

UC Berkeley Law Competitions

Halloum Negotiation Competition

2026 Competition Rules

Advocacy competitions are complex events that require a significant amount of coordination to operate smoothly for everyone involved. The tournament organizers may, in their discretion, amend or add to tournament rules as appropriate to suit the needs of the tournament.

Competition-related emails may contain material that requires a time-sensitive response. Competitors are expected to review competition-related emails promptly upon receipt and in their entirety. Failure to respond as directed may have consequences, including disqualification from a competition.

Competitors are also expected to keep all potential competition days and time slots open in their schedules. All competition rounds will be held at Berkeley Law. Tournament organizers have carefully selected the dates and times, making every effort to avoid class conflicts. Dates and times for all rounds will be provided to competitors before the registration deadline. Important competition dates are listed on the [2026 Halloum Negotiation Website](#).

I. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY & TEAM ASSIGNMENTS

All Berkeley Law 1L students (excluding members of Berkeley Law’s Board of Advocates) are eligible to participate. Registration is on a lottery system, and you can sign up with a partner or individually. A maximum of 24 teams of 2 students each can participate in the Halloum 1L Negotiation Competition due to logistical and resource limitations. If the maximum number of participants is reached, a waitlist will begin. We often admit students from the waitlist; therefore, we encourage students to attend the training just in case, as well as to further their own learning. Each team will randomly be assigned to their sides.

II. LOGISTICS

A. Fact Pattern Distribution

For each round, the fact patterns all teams receive will include:

- one common set of facts, called “General Facts,” which are shared with all competitors; and
- one set of confidential information, called “Confidential Facts,” which is shared only with the competitors representing your side.

Competitors CANNOT share confidential information with any other team in the negotiation competition, including teams that share the same fact pattern. See Rule 3E. Judges will have access to all materials provided to competitors. The Competition Directors will release the materials in such a way that the teams have an equal amount of time to prepare for their respective appearance in the rounds.

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B. Questions

Questions relating to the tournament generally can be sent to any of the contacts listed in the last section of the rules.

Questions relating to the released fact patterns should be sent by email in advance of the applicable tournament round to halloumnegotiation@law.berkeley.edu. You may NOT consult with other teams about your questions, even those who have the same side as you. The last opportunity to send fact pattern questions will be 6:00 p.m. the day before the applicable round. This is to allow the Competitor Directors the opportunity to respond to your inquiry. Questions submitted after that time must be procedural only.

C. Judges

Competition organizers will provide judges for this tournament, consisting of attorneys and/or students from Berkeley Law's Alternative Dispute Resolution Team. These judges will be instructed to evaluate the competitors' performance according to the Evaluation Criteria Form provided to them. All rooms will do a conflict check before starting the round to ensure personal relationships will not bias the round's results.

III. TOURNAMENT STRUCTURE

A. Scoring

The evaluation standards in this tournament are based on the premise that there is no one "correct" approach to effective negotiation in all circumstances. Whatever approach is used, however, negotiation effectiveness can be judged at least in part by the process and outcome of the session, regardless of whether the agreement was reached.

Ultimately, competitors should refer to the Evaluation Criteria Form for the specific criteria provided to scoring judges. It is also a good idea to keep in mind that generally, a good negotiation outcome is typically one that demonstrates many (if not all) of the following elements:

- Is better than the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (with this party)
- Satisfies the interests of:
 - The client – very well
 - The other side – acceptably (enough for them to agree and follow through)
 - Third parties – tolerably (so they won't disrupt the agreement)
- Is legitimate and no one feels "taken"
- Involves commitments that are clear, realistic, and operational
- Involves communication that is efficient and well understood
- Results in an enhanced working relationship, so the parties and/or their lawyer can deal with future differences more easily

Scores for this introductory competition will not be released. The primary focus of this experience for first-year law students is to develop their negotiation skills through training, practice, and the receipt of oral feedback from experienced evaluators.

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B. Rounds & Sessions

Half of the teams will compete in “Session A” (90 minutes), and half will compete in “Session B” (90 minutes). In total, each team will negotiate in two preliminary rounds. Teams will be randomly assigned to their time slot and only compete once per round. Class conflicts are the only event that will be taken into account when scheduling. The semifinal round will be conducted the same way as the preliminary rounds. The final round will be recorded and consist of one negotiation session over the lunch hour.

C. Negotiation Structure

Each session will begin with a 40-minute negotiation (which may include one “mid-negotiation break” per team, see Rule 4A). After the negotiation concludes, teams will have 5 minutes to speak with their partners outside of the room and prepare for their analysis. The student directors (halloumnegotiation@law.berkeley.edu) will predetermine which side presents their analysis first.

Teams will each have 7 minutes to present their post-negotiation analysis to the judges. **The other team cannot be present in the negotiation room during the analysis and should wait in the hallway.** Once the first team completes their analysis, the second team will provide their analysis in front of the judges while the first team waits in the hallway. After both analyses have concluded, the first team may enter the room as judges complete their scoring. After scoring, judges may provide oral feedback to competitors.

An example session schedule is provided below to demonstrate the timeline for all rounds, but please note this example is not a reflection of the exact schedule for this year’s tournament. This example of a Session A schedule is offered as a guide, but does **NOT** reflect an exact schedule for your particular round. For example, your assigned round start time may not be 1:00 pm and can vary depending on several factors related to tournament logistics.

