



School Debate Project

ISA International Interschool Debate Project

Main school subjects involved

Social Sciences / Global Perspectives / Civic Education / English / Communication Skills

Aimed at

students between 10 and 18 years old

Participant Schools

TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Supporting Organizations

Organizational
Endowment

Academic
Advisor



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

International Schools Association - ISA
(Switzerland)

TBD

School term:

September 2026 - October 2027

Introduction

The **ISA International Interschool Debate Project** is a year-long international educational initiative bringing together student teams aged 10–18 from participating schools in different countries.

The project provides students with a structured environment in which to investigate contemporary issues, develop and defend positions, challenge arguments, negotiate with other teams and formulate possible solutions. Rather than consisting of isolated debating competitions, the project is designed as a progressive learning experience in which research, debate, reflection and international collaboration develop throughout the school year.

The project will be organized around a **common annual theme**, selected jointly by the teacher leaders of the participating schools during the preparation stage. The theme should be sufficiently broad to allow it to be explored from different social, cultural, scientific, economic, ethical or international perspectives. Once the annual theme has been selected, teacher leaders will jointly identify a sequence of debate motions and subtopics. These will allow students to explore progressively different dimensions of the theme.

Debates will combine selected elements of **Model United Nations** procedures and competitive debating. Depending on the purpose of a particular session, students may defend or oppose a motion, represent a conditional or alternative position, negotiate amendments, develop policy proposals or collaborate on a common resolution.

The international dimension is fundamental to the project. Students will encounter perspectives developed by peers living and studying in different countries and will be encouraged to examine issues beyond their immediate national or cultural context. Where appropriate, teams may be asked to research and represent perspectives different from their own.

The project is student-driven. Teachers act primarily as mentors, facilitators and academic supervisors, supporting students in research, preparation, communication and reflection while allowing students themselves to take responsibility for the development and defense of their positions.

The project will culminate in a **Final International Debate** in October 2027, bringing participating schools together to debate a final motion connected to the annual theme and to present the knowledge, arguments and perspectives developed throughout the project.

Project Implementation Steps

Step	Description
1. Teacher Leader Coordination	Each participating school appoints one or two teacher leaders. During September 2026, teacher leaders meet online to establish the organizational framework, agree on the annual theme, discuss possible debate motions and coordinate the calendar.
2. Student Team Formation	Each participating school forms a student debate team. Schools may organize students according to age and experience and may rotate students or responsibilities during the project.

3. Theme Exploration & Research	Student teams explore the selected annual theme, identify key questions and stakeholders, gather reliable information and examine different national and international perspectives.
4. Debate Preparation	Before each international session, teams receive the motion and debate format sufficiently in advance. Students research the issue, prepare evidence, develop arguments and counterarguments, and assign speaking and support roles.
5. Structured Interschool Debates	Participating schools meet online for structured international debates. Different formats may be used according to the purpose of the session, including moderated caucuses, three-bloc debates and collaborative resolution-building.
6. Reflection and Progressive Development	Following each debate, students receive feedback, evaluate their performance, record conclusions and identify areas for improvement. Knowledge and skills developed in one session should contribute to subsequent sessions.
7. Final International Debate	In October 2027, participating schools take part in a culminating international debate connected to the annual theme. Where circumstances permit, the final session may be organized in person or in hybrid format in cooperation with an international institution or host school.

Learning Objectives

The project aims to:

- Develop students' ability to construct clear, logical and persuasive arguments.
- Strengthen evidence-based reasoning and the responsible use of reliable sources.
- Develop research, analysis and critical-thinking skills.
- Improve students' ability to identify weaknesses in arguments and formulate effective rebuttals.
- Develop confident and effective public-speaking skills.
- Introduce students to selected procedures and practices associated with Model United Nations and structured debating.
- Develop negotiation, diplomacy, consensus-building and collaborative problem-solving skills.
- Encourage students to distinguish between personal opinion and positions supported by evidence.
- Expose students to **perspectives originating from different countries, cultures and educational environments**.
- Encourage students to examine complex international issues from more than one perspective.
- Develop active listening, respectful disagreement and constructive intellectual exchange.
- Strengthen teamwork and the distribution of responsibilities within student teams.
- Encourage students to formulate practical proposals and possible solutions rather than limiting debate to arguments for and against.
- Promote **intercultural communication** and **global citizenship** through sustained collaboration among schools.

