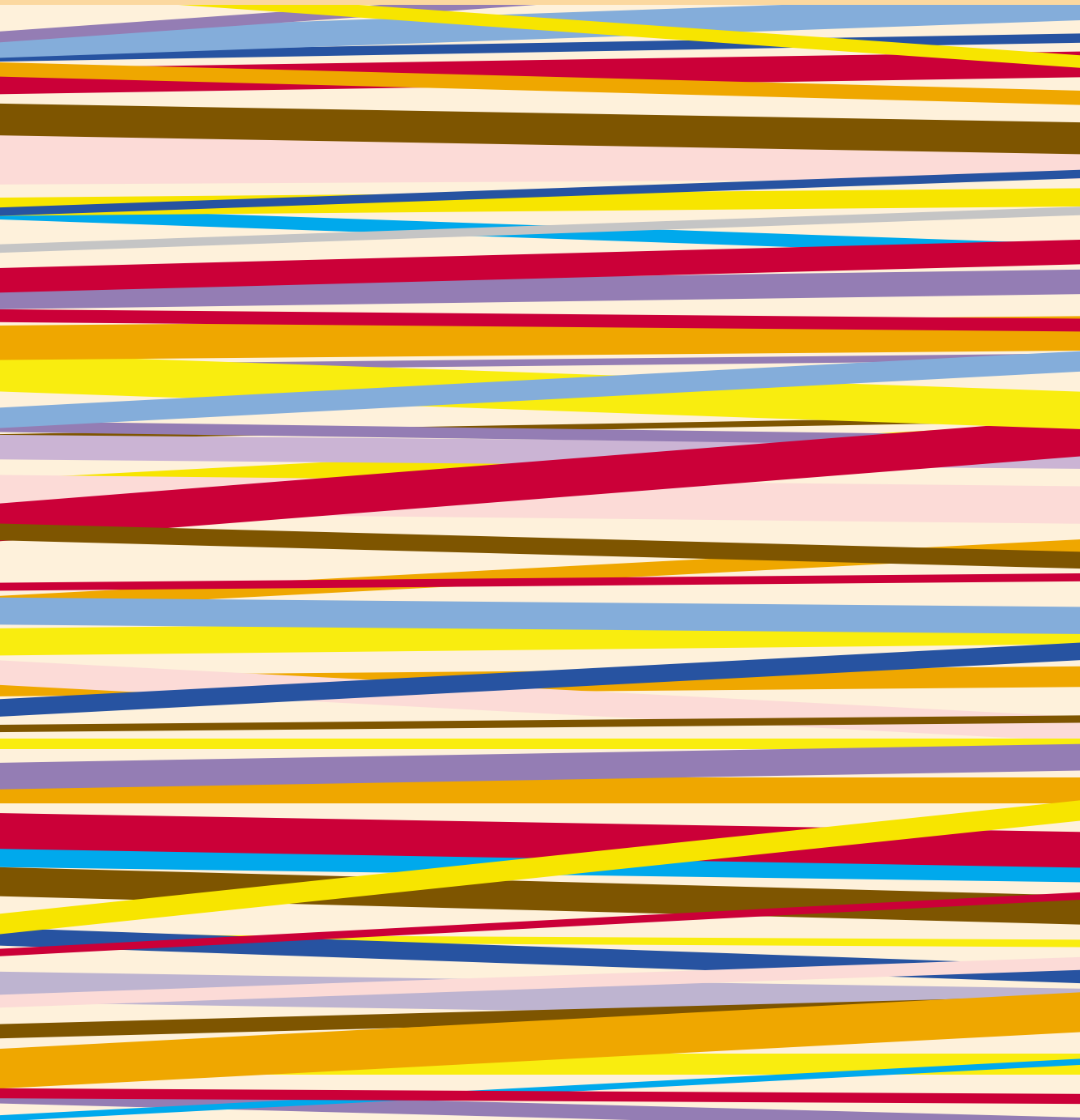
The Australia-Asia Debating Guide

Second Edition

Edited by Ray D'Cruz



The Australia-Asia Debating Guide
Second Edition

Edited by Ray D'Cruz

Australia-Asia Debating Guide
Second edition - February 2003

Published by the Australian Debating Federation
Suite 6, 87-89 Flemington Road
North Melbourne, Vic, 3051, Australia

Editor: Ray D'Cruz
Text by Alan Swanwick, Christopher Erskine, Ray D'Cruz
Design: Sophie Campbell Graphic Design

ISBN 0-9750546-0-0

There is no copyright in this guide. The Australian Debating Federation wishes that it be freely available. All or part of this guide may be copied for any purpose. It may be translated. The only request is that parts of this guide are not reproduced out of context.

There should be no copyright in debate theory. Its contributors are too numerous to mention; they span thousands of years and numerous cultures.

An online version of this guide is available from www.dav.com.au.
Official copies of the handbook may be purchased from the same website.

Please contact Ray D'Cruz (ray@aticus.com) if you require clarification of any part of this guide, or if you would like assistance translating the guide into a language other than English.

Contents

Foreword 1

Chapter 1 – Introduction 3

Chapter 2 – Adjudicating 4

2.1 Role of the adjudicator 4

2.2 Functions of the adjudicator 4

(a) Deciding which team has won 5

(b) Explaining reasons for the decision 5

(c) Providing constructive feedback 6

2.3 The adjudication process 6

Chapter 3 – Matter 8

3.1 Introduction 8

3.2 The elements of matter 8

(a) Logic 8

(b) Relevance 8

3.3 Particular matter issues 9

(a) Rebuttal 9

(b) The onus of proof 9

(c) Taking the audience into account 10

(d) Assessing the quality of arguments 10

(e) Argument by example 10

(f) References to experts 11

(g) New matter from third negative speakers 11

(h) The *'invalid'* case 12

(i) The *'hung'* case 12

(j) Humorous arguments 12

Contents

Chapter 4 – Method 13

4.1 Introduction 13
4.2 The elements of method 14
(a) Responsiveness 14
(b) Structure 14
4.3 Particular method issues 17
(a) Under-time and over-time speeches 17
(b) New matter from third negative speakers 18
(c) Overemphasis of method 18

