

Executive Meeting 9 Minutes

Thursday July 24th, 2014 – 10:00 a.m. – 12:35 p.m., Location: Macquarie University Library

Present: Nandini Bajaj (President), Ryan Thalari (Secretary), Jacob Rock (Treasurer),
Lachlan McGrath (Vice President), Anna Kosmynina (President Emeritus), Stephanie Fehon,
Dhanya Mani.

Absent: Rochelle Amys, Himmi Cheruvu (Non-Voting: Honorary Member).

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Trial (not) by Combat: Worlds Trials and Trial Policy

Policy

Nandini: The “pool of debaters” is unclear. In the past we’ve interpreted “the pool” to be equal to the number of spots available, but that interpretation’s not explicit in the Policy. We need to be clear about the definition of “the pool”.

Dhanya: I think we need to alter the Policy because trial performance can be arbitrary. Trials aren’t necessarily an accurate reflection of a debater’s ability or their capacity to work with another person. Limiting “the pool” to the people who rank 1st and 2nd after Trials won’t always create the best dynamic. I would be in favour of a broad interpretation of “the pool”.

Steph: I agree with Dhanya in that those are all important issues, especially since we only have 1 team at the moment and breaking a team at Worlds will lead to being allocated more teams in the future. It’s important therefore to send the most competitive team possible. However, I’m also mindful of the fact that if someone really wants to go to Worlds, works hard and ranks highly (e.g. 2nd) and are told by someone else in “the pool” (e.g. the person who ranked 1st) that “even though we can work well together, I’m going to choose someone else because I think I work slightly better with them than with you”, that seems slightly unfair to that individual and could create some personal issues.

Ryan: I think if we’re going to have an open pool, that that option should only be available if we have just 1 team, and that in that instance, the pool should be a maximum of 3 people.



Anna: I agree with Steph in that in most situations the difference between a team of 1st and 2nd and a team of 1st and 3rd isn't a huge difference. If a high-performing debater does badly in trials, they would be disadvantaged, but that situation is unlikely.

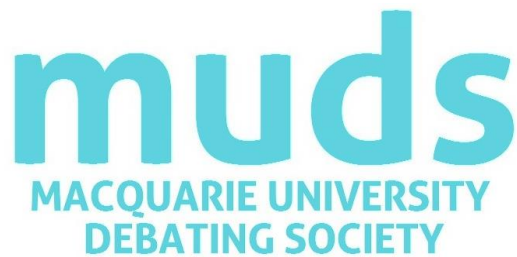
Steph: We need to be clear before Trials about how we define "the pool". A closed-pool system can help avoid some of the personal issues with an open pool.

Nandini: I'm not sure any Policy could ever fully circumvent personal issues. Even if we could, that seems secondary to the goal of creating the most competitive team possible. I kind of agree with Ryan in that if we have multiple teams, that we should have a closed pool.

Anna: It's important to remain comparative: With a closed pool, the number of people who could potentially be picked as a teammate is smaller. With an open pool, you could potentially be preventing someone from attending a tournament they would otherwise have been able to attend on merit.

Jacob: A single team is made up of 2 people. If we have just 1 team available, the current Policy says that the person who ranked 1st has no choice, and so could end up with someone they can't work with.

Steph: Personal issues could still exist because saying who you work well with is inherently subjective. If we say "I want to form the most competitive team possible based on my personal relationships with others", that may not actually lead to a competitive team. Personal relationships may have no impact on performance. Dynamics are important, especially if people can't work with someone, but at the



same time, the discretion of being able to choose who you have the best dynamic with doesn't guarantee the best possible outcome.

Dhanya: I think we need a balance between having the most competitive team and team dynamics. The best compromise to achieve that would be to have an open pool because that would allow room for movement which is good because dynamics are important, and if an experienced person performs badly in Trials it would allow room for error.

Nandini: We also need to consider the Policy in regards to trialling by CV. The current Policy says that if anyone trials by CV, they're not included in "the pool".

Ryan: The current Policy says that anyone who trials by CV and is selected in "the pool" will be unranked within "the pool".

Anna: If we have 3 people who want to go but only 2 spots available, it's worse for the person who doesn't get to go if the reason they don't get to go is because they weren't chosen by the other person as opposed to because they performed badly in Trials. Also, the damage to personal relationships and the ability to misjudge dynamics could lead to worse outcomes, compared to the marginal benefit of a potentially, slightly more competitive team. Personal ties could confuse perceptions of dynamics and cloud judgement. We have relevantly equal experience from Internals (6-12 debates). The decision made may be based on who people get along with in real life instead of in "Debaterland" (i.e. in debates). If we wanted a semi-closed/semi-open pool, we could give the Selector(s) more discretion. We could ask the Selector(s) to provide us with a ranked list of everyone trialling, and if 2nd and 3rd are close, list them both as being equal second.

