

MEDIATION COMPETITION RULEBOOK

7th GNLU ANNUAL LEGAL SERVICE FORUM 2026



21st & 22nd March 2026

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GUJARAT NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY

Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar is a premier institution of legal education in India established under the Gujarat National Law University Act, 2003. With its exemplary faculty, staff, and committed students, the University endeavors to impart quality legal education, contextualizing it within the latest policy and practical developments in the fields of humanities, commerce, business administration, social work, science, and technology. GNLU is the largest National Law University in India with regard to student, faculty, and academic discourse strength and the only Indian National Law University to offer integrated law degrees in five streams including B.S.W. L.L.B, and LL.M., Ph.D. and diploma programs in a wide multitude of legal and interdisciplinary fields.

GNLU LEGAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

The GNLU Legal Services Committee has been established as the epicenter of legal aid and all allied activities. The Legal Services Committee (LSC) is set up under Section 4(k) of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The committee rides on the principles of empowering society with legal awareness and legal aid. Over the years, the GNLU LSC has strived to recognize law as an instrument of social change. The Committee leads a wide range of activities from pro-bono and legal aid clinics to piloting research projects and organizing sessions.

ABOUT THE EVENT

The GNLU Annual Legal Services Forum (GALSF) is the annual flagship event of the GNLU Legal Services Committee. The premise of the Annual Legal Forum is to connect and establish a foundation and a consortium of all Legal Aid and Services Committees across the nation, address pertinent socio-legal issues, and facilitate discussion, cooperation, and contribution. We seek to give a platform to all exemplary voices, Law Universities, NGOs, and Legal Services Authorities throughout India in order to achieve the goal of providing affordable and accessible legal services to the underprivileged sections of society and bridging the gap that hinders the fulfilment of the aforementioned goal, by sharing their distinctive experiences.

The 7th edition of the GALSF, scheduled on 21 - 22 March, 2026, will focus on the theme of “Artificial intelligence and Access to Justice”. This year’s forum is dedicated to addressing pressing issues in society by combining seven components in total.

The different components of the event are-

- Mediation Competition
- Paper Presentation Competition
- Round Table Discussion
- Podcast Legislative Drafting Workshop
- Legal Quizzes
- Lok Manch
- Abhvyakti' Nukkad Natak

The GNLU LSC Annual Grant Presentation is a cornerstone of the event, embodying its commitment to informed advocacy and evidence-based action. This research component explores and delves into the theme of the rights and working conditions of gig workers, who are often exposed to exploitation and limited legal protection. The Mediation Competition is designed to give participants hands-on experience with resolving disputes, which aims to settle legal conflicts amicably through mutual agreement between the involved parties. In addition, the forum will hold the annual Round Table Conference wherein the faculty heads of legal aid clinics of all participating universities and other esteemed guests will enter into a formal discourse on strengthening the legal aid in the country and evolving a common consensus on a united effort of law schools towards quality legal aid.

7TH GNLU ANNUAL LEGAL SERVICES FORUM – 3RD GNLU MEDIATION COMPETITION, 2026

The theme for the GNLU Mediation Competition is:

“Democratizing Dispute Resolution: The Role of AI in Mediating Justice for All”

The primary objective of the mediation competition is to offer participants a hands-on opportunity to tackle legal disputes in the realms of everyday issues the common man faces. Participating in this competition will cultivate a nuanced comprehension of these complex legal domains and gain invaluable expertise in alternative dispute resolution techniques. Moreover, this practical experience will equip them with the confidence and efficacy needed to effectively address inquiries brought to legal aid centers. Ultimately, this component serves as a dynamic educational platform, fostering the development of well-rounded legal professionals capable of comprehending intricate legal matters and proficiently navigating and resolving disputes to enhance access to justice for those in need.

DEFINITIONS

- “Advance Rounds” means to the physical rounds consisting of Octa Finals, Quarterfinals, Semifinals and Final Rounds, scheduled for 21st-22nd March, 2026 at the campus of GNLU, Gandhinagar.
- "BATNA" means "Best Alternative to a Mediation or Negotiation Agreement" and refers to what is the most feasible step for a party to take if the parties fail to reach an agreement.
- "WATNA" means the Worst Alternative to a Mediation or Negotiation Agreement and refers to the worst outcome if the mediation or negotiation fails.
- "GALSF " means the GNLU Annual Legal Services Forum which is the flagship event of the GNLU Legal Services Committee of the Gujarat National Law University.
- "Competition Rules" means the rules and guidelines mentioned herein.
- "General Information" is the factual information provided to the registered participants by the GALSF Mediation Competition that is delineated as such.
- "Confidential information" means factual information given exclusively to one party in accordance with the rules of the competition.
- “Conflict of Interest” is a claim for recusal of one or more of the judges, only to be made in a scenario where a client-advocate/counsel-counsel pair or any of the two mediators face a judge or judges from the immediately preceding round, as it can negatively impact their scores due to possible bias culminated from the judge’s/judges’ impression of the participant in the last round.
- "Eligible Student" means a student enrolled in an undergraduate law degree programme at any of the universities recognized by the Bar Council of India. Each participant must be a current undergraduate student (5-year or 3-year course) at their respective institution.
- "Judge" means a lawyer or an academician nominated and/or selected by the GNLU LSC who evaluates and scores the performance of the participating team during the competition in accordance with the Competition Rules.
- "Mediator" refers to a participant who has registered or is designated as a mediator.
- "Participating Team" refers to a team from a recognised law university whose registration has been approved by the GNLU LSC for the GALSF.
- "Requesting Party" stands for the party, in the proposition, at whose behest the option of mediation or negotiation was exercised.
- "Responding Party" stands for the party other than the requesting party in the mediation or negotiation proceedings.

