

**Grantholder:** Professor Dame Hazel Genn

**Institution:** University College London

**Project Title:** Tribunal decision-making: impact of oral hearings and consistency of outcomes

**Amount awarded:** £201,140

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**Project Summary:**

Using the innovative methodology of case simulation, this study examines the effect of the form of hearing (paper or oral) on tribunal outcomes and the degree of consistency in tribunal decisions. Using two real cases from the Social Security and Child Support Appeals tribunal (one Disability Living Allowance and one Incapacity Benefit case), numerous tribunal panels will decide the same case where only the form of hearing will differ. Some panels will consider the case based only on a written submission, while others will also see a film of the case's oral hearing. The study will examine not just the panel's final decision, but the decision-making of individual panel members through questionnaires exploring their perceptions of the case and their social attitudes. The results will contribute to debates about the value of oral hearings, consistency of decisions, contribution of non-legally qualified members to tribunal decision-making, and tribunal training needs.