



network of international
business schools

WORLDWIDE BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

Official Rules and Guidelines

Updated May 2017

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The following rules and guidelines for the Network of International Business Schools (NIBS) Worldwide Business Plan Competition, hereinafter referred to as “the Competition”, are intended to ensure fairness to all participating teams. The organizers and judges of the Competition are responsible for strictly enforce these rules. Any interpretation of these rules that may be required during the Competition will be solely the responsibility of the organizers. Their decisions will be final.

COMPETITION OBJECTIVES

The NIBS Worldwide Business Plan Competition aims to stimulate global entrepreneurship among students at NIBS member institutions. Participants are challenged to conceive of a viable new product or service, and then prepare a business plan and video aimed at convincing potential investors to invest in the business.

By participating in the Competition, students will gain experience:

- Identifying business opportunities, developing a business model, and writing a formal business plan
- Performing market research and feasibility studies using primary and/or secondary data
- Pitching their idea to an international panel of business professionals and academics
- Developing communicational and organizational skills
- Working as part of a team

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Student Eligibility

The Competition is open to any student registered, *for the duration of the Competition*, in an undergraduate (bachelor level or equivalent) business program (commerce, administration, management, etc.) at any member institution of the Network of International Business Schools or through special invitation made by the host institution and the NIBS Board. Students on exchange at a member institution for the entire academic year may compete for that member institution, provided they meet other eligibility requirements. Individuals who have previously participated in the Competition may not enter again.

NOTE: To be eligible, a student must NOT have completed his/her degree requirements by the time the Final Round of the Competition is held (typically in May).

1.2 Team Composition

Each NIBS member institution is permitted to enter **one team** in the Qualifying Round. Teams can consist of a **minimum of three** and a **maximum of five** eligible students.

Each member institution is responsible for selecting its team in accordance with its own procedures. Many schools organize their own internal business plan competition, with the winning team representing the university in the NIBS Worldwide Business Plan Competition. In such cases, it is highly recommended that the internal judging panel be similar in composition to the panel used by NIBS—i.e., it should include both academic faculty members and industry practitioners.

1.3 Team Coach

An advisor from each member institution shall be nominated to serve as liaison with the NIBS organization. This advisor is often referred to as the coach of the team.

1.5 Registration Fee (Qualifying Round)

Each member institution wishing to enter a team for the NIBS Worldwide Business Plan Competition qualifying round must register by **December 1, 2018** and pay the registration fee of **€150** by **January 1, 2019**.

1.6 Qualifying for the Final Round

Qualifying Round submissions consist of a written business plan and a link to a 5-minute 'pitch' video describing the market opportunity and proposed product / service. These should be submitted via email to carline.vuyksteke@ucll.be and ana.deplus@ucll.be by **March 1, 2019**.

The judging panel for the Qualifying Round will be selected by NIBS, with input from the host school. It will consist of three to five members and include both academics and practising managers. This panel will examine all entries submitted prior to the deadline and select three teams to advance to the Final Round. The finalists will be announced on or before **April 1, 2019** via email sent to the entrants, and on the NIBS website.

1.8 Team Changes

Any changes in team composition between the end of the Qualifying Round (March 1) and the beginning of the Final Round must be approved by the NIBS Board. Substitution will only be allowed under *very exceptional circumstances*. These must be explained in a written statement to the NIBS Board signed by the dean of the participating university. No more than one team member can be replaced.

1.9 Final Round Responsibilities

The Final Round of the Competition will be held in conjunction with the NIBS Annual Conference, and is hosted by the NIBS member institution that organizes the conference. The host's responsibilities include:

- Providing at least two members to serve on the judging panel (one academic, one from the business community).
- Supplying technology and technical support for the presentations and subsequent question-and-answer sessions.
- Informing the three finalist teams about technology requirements—e.g., how to access / interact with the video-conferencing system that will be used in the Final Round.
- Providing a telephone with speaker during the Final Round, for use in communicating with teams and as a back-up to the video-conferencing system.
- Any other logistical arrangements related to the organization of the Final Round.

