

Welcome to the Client Interview Info
Session!



Overview of the Competition

- You are a junior lawyer at a law firm, tasked with holding an initial interview with a prospective client.
- It is up to you and your partner to gain a comprehensive picture of the client, their issue, and their motivations for seeking legal advice.
- After having interviewed the client, you must advise your Senior partner whether the firm should take on the case.



Structure of the Competition

- In each round clients are given a confidential memorandum. Judges will be provided with a score sheet and the client's confidential facts, which shows the legal problems that participants should be identifying/exposing in the interview.
- Each team will interview their client for **15 minutes followed by 2 minute discussion with your teammate and then a 5 minute briefing** to the judge, who acts as the participants' Senior partner
- The results of rounds will be announced 1-2 days following the completion of a round.
- **No knockouts for the first three rounds! Followed by a bracket style quarter-final...**



Instructions to Teams

- The instructions will be released to competitors at least **24 hours before** the round begins.
- Competitors should be dressed in **business attire** and are to 'sign in' with us 15 minutes before the interview on Level 1.
- The interview is to last no more than 15 minutes.
- Judges will be timing the interview and will indicate when you have **five minutes** and **one minute** left. It is advisable that you also keep time as well. Judges are entitled to impose penalties if a time limit is breached.
- Judges provide brief feedback at the conclusion of the round but are not obliged to do so.



Example Memorandum

Memorandum – Mike/Michelle Armstrong

To: Solicitor

From: Secretary

Re: Mike/Michelle Armstrong

Date: [#]

I received a call from Mike/Michelle Armstrong who has had an issue with some weights he/she recently acquired for exercise purposes and would like some advice on. He/she also has concerns about their employment. I have set up a meeting with him/her for you.

Kind Regards,

Secretary.



Greeting the client

- Welcome the client. (It sounds more professional if one person does the introduction)
- A good formal introduction may sound similar to this:

"Hello Mr/Mrs _____, it is a pleasure to meet you. Thank you for taking the time to meet us this evening. My name is _____ and this is my colleague _____. This meeting will run for approximately 15 minutes and any information that you tell us is confidential. As this is your first consultation with us it is free of charge, however subsequent meetings may be charged. Would you mind if we take notes during this session?"

- Take care of the administrative matters (i.e. informing your client of the procedures; payment; reassure them that the info will be kept confidential; etc.)



During the interview

- Get an overview of their problem. Find out the client's objective. What are they trying to achieve through seeking your services?
- Take note of the elements of the story which prompt you to seek out further detail. You must aim to tease out the client's 'secret facts', which the client will conceal unless adequately prompted to confess.
- To achieve this we suggest that you adopt an open-ended questioning style.
- Accommodate your client's personal demeanour — Every client is different! Your client may be emotional, shy, or rude- adapt and make them comfortable.
- Keep your client on topic- Don't let them distract you with irrelevant information. Where you suspect they are going off on a tangent, don't be scared to politely interject.
- **WORK AS A TEAM!**



Example Secret Fact 1 2022

CLIENT INSTRUCTION: You briefly explained to him [the client's father] the situation of your business and asked whether he wanted to be your guarantor. Albert muttered a few words and after you saw Albert sort of nodding his head, you handed the mortgage document to him and indicated him to sign on the last page.

SECRET FACT: Albert's signature on the mortgage was forged by you. Albert could not hold the pen, let alone leave a mark on the paper. Thus, you decided to scan a letter he sent to you many years ago, crop out his old signature and paste that onto the pdf file of the mortgage document.



Example Secret Fact 2

CLIENT INSTRUCTION: Billie was happy to see you again. You learnt from her that her current music agency is Future Artist Agency (FAA). Billie ‘kinda’ recommended her agency and said they are very experienced in promoting new artists and stuff’;

If probed further how Billie recommended Future Artist to you:

Be elusive and avoid eye contact, say: ‘It’s not hard to imagine right? I mean, friends should help each other out and whatnot, anyway...’

