

# Queensland Debating Union Rules

*Reviewed and accepted by the QDU Executive on March 6, 2022*

These Rules govern the QDU Schools Competition and the QDU Junior Round Robin Competition.

For advice on debating practice and technique, please consult the QDU's Official Handbook.

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## 1 Status and Interpretation of Rules

- 1.1 By nominating teams in QDU competitions, schools agree to be bound by these Rules, including the Fees Schedule (as defined in Rule 21.2).
- 1.2 In addition to these Rules, schools are responsible for ensuring students, coaches, parents and other representatives are aware of and comply with the QDU Code of Conduct available on the QDU website as updated from time to time.
- 1.3 The Vice-President (Schools), in consultation with the QDU Executive, is responsible for the interpretation of these Rules, and may determine any matter not covered by these Rules (including the extent of their application in exceptional circumstances).
- 1.4 Decisions of the Vice-President (Schools) may only be appealed to the QDU Executive where a complainant can demonstrate that they are manifestly unfair and unreasonable.
- 1.5 Powers of the Vice-President (Schools) in these Rules may also be exercised by:
  - (a) the President; or
  - (b) a delegate designated by the Vice-President (Schools) or the QDU Executive from time to time, in which case such exercise shall be subject to reversal by the relevant delegator.

## 2 Communication

- 2.1 All communications in relation to these Rules shall be first made to the QDU Program Manager ([admin@qdu.org.au](mailto:admin@qdu.org.au)) in writing within seven days of the matter arising.
- 2.2 All complaints relating to a debate or adjudication must state:
  - (a) the name and telephone number of the complainant;
  - (b) the date, grade and topic of the debate;
  - (c) the teams in the debate;
  - (d) the basis of the complaint;
  - (e) the proposed resolution of the complaint; and
  - (f) the name of the adjudicator where known.

*Note: Adjudicator names are posted on door signs at debate rooms.*
- 2.3 Correspondence that does not comply with the above conditions may be disregarded.

## 3 Breach of Rules and Powers of the Vice-President (Schools)

- 3.1 Where a team believes these Rules have been breached, their school coordinator may notify the Vice-President (Schools) in accordance with Rule 2.
- 3.2 Adjudicators are not to be called upon to determine a breach of these Rules or to award a debate on the basis of any potential breach. Potential breaches should be referred to the Vice-President (Schools) after the debate. During a debate an adjudicator may only intervene:
  - (a) to correct breaches relating to the conduct of the debate (such as if the timekeeper is ringing bells at incorrect times); and
  - (b) at the discretion of the adjudicator.
- 3.3 The Vice-President (Schools) may determine:
  - (a) whether to investigate a potential breach of these Rules;
  - (b) whether or not a breach has occurred; and
  - (c) whether any action is appropriate in relation to a breach.
- 3.4 The Vice-President (Schools) may take the following action in response to a breach of these Rules (or where the circumstances otherwise demand it):
  - (a) deem a team to have won a debate (which may be done with or without affecting the result awarded to the other team);

- (b) issue warnings;
- (c) deem a team to have lost a debate;
- (d) deem a team to have forfeited a debate;
- (e) disqualify a team from participation in the finals series;
- (f) ban a student, parent or other person from attendance at QDU debates or events;
- (g) any other appropriate action given the circumstances; or
- (h) any combination of those actions listed above

## 4 Year Level Requirements

- 4.1 Teams in each grade of the competition must be comprised at all times of students from the relevant grade of school or below (for the purposes of these Rules, Senior A is the highest grade and is open to all students in year 12 or below).
- 4.2 If requested, schools must provide the year level of debaters nominated in teams.
- 4.3 Teams in breach of this Rule 4 are deemed to forfeit, unless determined otherwise at the discretion of the Vice-President (Schools).

## 5 Team Composition

- 5.1 Teams must contain either four or five members, unless the Vice-President (Schools) has in their discretion authorised a team of three members.
- 5.2 No debater may speak more than once in:
  - (a) the same debate; or
  - (b) in the same grade and the same round,otherwise the team for which they speak the second (or further) time is deemed to forfeit.

## 6 Change in Team Composition

- 6.1 The members of a team may only be changed for the first and second rounds of debates, unless the Vice-President (Schools) has given approval for a permanent later change in team composition due to exceptional circumstances.
- 6.2 The members of a team from the start of the third round onwards must be comprised only of debaters who have been members of the team in the first or second rounds.
- 6.3 If requested, schools must confirm the final team membership before the start of the third round of debates.
- 6.4 Teams in breach of this Rule 6 are deemed to forfeit, unless the breach is permitted as a substitution under Rule 7.

