

World Universities Debating Championship
World Parliamentary Debating Rules
By Ray D'Cruz

Part 1— Introduction

1.1 The format of the debate

1.1.1 The debate will consist of four teams of two persons (persons will be known as "members"), a chairperson (known as the "Speaker of the House" or "Mister/Madame Speaker" and an adjudicator or panel of adjudicators.

1.1.2 Teams will consist of the following members:

1.1.3 Members will deliver substantive speeches in the following order:

- (1) Prime Minister;
- (2) Opposition Leader;
- (3) Deputy Prime Minister;
- (4) Deputy Opposition Leader;
- (5) Member for the Government;
- (6) Member for the Opposition;
- (7) Government Whip;
- (8) Opposition Whip.

Opening Government:

"Prime Minister" or "First Government member" and
"Deputy Prime Minister" or "Second Government member";

Opening Opposition:

"Leader of the Opposition" or "First Opposition member" and
"Deputy Leader of the Opposition" or "Second Opposition member";

Closing Government:

"Member for the Government" or "Third Government member" and
"Government Whip" or "Fourth Opposition member";

Closing Opposition:

"Member for the Opposition" or "Third Opposition member" and
"Opposition Whip" or "Fourth Opposition member".

1.1.4 Members will deliver a substantive speech of seven minutes duration and should offer points of information while members of the opposing teams are speaking.

1.2 The motion

1.2.1 The motion should be unambiguously worded.

1.2.2 The motion should reflect that the World Universities Debating Championship is an international tournament.

1.2.3 The members should debate the motion in the spirit of the motion and the tournament.

1.3 Preparation

1.3.1 The debate should commence 15 minutes after the motion is announced.

1.3.2 Teams should arrive at their debate within five minutes of the scheduled starting time for that debate.

1.3.3 Members are permitted to use printed or written material during preparation and during the debate. Printed material includes books, journals, newspapers and other similar materials. The use of electronic equipment is prohibited during preparation and in the debate.

1.4 Points of Information

1.4.1 Points of Information (questions directed to the member speaking) may be asked between first minute mark and the six-minute mark of the members' speeches (speeches are of seven minutes duration).

1.4.2 To ask a Point of Information, a member should stand, place one hand on his or her head and extend the other towards the member speaking. The member may announce that they would like to ask a "Point of Information" or use other words to this effect.

1.4.3 The member who is speaking may accept or decline to answer the Point of Information.

1.4.4 Points of Information should not exceed 15 seconds in length.

1.4.5 The member who is speaking may ask the person offering the Point of Information to sit down where the offeror has had a reasonable opportunity to be heard and understood.

1.4.6 Members should attempt to answer at least two Points of Information during their speech. Members should also offer Points of Information.

1.4.7 Points of Information should be assessed in accordance with clause 3.3.4 of these rules.

1.4.8 Points of Order and Points of Personal Privilege are not permitted.

1.5 Timing of the speeches

1.5.1 Speeches should be seven minutes in duration (this should be signaled by two strikes of the gavel). Speeches over seven minutes and 15 seconds may be penalised.

1.5.2 Points of Information may only be offered between the first minute mark and the six minute mark of the speech (this period should be signaled by one strike of the gavel at the first minute and one strike at the sixth minute).

1.5.3 It is the duty of the Speaker of the House to time speeches.

1.5.4 In the absence of the Speaker of the House, it is the duty of the Chair of the Adjudication panel to ensure that speeches are timed.

1.6 The adjudication

1.6.1 The debate should be adjudicated by a panel of at least three adjudicators, where this is possible.

1.6.2 At the conclusion of the debate, the adjudicators should confer and rank the teams, from first placed to last placed. (see Part 5: The Adjudication).

1.6.3 There will be verbal adjudication of the debate after the first six preliminary rounds of the tournament. The verbal adjudication should be delivered in accordance with clause 5.5 of these rules.

Part 2 – Definitions

2.1 The definition

2.1.1 The definition should state the issue (or issues) for debate arising out of the motion and state the meaning of any terms in the motion which require interpretation.

2.1.2 The Prime Minister should provide the definition at the beginning of his or her speech.

2.1.3 The definition must:

(a) have a clear and logical link to the motion - this means that an average reasonable person would accept the link made by the member between the motion and the definition (where there is no such link the definition is sometimes referred to as a "squirrel");

(b) not be self-proving - a definition is self-proving when the case is that something should or should not be done and there is no reasonable rebuttal. A definition is may also be self-proving when the case is that a certain state of affairs exists or does not exist and there is no reasonable rebuttal (these definitions are sometimes referred to as "truisms").

(c) not be time set - this means that the debate must take place in the present and that the

definition cannot set the debate in the past or the future; and

(d) not be place set unfairly - this means that the definition cannot restrict the debate so narrowly to a particular geographical or political location that a participant of the tournament could not reasonably be expected to have knowledge of the place.

2.2 Challenging the definition

2.2.1 The Leader of the Opposition may challenge the definition if it violates clause 2.1.3 of these rules. The Leader of the Opposition should clearly state that he or she is challenging the definition.

