

Manchester EUDC judges' briefing

Dear future judge!

You've clicked on this link because you are seriously considering spending a week sitting in uncomfortable chairs listening to human beings argue about big things. Reading this brief is the first judgy thing we would like you to do. It is not long, we promise.



Below we outline our views on the parts of our lovely sport governed by broad consensus and CA team discretion. Broadly, we agree with the standing consensus on judging as it pertains to international BP competitions. In some cases, we have clarified ambiguities in the folk wisdom. We have made a small modification to the rules governing points of information, to reflect the changing ways that the game of debating is played.

The basics

There is no such thing as an automatic win or an automatic loss.

Debate is about persuasion. Teams attempt to persuade the panel that their side of the debate is right, through cases composed of arguments for or against the motion. Judges (you) assess who seemed to advance the best reasons for their side of the motion, as it happened in this particular debate. They do this as the 'ordinary intelligent voter', applying a very small set of technical rules, which are there to facilitate, not displace, logical argument.

There are six rules at this tournament:

1. Who speaks when
2. That new matter is not allowed in summary speeches
3. That teams must prep by themselves, in communication with no one and without the use of electronic resources.
4. That each speaker can offer POIs and must take one
5. What constitutes an acceptable definition
6. That closing teams should (in general) not contradict their opening teams

Rules 1, 2, and 3 will be covered in the novice briefing. We discuss 4, 5, and 6 further down. If you think other things are rules you are mistaken.

Rule no. 4

POIs are offered by standing during a speech given by a speaker on the other side of the debate, and saying, “On that point”, “Point of information”, or some variant thereof. When offering a POI, debaters should not use language that conveys, even partially, the content of their POI. There is one exception: Debaters may preface a POI with “point of clarification”, to convey that they wish to ask a clarificatory question about the other team’s definition/policy/alternative.

Once a POI is accepted, the offering speaker has 15 seconds in which to make their point. Speakers holding the floor should not seek, by word or gesture, to cut short a POI before 15 seconds are up. **If a speaker holding the floor cuts short a POI, please intervene and permit the offering speaker to finish speaking.**

POIs are there to facilitate engagement between teams. If a speaker is given a range of opportunities to take a POI and takes none, this is a breach of the rules. At EUDC 2013, we require speakers to take at least one POI per speech.

If the speaker holding the floor hasn’t (yet) taken a POI any team that has offered **at least one POI before the five-minute mark** may offer POIs **at the six minute mark**. The speaker holding the floor is then **obliged** to accept at least one such POI. (If a team that does not fulfill this criterion offers a POI at the six minute mark, the chair and/or timekeeper should inform them that they are “out of order”.) This is a rule of debating, just like the rules that specify the order in which speaker’s speak. **If a speaker takes no POIs, but does not violate this rule, they should not face any penalties.** If a speaker is offered a POI in these circumstances, and refuses, the chair should intervene and remind them to take one. If they still refuse, they are cheating.

Rule no. 5

A definition should specify the meanings of words in a motion in a way that accords with a common-sense reading of the motion. Definitions are allowed to exclude pathological cases, where the debate involves very different principles. However, definitions must include the vast majority of instances. In general, definitions should be a **good-faith attempt to create a debate**. (Of course, that’s not an excuse for well-meaning teams to give horrible definitions.) Teams should also avoid ‘building arguments into the definition’.

For example: On the motion that THW legalise recreational drugs the government can say “but not for children”, while they cannot say “but not for unemployed people”.

Rule no. 6

Teams are expected to present a coherent case for their side. Consequently, closing teams should avoid making claims that contradict or directly undermine the assertions made by the opening team on their side. If a closing team makes such a claim, then judges should discount that claim, and any arguments that rely crucially upon that claim. There are, however, some exceptions. Such claims should be credited if:

1. The original claim was a plainly false claim about some empirical matter-of-fact.
2. The original claim made their side obviously unwinnable, even in the absence of any rebuttal.
3. The original claim was also contradicted by a speaker in the opening team.

