A Six-Step Plan for Preparing Your Students

1) Assign Countries & Committees

Assigning countries and committees is a fun and necessary part of preparing for the fall conference. You will receive your country assignments from the Secretary General External (SG-E) or the Assistant Secretary General External (ASG-E). Once you have your country assignments, the first step is assigning your students a country and a committee. One way to help determine this is to survey the students about their country and issue interests. This will contribute to their success and enjoyment at the conference. For an example of the survey used in by the MMUN conference staff, see the appendix of this document.

Each student should be assigned one committee slot for one country. If you have a Security Council seat, be sure to assign it to one of your most accomplished students. The fast pace and intense setting of the Security Council demands students who are knowledgeable, articulate, and confident.

2) Provide an Overview of the UN

It is important to provide the students with background information on United Nations history, committee structure, and current events. This enables them to understand the role of their committee and observe real-world diplomats in action.

For an overview of issues and resources about the UN, see the “Delegate Preparation Guide” on the Tools for Delegates page of the MMUN website. For more detailed information on the committees MMUN is simulating, see the committee background guides that will be posted on the Topic Guide page as the semester progresses. Other good sources on the UN are the UN website, http://www.un.org/Overview/uninbrief/ and The United Nations: A Very Short Introduction by Jussi M. Hanhimäki (Oxford University Press 2008).

Group quizzes and debates can be a good way to motivate students to keep up with what is happening at the UN. Some teams keep track of student participation and performance during the preparations and have their own awards ceremony after the conference.

3) Help Students with Country Research

Students need to know as much as possible about their country, including its geography, government, economy, culture, foreign policies, etc. Since each country is represented on at least 4 committees, you can have your students work together on general country research. For example, the GA Plen representative can research the country’s political situation, the GA-1 student can be in charge of security, GA-2 in charge of economics, and GA-3 in charge of social, cultural, and humanitarian issues.

For research strategies and sources, see the “Delegate Preparation Guide” on the Tools for Delegates page of the MMUN website. Among the resources most often used by MMUN staff are:

- The Government Website of the assigned country (especially foreign ministry site)
- Newspapers from the assigned country or its region (if available in English)
- The country’s UN mission site (these will often have speeches and other documents). To find this site easily, Google the country’s name followed by “Permanent Mission to the UN”
Be sure to remind students that their research will not only be critical during the conference for their negotiations and working papers, but will also be helpful in this year’s first annual international trivia game. In the “Global Gauntlet,” which members of each country team will work together to answer questions about the UN, current events, parliamentary procedure, world geography, world history, and MMUN committee topics.

4) Practice Parliamentary Procedure

The Rules of Procedure as well as the short list form are located on the MUN website. In our experience, parliamentary procedure is best understood through practice.

When learning parliamentary procedure, the staff begins with fun topics that require no research. In debating topics that are fun and more of a personal opinion, students can more easily focus on the details of parliamentary procedure. After becoming familiar with the procedure, the staff then moves onto debating the conference topics using their assigned country’s position. One favorite fun debate is Coke vs. Pepsi, but the possibilities are endless.

Committees will begin with the Chair calling the session to order and taking role. Next, will be agenda setting. This is important because it determines the order topics will be discussed during the conference. Once the agenda has been set, it is important for delegates to get their names on the speakers list. This will give them an opportunity to discuss their thoughts on a topic or working paper with the attention of the entire committee. During the speaking times, delegates have a great opportunity to gain support for a working paper or to bring consensus together on a particular issue. Usually after hearing a few speeches there is a motion to caucus. This is a key time for delegates to create working papers and discuss ideas. After a working paper is completed the sponsors will submit it to the Dais for approval. Once approved it becomes a draft resolution. Once the committee has finished discussing a topic and all the draft resolutions have been passed out, the committee will vote. Voting usually takes place in the afternoon of the second day. It is typical to suspend a debate on one topic and move onto another in order to cover more topic items. If a topic is suspended, debate can resume later and the committee can move into voting procedures for draft resolutions of that topic. Once all draft resolutions of all the topics are voted on the committee session is adjourned. It is common for committees to finish debating and voting on only one or two topics. It is difficult to complete all three which is why the agenda setting is so critical.

Another way to become more familiar with parliamentary procedure is to schedule a traveling workshop with the staff. During the workshop, the staff members will cover and practice parliamentary procedure with the students.

5) Help Students with Position Papers & Resolution Writing

Detailed instructions for and examples of position papers and resolutions are on the MUN website in the “Tools for Delegates” section. Each student must submit a copy of his/her position paper during the first committee session. The rest of the committee sessions will be devoted to drafting, negotiating, and voting on resolutions.

