

NDL MANUAL

2025/26

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National Debate League



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What is NDL?

In the 2025–2026 school year, we will organize the second edition of the National Debate League (NDL). Participating schools offer their students an intensive program with professional debate training and national English-language tournaments. As the largest English-language debate community for secondary schools, the NDL gives students the chance to develop debating skills, compete in tournaments, and mentor younger speakers. Thanks to MDT funding, we are able to offer this extensive program at little to no cost. The partnership between NUFFIC, DebatUnie, and The Oracy Institute supports the three pillars of bilingual education: personal development, global citizenship, and language proficiency.

Limited spots!



Key information

- Participation per school: **minimum of 15 and maximum of 30 students** (please note: participation is possible with a mixed group of bilingual (TTO) and non-bilingual students).
- Students get a chance to be selected to **debate in Oxford** at the Oxford Schools Finals' Day in the Oxford Union
- The full program consists of **approximately 80 hours**, including training, tournament days, preparation, and a giving back activity.

Training

In agreement with the school we plan **three training days** on which students are released from regular classes and will receive a full day of debate training from a coach provided by us. These will approximately be in November, January and March

Tournament

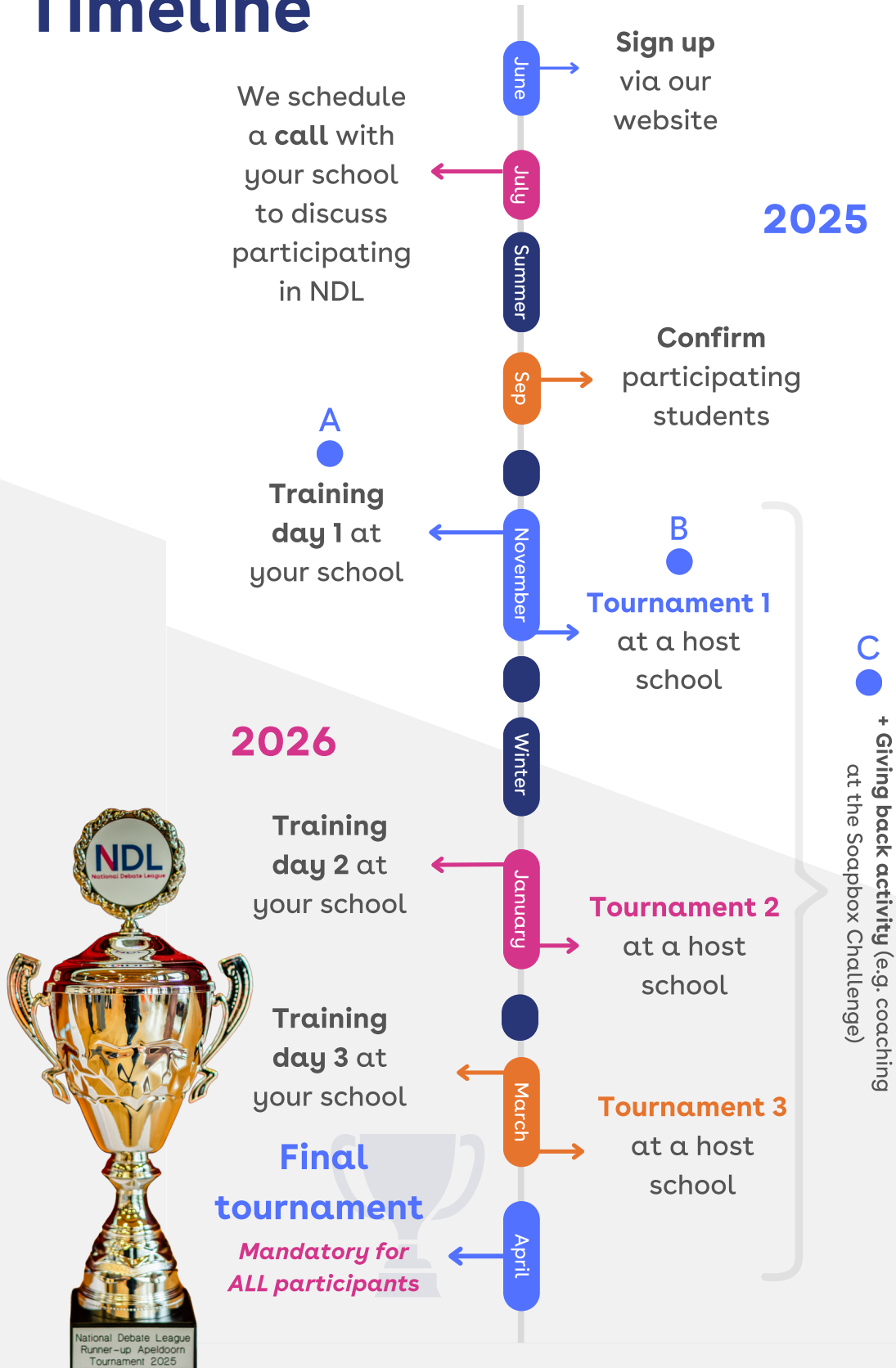
There will be three preliminary tournaments; each school must join two. The final tournament is mandatory for all. In total, students will take part in **three tournament days**. Dates will be confirmed by July 1st, depending on host school availability.

