Adrian Hughes KC

Year of Call **1984**
Silk **2006**



Profile

Adrian Hughes KC acts as counsel and arbitrator with a broad international and UK construction and commercial practice. He focuses on complex contract disputes spanning a wide range of sectors, including construction and engineering, energy and natural resources, international trade, shipbuilding, transport and infrastructure, investment and public international law, information and communication technology and commercial disputes including agency, insurance and joint venture cases.

Whilst his domestic practice centres on the Technology & Construction Court and the Commercial Court, the majority of his work involves international arbitration and associated court proceedings. He regularly conducts commercial and construction arbitration work as counsel in many different jurisdictions. Recent cases have included major international arbitrations arising from power and infrastructure projects in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia, with seats in London, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Dubai and China.

Adrian increasingly sits as arbitrator in international disputes, as president, party nominated arbitrator or sole arbitrator, appointed by all the main international institutions. He also acts as chairperson and member of dispute boards for international construction projects as well as mediator and adjudicator.

He has a leading practice relating to China and regularly conducts advocacy and advisory work involving Chinese parties. Recent cases have included a number of prominent international arbitration and court cases in, and related to, China. He is instructed as expert to the Great Britain China Centre / Foreign Office on UK / China Arbitration and Dispute Resolution, and is on the advisory board of the Oxford University Belt and Road Institute directed at the impact of China's outbound investment policy. He acts as expert witness on English law issues and was the first English barrister to act in this capacity in Chinese commercial court proceedings.

His early practice included extensive Supreme Court and Commercial Court proceedings arising from the collapse of the International Tin Council, involving issues of public and private international law relating to the enforceability of arbitration awards against an international organisation and its Member States. This experience carries through to public and private international law issues arising in his current work.

He sits as a part time judge, having for a number of years acted as Recorder and Examiner of the Court, and has recently been appointed to the Court of Appeal of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. He is a past Chair of the UK Society of Construction Law (SCL), the country's leading multi-disciplinary construction law association.

International Arbitration

Adrian has many years of experience as arbitrator in international commercial arbitration, including acting as Presiding Arbitrator, Party Nominated Arbitrator and Sole Arbitrator in numerous international commercial arbitrations over the last twenty years.

He regularly sits as arbitrator in proceedings under a variety of arbitration rules, including the International Chamber of Commerce ("ICC"), the United Nations Commission on Trade Law ("UNCITRAL"), London Court of International Arbitration ("LCIA"), Singapore International Arbitration Centre ("SIAC"), Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre ("HKIAC"), Stockholm Chamber of Commerce ("SCC"), and the Dubai International Arbitration Chamber ("DIAC"), including the former DIFC/LCIA. He has a specialist knowledge of arbitration and dispute resolution in China and sits on several panels in China including CIETAC, SHIAC, SCIA and CCPIT (Mediation Panel). He also acts as chairperson and member of dispute adjudication boards for international construction projects.

Adrian is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, a former Chair of the Society of Construction Law and a member of the Society of Construction Arbitrators.

Current and Recent International Arbitral Appointments Include:

- Presiding Arbitrator (ICC) in a dispute arising from the construction of a gas plant in Saudi Arabia (applicable law – Saudi Arabian law; seat in London).
- Chairman DAB (ICC) for a dispute arising from Combined Cycle Power Plant in Iraq (applicable law – Iraqi law; seat in London).
- Presiding Arbitrator (SIAC) in a dispute arising from the supply and construction of compressors for an oil refinery in Thailand (applicable law – English law; seat in Singapore).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (LCIA) in an extensive dispute arising from the construction of a nuclear power plant in Abu Dhabi (applicable law – English law; seat in London).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (ICC) in a dispute arising from the design and construction of a solar photo-voltaic plant in Africa (applicable law – English law; seat in London).
- Presiding Arbitrator (ICC) in a dispute arising from the design and supply of a plant for the manufacture of plastic packaging (applicable law – English law; seat in London).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (LCIA) in a dispute arising from the design and construction of a hydropower plant in Africa (applicable law – English law; seat in London).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (SCC) in a dispute arising from the construction of a coal fired power station in Brazil (applicable law – Brazilian law; seat in Stockholm).
- Party nominated DAB member (ad hoc) in a dispute arising from the construction of a coal fired power station in South Africa (applicable law – South African law; seat in Johannesburg).
- Presiding Arbitrator (DIFC-LCIA) in a dispute over an agency agreement for the marketing of IT technology (applicable law – English law; seat in London).
- Presiding Arbitrator (LCIA) in a company share purchase dispute in the aviation sector (applicable law – English law; seat in London).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (SIAC) for a dispute arising from contracts for the purchase and sale of aircraft (applicable law – Singapore; seat in Singapore).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (UNCITRAL) for a dispute arising from a power and water purchase agreement in Saudi Arabia (applicable law – Saudi Arabian law; seat in Bahrain).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (AIAC) for a dispute arising from a power purchase agreement for a power plant located in East Malaysia (applicable law – Malaysian law; seat in Kuala Lumpur).
- Presiding Arbitrator (ICC) in a high value dispute arising from a government construction project in Qatar (applicable law – Qatar law; seat in Doha).
- Presiding Arbitrator (CIETAC, Beijing) for a construction dispute arising from the construction of the world's largest warehouse complex in Wuhan, China (applicable law – PRC law; seat in Beijing).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (ICC) in a high value dispute arising from a residential construction project in Qatar (applicable law – Qatar law; seat in Doha).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (DIFC/LCIA) for a construction dispute arising from a project in Abu Dhabi (applicable law – Abu-Dhabi/UAE; seat in Dubai/DIFC).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (DIFC/LCIA) for a construction dispute arising from an iconic commercial development in Dubai (applicable law – Dubai/UAE law; seat in Dubai/DIFC).
- Party nominated DAB member for a dispute arising from an airport project in Oman (applicable law – Oman; seat in London).

