



GUIDE TO STARTING A MODEL UNITED NATIONS TEAM

INTRODUCTION

What is Model United Nations?

Model United Nations (MUN) is a student activity that provides an educational simulation of international politics and diplomacy. As its name suggests, MUN allows students to take on a role as a given country's diplomat within an intergovernmental body; most simulations are of committees within the United Nations, such as the General Assembly or the Security Council, although the largest and most innovative conferences also include a variety of Regional Bodies and Historical or Crisis Committees. Schools generally either organize their own MUN conferences (such as Harvard National Model United Nations), or participate in other schools' conferences through a traveling MUN team.

How do students participate in Model United Nations conferences?

Model United Nations clubs host many conferences open to university students every year. These students are assigned as either single delegates or in pairs, and asked to represent a specific member country of the United Nations. Each individual or pair is placed in a committee focused on a specific issue of international politics. Representing their assigned country, the delegates are expected to research their country's position on the issue at hand and defend their assigned country's interests during committee session. After a few days of exciting debate, negotiations, and compromises, the committee arrives at a resolution to the issue, much like real-life member states of the United Nations do in their chambers.

Why start a Model United Nations team at your university?

A MUN team will serve as a unique addition to your university community and provide students with an unparalleled opportunity to experience firsthand the

challenges of international diplomacy, grapple with some of today's most pressing world issues, and interact and learn from other students from across the globe.

MUN can benefit a wide variety of students, allowing those studying international affairs to apply what they are learning in a realistic and exciting way, and providing those in other fields with the opportunity to pursue passions not covered in the classroom. The diversity of MUN topics and committees engages delegates from a wide variety of backgrounds and interests, whether it is finance or public health, current crises or historical simulations. For all participants, MUN fosters essential skills of cooperation and communication.

International MUN conferences such as HNMUN, which brings together students from all continents save for Antarctica, provide an authentic simulation of the UN and allow students to see firsthand how differently the same issues are viewed around the world. MUN conferences are also a lot of fun and allow delegates to forge not only intellectual ties but great personal friendships across national and cultural boundaries.

Beyond the conference experience, a MUN society can serve to foster awareness and understanding of international affairs within your campus community by organizing international events, hosting club meetings, and even simply sharing what they have learned at conferences with their friends and classmates.

STEPS TO STARTING A MUN TEAM

Organizing a MUN team for the first time may seem like an intimidating process, but it can prove to be an incredibly rewarding experience. The following are some general steps to follow when starting a team. However, please note that these are just guidelines and the specifics of what to do will depend upon your university environment and regulations.

(1) Find a group of students interested in starting the Model United Nations team with you.

The first step in starting a MUN team is to put together a group of founding members who will help you lay the groundwork for the team. Personal connections can sometimes be the easiest people with whom to start a new club, so talk to friends who share your interest in international relations or who you think might be interested in MUN. However, do not be limited by people you already know; reach out to members of the university debate or mock trial team, people who participated in MUN in high school or elsewhere, people who share an interest in international relations, and even people who want to practice their English and public-speaking skills. If your university has an international affairs or similar club, talk to their members about getting involved as well.

(2) Find a faculty advisor.

Most universities will require that you have a faculty advisor in order to start a club. Professors that you know personally will often be the most willing to serve as your advisor. However, do not worry if you cannot think of anyone right away. Reach out to faculty in the International Relations, Political Science, or other relevant departments at your school. Explain to them what MUN is, why you want to start it at your university, and what their role would be as an advisor. Depending upon your university's regulations and your own preferences, this advisor can either be very involved in all aspects of your team or can simply serve as an informal resource. Most college MUN conferences do not require that your advisor attend conferences with you, although your university might.

(3) Hold your first planning meeting. Put together a preliminary club constitution and budget.

Before you apply for approval as an official organization from your school, you should hold a planning meeting and plan the structure of your club. Think about how the club will run, both in the short-term and in the long-run, as well as what conferences you may be interested in attending. Look up the procedures and requirements for becoming an official organization at your university and use that as the basis of your planning meeting. Although regulations may differ, you will usually need to have a club constitution before getting approval. The constitution drafting process can be a great time to think about your vision for the club and the specifics of how it will be run. Your constitution should cover your mission statement, the election of officers and their responsibilities, membership, dues, and appropriate procedures for amendments.

Please see the sample constitution at the end of this guide.

(4) Get approval from your university administration to start a club.

Getting official approval from your university as a club can give you access to fundraising resources, meeting spaces, and many other benefits, and is thus highly recommended. Some universities may not allow you to operate at all without official approval. Policies on how to get official approval for a club will differ depending on your university, so you should contact your Student Activities Office or Student Government to find out the exact procedure you will need to follow. This will usually consist of presenting a committee with a membership list, a mission statement, a sample constitution, and a description of your club's activities.

(5) Recruit more members.

