Cross-Examination Policy Team Debate

If UIL CX Debate competition is administered through a virtual platform, temporary waivers or alterations to the C&CR and handbook rules and procedures may be implemented for the 2020-21 school year.

- **ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE CHAMBER:** Internet access is permitted to access virtual competition space and for the transfer of debate evidence between teams. Cell phones are permitted to assist with internet access, timing devices, and sharing of debate evidence between teams. Coaches and competitors are expected to adhere to existing contest rules that prohibit assistance in or outside of the round. The UIL Academic Ethics code will remain and all participants are expected to exhibit the highest level of integrity in not seeking outside information or coaching to give them a competitive advantage.

- **CROSS-EXAMINATION PERIOD:** In a virtual round, debaters are not required to "stand and face the judge". However, each debater shall question one opponent and only that one opponent may respond.

- **BALLOTS:** The E-ballots provided by an online tournament management system are not required to carry instructions concerning rapid delivery as detailed in the UIL C&CR. Instructions to judges about rapid fire delivery that interferes with effective communication still apply.

- **AVAILABILITY OF MATERIALS/EVIDENCE UPON DEMAND.** Email chains are allowed in a virtual tournament. If the platform provides, evidence links may also be posted in the chat for evidence exchange purposes.

- **DEBATE ROUNDS PUBLIC:** No one, other than coaches who are employed by the school, will be allowed to observe rounds and only when technology allows. Cameras of coaches should be off for the entirety of the round. *

- **PROCEDURES:**
  - Cameras of participants and judges are expected to be on at all times, unless adjustments must be made due to technical malfunction.
  - No recording of rounds is permitted.
  - For UIL CX Debate State Meet, no observers will be allowed. *
  - At State, pairings are scheduled to be released 30 minutes prior to the round. Debaters and Judges are to be in the virtual room at least 15 minutes prior to the round start time in order to check technology and mitigate any issues.
  - To facilitate the sharing of evidence, participants may create an email chain, which may include the judge. This should happen at least 5 minutes prior to the start of the round.
  - Should technical difficulties arise, debaters will be allotted 10 minutes to resolve these. If the time extends beyond this allotment, judges will deduct from the team's prep time. Contest Director will determine if forfeiture must be declared.

BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL CX DEBATE

Preparation

Prepare before the start of actual competition rounds by using test rooms provided by the specific video platform a tournament is using. You must practice with your technology before you enter a competitive tournament so that you will be prepared to understand when you are having issues and how to diagnose those problems before they interfere with your actual competition.

Technology Set-Up

Technical set-up is critical to consider in advance. Your computer should be fully charged or, preferably, plugged in. The battery is drained rapidly when using video conferencing software.

Laptop is the best option since most have a built-in microphone and web cam. Tilting the laptop screen can easily adjust the position of the webcam. Purchasing an ethernet cable to hardwire to the router is recommended to improve connectivity. This is far more stable than wi-fi.

A desktop with microphone and webcam can also work. Tablets and phones are the least preferred options for a few reasons: positioning the camera can be tricky; a cell phone hotspot is not likely to have a fast enough connection to provide stable videoconferencing; it requires a few more steps when using Video Meeting apps; moving these devices creates a lot of movement on the screen.

If you do not have the latest and greatest technology, do not worry. Judges will not be judging you on your technical set-up but on the quality of your performance.

Competitors should enter the virtual contest early to test technology in advance. If using wi-fi, check the connection. Turn off unnecessary devices. Test the microphone. Try to minimize simultaneous connections to the router to improve video quality.

Location

Try to secure a separate room away from noise and other people and one that has good lighting. If using a wireless connection is necessary, be as close as possible to the router. Inform others of the tournament schedule and required privacy to compete. Be aware of when to be online and show up early.

Cameras

Adjust the web camera taking into consideration what can be seen in the "virtual box", and adjust the side lighting so as not to be a dark shadow on the screen. Adjust the room. These adjustments might include: a visual background free from distractions, turning on a desk lamp for back lighting, turning off a ceiling fan to eliminate distraction,

removing pets that might make noise and making sure what shows in the background is organized and uncluttered.

