

# 2025 Marshall International Case Competition

## Rules & Guidelines

*This document outlines the official rules for the competition as of **February 3, 2025**. While these rules are intended to be comprehensive, minor revisions may be made for clarity and effective communication. Fair play is a fundamental principle of this competition, and all participants are expected to uphold its standards. Additionally, we reserve the right to review and address any situations or rules not explicitly covered in this document.*

### 1. Team Guidelines

1.1. Invited schools will select a team of four **undergraduate** students and a faculty advisor to attend the competition. All students selected for the team must be currently enrolled in an accredited undergraduate (Bachelor) program. Students on the team cannot have enrolled in or completed any post-graduate coursework.

1.2. Student participants can be of any major and any year (e.g., first-year business major or fourth-year engineering major; that is up to the team's discretion)

1.3. To ensure the teams' anonymity and the judges' impartiality, the teams will not be known by their school names and should not mention their school names until the final presentations have concluded. Teams' presentations should be free of any references to the team's school, location, or other distinguishing characteristics (e.g., logos, colors, etc.).

1.4. Instead, each team will be known by the room location and time they present. Each room will be named after a famous beach in Los Angeles (e.g., Hermosa 1, Hermosa 2, Venice 2, Venice 3, etc.). These names will be provided during the random presentation order selection on the morning of **Tuesday, February 18th**. Teams will be divided into **four divisions of five** teams.

1.5. The assigned names and the above rules apply to all rounds of the competition, including the Preliminary, Challenger, and Finals.

### 2. Competition Format

2.1. The competition consists of **three** rounds: Preliminary, Challengers, and Finals.

2.2. The Preliminary round consists of **one 5-hour** case and **one 24-hour** case. All teams must compete in this round and will be randomly allocated to one of the four pools, save the social media challenger winner.

2.3. The Challenger round determines the **fifth finalist**, who will be selected based on presenting the **24-hour** case to a new panel of judges. The slide deck may not be modified between the

Preliminary round and the Challenger round; however, teams are allowed and encouraged to modify the oral presentation.

2.4. The Final round will have all five finalist teams represent their solution from the 24-hour case using the same presentation files. No modification of the slide deck is allowed between the Preliminary round and the Final round; however, teams are allowed and encouraged to modify the oral delivery of the presentation.

2.5. The Preliminary Round consists of the 5-hour case presentations on **Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>**, and the 24-hour case presentations on **Friday, February 21<sup>st</sup>**. The Challenger Round presentations will be on **Friday evening**, and the Final Round presentations will be on **Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>**.

2.6. The social media video challenge winner, determined by the organizing committee, will first select their division and case presentation time. They will then draw the name of the next school, who will then draw their division, presentation time, and the next school to continue the cycle. This process will repeat until all schools have been assigned a division and presentation time. **The 5-hour case presentation order will also apply to the 24-hour case round.**

2.7. The order in which teams will present in the Challenger round and Final round will be determined by blind drawings performed during Challenger and Finalist announcements after the Preliminary round.

2.8. All teams will receive feedback from their judges following the 5-hour case presentations. However, only teams that place third, fourth, or fifth overall in their division will receive feedback after the 24-hour case. Teams that don't advance after the challenger will also receive feedback.

2.9. Formal business attire is required of all presenting teams during all rounds.

2.10. Cases can involve for-profit or not-for-profit organizations, publicly traded or private companies, clients from any industry, and any business or business-related disciplines (strategy, finance, marketing, etc.).

### **3. Preliminary Round**

3.1. The preliminary round will consist of two cases. There will be a short 5-hour case and a long 24-hour case. Both cases will factor into division team rankings to determine who moves on to finals. The 5-hour case will have a **40% weight**, and the 24-hour case will have a **60% weight**. Both case formats are detailed below.