Chapter 5 – Manner 19

5.1 Introduction 19
5.2 The elements of manner 21
(a) Body language 21
(b) Vocal style 22
5.3 Particular manner issues 23
(a) Humour 23
(b) Personal attacks on opponents 23
(c) Dress 23

Chapter 6 – Definitions 24

6.1 The purposes of the definition 24
(a) Identifying the issues to be debated 24
(b) Clarifying the meaning of words 25
6.2 Prohibited definitions 25
(a) Definitions without a logical and relevant link to the topic 25
(b) Self-proving or truistic definitions 26
(c) Definitions which time set the debate 26
(d) Definitions which place set the debate unfairly 26
6.3 Definitional debates 27
(a) The more reasonable definition rule 27
(b) The unreasonable definition rule 27
6.4 The *even-if* argument 28

Contents

Chapter 7 – Marking the debate **29**

7.1 Introduction 29
7.2 Selecting a starting point 29
7.3 Dividing the points 30
7.4 Determining the margins 31

Chapter 8 – Reply Speeches **32**

8.1 Introduction 32
8.2 Particular reply speeches issues 32
(a) Marking 32
(b) Method 33
(c) New matter 33
(d) Points of information 33

Chapter 9 – Points of Information **34**

9.1 Introduction 34
9.2 Asking a point of information 34
9.3 Answering a point of information 35
9.4 Assessing points of information 36
(a) Matter 36
(b) Method 36
(c) Manner 36
9.5 Chairing the debate 37

Chapter 10 – World Parliamentary Style **38**

10.1 Introduction 38
10.2 Format 38
10.3 The onus of proof 39
10.4 The roles of teams and speakers 39
(a) Opening Government 39
(b) Opening Opposition 40
(c) Closing Government 40
(d) Closing Opposition 40

Contents

10.5 Particular Worlds Style issues 41
(a) Points of information 41
(b) Role of the adjudicator 41
(c) Panel decisions 41
(d) Marking the debate 41

Chapter 11 – American Parliamentary Style 42

11.1 Introduction 42
11.2 Format 42
11.3 The onus of proof 43
11.4 Definitions 43
(a) Linking the resolution and the case 43
(b) Prohibited definitions 43
(c) Time-space definitions 44
11.5 The roles of teams and speakers 45
(a) Government 45
(b) Opposition 45
(c) Reply speeches 46
11.6 Particular American style issues 46
(a) Points of information 46
(b) Points of order 46
(c) Points of personal privilege 46
(d) Maintaining a fair and orderly debate 47
(e) Deciding who won the debate 47
(f) Panel decisions 47
(g) Marking the debate 47

Foreword

This guide is in its third incarnation. It started life in 1982 as the Adjudicators' Handbook, written by Alan Swanwick and published by the Debaters Association of Victoria. Its publication was a defining moment in Australian debating. It codified conventional debating wisdom in a thorough, detailed and articulate manner. The handbook was the official rules of the Victorian Schools and Adults competitions.

In 1992, the Australian Debating Federation published the Australian Debating Handbook. The new handbook was essentially the Adjudicators' Handbook, with several chapters added. Christopher Erskine authored additional chapters on reply speeches, points of information and two-a-side debates. The handbook became the official handbook of Australian debating and was used at both Australian National Schools and Adults Championships.

Not long after this, the fledgling Australasian Intervarsity Debating Association adopted the handbook as its official rules. At that time, the Australasian Debating Championship community included Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Through the 1990s that community grew to include Bangladesh, India, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

In 1997, key concepts from the guide were incorporated into the Rules of the World Universities Debating Championship. The rules have been subsequently adopted at national debating competitions from Croatia to South Africa to Japan. From its relatively confined beginning as the Adjudicator's Handbook, this guide has had an enormous impact on the world of competitive debating.

The reason for its impact is the integrity of the original text. Nevertheless, it needed to be updated and expanded in 1992 and again in 2002.

Now in 2002, the book takes on its third name – the Australia-Asia Debating Guide. The name change reflects the growth of the impact of the guide.

This guide retains the same view of what constitutes persuasive communication that was laid out in the Adjudicators' Handbook and the Australian Debating Handbook. However, it also makes a number of important changes:

– the matter chapter now includes a section on rebuttal; in the previous edition, rebuttal occupied a separate chapter;

– method is no longer divided into three elements; it now has two elements: responsiveness and structure;
– manner is no longer divided into a large number of elements; it now has two elements: body language and vocal style;
– the definition chapter includes both the *more reasonable rule* and the *unreasonable rule* as both are used at various competitions throughout the world; and
– new chapters have been included on World and American parliamentary debate styles.

In addition to these substantive changes, most chapters now contain an overview section and examples have been updated. The text has been simplified and the length of the guide reduced. In short, it is a more user-friendly guide.

The Australia-Asia Debating Guide has been written with the assistance of a number of people. Tom Hawkins, Praba Ganesan, Wayne Jocic and Andrew Gormly reviewed drafts of this guide. Meg O'Sullivan reviewed drafts, drafted text and engaged in valuable debate and discussion about the content of this guide. Alan Swanwick's Adjudicators' Handbook still forms much of the text and spirit of this guide. Christopher Erskine's work in developing Swanwick's handbook into the Australian Debating Handbook was also very significant. A warm thank you to these people on behalf of the debating community.

Ray D'Cruz

Melbourne, February 2003

Chapter 1

Introduction

Debating is about persuasion. Debating is not about rules.

People are persuaded by various means, rational and irrational, logical and illogical. Persuasion may differ depending on cultural context and local customs.

The purpose of this guide is to provide some objectivity about what constitutes effective debating. It allows debaters and adjudicators to hold certain expectations about how to prepare, present and judge debates.

Debaters will *generally* be more persuasive if they comply with the rules in this guide. However, the guide will not always tell us the answers. Debaters and adjudicators should be aware that each rule has a purpose, and that sometimes the same purpose can be achieved in contradiction of the rule. In these instances, debaters should be rewarded for achieving the objective of the rule.

The rules provide a framework within which adjudicators make objective assessments and limit their subjectivity. Debating is a means by which our community discusses and analyses issues of public importance. Setting out rules that promote fairness between teams and speakers is more likely to lead to better public debate and enhance the reputation of debate as an effective means of communication.

