Judge Training

THE NETHERLANDS ONLINE WSDC 2022

This is an adapted version of the 'Speaker and Judge Briefing', 'Key takeaways for Judges' 'Introduction to Conferral Judging' documents from The Netherlands WSDC 2022 collated by the WSDC Board, for the purposes of Judge Training. All credit should be given to the WSDC 2022 CAP for content.

1. Further resources

Additional material

- Conferral judging briefing
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoUZbEtOqoY&list=PLFpL5C-0smTZwM1iyZ6BenouKn25kgI9e&index=1&t=2s
- Tracking and Scoring Speeches
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYZ3dz49-lE&list=PLFpL5C-0smTZwM1iyZ6BenouKn25kgI9e&index=3
- Judge Workshop Beginner level
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLRODVsfgxo&list=PLFpL5C-0smTZwM1iyZ6BenouKn25kgI9e&index=7
- Judge Workshop Intermediate level
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QN4WUr9aOAw&list=PLFpL5C-0smTZwM1iyZ6BenouKn25kgI9e&index=8
- Conferral Judging Discussion Sample
  - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1U5iE_4WmOF_-FOdDnFyHk8xgVej1yZJK/view?usp=sharing
- OA Examples
  - https://drive.google.com/file/d/15fObRkMwcXZ2ZuwAYHguBSiVArgXy0dx/view?usp=sharing
  - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bJ3SldpWBRq2b90HlQyuEgJ6bEFdZn79/view?usp=sharing

2. Marking Ranges

Overall marking range

Constructive speeches

Standard	Overall (/100)	Style (/40)	Content (/40)	Strategy (/20)
Flawless	80	32	32	16
Excellent	76-79	31	31	15-16
Very Good	74-75	30	30	15
Good	71-73	29	29	14-15
Average	70	28	28	14
Below average	67-69	27	27	13-14
Weak	65-66	26	26	13
Very weak	61-64	25	25	12-13
Improvement Needed	60	24	24	12

Reply speeches

Standard	Overall (/50)	Style (/20)	Content (/20)	Strategy (/10)
Flawless	40	16	16	8
Good to Excellent	36-39	15	15	7.5
Average	35	14	14	7
Weak to below average	31-34	13	13	6.5
Improvement Needed	30	12	12	6

Constructive Speeches (Below average to average)

Mark	Standard
60	• Content is not relevant to the motion and what the team needs to prove. • All points made are claims, with no analysis, and are confusing. • The speech is hard to follow throughout, so it is hard to give it any credit.
61-63	• A few marginally relevant claims. • No analysis provided in the claims, which are mainly lines without explanation. • Parts of the speech are clear, but significant parts are still hard to follow.
64 - 66	• Some of the points made are relevant to the debate. • Arguments / rebuttals are made with some explanation and analysis, but with significant logical gaps in the explanation. • Sometimes the speech is difficult to follow.
67 - 69	• Most of the points made are relevant to the debate. • All arguments / rebuttals have some explanation, but it still has logical and analytical gaps in important parts of the argument and lacks evidence. • Mostly easy to follow, but some sections may still be hard to understand.
70	• No major shortfalls, nor any strong moments. • Arguments are almost exclusively relevant, although may fail to address one or more core issues sufficiently. • All arguments have sufficient explanation without major logical gaps and some examples, but are simplistic and easy to attack. • Easy to follow throughout which makes the speech understandable, though style does not necessarily serve to make the speech more persuasive.

Constructive Speeches II (above average to exceptional)

Mark	Standard
71 - 72	• Arguments are all relevant, and address the core issues in the debate. • All arguments have sufficient explanation without major logical gaps and most have credible evidence. Some points raised may have minor logical gaps or deficits in explanation. • Easy to follow throughout. On occasion the style may even serve to make the speech more engaging and persuasive.
73 - 76	• Arguments are relevant and engage with the most important issues. Arguments have sufficient explanation without major logical gaps. • Occasionally, the speaker provides more sophisticated and nuanced analysis, making their arguments hard to attack. • Easy to follow throughout. On occasion the style may even serve to make the speech more engaging and persuasive.
77 - 79	• Arguments are all relevant and well-illustrated, and address the core issues in the debate, with thorough explanations, no logical gaps, and credible examples, making them hard to attack • Easy to follow throughout. The style serves to make the speech's content more engaging.
80	• Plausibly one of the best debating speeches ever given in a schools competition. • It is incredibly difficult to think up satisfactory responses to any of the arguments made. • Flawless and compelling arguments, made with outstanding delivery.

