



**Law Society  
of Scotland**

The Law Society of Scotland

Donald Dewar Memorial Debating Tournament

## **Information for Judges**



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# Structure of overall tournament

1st Round Heats take place throughout November

2nd Round Heats take place in January

Semi Finals take place in March with an 'unseen' motion

National Final takes place in June (venue and date TBC)

## Structure of tournament rounds

The format for debate is two speakers per side with only two teams in each debate.

There will (generally) be two debates per heat:

1st debate - 1 proposition team to 1 opposition team

2nd debate - 1 proposition team to 1 opposition team

## Can you make it all the way?

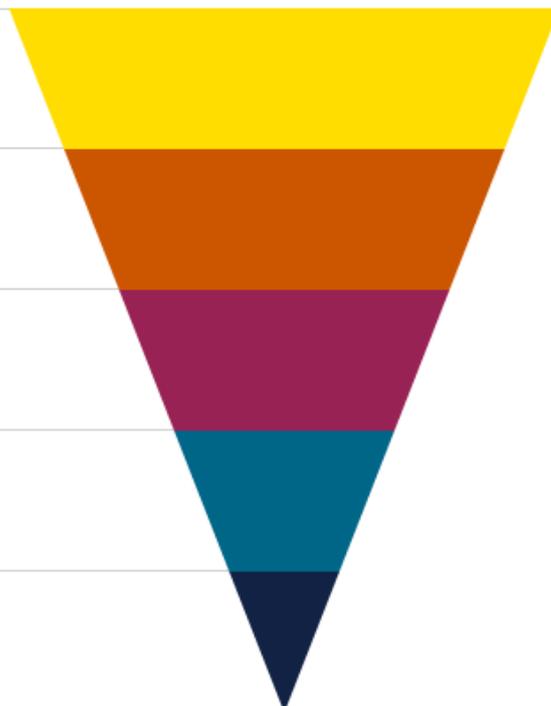
64 teams enter the first round

32 teams make it to the second round

16 teams battle it out in the semi-final

Four teams compete in the final hosted at the Scottish Parliament

Just one team is crowned the winner of the annual Donald Dewar Debate



# What happens on the night

There will be a Judging Panel usually of three at each heat but if due to unforeseen circumstances, this should alter on the day, the debates should proceed with the remaining Judges/Judge

Each panel has a Presiding Judge who oversees the decision making, ensures decisions are based on this set of rules and guidance and leads the feedback to the schools. Judges should be careful to refer ONLY to criteria stated in the rules when providing feedback and should refrain from giving feedback not experienced in doing so

Judges mark independently of each other during the course of the debates and at the end, leave the room briefly to confer



Judges can decide how marks are combined. In some instances, it may be most appropriate to add numeric scores but in others it may be best to take the relative positions in which each judge has placed the teams. Judges have absolute discretion but should be prepared to justify their result based on the guidance in this document

Judges should also select a 'Best Floor Speaker' of the night, using the criteria in this guidance, and announce the winner. The winner's name will be passed to the Law Society who will then send the book voucher to the school

The adjudication should be short and should explain the result to the audience. It should set out the key reasons why the winning team(s) won, and comment on significant matters of debate style or technique



The adjudication should be constructive, not negative

# Marking standards



It is expected that judges have watched the 'guidance for judges' video and should therefore be familiar with all the information in this document.

Judges will mark on the basis of the information provided in this document as a whole and this section specifically. It is the job of the judges to determine which team was most convincing as debaters using two key criteria: content and style (discussed in detail as follows).

Unless they affect the quality of the argument presented, judges must not take into consideration irrelevant factors such as dress, accent, age, grammar, school, etc.

