

Speakers' Briefing



This is an adapted version of the materials from Serbia WSDC 2024 collated by the WSDC Board, for the purposes of Speaker Training. All credit should be given to the WSDC 2024 CAP for content.

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PART 01

Tournament Format



Rounds & Motions

8 Preliminary Rounds:

- Rounds 1 and 2 are seeded and side-locked (see Tab Briefing for explanation)
- Rounds 3-8 are power paired
- Prepared Rounds v Impromptu Rounds
 - Rounds 1, 2, 5, and 7 are Prepared Rounds
 - Rounds 3, 4, 6, and 8 are Impromptu Rounds
 - All outrounds are Impromptu Rounds
- No technology is allowed during ANY debate.
 - For timing, please use a basic stopwatch – either a physical one, or one that is part of a basic watch.
 - If you require technology, please consult the technology policy.

PART 02

WSDC Tournament Rules



Draw and Preparation Time Procedure

Prepared Rounds: Rounds 1 and 2

- Draw for Rounds 1 and 2 already released
- Draw for Rounds 5 and 7 will be released at the latest 1 hour after confirmation of the final ballot for Rounds 4 and 6 respectively.
- Allowed to use all research materials the team has prepared for the round as long as they are printed out and/or written down on paper.

Impromptu Rounds: Rounds 3, 4, 6, 8, and all Outrounds

1. Upon release of the draw
 - a. Volunteers will pass a sealed envelope. DO NOT OPEN THE ENVELOPE UNLESS/UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO.
 - b. Debaters to pass all your electronic devices and prohibited materials to their coach(es)/team manager(s).
2. Before the motion is released
 - a. Debaters stay in the auditorium
 - b. Non-Debaters to move to the top floor of the auditorium
3. Motion Release
 - a. CAP will announce to open the sealed envelope.
 - b. Motion will be read out
 - c. Leave in an orderly fashion.
4. Motion Clarification
 - a. All questions are directed to the the DCAs serving on the Motion Committee.
 - b. You can ask for a clarification in the 15 minutes of the preparation time by coming to the front of the auditorium.
 - c. Clarification will be provided to the team that requested it and their opposing team.
 - d. No tournament-wide clarification will be given unless members of the Motions Committee wish to issue one.



Impromptu Round Materials Rules: Reference Materials

What reference material is allowed in the preparation room?

1. An English language dictionary
2. A bilingual dictionary
3. EITHER a single-volume encyclopaedia OR an almanac*
 - *Not almanac: CIA World Fact Book, Debbie Newman and Ben Woolgar ed., Pros and Cons: A Debaters' Handbook

What else can you bring into the preparation room?

1. Writing materials (pens, pencils, sharpeners, erasers, correction fluid/tape, stapler, highlighters)
2. Writing paper with nothing written/printed on them (no notes from previous debates)
3. A basic stopwatch
4. Water bottles
5. Snacks (please remember to clean up after yourself)

What is **NOT** allowed in the preparation room

1. Case files or matter files
2. Laptops, tablets, computers, mobile phones, smartphones, smartwatches
3. Paper with things written on them (e.g. notes from previous debates, meeting minutes, prep sheets, etc.)



Team Composition and Behaviour

Each team comprises a minimum of 3 debaters and a maximum of 5 debaters.

- During Preparation Time, all 5 debaters may prepare together.

