

Keen Minds COIL Competition (KMCC) Rules and Operational Handbook

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Industry Partner: **Everbright Group Hotels and PMD Tea. MC – we will reveal these nearer the time**

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1. Introduction

The Keen Minds COIL Competition (KMCC) is an international business case competition designed specifically for inexperienced competitors. It provides a structured, professional environment in which students develop analytical, strategic, and presentation skills while engaging with a real-world industry case provided by KMCC's partner organisations.

This Handbook constitutes the official rules, procedures, and operational framework governing all participating students, coaches, judges, and organisers. Participation in the competition signifies full acceptance of all provisions contained herein.

The organisers retain sole authority to interpret, enforce, or amend these rules.

2. Industry Partners – this is embargoed for now

2.1 Everbright Group Hotels

Everbright Group Hotels is a rapidly expanding hospitality organisation known for its portfolio of modern, service-focused hotels across Asia and emerging international markets. The group emphasises guest experience, operational excellence, and sustainable growth, with a strategic focus on technology-enabled service delivery and high-quality accommodation.

More information: <https://www.everbrightgrouphotels.com/>

2.2 PMD Tea

PMD Tea is a heritage tea company with deep roots in Sri Lanka's tea-growing regions. The organisation specialises in premium, ethically sourced teas and maintains long-standing relationships with estates to ensure quality, authenticity, and sustainability. PMD Tea is recognised for its commitment to provenance, craftsmanship, and transparent supply chains.

More information:

https://pmdtea.com/?srsltid=AfmBOoqlwHP_XrAltIzCMPRyrCigNCNH6C4_dRjMcr6ge7z15Wc7jAc

3. Competition Overview

- Two-stage, in-person competition
- Venue: Manchester Hyatt Hotel
- Date: 7 September 2026
- Teams: 3–5 students per university
- Eligibility: Undergraduate or postgraduate students with no prior case competition experience
- Teams present their solution to a panel of judges in a live format, followed by Q&A.

4. Competition Structure: Divisional structure and finals

The Keen Minds COIL Competition operates using a two-division structure to support fairness, transparency, and competitive balance.

4.1 Divisions

- The competition consists of two divisions, each containing four teams.
- Where a university enters two teams, these teams will be placed into separate divisions.
- All remaining teams will be allocated to divisions through a random draw conducted by the organisers.

4.2 Divisional Stage Scoring

- Each team competes only against the other teams within its division.
- Teams are evaluated using the KMCC Official Judging Rubric (see Appendix).
- The team with the highest total score in each division is declared the Divisional Winner.
- Divisional scores are used only to determine divisional winners and do not carry forward into the final.

4.3 Observation Rules

- Teams and coaches may observe all presentations within their own division.
- Teams may not observe presentations from the other division.
- All participants may observe both teams in the final.
- Divisional judges will not observe presentations in the other division, as divisional matches run in parallel. Judges will remain within their assigned division for the duration of the divisional stage.
- All judges will observe and assess the Final.

4.4 Advancement to the Final

- The top team from Division A and the top team from Division B advance to the Final.
- Finalists must re-present the same slide deck used in the divisional stage.
- Teams may incorporate judges' feedback into their delivery but may not alter their slide deck in any way.
- Finalist teams may adjust their presentation delivery in response to judges' feedback from the divisional stage. The following adjustments are permitted:
- Teams may change the speaking order.
- Teams may change the distribution of speaking time, provided the overall presentation remains within the specified time limits.
- Teams may add or remove speakers, provided all team members participate in the Q&A as required.
- No changes to the slide deck itself are permitted (as above).

4.5 Final Scoring & Winner Determination

- The final is scored using the same KMCC Official Judging Rubric.
- The full judging panel will evaluate both finalists.
- The team with the highest score in the final is crowned the Competition Winner.
- The final begins at zero for both teams; no scores from the divisional stage are carried forward.

4.6 Tie-Breaking Procedure

If two or more teams tie for first place in a division, the following tie-breaking procedure shall apply:

1. The team with the highest score in the Implementation Plan criterion shall be declared the winner.
2. If the scores remain tied, the team with the highest score in Presentation Delivery shall be declared the winner.
3. If the scores are still tied, the judges shall use their professional discretion to select the Divisional Winner.

This procedure ensures that the highest-weighted elements of the judging rubric are used to determine the outcome in the event of a tie.

