

Sunshine Coast Schools Debating Competition

ALL COACHES & TICs - look for and like the “Sunshine Coast Schools Debating Competition” on Facebook!

Tournament Rules & Procedures: 2025

Tournament Structure

- The USC Schools Debating Competition is a short-prep debating tournament open to all schools throughout the Sunshine Coast.
 - The tournament operates with three multi-age divisions:
 - a. Years 6-7 (Junior)
 - b. Years 8-9 (Intermediate)
 - c. Years 10-12 (Senior)
- NOTE:** Students who are younger can compete up an age division – E.G. a grade 5 student can compete in junior and a grade 9 student can compete in senior.
- Each division competes with four preliminary rounds followed by catch-up and play-off rounds (if required) prior to a single round of Semi-Finals and then a Grand Final.
 - The tournament conducts the preliminary rounds for each age division in a single region, dependent upon available host schools.
 - Upon conclusion of the last preliminary round, teams will be identified (from the overall points tally across all draws for that age division) for catch-up and play-off rounds after which the top 4 teams are confirmed for progression to Semi-Finals.
 - If play-off rounds are required in any division, venues will be confirmed with relevant schools after the last preliminary round.
 - Preliminary rounds will be hosted at set venues. In 2025 the venue will be Sunshine Coast Grammar School.
-
- Semi-Finals and Grand Finals for each age division will be hosted at Sunshine Coast Grammar School.
 - The champion school in each age division will receive a perpetual trophy which they can retain at their school until the closing date for team nominations for the tournament in the following school year at which time the trophy must be returned to the tournament administrator. Members of teams that reach the grand final will also be recognised with an individual memento for their achievement.

Team Structure & Entry

- Teams must nominate via the requisite registration form. For the 2025 tournament, registrations must be **submitted to Meg Dunstan by the 14th of June**:scsdebating@gmail.com
- Team registration must include acknowledgment of the host venues.
- Team registration must be received by the due date and then confirmed by the tournament's Logistics Coordinator in order for that team to participate in the tournament. If the Logistics Coordinator needs to address any issue regarding a team's nomination, then that school's debating coordinator will be contacted.
- Upon application to the Logistics Coordinator, a team can consist of students from multiple schools. This is intended only for circumstances in which (i) smaller population schools need to join together to obtain requisite team numbers, and/or (ii) a school chooses to not enter teams but is willing to approve a student's request to join with another school for the purpose of participating in the tournament. In the latter situation, the student must provide the Logistics Coordinator with formal evidence of their base school's permission to represent that school in a mixed team; mixed teams will be identified as consisting of representatives from multiple schools.
*For example: Tom from School X which is not participating in the tournament wants to join with Jane and Sam from School Y. Tom must provide supporting notification (email/letter) of his school's approval to represent School X in a mixed-schools team. **Note:** as a guideline, students from larger schools will not be granted permission from the Logistics Coordinator to form a team with another school.*
- Based on confirmed team registrations, the Logistics Coordinator will determine the draw for each division.
- Schools can withdraw registered teams without penalty if this has been communicated (email) to the Logistics Coordinator by 3.00pm - Wednesday the 30th of July.
- Any school that withdraws one or more teams after 3.00pm - Wednesday the 30th of July - will incur a one-off points penalty (minus 2 points per withdrawn team) applied to each other team from that school in all divisions. *For example, School X withdraws two Junior teams after the cut-off date, resulting in a minus 4 point penalty applied to the final overall score for School X's remaining teams in all three age divisions.*
- For each round, a team is to consist of three students (to present the debate), one coach and, for the debate not preparation, one assistant.
- The coach can be a school staff member, school-approved parent or student from the team's school (e.g. a Year 12 student as coach for a Year 8-9 team).
- The assistant can be a school staff member, school-approved parent or student from the team's school.
- The assistant will fulfill the duties of either chairperson (from the team for the affirmative side of the debate) or time keeper (from the team for the negative side of the debate).
- The coach and assistant cannot be the same person without prior approval.
- All team members presenting the debate and the coach will be permitted in the preparation room. The assistant is **not** permitted in the preparation room (predominantly to avoid unfair advantage between schools who can / cannot provide a 4th student team member for each debate).
- Teams may consist of students from various year levels as relevant to that division's year levels e.g. *students from Years 10, 11 and 12 can form a Senior team.*
- In the Junior (Years 6-7) division, students from younger year levels (e.g. Year 5) are permitted to participate with approval of their school.
- Students who present a debate must remain on that team's list for the duration of the competition i.e. they cannot then participate as a debate presenter for another team in that division.

