ROTTERDAM UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

RO/CA
Rotterdam / Carleton International Case Competition

Carleton University

ROTTERDAM-CARLETON INTERNATIONAL CASE COMPETITION

Official Rules
2025

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The following rules and guidelines for the Rotterdam-Carleton International Case Competition (hereinafter referred to as "ROCA") are intended to ensure guidance and fairness to all participating teams. The organizers and judges of the Competition will strictly enforce Competition rules. Any interpretation of these rules that may arise during the Competition will be solely the responsibility of the organizers. Their decisions will be final.

INTRODUCTION

The Rotterdam-Carleton (ROCA) International Case Competition is held annually in one of two locations—Rotterdam, Netherlands (in even-numbered years) or Ottawa, Canada (in odd-numbered years). The competition gives undergraduate business students from a diverse mix of universities across the globe a platform to cultivate their analytical and problem-solving skills, showcase their ideas on an international stage, and receive feedback from seasoned managers and leading academics.

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (Rotterdam Business School) and Carleton University (Sprott School of Business) are proud co-hosts of this world-class event.

MISSION & OBJECTIVES

ROCA was created to cultivate students' ability to solve challenging business problems related to sustainability, responsible management, and the economy of the future. It strives to achieve seven specific objectives:

1. Challenge participants with complex problems that demand integrative, cross-disciplinary thinking and reasoned application of knowledge and theoretical concepts;

2. Reflect the reality of modern business by using cases with a strong focus on contemporary issues, new business models, and new technologies;

3. Provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and perspectives from a diversity of cultures, within the competition itself and in its ancillary activities;

4. Support companies in Ottawa and Rotterdam by harnessing the creativity of students to provide innovative yet feasible solutions to their "wicked problems";

5. Facilitate meaningful networking among students from participating universities and those from the two host schools;

6. Connect participants with employers that share our universities' commitment to sustainability and responsible management, with the aim of creating and enhancing student career opportunities, and;

7. Promote Rotterdam and Ottawa through the event itself, and the cases developed for it.

DISTINCTIVE FORMAT

ROCA is an event like no other: On par with the best undergraduate business case competitions in the world, it features several elements that distinguish it from peer events:

- ROCA is jointly organized by globally-oriented business schools from both sides of the Atlantic. This ensures that the competition benefits from broad experience and perspective.

- The challenges tackled by students at ROCA are "live and relevant". Cases are written in close cooperation with companies and focus on contemporary issues. Teams have an opportunity to speak directly with managers from the case as they prepare their solutions.

- Cases cover a broad range of interdisciplinary business problems with a strong focus on sustainability, responsible management, and the economy and society of the future.

- Participating teams are guaranteed a minimum of 3 matches, with the six finalists tackling a total of 4 different cases.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Participating Schools

Sixteen (16) teams are invited to compete in ROCA, with selection overseen by an Organizing Committee composed of representatives from the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences and Carleton University. Given the importance of a high level of competition, invited schools are required to have substantial case competition experience, as evidenced by past participation and strong performance in previous events. To ensure that the competition benefits from a broad range of perspectives, the selection process also strives for geographic and cultural diversity.

ROCA prioritizes quality of competition over the size of the field. If 16 high-quality teams cannot be confirmed prior to May 1, the Organizing Committee may choose to organize the competition with only twelve (12) teams.

1.2 Student Eligibility

ROCA is open to any student registered, for the duration of the Competition, in an undergraduate (bachelor-level or equivalent) program at a participating school. Students on exchange at a school for the entire academic semester may compete for that school, provided they meet other eligibility requirements. Individuals who have previously participated in ROCA may not enter the competition again.

To be eligible, a student must NOT have completed their degree requirements by the time ROCA is held.

1.3 Team Composition

A ROCA team consists of four eligible undergraduate students chosen by their university, accompanied by one or more team coaches.

1.4 Team Coach /Advisor

A coach or advisor is an individual assigned by a participating university to oversee the preparation and training of their team for ROCA. Coaches are typically faculty members at the participating institution. Each team should have at least one coach, and it is expected that a coach will accompany the team to the competition. The coach is usually also the person who communicates with ROCA organizers on behalf of the team.

1.5 Registration Fee

Each institution invited to enter a team in ROCA must pay the registration fee by the deadline, according to the procedures set by the hosting university. This fee covers 4 students and 1 coach. At the discretion of the host school, and if feasible, additional coaches may be permitted to attend for an additional fee.

