

## John H. Jackson Moot Court Competition Amendment to the Rules for Virtual Regional Round

A Virtual Regional Round ("VRR") is an official round of the John H Jackson Moot Court Competition on WTO law ("Competition") and is an emergency measure that ELSA International has adopted in light of the Covid-19 pandemic to replace the in-person Regional Rounds and to permit the continued participation in the competition of registered teams. This amendment of the Rules applies specifically to the ability to conduct the oral pleadings on a virtual platform.

The written portion of the competition has already concluded and remains unchanged. All written submissions that were submitted on time have been marked and will be eligible for awards regardless of whether a team competes in the virtual oral pleadings. However, considering the circumstances, Rules 5.8 and 6.14 shall be amended as follows:

50 % of the total scores of both WS will be used for the team ranking in the preliminary rounds. The teams will be ranked according to the total score of their OP (50 %) and their WS (50 %) in the Preliminary Rounds.

All other rules of the Competition remain in effect.

### 1 TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

1.1. Microsoft Teams will be used to conduct the virtual rounds. Microsoft Teams can be accessed for an individual meeting via a website from a link provided by the organisers. Teams do not need to download Microsoft Teams or have any special software on their computers. However, students are encouraged to download the software and practice virtual pleading before the VRR.

1.2. Team members can join from more than one location. If it is not possible for the team to be in the same location, the camera must be focused on the designated orator and the cameras and microphones of the team members not using their speaking time must be off and muted. This can be a laptop camera or a separate web camera (which may be preferable).

1.3. Teams are not allowed to put on display any materials (such as notebooks or pens containing the university logo) that could identify which university, law faculty or country they represent. The breach of the anonymity rule may result in a disqualification from the competition.

1.4. If the team is pleading from different locations, team members may create a separate chat for communication among team members during the pleadings. Coaches or individuals that are not registered members of the team **shall not be** part of such a chat.

1.5. Each team and panelist is responsible for finding a suitable location, which is quiet and closed to the public and where the user will have access to a desk and chair, steady reliable internet and source of power for up to 4 hours. Locations in open hallways, libraries, cybercafes, coffee shops, etc. are not acceptable. We strongly urge you to choose a suitable location in advance of the VRR session.

1.6. The team not speaking shall mute its microphones and ensure that there is no rustling of papers or extraneous noise during the oral pleading. The Panel Chair will monitor and control this, including stopping time if it becomes impossible to hear the orator because of noise or other interference. If the Panel Chair needs to stop the session multiple times, unless for technical reasons independent from the team, it will be at the discretion of the Panel whether to disqualify the team responsible for the disruption, or to deduct points.

1.7. By agreeing to participate in the VRR both panelists and team members agree to the sharing of their email addresses, mobile telephone numbers with ELSA International or the VRR organizers



to facilitate the scheduling of and management of the virtual moot. ELSA International or the VRR organizers will not use this information for any other purposes.

## 2 PARTICIPATING IN THE ROUND

2.1. Teams must provide ELSA International with an email address of the user(s). ELSA International will then send teams the following relevant information at least 48 hours before the scheduled pleading:

- a. The number of the team they are competing against and the side they are pleading;
- b. The date and time of the pleading sessions. Teams are encouraged to log in an hour before the start of the pleading to confirm access;
- c. The contact email for the representative of ELSA International or the VRR organizer coordinating the pleading; and
- d. The link to access the videoconference.

2.2. Each panelist will also receive a link to the videoconference for the pleading. Panelists will also receive a link to a separate meeting where they will be able to deliberate privately and upload their score sheets.

2.3. The only users that should be on the videoconference are the team members (including registered coaches), the panelists, and the timekeeper.

2.4. One day before the scheduled pleading, ELSA International or the VRR Organizer will contact the teams and the panelists to verify that they can access the Microsoft Teams platform.