Reply Speeches

Mark	Standard
30	The speaker did not describe the debate as it happened. They misunderstood or misrepresented central arguments and responses.
31-34	Instead of actually identifying or analysing points of clash, speaker mostly just retold the debate as it happened or attempted to keep arguing for their side.
35	Speaker identified the major points of clash between two teams and was able to provide some basic justification for awarding the win to speaker's team.
36-39	Almost perfect overview of the debate. Particular interactions from the debate were analysed and used as evidence for awarding the win to the speaker's team.
40	Flawless analysis of the debate that just occurred. Speaker was able to accurately identify turning points in the debate (including the strongest arguments and rebuttal of their opponents) and why they their side wins on balance

Understanding the categories in more depth - CONTENT

Content deals with **what is being presented**. While analysing content, take into account the quality of the team's arguments, rebuttal, POIs, and example use. Arguments missing links (e.g.: presents a problem but doesn't explain how the policy solves on prop), weak bits of rebuttal, bad POIs, a lack of or underexplained examples all point to issues with content.

Mark	Description
24 - 25.5	Speaker has used unsubstantiated claims, which had major logical leaps or were internally inconsistent. Little to no use of evidence, examples or an explanation. Speaker's material does not engage with the opposing team's.
26 - 27	Arguments and rebuttal derive from plausible premises but lack sufficient explanation. Instead of deeper analysis and credible examples, speaker would likely just rephrase the claim or conclusion in a different way. Examples are presented but not usually rigorously explained/tied to the claims being made. Examples are not usually proven to be plausible in a majority (or significant majority) of cases.
27.5 - 28.5	Arguments are mostly well explained, with some logical gaps. Evidence such as statistics or historical examples from the real world are present, but only occasionally. Weaknesses of opponent's arguments are exposed and analysed. Rebuttals mitigate opponents' arguments but do not necessarily defeat them.
29 - 30	Most arguments are backed up by deep and compelling analysis, with regular use of very credible examples. Sophisticated responses to the most arguments of the opponents, including engagement with opponents' examples and evidence.
30.5 - 32	Well explained arguments supported with highly relevant and credible examples that are shown to be applicable in a broad range of cases. Rebuttals were developed against the strongest versions of the opponents' arguments and significantly damage the opponents' case. Speaker demonstrates how their team's specific arguments and rebuttal come together into a bigger picture.

Understanding the categories in more depth - STYLE

Style deals with **how content and strategic choices are presented**. While analysing style, make sure to hold yourself accountable by articulating what aspects you are crediting as style. Take into account body language and eye contact (if applicable), pace of speech (as this affects clarity), volume and tonal variations, characterisation and picture paining, etc. Style **is not** accent familiarity, judgements based on immutable characteristics or format of presenting a speech (e.g.: palm cards v. sheets)

Mark	Description
24 - 25.5	Speaker is mumbling or barely speaking. It can also mean that the speaker is so quiet (or loud) that it prevents any chance of hearing the arguments. This would also apply in cases where speaker uses undue profanity or is being excessively aggressive.
26 - 27	Speech pattern is choppy and/or there's overuse of verbal crutches (e.g. "uhm"). Speaker needs to be reminded to speak louder (or more softly). Speed of the speech is too fast paced to comprehend substance of the argument or too slow to retain the focus of the audience.
27.5 - 28.5	Speech has a natural speed to it with occasional unnatural breaks or pauses. Speed of the speech may be slightly above average speaking speed, but can be easily understood.
29 - 30	There is a natural flow to the speech. Words are chosen in a way so as to be most effective when explaining the argument while engaging the audience on an emotional level. Some minor flaws may be evident, but they do not interfere with the flow of the speech.
30.5 - 32	Speaker modulates their volume and speed in a way that adjusts to the debate room and accentuates certain parts of the speech. Speaker uses pauses to allow the audience to digest the argument without losing their attention or to emphasise a point.

Understanding the categories in more depth - STRATEGY

Strategy deals with **why something is presented in this specific debate**. While analysing strategy, take into account alignment to burden, prioritisation of material across speakers and time allocation, speech structure, and case consistency. Choices that speakers make to inflate and deprioritise parts of their case, contradicting their previous speaker, dedicating little time to constructive argumentation at 1st Opp, etc. all reflect in strategy. While strategy can be viewed separately, it correlates highly with and influences good content heavily.

