



HSMUN 2008 Awards Philosophy

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As in everyday life (the school and the non-school world), students and educators seek information wherever they will find assistance and solutions to problems and questions.¹ The process is similar with the delegates of, and representatives to the United Nations. They listen to rumours, have informal conversations within the eateries of New York City and Geneva,² in addition to a reliance on formal resources such as: past declarations, resolutions, and other multinational agreements. Thus, assuming and performing the role of a national delegate to the United Nations requires the embodiment of a comprehensive array of skills. The honing of these abilities optimizes the probability that a consensus will be reached between nations, compromising partial interests for the common good.

The 2008, University of Alberta High School Model United Nations Conference considers formal *awards* as a supplementary benefit of contributing to this event. Clearly, the opportunity for a student to enhance their knowledge of: international relations, multinational and multilateral organizations, diplomacy, appeasement, the dynamics of various social sciences, and interpersonal negotiations - serves to buttress the knowledge, comprehension and applicability of the outcomes found within provincial curricula. Moreover, the skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are enacted through research, listening, resolution formulation, and the assessment of information received.^{3,4} Still, it is the holistic *experience* of this conference that is the inherent reward for all participants and staff. What resonates beyond the closing ceremonies positively influences the delegate, school, community, country, and the world.

Having said that, do we *need* formal awards? Surely, extrinsic motivations have their purpose and can help to focus efforts; nevertheless, HSMUN reiterates its educational goal of fostering life-long learning through the participatory discovery of the United Nations, and its relation to the pressing and timeless issues concerning the contemporary and historical world. All the same, students experience the very real situation of receiving grades and already understand, or will understand, the role of wages in relation to their financial subsistence.⁵ Moreover, those

¹ Norman E. Grondlund, *Assessment of Student Achievement*, 7th ed., (Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2005), p.148.

² As has been substantiated through certain HSMUN staff's personal conversations with Canadian Government Representatives to the United Nations, unofficial stories, and personal experiences at model United Nations conferences; many resolutions go through an informal process of negotiation outside of official committee time, in a deli, with ideas scribed on a napkin. In short, all interactions are an educational experience, and important to the negotiation processes encountered as a HSMUN delegate – and in other aspects of one's life.

³ Traditionally, HSMUN is viewed as having a strong correlation to Social Studies topics, yet this should not delimit an approach from other subjects such as English or Biology. Consider that numerous outcomes from the Alberta, *Senior High School English Language Arts Program of Studies* (2003), apply to model United Nations. For example, an English 20-2 student might, “develop content appropriate to form and context [for example provide grounds and evidence to construct an argument [...]]” (p. 56) in relation to a model United Nations task. Additionally, a Biology student might approach the Third Committee of the General Assembly (GA3): Social, Cultural and Humanitarian (SOCHUM) with a scientific argument when discussing HSMUN's *Prescribed Topic I: Climate Change*. The Biology 20 unit on the biosphere has for two specific attitudinal outcomes: “develop an attitude or participation in planning and shaping the future”; “develop an awareness of global issues and the contribution of local activity to the resolution of global problems.” These are just two explicit examples of attitudinal outcomes from the Alberta *Senior High Science Program of Studies*, Biology 20-30 (1989).

⁴ See ‘Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives’, in: Guy LeFrançois, *Psychology for Teaching*, 10th ed. (Scarborough: Nelson/Thompson Learning, 2003), 496-7.

⁵ Although there is a trend within some educational settings to do away with symbolic grades (percentages, letters, or scales), symbolic evaluation is a reality of post-secondary and vocational settings.

students who attend a university or college with a model United Nations club (such as the University of Alberta) may attend conferences at the post-secondary level, which distribute awards at the closing ceremonies. Some delegates put forward a competitive mandate, although, the level of intensity is usually decided-on by the delegate or delegation.

At this conference, we strongly encourage delegations to place education and enjoyment ahead of formal accolades; nevertheless, because this year's evaluation process is based on a universal, conference-wide rubric, delegates and teachers can utilize this standard to focus their development and preparation.⁶ Essentially, the delegate, through intermittent, self-evaluation, *chooses* what level they would like to perform at. School clubs or classes may decide to peer evaluate using this tool, or teachers may choose to formatively and summatively assess using a whole, partial, or adapted rubric. The key is for delegates and delegations to use the rubric and other HSMUN resources for whatever is applicable for their context. Ultimately, HSMUN wishes all delegates success in having a meaningful, constructive, and respectfully interactive experience!

