

STUDENT LAW

# Mooting? Keep calm and carry a cheat sheet

The winners of this year's Times 2TG Moot share their tips — and explain why mooting can help in your pupillage interview



Hazel Bannerman and Patrick Cole

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Being able to persuade a judge using clear and concise oral arguments is what being a barrister is all about.

Mooting competitions that simulate court hearings — usually an appeal of a fictional case — enable students to practise and hone their skills of legal research, written submissions and presenting arguments.

Most universities, Bar schools and the four Inns of Court hold moots, and there are several wider competitions. Not least the national competition organised for the past decade by 2 Temple Gardens (2TG) in conjunction with The Times, which is open to all students in tertiary education.

To open the world of mooting to a broader section of students before they go to university, for the past three years the chambers has worked with academy schools in inner London to provide workshops to encourage aspiring barristers. All a potential competitor needs is a team-mate, explains Meghann McTague, a barrister at 2TG and chairwoman of its moot committee.

The first three rounds are based on written advocacy or held remotely to remove financial barriers, McTague says, and the committee will consider applications for financial help with travel expenses in later rounds.

The final is held in London at The Times' headquarters in London Bridge. Earlier this year Hazel Bannerman and Patrick Cole, both 26 and Bar course students at the Inns of Court College of Advocacy, triumphed in the latest competition.

They appeared before an eminent bench — two Supreme Court judges, the president of the King's bench division of the High Court and a Court of Appeal judge — in a dispute over an electric generator that included cross-border issues involving England, the Land of Oz and Ruritania.

The winners picked up prizes of £750 each, while the runners-up bagged £500. All four were offered mini-pupillages at the chambers.

Bannerman, who studied history at Exeter University, first experienced mooting in a speed competition, armed only with the tips from a YouTube video. "My performance was far from perfect, but I loved every minute of it," she says. The process helped to develop her confidence, the ability to think on her feet and to adapt to criticism.

Cole studied classics and English at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and encountered mooting in a workshop in his week on the law conversion course at City, University of London. Mooting was "an enjoyable way of developing legal analysis and presentation skills," he says. "You're far more likely to remember a case if you've been grilled on it by a tough judge."

In the highly competitive search for pupillage, the 12-month apprenticeship students must complete before being able to practise as a barrister, both agree that mooting experience strengthens applications.

Bannerman, who, after three years of applying, secured a pupillage at 4 Stone Buildings, says that mooting helped her keep calm during the “arduous and often demoralising” interviews. “Mooting throughout pupillage cycles has been the thing that reminds me of what the end goal is and why I want to become a barrister,” she says.

Encouraging prospective barristers to get involved, Cole says mooting enables participants to practise all the core skills of an advocate in a safer environment than open court. “It may seem scary to begin with, but the more opportunities to speak you take, the easier it gets,” he says, adding that it is “better to get started in a mock competition than when a real client is on the line”.

His preparation tips start with reading the problem “carefully, probably a few times”, narrowing down what you need to argue and looking carefully at the authorities, or cases, provided. “I’ll still be writing and rewriting parts of my submissions until the moment I stand up,” he adds.

Bannerman’s advice is to make a “cheat sheet” — a one-page summary of key facts, people and cases. “Even the best mooters will have that moment when your mind goes blank and you cannot remember simple facts. Having that sheet with you in the moot can be a real lifeline,” she says.

Also crucial is listening to the judges’ questions and being flexible with your submissions to respond to them. See them “as an opportunity”, Bannerman says, not an attempt to undermine your case.

**Registration for the next Times 2TG Moot closes on June 6; the problem — concerning a man injured by a falling gargoyle — is on the chambers’ website: [2tg.co.uk/the-times-2tg-moot](https://2tg.co.uk/the-times-2tg-moot)**