2021 Moot Court
Virtual Competition Format & Guidelines

This is complete, to the best of our knowledge and capacity at this moment. All rules, dates, deadlines, and procedures are subject to change based on new information, changing guidelines, or other concerns. A number of factors influence decisions made about this process, including number of teams, staff capacity, available volunteers, technological capabilities, and costs.

If you have questions or concerns regarding any of the following rules and guidelines, please contact Kelly Masterson (kmasterson@oclre.org). We will update the rules biweekly, based on advisor feedback and/or any changes in circumstances.

Please Note: In instances of conflict, the 2021 virtual competition rules will prevail. In instances where the virtual rules do not cover a specific instance, the standard rules outlined in the case packet will prevail.

Competition Deadlines

Registration deadline: Friday, April 9, 2021
Roster form deadline (*All students, teachers, and advisors must be included*): Friday, April 9, 2021
Brief submission deadline: Friday, April 23 by 5 p.m.
Deadline to drop (with no fee): April 23, 2021
Photo release deadline: Friday, April 30, 2021

I. **Rules of Competition**
   a. Team registration is taken on a first-come, first-served basis until we have reached capacity and is capped at 1 team per school for the first round of registration. After the registration deadline passes, if space permits, we will open registration for one additional team per school.
   b. Recognizing pressures on district budgets, and cost saving measures offered by the online format, the price per team for the full competition has been reduced to $35 team for members. The price per team for the brief-only competition has been reduced to $30 for members.
   c. Photo releases must be submitted electronically to OCLRE no later than April 30.
      i. If a photo release has not been submitted for a student, they are ineligible to compete.
      ii. Parents/Guardians can select "no" but must still submit the form.

II. Brief Submission
   a. Briefs for <u>both</u> the full competition and the brief-only competition are due by Friday, April 23 at 5 p.m. Briefs should be emailed to Kelly Masterson at kmasterson@oclre.org.
   b. Briefs for teams who participate in the full competition and in the brief-only competition will be evaluated using the same criteria.
   c. Teams who participate in the brief-only competition will remain eligible for "Best Brief" awards.

III. Hearing/Procedural Rules
   a. To the greatest extent possible, the virtual hearings should follow the format of the traditional in-person hearings. In instances where the virtual rules do not cover a scenario, the standard competition rules prevail.
   b. The scoring elements, guidelines, and procedures will remain the same. The score sheet, however, will look different because it will be formatted digitally. The digital score sheet will be made available to teams to view prior to the competition.
   c. Preliminary rounds
      i. Each team will compete in four preliminary rounds. Each team will argue for each side of the case twice.
      ii. Standard time rules for arguments will apply.
      iii. Each round will last a total of 50 minutes to provide sufficient time for introductions, arguments, and judge feedback.
         1. All technical issues must be resolved within the 50-minute time limit. Teams should prepare backup plans in the event of technology failures.
      iv. There will be a 20-minute break between the second and third rounds.
   d. No Secondary Bracket
      i. Due to the difficulty of coordinating a larger competition day, there will be no secondary bracket for the 2021 Virtual Competition.
   e. Semifinal round
      i. Teams advancing to the semifinal round will be announced after a lunch break, which will follow the conclusion of the preliminary rounds.
      ii. The time of the semifinal arguments has been extended to one hour. Semifinal arguments will follow the same time rules as the final round (listed in the case packet).
      iii. The semifinal round will last a total of 1 hour and 20 minutes to provide sufficient time for introductions, arguments, and judge feedback.
   f. Final round
      i. Teams advancing to the final round will be announced after an hour and ten-minute break, which will follow the conclusion of the semifinal rounds.
      ii. Standard time rules for final round arguments will apply.
      iii. The final round will last a total of 1 hour and 20 minutes to provide sufficient time for introductions, arguments, and judge feedback.
   g. Team communication

      i. If students are connecting to Zoom separately, student advocates may only communicate with each other through Zoom chat by sending a private message to their co-counsel.

          1. If student advocates are competing in-person, they may communicate as they normally would during an in-person competition.

          2. If a teammate needs to communicate a technical issue with the timekeeper, they should use Zoom chat by sending a public message.

              a. The timekeeper should notify the chief justice. The issue should then be discussed in open court to keep the chief justice and all competitors informed of the plan to rectify the technical issue.

          3. Rules regarding advisor/team communication during trials are still applicable in this format.

h. Timing the hearings

      i. Timekeepers will hold their timecards up to their camera to display time remaining. They may also put this information in the Zoom chat by sending a message to everyone.

          1. It is not required for timekeepers to put time remaining in the chat; it is at the team's discretion.

      ii. Timekeepers may keep time on a phone, tablet, or other electronic device.

      iii. Timekeepers should use the timekeeping sheet, found in the case packet, for each round. Teams do not need to submit their timekeeping sheets to the chief justice at the conclusion of the round.

i. The evening of the competition day, OCLRE will stream an awards ceremony to announce the winners of the competition and the Best Brief awards. Details will be sent to teams prior to the competition.

