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## **Letter from the Secretariat**

Distinguished delegates of AKACMUN'26,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to our conference. I am Ece, your Secretary-General, and I will be accompanying you throughout this unforgettable journey at AKACMUN'26.

As delegates, you are the heart of this conference. During the sessions, you will debate pressing global issues, exchange ideas, defend your nations' policies, and work together to produce meaningful solutions. Beyond the academic experience, I hope this conference becomes a place where you build confidence, friendships, and memories that will stay with you long after the final gavel.

Model United Nations is not only about diplomacy and resolutions; it is also about learning to listen, collaborate, and grow as individuals. I encourage each of you to participate actively, challenge yourselves, and make the most out of every committee session and social moment.

I sincerely believe that AKACMUN'26 will leave a lasting impact on all of us, both academically and personally.

I look forward to meeting each and every one of you.

See you at AKACMUN'26, my lovely democrats.

Ece Melek Ergindir  
Secretary-General of AKACMUN'26

### **1. Letter from the Committee Director**

Dear Delegates,

First of all, as a member of the Academic Team of AKACMUN'26, I am truly honored to welcome you to our conference and to the US Civil Jury Court Committee.

My name is Elif Naz Sari, and I will have the privilege of serving as your board member throughout this simulation. It is a great pleasure to have you as part of this committee, where we aim to create not only an engaging experience, but also a highly structured and intellectually challenging courtroom environment.

This committee differs from traditional formats, as it is designed to simulate a real civil trial based on the Virginia State Trial Court system. Throughout the sessions, you will be expected to think and act as legal professionals, constructing arguments, examining witnesses, raising objections, and most importantly, working as a coordinated legal team.

Additional information regarding the structure, rules, and expectations of the committee can be found in the relevant sections of this study guide, as outlined in the Table of Contents.

In this committee, I expect delegates to come prepared, not only with knowledge of the case, but with a clear understanding of their roles, strong teamwork, and the ability to adapt to dynamic developments. The success of this committee will depend on how effectively you engage with the process and contribute to the courtroom environment.

I look forward to meeting each of you and witnessing a highly engaging and well-prepared trial. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the topics, roles, or Rules & Procedure of the committee, or simply to introduce yourself.

Sincerely,

Elif Naz Sari  
US Civil Jury Court Committee Board Team Member  
AKACMUN'26

## 2. Key Words

- **Defamation**: A false statement presented as a fact that harms a person's reputation. In this case, the central issue is whether the statements made caused reputational damage under the law.
- **Plaintiff**: The party who initiates the lawsuit. In this committee, Johnny Depp acts as the plaintiff, claiming that he has been harmed by defamatory statements.
- **Defendant**: The party against whom the lawsuit is filed. Amber Heard represents the defendant and is responsible for responding to the plaintiff's claims.
- **Burden of Proof**: The obligation to prove the claims made in court. In defamation cases, the burden of proof lies primarily with the plaintiff, who must establish all required legal elements.
- **Actual Malice**: A legal standard applied to public figures. It means that the defendant either knew the statement was false or acted with reckless disregard for the truth.
- **Evidence**: Any material presented in court to support or challenge a claim. This may include documents, recordings, messages, or witness testimony. (see *Rules & Procedure – Evidence*)
- **Objection**: A formal protest raised by an attorney during trial when a question or piece of evidence violates legal rules. (see *Rules & Procedure – Objection Rules*)
- **Direct Examination**: The process of questioning one's own witness in order to present facts and support a legal argument. Leading questions are generally not allowed. (see *Rules & Procedure – Trial Procedure*)
- **Cross Examination**: The process of questioning the opposing party's witness to test credibility, reveal inconsistencies, and challenge their statements. Leading questions are allowed. (see *Rules & Procedure – Cross Examination Rules*)
- **Credibility**: The level of trustworthiness and reliability of a witness. The court evaluates whether a witness is believable based on consistency, behavior, and supporting evidence.
- **Damages**: The monetary compensation that may be awarded to a party who has suffered harm. This includes compensatory and punitive damages. (see *Rules & Procedure – Compensation Rules*)
- **Jury Deliberation**: The process by which the jury reviews evidence and arguments before reaching a final decision or verdict.

