

2026

Maxwell Challenge Rules



TABLE OF CONTENT

Definitions	3
Rule 1. Purpose and Scope	5
Rule 2. Administration	5
Rule 3. Applications and Team Composition	5
Rule 4. Case Scenarios	6
Rule 5. Parts of the Maxwell Challenge	7
Rule 6. Use of Artificial Intelligence	7
Rule 7. Written Statements	7
Rule 8. Pre-Mediation Meetings	8
Rule 9. Conduct of Mediation Sessions	8
Joint and Private meetings	9
Breaks	10
Material Support	10
Team Support	10
Rule 10. Sequence of Mediation Sessions	10
Rule 11. Assessors	11
Rule 12. Scoring	11
Rule 13. Awards	12
Rule 14. Penalties and Procedural Questions	12
Rule 15. Observers	12
Annex 1: Maxwell Challenge Calendar	14
Annex 2: Scoring Criteria for Written Statements	15
Annex 3: Scoring Criteria for Pre-Mediation Meetings	16
Annex 4: Scoring Criteria for Student Mediators in Mediation Sessions	17
Annex 4: Scoring Criteria for Negotiator Teams in Mediation Session	18

RULES

Definitions

“**Assessor**” means a professional appointed to evaluate and score participants in the challenge.

“**Case Scenario**” means the General Information, Confidential Information, and any clarifications.

“**Challenge**” means the Maxwell Challenge.

“**Challenge Calendar**” means the timetable for team submissions and sessions of the Challenge found in Annex 1.

“**Confidential Information**” means information provided only to one side of a Case Scenario.

“**Legal Counsel**” means the member of a Negotiator Teams who plays the role of legal counsel in a mediation session.

“**General Information**” means information common to both sides of a Case Scenario.

“**Mediation Session**” means a meeting in which a member of a Mediator Team facilitates negotiations between Student Negotiators together with time for scoring and feedback.

“**Mediator Team**” means a team of students selected to act as mediators and assessed separately from Negotiator Teams.

“**Negotiator Teams**” means a team of students selected to represent parties in mediation sessions.

“**Organizing Committee**” means the body responsible for administering the Challenge.

“**Participating Team**” means the students on a Negotiator Team or Mediator Team that take part in a Mediation Session

“**Party Representative**” means the member of a Negotiator Teams who plays the role of the client in a mediation session.

“**Professional Mediators**” means participants who act as mediators in Pre-Meditation Meetings.

“**Preliminary Rounds**” means the first four in-person rounds in which Negotiator Teams compete for ranking.

“**Pre-Mediation Meetings**” means recorded online discussion between Negotiator Teams and Professional Mediators meant to clarify issues, assess positions and interests, and prepare for Mediation Sessions.

“Private Meeting” means a confidential meeting during a Mediation Session between the Student Mediator and fewer than all participants

“Responding Team” means the team assigned the role of the party responding to that request in a round.

“Requesting Team” means the team assigned the role of the party requesting mediation in a round.

“Student Mediator” means a student participant appointed from a Mediator Team to mediate a Mediation Session.

“Team” means a registered Negotiator Teams or Mediator Team.

“Written Statement” means a document (commonly referred to in mediation practice as a position paper, mediation case brief, or mediation case statement) prepared by a Negotiator Team shared with the Professional Mediators and Assessors that sets out relevant facts, legal arguments, interests, and proposed paths to settlement for the purpose of assisting the mediator in understanding the dispute and facilitating negotiations.

Rule 1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 The Maxwell Challenge is a student negotiation and mediation challenge. It engages participants in different stages of the mediation process and presents them with challenges reflective of real mediation practice. Through preparation and participation in the Challenge, participants develop knowledge, practical skills, experience, judgment, and the ability to adapt in dynamic mediation settings.
- 1.2 The Challenge places particular emphasis on the distinct and complementary roles performed in mediation, namely the Legal Counsel, Party Representative, and Mediator, and participants are expected to demonstrate an understanding of these roles and their effective interaction in a mediation setting.
- 1.3 The Challenge is not intended to reward rehearsed performances or unrealistic progression toward settlement but rather adaptability and genuine problem-solving.
- 1.4 The Challenge also serves as an international forum for the exchange of ideas about mediation practice that brings together participants from different jurisdictions to share approaches, explore evolving techniques, and build lasting professional connections particularly within the Asia-Pacific region.
- 1.5 The dates for submissions and rounds of the Challenge are on the Challenge Calendar in Annex 1.