The awards selection process is as follows:

- 1) Every delegate will have the awards rubric available to them via a downloadable document at: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~hsmun/awards.html>.
- 2) The student and / or delegation choose to prepare themselves (or not) in light of this rubric. Utilizing this tool may increase the chance of being considered for awards at the conference.
- 3) Each delegate will receive a copy of the awards rubric and evaluation process when the delegate registers at the conference.
- 4) Each delegate represents their assigned country or Non-Governmental Organization in their given committee session (and all related conference activities), as they deem fitting for their goals.
- 5) With the rubric in mind, each delegate in every committee (one nomination for each country, N.G.O., or observer state)⁷ will be asked to nominate ONE delegate⁸ other than themselves by 9 a.m. on Saturday, February 23rd, to be considered for one of three, ranked awards.

Note: Delegates may use the rubric loosely in making a nomination decision (e.g. getting a general feeling by considering delegate(s) in light of the criteria and descriptors), or by tabulating an actual score to assist them in making their nomination. *Any scores arrived at by the delegates will be for their own decision making purposes, and will not factor into the final decision of the dais.

- 6) The dais will count the submitted nominations, and five delegates in each committee will be selected for final evaluations. Additionally, if the dais feels that a certain delegate deserves to be included in the final round of evaluation (but was not in the top five in terms of peer

⁶ As Gronlund notes, "The scoring procedure lets the students know how the performance will be judged and provides them with an instrument for self-evaluation." Gronlund, loc. cit., p.146.

⁷ Non-governmental organizations and observer states will be eligible for awards, even if they cannot be sponsors on a resolution (this will test these delegations creative capacities to facilitate the resolution building process).

⁸ Due to the limited number of available and trained HSMUN staff, in ratio to the amount of delegates in each committee, it is not possible to provide an evaluation for each delegate; however, teacher liaisons are encouraged to evaluate using the rubric, if this fits a pedagogical or student club mandate.

nominations), the dais may augment the committee nominations, no later than 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 24th.

Note: At 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 23rd, the dais of each committee will be required to forward a list of the 'finalists' to the Secretary General, or her respective appointee.

7) The dais will then evaluate these five delegations over the remainder of Saturday, February 23rd.

Note: the 'finalists' will not be notified of their status; *only* the top three delegations in each committee will be made aware of their 'finalist' status – that being when they receive their awards at the closing ceremonies.

8) Final scores will be tabulated according to the rubric, and results forwarded to the Secretary General for official purposes and records.⁹

9) Awards will be announced and distributed at the closing ceremonies. In the case of a tie, a decision will be made by the Secretary-General after consultation with the dais of that given committee. Only one delegate / delegation can receive an award for each ranking (Best, Distinguished, and Honourable).

Further notes:

- The awards decisions made, based on the official rubric, are *achievement* based; that is, while effort is concomitant to much that is achieved, only observed, demonstrated behaviours will be assessed in order to arrive at a decision. There is simply no justifiable way to measure how *hard* a certain delegate has *tried*.¹⁰
- While weighting certain criteria on the rubric was a consideration, this idea was discarded for two reasons. Firstly, HSMUN believes that all aspects of the conference experience should be on an equal footing. While one delegate may want to primarily “facilitate the formulation of original resolutions,” another may find that “maintaining a diplomatic disposition during *all* conference events” is a more efficient way to meet committee goals. Of course, honing a variety of skills that encourage growth in every criterion, will provide a prosperous and holistically educational experience. Secondly, as Stiggins notes, ‘weighting’ is a more complex assessment issue than is generally assumed.¹¹ HSMUN strives to keep the awards process as transparent, fair and simple as possible.
- The most important aspect of striving for any extrinsic reward is the *intrinsic benefits* resulting from the *journey* towards a certain culmination (e.g. the closing ceremonies). The learning process (using the rubric as a *guide*) ultimately fits the primary goal of HSMUN’s award philosophy; that is, assessment *for* learning.¹²

⁹ Only in extenuating circumstances shall an award be appealed or repealed. (e.g. demonstrated and proven delegate misconduct). These decisions will ultimately rest with the Secretary-General.

¹⁰ As Richard J. Stiggins and David A. Frisbie assert, “In general, the measurement community agrees that achievement should be the key factor in computing grades [...]” Stiggins, Richard J. and David A. Frisbie, “Inside High School Grading Practices: Building a Research Agenda,” *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practices*, 8 (2), pp. 6.

¹¹ Stiggins, op. cit., pp. 9-10. See also Gronlund, op. cit., p. 175-8.

¹² For more resources on assessment *for* learning, see various works by Richard J. Stiggins, and visit the Alberta Assessment Consortium Website at: www.aac.ab.ca. See also: Gronlund, op. cit. 6-8; A 2-8, A 2-9.