



# ***Academic WorldQuest***<sup>™</sup> **Operations Paper**

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## Host Your Own Academic WorldQuest™ Competition!

Academic WorldQuest™ (AWQ) is the flagship youth education program of the World Affairs Councils of America (WACA)—the national network of World Affairs Councils. With increasing budget cuts in schools, opportunities for students to learn geography, world history, and world affairs have decreased despite the ever-growing impact of globalization on a local level. AWQ provides a unique opportunity for high school students to test their knowledge of international affairs through a competitive and engaging trivia competition. On average, 4,000 students representing 50 local Councils across the United States participate annually in competitions across the country. Winning teams are invited to represent their high school, city, and local Council at the national competition, held each spring in Washington, D.C.

### General Competition Overview

A typical Academic WorldQuest™ competition is held on a Saturday, prior to the national competition organized by WACA. Ideally, a competition should take place at least two months before the national competition (typically held in late April) so as to allow the winning team enough time to study and prepare.

Teams consist of four high school students, selected by the school, and accompanied by a teacher chaperone. Each team sits at a separate table that is clear of all personal belongings. Teacher chaperones and other observers are asked to remain in the designated seating areas around the perimeter of the room.

Local competitions can consist of anywhere between 6 and 10 rounds of questions (note: the national competition has 10 rounds). Each round will have a total of 10 questions. In addition, there will be a separate tiebreaker round, if the need arises. These questions will also be provided by WACA. Following a competition introduction, the competition begins. Ten questions for each round are asked using a previously-created PowerPoint presentation (also provided by WACA). Teams have between 30 seconds and one minute once the question has been read to write their answer before moving on to the next question. Individual Councils can determine the exact amount of time that is allotted per question; however it is important to be consistent throughout the program. Students submit their answers at the conclusion of each round. Judges review answers while the competition continues and keep tally of the final scores. Each question is worth one (1) point. Answers are read periodically during the competition. After all rounds are completed, the scores are tallied to determine the winner. Tiebreaker questions are available in the event of a tie.

At the conclusion of each competition, the winning teams are recognized and awarded prizes. The number of teams recognized at your local competition is up to you; however, awards are typically presented to the first, second, and third place teams. In addition, the grand prize for the first-place team is participation in the national competition held in Washington D.C. each spring. Travel and accommodations for this trip are usually covered by the team's local Council.

### **Rules of the Game**

Teams are not allowed to consult with the audience, wireless devices, cell phones, other teams, books, or other written materials at any point during the competition. Any team found by World Affairs Councils of America judges, staff, or volunteers to be violating this rule will forfeit that round and a penalty of 20 points will automatically be deducted from that team's score. If a team believes another team is cheating, a player may alert a World Affairs Councils of America representative. However, if the other team is not found to be in violation of any rules, the accusing team will forfeit two (2) points.

A team consists of four (4) players. Player substitutions are not allowed. During the competition, a player can only use the restroom during the break. If a player leaves at any other point during the rounds, he or she cannot return until after the break. Parents, alternates, and other guests must remain in the reserved seating area, and "off the floor," at all times.

If a team wishes to challenge an answer, one (1) team member may bring the challenge calmly and politely to the judges within the time period allotted after answers are announced. Teams are not allowed to discuss challenges with audience members. The decision of the head judge is final. If the challenge is unsuccessful, the team that brought it will forfeit one (1) point.

## **Competition Questions**

WACA provides a full set of competition questions and rounds (10 complete rounds and 100 total questions) to utilize in local competitions. Category themes are chosen by the national office with some repeat categories—such as current events—addressed each year. These completed questions come preloaded onto PowerPoint presentations for easy use in local competitions. Questions are also provided in a Word document with full sourcing information. It is recommended to have a paper printout of this information at the competition to serve as backup in case answers are disputed. Local competition questions will be released to participating member councils in mid-October.

Each fall, the national office also releases the official student Study Guide that corresponds with the questions and rounds for that year's competition. Visit our website [here](#) for additional information regarding annual AWQ competitions. This guide links to articles, reports, and websites surrounding the ten categories. All questions for the competition are derived directly from the Study Guide sources.

## **Important Planning Logistics**

Beginning your planning process early is key to a successful Academic WorldQuest™ competition. It is recommended to begin this process six to twelve months prior to the competition date. A sample timeline for planning is laid out below. Be sure to reference the Frequently Asked Questions section of this packet for more in-depth planning information.

