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2021 INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOOT COURT COMPETITION General and Technology Guide for Virtual Rounds of the 2021 Competition

1. INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 1.1. The Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at American University Washington College of Law presents the following General and Technology Guide for Virtual Rounds (Virtual Rules), which include general and technology-specific information and clarifications that must be taken into account ahead of and during 2021 Competition.
- 1.2. The present Virtual Rules complement the 2021 Inter-American Human Rights Moot Court Competition Official Rules (Official Rules). They shall be regarded as an additional set of rules regulating teams' participation in the Virtual Rounds. The Official Rules shall therefore also remain in effect.
- 1.3. Both documents must be interpreted in light of the extraordinary circumstances derived from the COVID-19 pandemic and within the powers of the Technical Committee to administer the Competition. Virtual Rounds will replace the in-person Oral Rounds of the 26th Competition, originally scheduled to be held at American University Washington College of Law in Washington, D.C.
- 1.4. Due to the virtual format of the 2021 Competition, any mention of Washington, D.C. in the Official Rules shall be understood as designating the 2021 Virtual Competition, (Rule 1.2). Similarly, rules applicable to in-person participation, visas, (Rule 1.6), health insurance, (Rule 3.4.), and accommodation, (Rule 3.6), shall not apply.
- 1.5. Participants shall regard the updated, two-week Competition Calendar (from May 16 to May 28, 2021) as the official Calendar. Previously circulated Calendars are outdated and shall not apply, (Rule 1.4). Participants are responsible for monitoring any schedule changes and information, as all changes are publicized on the Academy's website and social media platforms.
- 1.6. The Virtual Rounds of the 2021 Competition will be conducted via Zoom. Participants, Judges, and Bailiffs will be offered opportunities to practice using the Zoom platform before the start of the Virtual Rounds. All Competitors, Coaches, Judges, Observers, Bailiffs, Volunteers, and other Participants should carefully read in their entirety the Official Rules and well the Virtual Rules of the 2021 Competition.
- 1.7. The Virtual Oral Rounds will follow the same structure as they would in person. This includes the same time allocation for each Round, the same scoring system, and the same procedure for Rebuttal and Surrebuttal, among others. Therefore, any unclear passage or dispute on the meaning of a word or section should be understood accordingly to the nature of the Competition.
- 1.8. If after reading the Official Rules and the Virtual Rules in their entirety, you have specific questions, email us at iamoot@wcl.american.edu.

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2. IMPORTANT RULES THAT WILL CHANGE TO ACCOMMODATE THE 2021 VIRTUAL COMPETITION

- 2.1. **Official Rule 9.4.3. Observation of Semi-Final Rounds.** This Rule shall remain in effect except for the section regarding sequestration instructions. The Technical Committee invites teams to refrain from engaging in any activity that could violate the spirit of this rule. Violations will be considered illegal scouting, and subject to the same consequences (see Rule 10.5.3).
- 2.2. **Official Rule 9.6. Sharing of Memorials.** Teams are responsible for downloading the memorial for each of their opponent teams. The memorials shall be available on the Competition's website one (1) week prior to the Competition.
- 2.3. **Official Rule 10.5.4. Coaches as Spectators.** This Rule shall remain in effect and shall be understood to allow coaches to log into Zoom call and join their teams in their Virtual Round.
- 2.4. **Official Rule 10.6.1. Prohibition of Electronic Devices.** This rule shall remain in effect, except in reference to the device Participants need to connect to the Zoom video calls (Computer or cellphone). Any other electronic device (tablets, second computers, or cellphones) not needed to connect to the rounds or that might aid the Oralists in their arguments continue to be prohibited. All devices must be turned off.
- 2.5. **Official Rule 10.8 Presenting Materials.** This Rule shall remain in effect.
- 2.6. **NEW: Panel President, First Vice-President, and Second-Vice-President.** Organizers shall appoint a Panel President, First Vice-President, and Second-Vice-President for each Virtual Round to ensure its continuity.

3. TECHNOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS AND DIGITAL RESOURCES

- 3.1. **General.** Participants shall ensure they have the appropriate technological equipment and audiovisual requirements to participate in the Competition.
- 3.2. **Internet connection.** Team Members and other Participants must have a stable Internet connection (with a recommended Internet bandwidth of 25 mbps) to participate in the Virtual Rounds for which they are registered. Participants may test their Internet speed at www.speedtest.net or might use other websites depending on their countries. Participants must take the necessary technical precautions regarding their equipment and ensure they will have access to a reliable Internet connection for at least two and a half hours without interruption. Participants shall ensure, as much as possible, that they are located in a quiet setting allowing for smooth and uninterrupted connection for the entire duration of the Virtual Rounds in which they are participating.
- 3.3. **Headset. The use of a reliable headset and microphone is required to ensure the quality and fluidity of audio communication.** Participants shall not use the computer's speakers and microphone as the quality of the sound is not ideal for the Virtual Rounds, This is indistinguishable from the quality or the brand of the computer or cellphone. Failure to use

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a headset and correct microphones can result in echoes and reverberation drowning out the speaker's voice making it impossible for other Participants and interpreters to perform their job. **Bear in mind that interpreters will refuse services if any of the Participants do not count with the appropriate headset and microphone, which may create delays and problems for the round and the team performance. Be aware that the use of a headset and microphone is required in all Virtual Rounds regardless of whether they are interpreted or not. Participants shall plan with their coaches and their universities access to the headset and microphone they need.**

- 3.4. **Noise and Distractions.** All Participants, including judges, are required to mute their microphones when not speaking. To minimize distractions and optimize sound quality in a virtual setting, Participants shall attempt to limit all sources of external or background noise. Participants shall switch off their phones, computer notification sounds, and any other sources of noise that they can control before the beginning of the Virtual Rounds.
- 3.5. **Requirements for identification.** All Participants are required to be easily identified during the rounds. Judges shall display their names in their video window. Oralists shall display their team's number followed by the role and the number of the Participant 1 or 2. **(e.i., 300. State, 1)**, Coaches shall display the number of their teams follow by the word coach 1 or coach 2. **(e.i., 300. Coach 1)**, Observers shall display the number of their teams, if applicable, short name and last name, and the word Observer. **(e.i., 300. Adriana Martinez. Observer)**. Any participant can be required to change their names to enhance clarity.
- 3.6. **Camera Angle and Setup.** All Oralists and judges are required to have their faces clearly visible at all times. Coaches and Observers might turn off their videos only if there are connecting from a separate space than the Oralists or other Members of their Teams. Speakers are encouraged to ensure that they have a consistent light source allowing their face to be clearly visible for the duration of their presentation. Participants should be advised that natural lighting may vary during the course of a Round, and plan accordingly. All Participants are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Academy to test their connection and equipment before the Virtual Rounds.
- 3.7. **Seated or Standing Oralists.** Competitors may be seated or standing. Bear in mind that if they choose to stand they shall not be too far from the camera and microphone. In case that standing affects the quality of the video or sound any participant might be asked to deliver their participation in a way that is clear to all Participants. This might be included to be asked to be seated. Plan accordingly.
- 3.8. **Plain background.** Participants are encouraged to select a plain background and refrain from using virtual backgrounds that might distract other Participants. Any participant might be asked to turn off their virtual background at any time.
- 3.9. **Prohibition of Shared Screens.** Competitors may not share their screen or use technology to share external information that may aid other Participants during the Virtual Rounds.

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Competitors may not use teleprompters or similar equipment during oral arguments in the Virtual Rounds.

- 3.10. Physical location.** Participants are allowed to be physically located in the same room during the Virtual Rounds. For example, they might to together at schools grounds. However, the Technical Committee encourages all Participants to avoid gathering whenever possible and to observe biosecurity measures at all times.

