



CODE OF FORENSICS PROGRAM AND FORENSIC TOURNAMENT STANDARDS FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The American Forensics Association, as a professional organization for forensics educators, believes forensics programs and tournaments are to provide environments where students become intelligent, effective and responsible advocates and communicators. We believe in equality and fair play in all forensics competition, and believe all tournaments should exist in an environment free of any behavior (whether verbal or nonverbal) which results in the harassment of any participant (whether student, coach, or judge). We therefore promulgate the following Code of Forensics Program and Forensics Tournament Standards for Colleges and Universities in the hopes that the guidelines outlined here will serve to govern and regulate effectively the conduct of forensics competition in the United States.

ARTICLE I: COMPETITOR STANDARDS

1. A tournament contestant is to be an officially enrolled undergraduate student in good standing at the college or university he/she is representing in competition.
 - A. A contestant is considered "officially enrolled" when he/she is duly registered in accordance with institutional regulations as an undergraduate student at the college or university he/she is representing in competition.
 - B. A contestant is considered an "undergraduate" if he/she is registered as a bachelor or associate degree seeking student at the institution he/she is to represent in competition and is not in possession of a BA degree.
 - C. "Good standing" shall be determined by rules and policies set by the institution the forensics competitor is representing in competition.
2. A student's eligibility for forensics competition shall expire following participation during 5 academic years, or 4 academic years of AFA national tournaments.
 - A. A student shall have used his/her eligibility in a given academic year if he/she participates in three or more forensics tournaments:
 - i. A student shall be considered to have participated in a tournament if he/she competes in at least half of the scheduled preliminary rounds of the tournament.
 - ii. A tournament is defined as a forensics contest involving at least four schools in which at least four rounds of debate or two rounds of individual events are held, decisions are rendered by judges and awards given. This definition does not include summer workshop tournaments.
 - iii. A student's participation in individual events shall not count against his/her eligibility to compete in debate, and vice versa.
 - B. Students may appeal cases of medical hardships to a designated appeals committee of the NDT or the NIET.
3. Students are free to transfer from one college to another so long as the transfer is not the result of an unscrupulous effort by one school to cause the student to transfer to it in order to receive financial compensation and/or other rewards for forensics competition.
 - A. "Unscrupulous" is used here to refer to cases where the college that the student transfers to initiates contact with the student and makes an offer of compensation and/or other rewards for forensic competition if the student transfers.
 - B. The Educational Development and Practices Committee will determine if a student's transfer is the result of unscrupulous recruiting efforts based on the facts of the individual case. It is the burden of the school alleging unscrupulous recruiting to provide proof to the Educational Development and Practices Committee that the school that the student transfers to initiated the contact with the

- student and the decision to transfer was motivated by the promise of financial compensation and/or other rewards for forensic competition.
4. Under unusual circumstances, involving valid educational or profession justifications, students who have received bachelor degrees may participate if:
 - A. The student has never competed in forensics as an undergraduate.
 - B. The coach who desires to let the student compete informs chair of the Educational Development and Practices Committee of the decision and the reasons for it, and a majority of the Educational Development and Practices Committee agrees that the student has valid educational or professional reasons for participating.
 - C. Such students may participate for a maximum of two academic years.
 5. The above eligibility rules shall not restrict additional eligibility requirements established by either the NDT or NIET Committees or by individual tournament directors.