Rule 2. Administration

- 2.1 The Challenge is administered under these rules by an Organizing Committee that is assisted by a Case Writing Committee, a Rules Committee, an Advisory Committee, and supporting administrators.
- 2.2 The Organizing Committee has final authority to interpret the rules and may take additional measures not proscribed in the rules for the orderly conduct of the Challenge. In the event of inconsistency between these Rules and any other communication, these Rules shall prevail unless the Organizing Committee decides otherwise.

Rule 3. Applications and Team Composition

- 3.1 Team members must be registered as full-time or part-time students on the dates of the Competition to be eligible to participate. Only law students may act as Legal Counsel. Students who have work experience as lawyers or mediators are not eligible to participate unless granted permission by the Organizing Committee.
- 3.2 Teams apply through the process announced by the Organizing Committee. Applications shall include:
 - a. details of team members including their names, institutions, and years of study;
 - b. information on any prior mediation or negotiation training or experience;

- c. details of coaches including names and affiliations; and
- d. a statement of motivation of no more than 500 words.

3.3 An institution may apply to register up to two teams including one Negotiator Team and one Mediator Team. Each team must apply separately.

3.4 The Challenge will include up to sixteen Negotiator Teams and nine Mediator Teams. Each team shall consist of one to four students. Students may participate either as a negotiator or as a mediator but not both. Each team may have one or two coaches.

3.5 In selecting teams, the Organizing Committee will consider the quality of the applications, demonstrated interest in mediation, prior experience, diversity of geography and background, and the educational objectives of the Challenge.

Rule 4. Case Scenarios

4.1 The Challenge is based on hypothetical disputes that are explained in Case Scenarios. Case Scenarios comprise General Information and Confidential Information.

4.2 All Negotiator Teams receive the same General Information for a round of the Challenge. The General information outlines the common facts of the dispute, the key issues, and the overall context in which the dispute arises.

4.3 Each Negotiator Teams is provided with Confidential Information corresponding to the party it represents in a round that reflects that party's internal perspective. The Confidential Information sets out the party's underlying interests, priorities, objectives, constraints, and approach to settlement including acceptable outcomes and areas of flexibility. Confidential Information may be disclosed by the receiving team during rounds and feedback session for that round. However, it must not be shared outside the team to which it is provided including with other teams or any third party at any other time.

4.4 Case Scenarios contain all information required for Participating Teams to address the dispute.

4.5 Teams must rely only on the facts provided in the Case Scenarios. They may draw reasonable inferences from those facts but may not:

- a. introduce new or different facts or legal sources;
- b. contradict their own Confidential Information;
- c. misrepresent the stated facts; or
- d. change the essential nature of the dispute or transaction.

4.6 Case Scenarios will be provided with sufficient time to allow for adequate preparation by Teams and Assessors. Each Case Scenario is self-contained and should be treated as independent from the other though the same General Information may be used in more than one round of the Challenge.

4.7 The Organizing Committee may issue clarifications to the Case Scenarios. Any clarification forms part of the record and is binding on all teams.

4.8 All materials prepared for the Challenge including Case Scenarios are the property of the Organizing Committee and may not be used for any outside purpose without the prior written consent of the Organizing Committee.

Rule 5: Parts of the Maxwell Challenge

5.1 The Challenge comprises the following scored parts:

- a. submission of Written Statements by Negotiator Teams;
- b. online Pre-Mediation Meetings between Negotiator Teams and professional mediators; and
- c. in-person challenge rounds between Negotiator Teams and Mediator Teams held in Singapore.

Rule 6: Use of Artificial Intelligence

6.1 Artificial intelligence can be a useful tool in team preparations. There are no general restrictions on its use and no general requirement that participants disclose that they have used artificial intelligence. However, the use of AI must be consistent with the following instruments:

- a. [the International Bar Association Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Mediation \(2025\)](#); and
- b. the [International Mediation Institute code of Professional Conduct](#).

