

2025-26 Equal Opportunity Cup Inter-School Debate Competition Competition Guidelines

I. Objectives

To promote the concepts of equal opportunities and raise awareness of the four anti-discrimination ordinances among the new generation, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) organised the inaugural Equal Opportunity Cup Inter-school Debate Competition in the 2024/25 academic year, which received positive responses from the education sector. As one of the flagship youth programmes of the EOC to engage secondary students, the EOC will organise the second edition of the Debate Competition in the 2025/26 academic year to sustain the momentum and continue to engage the younger generation.

The aim of this competition is to provide inspiring opportunities for young people to learn about the current situation of equal opportunities in Hong Kong, and to engage in deeper reflection and understanding of various topics related to equal opportunities and anti-discrimination. The EOC hopes to leverage the debate competition to raise public awareness of the four anti-discrimination ordinances, including the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, Disability Discrimination Ordinance, Family Status Discrimination Ordinance, and Race Discrimination Ordinance, to eliminate discriminatory attitudes and promote the values of equality, diversity and inclusion.

II. Eligibility for Participation

1. All secondary schools or international schools registered with the Education Bureau are eligible to participate in the competition. Each participating school can send one team to take part in the competition, and participants of each team must be students at that school during the competition.
2. Each participating school must:
 - Appoint at least one qualified mentor (such as someone with experience in debate or language teaching) to serve as an adjudicator for the 1st Preliminary to the 4th Round of competition;
 - Provide a competition venue for at least one day, which must include rooms/school auditorium for the competitions, a judges' lounge, and two preparation rooms for the use of both the affirmative and negative teams;
 - Once the mentors appointed by the participating schools are confirmed by the Organiser and arranged to serve as adjudicators for the competition on the designated day, they must attend

punctually. If they are unable to attend due to special reasons, they must notify the Organiser three days before the competition and provide a substitute mentor to fulfill the adjudicating role;

- Each team should consist of 4 to 10 members, with 4 serving as formal representatives of the school for the competition and 1 to 6 members serving as standbys;
- Each team should be led by a coach who will also act as the coordinator and be responsible for the communication between the team and the organiser.

III. General Rules

1. The competition will be conducted in Cantonese and on a knockout basis. Participation is limited to 48 teams. The winning teams of each round of the competition are qualified for the next round of the competition. If the number of applications exceeds the participation quota, the participating schools will be selected through a draw.
2. The competition will be conducted in 6 rounds comprising 48 matches in total. In the 4th Round, six teams will compete for four places in the Semi-Final (fifth round). Three winning teams and one losing team with the best performance will advance to the Semi-final. The adjudicators will determine which of the losing teams will be promoted to the Semi-final based on their performances in the 4th Round.
3. The competition slots and debate motions for each team will be arranged and decided by the Organiser. Participating teams may not object or make modifications on their own. The assignment of teams to affirmative and opposite sides will be determined by a draw conducted by the Organiser. The tentative schedule for the competition period is as follows:

Dates	Events
1 February (Sunday) or 7 February (Saturday) or 8 February 2026 (Sunday)	1 st Preliminary
8 March 2026 (Sunday)	2 nd Preliminary
21 March 2026 (Saturday)	3 rd Round
11 April 2026 (Saturday)	4 th Round
25 April 2026 (Saturday)	Semi-Final
9 May (Saturday) or 17 May 2026 (Sunday) (tentative)	Grand Final cum Award Ceremony

4. Arrangements for late arrival or absence: a team will be disqualified if it is late by 15 minutes or more on the day of the competition; its opponent will automatically advance to the next round.
5. The Organiser reserves the right and authority to invite anyone to serve as adjudicators, advisors, and chairperson in the competition.
6. All participating schools and teams will be invited to attend the Grand Final cum Award Ceremony to be held in May 2026.

IV. Competition Rules

(1) Chairperson

1. The chairperson is responsible for overseeing the entire competition process.
2. Before the competition begins, the chairperson will announce the debate motion, the competition rules, and introduce the participating teams and adjudicators.
3. The chairperson has the authority to consult adjudicators regarding any disputes that arise during the competition and make a ruling accordingly. Participating teams must comply with this ruling; nonetheless, the Organiser also reserves the right to make a final decision on any disputes.

(2) Timekeeper

1. The timekeeper must accurately and fairly track time and record it on the timekeeping sheet.
2. The timekeeper is responsible for completing the timekeeping record and must verify its accuracy before signing it at the end of the competition.

(3) Participating Teams

1. Each competition consists of two teams: one for the affirmative and one for the opposition. Each Team consists of four people, including a captain, 2nd speaker, 3rd Speaker and a concluding speaker. Participating students must wear proper school uniforms.
2. Each speaker from participating schools must be listed on the application form. Changes to team members are not allowed unless approved by the Organiser prior to the competition under special circumstances.
3. Participating teams can use cue cards not larger than 15.6 cm × 9.5 cm during presentations. The chairperson will check the cue cards before the competition to ensure compliance. If the size does not

meet the regulations, adjudicators may deduct 1 to 5 points from the team's total score at their discretion. Debaters may bring books, reference materials, and electronic devices to the venue, but these items are strictly prohibited on stage.

