



INTERVIEW WITH Assistant Professor HIRANO Miharuru

Case competition opportunities for students: How to encourage students to challenge themselves and aim high

Assistant Professor HIRANO Miharuru

Assistant Professor Hirano has been working at APU since Fall 2019. He specializes in international law and teaches at the College of Asia Pacific Studies (Field of Study: International Relations).



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Introduction

APS students now have more opportunities than ever to learn beyond traditional classrooms through role-play, moot courts, and other various platforms. APU has been one of the sole two national representatives of Japan at the Asia Cup International Law Moot Court Competition for two years in a row since 2021. Moreover, our team performed excellently and won first-place consecutively at the International Humanitarian Role-play Competition in 2021 and 2022.

This semester, ALRCS' Project Q Team is aiming to provide insights into the role of mentors during case

competitions by presenting the perspectives of two experienced mentors and two successful students. We hope that our articles help other professors see the importance of case competitions at APU and discover how to guide their students to success.



Q1. Can you briefly explain the two competitions that you are mentoring?

I have mentored two types of competitions: international law moot court and international humanitarian law role-play.

“Flow of international law moot court competitions”

The Secretariat presents a hypothetical problem with the theme of a dispute between nations.

↓
Written Memorial:
Each team summarizes their arguments in writing.

↓
Oral Pleading:
The teams are divided into the applicant (prosecutor) and the defendant to present their arguments before judges regarding the legal issues resulting from the hypothetical situation.

“Flow of the International Humanitarian Law Role-play Competition”

Based on the scenario released on the day of the competition, participants play various roles assigned to them, such as humanitarian organization, government, and media, under the various hypothetical settings within the armed conflict, and take on missions such as negotiating with combatants or visiting prisoners of war.

Until last year I had mentored entirely online, but now I can meet with students face-to-face once every week or two and provide them with feedback to prepare them for the competitions. Apart

from the competitions, we also hold a joint seminar with a professor from Ritsumeikan University to organize a friendly moot court. Any fourth-year students in my seminar can participate

in external competitions and support third-year students participating in the joint seminar as seniors. The key to these activities is the ability to comprehensively utilize the knowledge and skills gained from libraries, databases, international law, and daily studies.

Q2. What inspired you to join the Moot Court?

I have participated in moot court competitions as a student myself. Also, from observing the actual environment at APU, mainly First-year Education lectures (MCW), its atmosphere, and TA activities, I realize that APU's active learning methods are perfect for case competitions. Moreover, I can see the potential from students who apply what they have learned earlier from lectures on international law to demonstrate their abilities in seminars.

Therefore, when I proposed the idea to participate in such competitions to my seminar students, they responded positively with “I want to do it!” , then, I added, “Let's try to win it!” This is how it started.

Q3. Amongst past competitions, which one was the most interesting?

There are only two universities qualified to represent Japan in the Asia Cup International Law Moot Court Competition every year. Even on the first attempt, APU made it through the national selection and secured the slot. This selection was based solely on the written memorial, so I remember the feeling of surprise and happiness for the team for gaining this level of recognition. The junior students were also inspired by that achievement.

The other interesting moment was when students participated in the International Humanitarian Law Role-play Competition. I had never done a role-play competition and was very amazed at the wonderful acting skills of APU students. And they were the National Round Japan champions after all!

● Student Participation

Q4. For students, what skills are necessary and what attitudes should be kept in mind when competing?

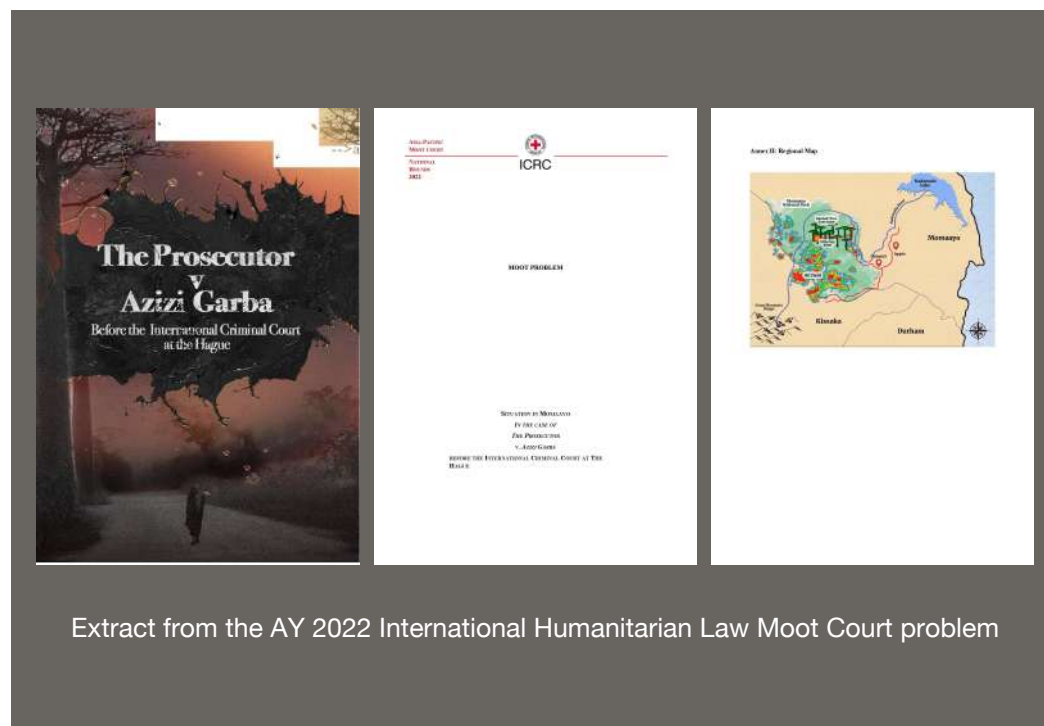
In terms of legal studies, it is necessary to acquire a “legal mindset” to know how to evaluate certain relevant facts when applying them to the law. International law might be ambiguous sometimes, but what solves the problem are the skills to work

