MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITIES DEBATE LEAGUE

Debate Format

Format: Asian Parliamentary Debate

Part One: Format of the Debate

1.1 A debate will consist of two teams; one to propose the motion and one to oppose it. The team proposing may be known as 'The Proposition', 'The Affirmative' or 'The Government'. The team opposing may be known as 'The Opposition' or 'The Negative'.

1.2 A debate shall be run under the auspices of a 'Speaker' who shall be referred to as 'The Speaker of the House' or 'Mister/Madam Speaker'.

1.3 A debate shall be adjudicated by a panel comprising an odd number of adjudicators. One of these shall be designated as Chairperson, by the organizers, and may function as Speaker in the event that none has been nominated in a particular chamber (venue).

1.4 A debate shall be timed by a timekeeper. In the event that none has been nominated in a particular chamber, the function of the timekeeper is to be taken over by one of the panel of adjudicators.

1.5 Teams will comprise the following members.

1.5.1 AFFIRMATIVE.
   a) Prime Minister, or Leader of the Affirmative.
   b) Deputy Prime Minister or Second Affirmative.
   c) Government Whip, or Third Affirmative.

1.5.2 NEGATIVE.
   a) Leader of the Opposition, or Negative.
   b) Deputy Leader of the Opposition, or Second Negative.
   c) Opposition Whip, or Third Negative.

1.6 Debaters (or members) will speak in the following order:
   i) Prime Minister, or 1st Affirmative.
   ii) Leader of Opposition, or 1st Negative.
   iii) Deputy Prime Minister or 2nd Affirmative.
   iv) Deputy Leader of Opposition, or 2nd Negative.
v) Government Whip, or 3rd Affirmative.
vi) Opposition Whip, or 3rd Negative.
vii) Negative Reply (given by 1st or 2nd Negative).
viii) Affirmative Reply (given by 1st or 2nd Affirmative).

1.7 Speakers not ‘holding the floor’ may not raise during speech unless it is to offer a 'Point of Information' (see Part 4: 4.5-4.9). Speakers doing so, or considered to be heckling, barracking or whose behavior is interfering with the acceptable course of a debate will be declared 'out of order' or will be 'called to order' by the Chairperson.

1.8 Interjections should be brief, pertinent and preferably witty. Interjections are comments made by members directed at the speech of the member holding the floor, and made from a seated position.

1.9 Points of order and points of personal privilege are prohibited.

Part Two: Motions

2.1 Motions must reflect the local nature of the championship, as a competition, and the currency of regional and global issues.

2.2 Motions must reflect the theme of the current round of competition (if stated).

2.3 Motions must be worded clearly.

2.4 One motion shall be offered at each debate round.

Part Three: Preparation

3.1 Fixtures are to be announced three (3) days prior to the debate.

3.2 One motion is to be announced to teams 30 minutes prior to the commencement of debates in that round.

3.3 The Affirmative or the home team has the right to prepare in chambers (venue).

3.4 Printed and prepared materials may be used during the thirty-minute preparation period. No electronic devices other than electronic dictionaries which are un-programmable and have no capability for data entry are allowed in the championship. Printed and prepared materials may be accessed during a debate, but MAY NOT be used during a speech.

3.5 Teams must prepare on their own. Once motions have been released, there must be no contact between debaters in a particular team and their reserves, coaches,
trainers, observers or any other individual for the purposes of assistance in the context of the debate. Such contact and assistance is 'cheating' and will be punished by the disqualification of teams thus affected from the round in question, at the least, and the competition, at the most - the latter, at the discretion of Council.

3.6 Teams must arrive at their chamber within ten minutes of the scheduled/given time of commencement of debate.

3.7.1 Teams failing to arrive in time will forfeit the debate, at the discretion of the chair of the panel.

Part Four: Timing

4.1 It is the duty of the timekeeper, or a panel member, or the Chair of the adjudication panel, to time speeches.

4.2 The timing of each speech starts at the moment that the member begins speaking.

4.3 Timings of speeches are as follow:

4.3.1 Constructive Speeches 7 minutes.
   Reply Speeches 4 minutes.

4.4 Time signals will be given in the following manner,

4.4.1 Constructive Speeches.
   End of first minute - single knock of the gavel.
   End of sixth minute - single knock of the gavel.
   End of seventh minute - double knock of the gavel.

