

NDT Charter

Revised by action of the National Debate Tournament Committee, February 6, 1993, Evanston, Illinois, and the National Debate Tournament Board of Trustees, November 18, 1993, Miami, Florida. Approved by membership of the American Forensic Association, November 19, 1993, Miami, Florida. Ratified by American Forensic Association members voting via mail ballot, March 1994. Revisions incorporated by Arnie Madsen, NDT parliamentarian. Revisions to take effect for the 1995 NDT.

Article I: Name, Purposes, and Jurisdictional Structure.

- A. This organization shall be known as the National Debate Tournament and is a unit of the American Forensic Association.
- B. The purpose of the National Debate Tournament shall be to encourage the growth of programs of excellence in forensics education in institutions of higher education in the United States; to conduct a National Debate Tournament which shall be equally committed to encouraging the opportunity for quality debate for students of all institutions of higher education by maximizing the number and geographic representation of participating schools, encouraging the highest standards of debate excellence by maximizing the competitive quality of participating schools, and encouraging the highest standards of educational excellence by conducting a tournament consistent with the educational objectives of intercollegiate forensics competition.
- C. The National Debate Tournament shall be organized around the following:
 - 1. the chartering organization, the American Forensic Association, which retains authority to alter this Charter, subject to the procedures herein, and to exercise supervisory authority over the organization;
 - 2. the individual subscribers which provide the base of support for the National Debate Tournament;
 - 3. the district committees which are chosen by member schools and are responsible for selecting district participants in the National Tournament, and for providing representation for member schools on

- the National Committee;
- 4. the National Committee which is a chartered committee of the AFA responsible for the conduct of the National Tournament;
- 5. the Board of Trustees which is a chartered committee of the AFA responsible for the finances of the National Tournament.

Article II: Subscription Membership

- A. Membership in the National Debate Tournament shall be granted to any accredited two or four year institution of higher education which sponsors a forensics program, pays the designated subscription fee, and has an institutionally-designated sponsor for its forensics program.
- B. Duties and privileges. Subscribers shall be committed to the conduct and encouragement of programs of excellence in forensics. Subscribers shall have the right to:
 - 1. participate in all qualifying procedures for the National Tournament;
 - 2. vote in the selection of district committees;
 - 3. receive appropriate reports on actions of the district and National Committees;
 - 4. appeal to the National Committee seeking to alter:
 - a. policies or procedures of their district in conflict with the AFA Code of Ethics, the National Debate Tournament Charter, the Standing Rules for the Operation of the National Debate Tournament, or AFA policies;
 - b. the number of districts and/or geographical designation of district boundaries.

Article III: Districts

- A. Districts of a number and with boundaries established by the National Committee shall be responsible for promoting debate activities among the

institutions of higher education within their geographic area; and selecting through a tournament or other process the participants in the National Tournament.

B. District Committees.

1. Each district shall be governed by a committee elected by subscribers within the district.
2. Each district shall elect annually or biennially (subject to the provisions of Article IV, Section A.5.b.) a chair, either by committee vote or by vote of subscribers.

C. Powers reserved to District Committees.

1. Right to determine their own election procedures as long as the following conditions are met:
 - a. all subscribers meeting the requirements of this charter for membership are enfranchised;
 - b. elections are conducted by November 1 for each academic year;
 - c. committee members' terms shall not exceed 2 years unless reelected;
 - d. all candidates are members of the AFA.
2. Right to determine the policies and procedures of their own qualification process as long as the following conditions are met:
 - a. no subscriber in good standing is denied participation;
 - b. all policies and procedures governing the qualification process are announced to subscribers by the January 1 preceding the National Tournament;
 - c. National Committee deadlines for selection of National Tournament participants are met;
 - d. policies and procedures are consistent with the AFA Code of Ethics, the National Debate Tournament Charter, the Standing Rules for the Operation of the National Debate Tournament, and other AFA policies.

D. Duties of the District Chair.

1. Communicate district and National Debate Tournament information to subscribers including, but not limited to, district policies and procedures and National Tournament qualification deadlines.
2. Assist in the collection of membership dues within the district.
3. Communicate to the NDT Committee and Chair information concerning district qualification results, committee lists, subscriber lists, and other information necessary for maintenance of the NDT process. Subscription fees and lists shall be forwarded to the Board of

Trustees Treasurer.

4. To maintain on file with the Chair of the National Committee a copy of the District Charter and Bylaws, any Standing Rules of the District Tournament, and a statement of compliance with AFA and NDT regulations.
 5. Any additional duties specified by the District Charter or Committee.
- E. Right of Intervention by National Committee shall be reserved under the following conditions:
1. if elections are not conducted by November 1, the Chair of the National Committee shall conduct the election under the procedures defined by the district;
 2. policies and procedures of the district in conflict with the AFA Code of Ethics, the NDT Charter, the Standing Rules for the Operation of the National Debate Tournament, or other policies of the AFA may be altered after investigation by and a two-thirds vote of the National Committee.

