Thank you for giving up your time to judge this competition. You may or may not have done this before but this briefing aims to ensure you have all the information you need.

### What the competition is about

Students from different law schools (and from different law courses) interview role-playing clients about hypothetical problems. They are in teams of two and are assessed on their interviewing skills and their application of the law. The national competition has encouraged the skills of client interviewing since 1984. The scenarios this year are based on issues arising for Residential Neighbours.

#### Ten regional events are taking took place across England & Wales. At each event, three teams will take part and each top ranked team will qualify for the national finals at the Exeter offices of Ashfords llp on Saturday 11th March 2017.

There is an international competition for national winners which this year will be hosted by the University of Kent from 19-22 April 2017. Our last year’s winners, Brighton University, went on to finish third in the 2016 international competition in Windsor, Ontario (Canada).

# Outline of Arrangements

Each team conducts two interviews with two different clients that are new to their firm. The clients all have a detailed script. The teams were given a short memorandum about 10 days ago giving basic details of the client and giving some indication of the nature of the problem.

The interviews are judged by panels of judges. Each panel is ideally made up of legal practitioners and people with counselling experience.

You will be judging interviews with one client. You will see 3 different teams interview that same client. Each panel member will then give each team a mark and ranking using the assessment criteria (see “marking” later). Each student team is given a random letter to ensure anonymity. Anonymity is maintained until the results are announced.

Each interview lasts a maximum of 40 minutes. Please appoint one panel member as time keeper. The student team has to manage the timing of the interview. They have 30 minutes for the interview and 10 minutes for a reflection that takes place after the client has left. The reflection is usually a discussion between the team members in your hearing. Judges should not indicate that 30 minutes have passed but must stop the session at 40 minutes if it is still going on. There is no penalty for overrunning on the 30 minutes for the interview but part of the assessment criteria relate to the reflection so they may be penalising themselves by doing this.

**Introductions** The team members may introduce themselves to you when they come into the room but make sure they don’t reveal their law school. You can introduce yourselves to them, perhaps shaking hands and telling them your name and job.

##### Tables and Props Students may move the tables to suit their interviewing approach. However, judges need to be able to see them and the client. They must put the furniture back to its original position before leaving the room after the interview.

**Costs** The rules say that “While the discussion of fees plays an important part of any first consultation, such discussion should not take up too much time in the competition. A uniform fee schedule will, therefore, apply for the purposes of the competition. This schedule will apply for all contestants and will not be subject for discussion with the judges. Where the client is not eligible for legal aid, the client will be told that the initial interview will be billed at a standard rate.” It also says that “Teams will be expected to be aware of the 10 mandatory principles of the SRA’s Code of Conduct (October 2011). Their attention is particularly drawn to the “1st Section: You and Your Client” and the client care outcomes.”

All teams have told that a uniform fee schedule applies: they must quote the introductory interview at a fixed fee of £75 +VAT and a standard charge rate of £200 +VAT per hour for subsequent work unless eligible for "legal aid".

**Marking** Marking is based on the competition **assessment criteria**. Each judge completes a **score sheet** for each team by circling scores for each criterion and totalling the marks.

After all the interviews, you need to complete a score sheet and total the marks. You should check the totals for each team. You then need to rank the teams, taking note of your score sheet totals. The scores are not wholly decisive: you could decide that a team that is a few marks adrift is still the best team. However, if the difference is greater than this, you really should stick to the outcome produced by the marking criteria.

* Judges must give a score for each category for each team.
* If a judge believes a team has underperformed in one area, they should try to avoid penalising them under more than one category in the assessment criteria
* Marking is individual but judges should discuss interviews before completing score sheets.
* Judges might find it helpful to circle scores initially in pencil, as they might want to revise earlier scores in the light of later interviews they see.
* In reaching a decision, judges are expected to consult with the client after all the interviews have taken place. However, whilst the client’s views may inform a judge’s decision, they do not have to be followed.

Please ensure you complete the written **feedback sheet** for each team. This is really important as it will be passed to the team. It should contain encouraging comments and then perhaps some suggestions for improvement. Your mark and feedback sheets will be collected by the event organiser to collate the results.

Thank you and we hope you enjoy the experience.