The host school is expected do its utmost to ensure that all video-conferencing systems (e.g., Skype or similar) are working. Facilities should be tested at least one week prior to the Final Round, and preferably again 2 to 3 days prior. This includes a test of both audio-video and internet connectivity, and at least one live rehearsal with all three teams in the Final.

It is the joint responsibility of the host institution and the NIBS board to reserve a time slot of 2 hours for the Final Round of the Competition during the NIBS Conference program. The timing should be determined in consultation with the three Finalist teams, keeping in mind the time zones in which the finalists are located.

Teams are responsible for taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the quality of their videos is of high quality and appropriate for the venue used for the Final Round. Video and sound should be thoroughly tested in a large classroom or audience hall, in order to approximate the conditions under which they will be viewed at the Competition Final.

1.10 Language

All business plan reports, videos, and presentations must be in English.

2. QUALIFYING ROUND: RULES AND GUIDELINES

2.1 Important Dates

December 1, 2018 – Deadline to enter a team

NIBS member institutions wishing to enter the Qualifying Round must complete and submit the completed registration form and fee to carline.vuylsteke@ucll.be and ana.deplus@ucll.be by this date.

March 1, 2019 – Deadline for receipt of Qualifying Round submissions

A complete written business plan and link to a 5-minute video about the proposed product/service must be sent by email to carline.vuylsteke@ucll.be and ana.deplus@ucll.be by this date.

April 1, 2019 – Finalists announced

The three finalists (name of NIBS member institution, individual team members, and coach) will be announced. Qualifying Round scores / rankings will not be provided.

Teams advancing to the Final Round should provide their detailed contact information (individual email addresses and telephone numbers) to NIBS at this point. This information will be shared with the host, so they can inform teams about technical requirements and set a suitable time for the Final Round.

2.2 Written Business Plan

The written business plan must be submitted as a *Microsoft Word* file. Text should be double-spaced using Calibri 11-point font; no handwritten material of any sort will be accepted. A margin of 1 inch (2.54 cm) should surround the text. The main body of the business plan must be no longer than 5,000 words. This limit will be strictly enforced. *Any team exceeding the limit will be summarily disqualified.*

The document should include a title page, specifying the name of the academic institution and the individual team members. **This information should not appear anywhere else in the report** (i.e., teams should refrain from including identifying information in headers and footers to ensure anonymity).

The business plan document may also include a maximum of five (5) pages of appendices, the purpose of which is to provide support for the assertions and conclusions expressed in the body of the business plan. This content is separate from the main text and will *not* count toward the word limit. Appendices should be numbered, titled, and appropriately referenced within the body of the document. Although teams may use this space as they see fit, appendices in case analysis reports commonly include elements such as:

- Financial statements
- Diagrams / illustrations
- Itemization / categorization of key information
- Implementation timeline

As in all business writing, appendices should be succinct, well laid out, and professionally presented. Teams should avoid the temptation to cram excessive content into these pages or employ overly small type. In addition, *appendices should not be viewed as an opportunity to circumvent the length restriction on the main body of the report*; any effort to do so will be poorly received by the judges.

2.3 Accompanying Video

The written business plan should be accompanied by a 'pitch' video **no longer than seven (7) minutes in length** that further explains / demonstrates the product or service in the business plan and clarifies and further elaborates on the business plan. This video must be produced by the team itself and at least **all team members must appear in it**. The video should be produced in a format, quality and size that allows it to be uploaded to YouTube and viewed in high-definition.

2.4 Judging

Each business plan submitted in the Qualifying Round will have its title page removed and replaced with an identification number to ensure anonymity. Judges will evaluate these business plans independently (i.e., without consulting each other) and evaluate them on a scale from 1 (extremely weak) to 50 (excellent). These scores will then be averaged and the teams ranked to determine which three teams will be invited to compete in the Final Round. For teams that advance, they will also form part of the Final Round score (see Section 3.4).