Once you have gained approval as a student organization, your next task is to recruit team members. This process is similar to recruiting founding members but on a wider scale; you should reach out to any debate, mock trial, or international relations societies and talk to friends and classmates you think may be interested. Be creative in your recruiting strategy and try to make yourself as visible on campus as possible, through posters, information sessions, and talks in classrooms if you can get permission from the professor. A good strategy is to advertise your first information meeting so that students have a concrete event to attend and provide a team email or website where they can go for more information.

One of your biggest recruiting resources will be students who have done MUN in the past, such as in high school, as they are often already excited about it and can bring valuable experience to your team. Ask friends if they know of anyone who attended MUN conferences in high school. If you have access to an online directory or Facebook, search to see if anyone at your school has listed it under their Interests or Activities.

However, do not confine yourself to just experienced delegates. In fact, some of the best college delegates can turn out to be those who have never participated in MUN before. Make an effort to reach out to those new to MUN by letting them know that they are welcome on the team and even offering to hold a special information session or "mini-simulation" to introduce them to the workings of MUN.

(6) Hold your first information meeting.

Your first club meeting is your best chance to "sell" MUN to potential new members and set the tone for the year, so it is important that you are well organized. Book a nice room in advance, get food if possible, and coordinate with your

fellow founding members on who will say what. Publicize this meeting as widely as possible.

At the meeting, start off by introducing the club, explaining what MUN is and what the club will be doing that year. If you have already decided on conferences, tell the club where you will be going and when. Even if you have not decided on conferences yet, talk about some options and the exciting places they could go as part of your MUN team. Explain how to become a member and the responsibilities and benefits of team membership. Make sure you dedicate some time to taking questions.

Your main goals during this meeting should be to make MUN sound fun and exciting and to recruit members. Make sure you put out a sign up list so you can keep track of your members and follow up with them afterwards. At the end of the meeting, tell everyone when the next meeting will be held and what you will be doing, as well as any application procedures and deadlines if you decide to make it an application-only team. Follow up with this information by email and in person as much as possible.

(7) Put together a fundraising and training plan.

Now that you have an official team and members, you need to put together a plan for the year. This can be done either before or after the first information meeting; the only benefit of doing it afterwards is to give you an idea of your team size. Meet with your founding members (or with your officers if they have already been selected) and map out your meetings for the year and important conference dates and deadlines. Decide when you will hold trainings for conference, who will organize them, and how they will run (See “Pre-Conference Training”). Also, think about your fundraising plans. These plans may, and likely will, change over the course of the year as events develop but it is important to have a clear sense of where you are going and how it will work. Decide how much of conference expenses you will try to cover as a team through fundraising and how much you will ask team members to contribute themselves (See “Fundraising”).

(8) Hold subsequent meetings.

Once you have your plan, begin holding regular club meetings. The format and structure of these meetings is up to you, but should be relatively consistent and build up towards preparation for each of your conferences. Meeting agendas could include how to write a resolution, different strategies for General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, Regional Bodies, and Specialized Agency committees, or a mock debate on a particular issue.

RUNNING A MUN TEAM

Who’s Who

Faculty Advisor: Your advisor is usually a faculty member at your university, and, as stated above, can have many different levels of involvement in your club. Some advisors are very involved in all club decisions and will aid in trainings and attend conferences with your team, while others serve in a more informal capacity. Advisors can be extremely valuable resources; both by sharing their knowledge and experience with students and by helping the team gain funding and other support from the university.

President: The President, or other chief officer, is the person primarily responsible for your team and, along with their officers, should direct all club activities. He/she will be the contact for your university and is responsible for the club’s compliance with all university regulations.

Head Delegate: The President is often also the Head Delegate, though some teams appoint a different Head Delegate if the President cannot attend a conference. The Head Delegate is the leader of your delegation at conference and is in charge of coordinating transportation, accommodation, and all conference activities. The Head Delegate will also be expected to attend Head Delegate meetings at conference and serve as the primary liaison between your delegation and the conference staff. The Head Delegate should also personally prep delegates for their committees before conference and check in on them at conference.

Delegates: The delegates are your team members, and they will be the ones representing countries in committees. Usually the Head Delegate will also be assigned to a committee, although some schools prefer to keep the Head Delegate out of committee to serve as a coordinator.

Picking a Team Size

The size of your team will depend upon many considerations, including:

Number of conferences: You will want a team that is large enough to ensure sufficient attendance at all of the conferences that you would like to attend, but small enough so that everyone has a chance to attend at least one or two conferences.

Budget: Budgetary concerns are related to number of conferences, as a smaller budget may mean you cannot attend as many conferences and thus cannot accept as many team members. However, if you plan on doing a lot of fundraising to support your team, a larger team size can mean more fundraising opportunities.

Selectivity: It is up to you to decide how you would like to choose your team, and how selective a process it will be. If you would like to accept all who wish to join, then you will have less control over team size than if you have a competitive application procedure.

Team Cohesion: You will also want to think about the social aspect of your team and the degree to which you would like team members to work together and get to know one another. A large team can sometimes lose team cohesion as members do not always get to interact with one another, but it also provides more opportunities to interact and meet new people.