Good position papers demonstrate a strong understanding of the UN, the issues before the committee, and the country the student is representing. In addition, they employ diplomatic language to state the country’s position in a positive light.

Position papers are best written in four steps: one step for each topic considered by each committee, and a final step for writing the introductory section. Award-winning position papers have clearly gone through several drafts to check for accuracy, clarity, and diplomatic language.

Position papers are a great resource for students during the conference. They provide material for speeches, negotiations, and resolutions. Thus when your students are writing their papers, encourage them
to practice speeches on each topic, make a note of countries that share their position, and make a list of clauses they wish to include in resolutions.

Resolutions begin as working papers, are much shorter than position papers, and are written during committee sessions with other delegates. It will help students to practice writing working papers several times before the conference. To do so, group students by committee to share research, draft working papers, and voting on whether they should become resolutions.

During this process, you can serve as the Dais by accepting working papers for discussion only when they are properly formatted and in diplomatic language. At the conference, we will also make sure that there are the required number of sponsors and signatories (usually 10% of the committee members).

Students should be reminded of the difference between preambulatory and operative clauses. The preambulatory clauses are substantive and therefore cannot be amended. This can be an issue when voting on draft resolutions (a working paper approved by the Dais). Operative clauses on the other hand, can be amended.

6) Develop and Practice Negotiating Strategies

This is one of the most exciting parts of preparing for the conference! A country’s negotiating strategy depends both on its own position on a topic and on the positions of other countries. Thus it is important to know which countries they are most and least likely to align with during committee. Sometimes cooperation is a result of common philosophies and general practices. For example, Scandinavian states are generally more concerned with social issues than security issues and are known to work closely together. Other times, cooperation is a result of common interests. Thus it is vital to know where various countries stand on the issues before the committee.

Before the conference, students should make notes about possible alliances while keeping up with current events and doing country and issue research. In addition, members of each country team can meet to compare notes and develop an overall strategy. During meals and breaks at the conference, students can revise their strategies in light of what they have learned about other countries’ positions during speeches and caucuses.

The first time delegates use negotiating strategies is when setting the agenda in the first committee session. This is critical because it will set the stage for the rest of the conference. Delegates should be fully informed of their country’s preference for topic order, including any order they do not wish to pass. Delegates should be able to articulate why they prefer a specific order. By making speeches and caucusing, delegates can build consensus with other delegates and potentially get their preferred agenda order passed.

Building consensus is another aspect of negotiating strategies. Delegates need support from other members of the committee to get working papers approved by the Dais and passed in voting. Delegates should listen to other members and amend their working papers or draft resolutions to build a stronger consensus among the delegates. It may even be helpful to merge resolutions.

Speeches are an important way to build consensus and promote working papers or draft resolutions. They are also a great way for delegates to express their opinions about agenda setting, suspending debate, or asking for help on a working paper. Speeches, like position papers, should be given from the country’s perspective -- for example, “The delegation from the Republic of Iceland would like to remind the committee...” It is important to use diplomatic language when delivering a speech. Delegates will be more confident if they come to the conference having practiced short speeches and having thought about negotiating strategies.
Additional Tips:

- Placards enable committee to run more efficiently. The chairs appreciate being able to read the name of the country each delegate represents. The Dais can’t reward a delegate if s/he can’t read your students’ placard.

- The staff is more than willing to travel for pre-conference workshops. These are very useful for the students. In the workshops the staff will discuss an overview of the conference, parliamentary procedure, writing position papers and resolutions, negotiating, and answer any other questions the students have about the conference. Please don’t hesitate to contact the SG-E to schedule a workshop. Workshops are held during the weekend, and last for approximately three hours.

- The MMUN staff is here to help. Please contact the SG-E with any questions or concerns.
Background & Interest Survey Form
(Prof. Adams uses this form to assign MMUN staff to countries and committees)

Name ________________________________________________________________

Phone number ____________________     Email address _____________________________

Year in school ________________

Previous MUN experience

Relevant courses taken to date

What additional academic, work, travel, extracurricular, or other experience and interests should we know about in making your MUN assignment? (If you are a foreign student, please note that here.)

Please rank ALL of the following topics in terms of your interest in them (1= most interested)

___ Security (GA-1/SC)
___ Economic (GA-2)
___ Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural (GA-3)
___ All of the above, plus UN Reform (GA Plen)

Please rank ALL of the following regions in terms of your interest in them (1= most interested)

___ Africa
___ Americas (North and South plus the Caribbean)
___ Asia and Oceania (includes the Middle East)
___ Europe

Please rank these countries, with 1 indicating your first choice.

(insert the countries your school has been assigned here)

If you have a special interest or special expertise in one of these countries, or if there is another country you would like to represent, please make a note of it here: