

## Briefing 1:

# Debating at the WUDC Berlin 2013

*With very many thanks to the Adjudication Team from the De La Salle University WUDC 2012 for this document. Our amendments have been few and minor.*

We strongly recommend that debaters read our associated briefing on adjudication (Briefing 2). Knowing how judging works is essential to learning how debating works.

1. Introduction
2. Technical Rules
3. Role Fulfilment
4. Defining the Debate
5. Status Quo and Opposition
6. Extension Speeches
7. Summary Speeches
8. Points of Information
9. A Brief Word on Equity and Conduct

## 1. Introduction

This briefing exists to outline how this debating tournament works. The style of debating used at the World Championships uses a small set of rules and tries to focus, as much as possible, on arguments about the motion set for each round. We want to make sure that you are all on the same page before the tournament begins, so that no one has an unfair advantage. We also recognise the need to standardise judging in a tournament to fulfil teams' right to know the criteria on which they are being judged.

Before we go any further it is very important to review how the *competition* in the debate works.

*Judges assess which team did the best job at **persuading them** that the motion ought to be affirmed or rejected. They do this as the **'ordinary intelligent voter'** and consider the strength of the arguments that each team presents. While doing so, judges apply a **very small set of technical rules**.*

The rest of this document is simply an examination of the various parts of the above statement, along with some comments on the logistics of the tournament.

## 2. Technical Rules

When discussing rules, we'll outline what the rule says, what it **doesn't** say, and then how judges should assess rule infringements. Keep in mind while reading all of the following that the *aim* of the rules is to facilitate logical argument, not to constrain or displace it.

For a full set of the formatting rules, please see our separate briefing on the British Parliamentary format.



### 3. Role Fulfilment

Different debating traditions have different understandings of 'role fulfilment' in British Parliamentary debating. Role fulfilment, in brief, is the name given to the particular duties given to each team on the table, by dint of their position, above and beyond the general duty to 'make persuasive arguments'. These duties exist to ensure fairness.

For the sake of this tournament, we define the aim of each team to **persuade** the judges to affirm or reject the motion. Role fulfilment, then, is the **context in which that persuasion must take place**, the boundaries that allow each team a fair chance to persuade the judges.

In football ('soccer') a team wins the game by scoring the most goals. But a player must obey certain rules, including those pertaining to conduct, boundaries, and the use of their hands. A football team doesn't win the game by keeping the ball in bounds more frequently or by exemplary conduct, but the rules of the game will define which attempts to score and prevent goals 'count'. For example, a footballer who picks the ball up and carries it into the opposing team's goal will not be credited with a goal. Similarly, a debater who gives an excellent fifteen-minute speech, or submits a persuasive essay or a set of visual aids will not be entitled to credit for doing so, *regardless of how persuasive* the fifteen-minute speech, essay, or visual aids would have been in conveying their reasons for affirming or rejecting the motion. Doing so involves breaking the rules, and cannot entitle them to credit. Role fulfillment is the necessary but not sufficient condition for a team to make persuasive arguments.

#### The Duties of Role Fulfilment

Broadly speaking, the duties associated with role fulfilment are as follows:

- (1) In first proposition, to define the debate (explained in Section IV).
- (2) For the extension speakers, to extend the debate (explained in Section V).
- (3) For all teams, to ensure that their arguments are consistent with all other arguments made by themselves, their teammates, and the other team on their side of the debate (contradiction is often referred to as 'knifing').
- (4) For opposition summary speakers, not to add new arguments (explained in Section VII).
- (5) For all speakers, to take at least one point of information during their speeches and to offer points of information on a regular basis (explained in Section VIII).
- (6) To demonstrate proper courtesy to fellow speakers, judges, and tournament officials at all times.
- (7) To speak within the time frame allotted.

In some debating traditions, the view of 'role fulfilment' is more expansive, and encompasses general duties associated with the to and fro and from of the exchange of arguments (e.g. your role



## The Penalties for Failures in Role Fulfilment

When assessing the penalty associated with a team's failure to fulfil their role, the precise remedy will depend upon what element of role fulfilment was violated and how grievous the violation was.

The general rule for violations of role fulfilment is that speakers are to lose any advantage that violating their role might have given them and to be penalised to the extent to which their role fulfilment created difficulties in the wider debate.

Some worked examples:

Violation of Role Fulfilment	Suggested Penalty
Adding new arguments in the Opposition summary speech.	The speaker receives no credit for any new arguments. Any time spent making new arguments is deemed to be time wasted.
Failure to take a point of information (where points of information have been consistently offered).	The speaker's material is assessed as though a damaging point of information had been asked and responded to poorly.
Contradicting one's own self/team/side.	Contradictory material is simply ruled out as inadmissible. Time spent making contradictory arguments is to be judged as time wasted.
Speaking for longer than seven minutes.	The speaker receives no credit for material brought after seven minutes.

N.B. This does **NOT** mean that a violation of role fulfillment results in a team taking a last. It is perfectly possible for a team to take first place despite having violated role fulfillment. It just doesn't help you win. All strengths and weaknesses of each team have to be viewed relatively to each other. There are no 'automatic fourths'.

## 4. Defining the Debate

The first government speaker (a.k.a. the Prime Minister) defines the debate. This means they tell the rest of the people in the room exactly what will be debated. They need to say whether there is a *policy* (i.e. whether someone is doing something) and what that policy is, if it exists. Remember, **debates are about the motion as defined by the Opening Government.** It is not about what you thought the words in the motion meant. The definition forms the subject matter of the debate. If THW: Privatised Education is defined as 'making all universities independent companies', (a fair definition) then that is what the debate is about for the remainder of the eight speeches, regardless of what the speakers or judges expected to happen when they heard the motion. Teams would still be entitled to make 'general' arguments against privatisation (e.g. 'privatisation of all public services is bad') provided that those still speak to the model. General arguments, like any arguments, must give the judge reasons to support or oppose the policy. To the extent to which they do so, they are successful.



*Definition: A "squirrel" is an invalid definition of a motion.*

In some cases, merely stating the motion can constitute sufficiently 'defining the debate' as that sentence may be enough to do all of the above. On the other hand, the definition might involve a many-pointed model or some extensive caveating/parameter setting. It may be that the same motion could be usefully defined in *either* of these ways, producing different legitimate debates. In other words, OG needs to do enough to explain what the person, organisation, group of people etc. is doing.

**It is not the job of the judge to attack the definition.** Only worry about the definition if teams in the debate do. If the definition *is* successfully attacked as being insufficiently explanatory, the OG team should be penalised only to the extent to which a lack of detail prevents teams from making arguments. Judges should give other teams the benefit of the doubt relative to OG where such a deficiency poses a problem and allow other teams to 'read-in' any fair and reasonable assumption about the definition that the first proposition team hasn't fully spelled out.

**Worked Example:** *THW allow Prisoners to Vote*

Example 1:

PM: 'We define this motion as allowing prisoners the right to take part in elections.'

LO: 'The Prime Minister has failed to confine this motion to adults in prison. Thus we must assume that children who are imprisoned will be allowed to vote, which is wrong as children are unfit to vote.'

DPM: 'That's clearly silly. Obviously child prisoners won't be allowed to vote.'

The Judge Should Conclude. The DPM is correct. The assumption made by the LO is unreasonable and must be rejected. The team in first opposition may be penalised for making a frivolous challenge. They certainly receive no credit for their challenge.

Example 2:

PM: 'We define this motion as allowing prisoners the right to take part in elections.'

LO: 'The Prime Minister has failed to tell us which sorts of prisoners are allowed to vote. This definition is illegitimate because it doesn't tell us which- and that might include murderers.'

DPM: 'That's silly! Of course our model doesn't extend to murderers and the like, that would be completely unreasonable!'

The Judge Should Conclude. Neither the DPM nor the LO are correct. There was nothing *wrong* with the Prime Minister's definition, it merely left the opportunity for the Opposition teams to make arguments about why allowing murderers to vote would be a bad idea.



## Parameterising debates

At this tournament, we'll set the debates we want you to have so, please, define debates in accordance with the words in the motion. As outlined above, teams have some freedom in defining the debate, but there are certain things you may not do. You may not time or place set a debate (e.g. you cannot turn THW allow abortion into a debate about whether the judges in Roe v Wade should have reached the decision they did then).

You should debate at the **level of generality** implied in the motion. It is **legitimate** to exclude anomalous examples ('we're banning cosmetic surgery like the motion says, but not for burns victims'). It is **not legitimate** to include only anomalous examples ('we're banning cosmetic surgery like the motion says, but only for children'). Nor is it legitimate to narrow debates to one country, or one instance of a wider phenomenon described in the motion. If we wish a debate to be solely about a specific country (or a specific set of countries) we will state this in the motion.