### 3. Roles of the Parties

#### Note from the Committee Director:

Delegates are strongly expected to thoroughly research the individuals they are representing in this committee.

This simulation is not only about understanding legal procedures, but also about embodying real-life figures. Delegates should aim to reflect:

- their speaking style,
- tone of voice,
- courtroom behavior,
- strategic approach.

The more accurately you represent your assigned role, the more immersive and effective this committee will be.

You are encouraged to analyze past interviews, courtroom footage, and legal strategies of your assigned individuals. Attention to detail — even in tone, confidence, and questioning style — will significantly strengthen your performance.

This committee rewards not only knowledge, but also realistic role-play and strategic execution.

#### Roles of the Parties:

- Plaintiff – Johnny Depp:



Johnny Depp is an internationally recognized actor and public figure with a decades-long career in the film industry. Known for roles in major productions, he built a reputation as a versatile and commercially successful actor. However, his personal life became the subject of intense public scrutiny during and after his marriage to Amber Heard.

In this case, Depp acts as the plaintiff, claiming that a 2018 opinion article written by Amber Heard implied that he was an abuser. Although the article did not explicitly name him, Depp argues that the context clearly referred to him and caused significant harm to his career, reputation, and public image.

Legally, Depp's position requires proving that:

- the statement was false,
- it was published to a third party,
- it caused reputational harm,
- it was made with actual malice (due to his status as a public figure).

Strategically, Depp's role in this committee is to present himself as a wrongfully accused individual whose reputation has been damaged, while maintaining credibility under cross examination.

- Defendant – Amber Heard:



Amber Heard is an actress and public figure who gained recognition through her work in film and media. Her public image became highly controversial following her relationship and subsequent legal disputes with Johnny Depp.

In this case, Heard is the defendant, arguing that her statements were either truthful or protected under freedom of expression. Her legal position is that the article reflects her lived experience and should not be classified as defamation.

Her defense relies on:

- establishing credibility of her testimony,
- supporting claims with evidence and witnesses,
- challenging Depp's narrative,
- creating doubt regarding the alleged reputational damage.

Strategically, Heard must present herself as a credible and consistent witness, while resisting attempts to undermine her testimony during cross examination.

- Lead Counsel (JD) – Benjamin Chew:



Benjamin Chew is a senior litigation attorney and partner at the law firm Brown Rudnick LLP, specializing in high-profile defamation and commercial litigation cases. With decades of experience, Chew is known for his structured legal approach and ability to manage complex cases.

As lead counsel for Johnny Depp, Chew is responsible for:

- overall legal strategy,
- structuring arguments,
- coordinating the legal team
- delivering key statements (opening/closing).

His courtroom style is typically controlled, professional, and strategic, focusing on clarity rather than emotional appeal.

In this committee, this role requires:

- strong leadership,
- coordination of team members,
- maintaining consistency in argumentation.

- Direct Examination (JD) – Jessica Meyers:



Jessica Meyers is a litigation attorney associated with Depp’s legal team. Her role during the trial focused on presenting witnesses and guiding testimony in a structured and persuasive manner.

As the direct examination attorney, her responsibilities include:

- questioning own witnesses,
- introducing evidence clearly,
- building a logical narrative.

Direct examination requires non-leading questions, meaning the attorney must allow the witness to tell the story.

This role demands:

- clarity,
- patience,
- strong narrative-building skills.

- Cross Examination (JD) – Camille Vasquez:



Camille Vasquez is a litigation attorney at Brown Rudnick who gained significant public attention during the trial due to her performance in cross examination. She is known for her assertive, precise, and highly controlled questioning style.

Her role involved:

- cross-examining Amber Heard,
- identifying inconsistencies,
- challenging credibility.

Cross examination allows leading questions, making it one of the most strategic parts of the trial.

In this committee, this role requires:

- quick thinking,
- confidence,
- strong control over questioning.

- Legal Objections (JD) – Samuel Moniz:



Samuel Moniz is a member of Depp's legal team who focused on technical legal aspects of the case, including evidence handling and objections.

His responsibilities include:

- raising objections,
- ensuring procedural accuracy,
- protecting the team's legal position.

This role requires:

- deep understanding of rules,
- fast reaction time,
- precision in legal reasoning.