1.6 Travel Documents

It is extremely important to obtain appropriate travel documents for all four team members as soon as the team has registered for ROCA.

1.7 Absence of a Team Member

Participation at ROCA requires at least three (3) student competitors. If a team arrives with only three competitors, they will be allowed to participate. If a team member becomes ill during ROCA and is unable to participate, the team will be allowed to compete with three (3) team members. If at any point during the competition a team has fewer than three available members, that team will be required to concede the match. In that case, the team that would have played against the missing opponent will present to the judges and be awarded a point total (on a scale of 0 to 13) that reflects the quality of their presentation.

1.8 Withdrawal of a Team

On rare occasions, circumstances may require a team to withdraw from the competition after participating schools have been announced. This can happen for a variety of reasons, including political/legal (e.g., travel bans, or changes in visa requirements), financial (e.g., bankruptcy of the university), and health-related (e.g., serious illness or injury) considerations.

If a team withdraws with sufficient lead time, the participating school will be replaced. If a substitute cannot be found, a spare team from the host university may be invited to take the spot.

If a team needs to withdraw at the last minute and it is impractical to replace the team using the procedure specified above, ROCA will be modified to allow for the participation of only 15 teams. The competition schedule will remain the same and any teams that would have played against the missing opponent will present to the judges and be awarded a point total (on a scale of 0 to 13) that reflects the quality of their presentation.

1.9 Case Database

As part of the case writing process, the ROCA Organizing Committee prepares a database of materials related to each of the cases that students will solve during the competition. These resources provide important context for the case, and include things like industry reports, annual reports from the company, company marketing materials, media coverage, etc. Since the case itself will not be released until match day, students will not know what specific challenges they need to address until they are at the competition.

Teams will receive instructions on how to access the case database several weeks prior to the start of ROCA. Teams will also have access to the database during the case preparation period.

1.10 Team Ambassador

Each team will be assigned a Team Ambassador (also known as a "buddy"). The Team Ambassador's primary responsibility is to assist their team and serve as the team's primary contact with ROCA organizers. When the team is preparing its case solution, the Team Ambassador will also serve as a "runner", replenishing supplies (e.g., water, paper, markers) and resolving issues as needed. No communication is permitted between team members and anyone except their Team Ambassador from the beginning of the preparation time to the time of presentation. *This specifically and explicitly includes communication with team coaches*.

1.11 Language of the Competition

The language of the competition is English. All cases used in the competition will be written in English and all presentations at ROCA must be delivered in English.

2. DIVISIONAL ROUNDS

2.1 Structure

ROCA begins with a divisional phase, held during the first three days of the competition (Monday-Wednesday). There are four divisions and each division consists of four teams. During the divisional phase, each team competes head-to-head with the other three teams in their division:

First divisional match (Monday): Team 1 vs. Team 3; Team 2 vs. Team 4
Second divisional match (Tuesday): Team 1 vs. Team 4; Team 2 vs. Team 3
Third divisional match (Wednesday): Team 1 vs. Team 2; Team 3 vs. Team 4

Competing "head-to-head" means that a pair of teams presents the same case to the same panel of judges. In each head-to-head match, judges will allocate a total of 13 points between the two teams based on their performance relative to one another.

2.2 Assignment of Teams to Divisions

ROCA uses a randomized draw to assign teams to divisions. All teams are expected to take part in this draw, which forms a key part of the Welcome Ceremony on Sunday afternoon.

DIVISION A	DIVISION B	DIVISION C	DIVISION D
1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4

2.2 Company Meeting

In the divisional rounds, the 6-hour case preparation period includes a 30-minute question-and-answer (Q&A) session in which teams have an opportunity to meet with a representative from the company described in the case. Sessions will be open to four (4) teams at a time, and a maximum of two (2) students from each team may participate—i.e., no more than eight (8) students in total, per session.

2.3 Match Schedule

Preparation start times for each team are scheduled so that the two teams in each match can present to the same judging panel immediately upon completing their case preparation, one after the other. To allow efficient use of judges, start times for matches will be "staggered" for the divisional matches on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday—i.e., there will be an early wave of matches, followed by a late wave of matches. This means a total of four possible start times in each round: early match first team; early match second team; late match first team; late match second team.

During the divisional matches, each team will have the opportunity to present first at least once, and second at least once.