ARTICLE II: COMPETITOR PRACTICES IN DEBATE

1. Forensics competitors shall not use fabricated or distorted evidence.
 - A. Evidence is defined as factual material (statistics and examples) and/or opinion testimony offered as proof of a debater's or a speaker's contention, claim, position, argument, point or case.
 - B. Fabrication of evidence refers to falsely representing a cited fact or statement of opinion as evidence when the material in question is not authentic. Fabricated evidence is so defined without reference to whether or not the debater or speaker using it was the person responsible for fabricating it.
 - C. Evidence is presumed ethical when it has a complete source, no internal omissions or unmarked additions, and is not directly contradicted by the text immediately before and after the quoted material. Distorted evidence refers to misrepresenting the actual or implied content of factual or opinion evidence. Distorted evidence is so defined without reference to whether or not the debater or speaker using it was the person responsible for distorting it. Distortions shall be judged by comparing the challenged evidence against the material as it appears in the original source. Distortions include, but are not limited to:
 - i. quoting out of context
 - ii. misinterpreting the evidence so as to alter its meaning.
 - iii. omitting salient information from quotations or paraphrases. MLA Standards will be considered advisory with respect to this standard.
 - iv. adding words to a quotation which were not present in the original source of the evidence without identifying such an addition.
 - v. failure to provide a complete citation of the evidence. Citations should be as complete as possible to serve the goals of allowing others to find the source and allowing the debaters/judges in the round to argue/evaluate the quality of the source. Not all evidence citation issues are ethical violations. Complete citations should include (name of author(s), source of publication, full date, page numbers (where relevant), and author(s)' credentials where available in the original when challenged. Debaters and speakers are expected to be in possession of the forms of documentation listed here at the time they used any evidence which was challenged.
 - vi. Failure to provide complete documentation of electronically retrieved evidence, including:
 - a. Name of author(s), source of information, full date, and author(s) credentials where available;
 - b. The nature and type of the electronic site identified in the evidence citation [e.g., "listserv," "Lexis/Nexis,"] for any source which isn't a public webpage.
 - c. A full current Universal Resource Locator (URL) when applicable [e.g., <http://www.epa.gov>], and a complete title for the material quoted where available.
2. Forensics competitors are expected to contribute to their own research. Learning to research should be considered a primary value. Competitors' experience should result in research competence.

- A. Persons other than the forensic competitor and their undergraduate team members (such as graduate students or instructor/coaches) are not to get charged with the primary responsibility for doing a forensics competitor's research.
 - B. This provision shall not be construed to prevent coaches or assistants from engaging in collaborative research designed to:
 - i. teach research techniques
 - ii. provide examples of high quality research
 - iii. identify areas of research which students should pursue, and
 - iv. provide the coach with the working knowledge necessary to function as effective critic with respect to the debate or speech topics being investigated by his/her students.
3. All forensics participants are expected to compete honestly and fairly. Students are not to intentionally lose debates or perform badly in individual events rounds for the purpose of allowing other competitors to benefit as a result. Directors of forensics, judges and coaches are not to encourage dishonesty in competition by asking students to purposely lose or do poorly in rounds of forensics competition.

ARTICLE III: COMPETITOR PRACTICES IN INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

- 1. Students competing in individual events are expected to provide sufficient support for their claims. The ethical use of evidence includes appropriate citations, accurate representation of evidence content, and avoidance of plagiarism and reflection of autonomous student work.
- 2. Appropriate Citations of Evidence: Outside sources shall be verbally cited during the speech. A verbal citation shall include sufficient information for an audience member to locate the source. The AFA-NIET recommends the following (additional information may be included):
 - A. Print periodicals shall be cited with the title of the periodical and date of the publication regardless if the material was electronically retrieved. The date a source is accessed online is not considered the primary publication date. For example: "According to the May 21, 2009, New York Times"
 - B. Materials distributed via electronic means only should be indicated as such. For example: "According to a May 21, 2009 on-line report by the Associated Press"
 - C. Books shall be cited with the title, date and author. Essays or articles collected in an anthology should be cited using the primary author's name not the editor of the collection. When applicable, students should find and cite the original publication of the anthologized work. For example: "Augusto Boal argues in his 1979 book Theatre of the Oppressed"
 - D. Webpages shall be cited using either a brief URL or the name of the sponsoring organization and the date on which the page was posted. In absence of a posted-on date, students should use the date the page was last updated. The date a source is accessed online is not considered a primary publication date. For example: "As reported on www.ptoweb.org last updated May 2009" and "The AFA-NIET states on its website last updated April 10, 2009."
 - E. Interviews shall be cited with the name of the interviewee, his/her qualifications and the date on which the interview occurred. Interviews include face-to-face, e-mail, chat, facebook, and other forms of electronic exchange. For example: "In an e-mail correspondence on July 7, 2009 with Joe White, former Chair of the Tucson, AZ Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors"
- 3. Accurate Representation of Evidence: When incorporating evidence into a speech, students shall avoid the following:
 - A. Citing evidence out of context
 - B. Misinterpreting evidence to alter intent or meaning
 - C. Cutting words from or adding words to a quotation or paraphrase in such a way that the intent or meaning of the evidence is altered
- 4. Avoidance of Plagiarism: In individual events which require the construction of the speech to be the original work of the student (persuasion, informative, after-dinner, communication analysis, impromptu, extemporaneous, or other similar speaking events) the speaker shall not commit plagiarism.
 - A. Plagiarism is defined as claiming another's written or spoken words as one's own, or claiming as one's own a significant portion of the creative work of another.
 - B. A speech in individual events competition is considered plagiarized when the student presenting it was not the principal person responsible for researching, drafting, organizing, composing, refining, and generally constructing the speech in question
- 5. Reflection of Autonomous Student Work: Forensics competitors are expected to do their own research.

