

# DEBATE RULEBOOK

KAIROS  
MARCH 20-22 | 2015



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## **§1 Tournament Format**

1.1 The tournament shall consist of a preliminary and an elimination phase.

1.1.1 The preliminary phase consists of four preliminary rounds, where Preliminary Round 1 shall feature teams paired up at random and Rounds 2 through 4 shall feature teams paired up on a Swiss League power matching basis. The power brackets will be decided by the win/loss record of teams, with the secondary and tertiary sorting criteria of total speaker points and cumulative margins of victory respectively. These will be used to determine pairings on a high-mid basis.

1.1.2 The elimination phase consisting of three elimination rounds—, pre-semis, semifinals and the Final—on a single elimination basis, according to the following scheme:

- Pre-Semi 1: Breaking Team 3 v. Breaking Team 6
- Pre-Semi 2: Breaking Team 4 v. Breaking Team 5
- Semifinal 1: Breaking Team 1 v. Winner Pre-Semifinal 2
- Semifinal 2: Breaking Team 2 v. Winner Pre-Semifinal 1
- Final: Winner Semifinal 1 v. Winner Semifinal 2

1.2 The 6 breaking teams from the preliminary rounds shall be determined on the basis of the following criteria, in order:

- Win/loss record
- Total speaker points
- Cumulative margin of victory

## **§2 Match Format**

### **2.1 Motions**

2.1.1 Each round shall offer three motions for debate, which may be linked by a common theme. The positions of Government and Opposition will be pre-decided and announced in with the match-ups.

2.1.2 Upon the announcement of the motions for a round, each team must, as soon as practicable, rank the motions in their order of preference for the debate in the round (1 being the most preferred, 3 being the least preferred).

2.1.3 Each pair shall then compare their preferences in order to determine which motion shall be debated in the round.

2.1.3.1 In case both paired teams rank different motions as their least preferred, then the remaining motion shall prevail for the round.

2.1.3.2 In case both paired teams rank the same motion as their least preferred and there is no identity as to their most preferred motion, the motion to be debated in the round shall be decided by way of a single coin toss.

### **2.2 Preparation Time**

2.2.1 The announcement of matches, venues and motions for the round will be done in a room with all participants and organisers present. Participants are required to write down motions word for word, listen carefully to clarifications issued and ask for any further clarifications that they require at the time itself.

2.2.2 After announcements and clarifications, teams will have 30 minutes from the time preparation time is announced to have commenced to decide upon motions in the manner prescribed in §2.1, proceed to the allocated venues and prepare for the round.

2.2.3 Unless otherwise agreed upon, the Government side shall have the right to prepare at the venue for the round.

2.2.4 Teams are permitted to use prepared or printed material during preparation time.

2.2.4.1 Teams are strictly prohibited from using any form of electronic media, electronic storage/retrieval devices including, but not limited to, computers, mobile phones, electronic data storage devices and the like.

2.2.4.2 Teams are strictly prohibited from consulting, in any form, any debaters, coaches, friends, observers or any other individuals for any assistance in the context of the round.

2.2.4.3 Teams may refer to printed or prepared materials referred to in §2.4 during the round but such materials may not be accessed by the speaker holding the floor.

## 2.3 Walkovers

2.3.1 In case a team is not present within 5 minutes of the motions being declared to provide their preference of motion the team present has the right to choose the motion to be debated.

2.3.2 If a team has one or both members absent at the time the first speech of the match is scheduled to begin the organisers will award a default win to the team present.

2.3.3 A team that receives a default win will be awarded the average of their speaker points and margin of victory from their performance in every other round of the tournament, unless otherwise specified by the organisers.

## 2.4 Post Match

2.4.1 Upon the conclusion of the last speech of a match, both teams and the runner must vacate the room to allow adjudicators time to formulate their verdict and prepare feedback.

2.4.2 Adjudicators can not discuss the merits of the debate with each other and must come up with scores, verdict and feedback completely individually. They may, however, ask one another clarifications on the wording of a point they misheard.

2.4.3 Adjudicators will get not more than ten minutes to fill in their score sheets and prepare feedback. At the end of ten minutes the teams will re-enter the room for the commencement of feedback.

## §3 Debate Format

### 3.1 Basics

3.1.1 Each round shall feature two participating teams (one team representing the Government side and the other team representing the Opposition side) and an odd number of Adjudicators.