## Challenging the definition

If the definition provided by the Opening Government is illegitimate then it can be challenged. This must be done during the **first opposition speech**, or in a POI to the **first government speech**. The criterion for legitimacy is liberal: *'is this one reading of the motion that does not do violence to the words in the motion, including not unduly narrowing the scope of those words'*. We explicitly do **not** consider whether a definition **helps** one team or another, or whether it is in the **'spirit of the motion'**.

If a team challenges the definition, they must explain why. That is, they must argue that the definition is illegitimate and explain why. In challenging the definition, the leader of the opposition has two choices:

- (1) Firstly, she can complain about the motion having been defined unfairly but proceed to debate it anyway. This is preferable if the motion proposed is not a fair reading of the motion but is still debateable.
- (2) Secondly, she can discard the motion and redefine it. She should tell the judge and the other debaters what a proper definition would be and should then proceed to argue against that case.

Don't punish teams for making a 'definitional debate'. This might be boring, but being boring doesn't automatically imply that you lose.

Only if a position is **tautologically untrue or unconscionable or impossible** to argue can anyone else change the debate after this point. If the motion does thus change, judges must weigh the contributions teams made to the debate *as they found it at the time*. That is, if OO won very strongly the debate OG ran, which they made a hugely significant contribution to, but CG successfully change the definition based on the fact that it is tautologically untrue and make a significant contribution to this 'new' debate, we must compare OO's contribution to the debate they were involved in with CG's contribution to that they were, **not** disregard OO because 'the debate became about something else'. This is not their fault. Of course, it may be that moments where OO and CG engage directly (say, on POIs) may be particularly important to the comparison.



N.B. Please bear in mind that definitional challenges are incredibly rare and more a 'last resort' than a first-line of defence against a proposition case.

**Worked Example:** *THW allow prisoners to vote*

Example One:

PM: We will allow all prisoners to vote in elections who have less than one week remaining in their prison sentence.

LO: This is clearly unfair as a definition of the motion as it unduly narrows the scope of the debate, but we'll oppose it anyway.

The Judge Should Conclude: The Leader of Opposition has made a correct challenge to the motion and the Prime Minister should be penalised.

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Example Two:

PM: We would allow all wrongfully-accused prisoners to vote, having released them from prison.

LO: This is a completely unacceptable narrowing and twisting of the definition which creates a completely impossible debate. We're redefining: the correct debate allows prisoners of all sorts to vote, some of whom may have committed crimes. We oppose such a policy for the following reasons...

The Judge Should Conclude: The first opposition team has done the right thing by replacing the unworkable definition with a workable one. Teams should follow first opposition's lead and debate the motion as they have set forth.

## 5. Status quo and Opposition

So, government decides what they want to *do or say is true*. What about opposition?

In a debate about a policy, the opposition must say that we shouldn't do it; that is, that *something is better than doing this policy*.

This can be the status quo in some countries, or it can be something which is currently done nowhere, it may be described as 'doing nothing' rather than 'doing the policy' (though naturally, teams doing this don't necessarily recommend wholesale government inaction, but are running the comparative 'whatever other broadly sensible relevant policies one is carrying out, the addition of this one makes things worse'). So long as opp provide reasons not to do the policy, this is fine. There are many ways for someone to disagree with a policy, and -- as long as they *actually constitute disagreements* - you should be willing to accept them. Keep in mind that at an international tournament like this, there is no domestic policy status quo of significance. There are, obviously, material conditions in the world which are relevant to the debate. There is no requirement to have a 'counter-prop', the vast majority of debates involve first opposition simply disagreeing that the policy proposed is a good one.



A counter-proposal which is not mutually exclusive with the policy is **not acceptable**. This isn't disagreeing with the policy.

**Worked Example:** *THW invade Syria*

First Proposition: We believe that the United States should invade Syria at once and install a new government.

First Opposition: We believe that the United States should invade Syria at once, but they should also give economic assistance to a new Syrian regime.

The Judge Should Conclude: First Opposition's counterprop is not mutually exclusive with first prop's. First opposition should be penalised for this.

## 6. Extension Speeches

The third speaker on each side of the debate (the first speaker on each of the second proposition and the second opposition teams) is responsible for contributing an extension to the debate.

An *extension* is defined as anything that hasn't yet been said by that side of the debate. An extension can take a number of forms including:

- (1) New arguments which have not yet been made in the debate.
- (2) New rebuttals.
- (3) New examples.
- (4) New analysis or explanation of existing arguments.
- (5) New applications of existing argumentation (e.g. if the extension speaker points out that that one of the first-half's arguments is able to defeat a new argument from the other side).

