

HRLA Judicial Review Competition: Our experience



Finalists (left to right): Lucy Meredith, Hannah Gardiner, John Fitzsimons, Emma Foubister.

The Human Rights Lawyers Association Mooting Competition is a unique opportunity for aspiring public lawyers to make an application for permission to apply for judicial review, rather than a traditional appeal.

Last year, the problem question concerned the application of Articles 8 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights in the context of welfare benefits and residence requirements. It was a topical and interesting question, and we enjoyed researching the relevant Strasbourg and domestic authorities.

At the first stage of the competition, we submitted a statement of facts and grounds for review. We gained a real insight into the practical steps of making an application, as we had to complete the N461 Judicial Review Claim Form. As students, this was not something we had been exposed to before and it was really useful in advance of pupillage applications! The written submissions had to be concise and shortly address what we anticipated to be the key issues in the case.

Along with 11 other teams, we were selected to participate in an oral application for judicial review. This stage of the competition took place at Doughty Street Chambers and was judged by barristers and members of the HRLA committee. We were very grateful for this opportunity to make submissions and defend our propositions to experts in the field. This stage of the competition was different from other moots, as we weren't in direct competition with another team. It was a points based system, with the two teams awarded the most points going through.

We were one of two teams selected to participate in the final, which took place at Middle Temple Dining Hall. For the final, we had to switch sides and defend the Government. This was an interesting challenge and really encouraged us to think about the issues from all perspectives.

It was an honour to be judged by Lord Justice Longmore and Professor Sara Chandler QC (Hons). The judges asked lots of probing questions but we enjoyed responding to their challenges and having a taste of what it is like for advocates in the Court of Appeal! The HRLA committee put us at ease and we were treated to a lovely dinner after the moot.

We were grateful not only for the opportunity to participate in the competition, but also for the generous prize of dinner for two and a voucher from Hart publishers. We gained a lot from this rewarding opportunity and highly recommend entering the competition.