficulties. The Directions mandate electronic documents to be submitted in Optical-Character Recognition (OCR) enabled PDFs,[20] which refers to documents which have been converted to a machine-readable format by artificial intelligence and machine learning automation.[21]

However, there may be accuracy issues with this format when scanning handwritten documents, as well as printed documents with faded ink, physical damage, or complex background textures.[22] Further, while OCR-enabled PDFs can be made using an online converter, it is also important to consider the fact that 45% of Nigeria's population lacks basic digital skills.[23]

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of the Practice Directions is to facilitate speedy justice delivery, improve case management, ease access to court records, and aid the administration of justice.[24] Hence, in order to fulfil these objectives, this work recommends the following:

The transmission and default fees should be modified to better accommodate the economic realities of the country, in order to ensure that justice does not become a commodity only available to the wealthy.

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19 Paragraph 2 of the Practice Directions.

20 Paragraph 6.

21 Adobe, 'What is OCR and how does it work?' (Adobe) <https://www.adobe.com/in/acrobat/roc/blog/what-is-ocr.html?msockid=1c87712c565467b50fe5640c570166b2> accessed 15 July 2026.

22 Team DigitalDefynd, '15 Pros & Cons of OCR (Optical Character Recognition)' (DigitalDefynd, 2026) <https://digitaldefynd.com/IQ/optical-character-recognition-pros-cons/> accessed 15 July 2026.

23 StateGlobe, 'Digital Divide Statistics in Nigeria (2026)' (StateGlobe, Updated June 2026) <https://data.stateglobe.com/nigeria/digital-divide-statistics> accessed 15 July 2026.

24 Paragraph 1 of the Practice Directions.

A grace period may be given for cases initiated before the issuance of the Practice Directions to comply with electronic filing, in order to allow both litigants and counsel to understand the e-filing system, as well as to be adequately prepared for its utility.

The provision mandating submission of hard-copies of electronically filed documents should be reviewed.

Rather than immediately mandating the use of e-filing for all cases before the Supreme Court, both electronic and physical filing can be used concurrently for a specified period, in order to enable legal practitioners to become accustomed to the system. During this transition period, the use of the e-filing system can be incentivised, for example, through the provision of lower fees for applications filed online than those filed physically.

If you require further clarity on these issues, do not hesitate to contact us.