adjudicate (vb.) 1. to give a decision (on) esp. a formal or binding one. 2. (intr.) to serve as a judge or arbiter, as in a competition. (From Latin adjudicicare to award something to someone).
Introduction

Started in 1984, the Concern Debates is Ireland’s longest running Secondary School debates competition. Each year over 160 teams register for the debates from all regions of the country.

The debates aim to engage students in tackling global issues that impact on the lives of millions of people living in the developing world.

The Concern Debates are open to all senior cycle students from transition year to sixth year. Each team should consist of a panel of around 10 members.

Concern Debates structure

The debates competition consists of two phases ‘the league’ and ‘the knockout’, during the league phase teams are divided into units of four schools who debate each other over three rounds prior to the Christmas break. Those who finish first in their unit will progress to the knockout phase, while those who finish second are entered into a ‘back door’ draw. A total of 64 teams progress to the knockout phase, which commences in January and runs to the National Final in May.

The adjudication panel

At each Concern Debate there is a panel of three adjudicators; one chief and two assistants. During the League Phase Concern appoints the chief adjudicator while each school is responsible for appointing an assistant. The school appointee however is not permitted to adjudicate at their own school’s debate. During the Knockout Phase Concern will appoint all three adjudicators.

Before the Debate

Once an adjudicator has agreed to attend a debate Concern will send out a ‘pack’ including a marking sheet and details of the schools participating in the debate. Unless otherwise stated all debates commence at 8:00pm.

Along with the Adjudicators Kit (see below) we recommend that the best thing an adjudicator can bring with them on the night is an open mind…after-all an adjudicator is there to judge the debate not participate in it!

Prior to the debate itself it is a good idea for the Chief Adjudicator to work out a signal with the Chairperson that indicates the adjudicators have finished marking and it is alright to introduce the next speaker.

What if a team arrives late?
If a team hasn’t turned up 30 minutes after the agreed starting time that team will forfeit the debate. Efforts should be made to contact the team directly or through Concern. If however, the team arrives just after the elapsed time and by mutual consent both teams agree, then the debate should go ahead.

What if an adjudicator is late?
Concern is in regular contact through text messages and phone calls to each adjudicator. Very occasionally however circumstances may arise where an adjudicator is late or a ‘no show’. In such circumstances we recommend that you allow a grace period of 15 minutes for the adjudicator to arrive. After the 15 minutes have elapsed you should;

a. Select either the chairperson or an impartial member of the audience to adjudicate
b. Proceed with two adjudicators
c. Phone the concern mobile on 087 797 3636

The moment we want to believe something, we suddenly see all the arguments for it, and become blind to the arguments against it.

George Bernard Shaw

A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens but its lowest ones.

Nelson Mandela

Adjudicator’s kit

Marking & results sheets
Pen / pencil
Calculator
Blank paper
Concern Debates running order

01 The chairperson welcomes the participants, outlines the night’s proceedings and calls on the captain of the proposition to begin the debate.

02 Adjudicators mark the captain of the proposition.

03 The captain of the opposition responds to the motion.

04 Adjudicators mark the captain of the opposition.

05 Speakers alternate between the proposition and opposition until the fourth speaker from the opposition has spoken.

06 Adjudicators assign marks at the conclusion of each speaker’s contribution.

07 The captain of the opposition sums up on behalf of his/her team followed by the captain of the proposition.

08 Adjudicators assign marks at the conclusion of each captain’s contribution.

09 The adjudicators take the timekeeper’s sheet and retire to an adjoining room to make their decision.

10 Open forum - while the adjudicators are agreeing their decision, the floor is opened to the audience.

11 The adjudicators return and the chief adjudicator delivers his/her feedback and the result.

12 The chief adjudicator keeps the timesheet, results sheet, marking sheets and returns them to Concern. Marking sheets and results sheets should not be shared with teachers or debaters.

13 Enjoy a well deserved cup of tea in the school hall.

Room layout
Arriving at a decision

Once the captain of the proposition has concluded his summation and marks have been assigned, the three adjudicators should take the timekeeper’s sheet and repair to a nearby room to make their decision.