3.2. Once the cases have been distributed, teams are not to communicate about the case with advisors, ambassadors, or anyone outside their team. All questions should be directed solely to

the competition directors. ***We suggest advisors limit their contact, even casual contact, with their team unless it is an emergency.***

3.3. Teams must bring their own laptops to use.

3.4 Teams may use textbooks, notes, the Internet, file-sharing services, university password-protected databases, and shared drives, but they may only discuss the case with their team members. **AI resources like ChatGPT are permitted but must be cited in their presentation.** However, teams cannot use AI resources to generate their slides.

3.5. Teams should keep their presentations strictly within the time guidelines. A timekeeper will cut off teams if they exceed the time limit.

3.6. Teams must compete fairly and with integrity, using their best judgment to ensure their actions are fair and ethical. Plagiarism will result in severe consequences, and all teams must submit their own original work.

3.7. The organizing committee reserves the right to conduct random checks during the case preparation period in a team's breakout room or hotel room.

3.8. The organizing committee reserves the right to penalize or disqualify teams that are found to be cheating, late in submission of their presentation, late to their presentation, blatantly ignoring the time limit of the presentation, or otherwise breaking the rules/guidelines listed here or the spirit of the competition rules. All decisions the organizing committee makes are final and cannot be appealed. The organizing committee may also amend the rules and guidelines whenever necessary.

### **3.9. 5-Hour Case Preparation & Presentation:**

3.9.1. The case will be distributed on **Tuesday, February 18th**, in a staggered format based on each team's presentation time, with teams receiving the case at **12:00 PM, 12:20 PM, 12:40 PM, 1:00 PM, and 1:20 PM.**

3.9.2. Teams will receive the case via the email submitted to the competition. They must pick up all case materials, including a flip chart, legal pads, pens, permanent markers, highlighters, printing paper, and post-it notes, from **USC Hotel Room TBD** for case preparation.

3.9.3. Each team will prepare their solutions to the case in their respective hotel rooms.

3.9.4. Teams will have 5 hours to prepare their case solutions, which includes reporting to the lobby of the USC Hotel precisely 5 hours after receiving the case. The lobby report times are **5 PM, 5:20 PM, 5:40 PM, 6:00 PM, and 6:20 PM. Teams that are late and not present will not be allowed to present.**

3.9.5. Teams will be accompanied by an organizing committee member or ambassador from the hotel to the presentation room.

3.9.6. Teams will present at **5:15 PM, 5:35 PM, 5:55 PM, 6:15 PM, and 6:35 PM.**

3.9.7. 5-hour case presentations will be recorded in the Experiential Learning Center in Popovich (JKP) and released after the competition concludes.

3.9.8. During 5-hour case presentations, the room size can only accommodate judges, the presenting team, the presenting team's advisor, and a timekeeper. Advisors from non-presenting teams will be provided headsets to watch the other presentations outside the room.

3.9.9. Solutions will be presented to judges in a **5-minute verbal presentation** followed by a **5-minute Q&A** session. If a team finishes their presentation early, the remaining time will not be added to the Q&A period. The timekeeper will also alert the presenting team when **1-minute remains** for the presentation and Q&A.

3.9.10. **No slide decks will be allowed as part of the presentation.**

3.9.11. Each presentation room will have a whiteboard and dry-erase markers (two black and one red). Teams are encouraged to use the whiteboard to showcase their solutions in real-time during the 5-minute presentation and 5-minute Q&A. However, they will not have time to write on the whiteboard before the presentation begins.

3.9.12. All team members are not required to speak during the 5-hour case presentations.

3.9.13. Teams may bring one sheet of A4 paper (using both front and back) for their 5-hour case presentation. This paper is for team use only and cannot be handed to the judges.

3.9.14. The case may only be discussed among team members until after their 5-hour case presentation has concluded. Faculty advisors can speak with their team after their presentation but must not discuss the case with other teams until all 5-hour case presentations have concluded.

### **3.10. 24-Hour Case Preparation & Presentation:**

3.10.1. The case will be distributed on **Thursday, February 20th**, in a staggered format based on each team's presentation time, with teams receiving the case at **11:30 AM, 12:05 PM, 12:40 PM, 1:15 PM, and 1:50 PM.**

3.10.2. Teams will receive the case via the email submitted to the competition. Teams may bring any leftover case preparation material from the 5-hour case to their breakout rooms.

