

The Premier's Debating Challenge

2021 Information Guide

The Premier's Debating Challenge is open to all NSW government schools, with the aim of developing the debating and reasoning skills of students from Years 5 to 12.

What age groups can compete in the Premier's Debating Challenge?

The Premier's Debating Challenge has four different state-wide age divisions: Years 5&6, Years 7&8, Years 9&10, and Years 11&12.

How do the debates work?

Every debate in the challenge is a one hour preparation debate. Teams do not know the topic or which side of the debate they are on until one hour before the debate starts. Once the preparation time is up, three speakers from each team take turns to speak, with a fourth silent speaker helping out during preparation and during the debate.

How long do the students speak for?

The speaking times differ in each age division of the challenge as outlined below.

Division	Warning Bell	Speaking Time	Continuous Bell
Years 5&6	3 minutes	4 minutes	5 minutes
Years 7&8	4 minutes	6 minutes	7 minutes
Years 9&10	6 minutes	8 minutes	9 minutes
Years 11&12	6 minutes	8 minutes	9 minutes

How many teams can a school enter?

Schools can enter as many age divisions as they like. In each age division, schools can enter up to two teams, which will be designated "Team (A)" and "Team (B)" on the draws for the secondary age divisions. Primary school teachers must provide appropriate nicknames, e.g. "Swans" and "Giants", to distinguish their teams. Many schools choose to enter two teams in the Years 11&12 division, two teams in the Years 9&10 division, and two teams in the Years 7&8 division so that a large group of students throughout the school can be involved and work together on their skills.

Who can be in the debating team?

In any given debate a team will field four members. Those members can change from debate to debate, so a team can in fact be made up of a large squad of students. The students can be from any year equal to or below the age division in which the team is entered (for example, a Year 10 student can debate in a Years 11&12 team. When a school enters two teams in a division, a student cannot appear for both of those teams, so Team (A) would need to have a different and separate squad from Team (B).

How do schools enter the challenge?

Schools can enter the challenge by simply completing the online entry forms at www.artsunit.nsw.edu.au before the deadline. For the Years 11&12 age division, that deadline is Monday 15 February 2021. The deadline for the other divisions is Monday 1 March 2021. Please ensure that you include contact details for the teacher who will be looking after the team. We'll email you as soon as we've processed your school's entries.

How much does the challenge cost?

The entry fee for the Premier's Debating Challenge is \$95.00 per team. Schools will automatically be debited for this amount once they submit their entry form. Please advise your school's finance department that this will occur. Note that fees are due on entry and cannot be refunded even where teams might subsequently withdraw.

How are the debates organised?

Once your school has entered, we'll organise all of the teams into draws and then email the draw to you with a timetable. At the first stage of the challenge, secondary teams are organised into zones of six teams (occasionally fewer depending on entries and geography, and often more in the Years 5&6 division). Each secondary team then completes three zone debates (four in Years 5&6) and you'll cooperate with the other schools and the adjudicators to organise the times and dates of your debates to suit your availability. Once all of the zone debates are completed, the zone champions will face each other in a knock-out competition until we have a state champion. It's a little different in the Years 5&6 and Years 7&8 divisions, where the ten teams who win their regions will hopefully meet at a three-day debating tournament to decide the state champions (subject to health advice.)

When does the Premier's Debating Challenge run?

The Years 11&12 division runs from March to July, with the zone debates completed by the end of May. The other divisions run from April to December, with the zone debates completed by the end of July. All schools who enter will receive invitations to attend the Years 11&12 state final on Friday 6 August in the Great Hall of the University of Sydney and the Years 9&10 state final which will be held in the Wilkins Gallery of the NSW Department of Education Offices in Parramatta on Monday 8 November.

Can we debate online?

Definitely. We anticipate that the early rounds of the competition will need to be conducted online in the same way that the entire 2020 Premier's Debating Challenge was, but even once the state returns to normal after COVID-19 debating online is a great option. If your school is in a remote area, or is just having trouble finding the time to travel to a debate, you can always organise to hold a debate that way. We're happy to help organise debates over Zoom, Microsoft Teams or whatever platform the schools prefer and will be ready to help with any technical support teams might need. We'll include much more detail on running online debates when we send out the draws for the 2021 competition.

What are the prizes?

All students involved in the challenge will receive a certificate acknowledging their participation. Certificates of congratulations will then be awarded to teams who win their zones. Medallions will be awarded to teams who reach the state final, and a perpetual trophy will be awarded to the state champions in each age division.

Sponsors and support

The Premier's Debating Challenge is supported by the Faculty of Education & Social Work in the University of Sydney.

Contact details

If you have any questions about the Premier's Debating Challenge please call the Speaking Competitions Officer on (02) 8512 1172 or email debating@det.nsw.edu.au. You can also check out our website at www.artsunit.nsw.edu.au.