

Virtual Debate Competition 2026-27 Terms and Conditions

Debate Mate is an innovative organisation that employs elite debate mentors to teach the skills of communication and leadership across the globe. With over 20 years of experience, they run one of the world's largest debating programmes.

The Virtual Debate Competition will take place from 29-31 January 2027. The competition will be delivered in partnership with Debate Mate.

Registration

- The Virtual Debate Competition is open to COBIS member schools, including Applicant schools. Each school with a registered COBIS account must participate as an individual school.
- Those who register from non-member schools will be denied access to the competition.
- Schools must register their students for the event via the online form on the COBIS website.
- Each school can register a maximum of four teams.
- **The closing date for registration is midday GMT Wednesday 30 September 2026.**
- The competition will take place on 29-31 January 2027. There will be two timeslots to choose from: Red League: 08.00-13.00 GMT or Blue League: 14.00-19.00 GMT
- There are limited places available and these will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Student Teams

- The competition is recommended for students in UK Years 9-12, aged 14+ although younger students will be permitted if the lead teacher feels it is appropriate.
- Teams should include between four and six students. All six students can participate in preparation time, however only four students per team will be able to take part in the debate.
- Students have 20 minutes to prepare for each debate.
- Substantive speeches are 5 minutes long, including 1 minute of protected time at the beginning and the end. Summary speeches are 3 minutes long and are entirely protected time.
- Schools will be emailed Prepared Motions 1-month in advance but will not know which side they are arguing for until the start of preparation time.
- Unseen Motions won't be shared with students until the beginning of Preparation Time.
- The competition is hosted on Zoom Events. Schools will receive the Zoom details from Debate Mate via email the week of the competition.

Cost:

- The cost per team is £325 including VAT.

Judging and Prizes

- Judges score individual speakers against judging criteria. Individual speaker scores are combined to create a team total. The highest scoring team total wins the debate. Team totals from each debate are combined to create a running total throughout the competition.
- Numerical scores will never be shared with students, but team positions can be viewed on the Competition Leaderboard throughout the weekend.
- The 8 highest scoring teams from across both leagues will progress into the Quarter-Final Debates on Day 3. From the Quarter-Finals onwards, the competition becomes a knock-out.
- Judges' decisions are final.
- All students will receive a certificate of participation. The winners of the competition will also receive a free Virtual Debating Masterclass delivered by a World Champion Debater.

Finance

- Schools will be invoiced directly for places booked, not parents or guardians.
- Schools must pay the participation fee in a timely manner, in accordance with the timeline specified on the invoice.

- If a school does not pay their fee by the date shown on the invoice, their place may be revoked.
- If a team withdraws after 30 September 2026, the fee will still be payable. Fees are non-refundable once the registration deadline has passed.

COBIS Student Code of Conduct

By participating in a COBIS Student Event, individuals agree to abide by the Code of Conduct. Participants who exhibit any behaviour that contravenes this may be immediately removed from the event in question and may be suspended from future COBIS events. Please review the [COBIS Student Events Code of Conduct](#), relating to students and staff, in full.

Students:

- Demonstrate empathy, tolerance, respect, and kindness towards others.
- Be respectful of differing opinions, viewpoints, experiences, and cultural sensitivities.
- Be considerate and respectful to all participants, attendees, hosts, officials and COBIS staff.
- Do not engage in unacceptable behaviour, including but not limited to demeaning, discriminatory, or harassing behaviour, materials, or speech, whether in-person or online.
- Adhere to digital etiquette during online events including appropriate use of chat, breakout rooms, and screen sharing. The expectation will be for cameras to be turned on when requested (where this impacts bandwidth or connectivity, participants can ask permission to turn cameras back off once the event has begun).
- Take part for enjoyment and strive for personal excellence.
- Graciously accept constructive feedback
- Compete by the competition conditions and rules.
- Accept responsibility and apologising to those affected by our mistakes, and learning from the experience
- Learn to value honest effort, skilled performance and improvement.
- Cooperate with the officials, teachers, and teammates (if applicable).
- Do not argue with the officials' decisions.

In the case of team events:

- Work hard for the team as well as for yourself.
- Treat all teammates and opponents with kindness and respect.

Amendments and Cancellation

- COBIS and Debate Mate reserve the right to update these Terms and Conditions, change competition details or cancel this event if insufficient bookings are received, or if circumstances do not allow a virtual event to take place. Registered schools will be notified of any significant changes as early as possible.
- COBIS and Debate Mate reserve the right to cancel a team's place if the school has not paid their invoice in a timely manner.

Data Sharing and Processing

- In order to administer this event, COBIS and Debate Mate will collect the following information:
 - **School details:** Name & Address.
 - **Head Teacher:** Name.
 - **Lead Teacher/Booking Coordinator:** Full name; email address; job title; school.
 - **Finance contact:** Full name; email address; school.
 - **Participating student:** age, year group, school.
- Information will be collected by COBIS via an online form created in COBIS's website (Finalsite). This data will be shared with Debate Mate for the administration and delivery of the event. COBIS and Debate Mate have a data sharing agreement in place to protect the transfer of this information.
- The full name, age, school name and entries of winners and runners-up (video/images) may be published on the COBIS and Debate Mate website and social media. This information may also be published and promoted at the COBIS Annual Conference in May 2027 and in other COBIS-related publications. By entering the competition, the teacher confirms that the necessary permissions have been sought from students and/or their parents to publish this

information for such purposes. Evidence of such permissions may be requested by COBIS at any time.

- Data will be retained in line with COBIS's and Debate Mate's respective data retention policies. For more information on how COBIS processes data, please see the [COBIS Privacy Policy](#). Please click on the following links for the [Debate Mate Privacy Policy](#) and [Debate Mate Photography and Sharing Images Policy](#).
- In line with the applicable Data Protection Laws, the data subject or legal guardian (if the data subject is under 13) may request the removal of their name at any time. Please contact students@cobis.org.uk to make this request.

These event Terms and Conditions should be read in conjunction with the COBIS Membership Terms and Conditions (with specific reference to Schedule 14), which is linked [here](#). By agreeing to these event Terms and Conditions, you agree to also be bound by the relevant sections of the COBIS Membership Terms and Conditions. Should your school not adhere to the Membership Terms and Conditions, your membership with COBIS may be subject to review as determined by the COBIS Board. COBIS reserves the right to publish updated guidance and terms and conditions regarding this competition.