3.1.2 The Government team is represented by a Prime Minister and a Member Government. The Opposition team is represented by a Leader of Opposition and a Member Opposition.

3.1.3 The Government team proposes a case statement based on the motion selected by the teams for the round (see §2.1) and seeks to establish that the House (embodied in every round by the panel of Adjudicators), should vote for their proposal. In response, the Opposition team may either challenge the way in which the Government has defined the motion (in accordance with §6.1) or seek to establish that the House should

not vote for the proposal of the Government, on the strength of the arguments led by the Opposition. The team which best fulfils its burden wins the debate round.

### 3.2 Order and Timing of Speeches:

3.2.1 Each preliminary round shall consist, in order, of the following speeches:

- Prime Minister (PM): 7 minutes
- Leader of Opposition (LO): 7 minutes
- Member Government (MG): 7 minutes
- Member Opposition (MO): 7 minutes
- Opposition and Government QnA : 4 minutes each
- Opposition Reply Speech: 4 minutes
- Government Reply Speech: 4 minutes

3.2.2 Each speech has a twenty second grace period.

3.2.3 Only the first speakers from either side (i.e. PM and LO) shall give the Whip Statement for that side.

### 3.3 Points of Information

3.3.1 At any time between the first and final minutes of the four constructive speeches of the round, a member of the opposing team may indicate his/her willingness to ask a question of the speaker holding the floor and may do so upon receiving the permission of the speaker. The speaker must indicate as soon as possible whether or not they intend to take the point, and not leave the member of the opposition without a response.

3.3.2 The point raised must be in the form of an untagged question, preceded only by the words "point of information", "question" or other similar terms.

3.3.3 A point of information may interrupt the speaker holding the floor for no longer

than 15 seconds and may not be offered without a minimum gap of 20 seconds between points offered by a team, and not just a member of that team.

3.3.4 Any violation of the rules mentioned in §3.3.1-3.3.3 shall invite a warning, reprimand or points penalty by the judge(s) for the round, as such judge(s) may deem appropriate in accordance with §7.

## §4 Speakers

4.1 Each speaker in the round is expected to perform the following functions as per their role:

4.1.1 Prime Minister: The Prime Minister's speech is shorter than usual, which necessitates him/her to be concise and initiate debate by entering the crux of the issue right from the outset. The speech is expected to clearly lay out the Government's stand, as well as the split of arguments across the two constructive speeches at their disposal, while fully covering the highest priority argumentation within the same speech. The Member Government will be largely bound by the plan of argumentation provided by the PM. A model of implementation to be followed in any proposed policy must be entirely stated in this speech, with no further additions or modifications allowed as an afterthought in MG.

- State a clear, concise case statement/proposal that is not in violation of any of the rules mentioned in §5.1.
- Offer a background, explanation or context for the Government case, if necessary.
- Present arguments in support of the proposal.

4.1.2 Leader of Opposition: The Leader

of Opposition has been given 2 minutes more than the PM to lay out his/her case, as well as a minute more than Member Opposition. This is to establish a necessity for the Opposition to push the majority of its argumentation to the fore of the debate. The nature of motions ensure that there is great scope for constructive matter to be presented by the LO without having to rely solely on reactionary rebuttal arguments. The LO will also be required, but less rigorously so, to provide a team split in argumentation for the Opp side.

- If challenging the way the motion has been defined by the Government, a clear statement up front of the ground under which such a challenge is sought to be sustained.
- Offer rebuttal to the Government case.
- Present independent arguments for rejecting the Government case, including a clear statement detailing a counter-proposal to that of the Government, if so desired.

4.1.3 Member Government: The Member from Government has 8 minutes to thoroughly engage with the LO's case as well as well fulfill any constructive extensions deputed to him/her by the PM in the team split. The MG is allowed to use new lines of argumentation to deal with the constructive argumentation in the LO's case, which must branch out or complement, but not contradict, the case set out by the PM. The MG speech is the last opportunity for the Gov to provide substantial analysis to their case and must be utilised as such.

- Present any further new argument(s) in support of the proposal.
- Engage with the rebuttal and independent arguments presented by the Leader of Opposition.
- Summarise the Government case and the

debate so far, with an emphasis on the issue(s) that the Government is winning.