Chapter 2

Adjudicating

Chapter overview

This chapter addresses the role the adjudicator plays in assessing the debate. The adjudicator adopts the role of the average reasonable person. The adjudicator has three functions:

– to decide which team has won the debate;

– to provide an explanation of the reasons for the decision; and

– to provide constructive feedback to the debaters.

2.1 Role of the adjudicator

The adjudicator adopts the role of an average reasonable person, who has the average reasonable person's knowledge of the topic but who, unlike the average reasonable person, has expert knowledge of the rules of debate.

Adjudicators must eliminate any preconceived ideas as to the merits of the issue in debate, and any expert or special knowledge of the subject matter. The average reasonable person is assumed to be intelligent and capable of assessing flaws in arguments; the adjudicator is invested with these qualities.

The assumption of this artificial role is one of the most difficult aspects of adjudication, and imposes a heavy burden on adjudicators. Nonetheless, it is central to the whole notion of adjudication. The alternative of permitting adjudicators to assess a debate from their own personal viewpoint, and to take into account their own expert knowledge, prejudices and preconceptions, would strike at the heart of debating as an exercise in the skills of persuasion.

2.2 Functions of the adjudicator

The adjudicator has three functions:

1. to decide which team has won the debate;

2. to provide an explanation of the reasons for the decision; and

3. to provide constructive feedback to the debaters.

(a) Deciding which team has won

The first task of an adjudicator is to decide which team has won the debate. The adjudicator's role is different from that of an average audience member who asks "was I persuaded?" An adjudicator asks "which team better performed the process of persuasion, in accordance with the rules of debate?"

There are at least three possible results – a win for the affirmative team, a win for the negative team, and a tie. In theory, there is no reason why an adjudicator might not decide that the performance of the teams was entirely even. However, adjudicators should not award a tie – partly because of the difficulties it causes competition organisers; partly because it provides an easy escape from making a difficult decision; and partly because it will be a very rare occasion where two teams are so evenly balanced that no distinction between them can be drawn.

In many debates, the adjudicator is required to award marks to speakers and teams. The adjudicator must make the decision and the marks should reflect that judgment. The marks exist only as a guide to the adjudicator's progressive assessment of the debate.

It's not uncommon in a close debate to find that when the marks are first totalled, they reflect a decision different from the adjudicator's impression of the debate. If this occurs, it means either that the marks are in error or that the adjudicator's impression at the end of the final speech is in error. In this situation the adjudicator should carefully review the notes of the debate and attempt to identify where the marks and impressions differ. It might be that the adjudicator will decide that the final impression was too heavily based on a very strong third negative speech – in which case the adjudicator's decision would be modified to reflect a better weighting for that speaker.

Occasionally an adjudicator will add up the marks incorrectly so that the marks do not reflect the decision which has been announced. In such a situation, the decision announced remains the outcome of the debate.

(b) Explaining reasons for the decision

In delivering the adjudication, adjudicators should highlight the critical differences between the teams rather than replay the whole debate. A useful start is to total the marks in each of matter, manner and method for each team, and to use this as the focus for comment.

There may be one or several strategic issues which were critical in the debate; issues on which the debate was won or lost. Focusing on these strategic issues allows the adjudicator to identify the main reasons for the decision.

At the end of the adjudication, the debaters should have a clear understanding of why their team won or lost. Most complaints arise because adjudicators are not able to clearly identify the reasons for the result.

(c) Providing constructive feedback

Adjudicators are in a position to perform a valuable training function. Particularly with novice or school-student debaters, the feedback offered by an adjudicator is likely to be the most substantial basis for improvement.

Feedback can affect the confidence of individual debaters. Adjudicators must take this responsibility extremely seriously. An overly sarcastic or negative adjudication may undermine the confidence of novice debaters to the point where they are fearful of speaking in public again. Feedback should be couched in constructive terms.

2.3 The adjudication process

Adjudicators must arrive at their decision after careful consideration. This will include listening attentively to all speakers in the debate, taking notes and applying the rules of debating.

Note taking is important because notes allow an adjudicator to resolve issues which emerge later in the debate, for instance, where there is a dispute over the definition of certain terms. Adjudicators must be wary not to enter the debate while making notes by filtering the comments made by speakers. For example, a speaker may provide an argument which has no clear link to the topic. The adjudicator may infer a link and record this inference in their notes, later crediting the speaker with having made the link.

Adjudicators should mark the scores of the speakers as the debate proceeds. Leaving the marking of scores to the end of the debate can be a perilous exercise in recalling the matter, method and manner of earlier speakers. It may result in the adjudicator overemphasising the impact of third speakers.

Chapter 3

Matter

Chapter overview

Matter is the content of the speech. It can be contrasted with the presentation style of the speech (manner) and the structure of the speech (method).

Matter includes arguments, evidence presented to support those arguments, examples and analysis. Matter includes substantive matter, rebuttal and points of information. In debates in which points of information are used, both the content of the question and the content of the answer are considered matter.

The elements of matter are:

– logic; and

– relevance.

Particular matter issues discussed in this chapter are:

– rebuttal;

– the onus of proof;

– taking the audience into account;

– assessing the quality of arguments;

– argument by example;

– references to experts;

– new matter from third negative speakers;

– the *invalid* case;

– the *hung* case; and

– humorous arguments.

3.1 Introduction

The adjudicator must assess the persuasiveness of the arguments presented by the speaker. This means assessing not just the presence of matter, but the quality of the matter presented. In making this assessment, the adjudicator adopts the role of the average reasonable person – dispensing with specialist knowledge of the area and asking the question: how persuaded would the average reasonable person be by this argumentation?

Matter includes substantive matter and rebuttal (arguments in response to the other team). Rebuttal is what distinguishes debating from public speaking – it is the point of contact between two teams. Where there is no rebuttal, there is no engagement and there is no debate.

3.2 The elements of matter

(a) Logic

An argument is *logical* if its conclusion follows from the premise. It does not necessarily mean that the premise must be capable of being proved absolutely. While that may be the goal of philosophers, it would certainly bring an early end to the debate! Instead, debaters tend to grapple with issues that are incapable of absolute proof and their cases consist of the gradual accumulation of arguments tending towards one conclusion.