- Lead Counsel (AH) – Elaine Bredehoff:



Elaine Bredehoff is an experienced trial attorney based in Virginia, specializing in civil litigation. She served as the lead counsel for Amber Heard during the trial.

As lead counsel, her responsibilities include:

- managing defense strategy,
- presenting key arguments,
- coordinating the defense team.

Her approach often involves structured argumentation combined with emotional appeal.

In this committee, this role requires:

- strong leadership,
- adaptability,
- persuasive communication.

- Direct Examination (AH) – Rebecca MacDowell Lecaroz:



Rebecca MacDowell Lecaroz is an attorney who played a role in presenting Heard's witnesses and supporting evidence.

Her role includes:

- guiding witness testimony,
- presenting expert witnesses,
- supporting the defense narrative.

This position requires:

- strong organization,
- clarity in questioning,
- ability to highlight key details.

- Cross Examination (AH) – Ben Rottenborn:



Ben Rottenborn is a litigation attorney who played a key role in cross examining Johnny Depp during the trial.

His style is:

- analytical,
- controlled,
- detail-oriented.

His responsibilities include:

- challenging Depp's statements,
- exposing inconsistencies,
- weakening the plaintiff's narrative

In this committee, this role requires:

- logical questioning,
- attention to detail,
- strategic thinking.

- Legal Objections (AH) – Jessica Jennings:

Jessica Jennings is part of Heard's legal team and contributed to managing objections and procedural aspects of the trial.

Her role includes:

- objecting to improper questions,
- monitoring evidence,
- maintaining legal consistency.

This position requires:

- strong rule knowledge,
- fast decision-making,
- attention to courtroom dynamics.

- *Assistant Attorneys & Legal Interns:*

Assistant Attorneys and Legal Interns in this committee are not based on specific real-life individuals from the case, but rather represent the essential behind-the-scenes legal team that supports the main attorneys throughout the trial process.

In real courtrooms, these roles are responsible for a significant portion of the work, including:

- researching legal arguments,
- preparing documents and evidence,
- organizing case files,
- analyzing opposing arguments,
- supporting attorneys during examinations.

Although they may not always be visible in the courtroom, they play a critical role in shaping the outcome of a case.

**Role in This Committee:**

In this committee, Assistant Attorneys and Legal Interns are especially important roles.

Because this is a crisis-based simulation, the direction of the case is not fixed and may evolve based on creativity, strategy, and the introduction of new evidence. Much of this development will come from the work done by these roles.

They are expected to:

- prepare directives,
- create and develop evidence,
- support questioning strategies,
- analyze the opposing team's arguments,
- contribute to the overall legal strategy of their team.

In many cases, the most impactful developments in the trial may originate from these positions.

**Important Note:**

The names assigned to these roles are fictional and created solely for the purposes of this simulation. Delegates assigned to these positions are not required to research real individuals.

Instead, they are strongly encouraged to focus on:

- fully understanding the case,
- mastering the Rules & Procedure\*,
- preparing creative and strategic contributions,.

Delegates should not spend time researching identities for these roles, but should instead prioritize deep preparation and active participation.

Assistant Attorneys and Legal Interns are not secondary roles they are strategic roles.

Delegates in these positions should come prepared to think creatively, act quickly, and support their teams at every stage of the trial. Their work has the potential to directly influence the direction and outcome of the committee.