Documentation of the Activities and Means of Interschool Communications

Example of diary of activities

Team “.....” School Activity Diary		Teacher Supervisor _____			
		Team coordinator _____			
		Team members _____			
Lesson #	Activity	Working reflections	Difficulties found	Suggestions	

Keeping a diary of activities in a school project serves several important purposes. For instance, it provides a detailed record of what has been done throughout the project. Additionally, it documents the progress, milestones, and accomplishments achieved by the project team. This documentation can be valuable as a space for reflection on the project's progress. Team members can analyze what has been accomplished, what challenges have been faced, and how those challenges were overcome. This reflection is crucial for evaluating the project's effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. Finally, the diary serves as a means of communication within the project team. Team members can refer to the diary to stay informed about the project's status, upcoming tasks, and any changes or adjustments that have been made. This helps to maintain transparency and keeps everyone on the same page.

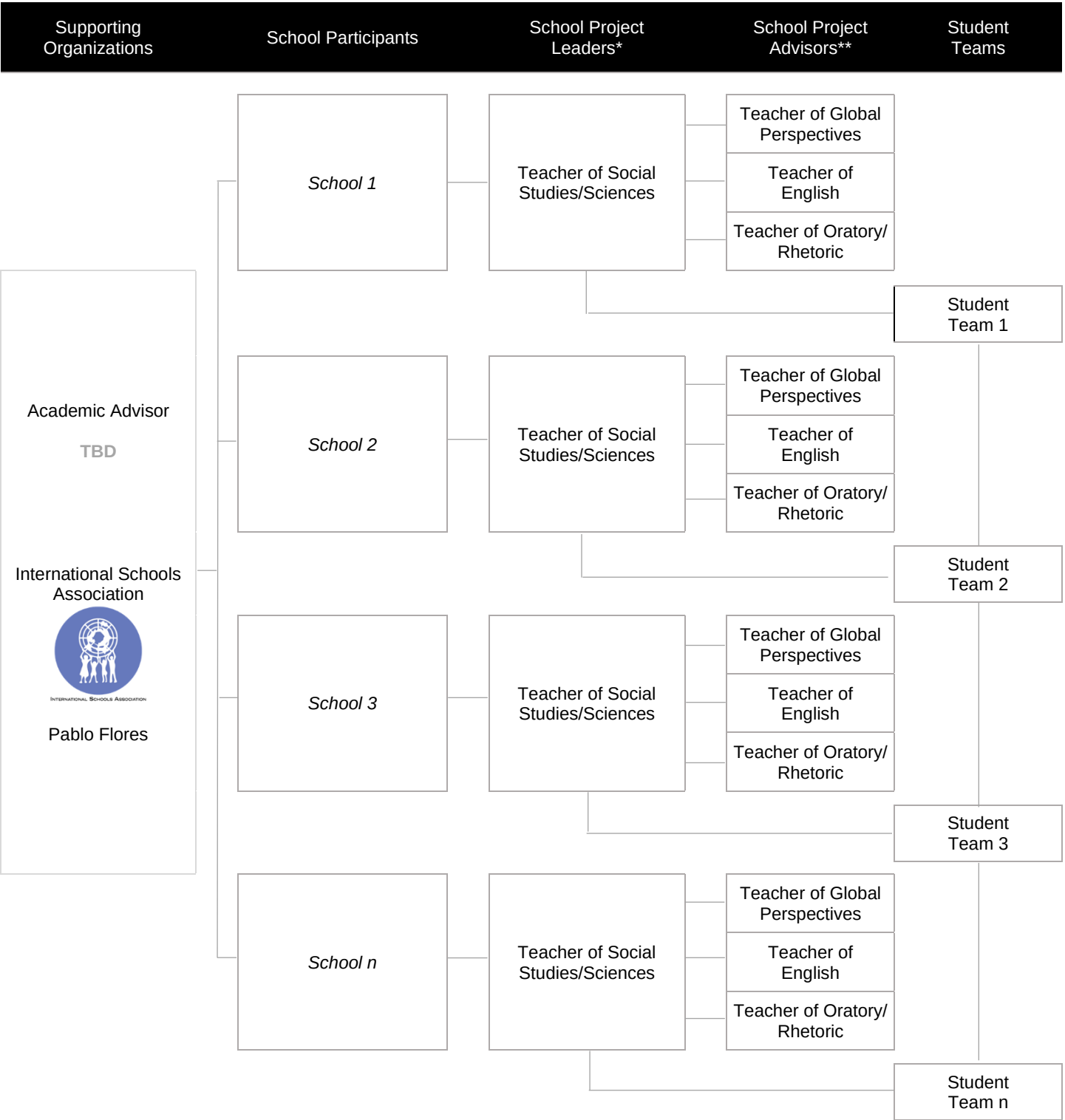
Blogging

- Blogging in the classroom, especially throughout project work, is a great way for students to document their work and experiences.
- The blog serves as a platform upon which to post written editorials, videos, photos, how-to instructions, and more.
- This would be a great way for students to take initiative, get involved, and share their stories with others.
- Parts of this blog can be uploaded in a collaborative platform in order to share the activities with other schools participating in the project.