Rule 7. Written Statements

7.1 In mediation practice, parties commonly provide mediators with written statements in advance of mediation that set out the key facts and issues in dispute and lay the groundwork for constructive negotiation. Each Negotiator Team shall submit one Written Statement on behalf of the party it represents before the Pre-Mediation Meetings.

7.2 Each Written Statement shall:

- a. be submitted in English;
- b. include a cover page identifying only the team number and the party represented;
- c. not identify the students, institution, coach, or university anywhere in the document;
- d. be clear and legible in format;
- e. not exceed 1,000 words excluding the cover page;
- f. not include annexes or supporting materials; and
- g. be submitted as a single PDF document.

7.3 Negotiator Teams may refer to the score sheet in Annex 2 for additional guidance on expected content. The deadline for submissions is on the Challenge Calendar in Annex 1.

7.4 In mediation practice, written statements are commonly drafted by legal counsel. Negotiator Teams may draft their statements to read as documents prepared by legal counsel though both members of a Negotiating Team, namely Legal Counsel and Party Representative, may work together to prepare the statements.

7.5 In mediation practice, written statements may be shared with both the mediator and the other party. For the purposes of the Challenge, teams should assume that the audience is the mediator only and that the statement will not be shared with the other party.

7.6 Written Statements will be assessed following the Pre-Mediation Meetings. They will not be used in any other part of the Challenge including the Mediation Sessions.

Rule 8. Pre-Mediation Meetings

8.1 In mediation practice, parties may meet with the mediator in advance of a mediation session to clarify key issues, test positions, and prepare for productive negotiations. In the Challenge, each Negotiator Team shall participate in one Pre-Mediation Meeting with a Professional Mediator.

8.2 Each Pre-Mediation Meeting shall last thirty-five minutes. Meetings will take place online, will be recorded, and will be made available to Assessors for scoring. The meetings are intended to be an interactive discussion rather than a presentation by Negotiator Teams. Teams may refer Annex 3 for guidance on scoring and expected content.

8.3 The Pre-Mediation Meetings are based on Case Scenario 1. The date of the meetings is on the Challenge Calendar in Annex 1.

8.4 Coaches may assist teams in preparing for the Pre-Mediation Meeting but may not communicate with team members during the meetings.

8.5 In exceptional cases involving serious connectivity or logistical difficulties, the Organizing Committee may permit alternative arrangements to teams including holding the Pre-Mediation Meeting in person in Singapore before the preliminary rounds.

Rule 9. Conduct of Mediation Sessions

9.1 In mediation practice, there is a stage at which the mediator and the parties engage in a facilitated negotiation, namely a mediation session, aimed at resolving the dispute. Mediation Sessions in the Challenge are conducted with a member of a Mediator Team facilitating direct negotiations between Negotiator Teams based on Case Scenarios.

9.2 Each Mediation Session in the general rounds shall include:

- a. ninety minutes for the mediation;
- b. twenty minutes for scoring; and
- c. twenty minutes for feedback.

9.3 The starting point of each Mediation Session is determined by the Case Scenario. A session may begin at the outset of the session and so it will typically include a mediator introduction followed by opening statements from each team. Alternatively, a session may begin at a later stage of the process in which case it will begin with negotiations.

9.4 In general terms, Student Mediators manage the sessions by guiding the parties' engagement and supporting constructive dialogue. Party Representatives negotiate and make decisions regarding settlement. Legal Counsel explain and advocate their clients' legal positions and support them in negotiations.

Joint and Private Meetings

9.5 Mediation Sessions will begin with joint meetings with all participants present but may also include Private Meetings. A Private Meeting or "caucus" is a confidential meeting between mediators and a limited number of participants.

9.6 Each Negotiator Team may initiate no more than two Private Meetings in a session each lasting no longer than five minutes. Each Student Mediator may initiate no more than two Private Meetings with a total duration not exceeding ten minutes. This means that there could be up to six Private Meetings in a session totaling 30 minutes. The participants in the Private Meeting can be the Student Mediator and either one Negotiator Team, the Legal Counsel for each team, or the Parties from each Team.

9.7 Negotiator Teams may initiate Private Meetings, for example, to explore how to overcome obstacles in the negotiations or seek guidance from the mediator on how and when to communicate information or proposals. Mediators may initiate private meetings, for example, to explore the implications of positions taken and assist the parties in assessing options and moving the discussion forward.

