



University of St Andrews

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Union Debating Society

St Andrews Union Debating
Society

Equity Policy

This document explains the policies and procedures we have in place to ensure that every participant is given a full and fair opportunity to participate, the expectations we have for the behaviour of participants, as well as what you can do if you feel uncomfortable. We ask that everyone takes the time to read this document in advance.

What is Equity?

Equity is about ensuring every participant has an equal opportunity to participate in the competition and that their welfare is looked after. It creates a process for dealing with issues that arise and provides a series of policies we expect participants to abide by during the competition.

Every person at this competition - including volunteers, convenors, the CA Team, and the Equity Team - are responsible for abiding by this policy.

What do Equity Officers do?

You can speak to an Equity Officer about any issue that has arose during the competition and we will endeavour to provide as much help as we can. We can be a listening ear if there is an incident you would like to talk about, and we can also talk to you about any other concerns you might have (for example, stress during the competition, accessibility issues, or general questions and concerns).

Equity Officers are normally volunteers from around the debating circuit. While they are chosen for their ability to deal with issues respectfully and their supportive nature, they do not necessarily always have training in things like active listening. If necessary, Equity Officers can suggest services that might be able to provide better support.

In dealing with equity violations, the role of an Equity Officer is not always intended to be punitive, although they can do this if necessary. They act as impartial adjudicators on issues that arise, and facilitate discussion between participants where required.

If you feel uncomfortable talking to a member of an Equity Team about something, the CA Team can also act as a point of contact.

What is an Equity Violation?

Several policies have been put in place to ensure that the competition runs smoothly and all participants feel safe. Breach of these constitute as equity violations. The following policies apply across all areas of the competition, during rounds, between rounds, and the social. While the examples listed here often refer to speakers, they include everyone in the competition, including judges, the CA Team, convenors, and volunteers.

NOTE: Alcohol/drugs are not mitigating factors for breach of equity. If you believe that you may not be able to follow the equity policy in it's entirety under the influence of alcohol/drugs, we strongly advise you limit your consumption.

Language Policy

Comments should not be made that belittle another participant or make them uncomfortable, whether those comments are intentional or made accidentally. As a rule of thumb, you should only ever criticise people's arguments, and not them as a person. Some examples of unacceptable language include:

- **Attacks against an individual's identity:** this includes derogatory remarks about an individual's race, gender, class, sexual orientation, mental or physical health, language background, disability, nationality, educational background, religious affiliation (or irreligion), or political ideology.
- **Derogatory remarks about personal characteristics** such as appearance, dress, weight, personal habits, sexual practices, profession, or lifestyle choices.
- **Inconsiderate treatment of other speakers**, for example, criticising the length or presentation of another speaker's speech instead of rebutting their arguments, or by referring to their arguments in a derogatory manner.
- **Gross or unfair generalisations about a community or stereotypes** that cannot be defended through rational argumentation and evidence. Making such generalisations is an equity issue even if no member of that community is present during the debate and therefore cannot be 'personally offended'.
- **Inflammatory or triggering language**, particularly in debates where the discussion of sensitive subjects such as mental health, sexual assault, violence, abortion, and abuse might be necessary. While it is sometimes necessary to discuss these things, we ask speakers to be mindful of the fact that these issues affect real people, including those who may well be in the room. A more graphic description does not contribute to the logical strength of your argument.

Generally speaking, you do not know the background of the other speakers or judges in the room and so we ask that when you talk about groups of people or particular life experiences, that you do so in a way that is considerate and understanding.

Behaviour Policy

We ask that individuals be mindful of their behaviour towards other participants of the competition. Behaviour should always be respectful. Some examples of unacceptable behaviour are:

- **Intimidation of any sort.** There is a zero-tolerance policy for this. Intimidating or threatening behaviour includes such things as: yelling, harassing, threatening, bullying etc.
- **Discrimination of any kind.** Discrimination of any sort, regardless of type (e.g. age, appearance, social status, gender identity, disability, nationality, sexuality, religion, etc) is completely unacceptable.

- **Behaviour designed to upset or throw off other participants.** Behaviour we would deem unacceptable would include interrupting or disrupting someone's speech or making disrespectful facial expressions or body language towards someone. Such behaviour means other speakers do not get a fair chance in the debate.
- **We ask that participants be mindful of respecting individual's sexual and romantic boundaries.** Please note that interactions are always subject to power dynamics and individuals may feel coerced into consenting to, or not objecting to, invasive or threatening behaviour. We ask everyone to follow a standard of enthusiastic consent. Note that this applies in an online competition as well, and there is a zero-tolerance policy for harassment.
- **Undermining the equity policy.** Undermining/belittling the equity policy, or parts of it, also comes under the remits of equity violations.
- **Victimisation.** Negative interactions with a person because they have made an equity complaint or have been part of equity proceedings.

The examples here are a non-exhaustive list and other instances may be considered inappropriate behaviour on evaluation by the Equity Team. We encourage you to raise any incidents that have made you upset or uncomfortable with the Equity Team.

Clash Policy

Clash is the process of ensuring that people do not judge teams who would be personally biased or if it would cause significant discomfort. Some examples of where clash is normally used are previous or current close relationships, hookups, mentors, previous WUDC/EUDC partners, or cases of harassment, although this list is non-exhaustive.