2.2.2 The Leader of the Opposition should substitute an alternative definition after challenging the definition of the Prime Minister.

2.3 Assessing the definitional challenge

2.3.1 The adjudicator should determine the definition to be 'unreasonable' where it violates clause 2.1.3 of these rules.

2.3.2 The onus to establish that the definition is unreasonable is on the members asserting that the definition is unreasonable.

2.3.3 Where the definition is unreasonable, the opposition should substitute an alternative definition that should be accepted by the adjudicator provided it is not unreasonable.

2.3.4 Where the definition of the Opening Government is unreasonable and an alternative definition is substituted by the Opening Opposition, the Closing Government may introduce matter which is inconsistent with the matter presented by the Opening Government and consistent with the definition of the Opening Opposition.

2.3.5 If the Opening Opposition has substituted a definition that is also unreasonable, the Closing Government may challenge the definition of the Opening Opposition and substitute an alternative definition.

2.3.6 If the Closing Government has substituted a definition that is also unreasonable (in addition to the unreasonable definitions of the Opening Government and Opening Opposition, the Closing Opposition may challenge the definition of the Closing Government and substitute an alternative definition.

Part 3 — Matter

3.1 The definition of matter

3.1.1 Matter is the content of the speech. It is the arguments a debater uses to further his or her case and persuade the audience.

3.1.2 Matter includes arguments and reasoning, examples, case studies, facts and any other material that attempts to further the case.

3.1.3 Matter includes positive (or substantive) material and rebuttal (arguments specifically aimed to refute the arguments of the opposing team(s)). Matter includes Points of Information.

3.2 The elements of matter

3.2.1 Matter should be relevant, logical and consistent.

3.2.2 Matter should be relevant. It should relate to the issues of the debate: positive material should support the case being presented and rebuttal should refute the material being presented by the opposing team(s). The Member should appropriately prioritise and apportion time to the dynamic issues of the debate.

3.2.3 Matter should be logical. Arguments should be developed logically in order to be clear and well reasoned and therefore plausible. The conclusion of all arguments should support the member's case.

3.2.4 Matter should be consistent. Members should ensure that the matter they present is consistent within their speech, their team and the remainder of the members on their side of the debate (subject to clauses 2.3.4, 2.3.5 or 2.3.6 of these rules).

3.2.5 All Members should present positive matter (except the final two members in the debate) and all members should present rebuttal (except the first member in the debate). The Government Whip may choose to present positive matter.

3.2.6 All Members should attempt to answer at least two points of information during their own speech and offer points of information during opposing speeches.

3.3 Assessing matter

3.3.1 The matter presented should be persuasive. 'The elements of matter' should assist an adjudicator to assess the persuasiveness and credibility of the matter presented.

3.3.2 Matter should be assessed from the viewpoint of the average reasonable person. Adjudicators should analyse the matter presented and assess its persuasiveness, while disregarding any specialist knowledge they may have on the issue of the debate.

3.3.3 Adjudicators should not allow bias to influence their assessment. Debaters should not be discriminated against on the basis of religion, sex, race, colour, nationality, sexual preference, age, social status or disability.

3.3.4 Points of information should be assessed according to the effect they have on the persuasiveness of the cases of both the member answering the point of information and the member offering the point of information.

Part 4 — Manner

4.1 The definition of manner

4.1.1 Manner is the presentation of the speech. It is the style and structure a member uses to further his or her case and persuade the audience.

4.1.2 Manner is comprised of many separate elements. Some, but not all, of these elements are listed below.

4.2 The elements of style

4.2.1 The elements of style include eye contact, voice modulation, hand gestures, language, the use of notes and any other element which may affect the effectiveness of the presentation of the member.

4.2.2 Eye contact will generally assist a member to persuade an audience as it allows the member to appear more sincere.

4.2.3 Voice modulation will generally assist a member to persuade an audience as the debater may emphasise important arguments and keep the attention of the audience. This includes the pitch, tone, and volume of the member's voice and the use of pauses.

4.2.4 Hand gestures will generally assist a member to emphasise important arguments. Excessive hand movements may however be distracting and reduce the attentiveness of the audience to the arguments.

4.2.5 Language should be clear and simple. Members who use language which is too verbose or confusing may detract from the argument if they lose the attention of the audience.

4.2.6 The use of notes is permitted, but members should be careful that they do not rely on their notes too much and detract from the other elements of manner.

4.3 The elements of structure

4.3.1 The elements of structure include the structure of the speech of the member and the structure of the speech of the team.

4.3.2 The matter of the speech of each member must be structured. The member should organise his or her matter to improve the effectiveness of their presentation. The substantive speech of each members should:

4.3.3 The matter of the team must be structured. The team should organise their matter to

improve the effectiveness of their presentation. The team should:

- (a) contain a consistent approach to the issues being debated; and
- (b) allocate positive matter to each member where both members of the team are introducing positive matter; and
- (a) include: an introduction, conclusion and a series of arguments; and
- (b) be well-timed in accordance with the time limitations and the need to prioritise and apportion time to matter.