Mark	Description
12	Speaker barely spoke (less than 4 minutes) or went significantly over time limit (more than 45 sec). Lack of structure is so severe, that it impacts audience's ability to comprehend the arguments. Arguments were barely relevant. Speaker ignored most of the opposing team's arguments or conceded them.
13	Speaker left a chunk of the speaking time unused or went quite a bit over time. Audience had to focus intently to follow the structure of the speech, which made it harder to fully grasp the presented arguments. Some arguments were relevant, though simplistic or easy to challenge. Some central arguments of the opponents are challenged, but some are missed.
14	Speaker used up the entire time of the speech with individual points that were clear enough to follow easily, even if not explicitly outlined by the speaker. Arguments were relevant or mostly relevant and rebuttals addressed the central issues in their opponents' case.
15	Individual points were identified by speaker themself at the onset of the speech or before each point separately. Flow between various sections of the speech was mostly natural and most of the time was allocated to the more important arguments and rebuttals.
16	All points are identified clearly by the speaker and flow from one section to the other is effortless and easy to follow. Arguments address exclusively main issues in the round. Timing of arguments and rebuttal is carefully chosen to effect most damage. Arguments were put into broader context of the motion and debate itself.

POI Adjustment column

- **Track POIs asked, and reward speakers who ask good POIs in the POI column**
  - Everything that happens within the 8 minutes of a speech is marked within the 3 categories of Style, Content and Strategy. Therefore, answers to POIs will be factored into one of these three categories.
  - Content that happens outside the speaker holding the floor's speech is marked within POI adjustment column (if necessary).
  - Can grant or take away up to 2 further points
- **POI adjustments can only punish or reward speakers based on whether they're already very below average or highly above average respectively**
  - You cannot add two points where a speech is already excellent, and you cannot subtract to points where the speech is already below average.

3. Characteristics of a model judge

The Model Judge

- **Hypothetical ‘ordinary intelligent voter’** (‘average reasonable person’).
- **Impartial:** Doesn’t judge teams they have personal bonds with (nation of affiliation, teams they coached, etc.).
- **Unbiased:** Has no prior idea who is going to win the debate. They set aside their personal opinion about the motion or specific arguments. They don’t expect teams to argue their preferred arguments or discount arguments they don’t like. They judge the debate that happened before them. They are thus willing to be convinced by the debaters who provide the most compelling case for or against a certain policy**.**
- **Observant and diligent:** Listens carefully to what debaters say and doesn’t construct ideas that haven’t been explained well. They look for substantiation and evidence equally from both teams. They track arguments, responses, and POIs – and are able to fairly and accurately summarize the debate (not necessarily to the debaters, even just to themselves) before evaluating it.
- **Possessing general knowledge:** Take on the role of an average, intelligent listener and is aware of current affairs and basic facts without letting specialist knowledge interfere with the debate.
- **Expert on the rules:** Knows WSDC debating rules well and understands the words in the motion and the roles of teams/speakers.
- **Accountable & Constructive:** Can justify their decision based on a sound understanding of issues in the debate and the criteria for judging & gives debaters constructive and concrete feedback after the result of the debate is announced.

Don’t be like Sally, Wally, Villy and Milly! Missteps to avoid in evaluation and oral adjudication

- **Using your extremely specific knowledge on a certain topic. A judge should never say:**
  - “The proposition claimed that 1 million electric cars were produced in the UK last year, and it wasn’t attacked by the opposition, but since this is my field of expertise I know that the correct number is 39000 which is why the argument falls.” - Smartypants Sally → Sally should judge the debate as it happened.
- **Assessing the content in the debate based on the arguments a team could have made. A judge should never say:**
  - “I penalized you because you didn’t bring an argument about the economy, even though I think that is really relevant in the debate.” - What-if Wally → Wally shouldn’t penalize teams for not making certain arguments. Wally also shouldn’t use this as the call for the given debate. Willy can, however, give this as explicit feedback for teams to improve.
- **Assessing content based on refutation the judge is able to think of against an argument. A judge should never say:**
  - “You explained your arguments about violence pretty well, but I thought of 3 different ways to rebut it which is why I penalized you on content.” - Verbal-joust Villy → Villy should only take into account what has been said, not what could have been said in the debate.
- **Filling in analytical gaps or considering rebuttal that a team hasn’t provided themselves. A judge should never say:**
  - “You tried to explain why this policy harms minorities. Even though you didn’t give the right reasons, I agree with you that it’s an important argument because of reasons X, Y and Z. This is why I awarded you on content.” - Make-up Milly → **Milly should only take into account what has been said, not what could have been said in the debate**. Such advice should only be given during feedback if teams want to know how to make their argument(s) stronger, not as a justification for awarding marks.

