



# 2023 CLIENT INTERVIEW INFORMATION BOOKLET

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# INTRODUCTION TO CLIENT INTERVIEWING

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Client Interview competitions involve a team of two competitors acting as legal practitioners for a firm that are tasked with interviewing a potential client.

The overall aim for the competitors is to gain an understanding of the client's current legal circumstances and offer them possible preliminary advice and/or solutions for future action, all while maintaining a professional relationship between parties.

Teams are provided with a memorandum sent by a colleague at their firm that contains brief details regarding their new potential client's issue(s).

While being interviewed, competition clients will follow a script containing the key facts of the case. However, not all the facts will be readily disclosed. Particular facts will remain confidential, and will only surface when practitioners build enough rapport, or press their clients for further information where necessary.

Competition clients may be given specific instructions throughout their interview to behave with certain mannerisms or to react to certain words, phrases or recommendations.

This competition requires teams to demonstrate a great ability for interpersonal communication to successfully identify and obtain all the relevant information from their client and to successfully work within a team dynamic.

# COMPETITION ROUNDS

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## Interview Period

Each competition round will begin with thirty (30) minutes devoted to the clients interview. The primary objectives are to uncover all the necessary information from their client's legal position, outline to the relevant legal issues that have arisen, and then propose the possible preliminary solutions.

During the interview, there will be a two (2) minute warning given to competitors before the end of the interviewing period. Competition judges are given complete discretion to extend the interview period by three (3) minutes if requested by the competitors.

Teams that are found to have exceeded their time limit without an approved extension will have a thirty (30) second grace period before it will result in a three (3) mark penalty for every minute, or part of, of overtime.

## Consultation Period

Following the interview period, each team will be granted five (5) minutes to prepare between themselves for the self-reflection with their competition judge.

During this time competitors should evaluate and reflect on their overall performance and identify both the strengths and weaknesses in their performance in the interview and the relationship built between competitors and client. Competitors must also turn their thoughts to any potential areas for improvement of their performance for future competition rounds.

Competitors will then be granted ten (10) minutes to present their self-reflection to the competition judge

Teams that exceed this ten (10) minute self reflection will have a thirty (30) second grace period after which they will receive a one mark penalty every minute, or part of, of overtime.



# UNPACKING THE MEMORANDUM

## Jones' Lawyers – your local lawyers

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Date: 10 March 2020

To: You [criminallaw@joneslawyers.com.au]

From: Mr Green [admin@joneslawyers.com.au]

**Re: New Criminal Matter – Aaron Jones**

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Mr Jones' son, Aaron, has made an appointment about an upcoming court date this month.

Mr Jones is currently on holiday in the Bahamas and cannot be contacted about the matter. He is not due back at work until 30 March.

I don't suppose I need to remind you about your how abysmal your last case went and how displeased Mr. Jones was with you. Please do try to do better this time.

I have booked the boardroom for 50 minutes for you.

Regards,  
Mr. Green.

There is not much critical information that can be extracted from the memorandum, as the document only intends to be brief and act as a gateway between yourself as the lawyer and the client.

The details that should be considered however are the clients name, the date of the scenario, the possible legal subject, and the initial reasoning for why the client is seeking legal consultation.

The real depth of information will be available within the interview itself.



# DURING THE INTERVIEW

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01

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## INTRODUCTIONS AND BREAKING THE ICE

It is important for the lawyers to make sure their client is at ease and is comfortable throughout the entirety of the interview.

03

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## ENQUIRE IF THE CLIENT HAS SOUGHT PREVIOUS LEGAL ADVICE

04

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## ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY

Ensure that the client is aware that their disclosure of any information within the interview will remain confidential, permitting exceptions.

*(Legal Profession Uniform Law Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules 2015 (NSW) s 9)*

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## MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ALL THE CORRECT FACTS.

When a client has finished their account, make sure you have the right order of events, names, dates, and monetary amounts

Probe for gaps or ambiguities in their accounts, and the existence of documents or other evidence or legal instruments that could assist you in making our their case.

02

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## DISCUSS THE CONTACT DETAILS OF THE FIRM AND THE CLIENT

The lawyers must record the contact details of their client and provide their contact details to ensure communication between both parties is viable.

05

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## THE LAWYERS' COSTS SHOULD BE DISCUSSED, AS WELL AS A CLIENT RETAINER

The lawyers must disclose to the client, as soon as practicable after instructions are provided, an estimation of the total legal costs (*Legal Profession Uniform Law (NSW) s 174*)

This can be achieved though either a black piece of paper or reference to an email sent about costs. You are not expected to have accurate billing rates.

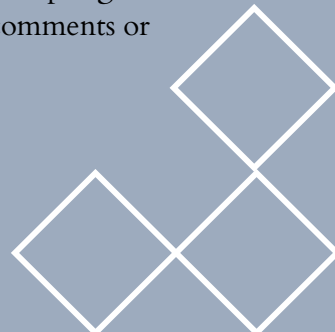
07

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## HAVE THE CLIENT OUTLINE THE SCENARIO IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

To make the interview process easier for both parties and ensure that no critical information is missed, ask the client to proceed through their facts in the order that they appeared/happened.

Listen closely to the client, without interrupting them, with the exception of off-topic comments or rambling.





# ASSESSABLE CRITERIA

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## **Working Atmosphere**

Did the team establish an effective relationship with the client? 5 marks

## **Description of the Problem**

Did the team ascertain the key issues? 10 marks

## **Client's Goals and Expectations**

Did the team ascertain the client's goals and expectations? 5 marks

## **Professional Comportment**

How well did the team conduct themselves and run the interview? 5 marks

## **Alternative Courses of Action**

Did the team outline and explain alternative solutions? 5 marks

## **Client's Informed Choice**

Did the team assist the client in making an informed choice about the next step? 5 marks

## **Effective Conclusion**

How effectively did the team conclude the interview? 5 marks

## **Teamwork**

How well did the team work together? 5 marks

## **Post-Interview Reflection**

Does the team think the claim has merits or is frivolous? What may need to be further determined before taking the case? 5 marks

# INTERVIEW CONCLUSION

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Drawing the the end of the interview, competitors should reserve time to summarise or reiterate what has arisen and been discussed, the facts that client has disclosed, and the clients desires from this consultation.

Explain to the client their possible legal position and the next possible steps that will now arise. Organise a second meeting between yourselves and the client to discuss what the next steps for the case's progression will be in the future.

At the closing of the interview be polite and professional, thank the client for coming in, and express that you look forward to the next meeting.



# TIPS FOR PREPARATION AND PRACTICE

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Competitors must consider the legal process and the rights and obligations that might arise from certain issues. Are the clients being threatened with a legal suit or are they seeking to bring a suit against someone else?

Will this legal case involve the courts or mediation?

Is litigation a necessity to resolve the issue or can the lawyers propose some alternative dispute resolutions?

Establish and allocate specific roles between each team member. This may include thinking to who will welcome the client, who will disclose the costs, or who will record all the client's information to then summarise at the closing of the interview.

Lawyers should use funnelling questions to direct the client down to a particular issue. This may include asking a client to reiterate their last statement, then asking them to clarify a curious statement.

It is important to listen and engage with the client throughout the whole interview period. The client will be in a vulnerable position seeking legal advice, and it is crucial to make them feel valued. One lawyer/competitor should maintain eye contact at all times and occasionally summarise/paraphrase what the client is saying to show an engaged interest in what they are disclosing.

Competitors should take precautions to ensure that they do not let their client continuously ramble on a particular fact as the team only has a finite amount of interview time.