## 7 Substitution of Team Members

- 7.1 If required, a maximum of two substitute debaters may be used as speakers in a debate.
- 7.2 Substitute debaters may be either:
  - (a) debaters from a team in a lower grade (for Senior A, year 12 is lower); or
  - (b) students from that grade or a lower grade who are not in another QDU debating team.
- 7.3 A student may only act as a substitute debater up to two times in one calendar year across all grades, unless given approval to fulfil additional substitutions by the Vice-President (Schools).
- 7.4 Substitutions are not permitted after the chairperson has opened a debate, except in exceptional circumstances.

## 8 Postponements

- 8.1 Applications for postponements must be made to the Vice-President (Schools) online through the QDU Competition Management System as soon as possible and at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of the debate.
- 8.2 The Vice-President (Schools) may approve an application at their discretion and only in these circumstances:
- (a) compulsory school events (as defined in Rule 21.1); or
  - (b) other exceptional circumstances, for example substantial illness affecting multiple team members
- 8.3 If an application is granted, schools may be directed to pay the relevant fee set out in the Fees Schedule.
- 8.4 If an application is granted, the relevant teams must determine a time and venue for the postponed debate in consultation with the QDU Program Manager. Schools must act reasonably when approached to make arrangements for the postponement of a debate.
- 8.5 If an application is granted but the other team is unable to debate at a later time, the team granted the postponement is deemed to have lost the debate.
- 8.6 Applications for postponement of the fourth round of debates will not be granted, however applications to bring such debates forward may be granted under Rule 8.

## 9 Forfeits

- 9.1 This Rule 9 applies if teams forfeit or are deemed to forfeit a debate, but not if a team is deemed to have lost a debate.
- 9.2 Teams must ordinarily seek postponement of a debate under Rule 8.
- 9.3 A team forfeits a debate if:
- (a) the school coordinator notifies the QDU Administrator online through the QDU Competition Management System to that effect;
  - (b) less than three members of the team are present 15 minutes after the scheduled start time of a debate;
  - (c) less than three members of the team are present 30 minutes after topic release for a short preparation debate;
  - (d) these Rules deem that a team has forfeited; or
  - (e) the Vice-President (Schools) deems that a team has forfeited under Rule 3.4.
- 9.4 In order not to waste preparation work, debates may go ahead where a forfeit is due to the failure of team members to show up, with such adjustments (such as a debater speaking twice) as are necessary in the circumstances, however this Rule 9 will still apply.
- 9.5 If a team forfeits a debate, the following consequences apply:
- (a) the other team is deemed to win the debate (unless that team also forfeits);
  - (b) the school must pay the fee set out in the Fees Schedule; and
  - (c) the forfeiting team will be ineligible for the finals series.
- 9.6 A forfeiting team may apply for the Vice-President (Schools) to waive 9.5(b) or 9.5(c) in exceptional circumstances.
- 9.7 Schools with teams forfeiting with or without notice on a regular basis will be warned, and failure to heed this warning may be penalised at the discretion of the Vice-President (Schools), including by excluding the school from registering teams in the QDU competition in subsequent years.

## 10 Adjudication

- 10.1 Complaints regarding adjudication must be made by school coordinators in accordance with Rule 2 within seven days of the adjudication.
- 10.2 Complaints that do not comply with Rule 2 or Rule 10.1, or which lack sufficient detail, may not be investigated.
- 10.3 The Vice-President (Adjudicators) may review an adjudicator's decision at their discretion, however will not award a win to a losing team because of technical breaches or peripheral issues that do not go to the core of the decision.
- 10.4 School coordinators are to review the concerns of their coaches or students and exercise judgment in each case as to whether the making of a complaint is justified.
- 10.5 Schools submitting complaints that are not upheld on a regular basis will be warned, and failure to heed this warning may be dealt with at the discretion of the Vice-President (Adjudicators), which may include a decision to cease investigating complaints made by that school or in relation to a particular team.

