

ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS HANDBOOK

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES
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elsa

The European Law Students' Association

FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

This is a Handbook about the Academic Competitions, which are currently organised in the Network of ELSA International. It contains information about the ELSA Negotiation Competition (ENC), the Client Interviewing Competition (CIC), the Witness Interviewing Competition (WIC) and Legal Debates.

With this, ELSA offers you an additional support organising the Competitions and summary of the most important information. Should you have any questions, you can always contact the acting Vice President in charge of Academic Activities at academicactivities@elsa.org or the Director for Academic Competitions at academiccompetitions@elsa.org.

Enjoy the read!

Yours sincerely,

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I. What are Academic Competitions?

Academic Competitions are projects which, next to moot courts and legal writing, fall within the Area of Academic Activities. Competitions and other AA projects distinguish themselves by having participants actively take part. But unlike moot courts and legal writing, Academic Competitions focus on evaluation and development of soft skills. Legal skills are only - if at all - partly evaluated and not the main focus. This difference makes Academic Competitions suitable for students at all levels of their legal education.

A. Organisational Checklist

This checklist serves as a template for organisers of any kind of Academic Competition. However, it should not be understood as an exhaustive list.

What?	Annotation
Jury	The Jury should consist of three people; at least two of them should be legal professionals. Lawyers with practical experience are most suited for this.
Teams	Each team consists of two to four students depending on the competition. The organiser may consider whether your Academic Competition is open to law students exclusively, or if you also wish to invite other students.
Venue	Rooms in the participating law firm are most suitable. Rooms in the university work as well.
Budget	Costs include travel costs, meals, coffee breaks, venue and prizes. For Local Rounds, the organiser may consider covering travel costs to the National Final Round, if applicable.
Case	Cases should be drafted by the organising group with the help of an academic partner. For the ENC, ELSA International can provide cases, if it is not possible to acquire a case elsewhere.
Rules	Rules govern the entry into and process of the competition. For the ENC, draft rules may be found in the ENC package.

Scoresheets	For all competitions there should be clear guidelines for the judges to determine the winning team. Providing, or creating a scoresheet with the Academic Partners is recommended. For the ENC, draft score sheets and scoring guidelines may be found in the ENC package.
Marketing	In order to attract participants and ensure professional outlook, marketing is key. You need, at least, posters for social media and diplomas for participants. For the ENC, it is essential to utilise the materials provided in the ENC package.
Trainings	Soft skills training on e.g. negotiation and/or rhetoric are well suited to prepare the teams for the competition.
Prizes and gifts	Ensure prizes for the winning team and gifts for partners, judges etc.

II. The ELSA Negotiation Competition (ENC)

The ENC is an interactive competition which simulates a negotiation process between two parties. The participants act as the legal representatives of two hypothetical parties who – despite opposing interests – try to find a common ground for a contract or a dispute. The goal is not only the signing of a contract or settling a dispute, but also fulfilling the interests of the client as much as possible. For this reason, each team receives additional and confidential information in addition to the generally available information, specifying which aims need to be met.

A. Course of Events/Process

Procedure	Duration	Description
Preparation Time	30 - 45 minutes	The teams are individually preparing the negotiation in preparation rooms.
Pre-Negotiation Period (optional)	5 minutes per team	<p>The teams introduce themselves to the judges.</p> <p>Each team presents their own strategy and aims of the negotiation to the judges without the other team being present.</p>
Negotiation Period	30 - 60 Minutes	<p>The teams present their main arguments.</p> <p>They try to find a possible zone of agreement and aim to reach an agreement or common ground.</p> <p>Each team can request a break of up to 5 minutes.</p>

Self-Reflection Period	5 minutes for the preparation + 5 minutes per team	<p>Both teams are allowed to prepare for the self-reflection period, without the presence of the judges.</p> <p>This is followed by self-evaluation by the participants of their performance in front of the judges.</p> <p>The teams reflect on the success of their strategy and the outcome of the negotiation.</p>
Feedback by the Judges	As long as needed/possible dependent on the case and number of teams.	Feedback from the judges to ensure that teams learn from the process and improve their soft skills.

B. Finding the winner

Depending on the number of teams, the ENC will usually consist of pre-rounds followed by a concluding finale. The teams will be ranked according to the scoresheets. The two best teams will negotiate again in the Grand Final to determine the winner of the ENC. The organiser may choose between:

- Using the same case with the teams in their original position;
- Using the same case with the positions switched;
- Using a new case.

C. Rounds in the Competition

i. Local Rounds

Local Rounds of the ENC may be hosted by Local Groups of ELSA upon the assistance and guidance of the National Vice President for Academic Activities of the respective National Board. Depending on the number of teams registered, the Local Group may structure the competition with several local rounds taking place.

Entry into the competition: The competition on local level is open for students as stipulated in the rules of the ENC. The goal of the Local Round is to determine a local winner team that qualifies to the next level of the competition.

ii. National Final Rounds

The National Final Round of the competition may be hosted annually by a Local or National Group of ELSA. The host will be responsible for coordinating arrangements and logistics, including but not limited to finding an appropriate venue and recruiting judges.

Entry into the competition: Admission to the competition is primarily for the winners of the Local Rounds. However, in case a particular Local Group did not organise a Local Round, this group may directly send one team to the National Final Round upon approval from the organiser. It is at the organiser's discretion to permit teams that have not won a Local Round at the time the participants register for the National Final Round.