- Where necessary to help provide a full team, a student can debate up a division level (*e.g. a Year 9 student can help present a Year 10-12 team's debate*) but students are **not** allowed to debate in a lower age division (*e.g. a Year 10 student cannot help present a Year 8-9 team's debate*).
- Throughout the preliminary rounds, there is no limit to the number of students who can participate as debating presenters for a team (*with attention to the above restriction on team allocation once a student has presented their first debate for a particular team*).

Scheduling

- The tournament administrators will send the draw for the first preliminary round to registered schools no later than midday Wednesday 18th July.
- In 2021, tournament dates are
 - Round #1** 13th August
 - Round #2** 20th August
 - Round #3** 27th August
 - Round #4** 3rd Septmeber
 - Play-Offs** 10th September (*if required*)
 - Quarter Finals** 8th October
 - Semi-Finals** 15th October
 - Grand Finals** 22nd October
- In the preliminary rounds, preparation sessions and debate presentations will be scheduled as follows:
 - Years 6-7: Preparation commences 4.30pm / Debate commences 5.30pm
 - Years 8-9: Preparation commences 5.45pm / Debate commences 6.45pm
 - Years 10-12: Preparation commences 7.00pm / Debate commences 8.00pm
- If the play-off rounds are required, preparation and debate session times will be confirmed with relevant teams after the last preliminary round.
- For the Finals, unless otherwise advised, scheduling will be as follows:
 - Years 6-7 & Years 8-9: Preparation commences 5.00pm / Debate commences 6.00pm
 - Years 10-12: Preparation commences 6.30pm / Debate commences 7.30pm
- Teams need to arrive at their appointed host venue to meet the venue coordinator at least 10 minutes before the start of their preparation session.
- Preparation sessions will be scheduled as 60 minutes during which time teams are to prepare for their debate.
- If a team arrives late for their preparation session, they will not be allocated any extra time but will be expected to commence the debate at the designated time.
- If students who are presenting the debate arrive late to their preparation session, they will not be allowed to enter the preparation room if arrival is 15 minutes or later after the scheduled commencement of the preparation session.
- If the team (**i.e. debaters and coach**) has not arrived by 30 minutes into the scheduled preparation session, the other team will – if themselves in full attendance – be declared as having won that round. The team (or teams) that did not arrive in time (*by 30 minutes into their scheduled preparation session*) will be declared as an unannounced forfeit and addressed as per the relevant regulations.
- The team assistant does not need to arrive until just prior to the commencement of the debate.
- The competition aims to avoid scheduling byes in the preliminary rounds, but if necessary will do so and then schedule affected teams for inclusion of a catch-up debate to take place during the play-off rounds.
- The competition does not schedule byes for the play-off rounds or any of the finals debates.

- Postponements or rescheduled debates are at the discretion of the Executive committee and teams must notify the Tournament Administrator as soon as possible.
- Where possible, the Logistics Coordinator will avoid arranging repeat opponents; however, based on the number of teams, this might not prove possible in some divisions and as such there is the potential for some teams to be scheduled to debate each other in more than one preliminary round.
- Where possible, when an even number of teams have forfeited in the same age division in a region, the Logistics Coordinator will reschedule so the opponent teams can proceed with a debate against each other; however, this will not always be possible e.g. due to time constraints in notifying teams.

Topics & Preparation Sessions

- Prior to each debate, the Topics Coordinator will forward that round's topics to the Host Venue Coordinators.
- The Junior Division will address at least two "Should" topics in their preliminary rounds. No limit is placed (either minimum or maximum) upon the use of "Should" topics in the other age divisions.
- For all age divisions, topics in the play-off rounds, semi and grand finals may be of "Should" or other format.
- Venue coordinators must ensure security of these topics for the sake of the integrity of each debate.
- Immediately prior to the commencement of their scheduled preparation session, teams are to meet the venue coordinator who will provide the topic and side (affirmative/negative).
- Topics are not to be provided to teams prior to the commencement of the preparation session.
- **Teams are NOT allowed to take and use technology or devices in their preparation room to help them research.**
- The team (student presenters and coach) must remain in the room from the commencement of the preparation time until they are called out to present their debate.
- For some topics a prior reading document will be administered to teams in the week preceding a debate to allow for more informed arguments.