Qon it while thinking independently:

the ability to research what is necessary at the time, knowing how to find the relevant legal documents, and knowing how to make persuasive arguments.

In addition to English language ability, writing abilities and interpersonal skills are crucial especially in role-play. Even if you are not confident, I think it is vital to have the ability to be confident and undergo the challenge and to persevere even when your argument crumbles and needs to be rebuilt.

Furthermore, all members must also be on the same playing field as a team. These skills are not something that I as the faculty member can instruct. Therefore, it is important that students understand that although their individual goals are



Extract from the AY 2022 International Humanitarian Law Moot Court problem



different, all team members should be willing to compromise and collaborate toward the common objectives.

Q5. I think that competitions are important, beneficial experiences for students, but what exactly are the skills that can be trained?

All the above-mentioned skills can certainly be developed through competitions, but what I think is important among the experiences in the competition is the confidence gained through becoming aware of the ability to achieve something. Since APU does not have a law program, students do not know if they are doing right when preparing for a competition. Students trust my guidance, but achieving certain results in an external competition can be a great confidence

builder for them. Therefore, I think that students will be able to objectively develop their skills through feedback given by professors acting as judges and students from other schools in an environment outside of APU at these competitions.

Since this is an extracurricular activity, students cannot earn graduation credits. As it will be difficult for fourth-year seniors to balance job hunting or preparation for graduate school and the heavy workload from competitions, they must have good time management skills.

● Faculty Mentoring

Q6. As a mentor, what can you do to improve student experiences through these competitions?

First and foremost, I believe being a mentor is supporting students to take on challenges with confidence. When it comes to competing with other prestigious universities, students sometimes doubt their abilities, but I encourage them to try their best and aim for the highest result. Planning is also crucial. I try to support each student individually so that they are not overwhelmed. Moreover, I always try to call out students' individual achievements as well as areas for improvement so that they can have confidence and work harder.

The approaches above are what I aim to do for the students, but seeing students work hard every day motivates me also; there is a synergistic effect. I have not necessarily experienced role-playing myself, but there are many things I got to notice while coaching, and it is a learning experience for

me as well.

7. Are you enthusiastic for the upcoming competitions?

APS won the Role-play Competition for the second time in a row and the team of three students will participate in the international round in Albania.⁹ My strongest feeling right now is: "Do your best on the world stage!"

Interviewer's Impression

This interview was a very precious experience for me to hear directly from the professor about the appeal of case competitions. It was especially interesting to hear about the teaching methods of professors who often support their students generously. I hope that more people will take on new challenges at competitions in the future, and that this article will be helpful to students who are interested in competitions.



The Project Q Team with Assistant Professor Hirano

What is [Q]?

At APU there are many professors who put together wonderful classes, and if we could get to know how these classes are planned, it would contribute to the improvement of other professors' classes. For that purpose, we have begun doing interviews in order to learn about class planning. These articles have been entitled [Q], comprising a variety of meanings such as: increasing the [Q]uality of classes, answering [Q]uestions to increase quality, and forming a [Q]ueue, or line, of class improvements. We would be very happy if these articles could contribute to the [Q]uest of APU professors' class quality improvement.



Interviewer and Author



Name : SHIBATA Ayaha

College : APS

Country : Japan

Message: Hello everyone! I am SHIBATA Ayaha, a Q-Team member with ALRCS since Fall 2021. My hobbies are listening to music and looking at design. Through participating in Project Q, I have been able to get to know professors' and senior students' views on learning at APU and strengthen my desire to further deepen my own learning. I would like to convey the appeal of seminars that I learned and felt in the interview to all students!

Interviewer and Translator

Name : DO Ngoc Minh Thu

College : APM(A&F)

Country : Vietnam

Message: Hi! I'm Zoey, 2nd year Accounting & Finance. I have an ardent passion for writing and blogging. I love the process from talking to many people and listening to their stories, to writing well-structured articles for everyone to read. Therefore, as a Q-Team member, I want to create quality reading experience for both professors and students about academic life at APU.