### *Suggested Timeline for Planning*

#### 6-12 Months Before Competition

**Draft a budget for the competition** based on the projected number of people you expect will participate, as well as any prizes and food that will be distributed. The estimated transportation and hotel expenses for the winning team (four students and one teacher chaperone) to participate in the national competition should also be included in your proposed budget.

**Find an appropriate venue** that fits your anticipated (targeted) number of teams. Try to plan for the students to sit at small round tables to help facilitate their discussions. In addition, you'll need a podium in a central area; a computer/laptop connected to a projector for one screen large enough so all the participants can see the questions clearly; tables and chairs for the student teams and judges, registration, and prize display; extra chairs for teachers, parents, and other observers; and any necessary set up for food and/or refreshments.

#### 4-6 Months Before Competition

**Begin competition preparation and logistics.** Brainstorm prizes, identify an emcee to read the questions, and decide if you want to have other entertainment or speaker presentations built into the program.

**Compile materials for mailing or emailing to teacher contacts,** including a competition brochure with information on the competition, study guide for students, and an overview of the competition rules.

#### 2-4 Months Before Competition

**Determine method for registration.** If using an online system, finalize any necessary forms and open the registration portal on your website.

**Practice competition structure.** Typically, the questions for multiple rounds are read before going over the answers to allow for a smoother transition between rounds. For example, in a 10-round competition, you should follow this format: Questions for Rounds 1-3; Answers; Questions for Rounds 4-7; Answers; Questions for Rounds 8-10; Answers.

#### 1-2 Months Before Competition

**Reach out to volunteers.** The exact number will be based on the size and need of your event. For example, in Pittsburgh, where the local competition typically welcomes around 50 teams, the following is sufficient:

1 emcee; 1 person to change the PowerPoint slides; 6-8 judges (1-2 as master scorekeepers to tally results); 1 timekeeper; 2-4 people for registration; 3-5 volunteers to collect answer sheets during the competition; additional help with the food depending on what you do for refreshments.

#### Final Month Before Competition

**Continue communication with participating schools** and confirm participation, event location, date, and time. If serving food at your event, be sure to collect necessary dietary restrictions.

**Finalize and print necessary materials** needed for the day of the competition including event programs, name tags, and answer sheets, among others (see suggested full list below).

**Compile a packet of materials for the winning team** on the national competition including a preparation guide and an overview of the various activities to be organized that weekend (provided by WACA), as well as a precise listing of the expenses that will be covered by your Council.

#### Day of Your Competition

##### **Materials Needed for Day of Competition**

- Student Packets (one per team)
  - Five programs (one for each student and chaperone)
  - Four nametags (one for each student)
  - Blank answer sheets for each round (use different colors for each round to simplify grading)
  - Two challenge/appeal forms
  - Writing utensil(s)
  - Tent card with school name (if team is allowed to choose their own seat)
  - Any other materials specific to your competition
- Answer keys (one for each judge)
- Supporting documentation for each round/questions and tiebreaker (in case there are any appeals)
- A master scoresheet
- Stopwatch to measure response times
- Calculator and/or laptop to tally scores
- Directional signs
- PowerPoint presentation
- T-shirts, plaques, and other awards
- Information on the national competition to give to the winning team

#### After the Event

**Follow up with participating teacher sponsors** with a program survey and final team scores if requested.

**Send thank you** notes to volunteers, sponsors, venue, caterer, and others as deemed necessary.

**Draft a press release** to send to all news sources with details on the competition. Include a short narrative on the winning team, as well as other human-interest stories related to the competition.

**Design multimedia resources** to be used in the promotion of future AWQ competitions. We suggest using pictures and/or videos from the competition to create a PowerPoint presentation or video to be placed on your Council's website.

If needed, **arrange for major corporate sponsors to meet the winning team members.**

#### Preparing for the AWQ National Competition

**Register your winning team** with the national office and make necessary travel and hotel arrangements.

**Do pre-trip and post-trip press releases**—WACA provides a template—and suggest that a team member keep in touch with local press during the entire DC experience through social media.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why should my Council organize a local Academic WorldQuest™ competition?**

Academic WorldQuest™ is unique to the World Affairs Council system and has no direct competitor among K-12 knowledge-based competitions in the U.S. or abroad.

