

RULES

NATIONAL LEGAL AID INNOVATION COMPETITION

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1** These Rules (“Rules”) govern the conduct of the National Legal Aid Innovation Competition (“Competition”), constituted as Part I of the 3rd Stakeholders’ Summit, 2026 (“Summit”), organised by the Legal Aid and Awareness Committee (“LAAC”), National Law University, Jodhpur (“the University” or “NLUJ”), to be held from October 09 to 11, 2026 at the University campus.
- 1.2** The Competition is conducted on the theme “Strengthening Clinical Legal Education through Legal Aid Cells” and requires participating teams, nominated by institutions through their legal aid clinics, to identify a concrete access-to-justice gap in their local area and design an implementable, community-grounded response thereto. To facilitate focused engagement, participating teams may choose to work under any one of the broader thematic areas specified under Rule 4.
- 1.3** These Rules shall be binding on all Participating Institutions, Teams, student members, and Faculty Chairpersons. Registration for the Competition shall constitute unconditional and unqualified acceptance of these Rules.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1** “Competition” means the Justice Innovation Competition conducted as Part I of the Summit.
- 2.2** “Organising Committee” means LAAC, or any sub-committee constituted by it, for the purposes of organising and administering the Competition.
- 2.3** “Screening Committee” means the external committee constituted by the Organising Committee to evaluate and shortlist Concept Notes submitted under Stage I of the Competition.
- 2.4** “Team” means the group of student members nominated by a single Participating Institution to represent it in the Competition.
- 2.5** “Participating Institution” means the institution from which a Team is nominated to participate in the Competition.
- 2.6** “Faculty Coordinator” means the faculty member nominated by a Participating Institution to accompany its Team for the duration of the Summit.
- 2.7** “Concept Note” means the written proposal submitted by a Team under Stage I, comprising the identified access-to-justice gap, the proposed methodology, a video, and a feasibility analysis.
- 2.8** “Final Report” means the comprehensive empirical and doctrinal report submitted by a shortlisted Team upon completion of its field study, for presentation before the panel during the Stakeholders’ Summit.

3. ELIGIBILITY AND TEAM COMPOSITION

- 3.1** The Competition is open to students enrolled in all law schools recognised by the University Grants Commission and the Bar Council of India registering through the Participating Institution’s legal aid clinic.
- 3.2** Only one team per Participating Institution can participate, comprising students enrolled in an undergraduate programme, who have been duly authorised by the Participating Institution to participate as the sole representative of the Participating Institution.

3.3 Each Team shall comprise three (3) to five (5) student members, accompanied by one (1) Faculty Chairperson nominated by the Participating Institution.

3.4 No Team shall have student members from more than one Participating Institution.

3.5 At the time of registration, each Team shall submit:

- (a) a No-Objection Certificate (“NOC”) issued by the administration of the Participating Institution, confirming its endorsement of the Team’s participation; and
- (b) complete travel details of the Team and the Faculty Chairperson (mode of travel, dates of arrival and departure, and emergency contact information), to ensure institutional accountability and the safety of participants only after the Team has been shortlisted by the Organising Committee.

3.6 The Organising Committee reserves the right to seek further verification or documentation from the Participating Institution’s administration at any stage of the Competition.

4. THEMES

4.1 Each Team shall identify and address an access-to-justice gap falling within any one of the following sub-themes:

- Role of legal aid clinics in connecting victims to the criminal justice system via the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) or other institutions.
- Role of legal aid clinics in assisting juveniles in conflict with the system, whether as delinquents or as victims.
- Role of legal aid clinics in providing legal aid to women in various capacities.
- Role of legal aid clinics in providing legal aid to the LGBTQI+ community.
- Role of legal aid clinics in bridging the digital divide to ensure access to justice for marginalised communities in digitally excluded or rural areas.

4.2 Each Team shall clearly indicate the sub-theme selected at the time of submission of its Concept Note and video under Stage I, and shall not change the sub-theme thereafter without the prior written approval of the Organising Committee.

5. REGISTRATION AND FEE STRUCTURE

5.1 Registration for the Competition shall be conducted in three stages, with fees payable as set out below:

Stage	Particulars	Amount (INR)	Payable By
I	Competition Application	₹ 1,500/- per Team	All registering Teams, at the time of registration

II	Summit Accommodation, Boarding, Food and Internal Travel Arrangements (3 days)	₹ 4,500/- per Team	Teams shortlisted for the field study/presentation round, upon confirmation of qualification
III	Faculty Coordinator Registration	₹ 2,500/- per Faculty Coordinator	Faculty Coordinator accompanying a qualified Team, upon confirmation of qualification

5.2 The Stage I fee is payable by every registering Team at the time of initial registration, irrespective of whether its Concept Note is subsequently selected for the field study and presentation round.

5.3 The Stage II and Stage III fees are payable only by Teams, and the Faculty Chairperson accompanying them respectively, that are shortlisted/qualified pursuant to the screening process described in Rule 7.

5.4 The mode of payment, payment deadlines, and the registration portal/link.

6. REFUND POLICY

6.1 All fees paid under Rule 5 are strictly non-refundable once registration is complete.

6.2 Without prejudice to the generality of Rule 6.1, no refund shall be made on account of, including but not limited to:

- (a) voluntary withdrawal of a Team after registration;
- (b) non-selection of a Team's Concept Note at the screening stage;
- (c) a Team's inability to qualify for the field study/presentation round; or
- (d) cancellation or non-attendance by a Team, any of its members, or its Faculty Chairperson, for any reason whatsoever.