Adjudicators can begin by adding up their marks or by engaging in a brief discussion highlighting a few general impressions of the debate.

When marks have been added up, time penalties deducted, and a decision made, (see table on next page for decision options), the chief will ask the panel for points that should be included in his/her feedback to the teams.

Draw rule

In the league phase adjudicators can decide to award a draw if the scores are very close or if the panel feels that teams were equally matched.

It is recommended that adjudicators spend a maximum of 15-20 minutes agreeing their decision.

Remember to give the chief adjudicator all the marking sheets before leaving the adjudicators room.

Announcing the decision

The Chief should announce the decision at the end of his/her feedback by stating that; ‘the motion has been carried (in favour of the proposition) or defeated (in favour of the opposition)’.

Chief adjudicator's feedback

The Chief Adjudicator’s feedback forms a vital part of the overall debate. It is recommended that the feedback is addressed to the team as a whole rather than to any individual speaker. Good feedback should include positive remarks and constructive critique focussing on each of the following areas;

- The definition of the motion (too narrow/too broad/just right)
- Research (clear evidence of adequate and relevant research)
- Content (appropriate and relevant to the motion)
- Refutation and rebuttal (evidence of both)
- Quoting of sources (facts supported by a range of named sources)
- Captain’s summation (good recap and analysis. No new arguments have been introduced during the summation)
- Team Work (evidence of cooperation in preparation and delivery)
- Time penalties (speakers restrict themselves to the allotted 4 minutes and 30 seconds)
- Use of humour (welcome and appropriate use of humour)

Rules for the Concern Debates

01 Concern will provide the motions, decide the team pairings, the sides of motion, the dates, venues and times for each debate.

02 If an assigned date does not suit a team they must contact Concern no later than 7 working days prior to the date in question. The team must then arrange an alternative date with the other teams in the unit within the calendar period for that round.

Teams

03 Each team consists of at least 4 speakers and ideally should have a panel of substitutes and researchers.

04 Each speaker is permitted to speak for 4 minutes and 30 seconds, after this allotted time speakers will be penalised 3 points for each minute or part thereof.

05 Calling for points of order or any other form of interruption or heckling is not permitted during a speaker’s contribution.

06 Proposing teams will provide the chairperson and timekeeper for each debate until the Semi Final stage.
Points Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>All three adjudicators in favour of a team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unanimous win</td>
<td>3 points</td>
<td>Two adjudicators in favour of a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority win</td>
<td>2 points</td>
<td>One adjudicator with level marks and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw</td>
<td>1.5 points to</td>
<td>adjudicators favour a side each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Loss</td>
<td>1 point</td>
<td>One adjudicator in favour of a team when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the other 2 are against it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanimous Loss</td>
<td>0 points</td>
<td>No adjudicator in favour of the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BYE</td>
<td>3 points</td>
<td>No team to compete against</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

07 The decision of the adjudicators at each debate is final.

08 Marking sheets are confidential. All queries about the results of the debate should be referred to Concern.

09 Teams and their supporters should treat their opponents, their peers and the venue with respect.

League Phase

10 Concern in cooperation with the participating schools assign the 3 adjudicators for each debate.

11 During the League Phase points are awarded to teams using the points table (above).

12 At the end of the league phase the team with the most points will progress to the knockout phase. If there is a tie for first place, both teams will go through. All second place teams will be entered into a draw to fill the remaining spaces in the Knockout Phase.

Knockout Phase

13 Concern will provide all adjudicators for the Knockout Phase.

14 If a team has not arrived 30 minutes after the agreed starting time of the debate and has not been in contact with Concern or the Chief Adjudicator, the team will forfeit the debate, unless by mutual consent both teams agree that the debate should go ahead.

Penalties

Time penalties - each participant speaks for 4 minutes and 30 seconds. The timekeeper rings the bell after 3 minutes and again after 4 minutes and 15 seconds. Anyone who speaks for longer than 4 minutes, 30 seconds incurs a time penalty of 3 marks per minute or part thereof. Adjudicators should disregard any information that is given after 4 minutes and 30 seconds.

