



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

discovering voices

WSDC - Introduction to the competition

This document aims to serve as an introduction to those interested in attending the World Schools Debating Championship (WSDC), commonly referred to as World Schools. We hope this document will give you a working understanding of the history of the tournament, how the tournament operates, what to expect if you attend and who is responsible for various decisions that happen at the tournament. For an introduction to the debating format used at this tournament, please see the *“Introduction to WSDC Format”* document on our website.



History of the tournament

The World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC) is the most prestigious international English-language debating competition for high school level students in the world. Founded in 1988, the tournament, whose location changes each year, provides an opportunity to showcase the highest standard of secondary school debating as well as promoting debating in schools in the host nation. Recent venues include South Africa, Thailand, Singapore and Germany.

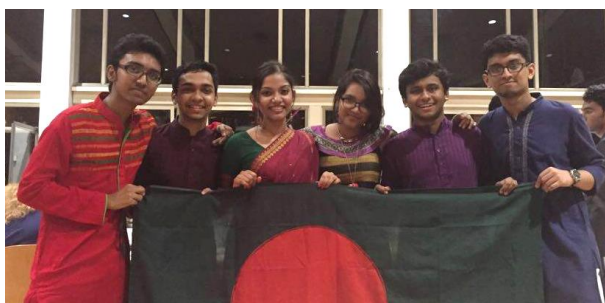
Each year, national debating organisations across the world put together teams of up to 5 of their nation's best debaters to compete in the Championships. The debaters selected then train hard together to ensure that they are prepared to the best of their abilities. Each year more than 50 different countries will compete for the title of World Champions. The English Speaking Union (ESU) is responsible for the selection and training of Team England and also funds Team Wales.

The competition lasts for around 2 weeks and will always take place sometime within either the period 1 January to 29 February, or between 1 July and 31 August. In this time, teams participate in 4 debates on prepared motions released roughly 2 months before the competition and 4 impromptu debates for which the topic is given 1 hour before the start of the debate. After the in-rounds, the teams are ranked by number

of debates won, number of judges who voted for them in each round then speaker points, and the top 16 teams then progress or 'break' to the knock out stages.

Aims of the tournament

- To achieve excellence in debating
- To encourage debating throughout the world
- To promote international understanding
- To promote free speech



Organisation of the tournament

The organization of the tournament is delegated between a number of organisational bodies detailed below.

Tournament Committee

The Tournament Committee is a council that decides on matters of constitution and organisation of the WSDC tournament. It comprises of one representative of each participating nation, selected by that country. Each participating country has one vote on any matters decided by the Tournament Committee.

It meets each year on the final day of WSDC to vote on any matters presented to it. One of its key responsibilities is to vote on who will host future WSDCs up to three years in advance.

Tournament Committee Executive

The *Tournament Committee Executive* are elected members of the *Tournament Committee* that take a lead in *Tournament Committee* matters. They manage meetings and ensure that information on up-coming decisions and tournaments is given to all committee members in advance of meetings. They are also responsible for decision-making in smaller matters that do not need to go to the committee at large such as organising working groups to produce draft proposals.

Tournament Host

As WSDC moves to a new location each year the local host selected will be responsible for a number of things. The *host* will have its own *Convenor* and likely a convening team surrounding them to organise the logistics of the event. The host bids to run a competition in a city and then the *Tournament Committee* will vote to decide between bids.

They are responsible for securing debating venues, organising food, travel and accommodation for participants. They will also set the dates of the tournaments they propose hosting and collect necessary information for the running of the tournament in the run-up to it. They are also responsible for creating and publicising the draw (see below).

Chief Adjudicator

Chief Adjudicator(s) of the tournament are the one or two people responsible for judging at the tournament. They are normally experienced judges of previous WSDC competitions. The host of the tournament is responsible for nominating a Chief Adjudicator who will be confirmed by the *Tournament Committee*.

It is the *Chief Adjudicator(s)* responsibility to recruit judges for the tournament, arrange the judging panels for each debate, confirm *English Second Language* (ESL) and *English Foreign Language* (EFL) status (see below) and deal with any judging issues (e.g. complaints about judges) as they arise at the tournament. They are also responsible for collecting the results of all debates and determining the break and draw for the out-rounds. The *Chief Adjudicator* will be assisted in

any of their responsibilities by a *Chief Adjudicator Panel* whom they select from applications. The CAP is made up of experienced judges who should also to represent the diversity of tournament. This Panel is ratified by the *Tournament Committee Executive*.