4.1.4 Member Opposition: The Member from Opposition's speech has a minute less than the MG because, as the last constructive speech, it is not meant to have any major new lines of argumentation, but have a focused approach on the clashes that are relevant in the debate. The MO is, however, allowed to bring in new analysis and rebuttals to counter instances of the same in the MG's speech without initiating a completely new line of constructive argumentation that was entirely absent from the case set up by the LO. The MO is expected to tackle the Gov. case in entirety and not just the MG speech, extending the LO's argumentation to the team's benefit.

- Present, at the earliest possible opportunity, any further new argument(s) in support of the Opposition case.
- Engage with the rebuttal and independent arguments presented by the Member Government.
- Summarise the Opposition case and the debate so far, with an emphasis on the issue(s) that the Opposition is winning.

4.1.7 Opposition Reply Speech: The Reply Speech from the Leader of Opposition is meant to provide a final crystallisation of the clashes in the debate into key voting issues for the adjudicators to consider. The speech is required to analyse these issues in light of substantiation provided by both sides, while identifying grounds to prove Opp.'s victory in the debate overall.

- Frame the debate from the point of view of the Opposition and crystallise the issues into clear Opposition voting issues.
- Clearly outline any concessions, inconsistencies or vague responses by the Government side and any important arguments or rebuttals by the Opposition

that were not engaged with by the Government.

- Offer coherent and compelling analysis for why, given the context and characterisation of issues in the round and the arguments raised and strategies adopted by both sides, the Opposition side outweighs the Government side on each key voting issue.

4.1.8 Government Reply Speech: Before the proposed legislation is put to vote in the house, side Government has the right to have the last word on the issue. This speech is to be the Gov. opinion on the voting issues of the debate and analysis to swing the verdict of the debate. Both Whip Statements are most effective as macro level evaluations of the debate, and not just a flurry of disjointed rebuttals

- Frame the debate from the point of view of the Government and crystallise the issues into clear Government voting issues.
- Clearly outline any concessions, inconsistencies or vague responses by the Opposition side and any important arguments or rebuttals by the Government that were not engaged with by the Opposition.
- Offer coherent and compelling analysis for why, given the context and characterisation of issues in the round and the arguments raised and strategies adopted by both sides, the Government side outweighs the Opposition side on each key voting issue.

4.2 Owing to the restriction on the last two speakers in the round from presenting new material (§5.2), the third and fourth speakers in each round (MG and MO) are instructed, as a matter of best practice, to present new material in support of their case as early in their speech as practicable, so

as to permit the opposing side reasonable opportunity to offer reasoned responses to such new material and thereby encourage a strategically fair debate.

4.3 Each of the first four speakers is permitted to bring in new material. However, the last two speakers in the round (OppWhip and GovWhip) are not permitted to offer any new material in the form of a fresh line of argument previously not presented in the round. This is without prejudice to the role of the GovWhip, who is permitted to address the arguments presented by the MO in the form of rebuttal which does not amount to a fresh line of argument previously not presented in the round.

## §5 Adjudicators

5.1 Adjudicators are required to assume the mantle of average reasonable persons possessing expert knowledge of the rules of debate.

5.1.1 Adjudicators are required to keep aside specialised knowledge they may know about any given issue through their disciplinary expertise or specialised study and must restrict their knowledge to that possessed by the average newspaper reader.

5.2 During the round, Adjudicators are instructed to listen carefully to every word spoken and encouraged to take detailed notes. While reviewing the round in preparation for their vote, Adjudicators are instructed to sift through all the material presented and narrow down the material relevant to their vote, giving due regard, in particular, to the objective strength of the material placed before them and the permissibility of the material placed before them (i.e. whether the material was validly introduced into the round, as per the role fulfillment rules in §4).

5.3 Adjudicators should formulate a set of clinching voting issues, which may or may not overlap with the issues identified by teams, which form the basis for their decision. The judging process must also involve prioritising these issues and accurately capturing the engagement between the two sides on these issues without unduly embellishing or discrediting the material put forward by the speakers.

5.4 While arriving at their decision for the round, Adjudicators are encouraged to critically analyse the Reply speeches in particular from the perspective of an average reasonable person, having due regard to the context and background in which the round is set.

5.5 It is important to note for adjudicators that debates should not be decided on a point versus point basis. Thus, a team won't automatically win a debate if it wins, say, four out of the seven points raised during the debate. Adjudicators must rank points and rebuttals in order of importance, and on how these points and rebuttals establish the burden of proof and points of clash of the two sides as well as the timing of such arguments across the team split of a side.

