



SEC MBA CASE COMPETITION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

(Revised: June 24, 2021)

The SEC MBA Case Competition is a great opportunity for the 14 SEC schools to work together in a competition to highlight the outstanding students in our MBA programs. It demonstrates that the SEC excels in the classroom as well as on the field. Most importantly, the SEC MBA Case Competition provides an excellent opportunity for SEC MBA students and advisors to network with each other.

The SEC has been very fortunate to have all 14 of its universities compete in the SEC MBA Case Competition in its first years of existence, and advisors agree that it is paramount to keep this wonderful tradition alive. The active participation of the SEC office staff in this event is critical to its success.

In 2015, a Steering Committee was proposed as a way to maintain continuity in the SEC MBA Case Competition planning and execution processes. This document is the result of that committee's work, and its purpose is to reiterate a number of points and lessons learned from previous years. The intent is to utilize accumulated knowledge from past competitions to provide guidelines for future hosts.

1. CASE AUTHOR / JUDGES

The host schools must be strongly committed to ensuring that the selection of a case author, judges, and host-company are handled by someone other than the advisor/coach. Hosts should avoid creating any conditions that are in any way advantageous for their own team.

- The case author should not have any type of relationship with the host school's coach.
- The case author should not currently be employed by any SEC school or from a competition with which the host school has substantial unique experience.
- None of the judges should have a relationship with a coach from the host school.
- The coach should not have any knowledge about the subject company prior to the announcement to the other teams.
- The case author should be limited to assisting the case company in framing the strategic issue/problem into a full case and identifying supporting materials. As such, the case company should be selected prior to the selection of a case author.
- There should be a panel of at least three judges in each of the four divisions, the majority of whom should come from the host-company. Winners of the four divisions will advance to the final round on Saturday afternoon. The four finalist teams will present to a panel of at least five judges in the final round, the majority of whom should come from the host company.
- No judge should serve in both the preliminary and final rounds.

2. THE CASE & STUDENT TEAMS

The case should be live with a participating case company. The live case should deal with a broad strategy problem faced by a real company. This gives the students the chance to take on a real MBA level challenge in front of judges who are experts on the topic.

- The presence of a live case is paramount for a variety of reasons, but not limited to the following:
 1. A major case company gives another level of credibility, and financial support, to this event. An agreement between the company and the host school needs to be made by November 1. If no case company is confirmed by that date, the other schools and SEC office are notified and will offer assistance.
 2. Employees from case companies bring another level of commitment to the case. As judges, their opinion and feedback matter to choosing the best team and ultimate winner.
 3. Students can have real data, suggestions and networking with a company. The company offers the best student experience possible which is why we are all present and competing.
- All teams should have access to the same information at the same time. The company reveal (only company name, no other information on subject matter should be released) should take place between 30-45 days in advance of the competition; no later than March 1 if the competition is the first week of April.
- It is strongly encouraged for schools to register their teams one month in advance of the competition. The hard registration deadline is two weeks prior to the competition.

3. LOGISTICS / OPERATIONS

Thursday Meet & Greet:

- Division selection should take place on Thursday night in order to allow ample time for focus on the case on Friday morning. Schools are encouraged to host an event Thursday night that will allow for networking as well as add excitement to the division selection.
- Once the divisions are decided on Thursday evening, each team should immediately receive their practice room, presenting time and divisional room.
- It is advisable to take a big group picture Thursday night when everyone has on school attire, even if it means one or more teams do not arrive in time.
- Thursday night event should include a full dinner with healthy options and adequate seating to ensure students are relaxed prior to the intensity of the competition.

Competition:

- All rules must be consistently communicated to operating staff (e.g., timekeepers) and strictly adhered to during the competition.
- Each room should have two timekeepers, one to keep time and the other to manage the flow of teams and advisors in and out of the room. Additionally, a visible timer (such as a digital clock or iPad), should be used for the team.
- Timers must ensure that every judge has the presenting team's presentation (whether digital or printed) prior to the start of the presentation.
- It is important to maintain anonymity in the sense that judges are not aware of the SEC school represented by a student or team. (Schools should not announce their SEC case team members in social media or any other published format in advance of the competition.)

- Anonymity between students and judges is critical and random assignment of teams to divisions is essential. However, anonymity between schools is unnecessary.
- Team preparation rooms should be planned in advance so that they are private (e.g., any glass walls/windows are covered) and that teams in the same preliminary division should not be adjacent to one another.
- Team rooms should be approximately equal in size and comfort if at all possible. If a university feels that there will be an issue in this regard, it should be brought up to the committee to discuss solutions.
- Presentation rooms should be completely inaccessible during a team's presentation. No one should enter or leave the room, including photographers or event organizers.
- Photographers may be present during the final round of presentations but should not enter or exit during a team's presentation.
- Teams should be allowed to conduct a test-run in the presentation rooms to become familiar with the equipment.
- Host school is responsible for testing ALL presentation equipment (e.g., screens, clickers, computers, lighting) to ensure it functions.
- Handheld microphones are difficult to use in this situation and can be distracting. Prefer use of lavalier mics when recording.
- All presentations (preliminary and final) should be recorded and (if teams agree) distributed to all participants if the case company allows dissemination.
- Assuming teams will submit presentation materials electronically via the university LMS or an alternate method such as Dropbox, the electronic method should be used exclusively OR USB drives should be submitted at the deadline. Teams should NOT be asked to upload presentations immediately prior to presenting. (However, technology can fail, so it is recommended that teams bring their presentation loaded on an extra USB drive in the event of a problem.)
- During the final round, there is no need to clear the room between each presentation. Judges can score the team individually after each and deliberate at the end.
- Teams should have a dedicated student ambassador.
- Host school should provide shuttles through motor pool or other resources and not dependent on the hotel and their staff for transport. Shuttles should run on a communicated specific schedule.
- Large novelty checks should be provided along with trophies.

Saturday Networking Event:

- Evening events on Saturday could be a great networking opportunity for students and faculty/staff attending the competition. All schools should be strongly encouraged to stay, and host school should plan a compelling event that adds value by providing strong opportunities to build connections.

4. RULE CHANGES

- Established competition rules are considered standing year-over-year unless a specific change is proposed and agreed to by all participating schools.
- Alternative rules may be established for virtual competition.
- Any school can propose a change to one or more rules by submitting it to the representative from the host school and copying representatives from all schools.

5. ADVISORS

- Host universities should schedule conference calls or virtual meetings starting at least 3-4 months prior to the competition (December suggested for a competition scheduled in April) so that participating schools have sufficient time to prepare for the competition and manage logistics.
- A mid-morning advisors' meeting is a best practice along with lunch, free time and dinner for networking. Each school is welcome to apply their own personality/style to Friday afternoon.
- Members of the competition steering committee (i.e., current host, next year's host, past two hosts) and an SEC representative should participate in a site visit to the host university, based on the rotation. The purpose of this visit is for, but not limited to, a tour of competition facilities, meetings with senior college leadership and planning members, and to share best practices for consistent planning and hosting operations. Traveling expenses related to the site visit (e.g., transportation, lodging, meals, etc.) are the responsibility of the traveling school and should be appropriately accounted for in the most recently concluded case competition budget. The SEC representative will cover his/her own expenses.