

## Setting criteria for your debate case

### **A.Goal of the lesson**

To introduce students to the way a team can establish a criteria within a debate in order to utilize it and increase their likelihood of success in the debate.. By the end of this lesson students should learn how to identify what goes into creating a decent, achievable criteria that also proves specifically how your team has had significantly more contribution to the debate.

### **B.Activities**

#### **Interactive lecture (45min)**

Explain that a criterion is a way in which you set out to identify specifically what makes you win a debate. That is, one must understand that criterion is essentially signposting of what a team feels is the most important issues in the debate according to their case and the general situation.

Explain how this can be utilized in realistic debate scenarios. For example, in classic motions such as „THW legalize prostitution“, on proposition a team should be able to understand why having a criterion which focuses on protecting sex workers is better than a criterion that focuses on, say, economic benefits due to increased tax income. The focus on sex workers is, firstly, a far more moral issue fit for most debating formats. More importantly, it directly engages in the fact that there is a severe lack of protection for individuals in the industry, where they are coerced and abused.

Explain that specifically strength of criteria is related to how much it relates to the motion. That is, increased tax income in the beforementioned motion is simply non-consequential – even if you have more taxed income, it is unlikely to significantly affect the outcomes in the debate and thus is an extremely weak way of how one can frame and prioritise a case.

A suggestion would be to cover a wide range of motions and get students to create criteria and really basic argument descriptions to gather more knowledge of what a criterion works

- Covering criteria for motions such as:
  - 1) Any recent WSDC, WUDC, EUDC tournament motions
  - 2) Classic motions such as THW Legalize all drugs, THW legalize prostitution, THW legalize the sale of human organs etc.
    - In all of these cases – it is imperative that one provides counter-contrats of what a BAD criterion is.
    - This should help achieve larger understanding of why teams choose one or another criterion

Explain that criteria, if set without clear goals in mind, are worth less – a team has to stick with a criteria and constantly stress it throughout speeches. Merely throwing it out in the beginning of the first speech is not enough. This is where educational goals collide with other components such as style, as one would have to be persuasive to convince judges that the specific chosen criteria is what is actually the crux of the debate.

Explain that if a criterion is unfair to a side and misrepresents what a team should actually stand for or is generally an unrealistic goal, a team can challenge it by simply summarising a counter-criterion of what a more realistic goal in a debate should be for one or both teams.

### **Exercise (15-20 minutes)**

Make groups of 3-4 people. Give them motion you consider full of different possibilities for criteria. Let the groups think of acceptable criteria they could use during debate. After cca. 10 minutes, let groups present the criteria and the way they would use to explain their place in debate on the motion. Let people discuss what they think of the chosen criterion and what would they do differently.

### **C. Preparation**

When preparing for the lecture, think of simple examples of various motions and the criteria that teams could utilize in those motions.

Think of how you would refute, reconstruct criteria. That is, if an opposing team sets a criteria, how could a team go around it or minimize its importance.

Depending on the length of the lesson, consider if you will be able to cover all the motions you figure out. In depth explanation should be prioritized, so students would be able to truly grasp how criteria work, thus it could be wise to cover a few motions, rather than bombard students with many different ones, especially in case of novices.

### **C. Hints**

Be prepared to help students do analysis of motions as they go along the lecture  
Discuss how judges might weight different criteria's presented by opposing teams  
Discuss if you need a criteria in every single motion and debate.

### **D. Verification**

- What kind of impression about debate students take from the lesson? Why is it a positive/negative one?
- What should every trainer do to learn from the lesson for the future:
  - a. What activity/example/discussion had the students engage most?
  - b. What was the biggest problem during the lesson? What can be done to prevent it in the future?