In addition, the following benefits for your Council derive from hosting a local AWQ competition:

- Revitalizing Council membership
- Raising Council visibility and standing in the community
- Building relationships with schools and community leaders
- Obtaining grants and sponsorships
- Attracting media attention
- Increasing Council brand recognition and membership

### **At what time during the year should my Council plan to have its competition?**

Because the national competition occurs in April, the program is renewed each academic year. Local competitions occur November through March, with the largest amount occurring in February. It is a very good idea to be aware of local school calendars so that you can schedule your competition on an available date.

### **My Council does not have a large network of educators. How do we begin to promote the event and recruit teams?**

Recruiting a core group of teachers to organize, advise, and coach teams from every participating high school is the single most important element in successfully running an AWQ competition and for sustaining AWQ year after year. To obtain this core group of teachers, a targeted approach is suggested. Focusing outreach efforts on social studies, world language, and gifted education teachers (including department chairs) is a more effective means of recruiting AWQ school support.

Start by reaching out to those already in your educator network. This could be through a paper mailing, electronic e-blast, or both. Be sure to include the brochure, preparation guide, and any other competition resources you've created.

If you don't already have a strong network of teachers to whom you can reach out, you can check with the State Board of Education or state-wide social studies education organizations to obtain email contact information for social studies chairs and teachers. You may also try calling schools to obtain contact information for appropriate teachers, and even designate a volunteer or intern to take on the task of keeping current teachers' contact information up-to-date from all Council-area high schools.

### **Where should my Council host its event?**

The venue you select should have all the necessary audio-visual capabilities including stage, podium, projectors, team tables, etc., or have the capability of supporting such equipment. More specifically, you'll need a raised stage for the moderator and/or question reader and a podium in a central area easily seen by all. Team tables should be organized in the front, middle of the room with additional chairs around the perimeter for teachers and chaperones. All team tables should have equal access to viewing the questions on the screen. You'll also need to ensure there is space for a registration table, judges table, lunch and/or snacks, as well as a place to display prizes during the competition. If you have a limited budget, consider reaching out to a corporate sponsor to have the facility costs donated or to use corporate sponsors' auditoriums at no cost. Local universities are a popular locale, as they see the high school students as prospective students and will often also offer discounts.

### **How many teams should my Council have at its competition?**

Your budget will determine the number of teams that are able to participate. Depending on the location of your competition, you may be limited in the number of teams that can reasonably attend. In Pittsburgh, the annual competition is limited to 50 teams; therefore, the Council only allows one high school per school district to participate. Alternatively, you could have multiple teams participate from the same school, or multiple schools from the same district. Each team sits at a separate table that is clear of all personal belongings.



### **How are the rounds of a typical AWQ organized?**

The following is based on a 10-round competition. The grouping of rounds when reading questions allows for a smooth and quick transition between rounds; however, please note that answer sheets are completed and collected at the conclusion of each round (not the end of the grouping).

Welcome & Introduction  
Warm-Up Round  
Questions for Rounds 1, 2, 3  
Answers for Rounds 1, 2, 3  
Short Stretch Break (*allow time for students to submit challenge forms*)  
Questions for Rounds 4, 5, 6, 7  
Answers for Rounds 4, 5, 6, 7  
Bathroom Break (*allow time for students to submit challenge forms*)  
Questions for Rounds 8, 9, 10  
Answers for Rounds 8, 9, 10  
Tiebreaker Round (only if needed)

### **How does the challenge process work when a team does not agree with the answer to a question?**

Students should be provided with 1-2 challenge forms at registration. Each form asks teams to identify the particular question and round being contested, as well as list their disagreement. These forms are to be turned into the judges table during designated break times during the competition. Judges review the challenge forms and respond to teams in a timely manner.

It is important to bring all source information for competition questions to the event as you'll need to reference this information when reviewing and responding to challenges. This information will be provided among the materials made available by WACA.

### **What type of awards should be given to the top performing teams?**

This could be any items of your choosing. For example, this could be something with your Council's name printed on it—plaques, t-shirts, etc.; items provided by a sponsor or partnering organization (i.e., university swag); educational materials; or even items purchased for the teams. The additional prize for the first-place team is to advance to the national competition, with hotel and ground transportation expenses covered by the Council.