Forfeits

- Due to the tight timeframes in which all schools operate, this tournament will not, except under exceptional circumstances, provide any postponements for any scheduled debate (preliminary, catch-up, play-off or finals rounds).
- Teams are expected to make a commitment to providing the required number of team members to deliver as high quality a debate as possible and to do so as scheduled in their draw.
- Teams who do not attend as required through the tournament's scheduling will be addressed on the basis of either an Announced Forfeit or Unannounced Forfeit:
 - a. Announced Forfeit: this is declared when for any reason a team cannot attend their scheduled debate and the Tournament Administrator is formally notified (phone/email) prior to 10.00am on the day of the scheduled debate.
 - b. Unannounced Forfeit: this is declared when for any reason a team does not attend their scheduled debate and the Tournament Administrator does not receive formal notification (phone/email) by 10.00am on the day of the scheduled debate.

- Upon notification of an announced forfeit, the Tournament Administrator will contact the opposing team to confirm them as having won that round. The declared winning team will no longer need to attend their scheduled debate for that round.
- In circumstances of an unannounced forfeit:
 - *In cases involving a team that has not arrived by 30 minutes into their scheduled preparation session:* the venue coordinator will inform the tournament administrator and opposing team of the unannounced forfeit. The opposing team will be declared as having won that round.
 - *In cases involving a team notifying the logistics coordinator after the required deadline:* the logistics coordinator will inform the tournament administrator who in turn will inform the opposing team and venue coordinator of the unannounced forfeit. The opposing team will be declared as having won that round.
- Any team wishing to query a declaration of unannounced forfeit needs to address this directly through the tournament administrator.
- Any team scheduled to participate in a catch-up, play-off or finals round but which does not then attend for any reason will be declared as having lost that debate. No further catch-up, play-off or final debate will be arranged.

Catch-up & Play-off Rounds

- The decision to allocate any team to a catch-up or play-off debate rests with the tournament administrator and logistics coordinator.
 - A team will be scheduled for a catch-up debate if: there is a clash of dates with another debating tournament
 - there is evidence of an unavoidable and immediate prevention for a team to attend their allocated debate (e.g. traffic accident; serious weather event)
- Inclusion in a catch-up debate will not be provided for:
 - illness of team member/s or coach
 - clash with other school event
 - any forfeit
- Each team is only permitted to ONE catch-up debate for the duration of the tournament.
- If the school's debating coordinator believes one of their teams has sufficient basis for consideration of inclusion in a catch-up debate, the debating coordinator needs to communicate this request and relevant details to the tournament administrator by 4.00pm on the date of the last (4th) preliminary round.
- Only by application to and approval of the tournament's management team will a catch-up debate be rescheduled.
- Teams can at most be included in one catch-up debate.
- A team will be included for a play-off round debate if there are more than 4 teams on equal points for the top four positions in that age division (thus requiring further separation of teams to confirm progression to semi-finals).
- The Tournament Administrator and Logistics Coordinator will determine then number of play-off debates required to identify the top four teams for progression to the semi-finals.

Scoring

- Each preliminary, catch-up, play-off, semi-final and grand final debate will have a declared winner. No debate will be declared as a tie or draw.

- When announcing the winning team, no scores (team or individual) will be announced by the adjudicator; scores and other detailed feedback can be requested by a team's coach once the debate has formally concluded.
- This tournament uses the standard recognized scoring system also used by a range of other debating tournaments.
- Win/Loss/Forfeit points for each preliminary round will be allocated by the Logistics Coordinator based upon results forms submitted by venue coordinators.
- Venue coordinators are to email all results to the Logistics Coordinator before 5.00pm the day after each preliminary debate round has occurred.
- Points will be allocated as follows:
 - Win + 3
 - Loss 0
 - Announced Forfeit – 1 (minus 1)
 - Unannounced Forfeit – 4 (minus 4)
 - *Late team withdrawal: minus 2 points **penalty per withdrawn team applied to all other teams from that school.** In situations involving a school that has registered just one team and then withdraws late from the tournament, that school will receive the penalty against the next team/s entered in a future year of the tournament.*
- After conclusion of the four preliminary rounds and (if required) the catch-up and play-off rounds, the Logistics Coordinator will tally points to determine which teams (from across the three regions) reach the 'Top 4' and progress to Semi-Finals in each age division. For this purpose, points are initially tallied from the results of preliminary and catch-up debates and then if required from the results of play-off debates.

