

UTS Law Afghan Judges Conversational English Initiative Handbook

A Brennan Justice and Leadership Program Initiative

Contents

Contents	1
Project Aims	2
Project Objectives	2
Rules and Availability	2
Resources	3
Information about Afghanistan	3
Add to resources	3
Conversation Starters	3



UTS Law Afghan Judges Conversational English Initiative

Project Aims

In a new initiative launched over the Brennan Justice and Leadership Program's Summer Circle initiative, female students studying at the UTS Faculty of Law will be paired with Afghan Women Judges recently arrived in Australia with their family.

The project will 'match' two students with an Afghan woman judge. Each judge will meet with 1-2 students for a 30-minute Zoom session, one to two times a week. The aim of the program is to assist in the development of English language skills and confidence for the participating judges, and to build skills and knowledge for students.

Project Objectives

- a. To improve conversational English for the judge recently arrived from Afghanistan.
- b. To facilitate Brennan Program student engagement and Leadership through Service (LTS) hours for the UTS student coordinating and attending the Zoom sessions.
- c. To facilitate connection and understandings between participants.

Rules and Availability

- Students who are selected to participate in the Project are committing to facilitating conversations via Zoom with an Afghan judge to assist in the development of conversational English at an agreed time once or twice per week for the duration of the Project.
- While students who apply to the program are expected to commit to the full length of the initiative, circumstances can change that may mean that the student is no longer able to participate. In these circumstances the student must notify the Faculty Co-director in writing via email as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- Students will aim to meet with the Afghan Judge 10-20 times over the Project period.
- Each participant in the initiative requires access to Zoom and can use their UTS login. Learn how to do this [here](#).
- The setting of times and dates for the zoom sessions is to be arranged between the judge and the student/s so that the time is suitable to both.
- Once a time is determined it is the student's responsibility to raise and circulate the Zoom link before each meeting (it can be helpful to have the meeting at a regular time).
- The informal conversation is to focus on everyday topics that can spark a conversation. Examples could include best places to visit in Sydney; the study of law in Australia; recent experiences of the student or judge like travel or shopping. It may advance to reading simple English paragraphs together and discussing them. You'll find resources and conversation starters to help you plan your Zoom meetings on page 3-4.
- The topic of Afghanistan is not to be discussed by students unless raised by the judge herself.
- In the event that the Afghan judge wishes to cease participation in the project, the judge will notify the Faculty Co-director in writing via email who will notify the relevant students.
- This program will not lead to any qualification for the Afghan judges.
- UTS Law students will obtain LTS hours towards the Brennan Justice and Leadership award. LTS hours will include the meeting time with the judge and time spent organising Zoom links and preparation.
- At the end of the initiative students will send their [LTS form](#) to either [Crystal Meikle](#) or the Faculty Brennan Co-Director for sign off before uploading to UTS CareerHub.



Resources

Information about Afghanistan

While students are not to discuss Afghanistan with the judges unless the judge raises it themselves, it can be very useful to have some knowledge about the context in which women judges from Afghanistan came to Australia, and some cross-cultural knowledge.

- To assist students to gain some understanding of the context and experience of the Afghan women judges participating in this conversational English initiative, you may like to listen to the Law Report episode broadcast on ABC Radio National on 12 April 2022: [‘How Afghan Women Judges Found Safety in Australia’](#)
- General information about [Afghan culture](#) by SBS Cultural Atlas. The ‘do’s and don’ts’ section might be useful to enhance some cross-cultural awareness.

Add to resources

This handbook is a work in progress. Please forward to the [Brennan Program management team](#) any resources you have discovered that you have found helpful – whether it is conversation starter tips and ideas, or resources to enhance cross-cultural understanding.

Conversation Starters

UTS:HELPS also provides this useful tip for their volunteers: talk about anything that interests you and the person you are talking to. Let it flow it is ‘not an English class that needs to be prepared’.