Collaborative Platform Engagement

- Digital Hubs for Interaction. Schools will connect through collaborative platforms such as Zoom (for live debates), WhatsApp (for teacher coordination), and potentially Discord or similar tools (for ongoing student discussions).
- Structured Virtual Meetings. Regularly scheduled online sessions will provide space for sharing insights, addressing challenges, and exchanging perspectives across schools.
- Knowledge Repository. The chosen platform will also serve as a central hub where teams can upload research materials, post-debate reflections, and access project updates.

Organizational Workflow



Notes:

* School Leaders are designated by the school administration to represent and coordinate activities. Any teacher may be appointed, depending on the school's context.

**School Advisors guide the student team, focusing on areas such as social sciences, global perspectives, English, or oratory/rhetoric.

Selection of the Annual Theme and Debate Motions

The project does not prescribe a predetermined annual theme. The theme will be selected collectively by the teacher leaders of participating schools during the preparation stage in **September 2026**.

Teacher leaders may propose themes based on their students' interests, school curricula, contemporary international issues and opportunities for interdisciplinary learning.

The selected theme should:

- be relevant to students from different countries and cultural contexts;
- allow different and genuinely debatable positions;
- be broad enough to sustain several debate sessions throughout the school year;
- allow students to conduct research using reliable and accessible sources;
- be suitable for different age groups;
- encourage international comparison and multiple perspectives;
- permit the development of progressively more complex motions;
- and, where possible, encourage students to consider practical solutions.

Once the theme has been selected, teacher leaders will develop a sequence of motions. A **motion** is a formal proposition that provides the central question for a debate and allows students to develop clearly differentiated positions.

The motions do not need to be finalized for the entire year in September. Teacher leaders may refine or introduce later motions according to the development of the project, student interests, emerging issues and conclusions from previous sessions.

Project Timeline

Time Frame	Stage	Recommended Activities
September 2026	Preparation and Coordination	Schools confirm participation and appoint teacher leaders. ISA establishes a teacher coordination group. Teacher leaders hold an initial online meeting, select the annual theme, establish communication procedures, discuss student age groups and agree on the first debate motion and format.
October 2026	Project Launch	Student teams are formed. Students are introduced to the annual theme, debate procedures, research expectations and team roles. The first international online meeting introduces participating schools and students. An introductory debate or training session may be held.
November–December 2026	Research and First Debate Cycle	Teams research the theme and prepare for the first formal debate. The first international debate is held, followed by teacher and adjudicator feedback and student reflection.

January– March 2027	Development Cycle	One or more debate sessions explore additional dimensions of the annual theme. Students progressively develop research, rebuttal, moderated-caucus and public-speaking skills. Different debate formats may be introduced.
April–June 2027	Advanced Debate and International Perspectives	Debates become progressively more complex. Teams may be required to examine unfamiliar perspectives, negotiate amendments, formulate policy proposals or represent viewpoints other than their own. A collaborative resolution-building session may be organized.
July–August 2027	Flexible / School Calendar Period	No compulsory common international sessions are required. Schools may undertake research, internal preparation, reflection or optional activities according to their academic calendars.
September 2027	Final Preparation	Teacher leaders agree on the final motion and format. Student teams consolidate their research and prepare for the culminating international session.
October 2027	Final International Debate	Participating schools take part in the final international debate. Students defend positions, respond to challenges, negotiate where appropriate and present conclusions developed throughout the project. A closing ceremony and recognition of participating schools and students may follow.

Student Teams and Roles

Each participating school should establish a student debate team appropriate to its size and context. A team of approximately **6–8 students** is recommended, although schools may involve additional students in research, documentation and support roles.

Students should be encouraged to rotate responsibilities during the project so that they develop different skills and the programme does not become limited to a small number of strong public speakers.

Possible roles include:

Role	Main Function
Lead Speaker	Introduces and frames the team's position.
Rebuttal Speaker	Responds directly to arguments presented by other teams.
Evidence / Research Specialist	Collects and verifies information, examples, statistics and sources.
Policy / Theme Specialist	Develops deeper knowledge of the annual theme and particular motion.
Negotiation / Caucus Delegate	Participates actively in moderated and unmoderated exchanges and negotiations.
Closing Speaker	Synthesizes the debate and presents the team's final position.
Documentation Officer	Records activities, conclusions and reflections.
Digital Logistics Coordinator	Supports online communication, shared documents and technical organization.