Article IV: the National Committee

A. Committee membership.

1. The voting membership of the National Committee shall consist of:
 - a. the chair or National Committee Representative of each district;
 - b. one representative from each of the geographic regions (as defined by the Constitution of the AFA);
 - c. The Chair of the National Committee;
 - d. the tournament Director.
2. Ex-officio membership of the National Committee shall consist of:
 - a. the President of AFA;
 - b. the tournament Host;
 - c. the Chair of the Board of Trustees;
 - d. the Chair of the Educational Development and Practices Committee of the AFA;
 - e. the Chair of the AFA Professional Development and Support Committee;
 - f. any other members that the National Committee shall determine facilitate their deliberations.

3. All voting members of the National Committee shall have the following minimal qualifications:
 - a. a member of AFA;
 - b. received at least a baccalaureate degree.
4. Election procedures.
 - a. The members representing districts shall be elected to office in accordance with Article III, Sections B.2., C.1., E.1. of this Charter in district election procedures.
 - b. By November 1 of the appropriate year, the regional representative shall be appointed by the President of AFA with the advice of appropriate regional associations and with the approval of the AFA National Council.
 - c. The Chair of the National Committee shall be elected by a majority of the Committee at the meeting of the National Committee at NDT.
 - d. The tournament Director and the tournament Host shall be appointed by the Chair of the National Committee and approved by a majority vote of the Committee.
5. Term of Office.
 - a. The Chair of the National Committee shall serve one year.
 - b. All members representing districts and regions shall be elected or appointed for two year terms, with half elected or appointed each biennium. The representatives from even numbered districts and the Midwestern and Western regions shall be elected or appointed in odd numbered years. The representatives from odd numbered districts and the Eastern and Southern regions shall be elected or appointed in even numbered years.
 - c. The tournament Director and the tournament Host shall serve as long as the National Committee wishes to retain their services, as long as those appointed to such positions consent to serve.
 - d. Terms of office shall begin on May 1.
6. Vacancies that occur on the National Committee shall be filled as soon as possible using the procedures specified in Section 4 above. Such members shall serve the remainder of the term for which the vacancy occurred.

B. Powers and Duties.

1. The following rights shall be reserved to the National Committee:
 - a. a. to regulate the number and geographic boundaries of the districts;

- b. to establish a uniform formula for determining the number of teams which the districts may qualify for the National Tournament;
 - c. to establish and administer procedures for operation of the National Tournament in compliance with this Charter, the AFA Code of Ethics, and the Standing Rules for the Operation of the National Debate Tournament.
2. The duties of the chair of the National Committee shall be:
 - a. to preside at meetings of the National Committee;
 - b. to report committee activity to the annual meeting of the AFA;
 - c. to appoint such subcommittees as specified in the Standing Rules or as she/he deems appropriate;
 - d. any other duties as designated by the AFA or by the National Committee.
3. The National Committee shall select the following officers:
 - a. a secretary selected from among the Committee who shall maintain and report to the National Committee and to subscribers the minutes of the Committee; maintain an up-to-date list of institutions carrying on forensics programs as well as the subscriber status and instructional staff of these programs; and perform any other duties specified by the National Committee;
 - b. a tournament Host who shall be responsible for such arrangements at the hosting institution as the National Committee shall request;
 - c. a tournament Director who shall have the following rights and duties:
 - (1) to work with the Board of Trustees in developing a budget for the NDT;
 - (2) to work with the Vice-President of AFA on publicity for NDT;
 - (3) to work with the chair of the AFA Educational Development and Practices Committee to implement AFA Code of Ethics sanctions;
 - (4) to request any guidance she/he wishes from the National Committee in areas not covered by existing policies and procedures;
 - (5) to implement the policies and procedures of the AFA and the National Committee in conducting the National Tournament;
 - (6) to report annually to the National Committee on the National Tournament including presentation of motions to alter NDT policies and procedures to facilitate work with the Tournament;

(7) any other duties specified by the National Committee.

C. Rules of Procedure.

1. A quorum of two-thirds of the voting members shall be required for transaction of National Committee business.
2. Robert's Rules of Order (newly revised) shall govern committee business.
3. Voting rights.
 - a. Voting members of the National Committee shall have all the rights and privileges endowed on the Committee.
 - b. The ex-officio members shall have the right to address the Committee but shall not have voting rights on any matter.
 - c. In their absence from a National Committee meeting, any member of the Committee may be represented by another person from his or her constituency who shall assume his or her voting rights.
4. Majorities required for enactment.
 - a. Policy decisions with respect to the Standing Rules for the Operation of the National Debate Tournament shall require a two-thirds vote of members present and voting, or a simple majority in two consecutive years. All policy and procedure decisions applicable to the Tournament on an on-going basis shall be enacted into the Standing Rules for the Operation of the National Debate Tournament.
 - b. Changes in the Standing Rules of the National Committee shall require a majority vote of all those present and voting.
5. The chair shall call meetings as necessitated by committee business with the following stipulations:
 - a. all meetings shall be open;
 - b. at one National Committee meeting each year, students shall be invited and encouraged to voice their opinions regarding the operation of the National Tournament;
 - c. at a meeting each year at the AFA National Convention, all AFA members and NDT subscribers shall be invited and encouraged to voice their opinions regarding the operation of the National Tournament.

