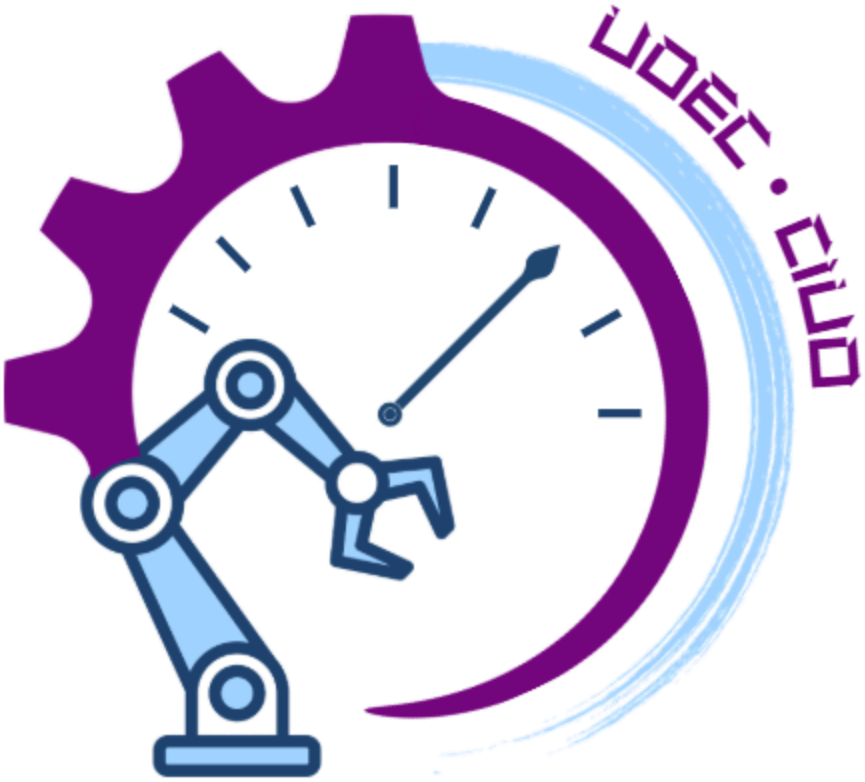


university of OTTAWA

ENGINEERING COMPETITION

Parliamentary Debate Competition 2026

uOttawa Engineering Students' Society

VP Internal

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This document outlines requirements and expectations for competitors in the Parliamentary Debate category at uOEC 2026. Please read this document carefully and in full.

Overview

Engineers don't just build systems; they also help shape public policy, technology ethics, and regulations. The Parliamentary Debate competition tests your ability to think on your feet, build logical arguments rapidly, and persuade an audience on high-stakes technological and societal issues.

You don’t need prior formal debate experience to compete. Traditional debate rules have been simplified so the focus stays strictly on your critical thinking, teamwork, clarity, and persuasive reasoning. No prior knowledge of traditional parliamentary debate conventions or jargon is expected or required. All guidelines, speech structures, and scoring criteria that affect your evaluation are explicitly defined in this rulebook, and competitors will not be judged on any unlisted rules or protocols.

Teams must consist of a maximum of two (2) competitors.

Scenario

As time-travel technology and autonomous robotics advance beyond laboratory testing, humanity faces unprecedented ethical dilemmas, safety risks, and legal questions.

To govern these powerful technologies, the Global Temporal Assembly convenes to debate urgent policies regarding timeline preservation, autonomous decision-making, and resource extraction across time. Your team acts as parliamentary members either representing the Government (proposing and defending a new motion) or the Opposition (challenging the motion and proposing safer alternatives).

Side Assignments and Motion Details:

- Side Assignment: Teams are assigned their positions (Government or Opposition) when the match schedule is posted at the pre-competition briefing, so competitors know their side well before taking the stage. Only the motion stays secret until 15 minutes before each match.
- Motion Information & Context: Both teams receive the exact same motion wording simultaneously. Along with the motion, all teams receive a standardized background sheet containing identical context and case details to ensure a level playing field.