That would help preserve the integrity of the trial process and also allow flexibility.

There could still be personal issues for the person who misses out though.

Steph: When designing the Policy, a lot of problems stem from the power given to the top-ranked person, and determining who is given that power is just as discretionary as determining who is taken out of “the pool”. Not everyone who ranks 1st has the experience to think about all of these factors. Remember that a lot of power is given to the person ranking 1st, and that will be arbitrary to some extent. If we expand “the pool” by one spot, people may choose based on past experience. Experienced debaters may be chosen because of “hackery rep”. I think we should just rank the 1st person. I’m hesitant about this because discretionary decisions can lead to hurt feelings, but this is likely the best option to minimise that as much as possible.

Ryan: To respond to Dhanya’s point about defining “the pool” in such a way that could minimise random error if a high-quality debater happens to perform badly on the day of Trials; I agree that Trials aren’t necessarily reflective of a debater’s capabilities and average performance, but I don’t think that’s a reason to change the definition of “the pool”. The main reasons to consider changing the definition of “the pool” should be based on whether we want to prioritise meritocracy (determined by Trial performance and rankings) or team dynamics, as those are the more salient issues regarding “the pool”.
If we’re concerned about minimising error and designing Trials in such a way that they result in the most accurate rankings possible (based on experience and ability),

that could be addressed in other ways, such as allowing people to debate twice or requiring all people trialling to submit CV's about their debating experience.

Steph: That sounds like a really good idea because it can help provide more information about a debater's average performance, and thus help minimise the influence of random effects on rankings.

Jacob: I like the sound of people getting into a pool, but that could make choices about who would be more competitive harder. Rankings could give an indication of that. We could just disclose the ranked list of everyone in "the pool" to the person ranked 1st.

Steph: We're having a pool because we agree Trials are arbitrary. Rankings are useful in closed pool. If we extend "the pool", rankings aren't really that useful because the purpose of having an open pool is to prioritise team dynamics.

Ryan: We could give CV's to the person ranked 1st.

Anna: If we have CV's, we should place a high emphasis on performance instead of just attendance. Attendance isn't necessarily reflective of ability.

Jacob: CV's may not be reflective of ability – if someone debates with novices, average speaker scores may drop. That could disincentivise debating with novices.

Ryan: The subsidy policy incentivises debating with novices.

Dhanya: We could let people choose what to include in their CV's, and so they could omit tournaments if they want to.

Steph: We want CV's to be representative of people's experiences though. We could just require people to list information about all of the tournaments they've attended.



Ryan: That would be a lot of effort if someone trialling has a lot of experience and had to compile all that information, and the Selector(s) had to read through all of that.

Nandini: I'd like some time to come up with an idea. An experienced person ranking 1st will look at rankings. The External Selector(s) can also look at CV's. I don't think minors are relevant besides tournaments like ANU Spring, Melbourne Mini and Sydney Mini. We also need to make sure we choose good External Selectors with experience as adjudicators – good debaters aren't necessarily good adjudicators.

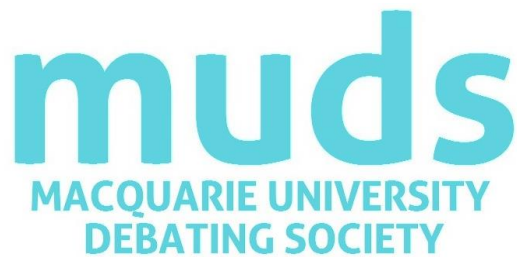
Steph: I don't think including CV's will disincentivise debating with novices. We're a small Society, and people often debate with novices, so even if people are disadvantaged, everyone would be disadvantaged to a similar extent.

Anna: My interpretation of Jacob's idea is that it shifts the incentive to debate with novices at minis. CV's are an important addition to trials, but that could also change the culture to one that's more concerned about performance instead of development.

Jacob: Slightly different topic: How would people feel about letting the Selector(s) determine the size of "the pool" instead? They could rank everyone, and the pool would only be open by 1 additional spot if they think 2nd and 3rd are really close.