Motions Committee

The Motions Committee is responsible for deciding the motions at the tournament and ensuring that they reach the *Tournament Host* in time to publicise prepared motions to the teams two months prior to the competition. Two members are selected by the *Tournament Host* and an additional five are elected by the *Tournament Committee*. The order of the prepared motions is decided by the *Tournament Host* whilst the impromptu debates are assigned to the rest of the in-rounds at random. The out-round motion order is selected by the *Motions Committee* - the final is always a prepared motion and the rest of the out-round motions are always impromptu.



Tournament Timeline

It is up to the *Tournament Hosts* to decide exactly how the tournament will be structured and what the schedule will look like. As such the below is an example of what the schedule has looked like in recent years. Prior to the tournament itself, the pre-prepared motions (four in-rounds and the Grand Final) will be released two months in advance, and the draw will be released two weeks in advance. Other deadlines for information the tournament organisers require will vary.

Day 1	Day 7
Arrivals Registration	Debate Rounds 7 & 8 Break-night party
Day 2	Day 8
Training workshops for adjudicators Welcome activities for teams Opening Ceremony	Up to two knock-out rounds
Day 3	Day 9
Debate Rounds 1 & 2	Up to two knock-out rounds
Day 4	Day 10
Debate Rounds 3 & 4	Tournament Committee meeting Grand Final Closing Ceremony & Awards
Day 5	Day 11
Debate Rounds 5 & 6 OR Day off for cultural activities	Departures
Day 6	
Debate Rounds 5 & 6 OR Day off for cultural activities	



This structure allows up to 2 debates per day for debaters and provides time within the schedule for participants to experience the culture of the city in which the tournament is being hosted. Individual debates are hosted around the city, normally in local schools for the in-rounds and local areas of cultural significance such as conference or concert venues for knock-out rounds. The aim of this is to promote debating in the host country

Language Status

All debates held at WSDC are done in English. There is no weighting given to the fact that some speakers are doing the considerably more difficult task of not just debating but debating in a language that is not native to them or one they commonly use. All speakers and teams are judged by the same metric at the tournament (see *Introduction to WSDC Format*). In order to recognise the accomplishments of this additional skill, speakers and teams can register as *English Second Language* (ESL) or *English Foreign Language* (EFL) at WSDC tournaments.

The *Chief Adjudicator(s)* are responsible for determining language status and confirming which speakers qualify for each status using the following guidelines. A team is eligible for a given language status if all but one of its members meet the language criteria below. Separate awards are as such given for the speaker and team that tops each of the categories.

English Second Language

A speaker is eligible for English Second Language status if:

- (a) They do not come from a first-language English-speaking family, and
- (b) They attend a school where English is used as a medium of instruction in addition to classes in the teaching of English.

English Foreign Language

A speaker is eligible for English Foreign Language status if:

- (a) They do not come from a first-language English-speaking family, and

- (b) They attend a school where English is not used as a medium of instruction (except for classes in the teaching of English).¹

The Draw

The draw is the term used to describe the pairings of teams that will debate one another across the tournament. All teams will face at least eight different teams, facing a new team in each debate in the in-rounds. *The draw* will be given to all teams at least two weeks before the start of the tournament so participants know what teams they will be facing, in what order as well as the side they are on each debate (thus allowing more specific preparation on the prepared debates).

The exact calculations are a drawn out and complicated process, but the basic goal of the draw is to ensure that all teams will face a similar number of teams that have historically done well at the tournament. Thus the goal is that no team should be disadvantaged by randomly receiving a “harder” draw than other teams.

Further Reading

WSDC Tournament Committee & Debate Rules -

<http://mkf2v40tlr04cjkt2dtlqbr.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/WSDC-Debate-Rules-U-2015.pdf>

WSDC “The Organisation” - <http://schoolsdebate.com/organisation/>

WSDC Hosting Wiki - http://schoolsdebate.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page

WSDC 2016 - <http://www.wsdcgermany2016.com/>

WSDC 2015 - <http://www.wsdc2015.org/>

ESU WSDC page - <http://www.esu.org/our-work/world-schools-debating>

¹ Definitions are taken from “WORLD SCHOOLS DEBATING CHAMPIONSHIPS TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE AND DEBATE RULES” clause 9.3 (EFL) & 9.4 (ESL)