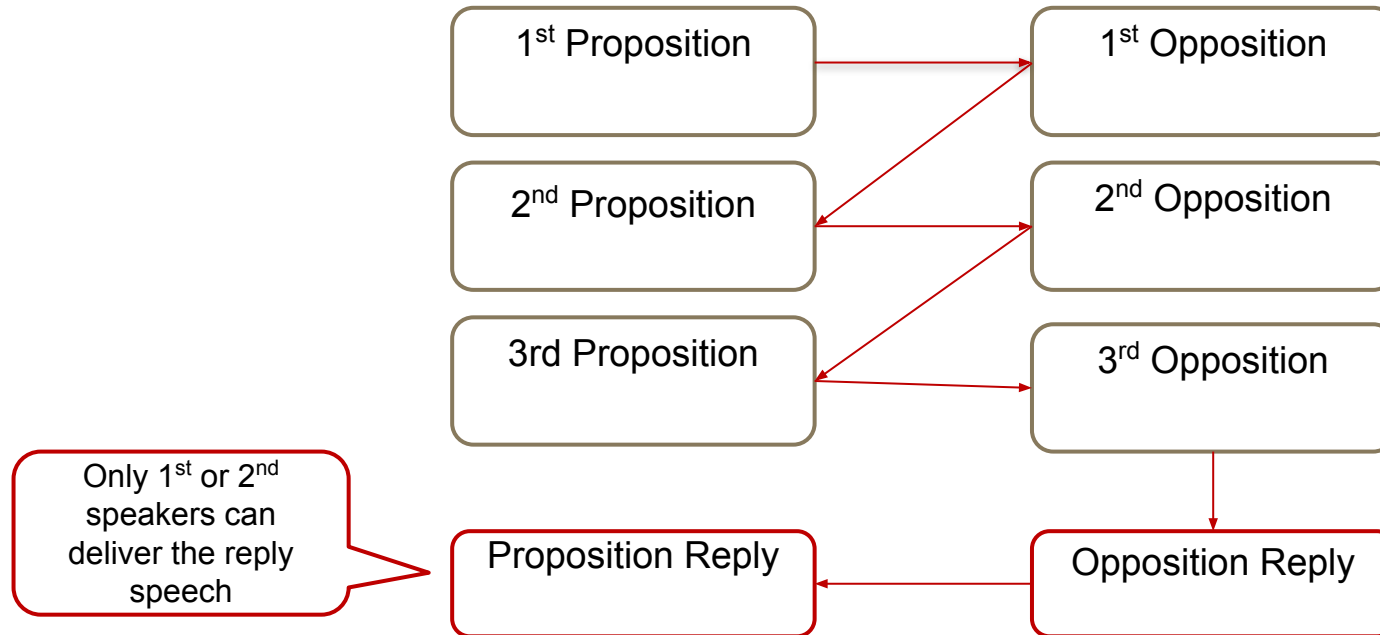
During the debate, only 3 speakers are allowed to speak. Remaining speakers who do not speak are **treated as part of the audience.**

- **ALLOWED** to speak to coach(es), team manager(s), and other audience members.
- **ALLOWED** to give basic time signals, but should not be used to signal things like “conclude now” or “move on from this”.
- **NOT** allowed to speak to the three debaters who are speaking that round.
- **NOT** allowed to send signals to the team (e.g. nodding, tipping of head, etc.)

PART 03

WSDC Format

WSDC FORMAT



Points of Information (POIs) can be offered by the other team during the first three speeches (constructive round).

POIs are offered between the first minute and the last minute.

There are no POIs during the reply speeches.

Each team consists of a **minimum of 3 and max of 5 debaters. Only 3 members can speak in each debate.** Teams with more than 3 debaters may rotate the speaking 3. During the debate, the **1-2 non speaking members of the team will be the equivalents of a silent audience/observers.**



SPEAKER ROLES

Roles	Proposition	Opposition
Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the motion clearly in a way that is fair to both teams • May present their characterisation of the status quo • Advance constructive arguments in favour of their case • Where appropriate, identify what the problem is and present a solution to the identified problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must oppose the motion • May set up their case purely on rebuttal of Proposition, though this is strategically risky • May have substantive arguments of its own, including proposing a counter-model
1st speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define/ characterize the motion, relevant burden(s) and the metric(s) by which to evaluate the debate • Introduce an action plan (model), if the team chooses to tackle the motion with one • Advance and develop constructive arguments • Flag the case division between the 3 Proposition speakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge the definition, if necessary • Clarify relevant burden(s)/metric(s) for the debate, if necessary • Provide rebuttals to the 1st Proposition • Introduce their own stance (detailed under “Team Roles”) • Bring their own constructive arguments (advisable) • Flag the case division division between the 3 Opp speakers
2nd Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with definitional challenges, if necessary • Provide rebuttals to the 1st Opposition • Extend or further develop constructive arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide rebuttals to the 2nd Proposition’s extension • Extend or further develop the constructive arguments
3rd Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small substantive arguments, if flagged in the 1st Proposition • Provide rebuttals to the Opposition’s case 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small substantive arguments, if flagged in the 1st Opposition • Provide rebuttals to the Proposition’s case
Reply Speeches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring a holistic overview of the debate • Compare both teams’ contributions to the debate • Explain why they think their side won the debate, without adding non-derivative arguments for their side 	



FORMAT - POIs

Accepting Points of Information

- The speaker who has the floor has a right to refuse POIs, but in general should accept about 2 POIs
- If a speaker accepts a POI, they should give the person offering the POI adequate time to express their comment (max of 15 seconds)

Offering Points of Information

- Speakers may offer POIs any time between the 1st and before the last minute
- Only one speaker from the opposing speaking team can offer a POI at a time
- Non-speaking members of the opposing speaking team may not offer any POIs
- When offering POIs, speaker should not indicate the topic of their POI, e.g. by saying “on that point”
- If a POI is rejected, they should wait ~20 secs before offering another. Badgering the speaker is in poor taste.
- Speakers should respect the preference of the speaker holding the floor while offering POIs

What happens if a speaker takes no POIs/less than 2 POIs?

