



DURHAM UNIVERSITY  
UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION  
**MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

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# INTRODUCTION TO MUN

A COMPREHENSIVE CRASH COURSE



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**“Do not accept that what we have today is inevitable. Do not accept that you cannot transform things.”**



**ANTÓNIO GUTERRES**

UN Secretary-General

# INTRODUCTION

Model United Nations (MUN) is an educational simulation of the United Nations, where participants (called delegates) represent nations in a United Nations conference, representing their chosen nation's international interests through diplomacy and debating topics regarding real world issues.

MUN provides a unique experience wholly different from other debating forums, as participants represent the global interests, views and arguments of their delegated nations, not their own, personal opinions.

Overall, this approach proves extremely useful when engaging in debate, discussion and resolution, as topics which would evoke significant discourse or are highly contentious

can be distanced from the individual participant. Debating through the lens of a nation allows us to remain respectful whilst making sure everyone feels welcomed and enjoys the debate.



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## KEY TERMINOLOGY

**Chair:** The person in charge of running the MUN debate. Responsible for enforcing rules of procedure and directing the flow of debate.

**Delegate:** The participant. An individual speaker responsible for representing the interests and values of their assigned nation within the committee and debate

**Points and Motions:** An official request raised by a delegate for the initiation of a specified action to guide debate. Motions can also be called for by the Chair at set times in the debate. Three most important examples of motions are:

**Motion for a Moderated Caucus:** Initiate a period of moderated discussion regarding a specific topic with prescribed total duration and maximum individual speaking time.

**Motion for an Unmoderated Caucus:** Initiate an unmoderated period of discussion on any topic. Delegates may move freely around the room to consult and negotiate with others about any topic. This caucus is normally used to write working papers / draft resolutions or to lobby other delegates for support.

**Motion for a Consultation of the Whole:** A period of moderated discussion where delegates manage themselves for a set duration. There is no time limit for individual speeches.



**Point of Order:** Raised by delegates when they believe rules of procedure have been applied improperly. This can be addressed at other delegates or the Chairs.

**Point of Personal Privilege:** Raised by delegates if something is impairing their ability to engage in debate. Examples include an inability to hear the speaker, need to go to the bathroom etc.

**Point of Information:** Raised by delegates in order to ask a question to another delegate or the Chair(s) on the topic of debate.

**Right to Reply:** Raised by delegates when they believe their nation's national sovereignty or integrity has been infringed upon or insulted. Only applicable if the comment made was in moderated debate. If the Right to Reply is approved by the Chair(s), the insulted delegate will be allotted a set period of time to respond to the insult. Often the result will be something along the lines of the offending delegate apologising.



# need extra support?

IF YOU HAVE ANY  
INQUIRIES OR REQUIRE  
FURTHER ASSISTANCE,  
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO  
CONTACT US AT  
[DUUNA@DURHAM.AC.UK](mailto:DUUNA@DURHAM.AC.UK)  
OR VIA INSTAGRAM DM!  
WE'LL BE MORE THAN  
HAPPY TO HELP.



# HOW DOES THE DEBATE WORK?

In the days leading up to a MUN Conference, a study guide will generally be released by the Chair(s) to help with delegates' research. This usually contains a detailed outline of the upcoming topic, identifies some brackets or subsets of nations which may be particularly relevant, and suggests some key points to address during debate and resolution.

We advise that delegates possess at minimum a basic grasp and understanding of the topic at hand, on top of doing some personal research into the specific position and interests of their represented nation.

## Opening

Chair(s) will generally open an MUN session with a roll call, in which member-State of the committee is called upon in alphabetical order to confirm attendance. In response, delegates will reply with one of two answers: either "present" or "present and voting".

Delegates who answer "present" may choose either to vote or abstain on resolutions and amendments, whereas delegates who answer "present and voting" *must* vote. Typically, delegates choose to answer "present and voting" when the topic being debated is of high importance to the member-State they represent.

## The Debate Begins: General Speakers List (GSL)

After confirming attendance at roll call, a General Speakers List (GSL) is established by the Chair(s) to give the debate structure and

control its flow. This GSL determines the order of speakers, and generally delegates use this initial one to present their opening statements and hint at their country's overall interests or position regarding the topic. In order to be added to the GSL, delegates are generally asked to raise their placards.

Chair(s) will use their gavel to indicate the amount of time delegates have remaining to deliver speeches. Although practice differs from Chair to Chair, widely accepted procedure has them banging the gavel when delegates have 10 seconds remaining, and once more when time has elapsed. If a delegate is left with excess time on their speech, it is customary requirement to "yield" this time back to the Chair(s).

## Moderated Caucuses

After the GSL concludes, the Chair(s) will usually open the floor to receiving motions, looking favourably towards motions to open a moderated caucus. Moderated caucuses focus on a specific, set topic, and generally encourage and facilitate more flexible, back and forth debates regarding policy, stances and interests of each nation. If there are any objections to motions after the GSL, all delegates are required to vote; a motion passes upon receiving a voting majority, and then begins right afterwards.

During a moderated caucus, the GSL is not utilised to structure the debate. Instead, Chair(s) call on delegates to take the floor, with the delegate who originally motioned for the caucus having the option to speak either first or last.