## 11 Absence of Adjudicator

- 11.1 If no adjudicator is present at the scheduled commencement of a debate, the teams must contact the venue coordinator (who will contact the QDU Administrator).
- 11.2 The QDU may allocate a substitute adjudicator.
- 11.3 If no adjudicator is present within 30 minutes of the scheduled commencement time:
  - (a) the debate may go ahead without the adjudicator; and
  - (b) both teams will be accredited a win.
- 11.4 In cases of dispute, the Vice-President (Adjudicators) may determine:
  - (a) the time of an adjudicator's arrival; and
  - (b) whether an adjudicator not adequately accredited for that grade is 'no adjudicator'.
- 11.5 In the finals series, Rule 11.3 will not apply and the QDU will make alternative arrangements for the debate.

## 12 Duties of Schools

- 12.1 Schools must submit reports of debate results as directed by the QDU Administrator.
- 12.2 Schools must comply with reasonable enquiries of the QDU when investigating potential breaches of these Rules.
- 12.3 The primary responsibility for the care of students (including when attending at other school venues) remains with the students' school.

## 13 The Draw

- 13.1 It is the duty of teams to correctly interpret the draw.
- 13.2 If changes are made to the draw:
  - (a) relevant school coordinators will be notified by the QDU Administrator;
  - (b) the changed draw, as soon as it is sent, will override any other draw (including the draw published on the QDU website); and
  - (c) it is the duty of school coordinators to inform all relevant parties (including coaches, students and parents).
- 13.3 If a team prepares the wrong side of a debate, the debate may be postponed for 15 minutes in which time that team may prepare the correct side of the topic.

13.4 If there is a disagreement about the correct interpretation of the draw, the teams in disagreement should contact the QDU Administrator from the venue and seek their final determination.

## 14 Duties of Teams

- 14.1 Affirmative teams must provide a chairperson and a whiteboard marker.
- 14.2 Negative teams must provide a timekeeper, a timer (that is not capable of electronic communications during the debate) and a bell.
- 14.3 The chairperson must chair the debate and fulfil the role set out in the Chairperson’s Speech published on the QDU website.
- 14.4 The timekeeper must time and record the duration of speeches in the debate and ring bells in accordance with Rule 15.
- 14.5 Affirmative teams must sit on the left (from the perspective of the audience) and negative teams on the right (from the perspective of the audience) of rooms.
- 14.6 The chairperson and timekeeper should sit in the centre so that neither is next to their team.

## 15 Speech Times

15.1 Bells are to be rung by the timekeeper as set out in the following table, and speeches are to be for the duration set out in the column headed ‘Final Bell’:

	<b>Warning Bell</b> Single Bell	<b>Final Bell</b> Double Bell	<b>Overtime Bell</b> Triple Bell
Grade 5	3:00	4:00	4:30 and every 30 seconds after
Grade 6	3:00	4:00	4:30 and every 30 seconds after
Grade 7	3:00	4:00	4:30 and every 30 seconds after
Grade 8	4:00	5:00	5:30 and every 30 seconds after
Grade 9	5:00	6:00	6:30 and every 30 seconds after
Grade 10	6:00	7:00	7:30 and every 30 seconds after
Grade 11	1:00 and 7:00	8:00	8:30 and every 30 seconds after
Grade 12	1:00 and 7:00	8:00	8:30 and every 30 seconds after
Senior A	1:00 and 7:00	8:00	8:30 and every 30 seconds after
Replies	3:00	4:00	4:15 and every 15 seconds after

15.2 Bells must be rung audibly and with consistent volume and duration of each ring.

## 16 Assistance

- 16.1 Students must prepare their team’s speeches. Coaches, parents or others must not write, prepare or dictate speeches.
- 16.2 Chairs, timekeepers, coaches and audience members must not communicate with any team during a debate, including by the use of oral or written communication or the use of signals.
- 16.3 Public communication with the chair of a debate is permitted if it relates to the conduct of the debate.
- 16.4 Debaters must not attend earlier debates in the same grade and round.

## 17 Conduct at Debates

- 17.1 Debaters, coaches and spectators must behave in an appropriate manner at all times.
- 17.2 Debaters must not use language that is offensive, derogatory or hateful, including swearing or the use of racial or gendered slurs.
- 17.3 Debaters and spectators must not act in any manner intended to disturb a debater during a debate.
- 17.4 Debaters are encouraged to use palm cards, however may choose to use paper as an alternative if preferred.
- 17.5 Adjudicators, chairpersons, and debaters are permitted to use mobile phones as timing devices during a debate;
  - (a) Any electronic device used under this Rule should be switched to a mode that prevents it from receiving calls or messages or making noises that could in any way disturb the debate.
  - (b) Debaters using an electronic device for the purposes of timing must place the device on a table, lectern, or other surface, and refrain from all interaction with it for the duration of the speech.
- 17.6 Where speakers require electronic devices due to exceptional circumstances (for example, if typing is the speaker's only mode of writing), then an exemption may be sought before their first debate from the Vice-President (Schools).
- 17.7 Adjudicators may give general directions as to the conduct of a debate, including as to points of information, ringing of bells, seating and writing on whiteboards.
- 17.8 Adjudicators must refer suspected breaches of the Competition Rules to the Vice-President (Schools).

## 18 Recording of Debates

- 18.1 Recording of any part of any debate in any way by any person whatsoever is strictly prohibited. This includes video, photographic and audio recording.
- 18.2 If any person is found to have breached Rule 18.1, the team with which they are connected will be deemed to have forfeited the debate.
- 18.3 Persons authorised by the QDU Executive in writing may record debates for QDU and Australian Debating Federation purposes.

## 19 Short Preparation Debates

- 19.1 Topics for short preparation debates are to be released 60 minutes prior to the scheduled time of the debate. Teams should be present at the venue prior to topic release.
- 19.2 Teams may only have a maximum of four students in the preparation room.
- 19.3 If four or more members of a team are present at the time of topic release, four students may enter the preparation room, then open the topic envelope and begin preparation.
- 19.4 If three team members are present at the time of topic release, they may elect to either:
  - (a) enter the preparation room without the fourth member, who will then not be permitted to enter the room upon their arrival; or
  - (b) wait up to 15 minutes from topic release for the fourth member to arrive, without opening the topic envelope or beginning preparation, and enter when the fourth member arrives;however if the team elects for (b) but the fourth member has not arrived within 15 minutes from topic release, they must then follow (a).
- 19.5 If two or less team members are present at the time of topic release they may wait up to 30 minutes without opening the topic or beginning preparation for a third member to arrive. If no third member arrives within 30 minutes, the team is deemed to have forfeited the debate.

If a third team member has arrived within 30 minutes, Rule 19.4 shall apply.

- 19.6 Only the following items are permitted to be taken into the preparation room by teams:
- (a) writing materials;
  - (b) blank paper and palm cards (which must not contain any writing whatsoever, including prompts);
  - (c) a stopwatch or wristwatch that is not capable of electronic communication;
  - (d) water bottles; and
  - (e) one unannotated dictionary.
- 19.7 Electronic equipment (such as mobile phones, smartwatches or laptops) must not be brought into the preparation room (subject only to Rule 17.6 above).
- 19.8 Communication with debaters by coaches, spectators, adjudicators or other debaters is not permitted at any time after topic release and before the debate commences.
- 19.9 Coaches, spectators and debaters in later rounds of debates must not be near preparation rooms at any time.
- 19.10 Debaters must not leave short preparation rooms before the debate unless it is to use the bathroom (which should be arranged with the venue coordinator if possible) or in the event of an emergency.
- 19.11 Potential breaches of this Rule 19 should be brought to the attention of the venue coordinator as soon as possible, so that investigation may occur immediately and teams may be told to cease any misconduct. However, regardless of any potential breach the debate must go ahead and be decided by the adjudicator as usual, with any breach to be dealt with in accordance with Rule 3.

## 20 Finals Series

- 20.1 The top performing teams in each competition will be invited to participate in the finals series at the discretion of the Vice-President (Schools). In exercising this discretion, the Vice-President (Schools) may consider:
- (a) a forfeiture or violation of rules in the prior rounds; and
  - (b) whether the team has won a sufficient number of debates to qualify (typically, in all competitions except Senior A, only teams with three or more wins will be invited to participate in the finals series).

## 21 Definitions

- 21.1 **Compulsory school events** include, but are not limited to, mandatory school examinations, but do not include:
- (a) school or inter-school sporting events or music concerts, regardless of school policy on attendance; or
  - (b) events that do not physically prevent a participant from being present at a debate (such as an event taking place the following morning).
- 21.2 **Fees Schedule** means the schedule of fees for withdrawal, forfeit and postponement set out on the QDU website ([qdu.org.au](http://qdu.org.au)) as amended from time to time.