### **Who should my Council invite to be the emcee and question reader?**

The emcee should be someone who is engaging and articulate as they will be tasked with reading the competition questions, which may include difficult pronunciations. Individuals to consider include the local mayor, a local media personality, or Council staff or board chair. Having an emcee that is more well-known in the community can assist in the recruitment process.

### **My Council's budget is limited, and we don't know whether we can cover the necessary expenses of holding a local competition. What should we do?**

Councils across the country have utilized various funding streams to support the cost of their local competition. Many have found AWQ to be an excellent way to build relationships with potential funders in the community. Corporations are often eager to support student programs, and this event helps Councils build their educational portfolio. Consider reaching out to potential sponsors to support the competition as a whole, or make particular asks based on your need (food, t-shirts, venue, etc.). The fundraising work starts as soon as the competition dates are determined. It is important to contact donors early enough to be included in their annual budgets. Start by contacting local businesses—particularly those in the general area of each of the participating schools. Potential sponsors may include universities, local radio stations or newspapers, area corporations interested in global issues, among others.

Alternatively, you can require teams to pay a small participation fee. While this practice wouldn't cover all program expenses, it helps and also ensures students who sign up will show up.



### **What type of information should be included in promotional materials and communication with local schools?**

A competition brochure with information on the competition format, rounds, and how to register is most important in promoting your event. Don't forget to include the date, time, location, and prize descriptions for the winning teams. In addition, a study guide should be sent to all prospective teams to allow students ample time to prepare. Finally, consider any additional resources specific to your competition. For example, in Pittsburgh, the local Council compiles a two-page "Competition and Rules" resource that provides more specific details about the structure of the competition for each of the participating schools.

### **How important is publicity in the success of our local AWQ competition?**

A good publicity plan is crucial to the future success and growth of AWQ in your community and should involve more than simply sending out press releases. Our suggestion is to do some research before you send a release and find out who at your local paper covers high school events and target them specifically. If there are smaller community newspapers in your area, those would be a good place to start. Send the release to that person and follow up with a phone call, talk up the program and what an interesting opportunity covering AWQ would be for them to meet students and write about international education in the schools. At the competition, make sure to have students available to reporters to talk about their experience preparing for AWQ and their schools.

When sending press releases to the media following your successful AWQ competition, consider including photos of the team, a short narrative on the winning team, and any other human-interest story related to the competition. Using pictures and/or videos from your event, you can also create multimedia resources (PowerPoint presentation, video, etc.) to be added to your Council's website in promoting the program.

## **Best Practices**

### **Teacher and Team Recruitment**

A good strategy for finding supportive teachers is searching for those who are already involved with similar activities (debate teams, scholastic bowl, history or international affairs clubs, Model UN, etc.). You can also work with the statewide social studies teachers' association to obtain teacher contact info as well as collaborating with the state's National Geographic Society representative to use their email listings of teachers to recruit teachers and send AWQ information.

Miscellaneous tips from Council experts on teacher recruitment include:

- Arrange to visit district-wide social studies meetings at the beginning of the year to do a short presentation about your Council and AWQ. Be sure to demonstrate international affairs resources available to teachers and students and pictures and/or videos of AWQ events.
- Arrange to have Council board members and volunteers make appointments with appropriate department chairs at schools (social studies, world language, etc.) and visit schools with packets of Council information to explain programs and recruit teacher advisors.
- Place articles and AWQ info in student newspapers, state-wide social studies teacher publications, and other related resources.
- Recruit a high school educator who is a Council member to serve as the chair of the AWQ teacher recruiting effort (using teacher-to-teacher connections).
- Offer free Council membership to department chairs and/or other teachers and use them as a conduit for Council program information and AWQ competitions.
- Recruit retired teachers to act as Council Global Educators to visit schools as presenters, recruit new teachers for AWQ, sharpen and improve international affairs programs, and to offer advice on web-based world affairs resources.

Once your competition is underway, all Councils stress word of mouth from teachers who have participated in Council events as the most effective recruitment method. This teacher base strengthens the foundation from which you can further grow your Council's youth programs in general. One Council has helped establish Junior World Affairs Council Clubs in about 20 high schools whose teacher-advisors organize all manner of Council-school events, including the school AWQ team.

### **Publicity and Outreach**

A good publicity plan is crucial to the future success and growth of AWQ in your community and should involve more than simply sending out press releases. In addition to targeted outreach at local papers, promotion videos and word of mouth help to strengthen and grow your program from year to year. Once you have established AWQ, word of mouth will be very important publicity as this helps to ensure the strong support of superintendents, teachers, students, and parents.

