

American Bar Association  
Law Student Division

Arbitration Competition

**Timeline with Checklists  
For Host School Administrators**

**The following is timeline to help you in the months and weeks heading up to the Regional Competition.**

**14-16 weeks before the Competition:**

1. **Carefully read the Arbitration Competition Rules and the Arbitration Competition Regional Administrative Guide.**
  - The Rules, Regional Administrative Guide, and other documents are available at <https://abaforlawstudents.com/events/law-student-competitions/practical-skills-competitions/arbitration-competition/>
  - Please carefully read the Arbitration Competition Rules. Our goal is that competitors all over the United States have similar experiences during their regional competition. In order to achieve this goal, it is important that every region follows the same rules.
  - The Regional Administrative Guide includes all of the information you will need to organize and execute a successful Regional Competition. Please carefully read the Regional Administrative Guide for information on steps to be completed in the months and weeks leading up to the Competition and for information on the format of the Competition.
  
2. **Familiarize yourself with the Arbitration Competition format.**
  - If you have never participated in or run an Arbitration Competition, please view an [ABA video](#) of a past competition as an example of the Competition format.
  
3. **Create a Committee to oversee the Arbitration Regional Competition.** You may wish to assign specific Committee members to specific tasks, including:
  - Hotel accommodations for participating teams
  - Competition Site room reservations
  - Food and beverages (snacks, lunches, and receptions)
  - Recruiting judges and alternates
  - Communicating by e-mail with contact persons at participating schools
  - Photocopying materials and creating packets prior to the competition
  - Administering the competition

## **12-14 weeks before the Competition:**

**1. Reserve a block of hotel rooms for teams traveling to the Competition.** Most hotels will allow a three-week cutoff, if you explain that you will not know who your competitors are until four weeks out. If you need assistance, please contact Sara Stretch, Associate Director of the ABA Law Student Division.

**2. Reserve all of the rooms that you will need on site during the Competition.**

You will need:

- One Registration / check-in area – usually right outside the orientation room.
- One Team Hospitality Room for teams to congregate during breaks. If large enough, this room can be used for the coaches and team orientation session, and for lunch.
- One coaches and team orientation room, if the Team Hospitality Room is not large enough.
- One room for lunch, if the Team Hospitality Room is not large enough.
- Six to Seven Competition Rooms. You will need one competition room (courtroom or rooms with moveable tables or chairs) per each two teams. Each competition room must hold 12-16 people (8 competitors, 3 judges, 2 coaches). Each regional host school should expect 12-14 teams, so you should set aside six to seven competition rooms. See Appendix G of the Regional Administrative Guide for suggested room setup options.
- One room for the arbitrator judges briefing, which takes place before each round. Expect three judges for each competition room per round.
- One Administrative headquarters, usually a conference room, for tallying the scores, etc.
- If additional rooms are available, you may set aside individual practice rooms for the teams.

**3. Arrange for catering or otherwise make provisions for food and beverages during the Competition.** You will need:

- lunches for coaches and competitors in one room
- food for judges in a separate room (donuts, fruit, coffee, water, and soda)
- a light reception for the evening when semi-finalists are announced

## **6-8 weeks before the Competition:**

- 1. Attend at least one Host Conference Call.** Call times, the conference call Dial-in #, and the Access Code will be provided to you by Sara Stretch via e-mail one week prior to each Host call.
- 2. Send Competition information to the contact person for each participating team in your region no earlier than 4 days and no later than 7 days after receiving team assignments from the ABA.** Waiting until the 4<sup>th</sup> day will ensure that any conflicts are resolved and that you are e-mailing the correct teams. Sending the e-mail no later than the 7<sup>th</sup> day will provide all teams with enough time to make flight and hotel reservations. Send a copy to Sara Stretch.