Nandini: No, I think for the sake of clarity it's easier if we determine the size of "the pool" before Trials. I also think we should include CV's in the Trial process.

Ryan: With CV's, we also need to consider that it could disadvantage good debaters who simply don't have much experience. It could also disadvantage people who spend more time mentoring other debaters and/or adjudicating relative to people who



have almost exclusively debated with other experienced debaters and are therefore likely to have higher scores.

Also, I think we should allow for performance at minis to be included because for some people who are good debaters but end up having bad luck with their trial performance and/or team selections, minis may be some of the only opportunities they would have to debate with other experienced debaters.

Steph: We could consider CV's and trial performance equally so too much weight isn't given to either one exclusively.

Lachlan: Let's review what we've discussed so far: First, a minimum 4-person pool including the top-ranked speaker.

Jacob: If we're going to expand "the pool", it should be a maximum of 3 people.

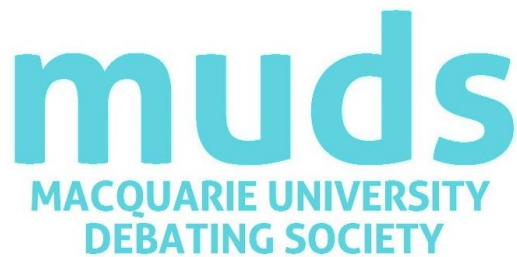
Anna: I agree that we should keep "the pool" to a minimum of 3 people (including top ranked person) if there are just 2 spots (i.e. 1 team) available.

Lachlan: Next: Everyone in "the pool" would be unranked.

Nandini: "The pool" should be ranked, but not disclosed to those trialling.

Ryan: I think we should only have an open pool if we have just 1 team, but a closed-pool if we have more than 1 team. The stakes are much higher when we have just 1 team.

Steph: There shouldn't be an ideological difference in how we apply the definition of "the pool" to 1 team or multiple teams. The logic of having an open pool to facilitate the formation of the most competitive teams possible can still be applied when we have multiple teams to fill.



Lachlan: Trials includes CV's which can also influence rankings. We're also maintaining the option for 2 debates.

"The pool" is equal to the number of spots allocated as a minimum, but can be expanded by one spot if the Selector(s) think those trialling have performed equally as well as each other.

"The pool" is ranked but undisclosed to those trialling.

Anna: Maybe instead "the pool" should be expanded if CV's and trial merit an expansion. We also need rankings if we have multiple teams so that the next-highest ranked person can select teammates.

Steph: The Registration Officer can have the rankings, but not disclose them to anyone.

Nandini: So "the pool" = Number of individual debating spots available + 1.

Those trialling are ranked by a combination of trial performance and debating CV's, with each having equal weighting (50/50).

The ranked list is only disclosed to the Registration Officer.

Debating CV's will be defined either by only majors or majors and important minis where they have debated in a Macquarie team.

Anna: If the person trialling is experienced, they can include a limited number of minis. If they're not experienced, they can include more minis.

Steph: CV's should include average speaker scores of all major tournaments they've debated in. If they've debated less than 3 majors, they can include up to 4 minis. If they've debated at 3 or more minis, they maximum number of minis they can include is less – maybe 2.

Anna: I think we can trust Selector(s) to know which minis are small. Maybe we can allow candidates to include as many minis they've debated at as they want. If someone just includes tournaments where they've received high speaks, the Selector(s) will probably be able to tell that that person has omitted some of their experiences.

Steph: The other reason to minimise the number of minis an experienced debater can include is so we don't disincentivise debating with novices. We should cap the number of minis an experienced debater can include to 2.

Ryan: Do we want to keep the system of vetos?

Nandini: Yes. We should draft a Policy with these recommendations in mind and can approve it by email.

ACTION ITEM: RYAN to draft the proposed Worlds Trial Policy.

Trial Dates

Ryan: At the last Meeting, we decided that the best dates to hold debater Trials for Worlds would be either September 14 or September 21. The USU IV will be held on September 13-14 and, and I don't think we should clash with that event.

Ryan: "I would like to propose the motion that Worlds Trials for debaters be held on Sunday the 21st of September, and Adjudicator Trials be held during Internals on Monday the 22nd of September, pending approval of trial policy."

Nandini seconds.

Motion passes unanimously.

Trial (not) by Fire: Women's Trial Policy

Nandini: I emailed around a draft Trial Policy. The proposal is similar to how we've held Trials in the past. I've made the pro-am requirements stricter because development is important. By the time someone has debated at 2 Australs, they should be experienced enough to be able to contribute to the development of other debaters.