Examples of successful publicity plans include the following:

- The St. Louis Council was interviewed for an article in "Louie" Magazine, a magazine that is distributed to all St. Louis high school students. The article discussed the experiences of the team that won a year earlier and promoted enrollments in future competitions. Due to this publicity, nearly half of all high schools in the St. Louis region participate in the competition annually.
- In Hawaii, word of mouth and the excitement from past competitions made the current year's event very popular. As a result, they had to turn down four teams because the room was filled to capacity.

### **Sponsorship and Funding Strategies**

Funding strategies vary across Councils (rural vs. urban, large vs. small). Financial need also depends on the anticipated size of your local competition and whether funding the winning team for the AWQ national competition is included in cost estimates.

When developing a fundraising strategy, you can either aim for a large number of small donations or work with one or two large funders. A Council in a technology hub said they have an easy time collecting \$250-\$1000 sponsorships from so many firms that they cover all AWQ event costs, including travel and accommodations for the winning team to participate in the national event. On the other hand, another Council has been fortunate to have the cost of AWQ totally annually underwritten by a local education-friendly foundation and advises Councils to do a deep dive researching available local, state, and national education grant funding.

Some sponsors who may not give cash are willing to instead contribute services, food, and/or supplies at a discount or free of charge. For example, Councils in "university-rich" environments underwrite funding by partnering with a local university to hold AWQ on campus, getting deeply-discounted facilities rates, logistics and technology assistance, and reasonably-priced lunches.

Words of advice from Councils who've been successful in their fundraising strategies include:

- Ask corporate sponsors to actively participate in the AWQ event by having sponsors ask "just for fun" questions about their companies between rounds. This helps line up sponsor funding, as well as swelling the ranks of corporate volunteers for the event.
- Sell corporate sponsors "student team tables" at \$250 and adorn the table with corporation logos and small flags, raising almost all AWQ program costs. Make sure to have a sit-down with the corporate sponsors and the team members after the competition. Corporate donors feel appreciated and enjoy meeting the students face-to-face. Students can report back to the donors of their success and future interests.
- Sell or give away AWQ t-shirts emblazoned with corporate sponsors' logos or include sponsors' logos on any written material to encourage corporate donations.
- Campaign to get local radio stations to announce the AWQ competition details and mention local funding sponsors.
- Simply put the cost of AWQ as an annual budget item for your Council to ensure funds are set aside annually for the event.
- Reach out to your board for support. One fortunate Council has two board members who totally underwrite the cost of AWQ, while another Council's board members have agreed as a group to personally underwrite whatever funds can't be raised for the event.

### **Sample AWQ Budgets**

World Affairs Council of St. Louis:

- First place team gets an all-expense paid trip to Washington \$3,000
- Second place team prize money \$500
- Third place team prize money \$250





- Trophies for top three teams \$300
- Pizza and soda supper for all competition entrants \$250
- Question/PowerPoint Presentation Development \$700
- Correspondence/printing/mailing/program/banner \$1,000
- Estimated "out of pocket" costs \$6,000
- St. Louis University contribution \$2,000
- *Note:* To cover the "out of pocket" costs, the St Louis Council sold twelve corporate sponsorships for the event at \$500 each, helping the Council to breakeven on the event.

World Affairs Council of the Florida Palm Beaches:

- 80 t-shirts donated by the Palm Beach Post \$0
- Sending winning team on all-expense-paid trip to DC \$2400
- Dinner \$1000
- Prizes \$500
- Supplies \$100
- TECO-Miami corporate donation \$600
- Corporate sponsors and individual donors \$3700
- Council revenue \$200

**Get in touch with Academic WorldQuest™ "Experts" from our Member Councils**

- Montana World Affairs Council
  - Kelcie Murphy, Programs Coordinator at [kmurphy@montanaworldaffairs.org](mailto:kmurphy@montanaworldaffairs.org)
- World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh
  - Annie Prucey, Vice President of Global Education at [annie@worldpittsburgh.org](mailto:annie@worldpittsburgh.org)
  - Brittany Cheeks, Education Program Manager at [brittany@worldpittsburgh.org](mailto:brittany@worldpittsburgh.org)

