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# Impromptu Debate

## Regina Engineering Competition

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### Team Composition

A debate team must consist of two members. All members of the team must be a student enrolled in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Regina.

### Debating Rules and Elements

#### 1. Teams

The debate is between two teams, each with two members. The proposition will be given the task of presenting an initial set of ideas and arguing their validity. The opposition will then proceed to show how these ideas are undesirable. Before the resolution is revealed, a coin toss is held. The team that wins the toss gets to pick the side that they want to represent. Teams are expected to act responsibly at all times. Inappropriate language or offensiveness towards the other team, the officials, or the audience is not acceptable. Teams are expected to direct all of their speeches towards the audience.

#### 2. Resolutions

The resolutions will be assigned by the organizing committee and will be validated by the Debate Chairs before the competition begins. They will be related to an issue that the average engineering student should have a defensible opinion on without any preparation. The resolutions will not be truisms. Absolute words such as "all", "everyone", and "always" will also be avoided (eg, "Be it resolved that all engineers are good at math" is not a good resolution, since there are always exceptions). Once both teams are informed of the resolution, they are given ten minutes to prepare for the debate.

#### 3. Time Allotted to Debaters

The speaking order and times will be as follows:

- First speaker of the proposition: 5 minutes
- First speaker of the opposition: 5 minutes
- Second speaker of the proposition: 5 minutes
- Second speaker of the opposition: 5 minutes
- Rebuttal by the first speaker of the proposition: 2 minutes
- Rebuttal by the first speaker of the opposition: 2 minutes

#### 4. Role of the Proposition

The proposition must narrow down the resolution so that the debate will be about one major topic. The resolutions must not be squirreled or converted into truisms. Squirreling is the act of redefining the resolution so that it has a meaning different than the one intended by the resolution. The proposition must also avoid specific knowledge debates where the average engineer has no familiarity with the topic.

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## Team #0

Team Member #1

Team Member #2

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### Overview

Competitors must use analytical techniques to present, with minimum preparation, a reasoned point of view of a resolution that has not been disclosed beforehand. The goal is to assess the competitors' abilities to convey ideas and develop arguments. The purpose is not to assess competitor knowledge of parliamentary procedure and formal debating rules. Therefore, the rules normally used in debates have been modified and relaxed to enable students with no formal debate experience to take part.

The debate will be conducted in a parliamentary debate format.

### Resources

#### Facilities Required

- 1 amphitheater (presentations)
- Equipment Provided
- 1 digital projector
  - White board(s) or blackboards
  - 2 tables

#### Equipment that may be brought

- External resources such as stopwatches, writing pads and other tools are allowed at the discretion of the debate mediator and judges.
- Props, external resources or resources prepared prior that are used to aid the debate which are not made available to all debaters are not permitted.

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### 5. The First Speaker

The first speaker of the proposition must explain the interpretation of the resolution, clearly state the principle and contention, and clarify any definitions. If a plan case is introduced, the entire plan must be outlined in the first speaker's speech. Finally, the first speaker must initiate the argumentation for the contention and plan.

### 6. The Second Speaker

The second speaker of the proposition continues the argumentation of the first speaker and reaffirms concepts that have been attacked by the opposition. New parts of a plan may not be introduced and terms in the resolution may not be defined. New lines of argumentation and new evidence, however, may be introduced.

### 7. Role of the Opposition

The opposition's task is to convince the judges that the proposition's views are fallacious. If the case presented by the proposition is a truism or requires specific knowledge to debate, the opposition can appeal to the judges with a "point of procedure" (see section below) at the beginning of the first speech from the opposition. If the point is well taken, then the opposition must redefine the resolution in a debatable manner. If the proposition presents a principle case, the opposition is left with little more to do than attack the principle. If the proposition presents a plan case, the opposition can attack the principle, the contention or the arguments for the plan. The opposition can also show how the plan will not work or identify the undesirable side effects that it will create. Finally, the opposition may propose a counter plan that is more effective than the original plan. The first speaker of the opposition must introduce counter plans.

### 8. Role of the Proposition

The proposition must narrow down the resolution so that the debate will be about one major topic. The resolutions must not be squirreled or converted into truisms. Squirreling is the act of redefining the resolution so that it has a meaning different than the one intended by the resolution. The proposition must also avoid specific knowledge debates where the average engineer has no familiarity with the topic.