The decision of the overall round, regardless of the POIs taken by speakers should be evaluated by the content coming out in the round. However, teams that take POIs are advantaged by being able to engage the other team's material more. Judges can reflect in an individual speaker's score the fact that they took no POIs.



SECOND SPEAKER CLARIFICATION: EXTENSION V. NEW SUBSTANTIVE

Traditionally, the norm was for Second Speakers to have 1-2 new, unique, independent, and explicit argument(s).

- More recently, there is trend at WSDC that sees Second Speakers not having 1-2 new, unique, independent, and explicit argument(s). Instead, Second Speakers engage in extensive weighing, framing, rebuttal action, and advanced stakeholder analysis.

CAP Position: Second Speakers should introduce substantial material (e.g. new examples, advanced stakeholder analysis, additional logical links, more impacts, more/new weighing or framing, etc.), even if it is not an entirely new argument. The Second Speaker Speech should not be a mere repetition of the First Speaker.

However, whether Second Speakers bring a new argument is a strategic decision for the team.

- No approach, in itself, is better than the other.
- If the decision is made to forward a new argument, that argument should be given enough time to be properly and fully analysed.



THIRD SPEAKER CLARIFICATION I: NEW MATERIAL

What do the Rules say?

- The role of the Third Speaker is to respond to the other team's case.
- The Third Speeches from either team may provide an entirely new, unique, independent, and explicit argument, **if and only if it was flagged in the First Proposition/Opposition speech.**
- However, it is **not strategic** to leave the strongest material to the Third Speaker as it shows poor prioritisation by the team.

*New Material: Anything that has not been mentioned in the debate, and cannot be traced to analyses already provided in the debate. e.g. an entirely new, independent, argument.

- **So long as the idea being developed can be clearly traced to a development in the debate** (e.g. picking up on an earlier response, deepening a given substantive, following on from what First/Second speakers are doing, similar analytical direction of existing material), **it is not considered as new material.**

However, even if a material is not new, it could be *late*. This means that it was not strategic for the team to leave this material to the third speaker as it is less able to be properly developed.



THIRD SPEAKER CLARIFICATION II - RESPONSES

Responding can come in a variety of forms, such as:

- **Direct rebuttal** to an argument that the other team has made, which means providing a critique of the logic in the argument or providing new explanations for why the conclusion reached in the other side's argument is wrong
- **Weighing** of arguments by providing analysis of the relative importance of arguments or impacts
- **Indirect comments or analysis** about an existing clash point: providing new conclusions or impacts which can be weighed against the conclusions reached by the other team
- **New contextual or characterisation analysis** which broaden the understanding of conclusions reached by either team
- **New examples** which provide deeper understanding of the arguments being made or existing rebuttal

What happens if a critical portion of the Opposition rebuttal to Proposition's case is delivered by the Third Speaker, without any engagement from the First and Second Speaker?

- It is theoretically possible for Opposition to win **IF** responses are thorough.
- However this may be unstrategic given that Opposition only has 1 speech to develop this response, and it is therefore harder to sufficiently respond in a thorough way.



REPLY SPEAKER CLARIFICATION: NEW MATTER IN REPLY

The Reply Speech is a summary of the debate from the team's viewpoint.

- 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

New arguments are not permitted in Reply speeches.

- New weighing, new framing, new contextual observations, new examples are permitted, **HOWEVER** they have to be clearly derivative.
- Leaving significant proportions of a team's weighing, framing, contextual observations or examples to the reply speech would likely be considered as poor strategy



Deeper look into: Content, Style, and Strategy

Debaters at WSDC are marked according to the tripartite standards of Content, Style, and Strategy.