## For all main speeches

Content = 60

Style = 40

## SCORING

## For reply speeches

Content = 30

Style = 20

**It should be noted that a common judging error is to award points on style over content. Whilst confident and eloquent speakers should receive high marks for their skills, at the heart of debating lies the ability to present a coherent, structured, reasoned argument supported by appropriate evidence. Hence the weighting in the marking system**

**Another common issue is how to score teams in a debate in which one team has a very strong speaker and a weak speaker, whilst the other has two mediocre speakers. We believe that debating is a team-based contest that depends on consistency of approach, consistency of argument, and both members fulfilling their respective roles. Team performance should be used as a deciding factor in such instances**



# Marking content

**'Content' is the argument used by the speaker, divorced from speaking style**

Judges will consider the following:

**Structure** - Was there a clear and logical structure to the individual speeches? Was it related to the speech the other member of the team made / was going to make? Was the structure easy to follow? Was the sequence logical?



**Roles of Speakers** - Did each speaker fulfill the role relating to his or her position in the debate? Did the speakers work well as a team? **Speakers who do not perform their roles should be penalised**

**Evidence** - Were facts and figures presented to support the arguments made? Were sources of authority cited? Was it possible to determine the level of research the team had engaged in? Did the team use evidence to rebut and counter arguments from the other side?

**Relevance** - Was the speech relevant to the motion and / or the definitions provided? Did any irrelevant material hinder the progress of the argument? Was humour, if used, relevant? Were any relevant areas deliberately or accidentally avoided?

**Analysis** - Was the evidence interpreted by the speaker and related to the argument in a perceptive and appropriate manner? Were issues graded according to relevance and strength? Were examples used to emphasise the arguments being put forward? Was the analysis logical and consistent? Were there contradictions, flaws or assumptions made?

**Rebuttal** - Did the speaker rebut the arguments of the preceding speakers on the other side? Did they fail to rebut any arguments? Did they appear to understand the arguments made? Did they use evidence in their rebuttal? A key skill is the undermining of the other side whilst at the same time bolstering your own arguments - this should be rewarded

**Timing** - Whilst short over/under running should not be penalised, any significant divergence from the set times should be, in relation to its length and any extenuating circumstances

**Points of Information** - Did the speakers accept / offer sufficient points of information? A speaker who offers no or very few points of information should be penalised. A speaker who accepts no points should be heavily penalised



# Marking style

*'Style' is the way in which the speakers speak*

Judges will consider the following:

**Confidence** - Does the speaker appear confident? Do they take command of the room and of the topic? Do they maintain eye contact and speak with flair?



**Speaking Style** - Does the speaker vary their tone, speed and volume? Do they use appropriate humour? Do they project their voice? Are they fluent? Do they 'um, ah and erm'? Do they connect with the audience? Do they use repetition to make a point? Does the speech flow? Do they use gestures and body language to reinforce points? Gimmick, 'pantomime', and stylistic issues that detract from the content and argument should be penalised.

**Off-the-cuff responses** - Speakers whose style is consistent when addressing questions raised as a point of information, or in rebutting the other side's arguments should be rewarded



**Use of notes** - Speakers should only use notes and only refer to them intermittently. Reading a brief verbatim from another speaker of authoritative source may be acceptable, in virtually no other circumstances is it permissible to read from notes - speakers who do this are not debating and should be penalised heavily



## Overall marks

*Below is a rough guide to what the combined marks about a speaker should mean*



		Level
Main Speech	Reply Speech	
90 - 100	45 - 50	This is a world-class debater who has just delivered a speech among the best you've ever heard - 'I have a dream', 'We will fight them on the beaches' standard
80 - 90	40 - 45	A potential winner of the competition; fluent, eloquent, engaging of the audience, responding well to questions, addressing the issues raised by the other team, structured and logical. Technically competent across all the criteria
70 - 80	35 - 40	A very strong speaker likely to do well in future rounds - but no feeling that they are a potential overall winner. Competent in all areas, logical, structured, with a degree of flair
60 - 70	30 - 35	A strong speaker likely to do well in future rounds. Technically competent but perhaps with one or two weaker areas. Not difficult to listen to but no real flair. A structured and organised presentation but not one that seems to conclusively build into a winning argument
50 - 60	25 - 30	Just competent as a debater. They are clearly aware of the standards they are trying to meet but have not displayed any real flair. The argument may have been a little disjointed and there will have been some issues of style but someone to be encouraged to try again
40 - 50	20 - 25	Someone who has failed to meet several of the criteria. Whilst they may still be excellent in some areas there were significant flaws in both content and style i.e. contradictory arguments, lack of evidence, failing to give any points etc
0 - 30	0 - 20	Serious failure to meet the criteria. This person is likely to read from their paper, have serious flaws in their argument, flaws in their timekeeping and have contributed little to the debate