Teams may also pick up any case materials for case preparation, including dry-erase markers, an eraser, and eraser spray from **JFF Room 415**.

3.10.3. Each team will prepare for their presentation in breakout rooms on campus (in Fertitta Hall) and their respective rooms in the USC Hotel. Breakout rooms in Fertitta Hall will be available from **7:00 AM to 9:30 PM on Thursday** and reopen at **7:00 AM on Friday** for teams wishing to practice on campus. From **9:30 PM on Thursday to 7:00 AM on Friday**, teams must relocate to the hotel for preparation.

3.10.4. Each breakout room will include a whiteboard, a built-in desktop computer, and a TV monitor. However, the functionality of the technology and equipment cannot be guaranteed. Teams are encouraged to bring their own HDMI cable to connect their personal laptops to the TV monitors.

3.10.5. Teams will have 24 hours to prepare their case solutions and must submit their slide decks exactly 24 hours after receiving the case. Submission times are **11:30 AM, 12:05 PM, 12:40 PM, 1:15 PM, and 1:50 PM on Friday, February 21st**. **Any team that fails to submit their presentation by their designated deadline will not be allowed to present.**

3.10.6. Presentations must be submitted in Microsoft PowerPoint (.ppt) and PDF (.pdf) formats via the Google Form sent to each team's email. If the presentation was made on Google Slides or any other platform, please ensure that the text and formatting are compatible with Microsoft PowerPoint.

File Naming Convention:

- Judge Deck: *"Team Name\_Judge\_Deck.pdf"* (Example: *Hermosa 1\_Judge\_Deck.pdf*)
- Deck: *"Team Name\_Presentation.pptx"* (Example: *Hermosa 1\_Presentation.pptx*)

3.10.7. Teams will not be able to make any changes to their submitted presentation decks after the end of their preparation time.

3.10.8. Teams will present at **12:40 PM, 1:15 PM, 1:50 PM, 2:25 PM, and 3:00 PM**.

3.10.9. All presentation rooms will be equipped with PCs running Windows 10 that have internet browsers, including Internet Explorer, Chrome, and Firefox installed. However, teams are responsible for ensuring all materials are correctly formatted and compatible with our equipment.

3.10.10. Each team will present their case analysis and recommendations for **15 minutes**, followed by a **10-minute Q&A session** during which judges may ask questions. The audience is not allowed to ask questions, and all team members must speak during the 24-hour case presentations. If a team finishes its presentation early, any remaining time will **not** be added to the Q&A period.

3.10.11. A timekeeper will be in each presentation room. The timekeeper will call time when the 15 minutes of the presentation and 10 minutes of the Q&A have expired. The timekeeper will also alert the presenting team when **5 minutes and 1 minute remain** for the presentation and Q&A.

3.10.12. The 24-hour case presentations will be recorded and distributed once the competition ends.

3.10.13 Each preliminary round 24-hour case presentation room will accommodate a maximum of 15 audience members, including advisors, ambassadors, and visitors. Competing teams are **NOT allowed** to watch other teams' preliminary round presentations.

3.10.14. The case is not to be discussed with the faculty advisor or anyone other than your team members until all the FINAL ROUND presentations have concluded.

## **4. Challenger Round**

4.1. The winning and runner-up teams of the Preliminary Round presentations will be announced once the judges have concluded their deliberations. The winning teams automatically advance to the Final Round, while **runner-up teams will compete for the 5th spot in the Final Round**.

4.2. The presentation order for the Challenger Round will be determined by a blind drawing at the announcement after the Preliminary Round.

4.3. Challenger Round presentations will occur on Friday evening at **5:00 PM, 5:30 PM, 6:00 PM, and 6:30 PM**.

4.4. The rules and format for the Challenger Round will be the same as for the Preliminary Round 24-hour Case. Teams will have **15 minutes to present and a 10-minute Q&A period**. Each team member must speak during the challenger round presentations. A single clicker, wired keyboard, and mouse will also be provided.