- Party nominated arbitrator (ICC) in a dispute arising from the design and construction of a city metro project (applicable law – Qatar law; seat in Doha).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (LCIA) in a dispute arising from construction of support base and facilities within an oilfield in Iraq (applicable law – Iraqi law; seat in London).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (ICC) for a dispute between Malaysian and French parties over a construction project in Kuala Lumpur (applicable law – Malaysian law; seat in Kuala Lumpur).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (ICC) for a dispute arising from a highways project in Sierra Leone (applicable law – Sierra Leone; seat in London).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (ICC) for a dispute arising from a highways construction project in Poland (applicable law – Polish law; seat in Warsaw).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (Shanghai International Arbitration Centre) for an IP dispute between US and Chinese parties relating to plastics manufacturing technology (applicable law – Chinese law; seat in Shanghai).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (LCIA) for a dispute arising from the termination of a major IT project in Asia, affected by sanctions (applicable law – English law; seat in London).
- Party nominated Arbitrator (HKIAC) for a dispute between Chinese and Hong Kong parties arising from a major IT project in mainland China relating to computer screen technology (applicable law – Hong Kong law; seat in Hong Kong).
- Sole Arbitrator (ICC appointment) in a dispute over a distribution and marketing agreement covering the Middle East in the pharma sector (applicable law – English law; seat in London).
- Sole Arbitrator (ICC appointment) in an international sales dispute between suppliers of oil slurry feed pumps and main contractor for an oil and gas project in Asia (applicable law – English law; seat in London).
- Member of the panel of arbitrators under the Host Broadcasting Agreement for the First European Games in Baku, Azerbaijan.

He has conducted many domestic arbitrations as sole arbitrator particularly arising from construction disputes and Lloyds' insurance disputes.

Commercial

Adrian's commercial practice as counsel includes international arbitration and litigation in the Commercial Court in London and before foreign courts, often involving jurisdiction and conflicts issues.

Experience Includes:

- Acting for a major international telecommunications organisation based in Paris in a Commercial Court dispute with a pipe laying company, arising from the laying of the world's longest sub-sea fibre optic telecommunications pipeline between Singapore and India. The case involved court jurisdiction challenges both in London and in Singapore.
- Acting for a major Chinese bank in relation to a series of London arbitrations concerning refund guarantees for ship building contracts.
- Acting for an Australian mining company in ICC Singapore arbitration proceedings arising from mining operations in Indonesia and involving pricing issues for long term contracts.
- Acting for a joint venture partner in connection with a share warranty dispute before the courts in Hong Kong and China arising from a large scale joint venture investment in the agricultural sector in China.
- Acting in three large international arbitrations on behalf of the world's leading manufacturer of military flight training equipment (based in the United States) against the UK government, the most recent of which, conducted under LCIA rules, involved a claim for damages for breach of a government procurement contract for the design and supply of both hardware and software for aviation maintenance trainers.
- Acting for a Chinese shipyard in an LCIA arbitration arising from a dispute with a Polish seller over the sale of engineering equipment.
- Representing a Chinese cocoa trader in FCC arbitration proceedings in London.
- Representing a Malaysian buyer in a GAFTA arbitration and Commercial Court proceedings with an Australian seller of grain.
- Representing a Ukrainian company in ICC proceedings in a dispute arising from the sale of aluminium.
- Acting for a French international hotel chain in a LCIA arbitration involving claims under hotel chain franchise and consultancy agreements.
- Acting for a large charitable institution in relation to agency commission claims brought by a fine art dealer in connection with the purchase of three world-renowned paintings.