6.3 Notwithstanding the conditions laid down in Rule 6.2, any Team that wishes to withdraw its registration within the stipulated time for registration notified by the Organising Committee is eligible for a refund. The aforementioned conditions apply after the date of the closing of the period of registration.

6.4 The same policy regarding non-refundable payments laid down under Rule 6.2 shall apply for a Team that has qualified for Stage II once they have made the additional payment for the presentation of their report on the Stakeholders' Summit. The Organising Team reserves the right to invite the next best Team for qualification from Stage I upon withdrawal by a qualified Team without having the obligation to refund the Team that has withdrawn from Stage II.

7. SCREENING AND SELECTION PROCESS

- 7.1 Each Team shall submit its Concept Note and a video of a maximum of two minutes, comprising the access-to-justice gap identified, the proposed methodology, and a feasibility analysis, within the timeline notified in the call for registrations. The Concept Note shall include the following heads:
- (a) **Identification of the Access-to-Justice Gap:** A clear statement of the legal or institutional problem sought to be addressed, supported, where possible, by secondary literature, stakeholder testimonies, empirical data or surveys, case studies, photographs, videos, or other evidence demonstrating the existence and nature of the gap.
 - (b) **Proposed Methodology:** A detailed description of the proposed intervention, including its objectives, phases of implementation, target beneficiaries, proposed activities, anticipated timeline, human and financial resources required, institutional or community partnerships envisaged, and the roles and responsibilities of team members and stakeholders.
 - (c) **Feasibility Analysis:** An assessment of the practical viability of the proposed intervention, including anticipated legal, administrative, financial, logistical, or community-level challenges, the assumptions underlying the proposal, potential risks, strategies for mitigating such risks, and the expected impact and sustainability of the intervention.
- 7.2 The accompanying video presentation should succinctly introduce the identified access-to-justice gap, outline the proposed intervention, and explain why the project is both necessary and practically feasible.
- 7.3 All Concept Notes and video entries shall be evaluated and shortlisted by an external Screening Committee, comprising evaluators independent of LAAC and the University, to ensure the objectivity and impartiality of the selection process.
- 7.4 The decision of the Screening Committee with respect to shortlisting shall be final and binding on all Teams, and no correspondence or appeal shall be entertained in this regard.
- 7.5 Teams shortlisted pursuant to the screening process shall be intimated in writing and shall thereafter be required to comply with Rule 5 (Stage II and III fees) and Rule 8 (Field Study) of these Rules.

8. FIELD STUDY AND SUBMISSION OF FINAL REPORT

- 8.1 Shortlisted Teams shall conduct a field study on their selected sub-theme, based on the objective parameters and metrics circulated in advance by the Organising Committee and/or its collaborating organisations.
- 8.2 Shortlisted Teams shall thereafter submit a Final Report incorporating the empirical data gathered during the field study together with a doctrinal analysis grounded in secondary legal sources, within the timeline notified by the Organising Committee.
- 8.3 The Final Report shall be submitted in the format, and within the word limit, if any, prescribed by the Organising Committee at the time of intimation of shortlisting.

9. PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 9.1 Shortlisted Teams shall present their Final Report before a panel comprising practitioners, policymakers, and/or civil society representatives during the Stakeholders' Summit as invited by the Organising Committee, and shall be liable to respond to questions on their methodology, findings, and strategy.
- 9.2 Teams shall be evaluated on the following objective criteria:
- (a) Originality;
 - (b) Community-rootedness;

- (c) Practicality and scalability;
- (d) Legal rigour; and
- (e) Boldness of vision.

9.3 The decision of the panel with respect to evaluation, and the declaration of the winning Team(s), shall be final and binding.

10. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ORIGINALITY

10.1 The Concept Note and Final Report submitted by a Team shall be the original and unpublished work of its members. Any instance of plagiarism, fabrication of data, usage of artificial intelligence for writing and/or generating the content, or misrepresentation of field findings shall render the Team liable to disqualification at any stage of the Competition, including after the announcement of results.

10.2 All sources relied upon in the Final Report shall be duly and accurately cited, in a citation format prescribed by the Organising Committee.

11. CERTIFICATES

11.1 A Certificate of Participation in the Justice Innovation Competition shall be issued to every Team that submits a Final Report, presents the same before the panel and attends all three (3) identified sessions held during the Summit. Partial attendance shall not entitle a Team to this certificate.

11.2 Certificates of Merit shall be issued to the winning Team(s) as determined under Rule 9.

12. DISQUALIFICATION AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

12.1 A Team may be disqualified, at any stage of the Competition, on grounds including but not limited to:

- (a) submission of false or misleading information, including in the NOC or travel details furnished under Rule 3.4;
- (b) violation of the one-Team-per-institution requirement under Rule 3.2;
- (c) plagiarism or fabrication under Rule 10.1;
- (d) non-payment of applicable fees within the prescribed timeline; or

13. MISCELLANEOUS

13.1 The Organising Committee reserves the right to amend, modify, or supplement these Rules at any time, and such changes shall be communicated to all registered Teams.

13.2 In the event of any ambiguity or dispute regarding the interpretation of these Rules, the decision of the Organising Committee shall be final and binding.

14. QUERIES AND COMMUNICATION

14.1 For any queries regarding the Competition, registered or prospective participants may write to:

Legal Aid and Awareness Committee

National Law University, Jodhpur

Email: laac@nlujodhpur.ac.in

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