9.8 Private Meetings are most common between a Student Mediator and one Negotiating Team. However, a Private Meeting between a Student Mediator and Legal Counsel from each team may be appropriate, for example, to discuss legal risks privately. A Private Meeting between a Student Mediator and the Party Representative from each team may be appropriate, for example, to enable direct discussions between the decision-makers.

9.9 Information shared in Private Meetings with one Negotiating Team is confidential and should not be disclosed by the Student Mediator to the other team unless the participants in the meeting agree.

9.10 Private Meetings take place within the rooms reserved for the sessions. Students participating in the session but not in a Private Meeting must leave room and must not communicate with their teammates participating in the Private Meeting during the meeting. Assessors, Coaches, Observers, and any other team members remain in the room and will not participate in the meeting.

9.11 Points will not be deducted on the sole basis that a Negotiator Team or Student Mediator does not initiate any private meeting. Points may be deducted if a Private Meeting is held but serves no clear purpose.

9.12 During Private Meetings, the time for the Mediation Session will continue to run.

Breaks

- 9.13 Each Participating Team and Student Mediator may take one break of up to three minutes during a session. A break may provide a moment to pause and reflect before deciding how to proceed or for a private discussion among teammates. The Participating Team taking the break will leave the session room with the Session Manager while all others remain in the room. During the break, the mediation discussions shall be suspended and no substantive discussions relating to the mediation may continue between the remaining participants in the room. The remaining participants may, however, confer privately among themselves during this time. No Participating Team, Student Mediator, or other participant may communicate with, seek guidance from, or otherwise engage in any discussion with the Coaches during the break.
- 9.14 During Breaks, the time for the Mediation Session will continue to run.

Material Support

- 9.15 Teams may bring paper copies of the case materials and their private notes into the session rooms and may take additional notes during the session.
- 9.16 Teams may use electronic devices including laptops, tablets and mobile phones. However, no communication with coaches or third parties is permitted during the Mediation Session. The use of such devices should not disrupt the session.
- 9.17 Each Negotiator Team may use handouts or other support materials during a session. Copies of any materials shared shall be provided to the Student Mediator, Assessors, and the opposing team unless use exclusively in a Private Meeting. Such materials may be used, for example, to present proposals, emphasise key information, or visually represent information that may otherwise be difficult to follow.
- 9.18 The nature and extent of materials used are not restricted. However, Assessors may consider whether the use of such materials is effective, appropriate, and consistent with the objectives of the mediation process when scoring.

Team Support

- 9.19 Coaches may assist teams to prepare for the Challenge including between rounds of the Mediation Sessions. No person, including coaches, may communicate with teams during Mediation Sessions.

Rule 10. Sequence of Mediation Sessions

- 10.1 There will be four general rounds of Mediation Sessions over two days. Negotiator Teams are not bound by the positions or strategies taken in their Written Statements or Pre-Mediation Meetings in the first round.

10.2 At the conclusion of the general rounds, the two highest-ranked Negotiator Teams shall advance to a final round mediated by a member of the highest-ranked Mediator Team. The final round shall include ninety minutes for the mediation.

Rule 11. Assessors

11.1 Assessors shall be appointed by the Organizing Committee. Assessors shall evaluate performance of teams using the score sheets annexed to these Rules.

11.2 Assessors shall not coach, assist, or communicate with teams about the substance of a session before or during that session.

11.3 Assessors may not participate as Professional Mediators.

11.4 Assessors shall disclose any circumstances that may reasonably give rise to doubt as to their impartiality in relation to a team.

11.5 The Organizing Committee may reassign or remove any Assessor where required to ensure fairness.

Rule 12. Scoring

12.1 The general score for Negotiator Teams will be composed as follows:

- a. 70% from performance in Mediation Sessions;
- b. 20% from performance in Pre-Mediation Meetings; and
- c. 10% from Written Statements.

The Written Statements and Pre-Mediation Meetings will each be evaluated by three Assessors. For Mediation Sessions in the General Rounds, each session will be scored by three Assessors. The Final Round will be scored by at least five Assessors. In addition, up to 10% of the Final Round score may be derived from input provided by invited professionals in attendance with the precise weighting and method of incorporation to be determined by the Organizing Committee.