Construction, Engineering and Infrastructure Disputes

Adrian's construction and engineering practice is closely allied to his commercial work. His international practice largely involves international arbitration of major infrastructure and energy projects. His domestic work involves large scale disputes in the Technology and Construction Court, and associated appeal proceedings, often arising from PFI, PPP or NEC partnering contracts and covering a wide range of sectors including highways, rail, hospitals, education and utilities. He is also very experienced in the conduct and enforcement of adjudications.

Experience Includes:

- Representing a Chinese state owned power company in ICC London proceedings arising from the construction of the world's largest power and desalination plant in Saudi Arabia.
- Representing a Korean contractor in LCIA London proceedings arising from the construction of an Ethylene Vinyl Acetate plant in Saudi Arabia.
- Acting for a marine works contractor in connection with an ICC arbitration in Singapore arising from the construction of a desalination plant in Algeria.
- Acting for the employer in a $US2 billion dispute in the Dubai International Arbitration Centre arising from a landmark construction project in Dubai.
- Acting for and advising the UK Government (Highways Agency) in a series of disputes arising from Term Contracts for Highways Maintenance (based on the NEC3 form of contract).
- Advising a major building contractor in its dispute with a City Council arising from a major public sector housing Framework Agreement.
- Leading the team acting for local authorities in the UK in relation to a string of adjudication and court disputes arising from PFI projects for the construction and operation of schools.
- Acting for the contractor and professional advisers in a series of reported TCC cases brought by a high net worth individual arising from the development of a historic estate in Herefordshire.
- Acting for a major rail company in the UK in relation to adjudications arising from PPP term maintenance contracts for the London underground.
- Acting for the joint venture main contractor in a £100m arbitration claim arising from the construction of an underground rail extension involving complex engineering issues, delay analysis and sustainability of global claims.
- Acting in the Court of Appeal for the insurer in subrogated proceedings arising from a fire claim.
- Acting for a national supermarket chain in a multi-million pound facilities management claim brought by the contractor in connection with their contract to provide services to 370 supermarkets.
- Acting for the joint venture contractor in claims arising from PFI Hospitals contracts.
- Acting for the joint venture contractor in arbitration proceedings relating to substructure works for a major national river crossing project.

International – China

Adrian has a long-established international arbitration practice in, and connected with, Asia and the Far East. In particular, this involves acting for clients from China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Korea.

He occupies a unique position at the English Bar in relation to his work in China. Originally stemming from his running of the Lord Chancellor's Training Scheme for Chinese Lawyers in London, he has developed a relationship with many of the main law firms in China and regularly conducts advisory and advocacy work upon direct instruction from Chinese law firms. He chairs the Bar Council's China Committee.

He also acts as expert witness on English Law issues and was the first barrister to appear in this capacity in Chinese commercial court proceedings in the landmark case of *Hua An v Lehman* in the Shanghai High Court.

Recent Asia-related international arbitrations have involved a number of major cases instructed by Chinese and Korean contractors, arising from their work on power and infrastructure projects in North Africa and the Middle East, as well as high value arbitrations for Asian clients in Hong Kong, Singapore and London.

Cases of Note

- Representing a Chinese state owned power company in ICC London proceedings arising from the construction of the world's largest power and desalination plant in Saudi Arabia.
- Representing a Chinese state owned power company in LCIA London proceedings arising from the construction of a desalination and power plant in Iraq.
- Representing a major Chinese bank in LCIA and LMAA arbitration proceedings arising from refund guarantees supporting a series of ship building contracts.
- Representing a Chinese shipyard in a ship building arbitration in London (LCIA) in a dispute with a Polish company arising from over 30 contracts together with enforcement proceedings arising from the successful award.
- Acting for a Chinese investor in an ICC arbitration concerning a joint venture project in a copper mine in Spain.
- Acting for a Chinese manufacturer in a CIETAC arbitration concerning a dispute over intellectual property rights.
- Acting for a Chinese contractor in its claim for delay and disruption costs arising from an extensive housing refurbishment contract for the Hong Kong government (Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre).

