

2012 APPE IEB Judge's Guidelines

Reasonable disagreement

The ethical case studies are designed to address controversial issues about which intelligent, thoughtful people can reasonably disagree. The scores of the teams, therefore, should be based on the quality of their arguments, not on whether or not they adopted one position rather than another. The team that makes the strongest argument should win the most points. Moral decisions are made case by case based on applying critical thought to difficult situations. When evaluating teams, judges should not let whether or not they agree with the team's conclusion influence their assessment.

Research

Successful presentations should include a clear and detailed understanding of the facts given in the case. Since cases often involve details that are not general knowledge, research will often be necessary. Students should be prepared to identify sources of facts gained through independent research. While research is helpful, even necessary as a learning tool, judges should focus predominantly on the quality of arguments presented.

Presentation style

The focus of the ethics bowl is on the arguments the students provide. This means that judges must evaluate, and only evaluate, a team on aspects of its presentation that relate directly to the four criteria identified on the judge's score-sheet. Judges may not consider in their scoring other aspects of the team's presentation (e.g. the voice quality of presenters, whether they maintain eye contact with the judges, etc.) .

Moral theories

Judges should be looking for good arguments that employ clear ethical principles. This does not require that teams put those arguments explicitly within some formal ethical theory. What really matters is that they grasp important ethical principle(s), and are able to clearly articulate and defend them well against critique. For example, if a team has a good argument about fairness they should be rewarded for this, whether they drape it in the clothing of Rawls' Veil of Ignorance or some other theory or just leave it in plain English. The above should not be interpreted to mean that teams should be discouraged from using ethical theory. Rather, if they do they should clearly explain the theory(ies) and not merely drop names (a really good argument based on such theories is possible).

Posing questions in the commentary

In their commentary (Rule 6), Team 2 may also pose questions to Team 1, but Team 1 is under no obligation to answer any or all of Team 2's questions. Team 1 should, however, be able to answer the most important question or two (in the event that there are more than two questions). When scoring team 2's commentary, judges should consider that questions raised during the commentary should address truly substantive issues both in relation to team 1's presentation and the moderator's question. A "question shower", in which Team 2 attempts to dominate Team 1's response to Team 2's commentary simply by posing a large laundry list of questions, should not merit a high score.

Scoring note

At the end of each round you should enter the following scores:

- a) The presenting team's presentation score,
- b) The presenting team's response to commentary and judge's question score (this is one score),
- c) The responding team's commentary score.