4. PROCEEDINGS DURING THE VIRTUAL ORAL ROUNDS

- 4.1. Availability.** Participants are required to be available at least 30 minutes before the set start time of their Rounds. This time is crucial to ensure all Participants are present, the connection and equipment are working properly, interpreters can perform their job, and any other details aiming to ensure the quality of the Virtual Rounds.
- 4.2. Noise Check.** Bailiffs are required to monitor noises that might interfere with the Virtual Rounds and shall mute any Participants who are not speaking to ensure consistent sound quality for the duration of the Virtual Rounds. Before starting each round, all Participants should check their microphone is properly connected and that the sound is collected by the connected microphone and not any other device. The Virtual Round shall not start until all Participants state they can properly see and hear all other Participants.
- 4.3. Exceptional Changes to the Display and Connection Rules.** In exceptional cases where Participants have a poor Internet connection hindering the smooth running of the Virtual Rounds, Participants may be asked to turn off their cameras to improve connectivity. During this time all Participants, specially Oralists shall continue to observe all the Competition's Rules.
- 4.4. Asking Questions.** Oralists shall bear in mind that judges are not required to raise their hand before asking for questions during the Oralists' presentations.
- 4.5. Troubleshooting Connection Problems.** If Participants are having difficulties connecting to the Zoom link before the rounds or get disconnected during the rounds, they shall notify the Bailiff, or the Competition Coordinator immediately. Participants are responsible for reporting any technical difficulties to Competition organizers as soon as possible, by any means available, including, but not limited to Zoom chat function or email at iamoot@wcl.american.edu. Failure to do so may affect the team's scheduled Rounds.
- 4.6. Continuity of the Presentation.** If one Oralist from a Team is disconnected the other Oralist shall be ready to continue their argumentation. When the first Oralist reconnects he/she might or might not continue the presentation according to the organization they stated at the beginning of the Virtual Round. In any case, the two (2) Oralists must make oral presentations of approximately the same period of time in accordance with Rule 10.1.
- 4.7. Virtual Rounds Adjourned.** If both Oralists of a Team are disconnected, the Round will be adjourned until at least one Oralist connects. Bailiffs shall keep a clear record of the time. This includes both the time passed before the round was interrupted, the time during with the

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round was adjourned, and the time left for interventions. If one of the two Oralists connects, the Virtual Rounds shall proceed up to half an hour beyond the total time set in order to complete the Virtual Round. In Case no one connects in the next thirty minutes, the round would be rescheduled to another time if the reasons are not the teams' fault.

- 4.8. **Official Rule 10.4. *Ex parte* Procedure.** As per Official Rule 10.4, if one Team fails to join a scheduled Virtual Oral Rounds, the Technical Committee, after waiting thirty (30) minutes, may allow the Oral Argument Session to proceed *ex parte*.
- 4.9. **Official Rule 10.4.1. Rescheduling the Virtual Oral Rounds.** As per Official Rule 10.4.1., if a Team has technical difficulties hindering the smooth completion of a Round, that is not its fault and that could not be avoided, the Virtual Rounds might be rescheduled. Make-up Rounds shall be rescheduled as soon as possible. Teams are required to be available at all times to proceed with the rounds.
- 4.10. **Round President and Vice-President disconnected.** If the President of the Virtual Round is disconnected, the First Vice-president shall serve as Chairperson until the President re-establishes their connection. If the First Vice-president is in turn disconnected, the Second Vice-President shall serve as Chairperson until the First Vice-President or Chairperson re-establish their connection.
- 4.11. **Judge Panel Disconnected.** If a Judge in the panel of Judges is disconnected, the remaining Judges shall remain in charge of the hearing. A Judge who was unable to participate in part of the Rounds shall score only the Oralists that they heard. The score of those whom the disconnected Judge was unable to hear shall be obtained by averaging the scores awarded to them by the other Judges. If a second or more Judges are disconnected, the remaining Judges shall complete the Rounds, and the score for each Oralist shall be obtained by averaging the scores awarded by the Judges who remained connected for the duration of the Rounds.
- 4.12. **Interpreter Disconnected.** If an interpreter is disconnected, the other interpreter for that Round shall be in charge until the first interpreter can re-establish their connection.
- 4.13. **Bailiff Disconnected.** If the Bailiff is disconnected, the Round President shall be in charge until the Bailiff is reconnected. If the Round President is also disconnected the Vice-president shall take this responsibility.

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