- Content (40%) → **WHAT** you say in the debate
 - Covers the content of the material provided, whether that be substantive arguments, rebuttals, responses to POIs, and so on.
 - Evaluates quality of the material being presented in terms of: analytical rigour, and the use of examples/illustrations.
- Style (40%) → **HOW** you say something in the debate
 - Appropriate word choice, Eye contact, Body movement and hand gestures, Voice projection and control, Articulation and Enunciation, Speed of delivery, Variation in delivery, and Effective use of humor to make a point.
 - Style is credited to the extent that it value-adds or value-diminishes to the persuasiveness of the speech given.
- Strategy (20%) → **WHY** you say something in the debate
 - Motion interpretation (Definition, Approach/Direction), Time allocation, Prioritization, and Structuring of materials in a speech, Consistency within and between speeches, Weighing and Framing.

The three marking schemes are not discrete categories that are marked independently, but the **three categories work together to form a cohesive speech**. Speeches are marked holistically, with a consideration of these three categories.

PART 04

Setting Up Debates



Interpreting the Motion

A motion is a topic to be debated in the round. It can be phrased in several ways, usually starting with “This House”. Who “This House” is changes based on the motion

- This House typically refers to a group of neutral observers (“we” as a collective)
- Other times it is a specific actor that is defined in the motion (e.g. This House, as a school teacher, This House believes that the US should ban fracking).

Information Slides are sometimes provided to provide clarity and necessary knowledge for the purpose of the debate. **Any information on this slide is assumed to be true for the debate**, and should be treated as part of the motion by teams and judges.

There are broadly two types of debates:

- Value Judgement / Analysis / Principle debates
 - Is a given statement true in the majority of cases?
 - Likely requires a metric / evaluative criteria / benchmark / yardstick
 - Can have discussions over practical impacts or principle(d) considerations.
- Policy / Action debates
 - Should action X be implemented as a matter of law?
 - Assume that whatever the motion is proposing is **NOT** the status quo (no global status quo)
 - Proposition fiat exists

All debates are a variation of these two types, but may be worded in different ways. Each wording carries with it a specific nuance e.g. Actor motion v. Non-actor motion.



Proposition Fiat & Opposition Strategy

Proposition Fiat:

- The action specified in the motion is assumed to be possible. This cannot be contested. **This does not mean perfect implementation of the action specified in the motion.**
- Example: THW reserve 30% of seats in Parliament for LGBTQ+ candidates
 - Motion assumes that reservation of seats is a policy that would pass Parliament.
 - Motion does not assume that the seats will be allocated in a way that would benefit the LGBTQ+ community.
 - Motion does not assume that there will be no backlash from conservative sections of society.

Opposition Strategy

- It is **NOT** mandatory for Opposition to have a countermodel / counterprop in the debate. However, it might be strategic for them to have one, depending on the motion.
- If Opposition chooses to have a countermodel, they have as much fiat as the Proposition. Their countermodel must therefore be:
 - mutually exclusive from the Proposition model, and
 - does not use more resources than the Proposition.
- Opposition can also choose to defend the status quo (or some variation of it)
- Some motion may be explicit on whether Opposition has to set a model (and what kind)
 - THBT X should do Y instead of Z → Opposition must defend Z



What Burdens Do Teams Have

When the motion is not worded as an absolute (e.g. THW ban cosmetic surgery)

- Proposition: Prove why it should be done generally, not beyond reasonable doubt.
- Opposition: Prove why it should not be done generally.

When the motion is worded as an absolute (e.g. THBT democracy is the best form of governance for all countries in the world)

- Proposition: Prove in the significant majority of cases, though not all conceivable cases.
- Opposition: Prove in the significant minority of cases, cannot win on one instance.



Motion Wordings at a Glance

1. This House believes that (THBT)
2. This House would (THW)
3. This House supports (THS) / This House opposes (THO)
4. This House regrets (THR)
5. This House prefers (THP)
6. This House, as X, would do Y