D. Branding of the Project: Uniform Marketing Materials

In order to implement the ENC as a unified project across the ELSA network, it is extraordinarily important to ensure that students as well as externals perceive the competition as a project of high academic quality.

By using the official logo as well as corporate templates for marketing materials, we can build a brand that is universally recognised when publishing any materials in the context of promotion or fundraising.

For this purpose, you will find the supporting materials in the ENC package.

E. Supporting Documents

In the ENC package you may find the following supportive documents:

1. ENC Rules
2. ENC Organising Overview
3. ENC Tutorial
4. Sample case
5. Scoresheet
6. Scoring Guidelines
7. Judge Pack Guide
8. Power point presentation
9. Media card
10. Media card guide
11. Draft sponsorship package
12. Draft email for potential partners
13. ENC sponsors – what you need
14. Template for documents
15. The ENC Logo

III. The Client Interviewing Competition (CIC)

In the CIC, participants simulate the first consultation with a fictional client. The main focus here lies on social interactions, while evaluation of legal skills is rather secondary. Therefore, this competition is especially suited for first year students. Depending on the complexity of the case, evaluating the legal skills of the participants is possible as well.

A. Course of Events/Process

Procedure	Duration	Description
Preparation Time	24 hours prior to the event	Each team receives a secretary memo in advance of the competition. The memo contains very brief information about the client and the problems the client needs help with.
Interview	30 minutes	The participants interview the client and to understand which problems the client has.
Post-Consultation Period	15 minutes	The participants talk with each other about the next steps they have to take to provide the client a sufficient legal service.

B. Finding the winner

The winner of the CIC will be determined by a ranking through scoresheets. The organiser may choose several structures:

1. Each team will only partake in one round, and the winner is the teams with the highest scores.
2. The two highest ranking teams qualify for a Grand Final, and the winner of the competition is the team with the highest score in the Grand Final.

C. The Client

The role of the client is often underestimated in this competition. The client sets the requirements for the teams and the academic level of the competition. An intensive preparation of the client is essential! As such they should be chosen carefully.

Former AA officers or participants, who are very familiar with the competition, are well suited for this role. Actors with legal knowledge might be even better suited for the role. If you are lucky enough to know a law student with a talent for acting, you should ask that person. The client receives extensive information, which they should know by heart.

IV. Witness Interviewing Competition (WIC)

The Witness Interview Competition (WIC) is an academic competition that simulates a witness interview in a criminal procedure. The principal purpose of a witness interview is to determine if an individual made applicable observations of the event and has useful information to provide. Teams consisting of two participants act the part of lawyers interviewing a witness with the purpose of taking a witness statement. A witness statement is a written legal document which contains witness' recount of events. The main assignment of the teams is to question a witness on all matters relevant to the particular case.

Participation in the WIC presents students with an opportunity to strengthen their communication skills and gain practical knowledge through the experience of drafting a witness statement, which is a crucial element of a criminal trial.

A. Course of Events/Process

Procedure	Duration	Description
Preparation Time	24 hours prior to the event	Each team receives a brief in advance of the competition. The brief contains information about the case, the defendant and evidence if there are any in the specific case.
Interview	30 minutes	The participants interview the witness, take notes and try to get the most accurate recount of the facts relevant to the case.
Post-Interview Period	30 minutes	The participants coordinate their notes and form a Witness Statement.

B. Finding the winner

The winner of the WIC is determined by a ranking through scoresheets. The organiser may choose several structures:

1. Each team will only partake in one round, and the winner is the teams with the highest scores.
2. The two highest ranking teams qualify for a Grand Final, and the winner of the competition is the team with the highest score in the Grand Final.

C. The witness

The witness plays a key role in the competition. The preparation of the witness is crucial, and it is recommended to take a few preparation days before the competition so the person taking on this role can be introduced to all details relevant to the interview. This role best suits former AA officers or participants, but it is encouraged to involve all students.

V. ELSA Legal Debates (ELD)

Legal Debates are a discussion between two teams about a motion. The team consist of two to three people but should not exceed four people. Teams are assigned to positions randomly.

A motion is usually announced 15 minutes before the debate starts, although some legal debates are organised, so the participants are familiar with the motion a day before the debate. Depending on the preparation time before the opening speeches, some debates allow participants to bring their own materials to argue their case.

The motion is usually framed with the wording “This House believes...” or “This House would...”. For instance, “This House would introduce the Death Penalty” or “This House believes that the Government should censor hate speech on the Internet”.

Speeches can range from four to seven minutes in length, while rebuttals usually last one to two minutes. The opening speaker presents the case for the affirming side. The second speaker then speaks for the opposition. After the opening speeches, teams can then rebut the opening speech of the affirming/opposing side and explain why their own position is more favourable than the other. When both sides have pleaded, they leave the floor, then in case there are more than two teams, other teams debate.

After the speeches and rebuttals, the judges evaluate the debate on the basis of the content, style and strategy of speeches.

A. The basic conditions

Generally, there are not a lot of differences between the organisation of these Academic Competitions. To organise a Legal Debate, you need a venue with the needed amount of rooms, judges and the right case or scenario for your respective competitions.

Therefore, we refer to the organisational checklist above.

VI. Contact

If you have questions regarding the Academic Competitions feel free to contact the Director for Academic Competitions academiccompetitions@elsa.org or the Vice President in charge of Academic Activities of ELSA International academicactivities@elsa.org.