4.5. Only judges, faculty advisors, team ambassadors, and other MICC staff are allowed to watch the Challenger Round presentations. No other students or teams are permitted to attend.

4.6. The **winning team from the Challenger Round will advance to the Final Round**, for a total of 5 teams in the Final Round (each winning team from the 4 Preliminary Round divisions plus the Challenger Round winner). The winner/ranking of the Challenger Round is based solely on performance during the Challenger Round.

## **5. Final Round**

5.1. The order of presentations in the Final Round will be determined by a blind drawing after the finalists are announced on Friday evening.

5.2. Final Round presentations will occur on Saturday at **1:10PM, 1:50PM, 2:30PM, 3:20PM, and 4:00PM.**

5.3. Finalist teams will have access to JFF breakout rooms on Saturday morning to practice if they choose starting at **7 AM.**

5.4. In the final round, the presentation teams will present their solutions to the 24-hour case again. A single clicker, wired keyboard, and mouse will be provided.

5.5. Each team will have **30 minutes to present**, and all team members must participate in speaking. Judges may begin asking questions **after the first 5 minutes** of the presentation. However, no new questions will be allowed **during the final 2 minutes.** The team may complete their response if a judge's question is still being answered when the 2-minute mark is reached. Presentations must stop once the allotted time is up.

5.6. A timekeeper will be present for the Final Round presentations. The timekeeper will provide alerts at key intervals: when the first 5 minutes have elapsed, when 10 minutes remain, when 2 minutes remain, and when 30 minutes are up.

5.7. Final Round presentations will be professionally recorded and live-streamed on social media.

5.8. Teams that advance to the Final Round are not allowed to watch the other finalist teams' presentations before they present. They may watch the presentations that remain after they are present. This means the last team to present in finals will not see any of the other presentations.

5.9. All teams are required to attend the Final Round presentations. Teams must show respect and courtesy to the presenting teams. Any disruptive or distracting behavior will result in significant penalties, including disqualification.

## **6. Scoring and Ranking**

6.1. The 5-hour case will be 40% of the preliminary round, and the 24-hour case will be 60% of the preliminary round. The winning team from each division, determined by the highest sum of points in the division (maximum of 50), will advance to the Final Round.

| <b>Rank</b>           | <b>5-hour Case (40%)</b> | <b>24-hour Case (60%)</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>1<sup>st</sup></b> | 20                       | 30                        |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> | 16                       | 24                        |

|                       |    |    |
|-----------------------|----|----|
| <b>3<sup>rd</sup></b> | 12 | 18 |
| <b>4<sup>th</sup></b> | 8  | 12 |
| <b>5<sup>th</sup></b> | 4  | 6  |

*Should there be a tie in total points, the team that placed higher in the 24-hour case of the preliminary round will advance to the finals. The team that does not advance based on the tie-breaker will be the runner-up that goes on to the challenger round mentioned below.*

6.2. Runner-up teams from each division, determined by the total points accumulated from both the 5-hour and 24-hour cases, will compete in the **Challenger Round on Friday evening**. In this round, teams will present their 24-hour case again to a different panel of judges. **One team** from the Challenger Round will be selected to advance to the **Final Round**.

6.3. On **Saturday, February 22nd**, a panel of new judges will evaluate the finalist teams in the **Final Round** and determine the **first, second, and third-place winners**. Additionally, audience members who have watched all five presentations will vote to select a **People's Choice winner** and the **Best Speaker**. **Finalists are not allowed to vote**.

6.4. Each round of the competition, including the Challenger Round and the Final Round, will be judged independently. Scores and performance from previous rounds will not carry over or impact the evaluation in subsequent rounds.

6.5. Judges will use a scoring rubric to evaluate teams based on **content, presentation, and Q&A performance**. However, they may also apply their **best judgment** and **business expertise** when making their final decisions.

6.6. Decisions of all judges are final.