Defining the Motion: Avoid the Following

<p>Squirelling: Distorting the topic and defining it in a way that violates the spirit of the motion.</p>	<p>E.g. <i>“THW ban gambling”</i> cannot be defined as banning risky behaviors such as taking hard drugs, as a way of “gambling with one’s life”. Gambling has an obvious meaning.</p>
<p>Disallowing opposition room for debate</p>	<p>E.g. <i>“TH supports cosmetic surgery”</i> cannot be defined as supporting it only for burn victims. This would make it impossible for Opposition to do the debate.</p>
<p>Refusing to debate the motion at the level of specificity / abstraction the motion requires</p>	<p>E.g. In <i>“THW restrict civil liberties in the name of national security”</i>, a definition that defends exclusively compulsory ID cards is too narrow. Compulsory ID cards may be an example of a national security policy that is defended by the Proposition team, but the debate extends beyond this example to a more general principle.</p>
<p>Place-setting: Narrowing the debate arbitrarily to specific places not specified by the motion</p>	<p>E.g. In <i>“THW ban commercial surrogacy”</i>, it is not legitimate to set the debate “only in low-income nations”. Examples from these countries may be used, but the debate has a global context. However, in <i>THW ban non-democratic countries from hosting international sporting events</i>, Proposition can identify reasonable criteria for what constitutes a democracy.</p>
<p>Time-setting: Narrowing the debate arbitrarily to a time that is not the present when unspecified</p>	<p>E.g. <i>THBT citizens should engage in civil disobedience to protest unjust laws</i>: Proposition cannot define the policy in the context of apartheid in South Africa from 1948 until the 1990s, even though they may use this as an example However, in <i>THBT NATO should not have withdrawn combat troops from Afghanistan</i>: Proposition can set the context of the debate to the period when they contemplated the withdrawal of troops (2011-2014) as it’s implicit in the motion</p>



Options Available When Encountering Unreasonable Definitions

1. Accept the unreasonable definition and debate with the Proposition's definition.
 - a. Accept the definition and continue to debate with the Proposition's definition.
2. Broaden the debate back to the words in the motion (level of abstraction/specificity, general meanings).
3. Challenge the definition
 - a. Argue that the definition is unreasonable, and present an alternative, reasonable definition, and debate based on the alternative definition, i.e. no 'even-if' responses.
 - b. Argue that the definition is unreasonable, and present an alternative, reasonable definition, debate based on the alternative definition, **and also argue that 'even if' Proposition's definition is reasonable, the Proposition's case is still flawed.**

Options 1 and 2 can be done in any speaker.

Option 3 **MUST** be done in the First Opposition Speech.



Some Notes on Definitional Challenges

There is no obligation to challenge unreasonable definitions: If teams deem that it is strategic to proceed with a unreasonable / faulty definition, they may do so.

Assessments of definition(s) and definitional challenges are marked under strategy: If the Opposition's challenge is successful, this will impact Proposition's strategy score. Conversely, if the Opposition's challenge is unsuccessful, this will impact Opposition's strategy score.

Debates are not automatically won or lost by definitional challenges: Definitions merely provide a framework for analysis of the round.



This House would (THW)

Policy / Action Debate

- **NOT MANDATORY** to have a policy/model, but could be useful to help explain/illustrate how the team envisions the new world to look like.
- Proposition Fiat exists; Opposition has same amount of fiat as Proposition does.
 - Does not mean perfect implementation; just that teams have the capacity to assume that the action required by the motion is possible.
- Assume that whatever the motion is proposing is **NOT** the status quo (no global status quo)

E.g. THW legalise all recreational drugs



This House believes that (THBT)

Variant 1: Value Judgement / Analysis / Principle debate (usually)

Does not usually require a policy set-up, but may be useful if teams wish to use one to illustrate what they envision the new world would look like.

- E.g. THBT parents should have access to their children's social media accounts

Not about changing the world, but about evaluating the validity of a certain view

- E.g. THBT the war on drugs has failed

May sometimes require a metric / criteria (e.g. what is “more harm than good”?)

- THBT single sex schools do more harm than good

Variant 2: May sometimes be a ‘policy’ debate when worded as THBT X should do Y

- E.g. THBT the Singapore government should abolish the mandatory death penalty for drug trafficking
 - The motion is calling for the Singapore government to do something
 - Modelling is not mandatory, but could be useful. Up to the strategic choice of teams.



This House supports (THS) / This House opposes (THO)

Value Judgement / Analysis / Principle Debate

- Debate takes place in the status quo.
- Requires teams to explain why having more (if support) / less (if oppose) of X is good for the world
- Might require a metric (e.g. at what point do we support / oppose something)
- No mandatory model, model is typically not appropriate

E.g. This House supports the rise of hashtag activism, This House opposes the rise of hashtag activism



This House regrets (THR)

Value Judgement / Principle / Analysis Debate

- Debate is retrospective. You hit a stop on the flow of time and ask if X is something that was good/bad for the world.
- Proposition needs to re-imagine what a world without X would look like – this re-imagined world is called the **counterfactual**. They must then show why this counterfactual world is preferable to the status quo.
 - Counterfactuals can be contested; Oppositions may claim that the Proposition's counterfactual is not likely/possible.
- Opposition must defend the status quo or the trends in the status quo.

