

*“The Debating Matters Competition was unlike anything I had participated in before and I will always regard it as one of the highlights of my school career.”*

Matt Bristow, debater from the Brunts School, Mansfield

*“Of all the competitions that we enter this is by far the best organised. The format allows genuine interaction between the teams and with the audience. The preparation for these debates really develops our students.”*

Lawrence Fleck, Teacher at Newcastle upon Tyne Church High School

*“This sort of debating is exactly what’s needed to protect society from received ideas and dangerous truisms, which is what being an engaged citizen is really about.”*

Nicolette Jones, writer and journalist

*“Debating Matters tests your nerves to the max.”*

Asif Muhammed, debater from Thomas Tallis School, London

*“It was the emphasis on content that first drew me to Debating Matters. The experience is very productive educationally and has made a real difference to the quality and diversity of my students’ education.”*

Paula Eleanor, Teacher at the King’s Norton Sixth Form Centre, Birmingham

*“There is such an electrifying atmosphere at Debating Matters that we have actually enjoyed losing! Even when knocked out you can make your point from the audience and feel like you are really contributing to the content and standard of debate.”*

Alexander Bates, debater from Perse School, Cambridge

*“Debating Matters is a competition that is challenging for both judges and students. I’m excited about the fact that many more schools are competing next year as Debating Matters expands its reach.”*

James Graham, Associate Director, Public Affairs, Pfizer (Judge)

*“The feedback offered by judges is invaluable, it gives you a strong sense of your weaknesses but also offers an opportunity to properly develop and correct them.”*

Catherine Bowyer, debater from Stanborough School, Welwyn Garden City

*“It’s so refreshing to see a debate that places a premium on knowledge, not style. I think the feedback from the judges is hugely important and really helps the students to improve their performance.”*

Beverley Johnstone, Teacher at Tunbridge Wells Girls Grammar School, Kent

*“I found the event very good fun, with a serious yet informal atmosphere. It was also stimulating – I was still rehearsing arguments hours and even days later.”*

Professor Hugh Pelham, Director MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology (Judge)

*“I only have positive comments to make about the Debating Matters Competition. The style worked much better than traditional debate with its endless Points of Order and Information, which just give people the chance to show off and too often get in the way of consideration of the issues.”*

Dr Sean Lang, lecturer in history at Anglia Ruskin University (Judge)

*“The judging panels are fantastic. It is so refreshing to really have your arguments and ideas properly scrutinised, not only by adults, but by a BBC journalist, a top academic and an editor at the Times.”*

Poppy Wilson St James, debater from Camden School for Girls, London

*“Taking part in the debates was terrifying at first, but once the judges get involved and you really have something to respond to, the whole experience becomes completely exhilarating.”*

Fabio Antonini, debater from Cardinal Newman Sixth Form College, Hove

*“You are never ready for what the judges are going to ask you, and I have surprised myself with how much I have been able to think on my feet. It’s really great that such prestigious people are prepared to take the time to engage with us in these debates.”*

Charlotte Blair, debater from Barton Court Grammar School, Canterbury



## DEBATING MATTERS TOPICS

**Debating Matters challenges and encourages young people to engage actively with a broad range of contemporary real-world scientific, political and cultural debates**

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – alternative medicine, designer babies, global warming**

**“Attempts to extend radically the human lifespan should be welcomed not feared”**

**“Complementary and alternative medicine should not be provided on the NHS”**

**“Nuclear power is the best alternative to fossil fuels”**

**POLITICS AND SOCIETY – immigration to animal rights, pollution to privacy**

**“We should have an open borders policy for migrants”**

**“Free speech is not an absolute”**

**“Protecting the public from terrorism should come before civil liberties”**

**ARTS AND CULTURE – from celebrity culture to media violence**

**“People need protecting from violent lyrics, films and video games”**

**“Celebrities should keep out of politics”**

**“America is dumbing down world culture”**

## TOPIC GUIDES

**Debating Matters Topic Guides, available from our website, introduce participants to the key concepts, issues and arguments and the views of commentators, politicians, campaigners and academics. The Topic Guides set the debates in their social context and provide a framework for students’ thinking. The most consistent piece of advice from Debating Matters judges to student debaters is to “read the Topic Guide!”**

## BECOME A DEBATING MATTERS JUDGE

**A key element responsible for the success of Debating Matters is the involvement of judges who probe students and encourage them to substantiate their arguments. From the local qualifying round stage through to the regional and national finals we are always keen to involve new judges in the competition. Please get in touch if you are interested.**

**Former Debating Matters judges have included the BBC’s home editor, Mark Easton; former Olympian and sports journalist Matthew Syed; Director of the Science at Glasgow Science Centre, Robin Hoyle; Psychologist and Vice Principal at the University of Dundee, Professor Anne Anderson; Chair of the Scottish-Islamic foundation, Osama Saeed; Emeritus Professor of Geriatric Medicine, author and playwright Raymond Tallis; Saturday editor of The Times, George Brock; Chair of the Cambridge University Hospital foundation trust, Dr Mary Archer; Chief Executive of GTCE, Keith Bartley; Managing Director of Broadcasting at STV, Bobby Hain; Professor of Psychiatry at Kings College, Simon Wessely and joint director of the MRC Cancer Cell unit, Professor Ron Laskey.**