5.6 Adjudicators are required to fill in their ballots with details of the round, accurate team and speaker names, accurately summated total team and speaker points (see §7.1) (the points total of the winning team must be greater than the points total of the losing team) and a clear indication of their vote (Government or Opposition) as soon as possible after the completion of the round.

5.7 Upon the completion of the duties in §5.6, Adjudicators are required to reveal their individual votes for the round and

give the teams oral feedback on the round individually. They are also required to evaluate the feedback of other adjudicators on the panel.

5.8 Adjudicators are required, as a matter of tournament policy, to adopt the following guidelines while giving oral feedback to teams:

5.8.1 Give the clinching reason(s) for the vote upfront and go over the most relevant/highest priority reasons for the vote. State your speaker score range and margin of victory range and provide integrated feedback to justify them.

5.8.2 Do not integrate team and individual feedback in the form of constructive advice into oral feedback. Restrict feedback to an analysis of the verdict and your reasons for the same. Once all feedback sheets have been submitted teams and adjudicators are encouraged to discuss constructive strategies for improvement.

5.8.3 Employ burdens of proof, key words in the topic and the context/background and characterisation of issues in the round wherever warranted.

5.8.4 Take questions/converse with teams during oral feedback according to your comfort level, without dropping courtesy or being evasive.

## **§6 Definition Challenges**

6.1 If a motion is defined by the Government in a manner that renders it un-opposable for the other side due to the restrictions they impose at the outset, side Opposition has the right to challenge this definition.

6.1.1 The Opposition may not challenge the definition supplied by the Government on

the basis that:

- Its own definition is more reasonable.
- A better debate would result.

Nor may the opposition redefine terms or words in the motion so that an entirely different debate is thereby set up.

6.2 The Opposition may challenge the definition supplied by the Government on any one of the following grounds.

- **Truism** (A matter stated as fact). For example: *This House supports Finishing Schools cannot be interpreted as The Government of India should improve the personal hygiene of children from poor families.* If the burden that the Government takes upon itself is too small for a reasonable debate to ensue, the Opposition may challenge on grounds of truism. A status quo truism is not and cannot be grounds for a definition challenge.
- **Tautology** - a definition that, in development, proves itself. For example, *this house is a house of rational people that will not allow universities to teach about banned political ideologies as universities are spaces of only rational learning and banned political ideologies are defined as those having no rational value.* A tautology is essentially a circular definition.
- **Time Set** – Changing the period in which the debate is occurring from what has been set by the organisers.
- **Place Set** - setting an unnaturally restrictive geographical or spatial location as its major parameter, such that all argumentation must necessarily be derived from the particular place setting that the proposition has chosen. E.g. *This House opposes the Iranian Nuclear Programme cannot be reasonably debated in the house of the Israeli Government.*
- **Squirrel** - Displaying no clear or logical links to the lexical meanings of the words in the motion, or clearly out of the

ambit of the spirit of the motion being debated. Further, any team that interprets a non-underlined word can be definition challenged on squirrel, and the challenge would stand. Adding or subtracting words from the motion is also adequate grounds for a challenge to hold. E.g. *This House supports EcoTerrorism cannot be defined as The United States Government should ban whaling, as while this is arguably not a truism, the original meaning of the debate has been completely circumvented in manner that does not provide fair warning to the other side.*

6.3 The definitional challenge must be made in the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, following a clear statement that the definition is being rejected. The onus for establishing the definitional challenge lies completely upon the Leader of the Opposition. Subsequent speakers are permitted a purely clarificatory role (if any) in this regard. If the leader of the opposition does not challenge the definition, no other speaker may do so.

6.3.1 In the event of a challenge, the Leader of the Opposition must do all of the following -

- He/She must justify his/her rejection by supplying the ground on which the original definition has been rejected (they may challenge the definition only on one ground).
- He/She must supply a substitute definition.
- The Opposition benches must then go on to negate the substitute definition.
- If the opposition fails to do any of these things, it automatically loses the debate.

6.3.2 In the event that its definition has been challenged, the Proposition must do the following:

- The DPM must defend the definition

supplied by the Prime Minister. However, he cannot redefine or extend the definition of any terms in the motion – he must closely stick to the Prime Minister’s original definition.

- The DPM, after mounting a defence of the Government’s definition, must go on to state his constructive points as mentioned in the Team Split.
- The DPM may give one or two arguments against his own case only to illustrate to the house how the definition supplied by the government could have resulted in a competitive debate.