Note: **Preparing** for the tournaments is an essential part of the program, and students are expected to take responsibility with support from their school.

Giving back

Each participant must complete a **"giving back" activity**, such as coaching during the Soapbox Challenge or an alternative arranged by the school (e.g., teaching debate to younger students). This activity typically requires one full day of student participation.

Timeline



What does the 80-hour trajectory look like?

Because of the MDT funding, students commit to an 80-hour project (more about MDT later) When a student follows the entire trajectory all hours will easily be completed. However, missed hours due to absence from training sessions or tournaments must be made up in other ways. We offer various alternatives for this, but rely on the active involvement of the supervising teachers.

Training 1	8
Homework 1	5
Tournament preparation	4
Tournament 1	10
Training 2	8
Homework 2	5
Tournament preparation	4
Tournament 2	10
Training 3	8
Homework 3	5
Final tournament preparation	4
Final tournament	10
Giving back activity	2-10
TOTAL	83-91

Missed hours

When a student misses a training session or tournament, the missed hours can be made up in various ways, such as:

- Participating in another NDL preliminary tournament
- Taking part in another debate competition, such as the Benelux Debate Competition organized by DebatUnie (we will provide the dates)
- Participating in a Model United Nations (MUN). If a student is already participating in an MUN, those hours can also count towards the 80 MDT hours.

There are many additional ways to compensate for missed hours, which can be discussed with the teachers.

Giving back

Every student is required to complete a giving back activity. This may range from judging at a debate tournament, coaching students during the Soapbox Challenge, organizing a debate workshop at their own school, and similar activities.

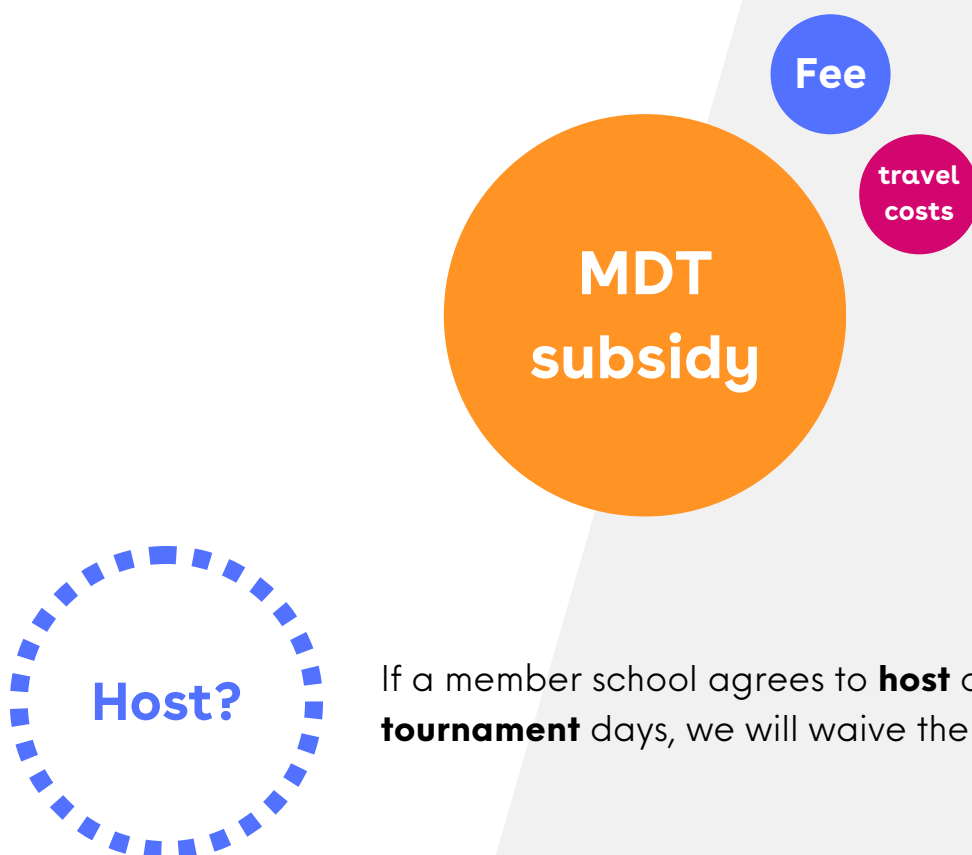
The giving-back activity is **mandatory**, but we will provide support, suggestions, and opportunities to help students fulfill this requirement.