Additional commitments when judging at WSDC

- **Always courteous and respectful** towards teams and coaches.
- Does not allow coaches or non-speaking members to make signs or signals to debaters beyond time signals, and **maintains room decorum.**
- Always makes themselves **available for feedback.**
- **Pays attention** during rounds:
  - Not checking their phones or otherwise off-task
  - Taking good notes

4. The judging process at WSDC 2022

1. Arrive at preliminary verdicts (5 min)

- **Track the debate closely through good notes and identify issues as they emerge in the debate.**
  - Issues are often questions that help you decide whether a particular motion should pass.
  - Teams will often outline issues themselves as the debate progresses.
  - Example – THW ban alcohol:
    - Is it a legitimate choice to drink alcohol?
    - Does banning alcohol reduce harms on drinkers and their families?
- **Evaluate who won the issues you have identified.**
  - Compare contributions of the two teams on a given issue (arguments + rebuttal) and check how they interact with each other;
  - Decide which team ultimately won the particular issue – was there important material that stood at the end that was ‘unresponded to by the other side? Did the existing responses adequately take down the core of a point a team made?
- **Decide the importance of each of the issues to the debate.**
  - In many debates, it is possible that one team has clearly resolved all the issues in a way that is favourable to their side. However, in some debates that are particularly close, different teams may have won different issues.
  - Use metrics that Teams often provide in the debate to decide which issues are relatively more important than others. In the absence of this, use implicit metrics, e.g.: time spent, extent of strength of the argumentation in each issue, intuitive metrics that an average intelligent voter would use, etc.
- **Determine a winner.**
  - The team that wins a majority of the important issues in the round wins the debate. Please note that winners aren’t determined by the aggregate of individual speaker scores, but rather by the issues they won. Scores then reflect the quality of the debate and speakers.

2. Confer with panel; make final decisions (~14-20 min)

- **Use the opportunity to clarify any questions you may have about the debate**
  - *Clarifications around the WSDC rules:*
    - Point X was made for the first time by the third speaker. Are we allowed to credit it?
    - Can Team Opposition run a countermodel in a prefers motion?
  - *Clarifications about more subjective elements of the debate round:*
    - Questions attempting to ascertain or clarify 'what happened'. These may attempt to double check tracking, confirm that a judge understood a point correctly, etc. - "Proposition set up 3 levers to the principle - A, B, and C. Is that correct?"
    - Questions attempting to ascertain 'how to evaluate'. In particularly close debates, these may attempt to understand how to compare contributions, or weigh up engagement. "Third Opposition has responded in X manner - how can we evaluate if Proposition has built implicit defences in their case to deal with this?"
- **Participate in identifying and tracking issues as a panel**
  - Chairs will facilitate the discussion to arrive at the crucial issues within the round and an understanding of the quality and closeness of the round through questions like: "I thought there were X important questions/issues in the round. Does anyone have additions to these?" "How close was this round? Did you think it was average, above average, or below average overall?"
  - Wings will contribute to the discussion by articulating how their view of a clash each, This may differ based on whether a split exists or not. Where a split exists, the judge splitting will briefly go through their perspective across clashes
- **Reevaluate your decision based on the new information and perspective you receive**
  - Take into account the discussion, recheck your notes, and make your final decision. Inform the Chair judge in the room of this decision.