Returning Members

Decide how membership will work for the following year. Will team members automatically be on the team again, or will they need to re-apply? Ideally, your team members will be involved for multiple years, as they can then build up experience and pass it on to younger members, but often students get busier every year, so do think about how you can set expectations for participation and encourage members to come back.

Pre-conference Training

Please refer to the HNMUN 2011 Guide to First Time Delegations.

Conference Rules and Procedures

Please refer to the HNMUN 2011 Guide to Delegate Preparation and Rules of Parliamentary Procedure.

Fundraising

Please refer to the HNMUN 2011 Guide to Fundraising and Financial Aid.

COMMON CHALLENGES

(1) Recruiting

Especially at the beginning, it can be hard to get members to join. See the suggestions above for how to recruit, but also keep in mind that it is not necessarily a bad thing to start off with a smaller group of dedicated members. As you attend more conferences, it will be easier to recruit new members by showing them concrete examples of what your team has done.

(2) Keeping Up Interest

In some cases, you may start out with a lot of enthusiastic members who then lose interest and participation as they get busier with other commitments. An important way to retain interest is to attend regular conferences and space them out throughout the year so that your team members always feel like they are progressing towards something. In addition, hold regular meetings but make sure you have something to do at these meetings and don't hold them more often than is necessary. Also, hold social events or other fun things for your team members to get to know each other and have fun. People are much more likely to stick with an organization to which they feel connected and in which they have friends.

(3) Ensuring Attendance at Conferences

Teams often have problems with delegates dropping out right before conferences as they realize they have other commitments or simply decide not to come. Strategies for addressing this challenge could include:

- a) Talk to your team members from the beginning about expectations.
- b) Shape team meetings around conference preparation and involve everyone in fundraising efforts before conference. Participating in the fundraising for a conference can increase members' level of ownership over the conference, and they are unlikely to drop out of a conference they have been preparing for and fundraising to attend for a long time.
- c) Make sure everyone checks their syllabi and talks to their professors before signing up for a trip to ensure they do not have class conflicts.
- d) Ask for a non-refundable conference deposit. If you are having serious attendance problems, you could consider asking members to submit a nonrefundable deposit when they sign up for the conference.

(4) At-Conference Attendance and Behavior

Set clear expectations for how delegates should behave at conference. This should include ensuring that delegates attend all committee sessions and take the conference seriously. Some delegates see MUN simply as a social experience, and you can decide to what extent you want to emphasize social vs. academic aspects, but you need to have a way of holding delegates accountable to your expectations.

CLOSING REMARKS

The Secretariat of HNMUN 2011 is always available to answer your questions regarding both conference preparation and logistical issues. Please do not hesitate to contact us, by email at info@hnmun.org or by phone at (617) 495-5828 during our office hours, 3-5PM EST, Monday-Friday. Additionally, Faculty Advisors and Head Delegates are strongly encouraged to join the HNMUN Faculty Forum, an online group dedicated to pre-conference discussion, which is run by the HNMUN Delegate Relations staff.

We hope you will join us in February for an unforgettable experience at HNMUN 2011!

Sincerely,

The HNMUN 2011 Secretariat

SAMPLE CONSTITUTION

Littlefield Model United Nations Association Governing Bylaws

Submitted for ratification and approval by the membership on 20 August 2010.

Article I: Purpose

To promote education of international affairs and the United Nations through participation in Model United Nations conferences and the hosting of events on campus.

Article II: Name

The name of this organization will be the Littlefield Model United Nations Association.

Article III: Membership

Membership will be open to undergraduates at Littlefield University who pay membership dues and are admitted to the team. Admission to the team will be the result of an application process.

Article V: Officers

Section 1: Elections

Elections will be held annually at the last club meeting of the school year. All team members who have paid delegate fees and attended 2 or more conferences will be eligible to vote and run in elections.

Section 2: The following officers will be elected by the membership of the organization:

- a) **President:** The President will be the chief executive officer of the organization and will be responsible for, in consultation with his/her officers, choosing conferences, coordinating transportation, and running conference training.
- b) **Vice-President:** The Vice-President will assist the President in all his/her activities and shall assume the post of President if the President resigns or is unable to execute his/her duties.
- c) **Treasurer:** The Treasurer will manage the organization's finances, be responsible for the collection of all dues, the payment of conference fees, coordinating fundraising, and the management of the organization budget.
- d) **Secretary:** The Secretary will keep all club records, and assist in the preparation of trainings.

Section 3:

Should any of the above officers be unable to discharge their duties, they should submit a letter of resignation to the President or Secretary. The President may appoint a temporary replacement, and a permanent replacement shall be elected at the next regularly scheduled club meeting.

Article VI: Budget

The budget of the organization shall be assembled by the Treasurer and approved by the club membership at the first meeting of the year.

Article VII: Conferences

The team will attend Model United Nations conferences hosted by other teams and universities. The number of conferences attended will be dependent upon the annual budget but shall never fall below one per year. Conferences shall be chosen by the President and his/her officers.

Article VIII: Amendments

This Constitution may be amended upon the submission of a written proposal and the two-thirds vote of the qualified membership.