## Unmoderated Caucuses

Generally, unmoderated caucuses are motioned for after the different policies, ideas, interests and stances of countries are apparent and clear to you. Delegates of specific countries will therefore want to form alliances (called "blocs") with other likeminded countries and start pushing for solutions. To follow up on this, delegates will write a "working paper" an informal document utilised to start proposing your solutions to the topic. All of this is done during an unmoderated caucus, as it facilitates open discussion and allows delegates to physically move around the room to do so.



## DECORUM, DELEGATES!

During debates, Chairs will expect you to follow MUN manners / "act with decorum". One of the most important rules of decorum refers to "crosstalk" between delegates (that is, talking with each other). This applies when the Chair(s) or a speaker is speaking, as interrupting them to talk is seen as disrespectful. If the committee is becoming too disruptive, out of control etc. usually the Chair(s) will call "Decorum, delegates!" as a reminder and warning.

Any factually questionable or accusatory proclamations may be subjected to a Right of Reply from another contesting delegate, so during speaking time it is crucial to have arguments thought out to refute challenges to your statements. Remember that disrespectful or intentionally inflammatory language or personal insults of any sort will not be tolerated.

Formal language is encouraged whenever a delegate addresses their fellow delegates, speaks during the GSL or in caucuses. A particularly important thing to note is that delegates should always speak in third person, as they are representing the opinions of their assigned country, not themselves or their personal opinions.



# WORKING PAPERS

After unmoderated caucuses elapse, delegates usually have determined who their allies are, have formed blocs, and have come up with rudimentary proposals and policies that they want to see passed. Delegates will therefore commonly submit "working papers" to the Chair when motions are called for.

These "working papers" are essentially the first draft or precursor to what will become your Draft Resolution. They're usually short, concise, 2-3 pages long at maximum, and note down all the solutions a bloc of delegates want to implement to resolve the situation at hand. Generally, what matters is not length the quality of solutions or ideas. When competing with other rival blocs, it's better to have a few or even one well-refined, thought out idea than several short unclear points.

The working paper is submitted to the Chair, and if approved, could be introduced to the room of delegates and be discussed. It is considered rude or an intentional slight to vote against the introduction of a working paper to be discussed amongst the committee.



# THE DRAFT RESOLUTION

Your working paper will eventually be replaced by a "draft resolution", a draft formal document setting out the exact solutions, proposals and stances that your bloc of delegates wish to put forward. This resolution must have sponsors (those who helped write it) and also signatories (those who support it, want it to be discussed, or both).

The draft resolution must also have correctly formatted clauses of proposed actions (the formatting of it will usually be explained in debate or you'll learn this through experience). These have specific and to-the-point proposals, and often begin with action verbs such as:

- Affirms
- Approves
- Recommends
- Establishes

An example of these clauses would be: "Recommends that developing countries establish women's trade unions and work with governments to fight for women's rights at work."

Preambulatory clauses are another form of clauses which some draft resolutions may have. These give some context on the solutions proposed.

Example preambulatory clause: "Recognising an urgent need for international cooperation to enshrine the rights of women globally".



# RESOLUTIONS: DEBATING & VOTING

Every delegate approaches a resolution with a single goal in mind – to get it passed by the committee with a majority vote. Any draft resolutions that are proposed to the Chair(s) will likely be fiercely contested by any rival blocs, or even by delegates belonging to the proposing bloc in order to clarify specific clauses. Delegates can also propose amendments to strike, propose changes, or otherwise alter the resolution.

When debate closes, the final, proposed resolution will be voted on, with options being:

1. For
2. Against
3. Abstain

Please note that you cannot abstain if you registered "present and voting" at roll call.

A fourth option is "passing on your vote", which allows you to vote after everyone else in a second round of voting, though if you pass, then you *must* vote either for or against, even if you only declared 'present'.

For a resolution to pass, a majority of votes in favour needs to be reached by the committee. If not, the resolution will fail. Sometimes, though rarely, the vote will require more than majority, though if this is the case the Chair(s) will likely have informed delegates of this beforehand.

## not yet a member?

**GET MEMBERSHIP TODAY TO  
GAIN FREE ACCESS ALL MUN  
EVENTS AND MUCH MORE  
THROUGHOUT THE  
ACADEMIC YEAR.**

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# A CONCLUDING NOTE

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**Unsurprisingly, the best way to learn how MUN works is active participation.** Although it may be nerve-wracking and daunting at first, the more actively and consistently you participate, the less difficult it may seem to speak in front of your fellow delegates, write resolutions, and debate!

Indeed, by making speeches and proposing motions, whether prepared for or improvised on the fly, you'll very quickly become accustomed to it, and before you know it, be an expert!

**If you have read this far but, for some reason, plan to remember only one thing, please remember this.** While debates can often be fierce, MUN is just a simulation. This is why we try to end most MUN sessions with a small social so that we can be reminded that we are all still friends. *(This applies especially after having just torn the living daylights out of your best friend's terrible draft resolution.)*

If you ever have any questions or wish to get some clarification, feel free to speak to a member of the Executive Committee at any of our events.

*Thank you for reading, and we hope to see you in our MUN sessions!*



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