- A. Persons other than competitor (e.g., undergraduate students, graduate students, instructors/coaches) are not to be charged with the responsibility of doing a forensics competitor's research.
 - B. This provision shall not be construed to prevent coaches or assistants from engaging in limited research designed to:
 - i. Teach research techniques,
 - ii. Provide examples of high quality research or,
 - iii. Identify areas of research for students
6. Ethical Use of Literature in Individual Events (as iterated in the AFA-NIET Charter/Bylaws)
- A. Contestants may not rewrite a prose, a poem, or a dramatic text so the work differs from the original text.
 - B. Contestants may not add or reassign scenes or lines to the performed cutting. Although an occasional line might be added, especially if a character has been deleted, this practice should be discouraged.
 - C. Contestants may not rewrite the ending of a work.
 - D. Contestants may not rewrite lines to change the gender or person of a character.
 - E. Contestants may not perform a text in a genre for which it has not been written.
 - F. Protests should be filed according to AFA-NIET Charter and By-laws Section X.

ARTICLE IV: TOURNAMENT PRACTICE

1. Tournament directors must ensure that all participants compete on a more or less equal basis.
 - A. A debate team should not meet the same team twice during preliminary rounds of a tournament unless:
 - i. There are so few teams entered that it would be impossible for the tournament to proceed, in which case the two teams should switch sides the second time they meet, or
 - ii. The schools entering the tournament have agreed to suspend the provision that teams not debate each other twice in preliminary rounds.
 - B. Speakers in individual events shall not be repeatedly matched against the same opponents in a given event, unless:
 - i. the tournament cannot proceed otherwise, or
 - ii. the schools attending the tournament agree to suspend the provision that speakers should not repeatedly meet the same opponents in a given round of individual events.
 - C. So far as possible, speakers in individual events contests should rotate speaking positions.
 - D. Judges for forensics contests shall be assigned in accordance with these stipulations:
 - i. A judge shall not be assigned to judge his/her own team
 - ii. A judge shall not judge the same debate team or student speaker in one particular individual event twice during a tournament's preliminary rounds unless there is no way to avoid this conflict. In such cases:
 - a. the judge will hear the debate team on the opposite side, unless it is impossible to do this or the schools competing agree to suspend this provision, and
 - b. the judge will hear the student speaker compete against as many different opponents as those involved in the judge's first hearing of the speech, unless it is impossible to do this or the schools competing agree to suspend this provision.
 - c. Exceptions to this principle, such as for district tournaments using panels, should be clarified in tournament invites or governing documents.
 - iii. A judge shall not judge debaters or speakers where there is a conflict of interest possible, such as:
 - a. The judge has previously had a significant coaching or affinity relationship a debater or speaker he/she is to hear,
 - b. The judge was, within the last two years, the coach of the school whose team or speaker he/she is to hear,
 - c. The judge was, within the last two years, an undergraduate forensics competitor at the school whose team or speaker he/she is to hear.
 - iv. Prior to the start of the tournament, all judges shall have an opportunity to declare themselves ineligible to hear specific debate teams, speakers, or events.