Evaluation components:

- Business strategy / objectives
- Internal and external analysis
- Target market and value proposition
- Revenue model / Financial plan
- Promotional / communications plan
- Implementation plan
- Contingency plan
- Creativity
- Viability / feasibility

2.4.1 Judging Panel

The judging panel will consist of at least three and at most five judges, drawn from the business community and academic faculty at NIBS member institutions. Typically, two of the judges will be provided by the Conference host, and the remaining one to three judges from other NIBS member institutions. Practical business experience will be highly valued in the selection process. Selection and recruitment of judges is a joint responsibility of the host institution (i.e., the host of the NIBS conference) and the NIBS board.

NOTE: Advisors / coaches of teams participating in the current year's competition may not serve as judges.

2.4.2 Judges' Role

It is extremely important that judges have a good understanding of their role: To act as potential investors and determine whether they would or would not invest in the presented product/service. For this reason, judges should be fully briefed by the organizers prior to evaluating submissions. Prior to March 1, all judges will be provided with an evaluation and feedback form to guide them in evaluating the business plans.

NOTE: These guidelines will also be distributed to the coaches of participating teams.

Each judge will also be responsible for formulating two individual questions for each team, based on aspects of the plan which they feel would benefit from further clarification and explanation. Teams that are selected for the Final Round will be asked to respond to these questions, and their answers evaluated as part of the team's final score (see Section 3.2).

2.4.3 Evaluation and Feedback

Submissions will be evaluated carefully so that all teams receive detailed feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their plans, particularly if they do not qualify for the Final Round. Judges will complete evaluation forms with the following in mind:

- Feedback should match the score—i.e., a low score should be accompanied by extensive guidance for improvement, while a good score should clearly identify the strengths of the submission;
- Not all teams have English as their mother tongue; hence, the focus should be on quality of the ideas, the clarity of thought, and content that supports the assertions being made.

3. FINAL ROUND: RULES AND GUIDELINES

Based on the Qualifying Round, three teams will be invited to compete in the Final Round. This academic year, the Final Round will take place on **May 9th, 2019** at **Heilongjiang International University** in **Harbin, China**. Details regarding the schedule and other arrangements will be announced by the host school.

If a team qualifies for the Final Round of the competition, but withdraws within a reasonable time frame, then the next highest-ranked team on the list of non-qualifiers (i.e., the fourth-place finisher) will be asked to participate in its place. If that team declines to participate, the NIBS board may ask the next team from those who participated in the qualifying round (fifth place), etc. If a team withdraws with insufficient time to invite a replacement, then the business plan finals will be contested by only two teams.

3.1 Format of the Final Round Presentation

The video used in the Qualifying Round (see 2.3) is used again: a video **no longer than seven (7) minutes in length** that further explains / demonstrates the product or service in the business plan and clarifies and further elaborates on the business plan. This video must be produced by the team itself and **all team members must appear in the movie**. The video should be produced in a format, quality and size that allows it to be uploaded to YouTube and viewed in high-definition. If a team uses graphics, figures, key words etc. in the movie it is their responsibility to ensure that the audience at the NIBS Annual Conference can clearly see/read this information; hence, they should avoid using small print or color schemes that impair legibility.

Where possible, the video should be saved to a USB flash drive and delivered to the NIBS Annual Conference by a representative of the participating university.

NOTE: The organizers reserve the right to use the movies following the competition.

3.2 Final Round Schedule

The Final Round will be held on **May 9, 2019** as part of the NIBS Annual Conference. The audience will consist of the judging panel and conference participants (approximately 40-50 faculty members and staff from NIBS member institutions).

The sequence of the Q&A-sessions will be determined in advance by the host institution in conjunction with the NIBS Board, and will take into account the time zones in which the participating teams are located. Each team will present their business plan as follows:

- 7 minutes – Product concept and Business Plan supporting video (from Qualifying Round), [TAPED]
- 10 minutes – Question & Answer session, all team members participate [LIVE]
- 10 minutes – Judges' deliberation time

After the judges have completed their deliberations for the last Q&A-session and a winner has been determined, the organizers will contact teams individually via video-conference or telephone to provide feedback and reveal the results.

