



**ABA Law Student Division
2020-2021 Negotiation Regional Competitions
Overview of Online/Virtual Competitions**

As always, thank you so much for hosting one of the 2020-2021 Negotiation Regional Competitions. We really couldn't have a successful Negotiation competition season without you!

We wanted to give you a brief overview of what a virtual negotiation competition will entail, sooner rather than later. We're also in the process of drafting a more detailed guide/supplement about hosting a virtual negotiation competition that will provide additional help, guidance, and training as we get closer to the regional dates.

PLATFORM:

When choosing a virtual platform, here are the features/capabilities required for the negotiation competition:

1. Breakout rooms for the pre- and post-negotiation analyses;
2. Easily changing screen names to prevent a student from identifying their school or a well-known/local coach from making themselves known to a judge.
3. Ability to have a host/tech administrator/bailiff (one person) in each virtual room to:
 - a. start and host the videoconference;
 - b. run the waiting and breakout rooms;
 - c. conduct a conflict check before the round starts;
 - d. monitor non-competitors from turning mics and videos on and remove non-competitors from the virtual room should they turn on their mics or videos.
 - e. monitor/prevent any recording of the rounds through the platform;
 - f. pause the negotiation if a competitor or judge's video connection gets dropped;
 - g. keep track of time, especially if there are technical issues during the round; and
 - h. terminate and re-start the videoconference if there is a "Zoom bombing" or other major technical issues.



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4. We're encouraging all hosts to use Zoom, because most people are familiar with it and it has all the features listed above. As we get closer to the regional competitions, we'll also provide live and/or recorded assistance of how to set up and use Zoom as intended for the competition.
5. In addition to setting up video sessions (*e.g.*, Zoom meetings) for the competition rooms, you may want to set up video sessions just for judge and competitor check-in, and the competition headquarters where teams and coaches can contact you with any issues/complaints, and scoring can be handled.

HELP BEFORE AND DURING THE COMPETITION:

1. You'll probably need to speak with your IT department about Zoom licenses (or whatever platform you choose) and the general capabilities of what your equipment can handle when you'll have dozens of people virtually attending and/or competing at the same. You may also wish to have an IT tech "on call" during the competition to help with any Wi-Fi/tech issues that occur.
2. You'll need a host/administrator/bailiff in each virtual room to keep time, help move people from the waiting room into the main room, move teams to the breakout rooms, etc. (as described above). This may require a little training of them in advance.

JUDGES:

1. One of the best collateral benefits of a virtual competition is being able to invite lawyers and judges from a broad geographical area. Hosting a regional competition provides a wonderful opportunity to invite alumni who've moved out of town or state. Be sure to highlight the time zone of the competition, so judges can properly calendar it!



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2. Currently, our plan is for judges to keep their videos on, but mics off during the pre-negotiation and negotiation. However, they'll unmute their mics for the post-negotiation analysis and oral feedback. This can help teams "read" the judges' reactions to what the teams are discussing, as well as help judges stay focused. It can be challenging for judges to stay engaged and give their full concentration during a virtual competition.

FORMAT OF ROUNDS:

1. Because judging virtual competitions can be more challenging for judges (and to account for the possibility of technical challenges), the length of the rounds is being adjusted as follows:
 - a. Pre-negotiation analysis: 5 minutes per team (no change)
 - b. Negotiation: 40 minutes (reduced from 50 minutes)
 - c. Breaks within the negotiation: 3-minute break per team (reduced from 5 minutes each)
 - d. Post-negotiation analysis: 5 minutes per team (no change)
2. We're also determining whether the overall competition schedule can be slightly adjusted in terms of orientations for competitors and judges, breaks between rounds, etc., as we expect the orientations to be handled before the competition through recording/videos. However, there may be some additional time needed to have teams, coaches, and spectators log in early to their competition rooms to test out the technology, change their screen names, and conduct conflict checks. We also may need to allow additional time during the tally review period because team members and coaches are not in the same room with each other. We'll keep you posted, but any changes would most likely be about 30 minutes.

BALLOTS/COMMENT SHEETS:

1. We'll be using electronic score sheets and an excel sheet. That means you won't have to decipher whether a judge wrote a 14, 17, or 19 in a box! This online



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scoring should also make collecting score sheets easier because judges will simply hit a “submit” button at the bottom of the sheet to send them to you. And, should a judge have technology problems, there will be two back-up options – they can:

- a. complete a ballot and email it as an attachment; or
 - b. print out the ballot, enter scores by hand, scan, and email it (or take a picture on their phone and email/text it to the host).
2. We’ll provide training on the ballots and excel sheet closer to the regional competition dates. Once you play with them a bit, you’ll see that they will make tabulating rounds considerably easier for host schools!
 3. Judges won’t be filling out written Comment Sheets this year and, instead, will just provide oral feedback to the teams.

PROHIBITED PHYSICAL LOCATIONS AND COMMUNICATION:

1. All competitors, coaches, faculty advisors, and spectators will be required to be in separate physical rooms throughout each negotiation round. This approach levels the playing field so no competitor will be sitting next to her or his teammate. This also should limit accidental communication between a competitor and coach who are sitting in the same room and should eliminate the possibility of audio feedback.
2. Coaches, faculty advisors, and spectators are to have NO communication with their teams from the beginning of the round (which is when the first team begins its pre-negotiation analysis) until the end of the round (when the judges conclude providing oral critique/feedback). This prohibition on communication extends to any breaks the teams or judges take during the round.



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PERMITTED/PROHIBITED SUPPLIES/APPLICATIONS:

1. Because teams will be in different physical rooms, they'll be allowed to use electronic devices to call, text, email, or instant message each other, which should replicate their ability to communicate to their partner during an in-person round by writing a note or whispering something.
2. Competitors will not be allowed to use virtual or actual whiteboards, or any teleprompter/script-scrolling programs (unless for an ADA accommodation). Instead, they'll be allowed to use only typed or handwritten notes for their own use.
3. You may want to prohibit virtual backgrounds, which use a lot of bandwidth and can interfere with connectivity. Or, you could provide or require a particular virtual background for all competitors to use to keep all backgrounds consistent. However, some older computers may be unable to use a virtual background, and some virtual backgrounds can be distracting as they are not seamless around a person's head and face.

ALTERNATES AND TECHNICAL GLITCHES:

1. Because a competitor may have a medical/family emergency or a competitor's Wi-Fi/computer may simply not work on the morning of the competition, all teams will be required to register and have on stand-by at least one alternate who may be substituted at the beginning of any round where such an emergency or Wi-Fi/technology glitch occurs. The goal is to eliminate any single-person teams. Single-person teams may provide an unfair advantage in a virtual round, because a single-person team doesn't have to build online rapport with his/her partner or manage not talking over each other, etc.
2. We're also drafting policies about how to deal with Wi-Fi/technical glitches that occur during the round by either a competitor or a judge in terms of how long to wait to try and fix the issue, etc. All competitors and judges should have a mobile



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phone with them (in silent mode) during their rounds. They likewise should be encouraged to download the Zoom app on their phones, so if their Wi-Fi goes out, they can use their phone's data to connect. And, the final back-up is to have the Zoom dial-in number to call into the session.