Only concede the below facts if they show suspicion or probe you further:

SECRET FACT: You admit that Billie did speak to you but never recommended anything to you. You merely got a glimpse of the caller’s name (FAA) on her phone.



Concluding the interview

With the client

Advice

When it comes to the end of the interview, it is a great idea to summarise the facts/ provide a timeline to the client to give them the chance to correct you if you have misunderstood anything or gotten any facts wrong,

Based on the information you have acquired; you should try to advise the client at this point in the interview about the next steps they might consider taking (e.g. providing medical reports, mediation, etc.)

NB: This should not be legal advice!



Concluding the interview

With the Judge

Conclusion

Summarise the facts, the issues, client's objective etc.

TIP: It's worth writing out a chronology as the client is relaying facts. This is an easy way to spot parts of the story where more questioning and probing is required. It also makes it more clear when telling the story to your firm partner (the judge) in the post-interview reflection

Reflection

After briefly conferring with your partner, you will discuss the merits of your case with the firm partner (the judge). This requires intuition regarding the matter and the motivations of the client.

TIP: if you think the case has merit, also tell the partner whether you think the client has capacity to pay



What are judges looking for?

1. Ability to identify 'secret facts':
This is information that the client is deliberately trying to withhold from you, which is fundamental to your ability to assess the merit of their claim.
2. Your relationship with the client:
As in a real life situation, it is essential that you establish an effective and professional relationship with your client. This means accommodating their needs and demonstrating empathy towards them, as well as moving the conversation along where need be.
3. A well-structured interview:
This includes a formal introduction and conclusion, and logically sequenced lines of inquiry.
4. Effective teamwork:
How well do you and your partner work together to interview your client?



What skills are developed?

The skill set that you will develop by participating in client interview is highly applicable to later work in a law firm (or elsewhere). The competition imitates the structure of a real client interview. This is part and parcel of a solicitor's daily life.

Specific skills that you will develop include:

- Formulating questions and lines of inquiry
- Prioritisation of relevant facts
- Active listening
- Teamwork
- Learning to quickly build relationships with clients and earning their trust.



Time commitment

Client interview is the least time consuming competition offered by the MULSS!

You will need to be available for half an hour during competition weeks (either Monday or Tuesday), with the competition set to finish in early Semester 2.

There is no additional preparation required.



Individual Sign-Ups

- The individual sign up form will be posted on the ‘MULSS Competitions 2024’ Facebook Page and the MULSS website at 2pm today (Thursday). Closes at midnight tonight!
- If we can match you with a partner we will let you know by 4pm tomorrow (Friday) so that you can sign up as a team once registrations open at 5pm tomorrow.



Group Sign-Ups

- The group sign up form will also be posted on the 'MULSS Competitions 2024' Facebook Page and the MULSS website at 5pm tomorrow (Friday).
- Please have ready:
 - Full name of all team members
 - Team name
 - Student email of all team members
 - Student ID of all team members
 - Contact Number for all team members
 - Preference for a competition night



Accessibility

- We want to ensure that Client Interview is accessible to everyone.
- An accessibility form will be sent to all participants upon registration, and all efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.
- This is confidential.
- Any further questions? Please email disability@mulss.com



Round Robin

Round 1: 25/3 & 26/3

Round 2: 15/04 & 16/04

Round 3 : 29/04 & 30/03

Quarter Final : 29/07

Semi- Final 19/08

Grand- Final 09/09

What's next?

- Look through the **key resources** on the UMLSS website:
 - Client Interview Competitor Guidebook 2023
 - Client Interview Judging Guidelines & Scoresheet 2023
- Join the MULSS 2024 Competitions Facebook group.
- Round 1 will take place Monday 25th and Tuesday 26th March 6:30-8:30pm AEDT (Week 5)
- Any questions? Please email Jessica and Juliet at clientinterview@mulss.com