For example, in a debate on the topic *That capital punishment should not be allowed,* the affirmative may state the following premise: that capital punishment will cause wrongly convicted, innocent people to die. The conclusion that the debater would like to lead the audience to is that because the premise is likely to be correct, weight is added to the overall proposition that capital punishment should not be allowed. Good debaters develop the premise into an argument and use evidence to show that the premise is likely to be correct.

(b) Relevance

An argument is *relevant* if it is likely to add weight to the overall proposition that the team is trying to prove. The proposition in turn must be relevant to the issues in contention in the debate.

Relevance is especially important in debates given the short period of time available to each speaker – there is no time for irrelevance.

Sometimes, adjudicators need to approach this element with an open mind, for example when assessing the first affirmative speaker's set up of the debate. While the information provided in this initial positioning stage may not be directly relevant (it won't necessarily add weight to the overall proposition), it may be crucial to the eventual success of the arguments.

3.3 Particular matter issues

(a) Rebuttal

Persuading an audience means that debaters must explain both why their arguments are right, as well as why their opponent's arguments are wrong. Rebuttal may require establishing:

- that the opposing argument is based on an error of fact, or an erroneous interpretation of fact;
- that the opposing argument is irrelevant to the proof of the topic;
- that the opposing argument is illogical (the conclusion does not logically flow from the premise);
- that the opposing argument, while itself correct, involves unacceptable implications; and
- that the opposing argument, while itself correct, should be accorded little weight.

The structure of rebuttal should be assessed in the method category while the content of the rebuttal should be assessed in the matter category.

Inexperienced debaters typically adopt a 'point-by-point' style of rebuttal, listing every argument and example and rebutting them in sequence. This is hard to achieve in the allocated time and it makes no acknowledgment of the relative importance of different aspects of the opposing case. A far more effective style of rebuttal is for the speaker to identify the important strategic issues in the debate and to attack these issues and the important examples which support these issues.

Every speaker after the first affirmative speaker must aim to bring the opposing cases into conflict by engaging in rebuttal. The balance between substantive argument and rebuttal in any speech will depend on the speaker and the nature of the debate. A suggestion, which is by no means prescriptive, is that about 25–30% of a first or second speech might be devoted to rebuttal and that third speakers might spend the majority of their speech on rebuttal. However, the proportion of rebuttal to substantive arguments will really depend on the requirements of the debate.

(b) The onus of proof

In most debates, there is no *onus of proof*. Both affirmative and negative teams must provide arguments. The affirmative team must assert positively that the proposition under debate is true; the negative team must assert positively that it is untrue. It is not enough for a negative team to rely entirely on rebutting the arguments of the affirmative. In some forms of parliamentary debate, it is acceptable for a negative team to rely entirely on rebuttal. This is discussed in chapters 10 and 11.

(c) Taking the audience into account

Speakers should pitch their arguments so that the particular audience can understand their case. Adjudicators may take the audience into account when assessing the persuasiveness of the arguments. However, adjudicators should not take the reaction of an audience into account when making a decision.

(d) Assessing the quality of arguments

Adjudicators must assess the quality of arguments. This requires the adjudicator to distinguish a strong argument from a weak one (from the viewpoint of an average reasonable person).

A weak argument remains weak whether or not the opposing team points out its weakness. Adjudicators should not wait to see whether the opposition attacks an argument before judging whether it is weak or strong. If the opposition effectively attacks it, they will score matter points; if they don't attack it, they will have missed an opportunity to score matter points (and may be penalised in method if the argument was an important one).

(e) Argument by example

The effective use of examples will add persuasive quality to the argument. If an argument is removed from the abstract by the use of familiar or compelling examples, an audience will be more willing to accept the argument.

In some debates, speakers do no more than reel off a list of examples (supposedly to support their conclusion). The opposing team may reel off a list of contrary examples, and the debate degenerates into a contest between the length and quality of the opposing lists. Good speakers identify a few compelling examples, explain their relevance and explore them in sufficient depth.

Properly used, examples are an important aspect of matter. Usually they'll be most effective when used to support an argument which has been already constructed. Examples should be used as a support for argument, not as a substitute for it.

To illustrate this point, it is a useful to think of a team case as a large tree. The overall proposition that the team is trying to establish is like the trunk. The arguments which support the proposition are like branches. Finally, the leaves are the examples which attach themselves to the branches. Trading lists of examples is like shaking the tree, causing some leaves to fall but allowing the tree to remain largely intact. Rebuttal may therefore be more effective if its intention is to attack the trunk and branches, rather than shake the tree. The exception to this is where certain examples raised in debates become crucial to the overall proposition being advanced by a team.

(f) References to experts

Debaters will occasionally find that an expert on an issue has expressed a view which supports their team's argument. Citing an expert in support of a case is legitimate and is an aspect of matter to be acknowledged by adjudicators.

However, the same caution must be exercised in regard to expert opinion as has been explained in relation to the use of examples. Authorities should be cited in support of an argument, not as a substitute for argument. The fact that an expert holds an opinion usually proves no more than that the expert holds that opinion.

Unless the reason for the opinion can be fully explained and independently assessed, the opinion carries only minor weight in the process of persuasion.

(g) New matter from third negative speakers

The final speaker in the debate may not introduce new matter.

This rule causes a great deal of confusion and controversy, mainly around what constitutes *new matter*. The difficulty created by the rule is resolved by examining the purpose of the rule. Once the purpose is understood, the type of material which is excluded is clearer.

The purpose of the rule is to prevent unfairness in the debate. It is unfair for an issue to be raised at a point in the debate when the opposing team has no opportunity to respond. Without this rule, a negative team would be able to allocate a substantial part of its case to the final speaker, and the affirmative team would have no opportunity to respond.

A number of conclusions follow from identifying the purpose of the rule:

1. the use of fresh examples to further illustrate an earlier argument is not new matter;
2. an argument which rebuts opposing arguments or defends the negative case is not new matter; and
3. new matter generally consists of an entirely new issue which has not been canvassed in the debate.