# Floor speeches

*At each heat a prize will be awarded to the best floor speaker of the evening. Part of the purpose of this is to encourage contributions, especially from those who may not yet be at the stage of entering full competitions*

The purpose of a floor speech is not to specifically attack or undermine the speeches of other schools and these should be judged against the following criteria:



**Structure** - Was there a clear and logical structure to the speeches? Was it related to issues already discussed or highlighted as a new point / position / angle?

**Relevance** - Was the speech relevant to the motion and/or the definitions provided? Did any irrelevant material hinder the progress of the argument? Was humour, if used, relevant?

**Confidence** - Does the speaker appear confident? Do they take command of the room and of the topic? Do they maintain eye contact and speak with flair?

**Rebuttal** - Did the speaker rebut the arguments of the preceding speakers on the other side? Did they fail to rebut any arguments? Did they appear to understand the arguments made? Did they use evidence in their rebuttal? A key skill is the undermining of the other side whilst at the same time bolstering your own arguments - this should be rewarded

**Speaking style** - Do they vary their tone, speed and volume? Do they use appropriate humour? Do they project their voice? Are they fluent? Do they 'um, ah, and erm'? Do they 'connect' with the audience? Do they use repetition to make a point? Does the speech flow? Do they use gestures and body language to reinforce points?

**Use of Notes** - Speakers should only use notes and only refer to them intermittently. Reading a brief verbatim quote from another speaker or authoritative source may be acceptable, in virtually no other circumstances is it permissible to read from notes

**Evidence** - Were facts and figures presented to support the arguments made? Were sources of authority cited? Was it possible to determine the level of research engaged? Did the speaker use evidence to rebut and counter arguments from the other side? Did they challenge the evidence of the other party?



**Analysis** - Was the evidence interpreted by the speaker and related to the argument in a perceptive and appropriate manner? Were issues graded according to relevance and strength? Were examples used to emphasise the arguments being put forward? Was the analysis logical and consistent? Were there contradictions, flaws or assumptions made?

# Providing Feedback

Constructive, supportive and encouraging feedback should be given to all teams, if requested

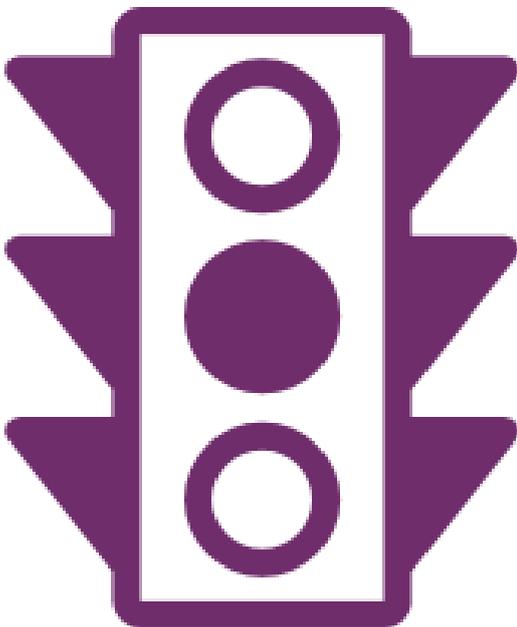
Marks are for the judge's reference only. In giving feedback, the emphasis should be on giving specific suggestions as to what to do differently next time

Remember - even those who have not done well this time have shown a considerable amount of courage and commitment to stand up and speak. Each year, new teams who have not debated competitively before join the competition and these achievements should be commended alongside any guidance given

Judges should be careful to refer ONLY to criteria stated in the rules when providing feedback and should refrain from giving feedback unless experienced in doing so