2.5. At the beginning of each session the Panel Chair will read out the following text and ask each team whether they affirm that they will comply:

*"Do you the students of team Number ## arguing on behalf of Taikon and Astor solemnly promise that you will abide by the rules of the John H Jackson Moot Court Competition and the rules for the virtual oral pleading and that you will not communicate with or accept assistance from in any way your coaches or other individuals during the oral pleading?"*

Each student from the participating teams must affirm that they will. The Panel Chair will then remind that:

*"Failure to comply with the rules or to accept help from outside sources, including coaches, can result in the Panel recommending your disqualification to ELSA International."*

2.6. The rule limiting teams to their team members and 2 coaches in the room or video conference remains in effect. Coaches **may not** pass notes to team members or communicate with them in any way during the pleading. All persons present in the room or the videoconference must be identified to the Panel at the start of the pleading. Once the pleading has started no one should enter the room where the team is or the videoconference that was not present at the beginning. If someone leaves the room or videoconference during the pleading, they must seek permission from the Panel or not return to the room or videoconference after they leave. The Panel has the discretion to disqualify a team for violation of this rule.

2.7. Students or coaches may not record the videoconference.



2.8. Teams are allowed to use not more than two laptops per team during the pleading. In addition to the laptop used for the webcast, a team may use another laptop for reference. A team may also use an additional device (stopwatch) for time keeping.

2.9. The chat feature of Microsoft Teams will be used to announce the approach of various time limits. Panelists may also use the chat to indicate to the chair they would like to ask a question. If teams are unable to get the Chair's attention via video, they may also use the chat to ask for additional time. The chat should not be used to send messages to coaches, the other team or panelists.

2.10. Panelists will exit the virtual pleading for a maximum of 25 minutes to confer on their separate videoconference. They will then return to the virtual pleading to provide feedback. Panelists will not reveal the scores to the teams. Once the feedback is complete, teams may leave the virtual pleading.

2.11. Panelists will send their scores to ELSA International. Once each team has pleaded both complainant and respondent, the scores will be tallied and combined with those of the written submissions per the existing rules.

2.12. ELSA International will send an email to all teams announcing the teams moving forward to the semi-final. The teams will be provided with the same information to conduct the semi-final as described in para. 2.1 above. The same will occur for the grand final of each VRR.

2.13. Teams should thus ensure that they are available for, at least, 2 hours on the days scheduled for preliminary rounds and all day for the semi-final and final. These will vary for each region and any changes in the schedule will be conveyed to teams in due course.

### 3 TECHNICAL OR OTHER DIFFICULTIES

3.1. If a panelist is unable to join the videoconference, the other panelists will wait 15 minutes. If the technical issues cannot be resolved, the pleading will proceed with two panelists. If the third panelist manages to join later, he/she may only score the orators/portion of the argument they actually participated in. If the third panelist does not manage to join the videoconference, the team's score shall be determined by averaging the scores of the two panelists that attended the virtual pleading.

3.2. Similarly, if a panelist loses connection and it cannot be restored, the other panelists will continue without him/her and may only accept scores for the orators/portion of the argument the panelist actually participated in.

3.3. If it is impossible for an oral pleading to be completed because of technical difficulties, the panelists have the option to make adjustment to the scores according to the relevant situation. This could include:

- a. Scoring the orators/portion of the argument they were able to hear and using that for the overall score; Orators who were unable to speak will not receive individual scores for that round towards determining the best orator award.
- b. If a team was unable to plead due to technical difficulties, then the score for that team's written submission for the relevant side (complainant or respondent) will be used. For such a team, the share of the oral pleading will be reduced to 40% of the total score.



#### 4 GENERAL

4.1. By agreeing to participate in the VRR, the teams and panelists acknowledge that ELSA International with the support and advice of the Academic Board of the Competition has full and final discretion in managing the VRR to ensure its technical and logistical success while maintaining academic quality and integrity.

4.2. The VRR is an emergency measure and ELSA International cannot be responsible for failure for pleadings to be completed because of technical difficulties – such as equipment, software, or internet failure. ELSA International will take best available measures to resolve or mitigate any issues that may arise, including adjusting scores as discussed in paragraphs 3.1-3.3 above, if this would produce the fairest result. ELSA International cannot warrant that it will be able to resolve every failure to complete a pleading to a team's satisfaction.

4.3. Teams are reminded that these amendments are to ensure the logistical possibility to run a virtual round in an emergency situation, the other rules of the Competition, particularly with respect to academic integrity remain in force.

4.4. ELSA International will send an email to all teams announcing which teams will advance to the Final Oral Round, which is currently scheduled to be held in Geneva the week of 22 June. ELSA International will continue to monitor the evolving situation with respect to the Covid-19 and update participants as soon as possible, if there are any changes to the Final Oral Round.