Example Session Schedule

- 1:00 p.m. – Judges enter the room and perform a conflict check with competitors
- 1:05 p.m. – Start 40-minute negotiation
During the negotiation, each team has the option to call one break. The clock will continue to run, and both teams must leave the negotiation room.
- 1:45 p.m. – Conclude the 40-minute negotiation
Competitors exit the room for 5 minutes to prepare their post-negotiation analysis.
- 1:50 p.m. – Team A presents their 7-minute post-negotiation analysis to judges
- 1:57 p.m. – Team B presents their 7-minute post-negotiation analysis to judges
- 2:04 p.m. – Judges score their ballots individually, then provide oral feedback
- 2:30 p.m. – End of Session A. Session B begins.

D. Timekeeping

Responsibility rests with the student competitors for timekeeping and for adherence to the allotted time periods for negotiating sessions and breaks. The judges must focus their attention on evaluating student performance. Students are not permitted to ask judges for time updates.

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E. Confidentiality

You may ONLY discuss your preparation plans with your partner. No one else may be consulted. We expect that all teams will be prepared to negotiate using their own original strategies and preparation materials, except those materials provided by the Competition Directors to teams equally. If you encounter a violation of this policy, please contact the Competition Directors immediately.

Observers: Spectators are not allowed during the preliminary and semifinal rounds. However, the final round will be open to the public, with lunches available for attendees. We hope to see you all there!

IMPORTANT: Competitors CANNOT share confidential information with any other team in the negotiation competition, including teams that share the same fact pattern. Competitors negotiating in the first session of the evening cannot communicate with any other competitors negotiating in the second session of the evening. Sharing information degrades the level of competition and will cause any teams offending this rule to be disqualified.

IV. NEGOTIATION HOUSEKEEPING

A. Mid-Negotiation Breaks

During the negotiation, each team is permitted to call for one break of no more than 5 minutes. (e.g., "Let's take a break and come back to continue our conversation in X minutes"). When a break is called, both teams must leave the room. The 40-minute period allotted for the negotiation will continue during the break. Round time does NOT stop for breaks.

B. Post-Negotiation Analysis

- a. **Format:** When the 40-minute negotiation ends, there will be a 5-minute preparation period, after which each team will have 7 minutes to analyze their team's performance in the negotiation for the judges. During each team's analysis, the opposing team will wait outside the room. For each round, the student directors will predetermine which team will present first.
- b. **Content:** Students are free to discuss any issues from the negotiation during the analysis. For example, students may provide self-analysis on their own performance, reflect on how the negotiation went for their own team or the other team, or address any other issues they see as being relevant to the negotiation. The team might also use this as an opportunity to explain why they chose a particular approach or tactic and discuss its effectiveness. As a starting point, students might begin this 7-minute period by answering the following questions:
 - "In reflecting on the entire negotiation, if you faced a similar situation tomorrow, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?"
 - "How well did your strategy work in relation to the outcome?"

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During the analysis, the team should also be prepared to respond to questions from the judges concerning the team's performance. For the purposes of scoring, the judges may consider anything said during this session.

Word to the wise: The post-negotiation analysis gives teams an opportunity to informally discuss how things went, and successful teams will be thoughtful in their approach. Negotiation competitions are often won and lost in the analysis period, so take it seriously. This is a chance for you to explain your strategy going in, talk up the things you did well, and acknowledge what you would have done differently. While you don't want to disparage yourself, being candid about your mistakes will usually earn the respect of the judges. Finally, make sure to focus on the "package" if your team reached an agreement at the end of the negotiation. While it is not necessary to reach an agreement in order to perform at a high level in the competition, if you do reach one, judges will expect you to explain how each element of the deal does or does not satisfy your client's interests. Much of this will have to be prepared on the fly during your preparation session in the hallway, but you and your partner can prepare some parts of it (such as the organization of what you'd want to address) ahead of time.

C. Additional Materials

Competitors may use the following materials:

- a calculator
- prepared notes* for personal use
 - *Please note these notes MUST be in a non-electronic format for the purposes of the competition. If your team shows up to the competition with electronic notes, you will not be permitted to use them.
- competitors may create shared notes during the round by using a whiteboard

Word to the wise: The use of shared notes during a negotiation can be a powerful tool for both teams. This helps everyone in the room (you, opposing counsel, the judges) remember what has been said and agreed upon. Make sure your shared notes are amenable to opposing counsel - you don't want to get into a "battle of the board" where people are debating over the accuracy of the shared notes instead of working toward a mutually agreeable solution.

D. Going "Outside" the Fact Pattern

Although the simulations may resemble actual events, for the purposes of the competition, assume that there is no mandatory legal authority. Any exceptions will be explicitly stated in the fact pattern. You will NOT be given extra points for displaying a knowledge of the law outside your fact pattern "universe." In fact, bringing in extraneous law can be confusing to both judges and opposing counsel if it is not something that was mentioned in the fact pattern. *Word to the wise:* While you are not permitted to make up facts of your own or bring in outside law, your team may want to consider the notion of "expanding the pie" (creating a larger pool of benefits to distribute between the parties).

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V. CONTACT INFORMATION

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