

ESU COMPETITIONS EQUITY POLICY

We believe that all young people deserve equal access to high-quality oracy programmes, including friendly, welcoming yet challenging competitions. All young people, regardless of their background, deserve the opportunity to make their voice heard.

Across our competitions, the ESU aims to set challenging and current motions and topics for you to debate or discuss, as well as providing the opportunity to perform Shakespearean texts in new and innovative ways. Participants often feel passionately about their side of a debate or presentation, but we expect all participants to treat each other, the judges, and the audience members with respect.

The ESU has a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of discrimination, including but not limited to race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexuality, or disability. Our Equity Policy seeks to ensure that our competitions are welcoming, inclusive, and supportive events where people feel that they are able to express themselves. Teachers should also consider if a student's argument or speech is likely to cause offence, especially if they are not suitably supported by credible evidence. While diverse views and opinions are always welcomed, generalisations or stereotyping without supporting evidence or stylistic intent is not.

In this safe space, you should feel that:

- You are given the same high level of respect due to all.
- You are never in a position where you feel under physical or psychological threat.
- You will never be judged on things you cannot change.
- Your opinions and beliefs can be challenged, but will always be respected.
- If your safety and well-being is threatened, others will listen and support you.

As is common in many education settings today, our competitions operate a [pronoun introduction policy](#).

Our pronoun introduction policy means that when speakers are asked to introduce their name, they are welcome to share which pronouns they would like everyone to use when referring to them, e.g., 'he', 'they' or 'she'. This is to ensure that no one is accidentally referred to incorrectly - for example, called 'he' when they should in fact be called 'she.' This a situation which can be awkward and upsetting, particularly in the relatively high-stress environment of a competition.

Students should feel able to tell the chairperson how they wish to be referred to. If they have no preference or prefer not to say, that is also a perfectly acceptable answer.

We expect our participants, judges, and accompanying adults to behave supportively at all times towards each other. We take any allegations of discrimination, harassment or intimidation very seriously. If at any point you feel like this policy hasn't been followed, please speak to the ESU Competition Lead present at your heat and/or escalate the situation to the ESU Education head office via competition@esu.org or call us at **+44 (0)20 7529 1565**. If you have a safeguarding concern, please contact our Designated Safeguarding Lead Gavin Illsley via gavin.illsley@esu.org.