Article V: the Board of Trustees

A. Membership.

1. The Board shall consist of five members appointed by the President of the AFA.
2. Members shall be appointed for staggered terms of five years. In the event of death or resignation of a member of the Board, the President of the AFA shall appoint a person to fill the unexpired term.
3. All members of the Board must be members of AFA and none shall serve concurrently as members of the National Committee or as tournament Director.
4. The Chair and Treasurer of the Board shall be elected by the Board from among the membership of the Board. The term of office shall be one year.
5. The tournament Director and Host, and the Chair of the National Committee, shall serve as ex-officio members of the Board with no voting privileges.

B. Powers and Duties.

1. The Board of Trustees shall be responsible for all financial affairs of the National Debate Tournament including:
 - a. preparing and approving the budget for each National Tournament;
 - b. developing sources of funding for the NDT including establishing any assessments for the districts and the subscribers;
 - c. developing the Standing Rules of the Board of Trustees to govern accounting and auditing procedures for the expenditures and income of the NDT;
 - d. signing any agreements with sponsoring institutions. The Board shall have the sole authority in negotiating with the agent(s) financing the NDT.
2. The Board of Trustees shall be responsible for establishing whatever legal framework is required to execute its duties.

Article VI: the National Tournament

- A. The organization shall annually sponsor the National Debate Tournament on

a date determined by the National Committee and at a site approved by the National Committee and the Board of Trustees.

- B. The Tournament shall be under the direction of the tournament Director who is subject to the definition of duties in Article IV, Section B.3.c. of the Charter. Decisions of the Director shall comply with all relevant regulations, policies, and procedures of the AFA, the National Committee, the NDT Charter, and the Standing Rules for the Operation of the NDT. The Director is granted power to formulate further rules and procedures and to make interpretations of rules and procedures as are necessary to operate the tournament subject to the review procedures established by the National Committee. The Director may select whatever assistants necessary for operation of the tournament subject only to Board of Trustees approval of financial arrangements.
- C. Operation of the NDT shall be governed by the Standing Rules for the Operation of the National Debate Tournament subject to the following:
1. Policies and Procedures of the AFA, the Standing Rules for the Operation of the NDT, and policies and procedures of the National Committee and Director concerning tournament operation shall be published and provided to all NDT subscribers by January 15 of each year. Any changes after this date shall not apply until the following year's tournament unless the emergency clause is invoked.
 2. Emergency alterations or exceptions necessitated by unforeseen circumstances shall be allowed only under the following procedures:
 - a. the tournament Director shall provide in writing a request for the alteration or exception, a justification for declaring an emergency decision, and a justification for the request;
 - b. the National Committee shall on a two-thirds vote of those present and voting declare the situation an emergency created by unforeseen circumstances;
 - c. the National Committee shall by a three-fourths majority of all those present and voting approve the request;
 - d. all subscribing members (or schools participating in the NDT if full participation has been determined) shall be notified of the change within five days of the decision.
- D. In addition to the provision for amendment in Article IV, Section C.4.a., the Standing Rules for the Operation of the National Debate Tournament may be amended under procedures identical for amending this Charter defined in Article VII, Section B.
- E. Any member school is eligible to participate in the National Tournament

provided they are in good standing with the financial requirements of the Board of Trustees; they are free of disqualifying sanctions from the enforcement of the AFA Code of Ethics; and they have qualified through the procedures established by the districts and/or the National Committee.

- F. Student qualification shall be established by the National Committee consistent with the AFA Code of Ethics.
- G. Qualification procedures shall be established by the National Committee.
- H. In all cases the NDT shall operate in a manner consistent with the provisions of the AFA Code of Ethics.

Article VII: Enforcement and Amendment

- A. This Charter shall be in effect immediately following the NDT following the annual meeting of the AFA which votes upon it according to the procedures in Section 7.H. of the Bylaws of the American Forensic Association.
- B. This Charter shall be subject to amendment by submitting a printed ballot mailed to the membership of AFA after discussion and passage of the recommendation by those present and voting at the annual AFA meeting. A summary of the pro and con arguments from the discussion at the annual meeting shall accompany the proposal. The ballots should carry instructions that include a return deadline date no earlier than thirty days from the date of mailing. Changes in the Charter will be accepted if ratified by a majority vote of the members voting. Changes in the Charter shall take effect immediately following the NDT following the annual meeting at which the changes are voted upon.