



Top Tip & Talking Point #2: The Chairperson

Many students find themselves in the role of the Chairperson without really understanding the context of the job. This poses immediate challenges. In addition, it is all too often the least experienced person in the team of 3 who gets this role, while less time is often given to preparing the Chairperson.

The Chairperson needs to understand that they are chairing what - outside of this PSC - would be a public meeting and, yet, the students have probably never been to one! This is something of an alien occasion for Years 9-11 pupils.

They need to imagine that each presentation by a Speaker with the Chairperson and Questioner is a unique occasion to which the audience members have come along to be informed or entertained. They need to forget about the judges and the timekeepers who would not be there at a public speaker meeting. The Chairperson is, thus, hosting this event and is in charge.

So, what do they as Chairperson actually do? The key tasks are to ensure that:

- everyone feels welcome and there is a warm and friendly atmosphere
- applause happens at the appropriate places (so it needs to be led)
- the Speaker and Questioner are looked after
- key individuals are introduced and later thanked appropriately
- the questions from the Questioner and from the audience are managed appropriately
- the key themes of the Speaker's presentation are summarised succinctly at the end;
- everything runs to time (even if that means having to intervene politely during the speech and the questions)
- the speaker meeting starts and ends positively

The Chairperson is not there to steal the show, but does need to be a positive personality and the glue which holds everything together. They are a key presence without being the star! They are the captain of a team whose underpinning role allows the others to shine.

The Chairperson should be able to speak with minimum notes and must, by example, be actively leading the listening to the Speaker and the Questioner.

Little things matter too: ensuring that the Speaker and Questioner are sitting at the right places on the table, that they have water if there is some, that the three of them move on and off the stage/away from the table together.

It would be great to know what others think of this advice and what other points should be raised concerning the role of the Chairperson. There will be another focus on the specific tasks of the Chairperson in a few weeks' time.

If you have any questions, then please do get in touch with me. Equally, if there are areas of the competition and the different student roles which you would like covered, then do let me know!

Best wishes.

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