### 9. Rebuttals

In the rebuttals, the most prevalent elements of the debate must be summarized in a concise and convincing manner. No new arguments or facts may be presented unless they directly refute what has already been discussed.

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### 10. Questions

Questions are a secondary means of refuting arguments. They can promptly point out deficiencies in ideas. The debater who currently holds the floor has the authority to take or ignore questions. The opponent who wishes to ask a question indicates their desire by simply standing up. If the debater does not wish to take the question, he or she can so indicate by a wave of the hand or a simple "no, thank you." If this occurs, the inquiring party must sit down. If the current debater wishes to entertain the question, it must be stated by the opponent in less than 15 seconds. Both team members may take part in answering the question. The time used to ask and answer the question comes out of the current debater's allotted time. Each debater must accept one question during his or her speech, if the opponent is making an honest attempt to ask a question. Three attempts at asking a question constitutes an honest attempt. Questions will not be allowed in the first or last minute of a speech, or during rebuttals.

### 11. Heckling

Often, the speaker can contradict himself/herself or make an absurd assumption. Heckling at this time will point out the error and add to the debate. Heckling is acceptable if it is short, to the point and preferably witty. If excess heckling becomes disturbing, the Chair may intervene.

### 12. Points of Procedure

If a team believes that one of the rules of the debate have been broken, they must immediately alert the Chair of the violation by standing and saying "Point of Procedure." The Chair will then respond with, "Make your point." The team will then proceed to explain how the debate rules have not been followed. Finally, the Chair will rule on the point by saying, "Point well taken" or "Point not taken." If it is obvious that the Chair is incorrect, the team should not argue with the Chair, but expect the judges to compensate for the Chair's shortcomings. The time it takes to rise and rule on a point is not included in the speaking time of the team currently debating. The following are violations that warrant a point of procedure:

- Unprofessional behavior
- Offensive behavior
- Truism\*
- Presentation of a specific knowledge case\*
- Misquotations
- Speaking to the opposition instead of the audience
- Presenting new arguments in the rebuttal
- Introduction of parts of a plan by the second speaker

(\*If the proposition has presented a truism or specific knowledge case, the opposition must wait until the end of the first debater's speech to point this out.) Moreover, if the officials have failed to follow the rules of debate (incorrect speaking order, too much speaking time allowed, etc.), it may be politely pointed out to them with a Point of Procedure.

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### Procedure

#### Pre-Competition

These rules are to be made available to all competitors and judges at least seven (7) days (168 hours) prior to the competition.

A competition briefing will be held before the commencement of the competition and will include the debate moderators/chairs, judges, and organizer. The debate moderators/chairs will run the briefing and review the rules, tips and expectations for the debates.

#### Presentation Order

The debate competition will follow a double elimination format that ensures all teams will get to participate in at least 2 debates. The competition begins with matches between randomly assigned pairs of teams. Once each team has debated once, the losers from the matches will face each other in a second "tree". (Note, in the case of an odd number of teams, all teams will debate at least once before the second tree commences, but some teams may not participate until the second round in order to minimize the total number of debates in the competition.)

The debates then proceed in the same format with the first tree being those teams that have not lost a match, and the second tree for those that have lost a single match. Once a team has lost 2 matches, they are out of the competition. The final match is between the top teams from each tree, and the third place team is the one with the most wins that didn't make it to the final.

Teams may have to debate two or more times in a row, due to the dynamic nature of the format, however the Debate Director should do their best to ensure teams are given reasonable breaks between debates. Double elimination is used to ensure a minimum level of team participation; therefore if a team proceeds unbeaten until the final round, only to lose to another team, there will not be an additional final debate.

### Assessment and Judging

#### Judging Matrix

The debate is judged based upon the most convincing argument. Each judge will decide individually and the debate chair will tally the decisions and announce the winner. The winning team will then move to the next round.

#### Feedback

After the conclusion of the debate and the announcement of the winning team, judges may elect to provide feedback to the competitors in the form of writing. The organizer will provide forms that can be used as a guideline for comments.

Judge's Name.....

#### Notes

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