## Preparing for your heat:

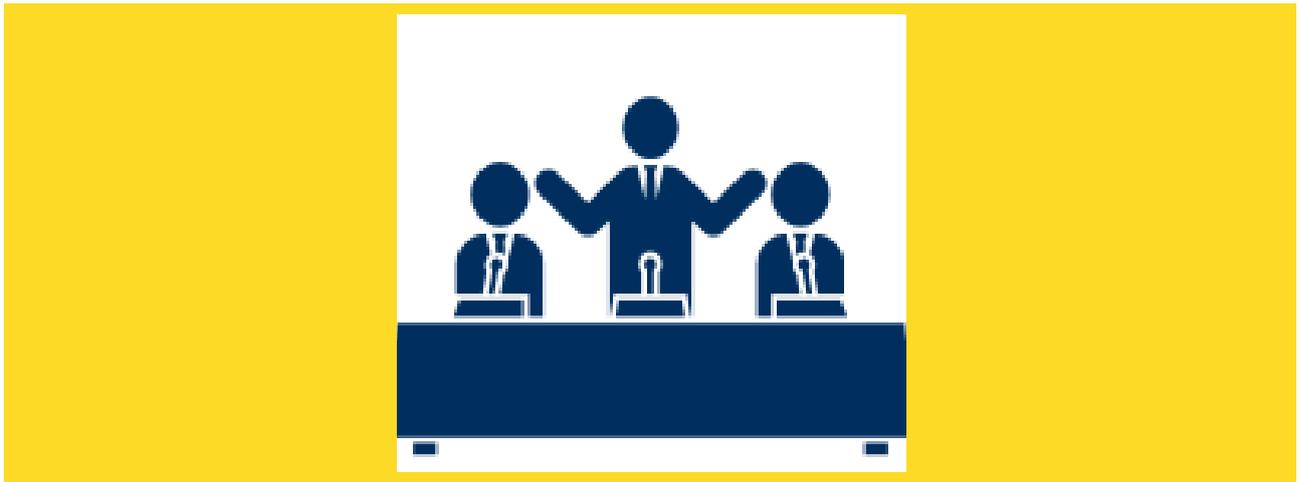
- Please familiarise yourself with this document,
- Schools will provide you with Order Papers and Marking Sheets upon your arrival however, if possible, please also bring these along on the evening,
- There will be two floor debates during each debate. Please encourage pupils to take part - there is a £10 book token for best floor speech (remember to note the name and school of the pupil),
- You are not obliged to disclose the exact 'scores' you award schools or tell schools where they 'rank'
- In the event that there is a complaint about a result - remember **the judge's decision is final**. You should then contact the Society and we will liaise with the school,
- Please ensure that if you are asked for feedback, you are positive and constructive and remember some of the debaters, particularly in the early rounds, may be competing for the first time
- Enjoy it!



# Additional information for Presiding Judges

It will be your role to:

- Guide other judges whilst deliberating, in the event that the judges are finding it difficult to make a decision,
- Deliver the adjudication speech at the end of the night, and
- Discuss your decision with pupils / teachers / parents at the end of the night (all judges will do this, but you may be "called upon" more than others to do so)



Please also note the following:

- As per the rules and judges video, when delivering the adjudication speech, please do not make direct references to particular schools/pupils, but rather, make general points about what impressed you / what was less impressive and what led you to choose the school(s) going through
- During your adjudication speech, we would be grateful if you would include the following points:
  - The Society is grateful for the support of our sponsors, Hodder Gibson publishers and the Glasgow Bar Association, without whom we would not be able to run the competition,
  - The Society and our sponsors are delighted to provide every competing pupil with a Law Society Notebook which will be sent to each pupil after the first round,
  - The tournament winner will receive £1000 for their school, the tournament award and £250 worth of educational books. A second prize of £250 will be awarded to the runner-up school who will also receive £250 worth of educational books and all finalists will receive book tokens and commemorative Quaichs,
  - Every pupil who took part should be extremely proud of their achievement, whether or not they are progressing to the next round,
  - Announce the winner of the best floor speech and advise their book token will be sent to the school,
  - Announce school(s) going through
- Please email [debate@lawscot.org.uk](mailto:debate@lawscot.org.uk) the morning after your heat with the name of the school(s) going through, plus the name and school of the pupil who won the prize for the best floor speech