ISDCN Virtual Debating Guide – 2018

*The following guide is a general overview of rules and conditions for the competition. For a summary of key operational links and files required for school coordinators, please refer to the **Coordinators Reference Sheet** (this will be provided to participating schools separately)*

Eligibility to Program

Any Australian independent school is theoretically eligible if they can fulfil the technical requirements needed to run an initiative of this nature. Video Conferencing is the technology used and ZOOM is the software platform used.

Background

The 2015 Virtual Debating trial was restricted to original TtEDSC project schools that had obtained a Polycom 6000 encoder device through the project or had equivalent equipment capable of H.323/SIP protocol communications. These devices in Australia are usually but not exclusively supplied by Polycom, Cisco (Tandberg) or LifeSize.

In 2016 we moved to the ZOOM platform with the crucial advantage that it allowed both full VC encoder devices and desktop computers to join the same sessions. This made participation viable for most schools despite their resourcing capabilities

Equipment Requirements

Given the success of the ZOOM platform in 2017 we will continue to utilise this service in 2018. This means schools that have adequate bandwidth and suitable peripherals can compete alongside schools with dedicated codec devices. Schools who intend to join debates with desktop access alone need to demonstrate an appropriate level of peripherals (microphone, speakers & cameras) ensuring a quality communication experience for all. This combination should provide an experience that approaches that provided by the dedicated encoder devices.

Schools connecting with desktop computers need to have:

- **Microphones** - ability to pick up participant input from anywhere in a reasonable sized room. They are also "**echo-cancelling**" which means output from the speakers is detected and not permitted to loop back through the microphone; very disconcerting for those speaking at the other end and unacceptable in a debate scenario.
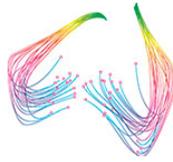
- **Speakers** - sound output sufficient so incoming audio can be heard comfortably anywhere in the room

- **Cameras** – HD quality cameras that can ZOOM and PAN to any position in the room. Digital ZOOM acceptable but optical zoom desired. Programmable pre-set positions are highly desirable.

Debate Dates & Times

This is a national initiative with 8 states & territories involved and we are faced with a multitude of time zones (5 in daylight saving months) and individual school conditions. There is only one realistic model that can work in these conditions and that is, competing schools must negotiate dates and times to the satisfaction of both parties.

When the negotiation period for an upcoming round of debates starts, the coordinators must check the relevant draws for their opposing school. They are then to use the supplied contact lists to make contact with their opposing coordinator and negotiate a suitable time for both schools within the time bounds laid down. Once this done, the details are to be entered into the supplied online form.

It is essential schools are diligent with this process and stick to timelines provided otherwise it can mean chaos for ongoing organisation.

Structure of Debates

The debates will have different structure and rules depending on the age groups of the competitors. Allowance for younger age groups is made in an attempt to make this a more formative experience for students at this level. All teams will have 3 speakers with an optional 4th silent speaker who may help out team mates during preparation and during the debate. See descriptions for each age level below.

Divisions

- **Year 11 & 12 debates** - Debates are "impromptu" with one hour of preparation time. Teams do not know the topic or which side of the debate they are on until 1 hour before the debate starts .The host will reveal the topic and randomly establish the affirmative & negative teams. Schools will then mute the microphones but leave their cameras running. After an hour the adjudicator will join the session and start the debate. This level will allow an "**authentic**" approach to preparation and teams will be able to access the Internet and other content sources during their hour of preparation.

  Staff/Coordinator Input: No teacher input is allowed at this level either during preparation or during the debate. Coordinators should be visible on camera.
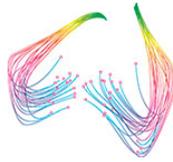
- **Year 9 & 10 debates** - Debates are "impromptu" with one hour of preparation time. Teams do not know the topic or which side of the debate they are on until 1 hour before the debate starts. The host will reveal the topic and randomly establish the affirmative & negative teams. Schools will then mute the microphones but leave their cameras running. After an hour the adjudicator will join the session and start the debate. This level will allow an "**authentic**" approach to preparation and teams will be able to access the Internet and other content sources during their hour of preparation.

  Staff/Coordinator Input: Teacher input is allowed for technique & approach during preparation time but not to supply direct argument content. No teacher input or coaching allowed during the actual debate. Coordinators should be visible on camera.

To reflect the age and inexperience of the younger teams, allowances are made to ensure a more formative experience. Debates for this level will **not** be "impromptu" and students will be able to develop their cases in the week leading up to the debate. Topics will be supplied through the "Point of Truth" online sheet one week prior to the debate.

- **Year 7 & 8 debates** – Teachers in this division can access their topic and indication of Affirmative or Negative position a week before the debate. All resources can be utilised to build arguments.

  Staff/Coordinator Input: Teacher input is allowed for technique & approach during preparation time but not to supply direct argument content. No teacher input or coaching allowed during the actual debate. Coordinators should be visible on camera.

- **Year 5 & 6 debates** – Teachers in this division will receive their topic and indication of Affirmative or Negative position a week before the debate. All resources can be utilised to build arguments**.**

  Staff/Coordinator Input: At this level, teacher input is allowed for technique, approach and argument content. No teacher input or coaching allowed during the actual debate. Coordinators should be visible on camera.

Use of computers during debates

As outlined above, authentic preparation using internet enabled devices is allowed for all levels of debates in the competition regardless of a one-hour (impromptu debates) or a one-week preparation.

