



Policy on Competition Schedule Accommodation for Religious Reasons

Introduction

Certain religious beliefs and practices of students who are eligible to compete in the National High School Mock Trial Championship (“NHSMTC”) may conflict with the traditional competition schedule of two rounds on Friday, two rounds on Saturday, followed by a championship round on Saturday beginning at approximately 5:00 p.m.

Therefore, the Board of Directors of the National High School Mock Trial Championship (Board) has determined to adopt a formal Policy providing for a possible modification of the competition schedule due to religious beliefs and practices held by a team’s student members. However, after consultation with the State Mock Trial Coordinators, the Board has decided to maintain the Friday/Saturday competition schedule. The National Board has implemented, effective beginning with the 2010 competition, a Policy that provides a procedure for a team to request an accommodation to modify the National Championship competition schedule for religious reasons. In the event that the firmly held religious beliefs and practices of any of the members of a registered team’s official competition roster conflict with the traditional Friday/Saturday competition schedule such that the team lacks sufficient team members to compete in the Friday/Saturday schedule, an accommodation may be requested pursuant to this Policy. The Policy and the required form to request an accommodation are posted on the NHSMTC web site, and reference thereto shall be included in the registration materials for the National Championship.

The Policy

1. A modification to the regular championship schedule (two rounds on Friday, three rounds on Saturday), hereafter referenced as “modified schedule,” shall be granted to a team that makes a request for such in accordance with the terms of this Policy, provided that the requested modification, in the judgment of the Board which shall be final, is (1) reasonable, based on the firmly held religious beliefs and practices of the team’s members and (2) does not create a substantial adverse impact on the competition as a whole.
2. A schedule modification may impact the scoring and ranking of competing teams, but such shall not be deemed a “substantial adverse impact.” All competing teams should be aware that “modified schedule rounds” may impact to some degree the accuracy of the final rankings of teams participating in the competition.
3. Potential modifications to the schedule that are necessitated by granting a request for schedule accommodation under this Policy shall be determined by the National Board in consultation with the Host Director, and such changes shall be made known to all competing teams as expeditiously as is possible, and to the affected teams as hereinafter provided.
4. The Board anticipates that the first round for an accommodated team(s) would be held on Thursday, no earlier than 5:00 pm, and thus all teams must be checked in by the official start of the competition which shall be 3:00 pm. Thursday. All registered teams shall be subject to being required to compete in one or more modified schedule rounds.

For the first modified schedule round, the opponent(s) for the accommodated team(s) shall be chosen by random selection by the Host Director, or a person designated by the Board, in conjunction with the scoring team. Because any team seeking an accommodation must do so no later than April 15, the selection of an opponent(s) shall take place as soon as the Board has determined that an accommodation(s) shall be

granted, but no later than April 23. The Host Director or a designee from the NHSMTC Board shall notify the team(s) that will compete in the first modified schedule round within 48 hours after the selection of the opponent(s) for the accommodated team(s) has been made. Teams not notified by April 25 that they have been selected to compete in the first modified schedule round will not be competing in that round. Determination of the teams required to compete in subsequent modified schedule rounds required by the granting of a request(s) for religious accommodation shall be made by the scoring team using the power matching system where applicable.

5. The official team registration form shall inform teams that the only acceptable form, entitled Request for NHSMTC Competition Schedule Accommodation for Religious Reasons (“Accommodation Request”) by which a team may request a schedule accommodation is found on the NHSMTC website, and such form must be used.
6. As soon as possible but in no case later than April 15, State Coordinators for a team(s) seeking an accommodation under this Policy are required to complete and submit the Accommodation Request form. On the Accommodation Request form the requesting team shall be required to provide the following information, which shall be considered by the National Board.
 - (a) An explanation of the nature of the religious belief and practices that supports the need for the requested schedule modification.
 - (b) The dates and times a team is unavailable to compete due to religious practices.
 - (c) The number of team members from the team’s official competition roster whose religious practices necessitates the accommodation.
7. The Accommodation Request form shall require the signature of that team’s State Coordinator and his or her signature thereupon, which shall act as certification that the information contained in the request is true and correct, to the best of their belief and knowledge. The National Board reserves the right in its sole discretion to request

additional information from the Coordinator or the team's coach(s), teacher(s), or school administrators before acting on the request.

8. If the National Board determines that all requirements for a requested schedule accommodation have been met, the National Board shall grant a request provided that the requested schedule modification can be made, without undue disruption of the Friday/Saturday schedule of competition.