A sample e-mail is included in Appendix I of the Regional Administrative Guide. This e-mail needs to include the following information and attachments:

- Introduce yourself, and include your contact information.
  - Provide the address of the competition location, including closest intersections.
  - Provide the name and address of the designated competition hotel, including the group name, group rate, and deadline for booking to obtain the group rate.
  - Provide the day and time of the first scheduled event, day and time of the last scheduled event, and travel times to and from the airport.
  - Provide airport information, especially if there is more than one local airport.
- 3. Recruit Judges.** You should have three judges per each competition room. It is suggested that you recruit an additional 25% more judges than you need, to cover inevitable last-minute cancellations. You must have a minimum of two judges per competition room. Begin recruiting judges now - at least six to eight weeks prior to the competition. If, three weeks prior to the competition, you don't have sufficient judges, you should notify your designated Arbitration Competition Subcommittee Member, who can provide suggestions for finding additional judges.

Recommended places from which to recruit judges:

- Alumni
- American Arbitration Association Neutrals
- JAMS Neutrals
- Neutrals from other arbitration organizations
- Local Arbitrators and ADR Lawyers
- Former Judges
- Local ADR Organizations
- Local (city, county, state) Bar Association
- ABA Section of Dispute Resolution
- ABA Law Student Division

A sample invitation and selection form is included in Appendix K of the Regional Administrative Guide. This message should be sent to your potential judge pool six to eight weeks prior to the competition. Include:

- Background information about the competition and why it is so important to the competitors.
- What's in it for the Arbitrator Judges.
- What they have to do to prepare for the competition.
- Time and date of rounds; include the judges' briefing in the start time.
- Address of the competition location, including closest intersections.

## **4-6 weeks before the Competition**

### **1. Send confirmation e-mail to participating judges.**

When an individual has agreed to judge the competition, a letter or email should be sent confirming that agreement and explaining when and where the judge should report on the day of competition.

A sample judge confirmation message is included in Appendix L of the Regional Administrative Guide. Your message should include:

- Time and date of rounds they've been assigned.
- Address of competition location, including closest intersections.
- Beginning time of the judges' briefing, followed by the start and end time of the competition.
- Parking information (free, on street, pay lot, meter etc.), including maps if necessary.
- Attach copies of the Competition Case File and Rule 7 (Competition Procedures).

### **2. Confirm a group of staff and/or students to assist you with preparing documents and to assist you onsite at the competition.** Work to be completed includes:

- Making photocopies of documents listed in the Regional Administrative Guide.
- Compiling and labeling packets and folders prior to competition.
- Creating name badges, table badges, door signs, and directional signs prior to the competition.
- Greeting competitors and judges as they enter the building.
- Helping to direct people on site.
- Calculating scores and entering them into the Master Score Sheets during the competition.

### **2-4 weeks before the Competition:**

- 1. Finalize recruitment of judges at least 2 weeks prior to the Competition.** Continue to send confirmation emails to judges. If you are having trouble recruiting, please contact Sara Stretch immediately.
- 2. Create the pairings/bracket according to the Regional Administrative Guide.** You **MUST** use the pairings/bracket listed in the Regional Administrative Guide. You may not pair the teams yourself. Locate the pairings associated with the number of teams in your region.

All ABA Law Student Division competitions prohibit the identification of a team's law school. The ABA will assign each team a random color. The schools' identity shall not be divulged to any judge until after completion of the regional competition.

- 3. Send attending schools a follow-up e-mail 2 weeks prior to the Competition.** A sample is included as Appendix J in the Regional Administrative Guide. Include:
  - Recommended means of transportation (drive, taxicab, shuttle, subway, etc.).
  - Parking information (free, on street, pay lot, meter etc.), including maps if necessary.
  - Seasonal weather expectations during the time of the competition.
  - Competition schedule.

## **1 week before the Competition:**

It is time to finalize all plans. Please contact Sara Stretch if you are having problems with any part of the competition preparations.

If you haven't already, it is time to work on the following items:

- 1. Assign the Judging Panels and make Room Assignments.** Decide which judges will judge each round and in what room. Attempt to vary the panels by age, area of practice, and law school. If local professors must judge, make sure that they will not observe teams representing your school.
- 2. Prepare the Judges' Folders/Envelopes.** Organize and compile packets of material for the Arbitrator Judges to include:
  - Competition schedule.
  - Competition Case File.
  - Instructions for Arbitrator Judges (Appendix C of Regional Administrative Guide); sample Evaluation Forms and Comment Sheets (Appendix D of Regional Administrative Guide); and the Timekeeping Sheet (Appendix E of Regional Administrative Guide). The score sheets and evaluation forms are available in the Regional Administrative Guide at <https://abaforlawstudents.com/events/law-student-competitions/practical-skills-competitions/arbitration-competition/>
  - Team pairings, listing room numbers/names for each round. The judges' version must not include school names.
  - Schedule listing round, room number, and judges assigned to that room (see Appendix M of the Regional Administrative Guide for an example). Judges should not see the same team twice, if at all possible. If a judge must see a team again, try to make sure the team represents the opposite party from the previous round. This is not an issue during the first two rounds. You may move your judges around, but not the teams, during the first two rounds.
  - Generic name badge, "Arbitrator Judge," for each judge.
- 3. Prepare the Participants' Folders/Envelopes.** Organize and compile packets of material for competitors to include:
  - Competition schedule.
  - List of schools and team designations.
  - Team pairings, listing room numbers/names for each round. The competitors' version may include school names. Remember, you **must** use the pairings/bracket from the Host School Instructions. You cannot pair the teams yourself.
  - Floor plan or map of campus.
  - List of restaurants in the neighborhood and/or near the competition hotel.
  - Transportation information.
  - Name badges with students' names and their team designations. You may wish to place these on the outside of the packets so they're easier to identify.



#### 4. Prepare the Competition Room Documents and Signage.

##### **Create, label, and compile folders for competition rooms:**

- Label folder with round number and room number. If possible, use a different color folder for each round. (One folder per competition room.)
- Include the following in each “round” folder:
  - 1) Two sets of stapled Evaluation Forms and Comment Sheets for each judge (*i.e.* six sets). Use single-sided copies so that judges can more easily refer to their paperwork. Ideally, if you’re using colored folders for each round, the color of the forms should match the color of that round’s folder. This makes it easier for the scorekeepers to keep track of which documents belong with which round.
  - 2) Tent cards for each judge that say, “Arbitrator \_\_\_\_\_.” Fill in the blank with each judge’s last name.

##### **Create signage for the competition (can be 8 ½ x 11 paper).**

Brightly colored paper works best.

- Directional signs directing people (competitors, coaches, judges) to their respective rooms.
- Signs on doors for Judges’ Briefing Room, Competitors’ Hospitality, and Orientation Room.
- For posting on competition doors:
  - 1) Quiet - Competition in Progress – Do Not Enter
  - 2) List room number and the teams (by designation, not school name) competing in the room by round.

### **2-3 Days before the Competition**

**Confirm time and location with food providers.**

Make sure food and drinks will arrive on time. Everyone responsible for delivering food or drinks to the competition should have your cell phone number, and you should have theirs.

## **The Day of the Competition**

### **SET UP THE COMPETITION ROOMS**

Make sure there are tables, adequate chairs, trash has been removed, etc. Set up water, pens, extra pads of paper, tent cards, and evaluation forms in each competition room. See Appendix G in the Regional Administrative Guide to for suggested room set-ups.

### **PLACE DIRECTIONAL SIGNS AROUND CAMPUS AND CHECK ROOMS**

Make sure to prepare and post plenty of signs indicating where competitors and judges should check-in when they arrive, the rooms where the rounds will take place, where restrooms are located, etc. Check all competition rooms to make sure they are unlocked and ready.

### **REVIEW ALL RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS**

Review the Rules and the Regional Administrative Guide. If you need an interpretation of a rule, confer with the ABA Law Student Division or your assigned Arbitration Competition Subcommittee member as soon as possible.

### **HOST SCHOOL'S COMPETITION COMMITTEE/HELPERS**

Make sure that members of your school who are part of the competition committee and will assist in running the day's competition are easily identifiable.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION TABLE**

Have a table to which the teams report when they arrive. Those staffing the table will hand out the team information packets and answer any questions the competitors or coaches have. They can also give the competitors and coaches tours of the building.

### **HOLD AN ORIENTATION MEETING FOR TEAMS AND COACHES**

A welcome and orientation meeting should happen 60 minutes BEFORE the start of the first round. Flush out any questions over the rules and who can watch.