12.2 Assessors will score Negotiator Team so that there is a winning Negotiator Team in each Mediation Session of the General Rounds. If two or more teams are tied on win-loss results, total points awarded will be used to break the tie for advancement to the Final Round.

12.3 Mediator Teams will be ranked based on their total scores across the Mediation Sessions they mediate. The Organizing Committee will seek to ensure that all Mediator Teams mediate the same number of sessions. Where this is not possible, rankings will be based on an average of their scores.

12.4 The highest-ranked Mediator Team will be selected to mediate the Final Round of the Mediation Sessions.

12.5 The highest-ranked Negotiator Teams will be determined by their score in the Final Round of the Mediation Sessions. A percentage of the overall score may be informed by contributions from invited experts in attendance to include perspectives from the wider professional community.

Rule 13. Awards

- 13.1 Awards will be granted to recognize outstanding performance by Negotiator Teams, Mediator Teams, and individual participants.
- 13.2 Awards will include:
- a. First-place Negotiator Team;
 - b. Second-place Negotiator Team;
 - c. First-place Mediator Team;
 - d. Second-place Mediator Team
 - e. Best Negotiator; and
 - f. Best Mediator.
- 13.3 Awards for Negotiator Teams will be determined based on scores in the Final Round of the Mediation Sessions. Awards for Mediator Teams and individual participants will be determined based on scores while awards for Negotiator Teams will be determined based on scores in the Final Round of the Mediation Sessions. In the event of a tie, the Organizing Committee may award joint recognition or apply such tie-breaking measures that it considers appropriate.
- 13.4 The Organizing Committee may establish additional awards including individual and special awards and determine the criteria for their allocation.

Rule 14. Penalties and Procedural Questions

- 14.1 Teams and participants are expected to comply with these Rules and the Maxwell Challenge Participant Code of Conduct.
- 14.2 Where a team or participant fails to adhere to these Rules or the Maxwell Challenge Participant Code of Conduct or to comply with instructions of the Organizing Committee, the Organizing Committee may impose appropriate measures including warnings, deductions of points, adjustment of scores, or disqualification from Challenge.
- 14.3 In the event of a procedural irregularity affecting a Mediation Session or other component of the Challenge, the Organizing Committee may take such action as it considers appropriate to preserve the fairness and integrity of the Challenge including adjusting scores or taking corrective measures.
- 14.4 Decisions of the Organizing Committee in relation to scoring, ranking, penalties, and procedural matters are final.

Rule 15: Observers

- 15.1 For each Pre-Mediation Meetings, participants include the Professional Mediator, the participating Negotiator Team, and administrators. Others may attend with the permission of the Organizing Committee.

- 15.2 For Mediation Sessions, participants include the participating teams, coaches, Assessors, and administrators. Others may attend with the permission of the Organizing Committee.
- 15.3 Assessors and Mediator Teams may observe any session. Coaches and team members may observe sessions in which their team is participating but may not observe other sessions in the general rounds.
- 15.4 The final round may be open to the public and may be broadcast.

ANNEX 1: Maxwell Challenge Calendar

Stage	Timeline
<i>Case Scenario 1 (including Confidential Information) distributed to Negotiator Teams</i>	5 June 2026
<i>Negotiator Teams submit Written Statements</i>	30 June 2026
<i>Preliminary Round Case Scenarios 2–4 distributed</i>	5 July 2026 subject to finalisation
<i>Online Pre-Mediation Meetings held</i>	15 July 2026
<i>Assessors complete scoring of Written Statements and Pre-Mediation Meeting videos</i>	31 July 2026
<i>Preliminary Round Confidential Information distributed</i>	7 August 2026
<i>Final Round Confidential Information distributed</i>	Immediately following announcement of finalists on Saturday evening

ANNEX 2: Scoring Criteria for Written Statements

Element	Score (1-5 each)
<p>Presentation of the case</p> <p><i>Clear and structured explanation of the relevant facts, laws, and issues in dispute</i></p>	
<p>Advocacy</p> <p><i>Persuasive presentation of the party's key claims and the legal basis supporting them</i></p>	
<p>Interests</p> <p><i>Clear articulation of the party's interests and settlement objectives as well as a demonstrated understanding of the other party's positions, interests, and concerns</i></p>	
<p>Risk assessment</p> <p><i>Identification of the risks of non-settlement which may include legal, financial, relational, reputational and other risks</i></p>	
<p>Path to settlement</p> <p><i>Establishment of a tone and posture that lays the groundwork for interest-based negotiation</i></p>	