E.g. This House regrets the rise of Twitter journalism



This House Prefers (THP)

Value Judgement / Analysis / Principle Debate

- Debate is a comparison between X and Y.
- Proposition must defend X, Opposition must defend Y. Opposition cannot defend Y+Z.
- Teams can be dynamic in their analysis i.e. they can show how X and/or Y can/has change(d) over time.

Two Phrasings

E.g. This House prefers benevolent dictatorships to weak democracies

E.g. This House prefers a world where all countries were benevolent dictatorships.



This House, as X, would do Y

Actor Motion

- Debate happens from the specific perspective of the actor specified in the motion. **All arguments must be linked to why actor X cares/would care about doing action Y.**
- Does not mean that Actor X is always self-interested or that principle arguments cannot be made. Just means that **teams must show why Actor X cares about that principle / perspective.**

E.g. TH, as a parent, would encourage their child not to attend Oxbridge



Feedback - Team on Judge

Question 1: Did this Judge: (tick all that apply)

- Provide an Oral Adjudication
- Give you Feedback after the Round
- Neither

Question 2: How would you rank this adjudicator overall? [1-10]

- Very Poor (1) This judge demonstrates a severe lack of understanding of debate rules and principles, frequently misinterprets arguments, and struggles to follow the debate flow. Additionally, they are unable to provide coherent feedback, with their comments being irrelevant, confusing, or lacking any meaningful analysis of the debate.
- Poor (2): This judge has difficulty applying debate rules consistently, often making errors in reasoning and struggling to articulate reasons for decisions clearly. Their feedback is vague, lacks depth, and does not effectively communicate reasons for decisions or provide constructive criticism.
- Below Average (3): This judge shows some understanding of debate rules but often misapplies them, resulting in inconsistent decision-making that may not align well with debate outcomes. Their feedback is somewhat relevant but lacks clarity and specificity, failing to effectively highlight key points for improvement or key reasoning in oral adjudication.
- Average (4): This judge understands basic debate rules but occasionally misinterprets or overlooks key aspects, leading to generally reasonable but inconsistent decision-making. Their feedback is generally relevant but may lack depth or specific examples, making it adequate but not particularly insightful.
- Satisfactory (5): This judge demonstrates a solid understanding of debate rules and principles, making generally sound judgments though they may lack depth in analysis or consistency in applying rules. Their feedback is clear and identifies key strengths and weaknesses, though it may lack nuance.



Feedback - Team on Judge

- Above Average (6): This judge shows a good understanding of the WSDC format and consistently applies rules appropriately, with generally fair and well-supported decision-making. Their feedback is insightful, helping debaters understand their performance better, with clear and constructive communication.
- Good (7): This judge exhibits a strong grasp of debate rules and principles, making well-reasoned decisions based on a balanced assessment of arguments and adherence to rules. Their feedback is detailed and insightful, identifying nuanced aspects of the debate and effectively conveying feedback to debaters.
- Very Good (8): This judge demonstrates a high level of proficiency in understanding and applying debate rules, with highly objective and well-supported decision-making. Their feedback is highly constructive, detailed, and helps debaters understand their performance comprehensively, with clear and insightful communication.
- Excellent (9): This judge shows exceptional understanding and application of debate rules, with thorough, fair, and deeply informed decision-making that reflects a comprehensive understanding of the debate mechanics and flow. Their feedback is exceptionally detailed and insightful, providing precise guidance that is invaluable for debaters' improvement.
- Outstanding (10): This judge exemplifies flawless understanding and application of debate rules, with impeccable and thorough decision-making that demonstrates outstanding impartiality and expertise. Their communication of feedback is comprehensive, precise, and insightful, significantly aiding debaters in their development.

Question 3: Do you agree with the Judge's call?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know



Feedback - Team on Judge

Question 4: Was this judge in the majority decision?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Question 5: Do you believe they should move from the role they fulfilled (for example be moved from panellist to chair or some other movement)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Question 6: Please provide a detailed justified explanation for the scores given about (mandatory)

[Comment here]

- Provide reasons for your agreement or disagreement?
- Was this judge open and willing to provide feedback and an understanding of the result?
- Was the judge's reasoning and explanations clear, comprehensive, and helpful? Please elaborate.

THANK YOU !