5. Eligibility & Team Composition

5.1 Student Eligibility

- Must be enrolled at an accredited university
- Undergraduate or postgraduate
- Any discipline
- No prior case competition experience

5.2 Team Composition

- 3–5 students
- One team per university
- No cross-university teams
- Coaches may only coach their own team

5.3 Registration

- Registration deadlines and requirements are published on the KMCC website
- Universities may run internal selection processes

6. Case Release, Preparation & Briefing

6.1 Case Release

- Case released to coaches 48 hours before the event
- Release time: 09:00 UK time, 5 September 2026
- Coaches must forward the case to students immediately
- Early access constitutes an Honour Code breach

6.2 48-Hour Preparation Period

Students may work freely on the case during the 48-hour period. They may:

- Conduct research
- Prepare written notes
- Prepare digital notes
- Build slide decks
- Create charts, graphics, speaker notes, and templates
- Bring all materials (digital and printed) into the venue
- Use USB drives, external storage, cloud storage, and any standard digital tools
- Coach involvement is prohibited from the moment the case is released. This prohibition covers the full 48-hour period and the 3-hour refinement window.

6.3 Client Briefing & Q&A (7 September 2026)

At the start of the competition:

- The client organisations will deliver a briefing of approximately 15 minutes
- This will be followed by a 15-minute Q&A session
- All students will attend and hear the same information
- Students may take notes
- Recording of the briefing is strictly prohibited
- This is the only permitted contact with the client organisations for both students and coaches

6.4 Three-Hour Refinement Window

On competition day:

- Teams receive a hard copy of the case at 10:00 ahead of the client briefing and Q&A
- Three-hour refinement window: 10:30–13:30
- Students may refine any materials prepared during the 48-hour period
- All digital and printed materials are permitted
- Coaches remain prohibited
- Submission deadline: 13:15 UK time

7. Honour Code

7.1 Principles

All participants affirm that they will:

- Compete fairly
- Respect timing and resource restrictions
- Refrain from unauthorised assistance
- Uphold the integrity of the competition

7.2 Breaches

Examples include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Coach intervention after case release
- Early or late case access
- Use of prohibited materials
- Collaboration with non-team members
- Misrepresentation of sources
- Uploading confidential case materials to public AI systems

7.3 Sanctions

- Score penalties
- Disqualification
- Institutional exclusion from future competitions

7.4 Reporting & Enforcement

Concerns must be reported immediately to organisers. All decisions made by the organisers are final.

8. Permitted & Prohibited Materials

8.1 Permitted

- Open-access internet resources
- Open-source textbooks
- Free-tier AI tools (strictly limited — see Section 11)
- Email systems and cloud storage
- Spreadsheet software
- Presentation software (PowerPoint)
- USB drives, external storage, and digital materials

8.2 Prohibited

- Password-protected databases (e.g., JSTOR, LexisNexis)
- External consultants, alumni, or non-team members
- Paid AI tools or proprietary software
- Any AI-enabled content generation features embedded in software

9. Slide Deck Requirements

9.1 Format

- PowerPoint (.pptx) only. 16:9 format
- Maximum 15 slides, including appendices
- Unnarrated
- Fictional consultancy name and logo permitted
- No external brand assets unless created by the team

9.2 Design Rules

- Permitted:
 - Self-created templates
 - Static graphics and charts
 - Basic on-click animations (simple appear/disappear transitions)
- Prohibited:
 - Embedded videos
 - Audio files
 - Hyperlinks to external content
 - Dynamic or interactive media
 - AI-generated images, charts, or templates

All content must be fully visible within the submitted slide deck without reliance on external sources.

10. Submission Procedures

10.1 Submission Method

- Slide deck emailed to the designated organiser address
- Deadline: 13:15 UK time
- File format: .pptx

10.2 File Naming

- Format: UniversityName_KeenMinds2026.pptx
- Example: ManchesterMet_KeenMinds2026.pptx

10.3 Late Submission

- Penalty: 2 marks per minute
- Submissions more than 15 minutes late may be rejected
- Organisers retain full discretion

11. Presentation Rules

11.1 Duration

- 10-minute presentation
- 5-minute Q&A

11.2 Platform

- Live, in-person presentation
- Judges use the official KMCC evaluation forms

11.3 Requirements

- All team members must speak during both presentation and Q&A
- No slide modifications permitted after submission
- Presentation order determined by blind draw
- Dress code (recommended): Formal

11.4 Judge Panel Composition

- The number of judges for the competition will be announced at the start of the event.
- Each division will be assessed by a separate judging panel, and these judges will evaluate all presentations within their assigned division.
- For the Final, all judges from both divisions will form a single combined panel and will evaluate both finalist teams.

12. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Policy

12.1 Permitted Uses (Free-Tier Only)

- Free-tier AI tools may be used solely for:
 - Translation
 - Grammar, spelling, and language refinement
 - Accessibility support
 - Verification of calculations independently completed by the team

12.2 Prohibited Uses

- AI tools may not be used for:
 - Generating analysis, frameworks, insights, or recommendations
 - Conducting research or synthesising external information
 - Drafting, generating, or rewriting content
 - Creating slides, structures, speaker notes, charts, or images
 - Using AI-powered design templates
 - Generating code used in analysis

12.3 General

- All work must be original
- No confidential case materials may be uploaded to public AI systems
- Teams must declare how AI was used
- Organisers may request working documents
- Breaches may result in disqualification

13. Recording Policy

13.1 Prohibition

Recording of the presentations by participants, coaches, and observers is prohibited during:

- Case preparation
- Team presentations (except official recordings)
- Client briefing and Q&A

13.2 Authorised Recording

Official KMCC recordings will be made during:

- Team presentations
- Social activities (arrival, welcome, lunch, celebration event)

These recordings will not include case preparation or private team discussions.

13.3 Data Use

Recordings may be used for:

- Educational review
- Institutional reporting
- Promotional use

14. Website, Data & Privacy

Participants agree to comply with all website terms, privacy policies, and data protection requirements, including:

- No commercial use of website content
- No duplication or publication of sponsor information
- No automated scraping
- Responsibility for uploaded content
- Permission for notifications and photographs
- Right to request access or deletion of personal data

15. Technical Failure Protocol

15.1 48-hour preparation window

- No time compensation for individual technical failures
- Institutional outages may be considered at organiser discretion

15.2 Presentations

If disruption occurs, judges may:

- Pause the clock
- Resume the presentation
- Terminate the session

No guarantee of replay or rescheduling.

16. Contacting the Case Companies

Participants and coaches must not contact any representatives of the case companies except during the official briefing Q&A. After the competition concludes, participants may connect for professional networking.

17. Appeals & Decision Policy

- All judging decisions are final
- No appeals process exists
- Applies to scores, rankings, disqualifications, and technical determinations

18. Closing Authority Statement

This Handbook constitutes the authoritative operational framework of the Keen Minds Competition. All participants are bound by its provisions. Interpretation, enforcement, and amendment rights rest solely with the organisers at Manchester Metropolitan University.

APPENDIX: KMCC Official Judging Rubric

This appendix provides judges and participants with detailed expectations for each criterion to ensure transparency and fairness in scoring.

Team Name:

Presentation order:

Judge Name:

Criterion		Weighting (marks)
Problem Understanding & Diagnosis		
	- Judges assess the team's ability to clearly identify and articulate the core problem(s) presented in the case. - Look for depth of insight and accuracy in problem framing.	/15
Possible Solutions		
	- Evaluation of the range and relevance of solutions proposed. - Consideration of feasibility and innovation.	/10
Quality of Analysis		
	- Assessment of data use, logical reasoning, and analytical rigor. - Use of frameworks and evidence to support conclusions.	/15
Creativity & Insight		
	- Originality and uniqueness of ideas. - Ability to provide fresh perspectives beyond conventional thinking.	/10
Implementation Plan		
	- Practicality and clarity of the action plan. - Consideration of resources, timelines, and stakeholder engagement.	/30
Risks & Mitigation		
	- Identification of potential risks. - Robustness of mitigation strategies.	/5
Financials / Feasibility		
	- Realism and accuracy of financial projections. - Feasibility of the proposed solutions within budget constraints.	/10
Slide Deck Quality		
	- Visual appeal, clarity, and professionalism of slides. - Effective communication of key points.	/5
Presentation Delivery		
	- Confidence, clarity, and engagement during the presentation. - Effective use of voice, body language, and pacing.	/20
Q&A Performance		
	- Ability to respond thoughtfully and accurately to judges' questions. - Demonstration of deep understanding and quick thinking.	/10
Total		/100

Feedback sheet

Team name:

Strengths
Areas for improvement