Judges may clash speakers and speakers may clash judges. In some cases, judges may clash other judges however we ask that you only request this where judging with someone would be very difficult. Note that speakers may not clash other speakers (as then teams cannot be power-matched) (please contact us within Equity if necessary though) and that you should not clash someone because you think they are a bad judge.

A participants list and form for you to submit clash will be posted prior to the competition. We ask that participants include any clash that occurs prior to the competition there.

If issues arise throughout the competition, you can request a clash by speaking to the Equity or Tab Team. The form will not ask why you have requested this clash and the form itself will only be seen by Equity and Tab. Instances of clash may be seen on the tab by the CA Team as they allocate judges, but they will not have a full list.

Pronoun Policy

At this competition, we will be using pronoun introductions at the start of every round. This is to ensure everyone can participate in the debate without being misgendered.

The Chair will introduce themselves and the gender pronoun they would like to use (e.g. "Hello, my name is X and I will be your Chair. My pronouns are she/they/he/etc."). They will then invite the wings to introduce themselves and their gender pronoun before requesting the names, speaking order, and pronouns of the teams in the debate (e.g. you could say "My name is X and I will be speaking first/second. My pronouns are she/they/he/etc.").

We ask that everyone is respectful of these pronouns throughout the competition and that you use gender neutral language (e.g. by referring to the "Prime Minister", "DPM", etc.) as a default.

Nobody is obligated to provide a pronoun, and acceptable responses include, but are not limited to, "she", "he", "they", "she exclusively", "no preference", "I prefer not to be gendered", etc. If somebody has not expressed a preference, we ask that you use their name or position to reference them.

It is not for participants to make judgements about other participants' pronouns and identities, and efforts should be made to not share these with others outside the competition. For example, telling someone outside of the competition 'I didn't know X uses Y pronouns and therefore identifies as Z' is unacceptable.

If you misgender someone accidentally, please apologise as soon as possible. We understand that individual mistakes do happen, but we take deliberate or repeated misgendering or attempting to undermine this policy seriously.

Opt-Out Policy

A speaker may opt-out of up to two rounds for any reason (including, but not limited to, physical or mental health, or if they feel affected by a motion or events on the day).

Their partner will be permitted to speak in the round, giving both speeches for that position (this is known as 'iron-personning'). They will receive the higher of the two speaker scores awarded to them, and the absent partner will receive 0. The teams will receive team points as if they were full participants in the debate.

If a team relies on this opt-out for more than two rounds (regardless of which speaker does it), they will not be eligible to break but may compete in all rounds. This means that either one speaker in a team can opt-out of two rounds, or each speaker can opt-out of one round each.

Technology Policy

Permitted use of technology: for general competition logistics, accessibility requirements, note-taking, time-keeping, as a fiddle device, or for aiding concentration.

Prohibited use of technology:

Use of the internet for matter generation is strictly prohibited. You cannot call your mentors, coaches, or anyone in general to help you with the debate. If clarifications are required, please contact the CA Team.

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH EQUITY?

If you speak to an Equity Officer about an incident involving another person, we will usually try to facilitate discussion between you and that other person with your consent. Most equity violations occur when people do not intend to cause harm or offence, so often Equity Officers facilitate discussion so that participants can understand what happened and apologise. If you would prefer not to speak to the person involved, an Equity Officer can speak to them on your behalf.

In some situations, where mediation is not appropriate and/or the incident was particularly harmful, Equity Officers will investigate the complaint with the parties involved. The Equity Team has the power to take actions like enforcing new clash, excluding people from the break or the competition, or complete removal from the competition, although we hope not to have to take any of these actions. For such action to be taken, a complaint must be made by the individual affected (where necessary). The Equity Team would not generally seek to pursue punishment without the consent of the victim unless it is necessary for safety or there are other complaints involved. In the broad majority of cases, we expect that mediation and an apology would be appropriate.

In any case, discussions with the Equity Team are completely confidential, and will only be shared with others where necessary (for instance, information may be shared with the CA Team where it is needed to enforce a clash or remove somebody from the break, and discussions may be had with the people involved to investigate a complaint).

During rounds, we ask Chair judges to highlight to speakers if they feel a matter has been dealt with insensitively or in violation of this policy. Only Chair judges should do this during the round itself, and if other panellists have concerns about the debate, they should raise this to the Chair during the private adjudication or to the Equity Team after a round.

In some cases, where general complaints or issues have been noted, Equity Officers will make announcements to all participants reminding them of the expected behaviour under this policy. Such announcements would not target any specific participant and are expected to be general advice.

In instances where something has occurred that is unlawful in nature, or anyone has been put in serious danger, the Equity Officer is mandated to report the offence to either the University security team or legal authorities. The Officer will be discreet and keep issues confidential during the process unless external authorities, where necessary, must be notified.

On a final note

Thank you for taking the time to read this policy. We hope that everyone has a safe and enjoyable experience at this competition. If there are any questions about this policy, please contact the Equity Team.

This Equity Policy is based on the SSDC Equity Policy, the Delta Wom*ns and Gender Minorities Online Open Equity Policy, Newcastle Mixed Doubles Equity Policy and Glasgow Ancients 2021 Equity Policy.