However, there are a number of marginal cases which are not clear-cut and in such cases the adjudicator must make a judgment as to whether, in the context of the debate, it was fair or unfair for the argument to be raised by the final speaker.

For example, an early speaker may make a brief, passing reference to an argument, but not develop it at any length or place much emphasis on it. If the third negative speaker then elevates the argument to a central role in the negative case and reveals implications which had not been explained, is it new matter? There is no definite answer. In one sense, the issue has already been raised (albeit briefly), so strictly speaking it is not a new issue.

But perhaps it is unfair for the final speaker to give entirely new emphasis and significance to the argument. This must be left for the judgment of the adjudicator, using the yardstick of *fairness*.

Where new matter is introduced, the adjudicator simply *does not hear* such material, and it scores no matter marks. The speaker may also incur a method penalty for a failure of organisation – the argument should have been led earlier in the debate.

(h) The 'invalid' case

A failure of relevance occurs when teams adopt arguments which, even if accepted as true, simply fail to address the topic under debate. This is a particular risk for negative teams when they incorrectly predict the approach of the affirmative team.

In a debate on the topic *That we would prefer small government*, the affirmative may

There is a great deal of flexibility as to precisely how and when in the course of a speech each of these duties is to be performed. The fact that a list of duties can be specified should not be taken to mean that there are rigid segments of a speech.

Debaters must be allowed reasonable latitude in the performance of their duties where their approach enhances the effectiveness of their speech. Adjudicators must assess the quality of performance of the duties; not mere performance. For example, a speaker who chooses to intersperse rebuttal and substantive argumentation should be rewarded if this approach enhances the overall effectiveness of the team's proposition.

(ii) Team structure

Debates do not consist of individual speeches in isolation from each other. Debating is a team activity and each speaker must be considered in their team role as well as their individual role. In considering team method, adjudicators assess whether the structure adopted by the team was effective.

A team structure will be most effective when it possesses a single, consistent theme (sometimes referred to as a *team line*), chunks of which are assigned to each speaker (sometimes referred to as the *team split*).

A team line is important for several reasons. Firstly, each team is attempting to establish that their overall proposition is likely to be correct. Secondly, a cohesive approach means that the speakers are more easily able to link their individual arguments to the overall proposition. Thirdly, the audience members (who do not take notes) will be better able to recall the major arguments advanced by the team if themes are consistent across all speeches.

Speakers must present distinct arguments united under a team line. This division of arguments (team split) may be thematic or may consist of a series of individual points or arguments, allocated randomly to the speakers. The thematic approach is preferred for several reasons. Firstly, team splits allow teams to avoid repetition and stress complementarity between speakers. Secondly, team splits allow speakers to prioritise their arguments strategically.

To illustrate the use of team lines and team splits, consider a debate on the topic *That US bases should get out of Asia.* The affirmative team may adopt a team line about the capacity of Asia to best handle regional tensions. The affirmative team may also add that America tends only to inflame tensions. This overall theme (suggesting Asia can best handle regional tensions) could be divided amongst the first two speakers as follows: the first speaker could focus on diplomatic and military reasons why US bases should get out of Asia (such as improvements in relationships between Asian nations through increased regional cooperation).

The second speaker may focus on the social reasons why US bases should get out of Asia (such as the extent to which local populations are antagonised by the presence of US forces).

This example shows a clear team line and team split. The team split is clearly linked to the topic and is prioritised in anticipation of the likelihood that diplomatic and military considerations will be paramount in this debate.

4.3 Particular method issues

(a) Under-time and over-time speeches

In a debate, each speaker is allocated time to deliver their speech. The allocation usually takes the form of a minute mark (for example eight minutes), with a warning bell sounded one or two minutes before this time.

One aspect of effective speech organisation is the speaker's ability to complete the material within the allocated time. It follows that a speaker who goes *significantly* over the allotted time should be penalised in method. Moreover, in fairness to other speakers who abide by the time limit, material delivered by the speaker after the time limit should not be awarded any matter marks.

Before a penalty is imposed a speaker is usually allowed a small amount of leeway – but no more than about 30 seconds. The speaker should use this period to finish the point being made and close their speech.

A speech which finishes before the warning bell will usually indicate poor organisation and will usually attract a method penalty. However, there are exceptions. In a debate in which the two teams adopt entirely divergent definitions and debate in parallel without ever coming into conflict on the basic issues, the final speaker will justifiably be able to say that there was only one issue between the teams – the question of definition. If the final speaker dealt with that issue thoroughly and decisively and finished his speech before the warning bell, the adjudicator may reward the speaker in method for appreciating that there was only one issue and not filling up time with irrelevant argument. This is exceptional but indicates that some flexibility is required in assessing method.

A short speech may also affect matter marks through a lack of argument. Conversely, a short speech packed with strong arguments might score as well as or better than an unconvincing or repetitive full-length speech.

(b) New matter from third negative speakers

This issue is fully discussed in the matter chapter. Briefly, a third negative speaker is not permitted to introduce any new matter. If any new matter is introduced, it does not score any matter marks and it will usually attract a method penalty. The reason for the method penalty is that it's a wasted period of the speech – a failure of both organisation and strategy. The magnitude of the penalty will depend on the importance of the new matter in the context of the speech. If it is a brief, passing reference, it may attract no penalty at all. If it is a crucial point in the speaker's argument or occupies a significant period of the speech, it will attract a substantial penalty.

(c) Overemphasis of method

It may have once been the case in debating that adjudicators gave all speakers virtually the same method mark. These days it is common to see adjudicators give high or low method marks (13 or 17) and to adopt a far more conservative approach to marking manner and matter (rarely deviating between the marks of 28 and 32). The answer to this over-use of method is to restore balance to the marking of debates and to achieve some parity in method marking versus matter and manner marking. Adjudicators should remember that a 13 in method is the equivalent of 26 in manner, while a 17 in method is equivalent to 34 in matter.

Chapter 5

Manner

Chapter overview

Manner is the presentation style of the speech. It can be contrasted with the content of the speech (matter) and the structure of the speech (method).

Manner includes the aspects of a speaker's presentation which contribute to or detract from their effectiveness as an oral communicator.