3. CASE PREPARATION

3.1 Preparation Room

A preparation room will be provided for each team; every effort will be made to ensure that teams are assigned the same preparation room for the duration of the competition. Internet access is permitted, but phone lines and mobile phones are NOT allowed in the preparation room. The preparation room will be available to the team at least 15 minutes before the preparation is to start. The following materials will be provided for the teams in the preparation room:

- Four copies of the case
- Blackboard, whiteboard, or flip chart
- Paper, pencils, and pens
- Two blank memory sticks

Teams must bring their own laptop computers to the competition (minimum 2, maximum 4). Laptops should have the ability to connect with wireless networks and be equipped with Microsoft 365 (i.e., MS Office)—i.e., Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

Each member of the team is permitted to bring the following into the preparation room: reference books, personal notes, dictionaries, grammar texts, rulers, and other drawing aids. Teams are permitted to access information stored on the hard drives of their computers. Teams are also permitted to bring their own presentation clicker into the preparation room and may use that clicker during their presentation.

Teams are permitted to use the internet as part of their case preparation, but this is limited to "open sources" that are available to all. This includes free-to-use artificial intelligence tools (e.g., the free version of ChatGPT) and other similar open-access generative AI resources. Within these boundaries, students are encouraged to think creatively about how AI can be incorporated into their process.

During the case preparation period, teams **may not**:

- Access password-protected websites and databases; teams are specifically barred from using resources such as JSTOR, LexisNexis, or any other material previously downloaded from password-protected sites, even if this material has been saved in e-mail, Dropbox, etc.
- Communicate with any external party about the case during case preparation.
- Use mobile phones, tablets, or financial calculators, or any other electronic device apart from the team's personal laptops.

With the exception of the case protagonist meeting organized by ROCA, teams may not communicate with the case companies or their agents at any point prior to or during the competition.

3.2 Templates

Teams are permitted to use a PowerPoint file containing one or more ready-made presentation template(s). A template may contain graphics such as background images, arrows, boxes, organization charts, icons, maps, and photographs, as well as embedded spreadsheets containing pre-set formulas. Videos and dynamic/animated images are NOT permitted in the template.

All presentation templates used at ROCA must be the exclusive work of members of the ROCA team. Templates created by third parties are not permitted. Teams are specifically barred from using purchased templates, downloaded templates, or templates made by students who are not part of their ROCA team.

Since teams are playing the role of professional consultants at ROCA, presentation templates should not include the name or other identifying marks of their university. Instead, teams are encouraged to choose a name for their consultancy firm and design a logo that reflects their identity, skills, and values.

3.3 Memory Sticks

Teams are required to save their presentation file on two memory sticks provided by the organizers. At the end of the preparation period, the Team Ambassador will take one memory stick and use it to load the presentation file onto the presentation computer. The other memory stick will be used to share the presentation file with the judges (for use during the deliberations), to enable printing of slides (if needed), and as extra backup. Teams should also save a copy of their final presentation to the hard drive of at least one of the laptops used to prepare their preparation. This will serve as a second backup.

3.4 Set-up Time

Immediately prior to each round, Team Ambassadors will meet their team and accompany them to the preparation room. The ROCA schedule reserves 15 minutes of set-up time before each preparation period for the team to confirm that the room is appropriately configured and supplied and that computers are working properly. Due to the importance of these tasks, this 15-minute set-up period is not optional.

Prior to the start of the preparation period, the Team Ambassador will collect all mobile phones and other non-permitted equipment from team members and keep these devices with them until after the presentation.

Cases will be made available to the coaches after the final team has begun its preparation period**.**

3.5 Preparation Time

In all rounds of the competition, including the Championship Final, teams will have six (6) hours to prepare their case presentation.

If a major problem occurs during the preparation time (for example a power outage or fire alarm), preparation will be suspended for the length of time needed to solve the problem. The preparation time will then be extended for up to 30 minutes to compensate for any preparation time lost.

If a team experiences a problem with any of their computers, it is their responsibility to advise the Preparation Room Monitor, who will immediately communicate with the technical support team. They will offer assistance and/or provide another laptop if needed. Since teams bring their own laptops to ROCA, a working laptop is considered the responsibility of the team or team member. No extension to the preparation time will be granted in the event of a computer-related problem.
The Team Ambassador will notify the team when 10 minutes of preparation time remain. At this point, the team should save the presentation on the presentation memory stick (provided by the host institution) prior to the end of the preparation period.