Dhanya: I don't think we should make the pro-am definitions stricter. We're a small Society, and so it's easy to become experienced.

Nandini: After 2 Australs, a debater will have generally put in effort and would be involved enough in the Society to have invested in going to 2 Australs. It's good to have competitive teams which is why there's an exemption in the proposed Policy if there are no novices, but we don't want to shy away from novice development since novice involvement is increasing.

Ryan: I think it's good to develop everyone, but we shouldn't limit the number of pro teams since there's always a lot of room for development, even after 2 Australs.

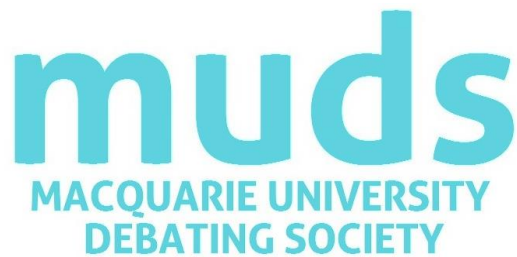
Anna: What are the concerns? What types of debaters would miss out? Maybe have one Policy for pro-novice teams and another one for pro teams. If there are 4 pros and 3 novices and an exemption comes into play, a novice wouldn't get to go.

Lachlan: The exemption comes into effect once all of the novices in the pool are exhausted.

Steph: Maybe the exemption should only come into play if no novices are trialling.

Anna: A lack of a clear Policy can create confusion.

Steph: Trials for Women's exist to create and rank teams. The pool should be decided after adjudicator trials so that if we don't meet N/2, we can work out which team(s)



shouldn't attend so we can meet our N/2 requirements. We should rank pro-am teams ahead of all-pro teams.

Ryan: Teams containing at least one novice should be ranked ahead of pro teams.

ACTION ITEM: NANDINI to amend the proposed Women's Trial Policy.

Back to Mac: MacFest

Steph: We need to make a stall presence. If we can get additional spots, we should make a brochure for Camp. We need a small flyer with the dates for upcoming events, the name of the Facebook page, the website, and details about Internals. We need more posters, and I can laminate them. I would like for there to be a typed list of sign-ups at then at the end of every day so that Ryan (as Secretary) can send a short welcome email giving members some information about the Society to help them feel engaged.

Dhanya: We can "panda" to new members.

Steph: I may be able to bake.

Nandini: Everyone on the Executive has an obligation to help.

Steph: Even if you can't work at the Stall, it would be useful to just help with small things, such as picking up things from Officeworks, getting food for the people at the Stall, covering at the Stall if someone needs a bathroom break.

Nandini: It could also be worth having some kind of performance/demo debate.

Mac Street's Back: Welcome Socials

Nandini: A Welcome-back BBQ could be good to have to engage new members.



Lachlan: We're having a social at Strike on the first Monday back.

MUDS-ster Chef: Bunnings Fundraising BBQ

Nandini: We were unable to secure August 17 because that's the same date as UNSW IV.

I'd recommend that the Finance Officers pick a date that doesn't clash with any other events.

(Other) Business Time

Lachlan: I'd like to propose that any MUDS online forms asking people to indicate their gender also include a field for "Other", instead of just "Male" and "Female".

Anna: Maybe we could have it as an open-input field to make it more inclusive? People can fill in what's applicable.

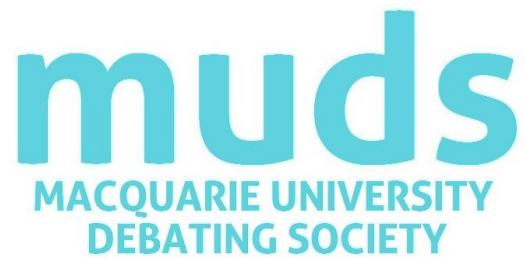
Lachlan: It should just be a field that says "Other". The idea is that "Other" is inclusive of those who don't identify as gender-specific.

Approved by acclamation.

Lachlan: I've begun looking into the possibility of #MacquarieEasters2017

Anna: Our next issue of POI will be available during MacFest. The theme is Media, and we'd like submissions of no more than 500 words before July 27 so we have enough time to make copies available before MacFest.

Ryan: What timeframe do we want to set for our next Meeting?



Nandini: It won't be until the end of August. I'll email everyone then to see when they're available.

Ryan: We should also look into dates for the AGM since we'll need to provide a lot of notice for it.

Meeting Concluded