Interruptions - calling for points of order or any form of interruption during a speaker’s contribution is not permitted.

Sarcasm - sarcasm and personal remarks are not part of the Concern debates and debaters will be marked down for their use.

Captain’s summation - A captain is not allowed to introduce new material during his summation, new material should be penalised by adjudicators.

The Art of Debate

What separates Debating from Public Speaking is the art of refutation and rebuttal. Essentially a debate is a conversation between two groups who disagree, with each group trying to convince the adjudicators not only of the correctness of their position, but the ‘absurdity’ or ‘irrationality’ of their opponents.

To refute an argument is to produce evidence (fact and figures) in order to prove it untrue [e.g. “our opponents claim that child labour affects only a few thousand children around the world, well according to the latest ILO report that figure stands at 218 million”...]

To rebut an argument is to disprove or discredit it by offering a different and stronger argument [e.g. ‘our opponents have argued that it is the fault of the people, the everyday consumer, but I disagree, it is the responsibility of Government and Big Business to solve this problem, and I will tell you why...’]

Marking Refutation and Rebuttal (R+R)

When assigning the 20 marks allowed for refutation and rebuttal some adjudicators like to opt for a system that allots a maximum of 5 marks for each example of refutation or rebuttal used by an individual speaker. If it is a particularly good R or R the speaker is given 4 or 5 marks, if on the other hand it is more of a contradiction than a R or R then only 1 or 2 marks are given. A speaker who uses R or R four times (4 examples of R or R X 5 marks) could then expect the maximum of 20 marks.

Other adjudicators however prefer a less rigid structure preferring to look for quality of rebuttal, ease of insertion in the speech, linking with points made by him/her, lack of sarcasm and general disdain. Quality is the key rather than quantity. A really good point well delivered that decimates the main point of a previous speaker is more significant than a number of throwaway criticisms of arguments. In the main there is an expectation that there will be a higher density of rebuttals from the third and fourth speaker than from the second, and so one could apply a ‘graded’ standard to speakers 2, 3 and 4.
Completing the marking sheet

The Concern Debates marking sheet is divided into three sections; content, debating skills and team effort.

What are marks awarded for?

CONTENT
× Clear evidence of adequate research through quotation of sources and speakers’ understanding of the motion
× The relevance of the content to the motion

DEBATING SKILLS
× The proposing captain is marked on his/her definition of the motion and outlining his/her team’s arguments. The opposing captain is marked for responding to the motion, outlining his/her team’s arguments and for responding the motion as proposed.
× When a speaker employs clear refutation and rebuttal (see Marking Refutation and Rebuttal) they should be duly rewarded. However no marks should be given where there is no attempt at refutation and rebuttal.
× Student’s ability to interact with the audience – eye contact, body language etc.
× Clear, well connected and forceful points
× Speakers should be marked down for constant use of notes. Award marks for good use of humour.

TEAM EFFORT
× The captain’s summation should reiterate his/her team’s arguments as well as refute those of their opponents. The captain may not introduce new information into the debate at this point.
× Display of teamwork and co-ordination as evidenced by coherent, non-repetitive arguments, familiarity with team mates arguments and active listening and assisting one another during the debate e.g. passing of notes etc.

MARKS TABLE

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Max 30 marks</th>
<th>Max 20 marks</th>
<th>Max 15 marks</th>
<th>Max 10 marks</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>26 - 30</td>
<td>18 - 20</td>
<td>14 - 15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>21 - 25</td>
<td>15 - 17</td>
<td>11 - 13</td>
<td>8 - 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>16 - 20</td>
<td>12 - 14</td>
<td>7 - 10</td>
<td>6 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>10 - 15</td>
<td>8 - 11</td>
<td>4 - 6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0 - 9</td>
<td>0 - 7</td>
<td>0 - 3</td>
<td>0 - 4</td>
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All photographs taken by Steve Ryan at the National Finals in May 06 and May 07.