#### **4. Timeline of the Case (Before April 2022)**

- 2009 – First Meeting on The Rum Diary: Johnny Depp and Amber Heard first met while working on *The Rum Diary*. Multiple timeline reports place this first meeting in 2009, during the production period of the film, which was later released in 2011. This moment is significant because it establishes the beginning of their personal history and provides the earliest factual context for the relationship that would later become central to both the abuse allegations and the defamation case.
- 2011–2012 – Relationship Begins: Although they met earlier, most public timelines place the beginning of their romantic relationship around late 2011 or early 2012, after the filming period and as their personal lives shifted. This matters because it separates the first meeting from the actual start of the relationship, which can be important when establishing sequence, motive, and emotional development.
- January 2014 – Engagement: By January 2014, the couple had become engaged. While this is not the central legal event in the defamation case, it is still an important narrative marker because it signals that the relationship had become serious and publicly visible. Their growing public visibility matters because later claims about domestic abuse and reputational harm unfolded against the backdrop of celebrity culture and media attention.
- February 2015 – Marriage: Public reporting and court-related timelines show that Depp and Heard married in February 2015. One widely cited report identifies the civil ceremony date as February 3, 2015, while court material consistently confirms the marriage occurred in February 2015. This is an important anchor point because it marks the legal and personal formalization of the relationship.
- May 2016 – Separation, Divorce Filing, and Abuse Allegations: This is one of the most legally and strategically important turning points in the entire case. Court material from the UK judgment states that the couple separated in May 2016 and that Amber Heard obtained a temporary restraining order on May 27, 2016. Public reporting also notes that Heard filed for divorce in late May 2016 and publicly alleged abuse. These events pushed a previously private relationship into a legal and media crisis.
- August 2016 – Divorce Settlement: In August 2016, the parties reached a divorce settlement. Reporting at the time described a \$7 million settlement and a joint statement indicating that the relationship had been intensely emotional but that neither side intended false accusations for financial gain. This settlement did not

erase the public controversy, but it did create an important legal and rhetorical checkpoint.

- December 18, 2018 – Washington Post Op-Ed: On December 18, 2018, *The Washington Post* published Amber Heard's op-ed, in which she wrote that she had become "a public figure representing domestic abuse." The article did not name Johnny Depp directly, but it became the central publication underlying the later defamation suit. This is arguably the single most important document in the entire case before trial.
- March 2019 – Defamation Lawsuit Filed: In early March 2019, Depp filed a \$50 million defamation lawsuit against Heard over the op-ed. Associated Press reported the suit on March 2, 2019, and Fairfax County court material confirms the case arose from the *Washington Post* publication and proceeded in Virginia. This marks the formal beginning of the legal action that eventually led to the 2022 trial.

### **Why This Timeline Matters for the Committee:**

This timeline is not included merely for background reading. It is the structural basis for the entire committee. A strong legal team must know:

- which moments build sympathy,
- which dates create legal relevance,
- which events can be connected to reputational damage,
- and which parts of the history are most vulnerable to attack.

Delegates who understand the chronology deeply will be able to:

- write more realistic directives,
- craft stronger witness questions,
- identify contradictions more effectively,
- and connect evidence to legal strategy with much greater precision.

For that reason, delegates should not memorize the dates mechanically. They should understand what each event means, how each side may frame it, and how each turning point could be transformed into argument, evidence, or cross-examination material during the committee.

## **5. Introduction to the Main Topic**

The trial begins in April 2022, marking the point at which a highly public and controversial dispute transitions into a formal legal proceeding governed by the Virginia State Trial Court system. From this stage onward, the case is no longer shaped primarily by media narratives or public opinion, but by legal standards, admissible evidence, and structured courtroom procedure.

At the core of the case lies the question of whether the *Washington Post* op-ed constitutes defamation under Virginia law. In order for the claim to succeed, the plaintiff must

demonstrate that the statement was false, that it was communicated to a third party, that it caused reputational harm, and that it was made with the required level of fault. Given that the plaintiff is a public figure, the standard of “actual malice” becomes especially significant. (see *Rules & Procedure – Standard of Proof*) A central point of legal debate is the fact that the article does not explicitly name Johnny Depp, raising the question of whether an implied reference can be considered sufficient for defamation.

The evidentiary structure of the case is based on a combination of personal and documentary materials, including audio recordings, text messages, photographs, and both witness and expert testimony. (see *Rules & Procedure – Evidence*) However, the importance of evidence in this context does not lie solely in its existence, but in how it is interpreted within the legal framework. The credibility, consistency, and admissibility of each piece of evidence will play a decisive role in determining its impact.

At the same time, this case exists at the intersection of law and public perception. It has been widely covered by global media and discussed extensively on social platforms, leading to strong and often polarized public opinions. While these narratives form an important background, they do not replace legal reasoning. Delegates are therefore expected to distinguish between public perception and legal evaluation, recognizing how narratives are constructed and how bias may influence the interpretation of evidence.

#### **In this committee:**

The case should be understood not only as a legal dispute, but as a conflict between competing narratives, each supported by selective use of facts and testimony. Delegates will be expected to construct arguments that connect evidence to legal standards, maintain internal consistency in their reasoning, and critically assess the credibility of opposing claims.