This is, of course, entirely necessary if the definition has been challenged on the ground of truism.

#### 6.4 Even-if argumentation:

The Opposition on challenging the definitions is not permitted to make an “even if” argument. That is, once the definition has been challenged, they cannot proceed to rebut the case as defined by side Government.

Similarly, the Government is not required to debate the substitute definition put forth by the Opposition.

#### 6.5 Additionally

- The onus to prove that a definition is unreasonable lies completely upon the Opposition, and should not be presumed by the adjudicators.
- Definitions should not require members of the house to have access to, or possess, specific or expert knowledge.
- Neither team should abandon either the definitions or the challenges of its opening speakers.
- **In case of a definition challenge, the team winning the challenge wins by a margin of 1 to 12, as decided by the adjudicators, based upon how well the challenge and its defence is argued. Both teams are to be scored as they would be**

**in the normal course of events, but the losing teams initial score must be halved by the adjudicators.**

- A definitional challenge should take place in the rarest of rare cases.

A definition may only be challenged on one ground.

## §7 Scoring

### 7.1 Speaker Scoring

7.1.1 Judges shall mark individual speeches within the following ranges, in multiples of 0.5:

- PM, MG, LO, MO: 0-10
- GovReply, OppReply: 0-5

7.1.2 Therefore, the lowest possible score that may be awarded to a team is 0 points and the highest possible score that may be awarded to a team is 25 points (10+10+5). We recognise that most debates possess a scaling of points but we wish to emphasize that the entire range is achievable, and will stick to a relative tournament specific marking which will be explained in detail after the demo debate.

7.1.3 Judges must ensure that their team and individual speaker points do not spill out of these boundaries.

7.1.4 Any and all infringements of rules such as, but not limited to, taking protected speeches, heckling, abusive responses as well as team slides and floating models must be reflected in penalties in speaker scores for the speaker(s) responsible.

### 7.2 Judges

7.2.1 Speakers are expected to mark judges on the basis of their oral feedback according to the following criteria:

- 1 out of 5 – No identification or analysis

of issues whatsoever.

- 2 out of 5 – Somewhat accurate identification and analysis of voting issues, speaker score ranges and margin of victory but serious shortcomings in application of logic, overall reasoning and presentation of feedback.
- 3 out of 5 – Fairly accurate identification and analysis of voting issues, speaker score ranges and margin of victory with some shortcomings in application of logic, overall reasoning and presentation of feedback
- 4 out of 5 – Very accurate identification and analysis of voting issues, speaker score ranges and margin of victory with minor shortcomings in application of logic, overall reasoning and presentation of feedback
- 5 out of 5 – Entirely accurate identification and analysis of voting issues, speaker score ranges and margin of victory with very minor, if any, shortcomings in application of logic, overall reasoning and presentation of feedback.

7.2.2 In an effort to ensure that judges are marked fairly, teams are instructed to listen to the oral feedback by judges in full, ask questions/clarifications if required but not ask for constructive feedback until after all scoring has been completed and relevant sheets submitted.

7.3 Adjudicators are required to declare their speaker scores and margin of victory in the form of ranges specified below, and are further required to integrate their justification of the same into their feedback on the verdict.

7.4 The panel feedback forms will be used in the case there is a great discrepancy in the scores given by the winning and losing team to the same adjudicator. To negate the effect

of gratuitous positive or negative scores the organisers' discretion will be used to determine which scores to use.

## **§8 Equity Protocol**

8.1 A participant in the tournament may bring to the organisers' notice any personal harm/abuse experienced at the tournament in the form of, but not limited to, personal enmity, ethnic/religious bias or sexual harassment.

8.2 The tournament has designated male and female Equity Officers to act as arbiters in the case of any such complaints during the course of the tournament. The Officers are not members of the National Law University, Delhi Debating Society, or participants in the debate. All information related to the Equity Officers will be kept in the strictest confidence, with all forms of support extended to the participant as required.

8.3 The power of the Equity Officers and the organisers extends to penalising any participant found violating tournament regulations in whatever manner is deemed appropriate, up to and including an immediate ejection and permanent ban of the participant and their entire institution from tournaments organised in National Law University, Delhi.

8.4 In case of a serious violation the organisers will be fully compliant with any police investigation that may ensue.

## **§9 Saving of Powers**

9.1 This rule vests the organisers of the tournament with the power to change any, or all, of the rules referred to herein.