Objective

Deliver a structured, well-reasoned argument in favor of (Government) or against (Opposition) a secret motion (resolution) related to time travel, robotics, and engineering ethics. Teams must strictly defend their pre-assigned side (Government or Opposition) regardless of their personal views on the topic. You

will receive the debate motion on the day of the event, and the 15-minute preparation period begins immediately upon the motion's revelation for you to construct your points before taking the floor.

Rules to follow

Competition Schedule

- Round-robin pool matches begin at 8:30 AM. Teams are drawn at the pre-competition briefing; every team debates twice during the morning, once as Government and once as Opposition
- Lunch break: 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM.
- Final round: 1:00 PM to 1:45 PM.
- **Rounds and Progression:** The competition runs as a single round robin with no byes. Team numbers are drawn at the pre-competition briefing, at least thirty (30) minutes before the first debate, and the full match schedule, including side assignments, is posted in the room throughout the competition. Every team debates twice during the morning rounds, once as Government and once as Opposition. Each match's motion is revealed to its two teams exactly fifteen (15) minutes before the match begins. Standings are decided by match wins, then cumulative judge score, then Head Judge decision. The top two teams meet in the final round, 1:00 to 1:45 pm, with sides drawn at lunch, and the winner of the final is the uOEC 2026 Parliamentary Debate champion.

Format & Team Roles

- **Teams**: Each debate features two teams (2 students per team).
- **Government Team**: Supports the motion.
- **Opposition Team:** Opposes the motion.
- **Side Assignment**: Teams are explicitly pre-assigned their positions (Government or Opposition) prior to the event, allowing competitors to know their role before taking the stage.
- **Secret Motion & Context**: The debate motion and standardized background sheet will be revealed simultaneously to both teams exactly 15 minutes before your round starts.

Preparation Period Rules

- **Duration:** 15 minutes immediately following the motion release.
- **Collaboration:** Teammates may speak and consult freely with each other during the 15-minute prep period. Communication with anyone outside your own 2-person team (including other competing teams or coaches) is strictly prohibited.
- **Materials Allowed:**
    - Blank scratch paper (competitors may write on both sides of the paper) and pens/pencils. Competitors are permitted to use their own pens/pencils or those provided by the organizers.
    - Competitors may create and consult handwritten notes made on-site during these 15 minutes.
    - The official Engineering Ethics Framework (provided in the Resources section as part of the competition materials) is explicitly permitted for reference during prep.

- **Prohibited Items & External Help**: Internet access, pre-written notes, reference books, digital devices (phones, laptops, calculators, tablets, smartwatches), and external human communication are strictly prohibited.
- **Logistical & Administrative Questions**: Communication with competition organizers, judges, or timekeepers is permitted strictly for essential logistical or technical questions.
- **Leaving the Prep Area**: Competitors are expected to remain in the prep area for the full 15 minutes. If a competitor must briefly leave the prep area for an emergency or restroom break, all prep paper and notes must remain at their prep table; taking notes out of the prep area is strictly prohibited.

Debate Structure & Speaking Times

Each speaker gets one turn to speak in the following order:

- Prime Minister (Government Speaker 1) – 5 Minutes
    - Role: Defines the topic, establishes the Government's model/framework, and presents the main arguments in favor of the motion. New arguments are expected.
- Member of Opposition (Opposition Speaker 1) – 5 Minutes
    - Role: Rebuts the Prime Minister’s points and introduces the Opposition's main arguments and counter-case. New arguments are expected.
- Minister of Crown (Government Speaker 2) – 5 Minutes
    - Role: Defends the Government’s position against the Opposition’s rebuttal, responds to the Opposition’s arguments, and expands/extends the Government's case. While new supporting points and extensions are allowed, the primary focus should be on defending and building upon Speaker 1's arguments.
- Leader of Opposition (Opposition Speaker 2) – 5 Minutes
    - Role: Summarizes the Opposition's overall case, delivers final rebuttals, and concludes why the motion must fail. No completely new constructive arguments may be introduced by Speaker 2 during this speech; focus must remain on rebutting, extending existing points, and summarizing the debate.