3. Fill in ballots independently (3-4 min)

- **Scores and categories (Content, Style, Strategy) become most relevant at this point:**
  - Content, Style and Strategy are the criteria used to review the performance of each team and assess scores to each speaker. Rather than rigidly seeing them as discrete elements, these are three mutually reinforcing areas that help a judge score a particular speaker within a debate
- **The speaker scores are a mathematical expression of your decision and your view of the debate/speaker quality and not the other way around**
  - Because speaker scores are a mathematical expression of your decision, they have to reflect your win loss decision - low point wins are not allowed, where one team scores higher than another, but loses the issues in the debate
  - If you write down your speakers' scores and when calculating the totals they indicate that team A won but you honestly think team B should win because they were overall more convincing and did a better job, then you should review the scores you've awarded as your decision and the final scores should not contradict themselves.
  - At the same time, since the scores are also an expression of your perspective on quality, you can award the highest speaker score to someone on the losing team to reflect the quality of their speech should it stand out
- **The theoretical full range is 0-100 for a constructive speech and 0-50 for a Reply, but this is restricted by rules to 60-80 (30-40 for replies), and speakers realistically score between 64-76 (and 32-38 in replies)**
  - Style: 40% (40 points) → Limited to 24 – 32 pts; Content: 40% (40 points) → Limited to 24 – 32 pts; Strategy: 20% (20 points) → Limited to 12 – 16 pts. Marks for reply speeches are halved.
  - Points of Information – a modifier of up to +/- 2. This cannot push the Total Score outside the 60-80 points range
  - Half marks are the lowest fraction allowed.
  - Average speech is 70 (28, 28, 14)

4. Oral Adjudication Preparation (5 min)

- **Only one member of the panel will deliver an OA reflecting opinions from all the judges**
  - In most cases, this is the Chair judge will deliver the OA to the Teams
  - Where there is a split, the Chair may request a member of the majority to deliver the OA
- **Make sure your OAs factor in dissenting opinions in their OA**
  - Take notes as the conferral decision is shaping up the win/loss
  - Request judges on your panel to provide you key points of divergence, and frame the OA to cover those

5. Oral Adjudication Delivery (8 min)

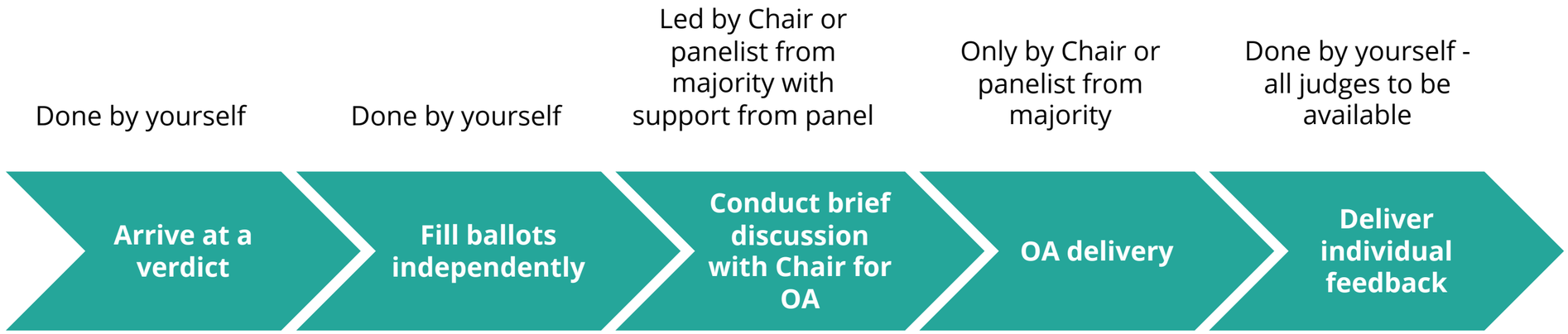
- **Only one member of the panel will deliver an OA reflecting opinions from all the judges**
  - In most cases, this is the Chair judge will deliver the OA to the Teams
  - Where there is a split, the Chair may request a member of the majority to deliver the OA
- **Deliver the OA**
  - Announce the decision first. There is no need to be suspenseful
  - Keep the OA within 8 minutes, and do not reveal any speaker scores
  - In these 8 minutes, walk teams through the tracking of the debate and its interactions, rather than giving them lists of what arguments they made:
    - Why are specific issues are important in the context of this particular debate? Why?
    - Are these issues equally important, or are some more important than others? Why?
    - Which teams won on specific issues and why?
  - Be comparative:
    - What points (e.g. points of argumentation, points of style or strategy) were more persuasive on the winning side
    - Explanation of strengths and weaknesses of teams has to always be comparative
  - Be specific: Don't stop at generic phrases like ("provided more analysis", "were more persuasive", etc.) Instead, give specific points of reference where that was observable.
  - Try to spend an equal amount of time on both teams, balancing positive and constructive
  - Choose your language carefully - no offensive comments, do not make fun of speakers, be respectful at all times.
  - When explaining the decision, stick to what happened in the round. Offer suggestions for improvement later.

