

NITOC Adjudication Policy

- I. The Adjudication Committee** will be a pool, consisting of Stoa USA Board members and coaches from TP, LD, and Parli.

A. General Guidelines:

1. If an investigation or adjudication involves students from a committee member's club, or someone with a personal affiliation with a committee member, that member will be recused from serving.
2. All information in the adjudication process is to be kept private and shared only with the other Adjudication Committee pool members.
3. Most adjudication teams will consist of 3 members. At any time in the process, if the committee determines that they would like a wider scope for the decision at hand, two additional members may be added.
4. All committee members, whether they participate in the adjudication or not, may be asked for input or briefed on what happened in the process, if appropriate.
5. All complaints and concerns that are addressed by a committee will be logged to help with improving consistency and clarity on issues for NITOC.
6. A briefing session will be organized via conference call after NITOC to evaluate adjudications or the preliminary investigative steps that were taken to determine how to better handle situations in the future and to help refine the process.
7. Remember our mission: we (big sinners) are helping train up competitors (young little sinners) to God's glory. We are doing it by His grace and with His help. Do not be surprised. Education, training, discipline, and consequences are all a necessary part of the grace and mercy that we extend to build God's kingdom.

II. Initial steps taken to determine if adjudication is warranted:

- A. The aim of addressing a complaint or concern is to reach a resolution as simply and quickly as possible, focusing on **educating with grace**.
- B. All determinations are to be made using **ONLY** the Stoa USA rules, as posted on the Stoa USA website. No other supporting documents (like ethics standards, etc.) will be used, although they may be referred to on points of education if appropriate.
- C. When a concern/complaint is brought to the attention of any NITOC staff by judges, coaches, parents, or students, the NITOC staff person should direct and help the 'plaintiff' to the judge orientation room. Once there the orienter, if they are not members of the Debate or Speech Committee, will contact a Debate or Speech Committee member, whichever is most appropriate, to hear the concern. If the plaintiff is a student then a parent or coach **MUST** accompany the student. Judges are always to be directed to fill out their ballot before discussing issues of concern.
- D. If the Debate or Speech Committee member, with or without assistance from another member of the adjudication pool, determines that the complaint is a misunderstanding based on a norm or other causal factor, then he/she will attempt to explain the rules to the satisfaction of the plaintiff. If this simple answer solves the problem, a resolution has been reached.
- E. If the issue is unclear to the committee member or it appears that the complaint addresses a Stoa USA rules violation or the plaintiff is not satisfied, then a team of 3 will be called together to hear the complaint/concern. Initial board member contact will be Elise Pope, Scott York and then down the line until one board member is contacted. Next, another member of the pertinent committee will be contacted (Speech or Debate). The committee member who initially handled the complaint will brief the other 2 members prior to hearing the complaint if possible.
- F. If the team of 3 members determine that investigation is warranted then the adjudication process begins.

III. The order of the adjudication process:

- A. Investigation.** The tone of an investigation is **appreciation** for all involved parties and their participation in NITOC and the greater mission that we are trying to accomplish with Speech and Debate.

Determinations of the Adjudication Committee of 3 should be unanimous at the investigation stage or the adjudication proceeds to the next step.