4.4.2 Reply speeches.
   End of third minute - single knock of the gavel.
   End of fourth minute - double knock of the gavel.

4.5 Points of Information may be offered during constructive speeches, after the first single knock of the gavel and up to the second single knock of the gavel. Points of Information may not be offered during the first and last minutes of constructive speeches. Points of Information may not be offered during reply speeches.

4.6 A 'Point of Information' must be indicated by a member of an opposing team rising from his/her seat, placing one hand on top of his/her head and extending the other towards the member holding the floor. A member offering a Point of Information may draw attention to the offer by saying "on that point Sir/Madam," or similar.

4.7 A member holding the floor must respond to an opposing member, or members offering Points of Information, in one of the following ways.
4.7.1 A clear gesture rejecting the offer.

4.7.2 A verbal rejection of the offer, or

4.7.3 A verbal acceptance of the offer.

4.8 If a Point of Information is accepted, the point should be phrased as a question, or clarification, or comment, and made in two sentences (or less) or approximately 15 seconds.

4.9 If a Point of Information is accepted, the speaker accepting it must frame an answer or response to it within the context of his/her speech.

Part Five: Adjudication

5.1 Debates will be adjudicated by a minimum single adjudicator or an odd number of panel or adjudicators.

5.2 Adjudicator(s) will arrive at their decisions, fill in the necessary ballots and pass their completed forms and ballots to the Debate Official. The decision is final.

5.3 At the end of a debate, the Adjudicators will announce their verdict and give an oral adjudication. This is to occur in all rounds throughout the debate league.

5.4 There will be no silent round.

5.5 Adjudication will be based on the awards of marks in two categories: Matter (50%) and Manner (50%), for individual speeches and a team’s response to the dynamics of the debate.

5.6 In a panel, Adjudicators will independently derive their own verdict. No discussion is allowed.

5.7 If the verdict is a split decision, the result of the majority shall be averaged.

5.8 If the Chair of the panel is the minority, one member of the majority shall give the oral adjudication.

Part Six: Definitions

6.1 The definition is the interpretation of the motion as put forward by the Prime Minister, or Leader of the Affirmative, in his opening remarks.

6.2 The definition should be reasonable.
6.3 The definition should state the issue or issues arising out of the motion to be debated, state the meanings of any terms in the motion requiring clarification and display clear and logical links to the wording and spirit of the motion.

6.4 The definition should not be

6.4.1 A truism (a matter stated as fact).

6.4.2 A tautology (a definition which, in development, proves itself), (because neither allows any reasonable substantive case to be mounted in opposition).

6.4.3 Place set (setting an unnaturally restrictive geographical or spatial location as its major parameter).

6.4.4 Time set (setting an unnaturally restrictive chronological duration as its main parameter. Because neither allows the opposition reasonable access to Matter).

6.4.5 Wholly unreasonable (displaying no clear or logical links to the motion).

6.5 The Negative may only challenge the definition advanced by the Affirmative on the basis of one of these conditions pertaining (6.4). The Negative may not challenge a definition supplied by the Affirmative on the basis that:

6.5.1 Its own definition is MORE reasonable.

6.5.2 A better debate will result. Nor may the Negative re-define terms or words contained in the motion so that a completely different debate is thereby set up. However, a Negative may contend with the specific or general approach to terminology supplied by the definition of the Affirmative.

Part Seven: Challenging the Definition

7.1 If the definition advanced by the Leader of the Affirmative contravenes any of the prohibitions set out in term 6.4, the Negative have the right to challenge the definition.

7.2 The challenge must be made in the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, following a clear statement that the definition is being rejected.