Timing & Transition Guidelines

- **Clock Start:** The 5-minute timer starts when the speaker begins speaking (or uses their first verbal or non-verbal communication to the room), not when they approach the podium.
- **Speaker Transitions:** There is a brief transition period (up to 30 seconds) between speakers for the next debater to approach the floor and adjust equipment/notes. Transition time does not count toward a speaker's 5-minute allocation.

Points of Information (POIs)

A Point of Information (POI) is a brief question or statement offered by an opposing team member to challenge or clarify a point during an active speech.

- **POI Window**: POIs are only permitted between the 1:00 mark and the 4:00 mark of a 5-minute speech.
- **Timekeeper Signals**:
    - 1:00 Mark: A single audible signal (clap or desk knock) indicates the POI window is open.
    - 4:00 Mark: A single audible signal indicates the POI window is closed.
    - 5:00 Mark: A double audible signal indicates the speaker's total time has expired.
- **Impact on Speaking Time**: The time taken to offer and answer a POI counts toward the speaker's total 5-minute speaking time. The clock does not stop.
- **Format (Question vs. Statement)**: A POI may be framed as either a direct question or a brief statement.
- **Offering Rules & Frequency**:
    - To offer a POI, an opposing debater stands and says, *"Point of Information"* or *"On that point."*
    - Offer Limit: An opposing team may make a maximum of 3 POI offers total per speech, regardless of whether the speaker accepts or declines them.
    - Alternating Rule: The same individual cannot make two consecutive POI offers; if a debater offers a POI, their partner must offer the next one before they can offer another.
- **Acceptance & Speaker Control**:
    - The speaker controls which POIs to accept, subject to the requirement that each speaker must accept at least 1 POI per speech, provided at least one POI is offered.
    - Speakers may accept more than 1 POI if time permits, but are encouraged to limit accepted POIs to 1 or 2 so as not to derail their speech.
    - If the opposing team offers no POIs during the window, the speaker receives no penalty.
- **15-Second Limit Enforcement & Window Boundary**:
    - An accepted POI has a strict maximum duration of 15 seconds. The timekeeper will verbally call "Time" at the 15-second mark, at which point the opposing debater must immediately sit down.
    - If a POI is offered before the 4:00 signal, the speaker may choose to accept it. If accepted before the 4:00 signal, the debater may complete their 15-second POI even if their response extends slightly past the 4:00 mark.

Tone & Expectations

- **Keep It Accessible**: Avoid overly dense legal jargon or overly complex debate formulas. Focus on clear, logical storytelling and real-world engineering ethics, utilizing the provided ethics framework to guide your arguments.
- **Respect**: Professionalism and courteous language are required at all times. Personal attacks result in an immediate deduction of 10 to 20 points.

Deliverables

- **Oral Speeches**: Four 5-minute speeches delivered live in the designated parliamentary sequence.
- **Permitted Preparation Materials**: Handwritten scratch paper notes written during the 15-minute prep period. Competitors are permitted to bring these notes from the prep area to the podium for reference during their speeches; they are not collected or scored.
- **Inspection Policy**: While preparation notes are not collected for scoring, judges and timekeepers reserve the right to inspect a competitor's handwritten notes at any time if a prohibited-resource violation is suspected.

Judging Rubric

For your reference, the judging matrix is provided below.