The elements of manner are:

– body language; and

– vocal style.

Particular manner issues discussed in this chapter are:

– humour;

– personal attacks on opponents; and

– dress.

5.1 Introduction

The assessment of manner is probably the most subjective assessment an adjudicator will make. The main questions that adjudicators must ask themselves in assessing manner is "was it effective?" and "did the speaker's style contribute to or detract from the force of their arguments?"

The variety of speaking styles is infinite. Some speakers use a forceful and authoritative style; others are quiet and calm in their presentation. Some use theatrical gestures and stride about the stage; while others are relatively reserved in their presentation. Some speakers are rapid in their delivery; others speak slowly and deliberately. Some speakers use notes while others speak without them.

In any particular debate, these elements may add to or detract from a speaker's performance. There is no rule that speaking loudly is better or worse than speaking softly, or that avoiding notes is better than using notes. The test is whether the aspect of the speaker's manner contributed to or detracted from the force of their arguments.

There has been a tendency in recent times for adjudicators to ignore manner (and to assess debaters on the basis of the matter and method). It is important to remember that manner is an extremely important factor in assessing the persuasiveness of a speaker. Research into the elements of communication consistently demonstrates that the speaker's style of presentation has a large impact on their perceived credibility. A confident and fluent speaker will generally be more believable than an uncertain and stuttering opponent. Similarly, in many cultures, eye contact will be seen as an indication of sincerity.

One very powerful example of the power of manner was the 1960 US presidential debate between John F Kennedy and Richard Nixon – the first televised presidential debate. In their assessment of the more credible and believable candidate, the audience was divided. Television viewers felt that Kennedy was more credible; radio listeners thought that Nixon was more credible. One important factor that has been identified as having made Kennedy more credible to the television audience is that he made eye contact with the cameras, while Nixon's eyes were largely focused on the interviewer. Kennedy looked sincere and trustworthy; Nixon looked insincere and shifty. Kennedy won a very close election.

Debating is an exercise in persuasion and must reflect the realities of interpersonal communication. There are many adjudicators who award equal manner marks and fail to distinguish between the qualities of the speakers' style. Perhaps the main reason for this is that distinguishing between speakers with good manner and speakers with poor manner may be hurtful to weaker speakers. Often, the weaker speaker already suffers from a lack of confidence and the adjudicator feels that giving them a low score in this area would be distressing for the speaker. This is a thoughtful but not necessarily helpful position to adopt. Improvement comes with recognition of speaking deficiencies. If a weak manner speaker continually receives 30 marks (the average) for manner, how are they to recognise that there's work to do?

Instead, adjudicators should award marks based on performance. They shouldn't second guess what would motivate the speaker to perform better. They should couple this honesty with encouraging feedback, highlighting the strengths and providing some insight into how to address the areas for improvement.

5.2 The elements of manner

(a) Body language

The body language of a speaker is a very important element of their speaking style. As the expression indicates, *body language* is a language of its own. It can have a significant impact on an audience and can create powerful impressions such as confidence, trust and credibility. It should go without saying that failing to create these impressions can be very damaging to the persuasiveness of a speaker. The Kennedy–Nixon debate is an example in which body language was crucial – eye contact created trust.

Some of the elements of body language include:

– eye contact (and the use of notes by speakers);

– gestures; and

– stance.

Eye contact is associated with confidence and sincerity; an audience is more likely to believe someone who is willing to look them in the eye. Debaters should attempt to maintain eye contact with their audience by moving their eyes over the audience as a whole, without becoming fixated on a single member of the audience, the adjudicator or an inanimate object in the room.

The overuse of notes limits the eye contact and reduces the capacity of the adjudicator to engage with the audience. Adjudicators should discourage speakers from reading their speeches – a debate is not an essay-reading competition; it is an exercise in persuasion that requires engagement with the audience. Notes should not become obtrusive or distracting – either to the audience or to the speaker. One way of avoiding this is to record only key words or headings rather than the whole text of the speech.

There are no rules regarding gestures, except that they should be natural and appropriate to the point being made. Overly dramatic or theatrical gestures may appear forced and unnatural, and distract an audience. Adjudicators assess the effect of gestures, determining whether they enhanced the speech or distracted the audience.

Speakers may stand to deliver their message in a variety of ways: some remain still, other move about the stage. Once again, the adjudicator will assess whether the speaker's stance was distracting, or whether it was appropriate and effective in the context of the speaker's total presentation. Speakers should find a stance with which they are comfortable.

(b) Vocal style

The second element of manner is the vocal style of the speaker. All speakers must have their message heard and understood. Vocal style is central to this goal.

Some of the elements of vocal style are:

– volume and pace;

– tone; and

– clarity and the use of language.

The volume of delivery should be such that the speaker can be clearly heard by the whole audience, without doing permanent aural damage to those in the front row. The pace of the delivery should be neither so slow as to be ponderous nor so fast that the audience feels overwhelmed or is unable to keep up with the speaker.

A certain amount of *light and shade,* or pausing to draw attention to crucial passages, and then dropping back to a conversational tone, can be very effective. However, it should not become artificial or theatrical. The objective is persuasion, and most people find artifice unconvincing.

The tone of the speech should be confident and conversational. Adopting such a tone will allow the speaker to build rapport and trust with the audience. Some speakers have an ability to lose the favour of the audience by being overly antagonistic or arrogant. It should come as no surprise that this affects their capacity to build rapport and trust with the audience.

The clarity of enunciation should allow the speech to be understood without difficulty, and without causing the audience to strain to comprehend the words. While speakers should be reasonably fluent, and cautious of over-using "ums" and "ahs", debating is not about getting things word perfect. It's about adopting a fluent and comfortable conversational tone.

Debaters should not use overly complex language and should steer well clear of jargon which the audience may not understand. This is particularly the case with acronyms which the audience may be unfamiliar with. Speakers at international competitions should take particular care as the audience or the adjudicator may come from a cultural background different from that of the speaker and may not be familiar with the use of certain language.

5.3 Particular manner issues

(a) Humour

Humour is a valuable tool in the speaker's kit. Even the most relentlessly serious topic can usually be lightened with humour.