IV. **Zoom Information**

a. Oral arguments will be held online, via Zoom.

      i. We recognize that some schools may have existing policies that disallow using Zoom for academics. Zoom is the most amenable format for what we need and will therefore be our standard. We recommend that teams with this restriction reach out to their administration to apply for exemptions. We will provide a letter explaining the security protocols that will be in place to address concerns with the platform (e.g. waiting rooms, facilitator monitoring, etc.)

b. Teams are required to join the Zoom meeting from the app rather than the web browser.

c. Teams will receive guidance regarding protocols, Zoom etiquette, and other instructions in advance of the competition (e.g. mute/unmute, proper name formats, common audio/video glitches, etc.).

      i. During the trial, team members who are not actively speaking should turn off their camera and microphone.

          1. Timekeepers are an exception to this rule. Teams may choose whether timekeepers should remain on camera (microphone muted) for the

entire time or they should only turn their camera on when displaying timecards.

    ii. The justices will be on camera at all times.

d. Naming conventions

    i. All teams will be given a team code when they receive a link to their Zoom meeting. The team code is necessary for changing each Zoom display name so everyone is placed in the correct breakout room.

    ii. The naming convention is:

        1. (Student Code) First Name, Last Name (Role)

        2. Example: if I am advocating for the petitioner and my team code is A, my Zoom name should appear as:
(A1) Kelly Masterson (Petitioner), indicating I am first counsel for the petitioner in that round.

        3. If students are sharing a device, or if the entire team will appear on one device, the name should appear as follows: (A) Petitioner

e. Hearings will occur in breakout rooms within Zoom.

    i. Students must ensure in advance of hearings that the device they plan to use for the meetings is capable of joining breakout rooms (e.g. joining from a web browser often causes technical issues in breakout rooms).

    ii. Team advisors will be sent a Zoom meeting link for the hearings.

    iii. Only names appearing on the official roster for each team (including advisors/legal advisors) will be admitted to the meeting from the waiting room and assigned to the hearing breakout room.

    iv. Unless the join time is otherwise specified, teams will be responsible for ensuring that they are joining the correct meeting at least 15 minutes prior to the designated hearing start time.

    v. Spectators will not be permitted to join meetings "live", but there are two possible ways to allow spectators to view:

        1. Recording will be permitted to share with students' supporters.

            a. The rules regarding recording in the case packet still applies. If any member of any team objects to recording, or if a guardian has checked "no" on the photo release form, recording will not be permitted in that trial.

        2. Teams may use up to one "spectator" device that will be admitted to the hearing rooms and can be shared by spectators in person (e.g. using a projector in a classroom or auditorium).

            a. Schools pursuing this option are responsible for complying with all rules in place by their school for safe in-person events.

f. Virtual backgrounds/Zoom setup

    i. OCLRE is not stipulating the physical setup or Zoom setup for hearings. Schools and students have differing access to technology and different devices, so it is up to each team to determine what works best.

    ii. Judges have been instructed to neither award nor subtract points based on a student's Zoom connection, background, or anything related to appearance. Rather, judges are instructed to evaluate students based only on their performance.

V. Technology – Preparation and Troubleshooting
  a. In the event of technical difficulties (e.g. a student is bumped from a meeting, has a camera freeze, etc.) the student should contact the team's timekeeper, who will be responsible for notifying the judges of the technical issue. If the timekeeper bailiff is the one experiencing technical issues, the responsibility of alerting the chief justice falls to one of the two team advocates.
      i. Participating team members may use the public chat feature to notify the timekeeper or student advocates if there are technical issues.
          1. If the student experiencing difficulty is unable to access the Zoom chat, they are permitted to notify the timekeeper member via text message or other means of communication as long as it does not disrupt the hearing.
          2. Once a technical issue has been brought to the attention of the justices, advisors may step in to help the student resolve the issue.
          3. The clock will stop to allow for troubleshooting. All issues must be resolved within the time allotted for each hearing.
  b. Teams will have flexibility regarding the tech equipment they would like to use in joining the Zoom meetings.
      i. If needed to reduce feedback/background noise, students are permitted to wear headsets during trial.
      ii. Schools that permit in-person gatherings can choose to join the meeting via 1-2 devices for the whole team or can chose to have each student on their own device in separate locations.
      iii. Experience thus far has shown that participants will experience technical difficulties when using Chromebooks and when joining meetings using the browser rather than the application. Zoom continues to update their software and servers, so this advice may change in advance of the competition.
  c. Practice tech sessions will be made available to teams to troubleshoot their devices in advance of oral arguments.
      i. These will be open practice sessions, scheduled throughout April.
      ii. When participating in these sessions, it is **critical** that teams join using the tech setup they intend to use on competition day.
      iii. Tech sessions will require pre-registration (can register up to 24 hours before the scheduled session) in order to allow for security protocols.