However, during debates the use of computers/tablets/phones is restricted to speech note summaries only. Active use of the internet/apps or documents are not allowed once a debate has started. The use of computers by students effectively as palm cards is allowed but obviously the straight reading of speeches may influence a student's "manner" score.
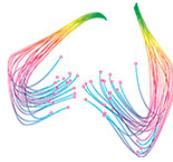
TIME ALLOWANCES

Time allowed for the entire process will depend on division. We advise the following for your planning.

Division	Total Time Allowance
Years 5 & 6	1 hour (no preparation hour required)
Years 7 & 8	1 hour (no preparation hour required)
Years 9 & 10	2 hours (1hour live preparation)
Years 11 & 12	2 hours (1hour live preparation))

This may include:

- Preparation – 1 hour (Open & Year 9&10 only)

- Speaking times differ in each age division as outlined below.
  Debate – 6 speakers – 24 minutes up to 42 minutes depending on division.

  Exact speaking times are as follows:

Division	Warning (signal - one)	Speaking time (signal - two)	End (signal - continuous)
Years 5 & 6	3 minutes	4 minutes	4 min 15 sec
Years 7 & 8	4 minutes	5 minutes	5 min 15 sec
Years 9 & 10	5 minutes	6 minutes	6 min 15 sec
Years 11&12	6 minutes	7 minutes	7 min 15 sec
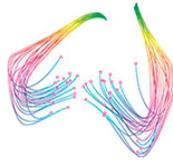
- Adjudication – Up to 15 minutes

Behaviour & Etiquette

The normal patterns of good behaviour and manners expected in normal face-to-face debates are also expected in virtual debates but with some differences. Respect for opponents must be shown always. In a virtual debate this includes:

- Student team members on both sides should, and will be visible on camera always and should be respectful at all times. Gesticulations of any kind (besides polite applause) towards the camera and opposition are not appropriate. Coordinators are asked to monitor their students to ensure appropriate behaviour.

- Being muted when the other side is speaking. An advantage of virtual debating is that the observing (non-speaking) team can verbalise thoughts to an extent as it will not be discourteous to the other team who can't hear.

- All students, staff and spectators in the room should be visible on camera whenever possible. Obviously, some exceptions to this rule may be required at times.
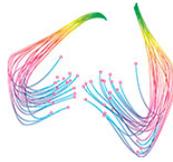
Scoring

It will be a three on three school debate. There are no PsOI or Replies in this format. Scoring will be between 70-80 with the average speech receiving a 75.

The scores will further be divided into three sections: Matter (or content: the logical construction of arguments and the level of engagement in refutation), Manner (or style: the use of verbal and non-verbal techniques to engage the audience) and Method (or structure and strategy: the organisation of the speech to maximise clarity and persuasiveness). Matter and Manner will be worth 40 marks each and Method will be worth 20 marks: a speech with average Matter or Manner will receive a 30, and a speech with average Method shall receive a 15, etc.

An online score sheet is provided for adjudicators to enter results based on the above structure. **Coordinators can access this sheet for a formatted score sheet for each debate**. Please see the coordinators reference sheet for details.

For further information on scoring or the technical aspects of debating consult the Australasian Debating Guide: http://www.dav.com.au/downloads/AADG.pdf

Testing Connections – Very important

Four separate parties are involved in an online debate – host, adjudicator (paid), Team 1 & Team 2. **Don't be the one to let all these people down!**

It is essential that schools test their connectivity on the conference links before the event. The meetings are set to "Join before host" so you can do this test at any time leading up to the debate. Allow a couple of days so if a problem exists ample time is available for trouble-shooting by your technical staff. Changes in your school network configuration can "break" a previously working encoder configuration.

Microphone Use during debates

In general, the non-speaking team should have their microphone muted for the greater part of the opposition speaker's delivery. It is a nice touch however to applaud the opposition speaker at the beginning and end of their delivery and obviously the microphone needs to be on at this stage.

Camera Use during debates

In a debate at least two camera ZOOM and PAN positions should be utilised:

1. A close up of the current speaker – possibly at a lectern. All speakers should assume the same position
2. A frame including the whole team – this pre-set could be used when the other team is speaking.

For schools without software adjustable ZOOM and PAN on their web cameras these changes will need to be made manually and as quickly as possible.

All good encoder cameras allow **pre-sets**. These are quickly accessed settings that direct the camera to a predetermined PAN and ZOOM level. This is desirable in a good conference to avoid the time and disruption on manual repositioning and focusing.
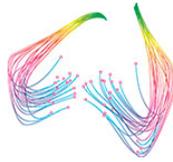
For example - The following instructions work for most <u>Polycom HDX series encoders</u>:

SET UP CAMERA PRESETS

1. Navigate through the MENU and select the CAMERA with the Remote Control.
2. Use the NAVIGATION ARROWS and/or ZOOM options on the Remote Control to position the camera in a desired position.
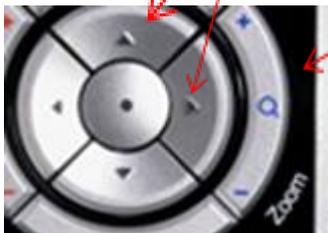
3. Press and hold (for minimum 3seconds) any of the NUMBER KEYS on the Remote Control

4. The Camera Preset is confirmed.
5. This will also be noted on the TV/Projector screen.

ACCESS THE PRESETS

1. Open a VC Call.
2. During the VC, press a specific NUMBER KEY on the Remote Control that has already been preset.

3. The Camera will automatically move to that preset position.