Speakers who are able to assist the audience's enjoyment of the debate may increase the willingness of the audience to accept their argumentation. It's part of the process of developing a rapport with the audience. Sarcastic or insulting humour may even have a negative effect on the audience.

(b) Personal attacks on opponents

Audiences generally do not appreciate a speaker who makes derogatory personal references about the opposing debaters. Such personal references should be firmly discouraged, usually by a manner penalty, since their effect is to create sympathy for the opponent and hostility to the speaker.

(c) Dress

Dress should generally not be taken into account when assessing the debate. There is no doubt that dress is taken into account in our everyday life, whether it's an impression created at a job interview or social occasion. Yet in debating, dress should only be considered if it distracts the audience from the arguments that the speaker is presenting. That said, it should be a significant distraction and not merely the reflection of the adjudicator's personal views on what is appropriate dress.

Chapter 6

Definitions

Chapter overview

The purposes of the definition are to:

– identify the issues to be debated; and

– clarify the meaning of words in the topic.

Prohibited definitions are:

– without a clear and logical link to the topic;

– self-proving or truistic;

– time set; or

– unfairly place set.

Definitional debates occur when the teams cannot agree on the definition. Where there is a definitional dispute, either of two rules may apply, depending on the competition. The first is the *more reasonable* rule. Under this rule, a team may challenge the other team's definition if its definition is more reasonable. The second is the *unreasonable rule*. Under this rule, a team can only challenge the definition of the other team if the other team has defined the debate unreasonably.

6.1 The purposes of the definition

(a) Identifying the issues to be debated

The purpose of the definition is to specify the issue or issues which arise from the topic and which are to be resolved by debate between the teams. Defining the topic is one of the first tasks to be undertaken by each team. There is no point in arguing the merits of an issue before the nature and scope of the issue have been determined.

Sometimes, this will be obvious because the wording of the topic will make clear the issue to be debated. For example, in a debate on the topic *That Australia should accept more humanitarian refugees,* the issue of the debate is whether Australia should increase (or maintain or reduce) its humanitarian refugee intake.

On the other hand, many topics do not have a clear and unequivocal meaning. Debates on topics such as *That the state of the union is stuffed, That the glass is half full* and *That the invisible hand has arthritis* are clearly susceptible to a range of possible meanings. Whatever the nature of the topic, the affirmative team should clearly state what issues will be argued between the teams.

Some debating topics are phrased as absolute propositions, appearing to require absolute proof of the proposition for every single case – for example, *That conformity makes cowards of us all* and *That we are all in the same boat.* In such cases, absolute proof is not required. It is enough to show that the proposition is generally true.

(b) Clarifying the meaning of words

Every topic contains a series of words, some of which need to be defined. Even topics with words that appear to be obvious in their meaning may require definition. A debate on the topic *That we should legalise euthanasia* requires clarification. What does "euthanasia" mean? Does it refer to active euthanasia (for example, lethal injections) or does it refer to passive euthanasia (for example, switching off life support machines)? What does "legalise" mean? Does legalise mean that euthanasia will be available on demand or that it will be allowed only with the permission of medical specialists? These are important words to agree on before arguing the merits of their case.

Debaters will need to anticipate the words in the topic that may become significant and clarify their meaning to avoid ongoing confusion.

6.2 Prohibited definitions

(a) Definitions without a logical and relevant link to the topic

Definitions must have a *logical and relevant* link to the topic. This is to be assessed (as with other parts of matter) from the viewpoint of the average reasonable person. The team defining the topic should be prepared to show explicitly the link between the topic and the issue or issues that will be debated. The quality of this link must be assessed in the same way as any other matter in the debate – in terms of logic and relevance.

If a team adopts a definition which is unexpected, or which appears to be contrary to the normal interpretation of language, a credibility gap may be created in the mind of the average reasonable person. In this situation, the team should give extra attention to bridging that gap by careful argument.

(b) Self-proving or truistic definitions

Teams should not adopt definitions which effectively prevent the other team from participating in the debate. While philosophers search for truths, debaters must avoid them or risk bringing an early end to the debate.

An example of a truism in a debate on the topic *That tomorrow is another day* is where the affirmative defines the word "tomorrow" as being the day after today, which by definition is another day – the definition contains its own proof of its truth. Another example may be in a debate on the topic *That we should eat, drink and be merry* where the affirmative team defines the issue of the debate to be whether humans need to eat and drink to survive and whether it is better to be happy than sad. The approach of the affirmative team allows little room for the negative team to move.

(c) Definitions which time set the debate

Definitions which time set the debate in the past or future are prohibited. For example, in a debate on the topic *That prohibition does not work,* it would be prohibited to confine the debate to the period of prohibition in the United States during the 1920s. While prohibition during the 1920s could be used as an argument or example to support the team, it could not be used as the definitional arbiter of what the debate could and could not include.

Similarly, in a debate on the topic *That genetic engineering should be welcomed and not feared,* it would be prohibited for the affirmative team to define the debate to be in the next century where genetic engineering had solved world hunger problems and a myriad of diseases. The definition should locate the argument on the day and hour of the actual debate.

(d) Definitions which place set the debate unfairly

Definitions which place set the debate unfairly are prohibited. While the debate can be narrowed to a particular place, situation or organisation, it cannot be narrowed unfairly. Consider the possible definitions in a debate on the topic *That the state of the union is stuffed.* It may be reasonable to define the debate to be about federalism, or the European Union or ASEAN or any other number of national or transnational unions. It may be reasonable to define the debate to be about the trade union movement. Undoubtedly these debates have been place set, but not unfairly.

The interpretation of what constitutes an unfairly place set debate will depend on the venue of the debate, the participants and the audience. A debate in Australia with Australian teams might fairly set the debate in the Australian workplace. The same definition may not be fair in front of a Japanese audience, with an Australian team on the affirmative and a Malaysian team on the negative.

Teams need to carefully consider the venue, the audience and the participants before place setting the debate.

6.3 Definitional debates

As the definition is considered part of matter, the adjudicator does not wait to see if the definition is attacked before deciding whether or not it is persuasive. However, just as debaters should seek to avoid making the definition an issue of contention, so too should the adjudicator where both teams are happy to get on with the debate.