6. Constructive feedback for teams/speakers (15-20 min)

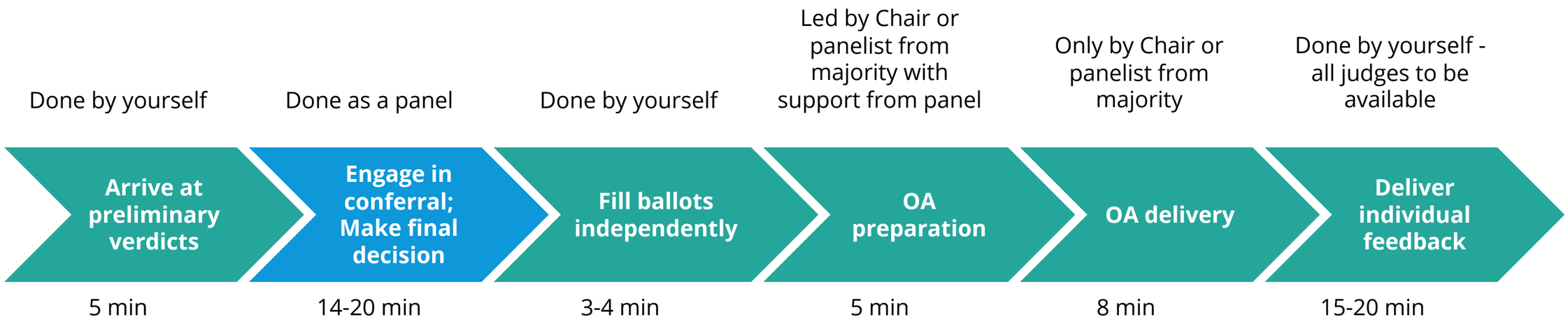
- In this role, you are an educator and not just an unbiased judge.
- Provide suggestions for how you would have approached the motion / specific arguments or responses you might have run. This can be useful BUT IT IS NOT A NECESSITY and coaches/teams should not expect this from judges.
- Suggest to teams how to prioritise their material.
- Provide more in-depth feedback per speaker (what they did well, what they can do better in the next round)
- Adjust your feedback to the speakers (don’t overload novices with complex comments, etc.)
- Do not single out speakers for doing poorly.
- Provide teams with an opportunity to ask any questions they may have.
- Be nice and compliment speakers when you can!

5. Distinctions of conferral judging

End-to-end overview of the previous process



End-to-end overview of the conferral judging process



This entire process should not take more than one hour

Conferral - important guidelines for all judges

- **Enter the discussion with openness:**
  - Avoid being obstinate or unwilling to listen to what other judges are saying. There is no shame in changing your decision if you feel that additional information or perspective changes the way you view the debate
- **Be specific in your questions:**
  - As much as is possible, any clarifications should be targeted and specific, rather than open ended. Judges are expected to avoid asking 'What did X say in their second argument?', and instead play back their understanding of the second argument and ask for additions if there are any
- **Use language that makes space for, and facilitates discussion:**
  - Phrase sentences that indicate that you are sharing opinions, rather than sharing objective fact. Avoid "I think there is no way X won", or "This is such an obvious win to Y"
- **Spend more time on contentious, important areas:**
  - Owing to time constraints, all participants are expected to spend a majority of the discussion on clear and specific areas that are more difficult to evaluate and matter more to the overall decision of the debate, rather than areas that the judges broadly agree on, or may have contention, but do not contribute as much to deciding the round's winner
- **Avoid arguments/heated back and forths:**
  - Be consistently aware that you are in a 'conferral' rather than a 'consensus' discussion. Receiving information to enhance your decision making process is more important than the end state of the decision itself.