Technology and Cryptoassets

Adrian has substantial experience in IT disputes. His work includes disputes arising from hardware and software contracts and licensing agreements. He regularly acts for employers, suppliers and designers in providing advice during the course of projects and in representing clients in court and arbitration proceedings.

Experience Includes:

- Acting for a high profile national football club against a designer/supplier in relation to a contract for a new computerised ticketing system for the club; case gave rise to issues of contract interpretation, fitness for purpose and performance.
- Acting for a leading company providing integrated networks in an action brought by a software designer and supplier in the Birmingham TCC in connection with the design and provision of a state of the art data management system.
- Acting in two large international arbitrations which involved issues as to the extent to which the employer could develop the software specification during the course of the project.
- Acting for contractor in relation to contract for the design and supply of automated car production system involving complex software issues.
- Acting for licensee in an international dispute over alleged breaches of a software licensing and distribution agreement.
- Instructed by IT supplier in relation to a dispute over a contract for the provision of online learning for an educational provider. Also acting for the employer in a dispute with designer and supplier of computerised administration and information database for a national teachers association.
- Acting for the designer and supplier in claim for damages for termination of software contract for digital

television access equipment.

Professional Negligence

Adrian maintains a wide-ranging and substantial professional liability practice. He acts for and against accountants, auditors, valuers, architects, engineers and surveyors and IT professionals.

Experience Includes:

- Acting for the developer in professional negligence claims against engineer and architect arising from a fasade collapse during an iconic reconstruction project in Bradford City Centre. The case involved complex liability and causation issues, together with previously untested damages and valuation issues.
- Acting on behalf of a well-known architect in long running adjudication and multiple court proceedings arising from the design and redevelopment of a historic estate in Herefordshire.
- Acting for structural engineers in relation to the design and foundations of a large warehouse in the Port of Tilbury in London, involving technical design issues as well as the extent of the duty to supervise construction.
- Acting for one of the professional defendants in a widely publicised matter concerning a local authority leisure centre in Hackney, London. The dispute arose from a £20m claim by the local authority for damages arising from the design and construction of a landmark leisure centre.
- Representing valuers in a £40m negligence claim arising from Enterprise Zone Trust investments which raised complex issues of reliance and existence of loss.
- Acting for the employer against architects in relation to a large riverside housing development in the north east of England.
- Acting for investigative accountants in connection with a report prepared for company investors, involving issues of performance, reliance and quantum.

Energy and Natural Resources

A strong part of Adrian’s construction and commercial practice relates to the energy sector. This work ranges from his international arbitration cases relating to power and process plants, and mining contracts, to a domestic caseload relating in particular to the commercial and engineering aspects of projects for renewable energy. He leads an international initiative between the UK and Azerbaijan aimed at the development of energy arbitration work, chairing the newly formed bilateral association BALA (British Azerbaijani Law Association).

Experience Includes:

- Acting for a Dutch company specialising in converting waste gas to energy in their dispute with the employer arising from a pioneering waste gas to energy plant in south-east England.
- Acting for the German claimant company in relation to commercial issues relating to the development of its biogas business including licensing and distribution in the context of ongoing proceedings in the Chancery Division.
- Acting for an Australian mining company in ICC Singapore arbitration proceedings arising from mining operations in Indonesia and involving pricing issues for long term contracts.
- Representing a Chinese state owned power company in ICC London proceedings arising from the construction of a power plant in Saudi Arabia.
- Representing a Korean contractor in LCIA London proceedings arising from the construction of an Ethylene Vinyl Acetate plant in Saudi Arabia.
- Representing the Bahraini marine works contractor in connection with an ICC arbitration in Singapore arising from the construction of a power and desalination plant in Algeria.
- Representing a Chinese state owned power company in LCIA London proceedings arising from the construction of a power and desalination plant in Iraq.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Mediator

He qualified as a mediator with CEDR in 1999. Since then he has been involved in many mediations as counsel and as mediator, mainly in the fields of construction and commercial law, both domestic and international.

He is a member of RESOLEX and in particular of its Construction Contracts Mediators panel.

Significant recent cases as Mediator have included:

- Mediator in a large claim involving the construction of a Caribbean airport. Multi party mediation also involving EU as funding authority.
- Mediator in a groundworks dispute arising from a large construction project in Belfast.

Adjudicator

He is a TECBAR qualified adjudicator in which capacity he has the benefit of his longstanding experience as counsel in many TCC adjudication related court cases and adjudications.