Debate Formats

Different debate formats may be used throughout the project according to the nature of the motion, the students' age and experience, and the objectives of the session. This is an **example with teams A, B, and C**.

Format 1 – Three-Bloc Debate and Resolution Caucus

Teams adopt different functions:

Bloc A – Pro-Motion

Supports the motion and develops arguments and proposals in its favor.

Bloc B – Anti-Motion

Challenges the motion, identifies weaknesses and defends an alternative or status quo.

Bloc C – Bridge / Amend Bloc

Examines both positions, proposes conditions or modifications and attempts to develop a workable compromise.

The Bridge Bloc is not a neutral observer. It must actively challenge both sides and formulate an alternative or compromise position.

A typical session may include:

1. Opening statements
2. Moderated Caucus – Problem and Stakes
3. Moderated Caucus – Solutions and Policy Mechanisms
4. Unmoderated negotiation period
5. Amendment round
6. Voting on amendments and/or a final resolution
7. Closing statements
8. Adjudicator feedback

Format 2 –Team Moderated Debate

This faster format emphasizes argumentation and direct response.

Teams normally represent:

Team A – Supports the motion

Team B – Opposes the motion

Team C – Conditional support or alternative position

Students participate in short moderated interventions and must respond directly to arguments made by other teams.

The format may include:

1. Opening statements
2. Claim Round
3. Challenge Round
4. Clarification / Question Round
5. Structured rebuttals
6. Closing statements
7. Adjudicator feedback

This format is particularly appropriate for introductory debates, analytical questions and sessions designed to strengthen reasoning and rebuttal skills.

Format 3 – Collaborative Draft-Resolution Summit

This format moves beyond debating *for* or *against* a proposition. Student teams must collaborate to produce a common resolution.

Teams may initially assume different responsibilities, for example:

- Team A – Problem and Principles
- Team B – Policy and Implementation
- Team C – Safeguards and Limitations

Teams defend their proposed clauses, challenge those of other teams, negotiate amendments and ultimately attempt to produce a single final resolution.

This format is particularly appropriate for later stages of the project when students have developed sufficient knowledge of the annual theme to formulate possible solutions.

General Structure of a Debate Session

International debate sessions will normally last approximately 60–90 minutes, depending on the age of the students, number of participating schools and selected format.

A typical session may include:

Phase	Approximate Duration
Registration, technical check and introduction	5–10 min
Opening statements	5–10 min
First moderated debate round	8–10 min
Second moderated / challenge round	7–10 min
Negotiation or collaborative round	5–10 min
Rebuttal / amendment / resolution stage	8–15 min
Closing statements	5–10 min
Adjudication and feedback	10–15 min

Speaking turns during moderated rounds should generally be short, **approximately 30–45 seconds**, to encourage active participation and direct interaction among teams.

The Chair and Moderator should ensure balanced participation among schools and prevent the debate from becoming a sequence of unrelated prepared speeches.

Roles During International Debate Sessions

Chair

The Chair oversees the formal organization of the session, opens and closes proceedings, introduces the motion and debate format, maintains order and ensures that procedures are followed fairly.

Moderator

The Moderator leads the interactive debate rounds, introduces subquestions, recognizes speakers, encourages direct engagement among teams and ensures balanced participation.

The Moderator may redirect discussion when it moves away from the motion but should not influence the substantive positions defended by students.

Adjudicators

Adjudicators evaluate the performance of teams and students and provide constructive feedback following each debate.

Timekeeper

The Timekeeper monitors speaking and session times and signals when allocated time is approaching its end. This function may be carried out by the Chair, Co-Chair or another designated person.

Debate Assessment and Feedback

The primary purpose of assessment is **educational development** rather than competition alone. Adjudicators should therefore provide both scores and constructive feedback wherever possible. Teams may be assessed in the following areas:

Content and Argument Quality

Accuracy, relevance, depth, logical reasoning and understanding of the motion.

Use of Evidence and Research

Quality, credibility and effective integration of evidence.

Structure

Clarity, organization, logical progression and cohesion among team members.

Engagement and Rebuttal

Ability to listen, respond directly, challenge arguments and defend positions.

Diplomacy and Collaboration

Respectful communication, active listening, negotiation and constructive engagement with other teams.

Delivery

Confidence, clarity of expression, effective speaking and time discipline.

Awards may be introduced in individual sessions or in the final event, but they should recognize different strengths rather than only declaring a single winning team.

Possible recognitions include:

Best Speaker

Best Evidence and Research

Best Rebuttal

Best Diplomacy and Negotiation

Best Collaborative Solution

Best Team Performance

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