Costs & Responsibilities

Costs

The NDL is largely funded through the MDT (Maatschappelijke Diensttijd) subsidy, which comes with certain **subsidy requirements** (more on this later). Each participating school contributes **€360** excl. 21% VAT (please note: host schools are exempt from this fee). In addition, schools are responsible for covering their delegation's **travel expenses** to and from the tournaments. Any travel or entry fee costs related to alternative activities used to make up for missed hours are also the responsibility of the school.



Responsibilities

Students

Membership schools are **responsible for the acquisition of AND communication with participating students** (15–30 participating students per school).

Contact

A **designated contact person** within the school to serve as the main point of contact for DebatUnie and The Oracy Institute. We prefer to have bi-weekly contact to monitor the progress of the project.

Schedule

Once you participate, we will call to **agree on dates** for the three workshops to be held at your school. Participating students might **miss classes** and a classroom at school will need to be arranged. Additionally, students might need to be accompanied to the tournaments.

Important information

- **Full completion required:** The subsidy is granted for each individual student who completes the program. It is therefore essential that every participant completes the full trajectory.
- **Unexpected dropouts:** Limited exceptions are made for unforeseen circumstances (such as illness). In all other cases, it is the shared responsibility of the school and the NDL team to provide alternative activities to compensate for missed hours.
- **Voluntary**, but not without commitment: Participation is voluntary, but students are expected to fully commit to the entire program.
- **Early termination:** If the project is discontinued prematurely, we will be **obliged to invoice the already completed parts retroactively.**



What is MDT?

MDT is a subsidy initiated by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport, designed to enable young people between the ages of 12 and 30 to develop their talents and contribute meaningfully to society. The project is structured around individual trajectories based on three core MDT pillars:

Talent

Participants acquire skills in the field of public speaking, critical thinking and listening as well as a deeper understanding of the role they play in the world around them.

Meet

During these tournaments, they will meet peers from all over the country (and even students from abroad), with whom they will connect and share insights.

Give back

An integral part of MDT is doing something back for others.

MDT key requirements

- A minimum of **80 hours** of participation → this will be covered by the tournaments, training and preparation time
- Completion within a maximum period of **six months** between the first and last activity → see timeline
- **Voluntary** involvement during both **school hours and free time**

About us

The National Debate League is a collaboration between NUFFIC, DebatUnie and The Oracy Institute, with the aim of offering challenging and prestigious debate opportunities to students in English.



The **DebatUnie** is dedicated to enhancing debate and citizenship education throughout the Dutch-speaking region. Our aim is to make debate education accessible to every student at every level and in every school. Among our endeavors is the organization of the Benelux debate competition, the largest Dutch debate competition for high school students. Together with the Oracy Institute, we seek to extend these opportunities to students studying in English.



At the **Oracy Institute**, we are passionate about empowering students with the skills necessary for success in both academia and life. Drawing from our background in competitive debating, we recognize the profound impact such skills can have.

Additionally we have previously organized the International Schools Debating League, because opportunities for debating in English seemed to be lacking.



NUFFIC has in the past already aimed at stimulating public speaking and critical thinking (oracy-related activities) in younger students with the SoapBox Challenge and the Public Speaking Awards. The National Debate League hopes to continue this learning trajectory into year 4 and up.