*“These young debaters can teach our politicians a thing or two! Attending the debates today was an intellectual feat.”*  
Gezim Al pion, Lecturer in Sociology and Media Studies, University of Birmingham (Judge)

*“The intensity and intelligence of the speakers was a real delight. The enthusiasm and passion that they demonstrated shows that we can all benefit from grown-up debate.”*

Lawson Muncaster, Managing Director, City AM (Judge)

*“Judging for Debating Matters is the most rewarding thing I do with my time.”*

Sarah Bartlett, Talis Information (Judge)

*“It’s my first time judging at Debating Matters, and I have been blown away by the pace of the debate! It’s certainly a fast and furious competition, yet the students always seem to stay calm under pressure.”*

Lisa Jamieson, Events Manager, Wellcome Collection (Judge)

*“Having honest, critical feedback is invaluable for students, but sadly it happens less and less these days. Debating Matters redresses the balance, giving debaters an insight in to how they might improve and develop intellectually.”*

Hayley Viser, Teacher from The Chase High School, Malvern

INSTITUTE OF IDEAS & PFIZER

# DEBATING MATTERS COMPETITION

Institute of Ideas



wellcome trust



## WHY DEBATING MATTERS

Debating matters because ideas matter. This is the premise of the Institute of Ideas and Pfizer Debating Matters Competition for sixth form students which emphasises substance, not just style, and the importance of taking ideas seriously.

When the Institute of Ideas launched the competition in 2003/04, it aimed to present schools with an innovative and engaging approach to debating. Topical debates and a challenging format appeal to students from a wide range of backgrounds, including schools with a long tradition of debating and those with no experience at all. The Institute of Ideas is delighted that the competition has proved popular with so many students and schools. Over two hundred schools have participated to date (some 35% of which had never debated before) and we are expanding the capacity of the competition year-on-year.

This brochure provides more information about the Debating Matters approach and what makes it distinctive. We hope you will want to get involved.

**www.debatingmatters.com**

**020 7269 9220**

## DEBATING MATTERS IS DISTINCTIVE

### A CHALLENGING BUT ACCESSIBLE FORMAT

Debating Matters dispenses with procedural formalities. Rather, the focus is on the strength of competing arguments and students' engaged responses to questions from the judges, the opposing team and the audience. This free-flowing but rigorous format encourages students not only to make a convincing case, but also to respond under pressure and think on their feet.

### JUDGES AND THE AUDIENCE JOIN IN THE DEBATE

Debating Matters involves a broad spectrum of judges, from a wide range of professional backgrounds, each of whom brings different expertise and insights to the discussion. Judges engage with students, posing questions and encouraging them to develop and defend their arguments. An emphasis on taking points from the audience – with prizes awarded for the best individual contributions – opens up the debate, and adds to the atmosphere of excitement. At the end of the debates, judges offer critical but constructive feedback and a justification of their decision.

### REAL-WORLD DEBATES

Debating Matters is about the real-world debates that are hitting the headlines, preoccupying policymakers and exercising academics. These debates aren't a contrived excuse for a discussion, but rather offer participants the opportunity to consider fundamental questions facing society. In their research and preparation, students are asked to go beyond soundbites or semantic hair-splitting to find the evidence they need to make their case.

## FORMAT OF A DEBATING MATTERS DEBATE

Debating Matters debates involve an experienced Chair, two competing teams, each comprising two students, and a panel of three judges. Additional judges in the audience note the contributions from the floor and award prizes to those who make the best individual contributions throughout the event.

### OPENING PRESENTATIONS

Students make their case in uninterrupted three-minute opening presentations.

### QUESTIONS FROM THE JUDGES

Moving straight to the judges, the teams are quizzed on the arguments they've made.

### QUESTIONS TO THE OPPOSING TEAM

Teams are given the opportunity to challenge their opponents.

### AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

Questions from the audience take forward the argument, with debaters given the opportunity to respond.

### FINAL REMARKS

One minute for each team member to make final responses to questions and sum up their case.

### FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS FROM THE JUDGES

The judges comment on the performances of each team in turn and, after conferring, give their verdict and a justification of their decision.

## THE DEBATING MATTERS YEAR

### QUALIFYING ROUNDS – AUTUMN

Evening events held at one of the participating schools.



### REGIONAL FINALS – SPRING

A day-long event held at a high-profile venue in the region.



### NATIONAL FINAL – SUMMER

The competition culminates in a residential event held at a prestigious national venue. After a day of preparation seminars and debates, teams battle it out in a knockout competition to determine the national champion.

### FRIENDLY FIXTURES

During the year schools that have been knocked out of the competition, and others that have yet to enter, are encouraged to engage in friendly debates locally.

### PRIZES

Debating Matters provide schools, team members and debaters with a range of prizes throughout the year, ranging from the educational to the just-for-fun. The competition's prize sponsor, Hodder Education, offer schools nearly £20,000 of books as prizes for the regional runners-up and regional and national winners, and each school gets to choose which titles they would like to fill their libraries. Individual prizes have also been donated by Skype, Encyclopaedia Britannica, the English National Ballet and the Art Fund.