Matter & Argumentation	Evaluates the depth, logical consistency, and strength of engineering and ethical reasoning, as well as the effective use of principles and real-world impacts. Given the 15-minute prep period and restricted external resources, competitors are expected to rely on sound logical reasoning, first-principles analysis, and general knowledge/broad real-world examples rather than cited statistical data or specific technical literature.	/ 25
Manner & Delivery	Persuasiveness, vocal clarity, eye contact, tone, pacing, and ability to communicate complex concepts in plain, accessible language.	/ 25
Structure & Time Management	Evaluates the effective organization of arguments, smooth transitions, adherence to speech roles, and proper utilization of the 5-minute allocation. Speeches ending significantly under time (e.g., under 4 minutes) or over time (e.g., past the grace period) will receive direct score deductions in this category proportional to the time variance.	/ 20
Rebuttal & Adaptability	Evaluates the direct, logical dismantling of the opposing team's core claims and the ability to defend one's own arguments under pressure within speech time. Point of Information (POI) responses offered or taken during speeches are formally assessed under POI Engagement; however, how effectively a speaker incorporates a POI's substance into their ongoing argument is evaluated here.	/ 15
POI Engagement & Floor Control	Evaluates the poise, clarity, and effectiveness when accepting and responding to POIs from opponents, as well as the quality and relevance of POIs offered. High-quality POIs are concise,	/ 15

	strategic, and directly target a flaw in the opponent's premise or evidence, rather than relying on surface-level interruptions or repetitive questions designed merely to hit offering limits. Scoring Note: Judges assess the team as a whole based on their combined floor management and collective POI contributions, rather than tabulating individual speaker scores.	
Total		/ 100

Tie-Break Procedure

If a debate round results in an equal total score between the Government and Opposition teams, the tie will be broken sequentially using the following rules:

- **Category Priority Comparison**: Even if judges assign different individual category scores that sum to the same total, the tie is broken by comparing the team scores in the following priority order, step-by-step:
    - 1st Tie-Breaker: Highest score in Matter & Argumentation
    - 2nd Tie-Breaker: Highest score in Rebuttal & Adaptability
    - 3rd Tie-Breaker: Highest score in Manner & Delivery
- **Head Judge Intervention**: If a team remains tied after evaluating all individual categories sequentially (meaning both teams achieved identical scores across every single rubric criterion), the panel will deliberate:
    - If the judging panel reaches a consensus, a Unanimous Judge Decision is awarded.
    - If the judging panel remains split or cannot reach unanimity, the Head Judge (Chair) casts the final, decisive vote to determine the winning team.

Penalties

- **POI Violation**: Refusing all POIs during a speech when at least one was offered results in an automatic 5-point deduction under POI Engagement & Floor Control. To avoid this penalty, each speaker is required to accept at least one POI during their speech if any are offered.
- **Prohibited Resources in Prep**: Any use of unauthorized resources including smartphones, live internet access, calculators, or pre-written materials during the 15-minute prep period results in immediate round forfeiture (0 points). Unintended or accidental possession of a device (e.g., a phone kept in a pocket) will not trigger forfeiture unless the device is actively accessed or used during preparation.
- **Unprofessional Conduct**: Personal attacks, offensive language, or deliberate mocking will result in a 10 to 20-point deduction under Manner & Delivery. The exact penalty within this range is

determined by the severity and persistence of the misconduct (e.g., a single isolated lapse results in a 10-point deduction, whereas severe or repeated personal attacks incur up to 20 points).

- **Overtime Speaking**: A 15-second grace period is granted after reaching the 5-minute mark (5:00 to 5:15). No penalty is assessed if a speaker finishes within this grace period. However, if a speaker reaches 5:15, the timekeeper will cut them off immediately, and a deduction will be applied directly to the team's overall score under Structure & Time Management.

Resources

Preparation Station Materials (Allowed During Prep)

- **Official Blank Paper Pads & Pens/Pencils**: Provided in the prep area for drafting handwritten preparation notes.
- **Engineering Ethics Framework Reference**: it's a document primer summarizing fundamental principles of safety, public welfare, environmental impact, and technological oversight.

  Exemption Note: This reference is explicitly allowed in the prep area alongside handwritten notes. It is provided to every team at the start of preparation and remains identical across all competition rounds.

Pre-Debate Orientation & Floor Signals

Timekeeper & Floor Signals Guide: Distributed to all competitors prior to the start of the tournament. Details the clear visual and audio signals used during rounds to mark time milestones, including speech starts/ends and the POI window (1:00 to 4:00).