(a) The more reasonable definition rule

In many Australian competitions, a negative team may challenge the affirmative's definition where it believes that its definition is *more reasonable* than the affirmative's definition. Therefore, under this rule, no team has a *right* of definition.

The test of what is more reasonable is to be resolved by argument. It is not enough for the first negative speaker to say "we disagree with the affirmative's definition, here is a better one". Adjudicators should insist that a change of definition be the result of argument, not the mere expressions of disagreement.

The presentation of a prohibited definition (discussed above) will strongly indicate to the adjudicator that the challenge of the negative team is reasonable. In addition to this, the negative should advance arguments as to why their definition is more reasonable.

While winning the definitional argument will propel a team well down the path to winning the debate, it will not always ensure victory. It's possible for a team to lose the definitional argument but win the debate. This is because the definition is regarded as being one of many arguments, though it will be a strategically important one if it holds the ongoing attention of both teams.

(b) The unreasonable definition rule

In many competitions outside Australia, definitions can only be challenged when the affirmative team adopts one of the prohibited definitions above. Such a definition is called an *unreasonable definition*. Where the affirmative team adopts an unreasonable definition, the negative team needs to explain why the definition is unreasonable and provide its own (reasonable) definition. Under this rule, the affirmative team has the *right* of definition provided it does not adopt a prohibited definition.

6.4 The *even-if* argument

When a definitional debate arises, it's tempting for debaters challenging the definition to focus on the definition and ignore the remainder of their opponent's arguments. Where the definition is a truism there's no alternative but to ignore the arguments.

However, the arguments of the other team should be challenged where possible. For example, if the challenge is launched because the affirmative's definition has no clear and logical link to the topic, it may still be possible to rebut the affirmative's arguments. In this situation, after challenging the definition, the negative speaker may say "even if their definition is more reasonable, their case is still weak because ... [rebuttal]...."

There are a number of reasons why it's undesirable for teams to ignore opposing arguments which are rebuttable:

– The aim of the debate is to foster a clash of ideas. If the two teams refuse to debate the merits of their opponents' views, the debate will become a sterile series of speeches in parallel, conflicting only over the definition.

– Debaters can never be sure that the adjudicator has accepted their definition. It is strategically wise to spend some time attacking the opposing case on its own merits.

As noted above, the definitional issue is not decisive of the outcome of the debate – though it's more likely to be decisive where an even-if argument cannot be presented.

Chapter 7

Marking the debate

Chapter overview

The marking scheme allows a maximum of 100 marks to be awarded for each speaker, subdivided into 40 marks for each of matter and manner and 20 marks for method.

A debater who speaks at the expected level for the grade in each of manner, manner and method should receive a score of 30–30–15=75.

The following guidelines should help adjudicators decide the margins by which teams win or lose debates:

– Margin 1–4 points: a very close debate, with only minor differences separating the two teams.

– Margin 5–9 points: a relatively clear decision, with one team having an obvious advantage.

– Margin 10+ points: a very clear win, with the losing team probably having failed in one or more fundamental aspects of its argument or presentation.

7.1 Introduction

The marking scheme allows a maximum of 100 marks to be awarded for each speaker, subdivided to allow a maximum of 40 points for each of matter and manner, and a maximum of 20 points for method. A detailed analysis of matter, manner and method is provided in preceding chapters. This chapter is confined to the marking system itself.

7.2 Selecting a starting point

Debaters will want to compare their speeches from debate to debate. If an adjudicator allocates a score of 75 for one speech and another adjudicator allocates 65 for the next, the debater may conclude that their debating has deteriorated. In fact, it may only mean that two adjudicators adopted different starting points. Consequently, adjudicators have adopted a uniform starting point for scoring which is related to the expected standard for the grade.

A debater whose overall performance is at the expected level for the grade in which they are debating should receive a score of 75 marks.

There is nothing magical about the score 75. However, if all adjudicators adopt it as their expected standard for any grade of debate, then it will be possible to compare scoresheets from different debates and different adjudicators. For example, if a debater at the Australasian Intervarsity Debating Championships performed at about the average standard expected for that competition, they would receive a score of 75. Similarly, if a debater at a National Schools Championship performed at the expected standard for that competition, they would receive a score of 75.

Inexperienced adjudicators may have little knowledge of the average standard of debate in a particular grade. This knowledge comes only with experience. Until adjudicators develop a *feel* for the standard of a grade, it is suggested that the first speaker in the debate be assumed to be of average standard, and all subsequent speakers be marked relative to the standard established by that opening speaker. Marks can always be adjusted later.

7.3 Dividing the points

The marking scheme allows a maximum of 100 marks to be awarded for each speaker, subdivided to allow a maximum of 40 points for each of matter and manner, and a maximum of 20 points for method.

A debater who performs at the expected level for the grade in each of manner, manner and method should receive a score of 30–30–15=75.

Using this as the general principle, we can set some slightly more detailed guidelines for adjudicators as to what individual marks mean:

Matter or Manner	Method	Meaning
26	13	Poor
27-29	14	Below average
30	15	Average or expected standard
31-33	16	Above average
34	17	Excellent

The table above indicates that the lowest score for a speech is 65 marks, while the highest score is 85 marks. Most speeches will score between 70 and 80 marks. For example, a debater could expect to receive 70 marks for a speech at the lower end of the expected range for that grade, and 80 marks for a speech at the higher end of the expected range. Marks above or below these are rarely necessary and would indicate an exceptionally good or exceptionally poor performance.

7.4 Determining the margins

Adjudicators should adopt a roughly identical approach to determining a margin of marks for the same reasons provided for selecting a consistent starting point.

Adopting a marking scheme for the margin means that it's possible to say something about the total winning and losing margin of the debate. In most cases, there will be a mixture of strengths and weaknesses on both teams. The following guidelines will assist adjudicators to decide the margins between teams:

Margin	**Meaning**
1–4 marks	A very close debate, with only minor differences separating the teams
5–9 marks	A relatively clear decision, with one team having an obvious advantage
10+ marks	A very clear win, with the losing team probably having failed in one or more fundamental aspects of its argument or presentation