- v. The practice of allowing debate teams or individual events speakers to prevent a specific judge from hearing a particular team or speaker is permitted only when:
 - a. all teams or speakers are given an equal chance to declare judge strikes or fill out preference sheets prior to the start of the tournament,
 - b. all teams and speakers are granted the same number of strikes-the number to be determined by the tournament director(s), and
 - c. The procedures for removing strikes (if any) are stated openly to all competitors.
- 2. Tournaments should be completely and fairly advertised.
 - A. The levels of competition expected should be specified.
 - B. If the tournament has more than one division of competition, eligibility requirements for the divisions shall be clearly defined in the tournament invitation.
 - C. The basis for advancing competitors to the elimination rounds, and/or for awarding trophies or prizes, shall be specified either in the tournament invitation or in written or oral statements presented to all tournament participants prior to the start of the first round of the tournament.
 - D. The rules governing all competitive events (event description, procedures, time limits, etc.) shall be clearly specified in the tournament invitation.
- 3. All tournaments are encouraged to invite interested any and all interested observers, on a space available basis, to view tournament rounds and take notes. Participants, coaches of the teams involved, judges or authorized researchers (with the tournament director's approval) may electronically record any tournament round of competition except for oral interpretation events. Member organizations may develop appropriate policies about the uses of recorded material.
- 4. Tournament judges are obliged to provide detailed and constructive criticism of any and all rounds of competition they evaluate. Judges are expected to provide either oral feedback or written comments on the ballots provided by the tournament, as appropriate for the event. If judges choose to provide written comments, these written comments should be made available to all the competitors a judge has heard by the conclusion of the tournament. All provisions of this article shall apply to high school and college competitors.
- 5. Tournament directors should ensure that:
 - A. Results are made available to all contestants as soon after competition ends as is humanly possible.
 - B. Their tournament runs smoothly and efficiently, with breaks in between rounds for power-matching minimized whenever possible.
 - C. All results are kept secret if that is specified by the tournament rules.
- 6. All tournaments should operate in an environment free of any behavior (whether verbal or nonverbal) which results in the harassment of any participant (whether student, coach, or judge).
- 7. This section is not intended to preclude experimental practices by tournaments, so long as those practices are clearly spelled out in the invitation.

ARTICLE V: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

1. The American Forensic Association (AFA) is committed to promoting professional communication conduct. The members of the AFA recognize the adversarial and competitive nature of academic debate and individual events may place students, directors, coaches, judges, and tournament administrators in situations where professional conduct by participants may be called into question.
2. The explicit focus of this policy addresses conduct by participants outside the specific time period when a student is competing in a round during a tournament. Participants include audience members, students, directors, coaches, judges, and tournament officials.
3. The AFA acknowledges the district and national tournaments sponsored by the association are designed to promote responsible and effective discourse. The AFA recognizes that behaviors which belittle, degrade, demean, or otherwise dehumanize others are not in the best interest of the activities sponsored by the AFA. Such behaviors interfere with the goals of forensic education.
4. All participants in an AFA sponsored event shall recognize the rights of others and communicate with respect for opponents, colleagues, critics, tournament hosts and audience members. Behaviors by any tournament participants occurring at an AFA sponsored event that violate the community standard of a healthy educational environment shall be deemed "Unprofessional Conduct." Unprofessional conduct is subject to sanction(s) by the AFA.

5. Forensics educators shall act in accordance with their own institutional obligations. Failure to adhere to employer's policies (e.g., a person suspended or terminated for violations of university sexual harassment policy, substance abuse policy, fiduciary policy or academic responsibility policy may be subject to sanctions by the AFA).
6. A charge of unprofessional conduct shall follow the appropriate steps detailed in Article 6: Adjudication Procedures.