4. During the competition, any form of communication or information exchange is forbidden between the speakers on stage and the audience. Both teams' speakers, their responsible instructors (including team coaches or alumni), the chairperson, adjudicators and the Organiser can raise relevant concerns before the competition results are announced. Once the violation of competition rules is confirmed by the Organiser and adjudicators, the team in violation shall be disqualified.
5. All presentations in the competition must be in Cantonese, except when quoting names of people, books and/or proper nouns. If a foreign language is used outside of the abovementioned categories during the competition, both teams' speakers, instructors, the chairperson, adjudicators and the Organiser may raise concerns. Upon confirmation of a violation of the competition rules, the adjudicators may deduct 1 to 5 points from that speaker's total score.
6. Personal attack or defamation is not allowed during competition. Both teams' speakers, their responsible instructors, the chairperson, adjudicators and the Organiser can raise out their concerns before results are announced. Upon confirmed by the Organiser or adjudicators, points will be deducted from the team in violation as determined by the Organiser or adjudicators based on the circumstances.
7. Each participating school will send a representative to verify the scores after the results are announced and sign for confirmation if they are correct. If there are any disputes regarding the scores, schools should raise them during the score review session to the adjudicators and the Organiser for immediately handling. Any appeals made after the signing of the confirmation of the scores, after the announcement of the results or beyond the stipulated time limit will not be processed.

V. Rules of Delivery

(1) Durations and Points to Note for Presentations On-stage

1. The timekeeper will start counting down after the bell rings. Each speaker can only begin his/her speech after the timekeeper rings the bell.
2. The captains from both sides have a speaking time of 4 minutes each in the first round. The first and second speakers have a speaking time of 3 minutes each. The concluding speeches for both sides are allotted 4 minutes each. Prior to the concluding speeches from both sides, there will be a 1-minute preparation time.

3. When each speaker has one minute left, the timekeeper will ring the bell once to indicate the speaker's allocated time is about to end.
4. At the end of the allocated time, the timekeeper will ring the bell twice to indicate the speaker should conclude his/her speech as soon as possible.
5. After the 15-second grace period at the end of the allocated time, i.e. the 16th second after the allocated time, the timekeeper will ring the bell several times and points will be deducted from that speaker.
6. Overtime penalty: after the 15-second grace period at the end of the allocated time (as indicated by the timer), each adjudicator will deduct five points from that speaker for every five seconds. Duration shorter than five seconds will also be counted as five seconds. A speaker's score may be deducted down to 0 as maximum.
7. The timekeeper is responsible for ensuring that the timing and signaling are accurate. Nonetheless, if there is an error on the part of the timekeeper, the adjudicators shall be consulted. The adjudicators must collectively decide whether to compensate for the time lost or to adjust the scores accordingly (the adjudicators may collectively discuss and determine to adjust scores up or down by the same amount based on the circumstance).
8. Under special circumstances, the adjudicators and the Organiser have the authority to make the final decision.

(2) Rules of Free Debate (Applicable from 4th Preliminary to Grand Final)

1. In the free debate, each side has two and a half minutes of speaking time.
2. During the free debate, debaters may choose to use up their speaking time or allocate it across multiple speeches. However, it is important to note that only one debater may speak at a time (unless one side's speaking time is exhausted, in this case the opposing side may send out multiple debaters to speak).
3. The affirmative side will speak first, followed by the opposite side, and this pattern will continue.
4. Debaters must stand while speaking, and the time will be counted based on when they sit down (i.e., when a debater finishes speaking and sits down, the time calculation will be switched to the other side; if a debater does not sit down after speaking, the time calculation will not be switched).
5. During the free debate session, the timekeeper will ring the bell once a minute before the speaking limit for that participating school, and will signal twice when the speaking time is over. There is no buffer time in this session; once the speaking time runs out, the chairperson will interrupt the speaker's speech immediately.

6. When one side's speaking time runs out, the chairperson will announce the remaining time for the other side, and that side can send one or more debaters to take turns speaking until the time runs out.
7. The total scores for the free debate session is 100 points.

(3) Unexpected Circumstances / Others

1. If any situation arises that hinders the fairness of the competition, the Organiser, adjudicators, chairperson, or the captains of the participating schools may request an immediate termination of the debate.