If there has been a delay in any of the preparation or presentation rooms, this may extend the time teams must wait before they are allowed to enter the presentation room. While every effort will be made to avoid such delays, they are considered part of the competition. As such, no compensation will be provided.

The organizers reserve the right to inspect the preparation room at any time.

3.6 Maximum Number of PowerPoint Slides

The maximum number of slides permitted in a presentation is 35. Teams have the option of holding back some of these slides for use during the Q&A session that follows the presentation. The total number of slides, however, may never exceed 35.

3.7 Checking for Violations

Members of the Organizing Committee (or their delegates) have the right to check for rule violations at any time. If anything is deemed to violate Competition rules, a penalty will be applied. This penalty will be determined by the organizers based on the severity of the violation and may include transferring one or more points from the offending team to its direct opponent after the score for the match has been determined. Penalties imposed by the organizers are final and cannot be appealed.

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Presentation Room

A presentation room will be provided for the case presentation. This room will be equipped with:

- One computer with software, including Word, Excel and PowerPoint
- One data projector
- One presentation clicker
- Possibly microphones
- Possibly a photographer / videographer recording the presentation

4.2 Participation of Team Members

Each member of the team must participate in the presentation.

4.3 Presentation Time

During the divisional round, each team will have **15 minutes** to deliver their formal oral presentation. In the Championship Final, presentations are limited to **12 minutes**. Teams normally use the entire presentation time.

4.4 Timekeeper

A Timekeeper will supervise each match (i.e., each pair of head-to-head case presentations). This person will begin by asking members of the audience to switch off all mobile phones. They will then ask the presenting team to enter the presentation room. The Timekeeper will let the team organize itself, which should not take more than two (2) minutes. When ready, the Timekeeper will introduce the presenting team, ask the judges to introduce themselves by name and judging role and, finally, motion the presentation to begin.

The Timekeeper will indicate to the presenting team when there are ten (10) minutes, five (5) minutes, three (3) minutes, and one (1) minute remaining in the presentation time. When the 15 minutes (12 minutes in the Championship Final) are up, the Timekeeper will end the presentation regardless of whether the team has finished. It is imperative that the Timekeeper sit in a location that is visible to all team members and all judges.

4.5 Question & Answer Session

At the end of the formal presentation, the Timekeeper will state the amount of time available for questions. Generally, this will be **10 minutes** (**8 minutes** in the Championship Final) but, if delays have been experienced, this time may be reduced. Teams may show new slides during the Q&A session provided they are relevant to questions asked. The team may not, however, continue the presentation. Furthermore, the total amount of slides may never exceed 35 (see §3.6).

During the Q&A period, the Timekeeper will issue a five (5), three (3) and one (1) minute warning. It is critical that the Timekeeper be visible to the judges during this phase.

4.6 Attending and Recording Presentations

During all matches, recording of presentations (i.e., still photography, video recording, or audio recording) by anyone other than ROCA organizers or the coach of the presenting team is strictly prohibited without explicit permission from the presenting team. The organizers reserve the right to record presentations for use in educational or promotional activities following ROCA.

During the divisional matches, student teams are NOT permitted to attend the presentation of their direct opponents. Coaches are free to attend presentations for any match. During the Championship Final, presentations are open to all participants, including any direct opponents after they have presented.

5. JUDGING

5.1 Judge Selection

Judges are recruited by the ROCA Organizing Committee and are drawn from a range of professional experiences and backgrounds. The organizers will strive to ensure that each judging panel contains representation from the business community, university faculty members, and case competition alumni.

Each judging panel normally consists of at least three judges. The formation of judging panels is the responsibility of the organizers.

5.2 Philosophical Approach

Judges will work to come to a consensus when evaluating teams, as opposed to each judge stating an individual score and then averaging these scores.

5.3 Deliberation and Scoring

At the start of each deliberation period, judges will be given access to digital copy of the presentation slides on the timekeeper's laptop.

5.3.1 Divisional Matches

During the divisional round, each presentation will be followed by a 10-minute deliberation period. After deliberation on the second presentation is complete, judges will determine the score of the match.

During the divisional matches, the timeline of events is as follows:

- First team, 25 minutes (presentation and Q&A)
- Deliberation, 10 minutes
- Second team, 25 minutes (presentation and Q&A)
- Deliberation, 10 minutes
- Scoring, 5 minutes

5.3.1 Championship Final

In the Championship Final (which includes 6 teams), there will be a 30-minute break between the first three presentations and the last three presentations; judges will use this time to deliberate on the first 3 teams. Once all presentations are finished, judges will have an additional 30 minutes to select the winner and finalize the team rankings (first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth).