Conducting a debate

- Each team's assistant is required to sit at the front centre of the room. They should position themselves such that they are not placed beside their respective team i.e. they should be sitting closer to the opposition team than their own.
- The affirmative team's assistant will perform the role of chairperson. The negative team's assistant will perform the role of timekeeper.
- Venue coordinators are to provide sufficient number of bells and stopwatches for all timekeepers to be ready to fulfil their duties. The chairperson for each debate is also to be provided a script outlining how to chair the debate. *If stopwatches are not available at the venue, then it is permissible for the timekeeper to use a mobile phone or other device (own or sourced from the audience).*
- The assistants are not to communicate with members of either team during the debate or the preparation session.
- Students presenting debates must be respectful of others. Personal attacks or comments are not permitted as part of debating; neither are comments about religious beliefs, sexuality, race, political beliefs or any other comments that are derogatory towards others involved in the debate. Inappropriate language will not be tolerated. Any infringements upon these aspects of appropriate behavior and conduct during the debate will be immediately addressed by the adjudicator to ensure that the debate can progress in a sporting and appropriate manner.
- Expected length of presentation for individual speakers is as follows:
 - Years 6-7 (Junior) 3 to 4 minutes
 - Years 8-9 (Intermediate) 4 to 5 minutes
 - Years 10-12 (Senior) 5 to 6 minutes

- The timekeeper assistant will ring warning bells at the following times:

- One bell at minimum time
- Two bells at maximum time
- Three bells at 30 seconds after maximum time

A speaker who receives the 30-seconds three bells warning must immediately stop and resume their seat; the chairperson (supported by the adjudicator) is to enforce this requirement.

- This tournament does not involve “Points of Information” procedures; as such, teams are not to interrupt opposition speakers at any time during the debate.
- Once the debate has formally commenced, the students presenting the debate are not allowed access to any device (phone, laptop, other).
- Members of the audience (including coaches, parents and other supporters) must not engage with team members from either team during the debate either by verbal, non-verbal or other means.

Adjudication

- The key roles of an adjudicator in this tournament are to:
 - ensure that participants enjoy the experience of debating and being adjudicated
 - provide constructive feedback to assist with participants’ future development
 - declare the winning team for each debate they adjudicate
 - provide the venue coordinator with the signed scoresheet for each debate
 - keep their adjudicator’s notes on each speaker’s presentation (*separate document for each speaker*) until the end of the Grand Final round
- Allocation of trained adjudicators for all debates will be arranged by the logistics coordinator.
- Adjudicators are required to arrive at their designated venue at least 15 minutes prior to the commencement of their first adjudication for the evening.
- Adjudicators are to use the proforma documents provided as scoresheets and records of the adjudicator’s notes on each speaker’s presentation. Adjudicators must ensure that all components of these forms are completed:
 - individual speaker’s scores for Matter / Manner / Method
 - individual speaker’s total scores
 - team’s total scores
 - identification of the winning team
 - adjudicator’s signature
- Upon conclusion of the debate, the adjudicator is to:
 - give the completed, signed scoresheet to the venue coordinator
 - keep their adjudicator’s notes on each speaker’s presentation in case these are requested by the Adjudicators & Complaints Manager for arbitration of a complaint and/or adjudicator training
- The scoresheets and adjudicator’s notes documents will be given to the venue coordinators who will provide these to adjudicators on the night of each debating round.
- Adjudicators will be trained by the tournament management committee either in person or via on-line training resources.
- Adjudicators are not to announce scores (team or individual); adjudicators are only to announce the winning team and provide a brief summary of key points for their decision. Upon request by a team/coach once the debate has formally concluded, an adjudicator can provide further feedback including speakers’ scores. Adjudicators can use the tournament’s feedback form to do so.

- Adjudicators can be school students (Years 10-12), school staff, USC students, parents and other volunteers from the community who complete adjudicator training and are approved by the Tournament Administrator (*including Blue/Exemption Card where required: see next point*).
- Adjudicators (*excepting Year 10-12 school students*) who are not registered teachers or police officers **MUST** have a current Blue Card before being permitted to engage in adjudication of any debate. Blue Card details **MUST** be provided to the tournament administrator before the person can be allocated to adjudicate a debate.
*Police officers: any police officer who wishes to work as an adjudicator for this tournament **MUST** have a current Exemption Card. Exemption Card details **MUST** be provided to the tournament administrator before the person can be allocated to adjudicate a debate.*
*Registered teachers: an Exemption Card is not required; instead, registered teachers **must** supply their current QCT teacher registration number to the tournament administrator before commencing the duties of adjudicator in this tournament.*
*This does not apply to relief teacher and retired registered teachers who **must** still supply Exemption Card details.*
- Unless otherwise authorized by the Tournament Administrator, an adjudicator cannot be assigned to adjudicate a debate involving a team from a school with which the adjudicator is associated e.g. a Year 11/12 student as adjudicator can attend the same venue as teams from their school but will only adjudicate debates between teams from other schools; this includes any circumstance in which there are mixed schools teams.
- Adjudicators are recognized for their contribution to the success of the tournament through receipt of certification e.g. Wider Field Experience hours for USC Education students. No adjudicator fees are paid; this is in order to assist the free team entry basis for the tournament.