7.3 In the event of a challenge, the Leader of the Opposition must justify his/her rejection by supplying the grounds on which the original definition has been rejected. Furthermore, a substitute definition must be supplied, which the Opposition benches must then go on to negate.
The debate which follows is characterized by the use of the 'even if' argument, unless a truism has been categorically exposed.

If the Leader of the Opposition does not challenge the definition, no other speaker may do so.

The onus to prove that a definition is unreasonable is on the Opposition.

Adjudicators will not indicate during the debate which definition they find to be (more) acceptable.

Neither team should abandon either the definitions or the challenges of its opening speakers.

Definitions should not require members of the house to have access to, or possess, specific or expert knowledge.

Part Eight: Matter

'Matter' relates to the issues in debate, the case being presented and the material used to substantiate argumentation.

The issues under debate should be correctly prioritized (by teams) and ordered (by individuals), dealing with the most important/pertinent first.

Matter should be logical and well reasoned.

Matter should be relevant, both to the issue in contention and the cases) being advanced.

Matter should be persuasive.

Matter will be assessed from the viewpoint of 'the average reasonable person'. Adjudicators must disregard any specialist knowledge they have, even though pertinent to the issues under debate.

Bias will not affect an adjudicator’s assessment (objective) or evaluation (subjective) of a debate. Debaters must not be discriminated against on the basis of religion, sex, race, nationality, sexual preference, age, social status, accent or any disability.

Points of information should be assessed according to the effect they have on both the cases of the offeror (team) and the responding speaker (speech and team).

A debater should take at least two points of information during a speech.

A Government Whip (Third Affirmative) may introduce 'new matter' into the debate, but is advised not to do so. ('New matter' in this context, means a new argument...
and does not refer to either new perspectives on an old argument or new examples, unless these change the course of the original argument entirely).

8.11 An Opposition Whip (Third Negative) is not permitted to introduce 'new matter' into the debate, UNLESS the argument is clearly in rebuttal of a new argument delivered at the third Affirmative.

8.12 No 'new matter' is to be introducing during Reply Speeches. The Reply Speech presents teams with an opportunity to focus on the major issue(s) in the debate and the way in which both teams approach that 'point of Clash'. The Reply Speech should also give an 'optimistic overview' of the general approach to the debate by both sides and focus on the relative merits of the case by the side Replying, and the relative weaknesses in the case of the opposing team. Reply Speeches should neither continue rebuttal arguments nor advance old arguments into significantly new 'territory'.

8.13 All speakers must develop 'positive matter' in advancing their respective cases. A Negative team cannot rely purely on its rebuttal of the Affirmative case and must present a case in opposition.

8.14 Whips (Third speakers) may not give reply speeches.

Part Nine: Manner

9.1 Manner refers to the presentation and delivery style of a speaker.

9.2 The following list represents some of the elements which are, or may be, subsumed under Manner. The list is intended as a guide, rather than as a number of marking categories. It is the combination of these elements (rather than the accomplishment of each), in various proportions that contributes to an individual speaker's style. The major influence on an adjudicator must be: 'Is the speaker's Manner EFFECTIVE in advancing the case?'

9.2.1 A) Vocal Style: Volume, clarity, pronunciation, pace, intonation, fluency, authority.
B) Language: Conversational.
C) Use of notes: Should not distract, should not be read.
D) Eye Contact: With audience.
E) Gesture: Natural, appropriate.
F) Stance
G) Dress: (only an issue if really inappropriate to the place or occasion).
H) Sincerity: Believability
I) Personal Attacks: (derogatory comments are not to be tolerated).
J) Humor: Effectiveness and appropriacy.
9.3 Participants must be aware that they will experience many different debating styles. There is no single 'correct' or 'right' style to adopt in this competition. Nor should a speaker's style be dismissed as inappropriate in the national context of the adjudicators or debaters who witness it.

9.4 As with Matter (8.7) personal bias must not be allowed to influence an adjudicator's assessment of Manner.