Imagine your students taking part in a formal debating competition against student teams from across the country with every clash being a home debate. Virtual debating lets you do this.

Virtual debating facilitated by Video Conferencing (VC) has proved to be very popular with schools over the last 3 years. Students and staff have benefited greatly by the variety of competitors nationally and the excellent adjudication provided through this convenient mechanism. If you are unfamiliar with how this program works, please view the portal page and associated links, and of course read on.

The history of this initiative to date:

2014 Ivanhoe Grammar (VIC) and John Paul College (QLD) held a formal debate using video conferencing as part of original TtEDSC project.

2015 TtEDSC Trial competition – 33 teams from 19 schools.

2016 TtEDSC Formal competition – 64 teams from 35 schools and 70 debates.

2017 ISDCN Formal competition – 96 teams from 47 schools (every state and territory represented) and 140 debates.

Expressions of interest are invited for the 2018 competition.

Benefits of virtual debating

» top level competition for debating students without needing to travel
» exposure to competitors that students would not encounter in normal circumstances
» prizes and certificates for all students reaching quarter finals and beyond
» possible recognition at a national level for schools
» top-level adjudication enabled by virtual technology
» minimal level of school-based organisation
» access by either desktop computers or encoder devices opens up initiative to all
» easy virtual access for school community spectators during debates
» recordings of debates on request for training and school community communication

The Independent Schools Digital Collaboration Network (ISDCN) is an initiative of Independent Schools Queensland and the Association of Independent Schools (NSW) for all Australian independent schools.

The anatomy of an online debate

1 Debating Coordinators are given the draw and negotiate a suitable day and time for their clash.
2 A live link is made available to spectators, teams and adjudicators.
3 On the day of the debate, the teams gather in front of the video conferencing device and join the allotted ZOOM conference.
4 The host announces the topic and flips a coin to assign sides.
5 Teams have an hour to prepare their arguments. They mute their audio but leave their cameras running with both teams in clear view.
6 After an hour, a qualified adjudicator from a national pool connects to the conference, calls the teams to order, recaps debate rules and launches the debate.
7 Teams alternate through their speakers in normal fashion. At all stages both teams and the adjudicator are in view but the speaker view dominates the screen.
8 When the speakers have finished, and after a short period of deliberation, the adjudicator delivers his/her adjudication.
9 Each debate is recorded and made available as a “streamed” resource to schools.
Structure of 2018 competition

Depending on the level of interest for 2018, we could easily have 128 teams and 250 debates with a 4 x 32 team competition. ISDCN will make every attempt to structure all competitions in 2018 as proper “double elimination”. This means schools must lose twice to be eliminated and will in most cases get 3 or more debates.

Different rules govern each division. There will be an emphasis on formative activity in lower year levels with extended preparation time and teacher involvement. Older divisions will experience a more demanding competitive regime.

Debates will start in early 2018 with a priority for the Open debates to finish this competition in Semester 1 or early in Term 3. This is to allow students to focus on final assessments.

Adjudicators

Thanks to virtual technologies adjudicators will come from all corners of the country. State and national debating societies have been approached to nominate adjudicators. This will ensure access to a pool of experienced debating practitioners who provide excellent judgement and formative direction to the students involved.

Eligibility and expression of interest

Teams from all Australian independent schools are invited to enter if they meet the technical and bandwidth requirements.

Entry fees will apply and are expected to be between $150 – $180 a team in 2018. These fees go directly towards payment of adjudicators.

The best technical capability will come from the use of a dedicated standards based video conference encoder (SIP/H323 codec) setup.

Schools without such devices can participate using a desktop computer, if they have a suitable level of peripherals (i.e. microphones, web cam, speakers and projection/screens) and sufficient bandwidth.

The organisers reserve the right to reject a school’s application to the initiative if inferior technical capability could risk the quality of experience for other stakeholders.

When schools register their interest they will be asked to provide the following:

- a primary contact person – email and mobile.
  Later you will be able to supply the details of separate coordinators for different divisions.
- division selection. Each school may nominate one team per division.
- technical capability
  - school’s internet speed
  - video conference encoder (codec) connection or desktop access.

If your school has desktop access do you have an echo cancelling microphone and web cam? If not, are you committed to purchasing this.

Visit our Equipment Offers page to see current offers.

Filling in the form at the following link does not lock you into the process but please indicate serious intent only. After the EOI process, schools will be made an offer and then payment of fees will confirm entry.


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FURTHER INFORMATION