Navigating Force Majeure and Hardship in Contracts Training Course

30 Nov - 04 Dec 2026

Vienna

5800 € (Per Person)

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Course Introduction / Overview:

In today's interconnected and volatile global economy, the stability of commercial contracts is more critical and more challenged than ever. This training course provides a comprehensive exploration of two of the most vital risk-mitigation tools in contract law: force majeure and hardship clauses. These provisions are no longer boilerplate text but are central to a contract's resilience against unforeseen events, from pandemics and geopolitical conflicts to supply chain disruptions and economic instability. This program, offered by BIG BEN Training Center, moves beyond mere legal definitions to provide practical, actionable strategies for drafting, negotiating, and invoking these critical clauses. Drawing upon established legal principles, such as those discussed in seminal works like "The Law of Contract" by Guenter Treitel, the course delves into the nuanced differences between impossibility, frustration of purpose, and economic imbalance. Participants will gain a deep understanding of the legal thresholds, procedural requirements, and strategic implications of both force majeure and hardship, equipping them to safeguard their organizations' interests and maintain commercial relationships even in the face of profound disruption. This course is designed to transform theoretical legal knowledge into a powerful commercial advantage.

Target Audience / This training course is suitable for:

- Contract Managers and Administrators.
- In-House Legal Counsel and Corporate Lawyers.
- Procurement, Purchasing, and Sourcing Professionals.
- Supply Chain and Logistics Managers.
- Commercial Directors and Managers.
- Project Managers and Engineers.
- Finance Managers and Executives involved in contracts.
- Risk and Compliance Officers.
- Business Owners and Entrepreneurs.

Target Sectors and Industries:

- Construction and Engineering.
- Oil, Gas, and Energy.
- Manufacturing and Industrial Production.
- Shipping, Logistics, and Transportation.
- Information Technology and Telecommunications.
- Pharmaceuticals and Healthcare.
- Banking and Financial Services.
- Retail and Consumer Goods.
- Government Agencies and Public Sector Entities.

Target Organizations Departments:

- Legal Department.
- Procurement and Sourcing Department.
- Supply Chain Management.
- Project Management Office (PMO).
- Commercial and Sales Department.
- Finance and Accounting.
- Operations Management.
- Risk Management and Compliance.

Course Offerings:

By the end of this course, the participants will have able to:

- Differentiate clearly between the legal concepts of force majeure, hardship, frustration, and impossibility.
- Draft precise and enforceable force majeure and hardship clauses tailored to specific commercial contexts.
- Analyze contractual obligations and identify trigger events that justify invoking these clauses.
- Develop a robust procedural framework for providing notice and documenting the impact of an unforeseen event.
- Evaluate the legal and commercial consequences of successfully invoking a force majeure or hardship provision.
- Master negotiation strategies for amending or renegotiating contracts when hardship is established.
- Manage and resolve disputes arising from the interpretation or application of these clauses effectively.
- Anticipate future risks and proactively future-proof commercial agreements against emerging threats.

Course Methodology:

The training methodology at BIG BEN Training Center is centered on immersive, practical, and interactive learning to ensure that complex legal concepts are translated into tangible business skills. This course rejects a purely lecture-based format in favor of a dynamic workshop environment. Participants will engage extensively with real-world case studies, dissecting landmark legal disputes and contemporary commercial scenarios to understand how force majeure and hardship clauses perform under pressure. A significant portion of the training will be dedicated to hands-on drafting exercises, where attendees will work individually and in groups to construct and critique clauses for various industries. Interactive sessions, including simulated contract negotiations and dispute resolution role-plays, will allow participants to practice their skills in a controlled and supportive setting. Our expert instructors facilitate group discussions and brainstorming sessions to encourage the sharing of diverse industry perspectives. Continuous feedback is a cornerstone of our approach, ensuring that each participant can refine their understanding and application of the material throughout the five-day program, leaving them confident and prepared to manage contractual risk.