Recommendations

‘A careful, considered and fair arbitrator and with the breadth of experience in construction and infrastructure disputes makes Adrian a go to for large scale arbitration.’
Legal 500, 2026

‘Adrian is a paradigm of the trade.’
Chambers and Partners, 2026

‘Adrian’s advocacy is clear, persuasive, and well-calibrated to both technical and legal audiences. He is particularly effective in managing expert evidence and complex contractual frameworks, and he brings a calm authority to proceedings.’
Legal 500, 2026

‘Adrian is the stand-out barrister of his generation. His strategic instincts are excellent and his advocacy is masterful. He also has superb client care and inspires confidence.’

Legal 500, 2025

‘Adrian’s expertise is particularly valued in complex contract disputes where his innovative approach to points of law makes a definitive impact.’
Legal 500, 2026

‘Adrian is very intelligent and quickly gets a handle on cases. He clearly articulates his advice to clients in a commercially minded manner.’
Legal 500, 2026

‘Adrian Hughes is prompt, asks sensible questions during the hearing and the quality of his drafting is very good.’
Chambers and Partners, 2026

‘Adrian Hughes is a strong arbitrator.’
Chambers and Partners, 2026

‘An advocate of strength and confidence.’
Chambers and Partners, 2026

‘He is always reliable and trustful.’
Chambers and Partners, 2026

‘Adrian responds quickly, analyses the case very professionally, and has a very accurate grasp of the procedures.’
Chambers and Partners, 2026

‘Adrian is competent and a pleasure to work with.’
Chambers and Partners, 2026

‘Exceptional client handling skills, especially with different cultural contexts for international cases. Superb strategic oversight. Succinct and persuasive advocacy, both written and oral. A leader in all senses of the word.’

Legal 500, 2025

‘Adrian’s brand recognition in China is amazing. He is well known in the region and really impressive on his feet before tribunals. He’s a very gentlemanly and measured advocate.’
Chambers and Partners, 2025

‘Adrian conducts hearings as chairman extremely well. He’s a very pleasant character and clearly gets stuck into the case.’
Chambers and Partners, 2025

‘Adrian’s expertise is particularly valued in complex contract disputes where his innovative approach to points of law makes a definitive impact.’

Legal 500, 2025

‘Adrian is the go-to senior counsel for a number of outstanding heavyweight Chinese litigation firms. He’s invested years of his career in understanding the dynamics and local legal culture.’
Chambers and Partners, 2025

‘A careful, thoughtful, resourceful and efficient arbitrator. In the top flight.’

Legal 500, 2025

‘Extremely user-friendly and a star in international arbitration’… ‘He shows great attention to detail, determination and commercial sense.’
Legal 500

‘A very able counsel with excellent advocacy skills, and a great team player too.’ ‘He is an excellent lawyer, with strength across the board.’ ‘He has become a major player in international arbitration and in particular has very good strength in depth in construction arbitration.’
Legal 500 Asia Pacific

‘Extremely personable and handles clients brilliantly. Excellent to work with and his work product was second to none.’
Chambers and Partners

‘He delivers highly innovative and persuasive submissions.’ ‘He builds a strong personal rapport with clients.’ ‘An extremely hands-on and user-friendly silk.’
Legal 500

‘Has vast experience in international commercial arbitrations’ and is further acclaimed as ‘a class act’ and ‘one of the best construction specialists’ in the international arbitration field.
Chambers and Partners

Appointments

- Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators
- Justice of the Court of Appeal of the Falkland Islands [2017 to present]
- Recorder [2001-2016] Court Examiner [2001 to 2016]
- Bencher of the Middle Temple
- Dispute Board Member of the Singapore Infrastructure Dispute-Management Protocol Panel, Singapore Mediation Centre [2019-2021]
- Chairman of the Society of Construction Law [2010-2011]
- Chairman of the China Law Council Legal expert to the Great Britain China Centre on UK China Dispute Resolution
- Advisory Board, Oxford University Belt and Road Institute
- Chairman, UK-Azerbaijan Law Association

Memberships

- ICCA
- LCIA
- Society of Construction Arbitrators
- Society of Construction Law
- COMBAR
- TECBAR

Additional Information

Adrian is consistently recommended in both Chambers & Partners and Legal 500, in particular for the practice areas of International Arbitrator, International Arbitration Counsel, Construction and Engineering, Energy and Professional Negligence. He appears in the Legal 500 Arbitration 2023 Powerlist for both the UK and for China and in the International Arbitration Spotlight section for Chambers Global 2023.