1. If Interviews with students/teams are required to gather the necessary information, at least one of each of their parents/coaches/chaperones **MUST** be present.
2. If judges are interviewed they must be directed to reach their conclusion on the ballot prior to the interview with only the information/assistance they would normally receive while judging. While the judge is the first line of defense for violations, the ballot is unique to the round and the judge must not be tampered with.
3. If judges are interviewed, once they have answered the committee's questions they are excused from the process with the assurance that the committee will handle it from there.
4. While no further explanation or feedback needs to be given to anyone outside of the Adjudication Committee, except for the students/parents/coaches directly involved as necessary for resolution, the tone in dealing with people should reflect the attitude of, "just checking to make sure everything is fine." Expressing appreciation to all and as little 'concern' of the seriousness of the matter as possible keeps NITOC moving with as little drama as possible.
5. Once all information has been gathered from all sources (feel free to contact other Adjudication Committee members for input), if the committee determines that there is no case (no rules violation) against a competitor(s) then the competitor and all that were interviewed should be assured that all is well. The plaintiff should likewise be assured that the committee was conclusive and their concern appreciated. Resolution should focus on understanding and closure.
6. If the committee determines that further action is/may be required based on the data collected then the adjudication proceeds.
7. If the action can be accomplished without further deliberation (i.e. a competitor delivered an OO in their Persuasive round) the committee determines the action, and proceeds to notify those parties involved. The committee should be unanimous at this point or seeks assistance from the adjudication pool to reach a conclusion.
8. If the committee finds that the accusation levied involves an ethical violation that may require further deliberation or further interviews, or that discussions, etc., are needed for resolution, then the adjudication moves to the Deliberation and Mediation process.

B. Deliberation and Mediation. The committee's first decision is to determine if the deliberation will affect the tournament going forward (i.e. who will break in a speech event or which team advances in debate).

1. **IF** the deliberation will **NOT** affect the tournament moving forward (i.e. the judge gave the team a loss) then the purpose of the deliberation is clarity, discipline, and resolution. It may proceed through careful and prayerful deliberation not to exceed one meeting time. The Scheduling of that meeting time has no impact on the tournament and should not disrupt the competitor's ability to compete.
2. **IF** the deliberation **WILL** affect the tournament moving forward then the scheduling of that meeting and the speed required is of paramount importance. Communication between the committee and TAB and the TD is vital to allow the tournament to move forward as necessary. A decision should be made within the allotted time enabling TAB to move forward as necessary.
3. If the complaint/concern proceeds, then all primary players, competitors, and their parents/chaperones, must be present to hear the concerns/complaints lodged. Coaches are welcome and encouraged to participate. The plaintiff must also be present if their presence is necessary for adequate discussion and resolution. If the plaintiff does not want to participate then the committee determines if the complaint should be considered without their involvement.
4. After a meeting with all concerned parties the Adjudication Committee may recess, if necessary, for private discussion before arriving at a conclusion.
5. The Adjudication Committee will communicate its findings as appropriate to all parties involved, take the necessary action(s), make recommendations and gracefully educate all parties involved.

IV. Recourse and Disciplinary Actions:

If a rule is **clearly** broken then some action **should** be taken. There are 3 avenues of recourse the adjudication committee may prescribe: **Compliance, Consequence and/or Discipline.**

A. Compliance will be a recourse required for all infractions.

1. Educate and require that the point in question be corrected, whether it is a script or a dress code violation, going off script, or use of props in a debate round.

B. Consequence will be a common recourse for the committee.

1. If a student is found guilty of breaking a rule he/she may suffer a consequence of up to a loss in that round (Debate) or last place in the room for that round (Speech) if the committee determines that the infraction warrants it. They will also be given instruction so that they do not repeat the infraction.
2. The committee determines the consequence regardless of the outcome on the ballot.
3. If the committee agrees with the ballot then no action is taken but to communicate with the concerned parties.
4. If the committee decides a loss is warranted due to the violation in the round and the ballot does not reflect that, then the committee alerts TAB to its findings and communicates the results to the interested parties. The ballot itself remains unchanged.

C. Discipline is an action taken outside the bounds of the round in question and can affect the competitors standing at the tournament.

1. Disciplinary action will be rare.
 - a. A disciplinary action would be levied against an ethical violation that is substantiated or an attitude of defiance and lack of respect and compliance for the dictates of Stoa (i.e. a competitor who refuses to comply and proceeds in the next round to carry out the infraction again).
 - b. A disciplinary action like disqualification from an event should be considered similar to a double loss in a debate event: extremely rare and serving the purpose of keeping everyone accountable.
 - c. If a competitor deserves disqualification after investigation and deliberation, then we owe that competitor the grace and mercy to take action against him/her. It is for their eternal good. Forms of discipline include but are not limited to disqualification from an event and disqualification from the tournament, with no awards offered.