3.2 Questions & Answers

Prior to the Q&A-session, each team selected for the Final Round will receive and must respond to the set of questions developed by the judges during the Qualifying Round (see section 2.4.2). These responses should be submitted to carline.vuyksteke@ucll.be and ana.deplus@ucll.be by May 1, 2019, and be formatted as follows:

- A margin of at least 2.54 cm (1 inch) must surround the text
- Font: Calibri 11-point
- Maximum number of words per answer: 150
- Submitted as a Microsoft Word file

The organizers will provide these responses to the judges prior to the Final Round. If a judge is dissatisfied with the answers, he or she may request further clarification as part of the live question-and-answer session (see below).

After the videos have been shown, the judging panel (NOT the audience) will ask additional questions of the team via live video-conference. This session will last for a maximum of 10 minutes. To facilitate effective time management, the organizers will indicate to both the team and the judges when there are 5, 3 and 1 minute remaining.

NOTE: Due to the nature of the competition and its participants, many teams will begin implementing their business plan in the period between the Qualifying Round (March 1) and the Final Round (mid-May). This often generates new information which could result in adjustments to the business strategy during the live Q&A-session. This is fine, however, **to ensure fairness and consistency in judging, the judges must primarily focus on the facts, assumptions, and expectations in the original business plan submission.**

3.3 Judges Selection

The judging panel in the Final Round will consist of the same individuals as in the Qualifying Round. If one of the judges is not able to attend the Final Round he/she will not be replaced.

The organizers will ask one of the judges to serve as president of the judging panel during the Final.

3.4 Scoring

The results in the Final Round are based on:

- a. Points for the business plan submitted in the Qualifying Round, awarded by the judges (50%)
- b. Points for answers to the questions, awarded by the judges (30%)
- c. Points for the performance during Q&A and the video, awarded by the NIBS Conference audience (20%)

Every judge will receive an evaluation form to assist in evaluating and scoring the presentation and Q&A answers, on a scale from 1 (extremely weak) to 30 (excellent). These scores will be averaged to produce a point total out of 30.

All NIBS Conference attendees will receive voting ballots following the last presentation. They will be invited to score each team's presentation and Q&A, on a scale from 1 (extremely weak) and 20 (excellent). These scores will be averaged to produce a point total out of 20.

NOTE: Representatives of the schools/teams participating in the Final will NOT be permitted to vote.

After deliberation for the third team is complete, the organizers and NIBS board will tabulate the results and determine the winner of the Competition.

3.5 Feedback

Once a winner has been determined, the president of the judging panel will call the third and second-ranked teams and deliver feedback in such a way that the teams understand the reasons why the winner was judged to be superior.

Next, the winning team will be contacted and a live video connection established. The president of the judging panel will congratulate the team members and 'virtually' award them the trophy and cash prize.

4. AWARDS

The prizes awarded to the winning team of the Competition are as follows:

- A Championship Trophy awarded to the first-place finishers (provided by the host of the NIBS Conference)
- Cash prizes (provided by NIBS):
 - €1,200 for the first-place finishers
 - €800 for the second-place finishers
 - €400 for the third-place finishers

In addition, the host of the NIBS Conference will provide individual certificates to each member of the three teams that advance to the Final Round, signed by the NIBS organizers and the president of the judging panel.

NOTE: Where possible, a representative of each school participating in the Final Round should be present during the Final (i.e., in attendance at the NIBS Conference) so that there is someone present to receive the prizes on behalf of the team. Often, this individual will be the coach/advisor of the team.

5. PROCEDURE IN THE EVENT OF RULE VIOLATION

These rules have been established to ensure fairness. The organizers retain the right to disqualify any team from the Competition if the rules are not observed or if a team does not maintain a proper standard of conduct in the professional and collegial spirit of the Competition.

Any concerns or disputes regarding the implementation of these rules and/or any improper or disloyal behaviour must be brought to the immediate attention of the organizers. Please note that the decision of the organizers is final and not subject to review.

Approved in London, UK

NIBS Board, September 2018