In the Championship Final, the timeline of events is as follows:

- First team, 20 minutes (presentation and Q&A)
- Second team, 20 minutes (presentation and Q&A)
- Third team, 20 minutes (presentation and Q&A)
- Break, 30 minutes
- Fourth team, 20 minutes (presentation and Q&A)
- Fifth team, 20 minutes (presentation and Q&A)
- Sixth team, 20 minutes (presentation and Q&A)
- Deliberation and scoring, 30 minutes

5.4 Judges' Feedback

Immediately after scoring each match (except the Championship Final), judges will give 10 minutes of oral feedback to the competing teams, one team at a time, in such a way that the teams understand the reasons why one team was judged to have been superior to the other. Teams are encouraged to make notes and are permitted to record this feedback. Teams are not permitted to hear the feedback given to other teams.

Immediately after the second team has received its feedback, the judges will invite the first team back into the room. The match score will then be announced to both teams simultaneously. Scores will be posted publicly after the two competing teams have been informed of the results.

In the Championship Final, the judges' feedback form will be made available to the coach of each team following the announcement of the winner at the Gala Banquet. There will be no scores, just a ranking.

6. SCORING

For each divisional round match, the judging panel will determine a winner on a 13-point scale—i.e., the total of the points to both teams must be 13. **Ties are not permitted**. The following will be used as a guide:

- **7.0 to 6.0:** winning team marginally better
- **7.5 to 5.5:** winning team better
- **8.0 to 5.0:** winning team clearly better
- **8.5 to 4.5:** winning team substantially better
- **9.0 to 4.0:** winning team outstanding and losing team weak
- **9.5 to 3.5:** winning team outstanding and losing team extremely weak

7. CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL

7.1 Qualifying for the Final

At the conclusion of the three divisional matches, team scores will be aggregated and the total used to rank the four teams in the division. The team with the highest point total in each division (i.e., the division winner) will advance to the Championship Final. In the event of a tie in the aggregated scores of teams, the team that won the match in head-to-head competition will be ranked higher.

The two teams with the highest point totals out of the non-division winners will also advance to the Championship Final. If second-place finishers from different divisions have identical point totals, the ranking will be based on which team had the highest score on the third day (i.e., Wednesday's case). If the teams are still level, the ranking will be based on which team had the highest score on the second day (i.e., Tuesday's case). If the teams are still level, the teams will draw lots, with the winner progressing to the Championship Final.

In the event of a competition consisting of only 12 teams, three divisions of four will be formed. In that case, the Championship Final will include the three division winners along with the two runners-up with the highest point totals.

7.2 Company Meeting

In the Championship Final, each team will get their own dedicated Q&A session with a representative from the company featured in the case. Each of these sessions will last exactly 20 minutes. It is up to the team to decide how many students will attend this session (0, 1, 2, 3 or 4) and how best to use their time.

7.3 Order of Presentation

The order of presentations in the Championship Final will be determined as follows: The team with the highest point total from the divisional matches will be invited to choose the slot in which they want to present in the Final—i.e, first slot, second slot, third slot, etc. Next, the team with the second-highest point total will be asked to choose their slot. This will continue until all teams have chosen their presentation slot.

7.4 Length of Presentations / Q&A

In the Championship Final, teams will have a maximum of **12 minutes** to deliver their presentation. The Q&A session in this round will last no more than **8 minutes**.

8. AWARDS

The team ranked first in the Championship Final will be declared ROCA Champion and receive both a championship trophy and individual gold medals. The second-place finishers will receive individual silver medals. The third-place finishers will receive individual bronze medals. The fourth, fifth, and sixth-place teams will receive no prizes.

Recognition will also be given to:

- the two best individual presenters
- the most spirited team

9. PROCEDURE IN THE EVENT OF RULE VIOLATION

The organizers retain the right to disqualify any team from ROCA if the rules are not observed or if a team does not maintain a proper standard of conduct consistent with the professional and collegial spirit of ROCA.

Any concerns or disputes regarding the implementation of these rules and/or any improper behaviour should be brought to the immediate attention of the organizers. The decisions of the organizers in all matters related to rule interpretation and enforcement are final and not subject to review.

ROCA Organizing Committee, May 2025