ANNEX 3: Scoring Criteria for Pre-Mediation Meetings

Element	Score (1-5 each)
<p>Presentation of the case <i>Clear, concise, and well-structured explanation of the relevant facts, applicable law, and key issues in dispute. Identification of the issues most likely to drive settlement discussions.</i></p>	
<p>Case assessment <i>Persuasive yet realistic presentation of the party's principal claims and legal arguments. Balanced discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the case, demonstrating sound judgment.</i></p>	
<p>Interests and objectives <i>Clear articulation of the party's underlying interests, priorities, and settlement objectives. Demonstration of understanding of the other party's positions and potential interests.</i></p>	
<p>Risk, constraints, and decision-making readiness <i>Identification of the risks of non-settlement, including legal, financial, and reputational risks. Consideration of practical constraints, areas of flexibility, and any limitations affecting settlement authority or decision-making.</i></p>	
<p>Barriers and information gaps <i>Identification of potential obstacles to settlement, including legal, factual, relational, or process-related challenges. Recognition of prior negotiation dynamics and any key uncertainties or information gaps affecting resolution.</i></p>	
<p>Negotiation strategy and use of the mediator <i>Clear and flexible approach to achieving settlement including areas for potential movement. Effective use of the mediator and responsive, constructive engagement with mediator questions. Establishment of a solution-oriented tone conducive to settlement.</i></p>	

ANNEX 4: Scoring Criteria for Student Mediators in Mediation Sessions

Element	Score (1-5 each)
<p>Preparation and case understanding <i>Demonstrates clear understanding of the problem, key issues, and party interests, and uses preparation to guide the mediation without being overly rigid</i></p>	
<p>Process management <i>Clearly explains the process and roles, manages time and structure effectively, and adapts the process as needed to maintain focus and momentum including effective use of joint sessions and private meetings</i></p>	
<p>Neutrality and party self-determination <i>Maintains neutrality and independence, ensures balanced engagement with both parties, and supports party ownership of both the process and outcome</i></p>	
<p>Communication and facilitation <i>Listens actively, clarifies issues and interests, encourages constructive dialogue, and manages unproductive or adversarial exchanges effectively</i></p>	
<p>Managing dynamics and use of techniques <i>Recognizes and manages emotions and barriers to progress, and uses appropriate interventions such as reframing, questioning, and caucus to advance discussions</i></p>	
<p>Reality testing and progress toward resolution <i>Uses appropriate techniques to test assumptions, explore risks and alternatives, and help parties assess options realistically, while supporting movement toward practical and mutually acceptable outcomes</i></p>	

ANNEX 4: Scoring Criteria for Negotiator Teams in Mediation Sessions

Element	Score (1-5 each)
<p>Preparation <i>Demonstrates clear preparation including a coherent negotiation strategy, understanding of key issues, and alignment between positions, interests, and objectives</i></p>	
<p>Understanding of interests <i>Clearly articulates own party's interests and priorities while demonstrating an accurate and evolving understanding of the other party's interests</i></p>	
<p>Negotiation effectiveness <i>Advances the negotiation in a purposeful way, makes appropriate use of offers and concessions, and works constructively toward mutually acceptable outcomes including by demonstrating a genuine effort to develop practical, realistic and durable settlement solutions responsive to the parties' commercial and broader stakeholder interests where relevant.</i></p>	
<p>Process engagement and use of mediation <i>Engages effectively with the mediation process including making appropriate use of joint and private meetings, and working constructively with the mediator to support progress, manage procedural needs, and advance the negotiation</i></p>	
<p>Communication and teamwork <i>Communicates clearly and persuasively, listens and responds effectively, and demonstrates strong coordination and role clarity within the team</i></p>	
<p>Professionalism and relationship management <i>Maintains a respectful and credible presence, builds rapport, and engages constructively with both the mediator and the other party</i></p>	
<p>Creativity and problem-solving <i>Generates and develops options, demonstrates flexibility in approach, and uses advanced negotiation techniques to overcome obstacles and create value</i></p>	