ARTICLE VI: ADJUDICATION PROCEDURES

1. Anyone wishing to initiate a formal complaint may do so by sending SIX copies of the charges, in writing, to the Chair of the Educational Development and Practices Committee. The complaint must:
 - A. Indicate the specific section(s) of the Code allegedly violated.
 - B. Name the person(s) charged with the alleged violation(s).
 - C. Indicate the factual circumstances and events associated with the alleged violation(s).
 - D. Include all necessary supporting documents which would constitute, at least, a prima facie case that there is a reason to believe that a violation of the Code may have occurred.
 - E. Include the addresses and phone numbers of the person making the complaint.
2. The Educational Development and Practices Committee, upon receipt of SIX copies of the charges, will inform, in writing, the person charged with an alleged code violation. The person(s) charged will have 30 days to respond to the charges. The person charged will be informed of the nature and extent of the charges against him/her. The person charged may supply any relevant information in his/her defense in regard to the charges. SIX copies of any material supplied should be sent to the Chair of Educational Development and Practices Committee.
3. Once all materials are gathered, the Educational Development and Practices Committee members will independently review the case and determine if there is reason to believe that a code violation has occurred.
 - A. If the Educational Development and Practices Committee agrees, by majority vote, that there is insufficient proof of a violation, the charges will be declared dropped and all parties to the dispute informed.
 - B. If the Educational Development and Practices Committee agrees, by majority vote, that there is sufficient evidence to support the charges made, the Chair of the Educational Development and Practices Committee will inform all parties of this fact and will schedule a formal hearing involving the members of the Educational Development and Practices Committee, the accused and the person bringing the complaint. The location of this hearing will be determined by the Chair of the Educational Development and Practices Committee, with the location being as convenient as possible to all parties. The hearing shall occur as soon as it can be feasibly scheduled, and shall be electronically recorded. The accused will have the right to make an oral defense at the hearing, and can be represented by legal counsel if desired. The complainant will have the same rights. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Educational Development and Practices Committee will vote on the charges. At least a 4-1 vote is required to convict the accused of a Code violation. Following the verdict of guilty, the Educational Development and Practices Committee will determine the penalties to be imposed in accordance with Article VII of the Code. A majority vote will be required to impose penalties.
4. The accused may appeal both the verdict and the penalties determined by the Educational Development and Practices Committee.
 - A. The appeal will be made to the President of the AFA, who will appoint a special three-person appeal board composed of impartial members of AFA.
 - B. The appeal board will review all documents gathered by the Educational Development and Practices Committee, and will also listen to electronic recordings of the formal hearings. The recordings shall remain with the archives of the AFA.
 - C. The appeal board may gather any additional information it deems necessary to judge the case from any of the parties (the accused, the complainant, or the Educational Development and Practices Committee).
 - D. The accused and the complainant have the right to present an oral argument to the appeal board. If so desired, the appeal board will set up a convenient method for allowing either the accused or the complainant to address it. The accused and the complainant have the right to counsel in these instances.

- E. A majority vote of the appeal board is necessary to overturn the Educational Development and Practices Committee's actions.