VI. Rundown of Each Match

	Order	Duration
1.	Captain of affirmative side	4 min
2.	Captain of opposite side	4 min
3.	1 st speaker of affirmative side	3 min
4.	1 st speaker of opposite side	3 min
5.	2 nd speaker of affirmative side	3 min
6.	2 nd speaker of opposite side	3 min
7.	Free Debate (4 th Round to Grand Final; 2.5 minutes for each team)	5 min
8.	Preparation of Summary	1 min
9.	Closing speech of opposite side	4 min
10.	Closing speech of affirmative side	4 min

VII. Judging Criteria

1. Each speaker can score a maximum of 100 points for each presentation. The 100 points include 40 for content, 30 for delivery, 20 for organisation and 10 for poise.
2. Free debate session has a maximum of 100 points for each team.

3. Each team can score a maximum of 20 points for cooperation.
4. A penalty system is in place; please refer to clauses 5-7 in section V for details.
5. Criteria to decide the winning team:
 - i. Each adjudicator has one vote, and the team with the higher number of votes wins;
 - ii. Each adjudicator will vote according to the scores they give to each Team of that match;
 - iii. In the event of split votes, the team with the highest total points wins. If both teams have the same total scores, adjudicators must discuss or adjust scores to determine the winner. There is no provision for a rematch in this competition.
6. In each match, one Best Debater will be selected, with the evaluation criteria based on the “Best Debater Ranking Scores”. Each adjudicator assigns scores to debaters on both sides, with the highest scoring debater receiving 1 point, the second highest scoring debater receiving 2 points, and so on. Debaters with the same score will receive equal ranking points. The ranking points given by all adjudicators to each debater will be summed up, and the debater with the lowest ranking points will be declared the Best Debater of that match. If two or more debaters have the same ranking points, their total scores will be used to determine the winner, with the higher total score prevailing. If total scores are also tied, the adjudicators will confer to select the Best Debater.

VIII. Adjudicator

1. Each match will have three adjudicators, except for the semifinals and finals. In any special circumstances, additional notifications will be provided.
2. The adjudicators’ responsibility is to attend a debate match, observe and listen to the speeches of each debater, and award scores not exceeding the maximum limit.
3. Under no circumstances may teachers, coaches or alumni from the competing schools serve as adjudicators for that match, in order to ensure fairness.

IX. Awards

1. The competition will award one champion, one first runner-up, and two second runner-up winners.
 - Champion: Book vouchers valued at HKD 6,000 and a trophy.
 - First Runner-up: Book vouchers valued at HKD 4,000 and a trophy.
 - Second Runner-up: Book vouchers valued at HKD 2,000 and a trophy.

- Best Debater of the Grand Final: Book vouchers valued at HKD 800 and a trophy;
 - Best Debater of other rounds: Book vouchers valued at HKD 300 and a certificate.
2. The aforementioned awards will be presented on the day of the awards ceremony, following the conclusion of the Grand Final.

X. Application and Enquiries

1. Participating schools can complete the registration via the following link <https://forms.gle/TCngAdG4n6scNgbW8> or via the QR Code below on or before 9 January 2026 (Friday). In case of multiple submissions, the latest version will be considered final.



2. The EOC has commissioned a service provider to coordinate the related activities. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr Chan, the person-in-charge of the service provider, by calling 2793 1673, or you can send an email to eodebate@eoc.org.hk to inquire with the EOC.

Points to note:

1. By participating in the debate competition, contestants acknowledge and agree that the competitions may be photographed and filmed. The Organiser reserves the right to use any photographs, videos, audios, and any other forms of media captured during the competitions in promotional materials, publications, and other communication materials of the EOC without further notification or any compensation to contestants. If a contestant does not wish to be photographed or filmed, please inform the staff of the competition upon arrival at the venue. The Organiser will respect your privacy and exclude the contestant from any individual photo and video capturing where possible.
2. Information collected will be used solely for purposes of registration, communications, and related activities of the debate competition. All personal information collected will be kept confidential and accessible only by the EOC and authorised service contractors. Contestants have the right to request access to, correct, or delete their personal data.

3. If the following situations occur on the day of the debate competition, all competitions on that day (including afternoon competitions) will be rescheduled:
 - a. The Hong Kong Observatory is still enforcing Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 two hours before the competition on that day or Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 will remain in force;
 - b. The black rainstorm warning is in effect two hours before the competition on that day; or
 - c. The Government issues an announcement about extreme conditions owing to adverse weather.

The EOC and the service provider shall not be deemed liable for any losses, damages or costs incurred by the contestants under the above circumstances.

4. After the match of the competition commences, it will be suspended if the following situations occur:
 - a. The Hong Kong Observatory announces that Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or black rainstorm warning will be hoisted in the coming two hours; or
 - b. The Government issues an announcement about extreme conditions owing to adverse weather.

The EOC and the service provider shall not be deemed liable for any losses, damages or costs incurred by the contestants under the above circumstances.

5. The EOC and the service provider will not be responsible for any personal injury or damage to property experienced during the competition.
6. For any disputes or controversies arising from this debate competition, the EOC and the service provider reserve the right to make the final decision.

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