School provision of FTE adjudicators:

- Although the tournament will each year work to recruit other adjudicators from outside of participating schools, all participating schools must assist in the provision of trained FTE adjudicators in order to have their team registration confirmed.
- “FTE” (meaning Fulltime Equivalent) is the provision of an adjudicator for all four preliminary rounds.
- Schools registering teams are to provide one trained FTE adjudicator per every 1-2 teams registered by that school *e.g. 7 school teams registered to participate = provision of 4 FTE adjudicators*
- One FTE adjudicator can be a combination of people *e.g. John is able to adjudicate Rounds 1 & 4; Jane is able to adjudicate Rounds 2 & 3; thus John and Jane combined = 1 FTE.*
- Schools that provide fewer trained FTE adjudicators than required per their team registrations will have their number of registered teams reduced to match their provision of adjudicators; details in such cases will be addressed by the tournament administrator with the school’s debating coordinator.

Team coaches as adjudicators:

- Based upon the requirement for participating schools to provide FTE adjudicators, the tournament aims to provide a trained tournament adjudicator for each debate. However, there remains the potential for some debates to not have a trained tournament adjudicator available to be allocated.
- Such a circumstance can arise when (i) the allocated adjudicator does not arrive as scheduled e.g. due to illness, traffic, weather event; or (ii) there are insufficient trained tournament adjudicators to fill that round’s roster.
- When there are not have enough adjudicators to fill the roster, the tournament administrators will identify for schools on that round’s draw which debates will require team coaches to work in pairs to fulfil the duties of adjudication. The administrators and logistics coordinator will track these

details throughout the tournament to ensure that this requirement is spread as evenly as possible among teams and schools.

- If the designated adjudicator has not arrived by 15 minutes before the scheduled start time of the debate, the venue coordinator will confirm with the team coaches that they will be required to work as a pair to fulfil the duties of adjudication.
- No other person can be allocated to fulfil the duties of adjudication without the direct approval of the tournament administrator.
- Refer to the “Complaints procedures” (below) for further information about the outcome of a debate requiring team coaches to fulfil the duties of adjudication.

Complaints Procedures

- If a team wishes to lodge a complaint about any aspect of a debate, this needs to be addressed by sending an email within 24 hours of the debate to the Complaints Manager.
- The email needs to be sent from the debating coordinator of the team’s school.
- The email needs to include:
 - Age division and region of the debate
 - School names and (where relevant) team name/number *(in case of multiple teams from one school)*
 - Date of the debate
 - Venue at which the debate was conducted
 - The debate topic
 - Name of the adjudicator *(can be sourced from the venue coordinator)*
 - Nature of the complaint *(must provide specific details)*
- The Complaints Manager will if necessary request further details from other relevant sources (e.g. adjudicator, venue coordinator).
- A written response to the appeal will be completed and emailed to the school’s debating coordinator within seven days of the appeal being received.
- The decision as determined by the tournament’s management team and communicated by the Complaints Manager is final.

Debates with coaches-as-adjudicators:

- The complaints procedure as outlined above is directly related to the outcome of a debate that has an allocated trained tournament adjudicator.
- When a debate requires team coaches to fulfil the duties of adjudication, the tournament’s requirement that one team is declared the winner remains in place i.e. a draw or tie is not permitted.
- If the coaches cannot reach agreement, they need to record this on the scoresheet as “Undecided” and inform the host of this result which will be treated as a loss for both teams.
- If one coach refuses to, or chooses to allow the other team coach to, fulfil the duties of adjudication, this needs to be noted by both coaches and the venue coordinator on the results sheet for that debate. Any complaint by the non-adjudicating coach regarding the outcome of the debate needs to be addressed as per the standard complaints process outlined above.
- If either coach feels forced or pressured into agreeing with the declared outcome of the debate, then they should advise the host venue coordinator who will inform the tournament administrator. The administrator and complaints manager will gather relevant details and then determine what if any response is required and appropriate to the situation and outcome of the debate.
- If both coaches refuse to fulfil the duties of adjudication, the debate can proceed without official adjudication and will be recorded as an announced forfeit for both teams. The host venue coordinator will confirm these details on the results sheet for the attention of the logistics coordinator and tournament administrator. No complaint from either team will be addressed in such a situation.

Executive management team: 2025

❖ President (Tournament Administrator & Training Officer):

Meg Dunstan

- Email: scsdebating@gmail.com
- Phone: 5477 4472

❖ Secretary (Logistics Coordinator):

Caitlin Brown

- Email: scsdebating@gmail.com

❖ Treasurer (Complaints Manager):

Alexander O'Connor

- Email: scsdebating@gmail.com