In short, saying ANYTHING other than a word-for-word repetition of first-half's material will- in some sense- constitute an extension. In that sense, role fulfilment here is fairly easy and most extension speakers will succeed in fulfilling their role.

So why have the rule that second-half teams must fulfill its role by extending, if it is trivially easy for them to do so? The answer is because it helps us to better understand the second-half's contribution by assigning the third speaker credit *only* for those arguments (or portions of arguments) which are meaningfully different from those which have already been made.

As a result, extension speakers do not defeat the first team on their side of their debate merely by 'having an extension' (any more than first proposition teams win the debate for 'having a definition'). A winning extension will bring out material that is *most* able to persuade the judge that the motion should be affirmed or rejected.



## 7. Summary Speeches

Summary speeches should summarise the debate from the perspective of their side. A good summary speech will note the major disagreements in the debate (points of clash) between the two sides and will make use of the best arguments from *each* team on their side to make their case that the motion ought to be affirmed or rejected.

A summary speaker which makes effective use of arguments that were introduced in the first half should receive credit for doing so, if those arguments are employed successfully. A summary speaker which ignores or minimises arguments made by the first-half is not effectively fulfilling their role as a summary speaker.

Debating is unfair if teams can make new arguments in the last speech (opposition summation), to which no one can respond. So they aren't allowed to do that. Proposition summation speakers are permitted to make new arguments, but should receive diminished credit for new arguments they raise, as these should really have been in the extension.

What do we mean by a 'new argument'? Debates are about doing things, or arguing that things are true. Therefore, we mean new reasons to do things, claims that new things will happen, or claims that new moral truths are the case.

### We do not mean:

- New defences of arguments already made.
- New explanations of previously-made arguments.
- Rebuttal
- New examples to support existing arguments
- Anything the other side can reasonably be expected to understand that team intends from the 3<sup>rd</sup> speech.

At times, it's often difficult to assess the difference between new rebuttals and analysis (which are permitted) and new arguments (which are not). The good judge will consider whether or not the making of the claim raises a new issue, to which the other side has no ability to respond.

### Assessing new material in 4<sup>th</sup> speeches

If a team makes a new argument in the 4<sup>th</sup> speech, ignore it. That is **all you should do**. Don't penalise it, don't make them lose. Just ignore it.

New material in the 4<sup>th</sup> speech is just bringing material in such a way that it can't be credited. Therefore, teams are advised to avoid wasting their time by doing so.

## 8. Points of Information

Points of information (POIs) can and should be offered by each speaker in the debate when the other teams are speaking. Every debater on the opposing side should offer at least one point of information during each speech from the other side. They should not offer more than one point of information every 15-20 seconds (barracking) as doing so can be very distracting.





When offering a POI, a speaker should rise and say, 'point of information', 'on that point', 'sir/madam', etc. Debaters who are offering numerous points of information should rise silently to avoid distracting either the speaker or the judge. Generally, debaters should not attempt to distract the attention of either the speaker or the judge when another speaker holds the floor, by carrying on audible conversations with their partner, pulling faces, wild gesticulations, laughter, cries of 'shame!', smacking their lips, exaggerated sighing, or other conduct designed to divert attention away from the speaker.

Every debater should accept at least one point of information from the opposing side, preferably two. The choice of which team(s) the speaker selects to offer points of information should be integrated into the judge's consideration of whether or not a speaker has engaged well with other teams. When analysing and comparing the arguments that have been made by the teams, the judge must have consideration as to how thoroughly and effectively the teams have engaged with each other. Particularly when making comparisons between second-half and first-half teams on different sides (the 'diagonals'), it is well for the judge to consider the opportunities that first-half teams have had to challenge new material appearing in the other side's extension.

N.B. If a speaker does not take a point of information but was not given the opportunity to accept a point of information, particularly later in their speech, the judge should waive any penalty normally associated with their failure to take a point of information.

## **9. A Brief Word on Equity and Conduct**

Speakers and judges are expected to be of upstanding conduct at all times during the tournament. Judges may legitimately decide to penalise speakers and teams who are obnoxious, use rude language, or are otherwise offensive to participants during the debate, whether or not the objectionable conduct exhibited by the speaker rises to the level of a violation of the Equity Policy. You should penalise these violations to the extent to which they make a speaker unpersuasive and/or are unfair on other teams or speakers.

If an equity violation does occur during a round, the maximum penalty that can be levied against a speaker is to reduce their speaker marks to 50.

We hope this doesn't happen and that everybody's really very nice to each other. After all, this is ultimately a fairly meaningless activity and not really worth people falling out with each other over.