You want your camera to be at eye level. That may mean placing your laptop on boxes. If you choose to stand when debating, avoid standing in front of a window or directly under a light fixture.

Audio
Be certain you have silenced notifications for texts, emails, social media and silence your cell phone.

Microphones
Debaters should mute their microphones when not speaking. Double-check it is muted before beginning prep time.

Technical Problems
Technology issues should be reported immediately through a tournament help line or email. The specific "help" procedure should be communicated by tournament officials in advance of the meet.
To Improve Connectivity:
- Wired Internet Connection
  - Plug your computer into the router (the network device that provides Internet connection) with a network cable. The computer may need an adapter to make this possible.
- Move closer to the router.
  - If wired is not an option, the next best option is to place your computer in the same room as the router. The closer the device is to the router, the better the signal quality. The video/audio could freeze if the device is too far away.
- Reboot the router.
  - If the device has repeated connection issues, reboot the router to reset all connectivity.
- Minimize interference.
  - Remove any solid objects between the wi-fi antenna and the router. Avoid using appliances while online, if possible.
- Don't crowd the router.
  - Reduce additional Internet usage while online. (Netflix, etc. should not be streaming in the other room)

Coach Notifications

Online Procedures

Familiarize yourself and your students with the tournament management software. Get any necessary accounts or registration set up ahead of time.
Be sure online registration includes your current cell phone number and an email address that is accurately entered. If you have more than one email address, make a note of which one you have entered in the tournament management software. Cell or email is how each person will receive postings and ballots.

Carefully make sure student names registered on the team roster in the tournament management system match the student account name entered. Example: if you entered the student as "Johnny Smith", they should not enter themselves as "Jonathan Smith." Take the time to proof email addresses and phone numbers (if used) to confirm they were entered not only correctly but consistently.

Plan in advance how to keep in contact with your students. There are apps available that do not require sharing cell phone numbers, a practice some school districts prohibit. Discuss protocols with the team regarding pre-round meetings, check-in and during the tournament.

Know how to access the specific tournament online video conference being used.
Be available at all times that your students are competing. Make sure you are aware of your judging obligations. Have contact information for tournament personnel.

Judge Notifications

Preparation

Judges should prepare to enter the world of online judging before the start of actual competition rounds. Access adjudication training presented digitally or via video.

Technology

Technology set-up is important to consider. Become familiar with the tournament management system and platform. Review all instructions provided by the tournament host and ask questions well in advance of the competition.

Equipment

Judges should use laptops or desktops when adjudicating rounds, not a tablet or a mobile device.

Keep your video on at all times but your microphone off while students are performing. Some judges wish to open one Chrome tab to watch the speaker and another to fill out the e-Ballot. Alternatively, you may wish to write notes on paper while observing the round and then transcribing the notes to the e-Ballot at the end of the round. Others use 2 devices. Experiment in advance to discover what works best for you.

Note: Some tournament software allows you to submit your results and add the comments afterward submitting your ranks, which allows the tab staff to access your rankings to keep the tournament on schedule.

Procedure to Start the Round

Verify the student's name or code and have the contestant reply "Here". This is a quick and easy way to test the audio for each student.

Environment and Disruptions

Judges are encouraged to remember that participants come from diverse backgrounds and we celebrate that we have economic diversity in our community. A student should not be penalized for things beyond their control. This may include unanticipated interruptions, technical issues or streaming quality and the visual background students have available to them. A student who cannot afford expensive equipment should be judged the same as one who can.

Technology Problems

Common tech issues, if a student needs help: (avoid interrupting a debate unless the issue is so bad you can't overlook it)
- Lagging audio – participant can turn off video briefly to improve bandwidth
- Noise in the audio – participant can mute themselves if they are not speaking
- Video quality – participant can readjust light or screen angle
- Disconnection – wait a reasonable amount of time for participant to reconnect The Contest Director should use discretion in determining the length of time that is reasonable.

Contact Info

Each tournament will have a Help Desk system that will be clearly explained before the tournament begins. Be certain the tournament officials have your current cell phone number and that you know how to reach them, should problems arise.

Be aware of Temporary Rule Waivers and Contest Procedures when this contest is administered virtually.