On types of motions

Some debaters and judges rely on a distinction between “policy” and “analysis” debates. We recognise that different people are going to draw different lines separating one from the other.

1. At Manchester EUDC, most debates will require debaters to argue in favour of or against a policy. The goal of the Gov teams is to persuade the judges that the policy should, all things considered, be enacted. The goal of the Opp teams is to persuade the judges that the policy should, all things considered, **not** be enacted.
2. Some debates will instead require teams to argue about the truth or falsehood of a statement, or about whether they should endorse a given attitude (applaud, condemn, support, etc).

To avoid confusion, **all debates of the latter kind will be marked by an asterisk at the end of the motion.**

On style

Manner (style) is an important mechanism for persuasion, but it is not a separate criterion for judging your debates. Consequently, there are two things to note: First, there are many acceptable forms of manner. Judges (you) should be open to unfamiliar forms of style and be careful not to privilege certain forms of manner which do not contribute to the argument (mere packaging).

Second, manner should not be counted separately. Never say (or think) “This is a bad idea,

but the government team sounded nice, so I'll vote for them." Good manner contributes to persuasion by ensuring that logical and relevant material is presented clearly and effectively. If you can notice that an argument was bad, but the speaker had good style, then that speaker did not have good style. Please judge the teams and indeed all your debates holistically.

We'd also like you to guard against regarding a speaker as more credible just because they speak fluently. There is experimental evidence indicating a strong subconscious bias in favour of native English speakers; the same sentence spoken in a non-native accent is less likely to be believed. (<http://psychology.uchicago.edu/people/faculty/LevAriKeysar.pdf>)

On ordinary intelligent voters

Please note, that this ideal person is used to determine a standard of knowledge, not intelligence. Judges (you) are not required to act "less intelligent" when judging, but are required to think critically about what was well explained, vs. what you happen to know about. The 'ordinary intelligent voter' is **from nowhere**. She doesn't have detailed local knowledge and she won't understand "common examples" from your circuit. She is **not a specialist** and therefore ignores jargon and technical talk that is unexplained. She has the level of knowledge that would be expected of someone who **reads a reputable international newspaper once a week (without attempting to memorise its contents)**.

She **evaluates arguments critically** and is **actually open to persuasion**. Insofar as possible, she adopts a **neutral, open-minded perspective**, as though she did not have strong prior convictions as to which side of the motion is correct.

Avoid common judging pitfalls and

- **do not** invent, complete or rebut arguments
- **do not** consider how easily you could have made or responded to an argument
- **do not** use proxies for persuasiveness (numbers, cleverness and novelty of arguments are all irrelevant in themselves)
- **do not** invent criteria for good policies (criteria for what makes a good policy are debateable - do not use your own if any are advanced in the debate)

On 'role fulfilment'

There are no rules specifying elaborate roles that teams have to fulfil. What we call 'role fulfilment' is just a set of rules-of-thumb about good ways to debate. Opening teams set out a policy (or alternative) because it's very unpersuasive to be vague about what you stand

for. Closing teams produce 'extensions' because it's persuasive to offer new reasons for your side of the motion. Teams 'engage' with one another because it's unpersuasive to leave good arguments unanswered. Seek to assess the degree to which a team has persuaded you that their side is right. Please don't reward or penalise teams on grounds of 'role fulfilment' above and beyond this.

On chairing and winging

Please remember this is debate, not war. Also, remember that the discussion after the debate is not there to determine which of the judges got the 'right call' on their first try. The chair's role is to **guide the panel to a consensus decision**. You are all trying to figure out what happened and judge the debate accordingly. **All judges** should participate actively in the discussion. Disagreement is healthy as long as it is collegial and aimed at genuinely moving the discussion forward. If it is not possible to reach a consensus, and the time is up, please vote on any unresolved parts of the team ranking, with the chair having the casting vote.

You are awesome!

Thank you for reading this. If you have pressing questions, please email us at adjudication@manchestereuros.eu. What you should take from this document is to judge the debate holistically, use your common sense and better judgement to solve hard cases. Follow the rules, be kind, and pay attention.

Much love

Your CA team