

# Position Paper Guideline

## *How to Write a Good Position Paper*

By Vivian Lai

For you to gain the fullest conference experience, we at HSMUN 2014 will require you to submit your position paper before **midnight on 6/15**. Please email it to the committee's email. Name both the **file** and the **topic of the email** as “[committee abbreviation]\_[country]” (eg. UNSC\_Argentina).

Committee's Email			
CCPCJ	ccpcj.hsmun2014@gmail.com	ECOSOC	ecosoc.hsmun2014@gmail.com
UNSC	unsc.hsmun2014@gmail.com	SPECPOL	specpol.hsmun2014@gmail.com

## Purpose

By definition, a position paper is a formal document explaining your country's stance and ideas on the topic. Usually, the document is about one A4 page for every topic. Position papers are written for the following reasons:

1. **Organize your thoughts**—As you write your position paper, you need to have a clear understanding of the topic as well as your country's position. This requires intensive research. Since a position paper is a formal essay, you will need to organize your thoughts logically and present them in a clear and understandable way. Writing the position paper is your chance to organize your research and thoughts. This becomes a great opportunity to organize the overwhelming information and ideas you may have.
2. **To look other delegates' positions** —Usually at MUN conferences, after delegates submit their position papers, the Dais will compile them and send them to delegates. Hence, delegates can look at the papers of other delegations to search for allies and enemies before the conference. This way, you can reach out to other countries who may share your position at the beginning of a conference to share ideas and cooperate. You can also prepare rebuttals against your enemies or brainstorm thoughts to persuade your enemies to support you.
3. **To look at the strengths of other delegates**—If you are aiming for awards at a conference, you can read the position papers to determine if a specific delegation is strong. This could influence your willingness to cooperate or increase your wariness.

## Format

There is some format of the Position Paper that one delegate must follow.

- Margins must be set at 1 inch or 2.54 cm. for the whole paper.
- Length must not exceed one page of A4.
- Font must be Times New Roman sized between 10 pt. and 12 pt.
- Country name, and committee name must be clearly labeled on the first page.

## What You Should Include

Here are some suggestions for the structure and content of a position paper:

- **General stance on the topic & Brief introduction**
  - A brief history of your country concerning the topic and committee
  - How your country view this topic
  - Your country's policies with respect to the topic or in the committee
  - How your country is (severely) affected
- **Elaboration of your stance:** a few items you can include in this part includes
  - Treaties, conventions, resolutions your country has ratified, signed or supported
  - Other UN actions and your stance (e.g. Voting records, meeting minutes)
  - Other actions to show your stance (e.g. National policies)
  - Statistics regarding your stance or situation
  - Quotes (of country leaders, governmental figures, etc.)
- **In the conference**
  - Aspects and policies that your country wishes to place emphasis on
  - Proposal or expectations of solutions that you may have
  - Emphasis of importance of the conference
  - Supports or Againsts towards previously proposed solutions or other prepositions
- **Closing Remarks**
  - Final remark on your stance
  - Show respect and expectation to the conference and the committee

## What A Position Paper Should “Sound Like”

- **Diplomatic**
  - **Your country, not you**—As is with all aspects of MUN, you are representing your country. Therefore you should be writing in representation of your country's stance, not your personal ideas. Abandon your own thoughts, even if your country's position contradicts yours. Do not use phrases like “I think” and “I believe.” Write like a diplomat, with a formal tone, less colloquial wordings, and logical sentence and paragraph structures.
  - **Nothing is black or white**—In the world of diplomacy, nothing is forever correct. Your stance may change during the conference; you may abandon your previous thoughts in support for new ones. Therefore, leave room to turn for yourself. Try to avoid strong words like “hate”, “always”, and “absolutely.”
- **General**—You don't really have enough space to detail your every position on every policy of the UN for the past decade. Pick the most important ones or the general policy you wish to discuss and elaborate on your general stance. Being general also keeps things vague and, in a sense, diplomatic.

## Tips

- **Research, research, research**—The key to success in your position paper, and the conference as a whole, is researching beforehand. We do not require you to be extremely thorough at HSMUN, but please do at least read through the study guide and look up more information on the topic and your country's position. In your position paper, it is strongly recommended to quote relevant evidence to

support your stance as well as to demonstrate to the Dais the relevant results of your research. As I have mentioned, this is also a good chance to organize your ideas and even a research folder to bring in the conference room.

- **Keep it simple**—To communicate strongly and effectively, avoid flowery wording and stick to uncomplicated language and sentence structure. Also avoid including irrelevant quotes or evidence that do not enhance your stance.
- **Get organized**—Give each separate idea or proposal its own paragraph. Make sure each paragraph starts with a topic sentence.
- **Speech! Speech!** —Do you plan to make an opening statement at your conference? A good position paper prepares you well for your introductory speech. During debate, a good position paper will also help you to stick to your country's policies.
- **Let the bullets fly** —Try not to let your proposals become lost in a sea of information. During speechmaking, create a bulleted list of your proposals along with your most important facts and statistics so that you will not waste time looking for them during debate. Starting your essay with bullet points also helps you organize your thoughts more easily.

I hope this guide has provided you with a clearer sense of how you should write your position paper. If you have any questions, feel free to email your chair or the director of academics. We look forward to reading your position papers!