

Award Criteria

Many conferences do not offer awards, to encourage cooperation rather than competition and to avoid drawing attention away from the substantive issues at hand. However, most conference do award prizes for Best Delegation, Best Position Paper, Best Delegate and various 2nd and 3rd prize equivalents, such as High Commendation, Outstanding Delegate, Honorable Mention, Special Mention and others. For conferences that do institute awards, it is recommended that the following criteria be used:

1. **Foreign Policy Accuracy**
2. **Substantive Knowledge and Contribution to Consensus-Building**
3. **Negotiation Skills**
4. **Rhetorical Skills**
5. **Resolution Drafting**
6. **Use of Procedure**

1. Foreign Policy Accuracy

The primary role of a delegate in a committee is to represent their country and its interests at an international meeting. Their aim is to ensure that international consultations, negotiations, treaties, resolutions and statements adequately reflect their country's priorities and interests. At the same time, they must build and maintain healthy relationships with the representatives of other countries as befits diplomats. Thus good delegates must show a strong grasp of their country's policies, including political, economic and trade, and ideological considerations. For example, Israel and the US would rarely oppose each other, while the US and Iran might rarely agree. These are not hard and fast rules, of course, but the underlying logic behind alliances and divergences must be strong. Diplomatic behaviour and foreign policy accuracy also includes a delegate's demeanour and demonstration of cooperative qualities, since disrespecting a fellow delegate is tantamount to one country disrespecting another, which is unacceptable.

2. Substantive Knowledge and Contribution to Consensus-building

A good delegate knows not only their country's background but also the agenda topic through and through. A winning delegate must demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the topic that is used to inform and advance debate and work towards achieving the goals of the committee. They must also propose creative and feasible solutions, with well-developed strategies for implementation, including operations and funding. These solutions should be inclusive not divisive, and accommodate concerns from different sections and blocs of the committee, with as wide acceptance as possible. Substantive knowledge must be used towards the aim of consensus-building and cooperation.



3. Negotiation Skills

A diplomat must use all the resources at their disposal to protect their country's interest while furthering cordial relations with strategic partners and the international community at large. It is crucial that the delegates who work towards resolving differences between groups or major players, such as by orchestrating a merger or by mediating negotiations, be recognized. They must demonstrate the skill of finding a middle ground to achieve solutions that are acceptable to all parties, and that constitute a definite improvement on the current situation. Delegates should understand that it is very much in their interest to exert themselves to achieve as much as possible of the objectives of other delegations (as well as their own objectives) to the extent that this does not do unacceptable damage to their own aims, in order to arrive at an agreement. They must be able to extract and exchange concessions from and with other delegations while maintaining an atmosphere of cooperation and teamwork. The mark of a delegate with good leadership and negotiation skills is inclusiveness and the ability to draw out and encourage other people's diverse viewpoints and skills to creatively solve problems.

4. Rhetorical Skills

In order to successfully represent their country's interests, a delegate must have strong communication skills that allow them to convey shades of meaning, understand what is said and not said, and be able to persuade their peers of the validity of their arguments, to bring them together despite their differences for a common solution to a pressing problem. While delegates should in no way be penalized for their grasp over the language of the committee, they must be encouraged to be able to express themselves with a certain level of fluency and comfort.

5. Resolution Drafting

Writing a resolution is a tricky task to accomplish - it requires an excellent command over the language to attain the proper structure and grammar, while also demanding a methodical and orderly mind to realize the resolution's aims with skill and context. Perhaps most important however is that the exact wording and syntax used in the text can make a great deal of difference to the meaning of the resolution and its acceptability to different states. Since all UN resolutions, except those by the Security Council under chapter VII of the UN Charter, are legally non-binding, the choice of words is almost like a code to indicate the wishes and temperament of the international community. It is important to recognize this to acknowledge that resolution-drafting can be a significant site for demonstration of negotiation skills, since it requires achieving a compromise on the final text that will represent the committee and be documented in historical records. Delegates who are uninvolved or uninterested in the resolution process should be encouraged to participate, and winning delegates should always be part of the negotiations at this stage, since consensus-building on the text of the committee's statement is crucial.

6. Use of Procedure

Delegates must be well-aware of procedure and able to use procedural points to their advantage while in sessions. It is not, however, necessary to memorize the rulebook and quote it at will – delegates must simply demonstrate a working knowledge of procedure that does not disrupt the smooth flow of debate.



“In Model UN, unlike most of all other American classroom learning, you are not constantly tested, graded, exposed for what you do not yet feel confident about knowing. You can remain completely silent the entire time in your committee and none will be the wiser.

“But those true ‘Best Delegates’, those true complex, well taught, listeners and encouragers of broadening the discussion and thus the true best ‘Problem Solvers’ — your best experience in MUN will be had in looking for *those* ‘Best Delegates.’

“Ignore the ‘shark in the water’ competitors for awards – they are also incredibly easy to spot by their arrogance and the way they shut down wider discussion. In many MUN Conferences to this day, they will often be the ones rewarded as ‘Best Delegate’ but I, and now you, know better.

“Look for those true ‘Best Delegates’ who indeed have done their work and can model for you how to present it in the most inclusive not arrogant voice, who can pull from everyone else their contribution to make the best resolution/solution and who can make all of the committee feel like ‘winners’ because they encouraged all gifts, diverse viewpoints and abilities to communicate together in order to truly problem-solve.

“They will teach you far more than you could ever learn alone or *they could ever learn alone* and they will make it a pleasure to do so. And this is perhaps the most critical skill set of all the skill sets for sustainable problem solving in a complex, interdependent, diverse world.”

- June Gorman, Guest post on Bestdelegate.com

