



# ICC MOOT COURT REPORT

2024





## Our common experience

The first semester began with a general introduction to international criminal law. Once the case was announced, we divided our team into two groups: Ana and Santi focused on writing the Memorial for Defense, while Lucas, Severin, and Valérie prepared both the Prosecution's and Victim's Counsel memorials.

After the break, we started the intense weeks of research, teamwork, and writing. Our coach, Georgina Howe, provided invaluable feedback along the way, which significantly improved our work. During the January exam season, we managed to balance our exams with continuously working on the memorials, ensuring that everything was ready by the March deadline. Following the submission of our written memorials, we transitioned into the oral phase of preparation.

In the oral phase, the speakers focused on preparing 20-minute oral pleadings. We met weekly to practice speaking and answering questions, with the researchers role-playing as judges and brainstorming potential questions that could arise during the pleadings. They also conducted additional case law research to ensure we were thoroughly prepared for the competition in The Hague. As the competition drew nearer, particularly after the spring break, the pressure mounted, making the preparation period both intense and highly educational.

The actual Moot Court Competition took place in early June in The Hague. It was an incredibly intense week, filled with some late nights but also unforgettable experiences. Our coach organized a visit at the Swiss Embassy in The Hague, where we were lucky enough to engage in a personal discussion with the Ambassador. All of us agree, that the experience, as a whole, was the most enriching one we had in our academic journey.

Next to our coach, Georgina Howe, we want to thank Prof. Bardo Fassbender who established this course back in 2015 and who supervised it since.

## Our accomplishments

We are very proud that our team advanced to the Quarter Finals, as had last happened in 2016 and 2017 (in 2018 and 2021, respectively, that advancement was missed by only one position). This achievement was unexpected, but we are extremely grateful for the opportunity. Additionally, our team won two prestigious awards: 1<sup>st</sup> place for "Best Defense Memorial", and 3<sup>rd</sup> place for "Best Victim's Counsel Memorial", out of 120 teams.





## Excerpts of individual experiences

### Speakers' perspectives

#### Counsel for Defense (Ana Kamber)

“The IBA ICC Moot Court was, by far, the best course I attended during my master’s degree.

The journey culminated in a highlight: the oral pleadings in The Hague. Initially skeptical about the trip, which seemed too expensive and lengthy with a seven-day stay, I couldn't have been more wrong. We arrived in The Hague and enjoyed our first apéro, when we forged first friendships with opposing teams. It is tremendous fun to befriend, and simultaneously fight against other teams. Our first pleading was the day after we arrived, a Saturday to be precise. Pleading in front of renowned judges against teams from all over the world, while being extremely nervous, is a feeling no one wants to miss.

After five intense days of pleading, we surprisingly advanced to the next rounds. A feeling of exhilaration overcame me, and my teammates, and we had such fun preparing for the quarterfinals. Imagine sitting in a hotel room at 2am, knowing that one of you must plead the next morning at 9am. The mere act of working together for a common goal in extraordinary circumstances bonded us into a strong team.

I am glad I chose the role of Counsel for Defense. Representing the Defense meant being creative, strong, witty, and thoroughly prepared. I immediately connected with my fellow Defense Counsels from other teams. However, I am sure I would have also enjoyed the roles of Counsel for Prosecution and/or Victims. Each role has its delicate intricacies, and as future lawyers, we should be able to move in between roles and truly understand each one.

For anyone considering this course, take a leap of faith, muster some motivation, and bring HSG to the semi-finals next time!”

#### Counsel for Victims (Severin Bollhalder)

“The decision to participate in the Moot Court was one of the best I made during my studies in St. Gallen. Even though the workload was higher than in other courses, it was also much more rewarding and interesting to learn about a new area of law and then directly applying that newly gained knowledge.

Together with my Co-Counsel Lucas, we formed the Victims representation team. This was a challenging position as it is very close to the prosecution and needed therefore different arguments to not be redundant. The goal was to not only support but also complement the prosecution to make the case overall stronger. We therefore worked closely with Valérie to find new angles of the case and to see how we could emphasize the role of the victims in the proceedings better. As Victims Counsel, it was important to have a good strategy and to be flexible. Especially in the Oral Pleadings in The Hague, you never knew what arguments the other teams would bring; You had to be prepared for everything.