Also instruct the teams and coaches that each school's identity should remain anonymous before, during, and after the round. Make sure that no spectators are wearing or carrying anything that would indicate what school is represented.

All protests MUST be made in compliance with the Rules.

An Outline for Orienting Coaches and Teams is included in Appendix N of the Regional Administrative Guide.

## **HOLD A JUDGES' ORIENTATION**

You must hold an orientation for all judges before each round. The orientation should happen 30-60 minutes BEFORE the start of the first round. An Outline for Briefing Arbitrator Judges is located in Appendix O of the Regional Administrative Guide.

## **SCORING**

You should be available throughout the competition for questions from competitors and judges.

To facilitate the scoring process, the Evaluation Forms should be collected from the Arbitrator Judges as soon as they are completed and **before** the critique period begins. Before leaving the hearing room, the Competition Administrator or Assistant collecting the Evaluation Forms should review the Arbitrator Judges' computations to confirm that each judge has entered a score between 1-10 within each criterion; there are no ties; there are no half points; and that the judge's "winning" team in that round received the higher score. The Arbitrator Judges may retain their written Comments Sheets to provide the teams feedback. The Competition Administrator or Assistant should collect the judges' Comment Sheets after the feedback period to distribute to the teams later that day.

### Scoring Room

A conference room works well, especially if you have two or three people tabulating scores. A larger room will be required if you decide to allow team coaches / representatives to observe the tabulation process. You will also need Calculators, Laptop with Excel version of the Master Score Sheet loaded, Paper Master Score Sheet, and refreshments for scorekeepers.

Rule 9 states that Teams are ranked as follows:

1. Win/loss record
2. Number of judges' votes
3. Overall team score/points
4. Previous head-to-head competition (To easily record the head-to-head team comparison, the Competition Administrator should use the team pairing schedule and highlight the winning team from each room.)
5. Strength of schedule, based on number of ballots won by opponent
6. Margin of Victory
7. Random coin toss

To ensure that the proper W/L is marked, Competition Administrators **must** input each judge's score for the two teams s/he observed into the same column. For example, in round 1, let's say Judge Rayburn's evaluation form is the first form the Competition Administrator picked up when preparing to input scores into the Master Score Sheet. That makes Judge Rayburn Judge 1. Thus, Judge Rayburn's scores for Aqua and Blue must be input into the Judge 1 column so that the determination of who received that judge's vote can be made by looking at the scores.

See Rule 9 and pages 9-11 in the Regional Administrative Guide for additional details on scoring.

## **ANNOUNCING RESULTS**

The Competition Administrator must announce the teams that will advance to the semifinal round. Immediately after the announcement, the Competition Administrator must make available to the competitors a copy or copies of the Master Score Sheet in Appendix F of the Regional Administrative Guide. Competition Administrators may post a single copy of the Master Score Sheet in such a manner that all coaches/teams may review the scores.

Score sheets may be reviewed for mathematical errors for fifteen (15) minutes following the distribution of the Master Score Sheet. If a mathematical error is identified during the Review Period, corrections shall be made before beginning the semifinal round. Corrective computations shall be an open process. Failure to raise any objection to the computations on the Master Score Sheet within the Review Period shall be a defense to any subsequent protests following the preliminary rounds.

## **NOTIFY THE ABA OF THE REGIONAL WINNERS**

Report the regional results to the Law Student Division Chicago office on the Monday morning following your regional competition. Please email Sara Stretch the winning school, team member names, master score sheet, semifinal round bracket, and Final Round bracket. The Arbitration Competition Subcommittee will use this information in deciding any protests and in determining what teams should attend the National competition in the event that higher ranking teams choose not to attend.

## **SEND THANK YOU LETTERS TO EVERYONE**

You should thank everyone who donated time, effort or money to the competition. This ensures that you and your advocacy program will look good, as well as the competition itself. You also might consider sending judges a listing of the names of the individuals and teams that placed in the competition to satisfy their curiosity.

Thank *you* for hosting the ABA Regional Arbitration Competition. We know this is a large undertaking, and we appreciate the experience you are providing for attorneys of the future. Do not hesitate to contact us before or during your regional competition.

**The American Bar Association Law Student Division's Arbitration Competition Subcommittee**