LANGUAGE AND ELIGIBILITY

- I. The competition will be solely conducted in the English language. All the law students currently pursuing three-year LL.B. or five-year LL.B. are eligible to participate in the competition.
- II. All the recognized universities are allowed to send only one team for the event. No cross university team(s) are allowed

TEAM COMPOSITION

Each participating team shall consist of 3 members - 2 members shall act as a client and counsel pair and 1 member as a Mediator. The role of the members shall not be altered (i.e., the participant in the role of Mediator shall continue to play the role throughout the competition). Client and Counsel are not permitted to interchange their roles in ordinary circumstances. However, under exceptional circumstances, they may apply for the same. However, the decision of the GNLU LSC shall be final and binding in this regard.

The Competition Committee members and observers (with permission from the Competition Committee) may enter the virtual rooms as well. Anyone entering the room, not listed above, must enter with their video and audio turned off to avoid disturbing the mediation.

GENERAL RULES OF THE COMPETITION

- I. Scouting is strictly prohibited. Violation of this rule shall result in disqualification after an immediate inquiry.
- II. Participants shall not attend any of the sessions of other teams or individuals during the competition or receive information from any person who has attended any previous rounds.
- III. Participants shall not reveal their identity or university to the panel of arbitrators/mediators or judges. Teams are not allowed to switch their roles during the competition. Participants shall address themselves as with the respective team codes allotted to them during the entire event. Note: Disclosure of unwarranted information including the name of their respective colleges by the Participants is strictly prohibited. Any such disclosure invites immediate disqualification.
- IV. If any team fails to be present in the competition room for the mediation oral rounds, for more than 10 minutes even after the commencement of the session, they shall not be allowed to appear for that round.
- V. The organizing committee shall serve as the final authority for the implementation and interpretation of these rules and of any supplementary rules or clarifications.

VI. If there is any situation that is not contemplated in the rules, the organizing committee's decision on the same shall be final and binding.

VII. All forms of sexual harassment are prohibited and any reported instance will be thoroughly investigated and addressed in accordance with the GNLU LSC code of conduct.

VIII. Participants are instructed to maintain mutual respect and decorum while contacting other participants or any members of the organizing committee. Please refrain from using derogatory, disrespectful, or sexist language and remarks.

IX. Each member of the participation team shall be dressed in formals (western) for the duration of the competition.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The participating teams should mention only their allotted team codes for the purpose of communication with judges/organizers. The identity of the participating team or members or the name of their college/university shall not be disclosed to any other person during the course of the competition in any form other than to the organizing committee, whether directly or indirectly. In addition, sporting any visible or distinguishable badges/ card/ uniform by any participant which provides an opportunity to infer/disclose their identity or the identity of the law college/ university being represented, is strictly forbidden. All the participants are to adhere to the western formals/business formals style of dressing. The organizing committee reserves the right to disqualify any team for misconduct during the competition. In case of doubts, the decision of the student convenors and the faculty coordinators of the board shall be final.

STRUCTURE OF THE COMPETITION

1. Preliminary Rounds I and II (ONLINE)
2. Quarter Final Rounds (ONLINE)
3. Semi-Final Rounds (OFFLINE)
4. Finals. (OFFLINE)

Preliminary Rounds (Online)

The preliminary rounds shall consist of preliminary round I ("Prelims-I") and preliminary round II ("Prelims II"). Each team shall mediate and negotiate in both rounds, once as a requesting party and once as a responding party. No team shall face the same bench or team more than once in the preliminary rounds. In the case of mediation, mediators can decide among themselves who wants to be mediator 1 or mediator 2 before the rounds.

