

## ELSA Legal Debates Guidelines for Virtual Rounds

### FOREWORD

In an attempt of making ELSA's Academic Competitions more accessible, ELSA International has developed guidelines for conducting Academic Competitions online. This set of guidelines applies specifically to ELSA Legal Debates.

### 1. GENERAL

- 1.1. By agreeing to participate in a Virtual Round (VR), the Teams and Judges acknowledge that the VR organiser has full and final discretion in managing the VR of the ELSA Legal Debates to ensure its technical and logistical success while maintaining academic quality and integrity.
- 1.2. The VR organiser will send an email to all teams announcing which team will win the ELSA Legal Debate.

### 2. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- 2.1. Microsoft Teams (or another suitable communication platform) will be used to conduct the virtual rounds. Microsoft Teams can be accessed for an individual meeting via a website from a link provided by the VR organiser. Teams do not need to download Microsoft Teams or have any special software on their computers. However, teams are encouraged to download the software and practice virtual session before the VR.
- 2.2. Team members can join from more than one location. If it is not possible for the team to be in the same location, the camera must be focused on the designated orator and the cameras and microphones of the team members not using their speaking time must be off and muted. This can be a laptop camera or a separate web camera (which may be preferable).
- 2.3. One VR organiser or timekeeper shall be present during the debate.
- 2.4. If the team members are debating from different locations, team members may create a separate chat for communication among team members during the debating session. Judges, VR organisers or individuals that are not registered members of the team must not be part of such a chat.
- 2.5. Each team member is responsible for finding a suitable location, which is quiet and closed to the public and where the user will have access to a desk and chair, steady reliable internet and source of power for a minimum of two hours. Locations in open hallways, libraries, cybercafes, coffee

shops, etc. are not acceptable. We strongly urge teams to choose a suitable location in advance of the VR.

- 2.6. If taking a break in the debates, teams must mute themselves. Team members must use a separate chat for discussing during their break if they are not in the same location.
- 2.7. Teams may not use phones, the internet or any other devices during the debate for anything but participating in the VR and internal communication.
- 2.8. By agreeing to participate in the VR, team members agree to the sharing of their email addresses and mobile telephone numbers with the VR organisers.

### 3. PARTICIPATING IN THE ROUND

- 3.1. Teams must provide the VR organiser with an email address of the user(s). The VR organiser will send teams the following relevant information at least three days before the scheduled virtual Debate Period:
  - a. The number of the team they are competing against and the side of the motion they are representing;
  - b. The case and the motion of the debating session;
  - c. The date and time of the rounds. Teams are encouraged to log in an hour before the start of the debating session to confirm access;
  - d. The contact email for the representative of the VR organiser coordinating the competition; and
  - e. The link to access the videoconference.
- 3.2. Judges will receive a link to the videoconference for the debate. Judges will also receive a link to a separate meeting where they will be able to deliberate privately and upload their score sheets.
- 3.3. The only users allowed in the videoconference are the team members, registered coaches, the judges and VR organiser.
- 3.4. One day before the scheduled competition, the VR organiser will contact the teams and the judges to verify that they can access the Microsoft Teams (or respective) platform.
- 3.5. At the beginning of each Debate Period, the Judges will read out the following text and ask each team whether they affirm that they will comply:

*“Do you the students of team Number ## promise that you will abide by the rules of the ELSA Legal Debates and the rules for the virtual round and that you will not communicate with or accept assistance from in any way your coaches or other individuals during the debating session?”*

Each student from the participating teams must affirm that they will. The Judges will then remind that:

*“Failure to comply with the rules or to accept help from outside sources, including coaches, can result in the judges recommending your disqualification to the VR organiser.”*

- 3.6. The rule limiting teams to their team members and two coaches in the room or video conference remains in effect. Coaches may not pass notes to team members or communicate with them in any way during the debating session. All persons present in the room or the videoconference must be identified to the judges at the start of the session. Once the Debate Period has started, no one shall enter the room where the team is or the videoconference that was not present at the beginning. If someone leaves the room or videoconference during the session, they must seek permission from the judges to re-enter the room or videoconference after they leave. The Judges have the discretion to disqualify a team for violation of this rule.
- 3.7. Team members or coaches may not record the videoconference. The Judges and the VR organisers have the discretion to disqualify a team for violation of this rule.
- 3.8. Each member is allowed to use no more than two laptops during the Debate Period. In addition to the laptop used for the webcast, a team may use another laptop for reference. A team may also use an additional device (stopwatch) for time keeping.
- 3.9. The chat feature of Microsoft Teams will be used to announce the approach of various time limits. If teams are unable to get the Judges’ attention via video, they may also use the chat to ask break. The chat must not be used to send messages to coaches, the other team or judges.
- 3.10. After the Debate Period, Judges will have an opportunity to deliberate in a separate chat. The Judges must provide direct feedback to the teams at the conclusion of the debating session.
- 3.11. Judges must send their scores to the VR organiser via a form provided by the VR organiser.

#### 4. TECHNICAL OR OTHER DIFFICULTIES

- 4.1. If a Judge is unable to join the videoconference, the other judges will wait 15 minutes. If the technical issues cannot be resolved, the debating session will proceed with connected judges. If the other Judge manages to join later, they may only score the portion of the Debate Period they actually participated in. If the other Judge does not manage to join the videoconference, the team’s score shall be determined by averaging the scores of the Judges that attended the virtual debate.

- 4.2. Similarly, if a Judge loses connection and it cannot be restored, the other Judges will continue without the judge in question and may only accept scores for the portion of the debate the Judge actually participated in.
- 4.3. If it is impossible for a debating session to be completed because of technical difficulties, the VR organiser will immediately explore with the teams and Judges the possibility of rescheduling the debating session or rescheduling the uncompleted part of the debating session. Should rescheduling not be possible due to the availability of judges, the judges may resort to the following options:
  - a. Where part of the debate has been conducted, the judges present during any part of the debating session will decide whether it is nevertheless possible to attribute team scores.
  - b. Where no part of the debate has been conducted or where the judges do not consider it possible to attribute team scores, the team score will be an average of the team scores awarded in all previous debates, subject to any modification deemed necessary by the VR organiser and the judges.
- 4.4. Where a Team does not appear within 15 minutes of the start time of their debate, the Team forfeits the round.