



Debate Events

Description

Debates are an excellent way to inspire deep reflections related to sustainability topics. They also provide you with the opportunity to challenge some important leaders, as well as inspire your student community to challenge their perspectives. In order to run a successful debate, you will need to choose a thought-provoking topic and create an environment that promotes inclusivity and interactions.

Acknowledgements

This guide was created with the help of knowledge and experience obtained from:

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About Re_Generation

[Re_Generation](#) is a Canadian youth movement that seeks to build a regenerative, sustainable, and just economy. We aim to reimagine our schools, repurpose our careers, and remodel our companies to be aligned with regenerative principles. In particular, we provide resources for individuals to launch impact-driven careers and advocate for change within their companies and schools. We also aim to advance public policies that promote regenerative and sustainable business practices.

Our successful 'Our Future, Our Business' Manifesto campaign received the support of 65 youth organizations, 130 high-level executives, and 100 civil society organizations recognizing the need for reform in business education on sustainability. After three years of existence as the Canadian Business Youth Council for Sustainable Development, we have changed our name to Re_Generation to become more inclusive of all youth, not just business youth.

We believe that the ideal society is a [regenerative](#) one. Regeneration to us means putting human and ecological [well-being](#) at the centre of every decision. It means restoring relationships, both within nature and within society, while helping all communities to thrive. Read more about our history and vision at our [About Us](#) page.

Getting Started

Debates

Run a debate series to promote critical thinking!

- Debates get students to think critically about various perspectives on hard-hitting topics
- Topic ideas:
 - Is corporate tax reform needed to tackle social and environmental issues?
 - Divestment versus Shareholder Engagement
 - Degrowth versus Green Growth
- Do not limit yourself to the most “digestible” and least “political” topics!
- You can use the [Regenerative Capitalism](#) framework to come up with concrete topics that fit your organization

Co-Hosting the Event

What are challenges arising with co-hosting the event with another organization to widen the reach of it? How to counter them?

- Potential challenges:
 - Every team has a different structure, works with different levels of rigour, and expects highly different things from each other
 - Often, organizations will have ample time before the set date of the collaboration, but things take too long, people become unresponsive, and the collaboration gets pushed back.

Counteracting

- Perform due diligence on an organization before collaborating. Doing research, getting insights from people who have attended their events or projects, and seeing the caliber of their work will give good insights.
- Once this is done and your first meeting is set up, both teams need to come together and outline clear expectations from each other that are set in writing. This means: who will be taking care of logistics, developing promotional assets, sponsorship, etc.
- Make sure to discuss financial considerations, including budget allocation and administration with each organization’s governing body (finance can become very tricky to divide)
- Create a plan with deadlines and phases for performing important tasks, and hold the teams accountable by checking in on them regularly. Something as simple as creating an eventbrite will allow you to get an idea of expected headcount which can be helpful in holding the other organization accountable for promotion
 - Give yourselves ample time - if the other organization is not pulling its weight, it is better to drop the event altogether than to continue with difficulty.

Diversity of Backgrounds

How to ensure a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives on a topic?

- Invite organizations to collaborate from different faculties, and then explain the intention of the debate thoroughly in order to be well equipped to discuss a large spectrum of ideas
- When searching for diverse speakers, ask those with many connections in your network for lists of people with specific and varying expertise

How to mix disciplines on a topic?

- Mix disciplines (economics, science, business, sociology) to gain a diversity of backgrounds
- Collaborate with multiple diverse student groups (example: Expanding Economics, Research Sustainability Network, Desautels Sustainability Network)
- This allows you to expand your knowledge base and ask more diverse and relevant questions to the speakers
- Also include people in the planning process who come from different academic backgrounds to help with the brainstorming process

Creating the Environment

How to create an environment in which speakers are comfortable sharing their thoughts on more difficult topics?

- Be sure to send the speakers the questions (for both sides) in advance, with the intention of being able to challenge them on certain aspects of their responses during the debate
- This allows them to prepare answers slightly in advance (one week) and become familiar with the difficult questions
- Ask the different speakers similar-level questions so they felt more comfortable sharing their answers since they knew the other speakers are also being challenged

What is the best format to get interaction with the audience?

- Doing it on zoom allows you to record the debate
- Pin the speakers during the debate
- If in-person: ensure the speakers can be heard and seen by each other and everyone in the audience (it's best to use mics if possible)
- Allow the audience to ask questions and interact with the speakers during a lengthy Q & A session (example: 45 minutes)
- In order to challenge the speakers and reduce the amount of opportunity for them to just read off a script, allow rebuttals after each response from the speakers, and then allow the other speaker 30 seconds to speak on behalf of what the initial speaker debated

After the Event

Following the Event

- Have note-takers create a quick report from key insights to
- Spread the report within your faculty after the event to mainstream these conversations
- Thank your speakers and send them a gift if you are able to
- Have a moment of gratitude for your team and their hard work to make the event happen

Resources

- Picking a topic: [Regenerative Capitalism](#) framework
- Example outline: [Clean Growth vs. Degrowth](#) (full recording) Debate at McGill University by Desautels Sustainability Network
 - [Questions Sheet and Schedule](#): This was sent out to speakers ahead of the debate.
 - [Facebook Event Page](#): This was used to attract participants to the event, provide updates and keep track of attendees.