UTS HELPS also provides a link to some [conversation starter questions](#).

Remember for all the conversation starter ideas listed here that you need to adapt and think about what is appropriate to the context of this project and the environment or context in which the Afghan women judges may find themselves. Sometimes you need to build a relationship, starting with more general questions before asking questions that might be seen as personal.

Here are a few topics and questions to help initiate a conversation between yourself and the judge.

Some important things to remember first:

- If your conversation goes off topic, great! Let it flow naturally.
- There are no requirements to use these prompts, they are just a guide if you get stuck.
- Answering the specific question isn’t the goal, having an interesting conversation is.
- Ask the other participant if they have any topics they would like to go over or that interest them.
- Keep the questions open-ended, it is about facilitating conversation not just answering yes or no.
- You can either choose a topic from the topic section on page 2 or ask a direct question which elicits a response from the participant you would like to hear and engage with.

STARTER QUESTIONS

- What is your name? Does it mean anything or were you called after anyone?
- Where are you Zooming in from?
- Who do you live with? [if family, how many siblings or children, ages]
- What did you do today? Do you have plans for the weekend?
- Do you want to talk about anything specific or practice anything you feel you need more experience with?



CONVERSATION STARTER QUESTIONS

- Which book has influenced you the most, and why?
- What music do you put on when you clean or do house chores?
- What is the most useful app on your phone?
- Are there any exotic or interesting foods you've never tried but would like to?
- What is the best invention in the last 50 years?
- Does technology make life simple or more complicated?
- What is your favourite cultural holiday? Can you tell me a bit about it and why you like it?
- If you could make up a holiday what would you celebrate? What activities would you do and what would people eat?
- Are there any special dates such as a cultural festival you celebrate in a year?
- What university did you go to? Did you have a favourite subject and what was your most difficult subject?
- Do you have any study habits which made your life easy when you transitioned to the workforce?
- Tell me about your journey to becoming a judge, what was your first job?

TOPICS

Current situation – usually a good place to start is your current situation. You can introduce yourself and tell the participant a little bit about your life, interests, hobbies and study. What keeps you busy? What do you wish you could do more of? What plans and goals do you have in the next couple of years? Then you can ask the person to go and provide the same information to you. There might be something in common or a topic either of you bring up which elicits questions.

Work - What does the person do? We know they are a judge, so we don't need to ask this question but we can ask something which is more specific but open-ended question like "What inspired you to be a judge?"

Music – a good way to get this topic started is asking what music brings up fun memories. Everyone has a favourite music soundtrack in their head or a song they know all the words to. This song might bring up some further conversation about an interesting period in their life.

Food – is always a collective joy. You can bring up this conversation by asking "are any foods you have never tried but would like to?" Or asking "what is your go-to comfort food?" Or, you might even like to ask something more difficult but sure to create a conversation like "if you had to pick one vegetable to eat every day for the rest of your life, what would it be and why?"

Food is also a great way to bring up traditions and cultural holidays which are different. You might like to speak about what your favourite meal is as a family, or think about what traditions you've never experienced but would like to learn more about. You can also ask them their favourite food to cook, they might hate the idea of cooking and that is a conversation in itself. Why? Maybe they prefer time to relax and like others to cook for them?

Embarrassing stories – are always a great way to elicit conversation and humour. One way you could bring up this topic by asking "what was the silliest thing you every got in trouble for at school?" Or asking if they ever had an embarrassing fashion phase, can they describe it for you?

Coffee – for some reason this is an enjoyable conversation for many cultures. Where do people get their coffee from? Is it roasted in a particular way? Where was the best coffee you've ever had? There is a very personal connection to coffee, and it isn't just about waking us up!

Photography and art – have you been to an art exhibition recently you think would be nice to share with someone? Does the other person like to take pictures, or do they like art? Does the other person have a photograph of their family/friends they will always cherish or have printed out? Do they ever use a camera? Or just their smart phone?



Notes