4.4 Assessing manner

4.4.1 Adjudicators should assess the elements of manner together in order to determine the overall effectiveness of the member's presentation. Adjudicators should assess whether the member's presentation is assisted or diminished by their manner.

4.4.2 Adjudicators should be aware that at a World Championship, there are many styles which are appropriate, and that they should not discriminate against a member simply because the manner would be deemed 'inappropriate Parliamentary debating' in their own country.

4.4.3 Adjudicators should not allow bias to influence their assessment. Members should not be discriminated against on the basis of religion, sex, race, colour, nationality, language (subject to Rule 4.2.4), sexual preference, age, social status or disability.

Part 5 – The Adjudication

5.1 The role of the adjudicator

5.1.1 The adjudicator must:

- (a) Confer upon and discuss the debate with the other adjudicators;
- (b) Determine the rankings of the teams;
- (c) Determine the team grades;
- (d) Determine the speaker marks;
- (e) Provide a verbal adjudication to the members; and
- (f) Complete any documentation required by the tournament.

5.1.2 The adjudication panel should attempt to agree on the adjudication of the debate. Adjudicators should therefore confer in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect

5.1.3 Adjudicators should acknowledge that adjudicators on a panel may form different or opposite views of the debate. Adjudicators should therefore attempt to base their conclusions on these rules in order to limit subjectivity and to provide a consistent approach to the assessment of debates.

5.2 Ranking teams

5.2.1 Teams should be ranked from first place to last place. First placed teams should be awarded three points, second placed teams should be awarded two points, third placed teams should be awarded one point and fourth placed teams should be awarded zero points.

5.2.2 Teams may receive zero points where they fail to arrive at the debate more than five minutes after the scheduled time for debate.

5.2.3 Teams may receive zero points where the adjudicators unanimously agree that the Member has (or Members have) harassed another debater on the basis of religion, sex, race, colour, nationality, sexual preference or disability.

5.2.4 Adjudicators should confer upon team rankings. Where a unanimous decision cannot be reached after conferral, the decision of the majority will determine the rankings. Where a majority decision cannot be reached, the Chair of the panel of adjudicators will determine the rankings.

5.3 Grading and marking the teams

5.3.1 The panel of adjudicators should agree upon the grade that each team is to be awarded. Each adjudicator may then mark the teams at their discretion but within the agreed grade. Where there is a member of the panel who has dissented in the ranking of the teams, that adjudicator will not need to agree upon the team grades and may complete their score sheet at their own discretion.

5.3.2 Team grades and marks should be given the following interpretation:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Marks</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
A	180-200	Excellent to flawless. The standard you would expect to see from a team at the Semi Final / Grand Final level of the tournament. The team has many strengths and few, if any, weaknesses.
B	160-179	Above average to very good. The standard you would expect to see from a team at the finals level or in contention to make to the finals. The team has clear strengths and some minor weaknesses.
C	140-159	Average. The team has strengths and weaknesses in roughly equal proportions.
D	120-139	Poor to below average. The team has clear problems and some minor strengths.
E	100-119	Very poor. The team has fundamental weaknesses and few, if any, strengths.

5.4 Marking the members

5.4.1 After the adjudicators have agreed upon the grade that each team is to be awarded, each adjudicator may mark the individual members at their discretion but must ensure that the aggregate points of the team members is within the agreed grade for that team.

5.4.2 Individual members' marks should be given the following interpretation:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Marks</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
A	90-100	Excellent to flawless. The standard of speech you would expect to see from a speaker at the Semi Final / Grand Final level of the tournament. This speaker has many strengths and few, if any, weaknesses.
B	80-89	Above average to very good. The standard you would expect to see from a speaker at the finals level or in contention to make to the finals. This speaker has clear strengths and some minor weaknesses.
C	70-79	Average. The speaker has strengths and weaknesses and roughly equal proportions.
D	60-69	Poor to below average. The team has clear problems and some minor strengths.
E	50-59	Very poor. This speaker has fundamental weaknesses and few, if any, strengths.

5.5 Verbal adjudications

5.5.1 At the conclusion of the conferral, the adjudication panel should provide a verbal adjudication of the debate.

5.5.2 The verbal adjudication should be delivered by the Chair of the adjudication panel, or where the Chair dissents, by a member of the adjudication panel nominated by the Chair of the panel.

5.5.3 The verbal adjudication should:

5.5.4 The verbal adjudication should not exceed 10 minutes.

5.5.5 The members must not harass the adjudicators following the verbal adjudication.

5.5.6 The members may approach an adjudicator for further clarification following the verbal adjudication; these inquiries must at all times be polite and non-confrontational.

(a) identify the order in which the teams were ranked

(b) explain the reasons for the rankings of team, ensuring that each team is referred to in this explanation; and

(c) provide constructive comments to individual members where the adjudication panel believes this is necessary.

5.5.4 The verbal adjudication should not exceed 10 minutes.

5.5.5 The members must not harass the adjudicators following the verbal adjudication.

5.5.6 The members may approach an adjudicator for further clarification following the verbal adjudication; these inquiries must at all times be polite and non-confrontational.