Course Agenda (Course Units):

Unit One: Foundations of Contractual Risk and Exceptional Events

- Introduction to commercial contract law principles.
- Identifying and categorizing risks in commercial agreements.
- The historical and legal evolution of force majeure.
- Distinguishing between force majeure, hardship, and frustration of purpose.
- The concept of "impossibility" versus "impracticability" in performance.
- Common law versus civil law approaches to unforeseen events.
- The role of boilerplate clauses and the danger of ambiguity.

Unit Two: Mastering the Force Majeure Clause

- Defining a force majeure event with precision.
- Key elements: unforeseeability, externality, and irresistibility.
- Drafting an exhaustive versus an illustrative list of trigger events.
- The legal importance of causation and its direct link to non-performance.
- Procedural mechanics: notice requirements, deadlines, and mitigation duties.
- Legal consequences of a valid force majeure claim: suspension vs. termination.
- Case studies on pandemic, war, and natural disaster clauses.

Unit Three: Navigating the Hardship Clause

- Defining economic hardship and fundamental alteration of equilibrium.
- Differentiating hardship from a bad bargain or commercial misjudgment.
- Establishing the threshold for invoking a hardship provision.
- The mandatory duty to renegotiate in good faith.
- Remedies for hardship: contract adaptation, suspension, or termination by a court or tribunal.
- Analyzing hardship provisions in international frameworks like the UNIDROIT Principles.
- Case studies involving currency devaluation, inflation, and supply cost shocks.

Unit Four: Practical Drafting and Negotiation Strategies

- Best practices for drafting clear, comprehensive, and balanced clauses.
- The strategic placement of force majeure and hardship clauses within a contract.
- Negotiating the scope of trigger events and the allocation of risk.
- Integrating these clauses with other contractual provisions like liability and termination.
- Drafting workshop: Creating bespoke clauses for different industry scenarios.
- Techniques for reviewing and amending clauses in existing contracts.
- Common pitfalls and drafting errors to avoid.

Unit Five: Invocation, Dispute Resolution, and Future-Proofing

- The strategic decision to invoke a force majeure or hardship clause.
- Gathering and presenting evidence to support a claim.
- Navigating dispute resolution: mediation, arbitration, and litigation.
- The role of expert testimony in proving the impact of an event.
- Future-proofing contracts: Addressing emerging risks like cyber-attacks and climate change.
- The impact of sanctions and government regulations as force majeure events.
- Course review, final Q&A, and action planning for implementation.

FAQ:

Qualifications required for registering to this course?

There are no requirements.

How long is each daily session, and what is the total number of training hours for the course?

This training course spans five days, with daily sessions ranging between 4 to 5 hours, including breaks and interactive activities, bringing the total duration to 20 - 25 training hours.

Something to think about:

In an era of increasing global volatility, should 'economic hardship' be given the same legal weight as a traditional 'act of God' in force majeure events?

What unique qualities does this course offer compared to other courses?

This course distinguishes itself by moving beyond a purely theoretical legal analysis to a deeply practical and commercially-focused examination of force majeure and hardship. While other programs may focus on reciting case law, our curriculum is built around contemporary, real-world scenarios that reflect the challenges businesses face today, from supply chain disruptions caused by geopolitical events to the economic fallout from pandemics. A key differentiator is the intensive focus on practical application, particularly in Unit Four, which is a hands-on workshop dedicated entirely to drafting and negotiation. Participants do not just learn what a good clause looks like; they learn how to build one from the ground up and defend it in a negotiation. Furthermore, the course is uniquely forward-looking. Unit Five is specifically designed to equip professionals with the foresight to future-proof contracts against emerging, non-traditional risks like systemic cyber-attacks, climate-related events, and sudden regulatory shifts. The emphasis is on proactive risk management and strategic resilience, providing attendees with not just knowledge, but a durable skill set to protect their organization’s commercial interests in an unpredictable world.