ARTICLE VII: PENALTIES

1. Directors of forensics, assistants or coaches found guilty of entering ineligible students in forensics competition will be subject to any or all of the sanctions listed below, as deemed justified by the Educational Development and Practices Committee:
 - A. Have their names published in the AFA Newsletter with a note of censure.
 - B. Have the notice of censure conveyed in writing by the AFA President to appropriate officials at the offending institution.
2. A student declared ineligible will be barred from national competitions or awards sponsored in whole or in part by the AFA. The student will be subject to any or all of the sanctions listed below, as deemed justified by the Educational Development and Practices Committee
 - A. Notice of the action published in the AFA Newsletter, with a letter sent by the AFA President to appropriate officials at the offending student's school informing them of the student's ineligibility for competition in forensics.
3. In instances of evidence distortion and/or fabrication, the judge(s) shall automatically award the decision in the debate to the opposing team and give the offending speaker zero speaker points, noting the violation of the rules of evidence on the ballot as the reason for the judge's decisions and points. In individual event, the judge(s) will treat evidence distortion and/or fabrication by giving the offending speaker zero points and by dropping that speaker from the speaker rankings to be assigned at the end of the round. The judge(s) will note the violation of the rules of evidence on the ballot as the reason for the points and no-rank given.
4. Speakers found guilty of plagiarism will be disqualified from the round in which the plagiarism occurred, with zero speaker points and no rank assigned and plagiarism noted on the ballot as the reason for the judge's action.
5. A judge who makes a decision on the basis of evidence distortion, evidence fabrication or plagiarism will immediately report his/her action to the tournament director. The tournament director will, as soon as possible, investigate the incident and determine if the offending speaker should be declared ineligible for further competition, elimination rounds or award at the tournament. Directors should base such decision on the severity of the case involved.
6. Tournament directors must report to the Chair of Educational Development and Practices Committee any and all instances of judge decisions granted for reasons of evidence distortion, evidence fabrication or plagiarism. If the Chair receives, in any given academic year, two such complaints involving the same student, the student will be subject to any or all of the sanctions listed below, as deemed justified by the Educational Development and Practices Committee:
 - A. Be declared ineligible for national competitions or awards sponsored in whole or in part by the AFA for a period of 12 calendar months from the date of the second offense. The student will be informed when notification of the second offense is received. The student has the right to appeal that the penalty should not be imposed, under the appeal procedure outlined in Article VI, Section 4 of the code.
 - B. A notice of the student's ineligibility for national competitions sponsored by the AFA published in the AFA Newsletter.
 - C. A letter by the AFA President sent to appropriate officials at the offending student's school.
7. Tournament directors found guilty of violating any section of Article IV of the code will be subject to any or all of the sanctions listed below, as deemed justified by the Educational Development and Practices Committee:
 - A. Censure of the offending tournament.
 - i. The Educational Development and Practices Committee finding that the tournament had violated the Code will be published in the AFA Newsletter.
 - ii. Appropriate officials at the offending school will be notified in writing by the AFA President of the decision to censure the tournament.
 - iii. In cases where the Educational Development and Practices Committee determines the Code violation to be severe, the tournament will not be allowed to publish its dates in the

- next AFA tournament calendar following the Educational Development and Practices Committee's decision that the tournament was in violation of the Code.
- B. Tournament probation.
 - i. When a tournament is found guilty of a Code violation on a second separate occasion, the tournament may be put on probation; viz. The results of the next occurrence of the tournament, following the Educational Development and Practices Committee's decision to place it on probation, cannot be used for the purpose of qualifying forensic participants for national tournaments sponsored in whole or in part by the AFA.
 - ii. If a tournament is placed on probation, this decision will be printed in the AFA Newsletter Tournament Calendar edition covering the tournament season in which the probation will be served, with notification that this tournament's results cannot be used for the purpose of qualifying forensic students for national competitions sponsored in whole or in part by the AFA.
 - iii. Probation will be for one year. When the probation ends that fact will be reported in the AFA Newsletter Tournament Calendar issue.
 8. Forensics directors, coaches, assistants or judges found guilty of asking students to throw rounds of forensics competition will be subject to the penalties listed under section I of this Article.
 9. A student transferring from one school to another as a consequence of unscrupulous recruiting will be ineligible to participate in the next national tournament sponsored in whole or in part by the AFA occurring after the Educational Development and Practices Committee's decision that the transfer resulted from unscrupulous contact initiated by the school to which the student transferred.
 10. Participant(s) at an AFA sponsored event found guilty of unprofessional conduct will be subject to any or all of the sanctions listed below, as deemed justified by the Educational Development and Practices Committee:
 - A. a letter of reprimand sent directly from the committee to the identified participant(s).
 - B. have their names published in the AFA Newsletter with a note of censure.
 - C. have the notice of censure conveyed in writing by the AFA President to appropriate officials at the offending institution.
 - D. may be barred from participation in AFA sponsored events for a specific length of time as determined by the Educational Development and Practices Committee.

ARTICLE VIII: AMENDMENT

This code may be amended by majority vote at any General Business Meeting, provided that those members with voting privileges have been notified of the proposed text of the amendment at least 30 days prior to the date of the General Business Meeting; or without prior notice by a two-third majority of those present and voting at the General Business Meeting.

Adopted 1982, Amended 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2009