I would strongly recommend this class as it is a unique combination. You not only learn about a new topic but also get the chance to spend a year deepening your knowledge. It is also a good chance to sharpen your writing skills and your oral speaking, which is something you can't normally do at the university. As a side effect, my English improved significantly."

[Counsel for Prosecution \(Valérie Bussard\)](#)

"Participating in the ICC Moot Court was an incredible experience that far exceeded my expectations. I was initially hesitant to apply, due to the anticipated workload. However, I am now immensely grateful for my decision to join. Although it required significant effort, the experience was far more engaging and educational than any usual academic work. Diving into a new area of law was both fascinating and rewarding. The highlight of the Moot Court was undoubtedly the week in The Hague, an experience unmatched by any other class.

From the beginning, I was drawn to the role of a speaker for the prosecution. I also wanted to challenge myself by taking on the speaker role. Watching last year's finals on YouTube made me incredibly nervous, but months of practice and the experience in The Hague helped me overcome my fears and perform far better than I ever imagined.

Through this Moot Court, I gained numerous legal and non-legal skills. I explored a new field of law, learning to write and research in international legal academia. Arguing strictly from one side of a case taught me to think strategically, presenting information that strengthened our position. My speaking skills improved significantly, and I learned to process information quickly and focus on relevant points when answering questions. Additionally, the opportunity to network with other students and legal professionals from around the world was invaluable.

I would absolutely participate in this class again, as it was the best experience I had within a course at HSG. The lessons learned and connections made were invaluable, providing me with skills and friendships that will benefit me throughout my life and career."

[Co-Counsel for Defense \(Santi Donato\)](#)

"As a researcher I was involved in various aspects of case preparation and team coordination, including research and analysis, which involved conducting extensive legal research on international criminal law. I analysed statutes, case law, legal principles, and international legal instruments relevant to the case. The competition replicated the authentic processes of the International Criminal Court, offering a unique opportunity to explore the intricacies of international criminal law. The combination of rigorous preparation, tight deadlines, and the thrill of competition fostered a stimulating and instructive atmosphere. The researcher learned research proficiency, analytical thinking, teamwork, and time management skills, as well as enhancing their general communication skills.

My key takeaways from the experience include an enhanced understanding of international criminal law, practical skills relevant to legal jobs, and the importance of networking with other law students, legal practitioners, and scholars from various countries. The experience also honed individual qualities such as the ability to bounce back from challenges, adapt to new situations, and take initiative in finding solutions.

Team collaboration was essential in the ICC Moot Court, with researchers working closely with speakers to ensure consistency between written and oral arguments. The team efforts helped strategize, refine arguments, and prepare responses to potential questions from judges and was instrumental to a successful competition.



Overall, the researcher experience provided a comprehensive understanding of international criminal law and practical legal skills. The ICC Moot Court competition offers both academic excellence and personal and professional growth in the legal field.”

Co-Counsel for Prosecution and Victims (Lucas Almeida Osmani)

“The ICC Moot Court has been the highlight of my studies in St. Gallen. This course is a must for every student with an interest in international law. As an international affairs student with only a basic law background from my Bachelor's, I initially questioned my decision to participate in the competition regarding my capacities and knowledge. However, the course began with a “crash course” on international criminal law, ensuring that each member started on an equal footing. Further progress in our knowledge came from our self-learning experiences by writing the memorials, preparing the pleadings, and discussing our arguments and findings within the team.

While the workload can be quite demanding at times, the effort is always rewarded with self-satisfaction when reflecting on the team’s achievements. This applies notably during the intensive week in the Hague, where you will fuel with coffee and perseverance, and witness your work in action through the pleadings. This hands-on experience was unique, allowing me to rapidly deepen my knowledge and apply it as if handling a real-life case. In a year, we progressed from students with limited knowledge of international criminal law to runners-up at the ICC Moot Court.

Additionally, the ICC Moot Court is a perfect opportunity to develop a personal network and meet people from around the world who share the same passion and competitiveness. Moreover, you will share fun and close experiences with your teammates, forging friendships that make this experience even more amazing.

Overall, the ICC Moot Court has been an invaluable experience, providing me with skills and connections that will benefit me throughout my life and career. I highly recommend this course to anyone interested in international law.”