CLICK HERE FOR DETAILED CONFERRAL JUDGING GUIDELINES AND EXPLANATIONS

Key points of difference to other judging formats

Area	Independent (AP)	Independent (ex-WSDC, Australs)	Consensus (BP)	Conferral (WSDC 2022)
Timing and purpose of discussion	**Low (0-2 min):** After ballots are submitted if at all as a formality	**Medium (5-10 min):** After ballots are submitted to improve OAs	**High (~15-20 min):** Before ballots are submitted to reach consensus	**Medium-High (12-18 min)** Before ballots are submitted to expand information available to judges
Importance of discussion	**Low:** Does not feature strongly as each judge delivers a separate OA to the teams that is evaluated	**Medium:** Only matters to the extent that the person delivering the OA collects opinions	**High:** The discussion is the primary method of evaluating who won the debate	**Medium-High:** The discussion can increase information, and change the minds of judges and the outcome, as it is done prior to ballot submission. However, it is not the method of evaluating who won
Approach to divergence	Only **matters to the teams** and not to judges themselves	Matters in as much as the **person delivering the OA should fold dissenting opinions** in	**Triggers in depth discussion** to attempt to resolve this divergence, where judges try and convince the other judge to move towards a common way of viewing the debate	Room acknowledges the alternative ways to view the debate, and the **explanations** of these **by judges may influence judges to independently change** their decision or not
Likelihood of dissents	Relatively high	Relatively high	Relatively low	Unclear - not wedded to the final decision
No. of OAs	Three separate	One OA	One OA	One OA

6. Evaluating material

Evaluating material from 3rd Opp Speech

- **A third speaker is not a BP Whip or a reply speaker - there is significantly more leeway and an explicit expectation to add material to the round**
  - Unlike BP whips, 3rd speeches in WSDC style may include a small part of their teams substantive case, IF flagged in the case division announced by the 1st speaker. However, they cannot include new arguments in their case.
  - The role of the 3rd speaker is to respond to the other team's case. "Responding" is a broad term covering direct rebuttal, weighing of arguments, new examples, etc. all forms of responsiveness often involve new ideas, logic, examples, components of arguments or new lines of rebuttal. It is acceptable for third speakers to bring these new aspects into their speeches.
  - "Newness" in a third speech is not sufficient justification to discredit material at third. However, newness is not permissible if third speakers introduce an independent and entirely new concept or argument in the debate that didn't exist earlier and wasn't flagged up in first speech.

What happens if a critical portion of the Opposition rebuttal is delivered by the 3rd Speaker, without any engagement from the 1st and 2nd speakers. Can the Opposition still win?

Third opp speakers can theoretically win a team a debate by responding thoroughly to an issue first and second opp speakers did not do enough on - however, this is arguably bad strategy given proposition has the opportunity to build onto the point and make it stronger, and because it reduces the thoroughness with which third speakers can respond to other issues in the round.

Evaluating material from Reply speeches

- **New argumentation or rebuttal, even if derivative should be discounted in Replies.**
  - Significantly stricter than in third speeches what replies can do that is new,
  - New arguments and new rebuttal should not be made in replies.
- **New weighing of arguments, contextual observations, or examples are all expected in Reply for the speaker to fulfill more than just a reporting role.**
  - Good reply speeches do not just report on the debate that happened, but contribute to the team's overall strategy and approach in the debate, in order to shape how the debate has evolved and panned out.
  - In particular, Prop reply responds implicitly to the 3rd opp by using new weighing, contextual observations, etc.
- **Reply speeches can swing debates through their observations, and by highlighting parts of the debate that may have occurred earlier in the debate, but is nonetheless worthy of full consideration by judges.**

Evaluating Contradictions

- **Contradictions can be resolved - and teams should be encouraged and rewarded for doing so.**
  - A successful resolution merits extra strategy points, while a made contradiction entails penalising strategy points.
- **Contradictions can also be a major part of the reason why a team loses a debate, but needs to tie into deeper strategic considerations. For example: THBT cats are better than dogs**
  - First Proposition (1P) says cats are better than dogs because they have soft fur and softness is the most important trait for animals, and second Proposition (2P) says cats are better than dogs because their fur is coarse.
  - This is a problem not because its 2P contradicts 1P and contradictions are inherently bad, it should be understood as a strategic problem because 2P's argumentation weakens the caseline from 1P, and a content problem because the arguments from 1P and 2P cannot coexist.
- **As a general rule, in cases where contradictions are unresolved, judges should discount the less substantiated of the two claims, and where claims are equally substantiated, the claim which was made last**
  - A one line response or an unsubstantiated claim that might be contradictory should be under minimal consideration, whereas;
  - a well substantiated argument that comes later may require discounting of previous arguments in favor of the former.
- **As with other aspects of scoring, the extent and reward should align with the magnitude of the offense made.**

A contradiction is never an autoloss.