### **6. Possible Legal Outcomes & Document / Evidence Preparation**

This committee is not a fixed historical simulation, meaning that the outcome of the case is not predetermined. While the real-life trial resulted in a specific verdict, this committee allows for multiple possible outcomes depending on how effectively each legal team presents its arguments, evidence, and overall strategy.

At the same time, the outcome of the case will be directly shaped by the quality of the documents and evidence produced by the delegates. For this reason, legal outcomes and evidence preparation should not be viewed as separate processes, but as interdependent elements of the same legal strategy.

Possible outcomes may include a verdict in favor of the plaintiff, a verdict in favor of the defendant, partial liability, or even a negotiated settlement. However, these outcomes will not emerge automatically. They will be the result of how convincingly each side:

- constructs its narrative
- supports it with evidence
- and defends it under examination

### **Example of Evidence from the Case:**

One of the most widely discussed and publicly available pieces of evidence in the trial is the audio recordings between Johnny Depp and Amber Heard, in which the parties discuss their conflicts and past incidents.

In these recordings, Amber Heard is heard making statements that appear to acknowledge physical altercations, including phrases such as admitting to hitting Depp. These recordings were presented during the trial and became a central point of analysis for both sides.

### **Why This Evidence is Considered Valid:**

This type of evidence is considered particularly strong because it satisfies several key legal requirements:

First, it is direct evidence, as it captures the voices of the individuals involved rather than relying on third-party interpretation. This significantly reduces the risk of distortion or misrepresentation.

Second, it meets the requirement of authentication, as the recordings can be verified through context, voice recognition, and supporting testimony. Once authenticated, such recordings are generally admissible under evidentiary rules. (*see Rules & Procedure – Evidence*)

Third, it has clear relevance, as it directly relates to the central issue of the case: the nature of the relationship and the validity of the abuse claims.

Finally, it carries strong probative value, meaning it has the ability to influence how the court interprets credibility, responsibility, and intent. In a defamation case, credibility is one of the most critical elements, and such recordings may significantly impact how testimony is evaluated.

### **Connection to Directive Writing:**

When preparing directives, delegates should aim to construct evidence with a similar level of strength and clarity.

A strong directive should not be vague or incomplete. Instead, it should answer the fundamental questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how (5N1K) in a way that leaves minimal room for challenge.

For example, instead of stating:

“We found a recording”

a well-structured directive should clearly define:

- who is speaking
- what is being said
- when the event took place
- where the interaction occurred
- how the evidence was obtained
- why it is relevant to the case

However, while answering these questions, delegates must also ensure that their directive is internally consistent and logically sound, so that it cannot be easily challenged through objections such as speculation, lack of relevance, or improper foundation.

The most effective directives are those that:

- appear realistic within the timeline,
- connect directly to legal elements,
- support a clear argument and can withstand cross examination and objections.

### **Final Note:**

In this committee, evidence is not only something you present — it is something you build strategically.

Delegates who understand how real evidence functions in a courtroom will be significantly more successful in creating directives that are both persuasive and defensible.

## **7. Key Questions for Delegates**

Delegates are expected to be familiar with the following guiding questions before the conference. Having clear and well-structured answers to these will significantly facilitate your performance throughout the committee.

- What is the central legal argument of your side, and how can it be presented clearly and consistently throughout the trial?
- Which events in the timeline most strongly support your case, and how can they be connected to the legal elements of defamation?
- What is your strongest piece of evidence, and how can you defend its credibility and relevance under objection?

- Which weaknesses exist in the opposing side's case, and how can they be exposed through questioning?
- How can witness testimony be strengthened or challenged in a way that directly supports your legal strategy?
- What contradictions or inconsistencies can be identified in the case, and how can they be used effectively during cross examination?
- How can the same piece of evidence be interpreted differently by each side, and how will you control that narrative?
- What role do credibility and consistency play in determining the outcome of the case?
- How will you construct a persuasive final argument that connects evidence, testimony, and legal standards?
- Under what conditions would a settlement be strategically preferable to a verdict?
- How can your team maintain coordination and adapt its strategy as new developments arise during the trial?

### **Final Note to Delegates:**

Being prepared to answer these questions will make the process significantly more manageable and allow you to engage more effectively in every stage of the committee.

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