Scoring: Each round shall be decided through the allocation of a total of six round points, with all points being awarded based on the scores of the client counsel pair and also the mediator, in the case of mediation. A total of 3 points will be allocated for the preliminary rounds. Marks will be awarded as per the following criteria:

- If the difference between the cumulative scores is more than 10% of the higher score, the pair or mediator with the higher score will be awarded 3 points.
- If the difference is less than 10%, then the pair or mediator with the higher score will be awarded 2 points, and the other team will be awarded 1 point.
- In the case of a tie, the pair or mediator will be awarded 1.5 points each for that judge.

Point Allocation Criteria

CONDITION	DESCRIPTION	POINTS (Higher Score)	POINTS (Lower Score)
Difference > 10% of the higher score	Team/mediator wins decisively	3	0
Difference < 10% of the higher score	Close margin win	2	1
Tie (scores equal)	Exact tie between participants	1.5	1.5

Example:

Pair A Marks	Pair B Marks	Difference	Condition	Pair A Points	Pair B Points
150	130	20	Difference > 10% of 150	3	0
120	115	5	Difference < 10% of 120	2	1
110	110	0	Tie	1.5	1.5

All competing teams shall participate in the preliminary round I and II in online mode. The client advocate/counsel-counsel pairs shall advance separately, and the mediators shall advance separately. The teams will be ranked based on the points secured in the preliminary rounds I and II. In case of a tie, whoever has scored higher under criteria 7 of the client-counsel (Scoring parameters sheet) and criteria 8 of the mediator score sheet shall be considered to break the tie. If and only if the tie cannot be resolved using the previously mentioned procedure, the teams shall be given equal points.

Advance Rounds

The advance rounds shall proceed on a knockout basis i.e only 1 team from each round shall proceed to the next round.

The round structure may be changed at any point before the start of the competition at the discretion of the organizers. The changes, if any, shall be communicated to the participants as required.

A. Quarter Final Rounds (Online)

The top 8 client-counsel pairs and top 8 mediators from the preliminary rounds shall participate in the quarter final rounds. The top 8 client-counsel pairs shall be ranked based on the cumulative score of the preliminary rounds. The top 8 mediators shall be ranked on the basis of their cumulative scores obtained during the mediation session. Only one of the Client Counsel pairs and Mediators in a particular round shall advance to the Semi final rounds.

B. Semi Final Rounds (Offline)

The winning client-counsel pairs and mediators from each one of the quarter final rounds shall participate in the semi-final rounds. The qualifying client-counsel pair shall be determined based on which team obtains the highest cumulative score in that round alone.

C. Final Rounds (Offline)

The highest-scoring client-counsel pairs and the highest-scoring mediator in their respective semi final round shall participate in the final round.

CLARIFICATIONS

Teams are required to submit their requests for clarification regarding the proposition via email. There is no restriction on the number of clarifications that a team can request. Any requests for clarification received after the specified deadlines will not be considered valid. All clarifications will be invited and released as per the schedule provided along with.

Note: Please mention the team codes while writing an email for seeking clarifications, or else the clarifications shall not be entertained.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

As per the nature of the competition, there might arise situations wherein the participants or the mediators find themselves in a situation wherein they are judged by the same panel or one of the members therein. The organizers will try their best to ensure that this does not take place. However, the participants are encouraged to report any such event whatsoever, to the organizers of the GALSF.

Any such claim shall be made only during the first 5 minutes of the concerned round and shall hold no ground once the time has elapsed. The acceptance of any such claim is subject to the approval of GNLU LSC, and they retain absolute discretion to accept or reject such claim. No disputes whatsoever shall be entertained as against the decision of the organizers.

TIME LIMITS

The time limits for each round are as follows:

Preliminary round I and II (Online): 45 minutes for each round (excluding 5 minutes of Caucus/ Private session for each party) + 10 minutes post Discussion and Evaluation (SUBJECT TO THE JUDGE'S DISCRETION) .

- Quarter final round: 60 minutes (excluding 5 minutes of Caucus/ Private session for each party) + 10 minutes post discussion and evaluation (SUBJECT TO THE JUDGE'S DISCRETION).
- Semi-final rounds: 60 minutes (excluding 7 minutes of Caucus/ Private session for each party) + 10 minutes post discussion and evaluation (SUBJECT TO THE JUDGE'S DISCRETION).
- Final rounds: 90 minutes (excluding 10 minutes of Caucus/ Private session for each party) + post discussion and evaluation (SUBJECT TO THE JUDGE'S DISCRETION).

Please note that the organizing committee reserves the right to make changes to the time limits before the release of the confidential information.

TIME KEEPING

The organizing committee member supervising the session shall be the official timekeeper. Teams have the responsibility to adhere to the time limit. Participants must note that they can speak only for the allotted time limit, as mentioned above. The Organizing Committee member shall notify teams about the remaining time during the round. Judges will be advised to not give any additional time and hence participants must adhere to the time split mentioned for the respective rounds.

RELEASE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Confidential information for each Mediation round shall be released:

- 30 minutes before the mediation session for the preliminary and quarter final Rounds.
- 45 minutes before the mediation session for the semi-final round.
- 60 minutes before the mediation session for the final round.

Participants are strictly instructed to keep the contents of the confidential information (CI) exclusively to themselves. The Mediators shall have no access to the Confidential Information of any of the parties before or during the competition. The participants shall be required to submit their mobile phones and electronic devices to the person who is in charge of the confidential information rooms and they can only be collected when the participants are leaving the confidential information rooms. Any violation of this rule shall result in immediate disqualification. In this regard, the discretion of the organizing committee shall be final.

TENTATIVE TIMELINE

EVENTS	IMPORTANT DATES
COMMENCEMENT OF REGISTRATION.	15TH DECEMBER 2026
DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION.	13TH FEBRUARY 2026
RELEASE OF PROBLEM FOR PRELIMINARY ROUNDS I AND II.	24TH JANUARY 2026
DEADLINE FOR SEEKING CLARIFICATIONS (PRELIMINARY ROUNDS I AND II)	15TH FEBRUARY 2026
RELEASE OF CLARIFICATIONS (PRELIMINARY ROUNDS I AND II)	16TH FEBRUARY 2026
PRELIMINARY ROUND I AND II.	21ST & 22ND FEBRUARY 2026
RESULTS (PRELIMINARY ROUNDS)	23RD FEBRUARY 2026

RELEASE OF PROBLEM FOR QUARTER FINAL ROUNDS	5TH FEBRUARY 2026
DEADLINE FOR SEEKING CLARIFICATIONS (QUARTER FINALS)	23RD FEBRUARY 2026
RELEASE OF CLARIFICATIONS (QUARTER FINALS)	25TH FEBRUARY 2026
QUARTER FINAL ROUNDS	28TH FEBRUARY 2026
RESULTS (QUARTER FINAL ROUNDS)	1ST MARCH 2026
RELEASE OF PROBLEM FOR SEM-FINAL AND FINAL ROUNDS	15TH FEBRUARY 2026
DEADLINE FOR SEEKING CLARIFICATIONS (SEMI-FINAL AND FINAL ROUNDS)	5TH MARCH 2026
RELEASE OF CLARIFICATIONS (SEMI-FINAL AND FINAL ROUNDS)	6TH MARCH 2026
SEMI FINAL ROUNDS	21ST MARCH 2026
FINAL ROUNDS	22ND MARCH 2026

Note: The release of sides (fixtures) for the specific online rounds shall be released 24 hours prior to the rounds. The fixtures for Semi-Final and Final Rounds shall be released 12 hours prior to the rounds.

EVALUATION

Evaluation Criteria for the Client-Counsel Team

SL. NO.	CRITERIA	MARKS
1	OPENING STATEMENT	10
2	ARGUMENT	10
3	UNDERSTANDING OF PROBLEM (ISSUE IDENTIFICATION / PRIORITIZATION OF STAKES)	20
4	TEAMWORK AND COOPERATION	10
5	PROFESSIONALISM AND ADVOCACY	10
6	STRATEGY + USE OF CI	20
7	TIME MANAGEMENT	10
8	POST CONSULTATION SESSION (IDENTIFICATION OF BATNA AND WATNA)	10
	TOTAL	100

Evaluation Criteria for Mediators

SL. NO.	CRITERIA	MARKS
1	OPENING AND CLOSING STATEMENT	10
2	EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATION SKILLS (RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND PROBLEM SOLVING + OTHER SOFT SKILLS)	10
3	ADVOCATING INTERESTS	20
4	MUTUALLY GENERATING CREATIVE OPINIONS	10
5	COLLABORATING WITH THE OTHER PARTY	10
6	TEAMWORK AND COORDINATION	10
7	EFFECTIVE USE OF CAUCUS	10
8	MEDIATION STRATEGY	20
	TOTAL	100

AWARDS AND PRIZES

- Each participating team shall be provided with a certificate of participation.
- The best performing team of the preliminary rounds 1 & 2 shall be given a certificate of appreciation and a memento.
- The Winner and Runner-Up client-counsel pair as well as the mediator, shall be given respective certificates, as well as the prizes mentioned below along with the provided Internship opportunities that will be declared on our social media platforms.

PRIZE	PRIZE MONEY
Winner Client-Counsel Pair	Rs. 25,000
Runner-Up Client-Counsel Pair	Rs. 15,000
Best Mediator	Rs. 12,500
Runner-Up Mediator	Rs. 7,500

CONTACT

All correspondence with the organizing committee should be conducted through email, using the address- galsf.legalservices@gnlu.ac.in and contact:

Varunesh Renganathan (Mediation Head)- +91 9840045753

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