

Amending the ASC Qualifying Tournament Document to clarify incorrect language, update practices, and require open invitationals.

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Background

ACTAA Leadership is committed to ensuring that our policies reflect both the integrity of our mission and the needs of our students and coaches. During the 2024–2025 season, ACTAA leadership identified discrepancies between ACTAA ballots, the ASC Qualifying Document and the long-standing common practices of our tournaments. In response, we took steps to update the ballots this past spring, and now we are extending this effort to update the ASC Qualifying Tournament Document.

Our goal is to clarify incorrect language, align the document with current practices, and establish requirements — such as open invitationals — that reinforce transparency and fairness. In addition to clarifying the requirement for open invitational, the amendment provides pragmatic language related to ASC leadership access to sanctioned tournaments to determine ASC qualifiers, requiring tabber status. These amendments are not only corrective but also forward-looking, ensuring that the Arkansas State Championship and its qualifying competition continue to provide a platform where the very best in our state can demonstrate their talents in a system that is equitable, consistent, and accurate.

Proposed Amendment

Language ~~stricken~~ is proposed to be removed, and underlined language is proposed to be added.

Qualifying Tournament Guidelines

The Arkansas Communication and Theatre Arts Association (ACTAA) is committed to providing students with a state championship platform in accordance with the Arkansas Activities Association (AAA) at the completion of each competitive season. The Arkansas Forensics and Debate State Championship (ASC) is a celebration of excellence. In order to ensure the quality of competition at the ASC, ACTAA outlines the following guidelines for hosting an ASC-Qualifying Tournament. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in the removal of a tournament's ASC Qualification.

Qualification Regulations

1. Students may not attend the ASC as an unaffiliated entry. Students must compete at a qualifying tournament (QT) sponsored by an ACTAA member school and/or coach. In the instance of imbalance in an event at a QT, such as policy debate, public forum, or duo/duet acting/improvisation, competitors from different schools may compete together to make a complete team at the discretion of the tournament host/director, however, these blended teams may NOT compete at the ASC together; they must compete with another qualified individual from the same school.
2. No student may qualify to the ASC at his or her own school-sponsored tournament, however host-school competitors may count toward event totals for qualifying levels if the next qualification level is five (5) or fewer entries from current level.
3. Ninth grade students MAY COMPETE at the ASC if they have qualified AS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT. A student who competes at a QT as a junior high student and places within an event level is NOT eligible for the ASC.
 - a. ACTAA ASC will be compliant with AAA regulation that dictates that junior high/middle school students (6-8th graders) MAY NOT compete at the ASC, nor may they compete against high school students (9-12th graders) in ANY event.
 - b. NINTH GRADE EXCEPTION: a ninth grade student on a junior high team may, at any point in the competitive season, choose at the discretion of competitor or coach, to compete on their corresponding high school team. Once a junior-high housed ninth grader competes as a member of the high school team, that competitor MAY NOT return to compete on the junior high/middle school level.
4. Out-of-state competitions may count toward state qualifications as long as the competitor competes in at least one in-state qualifying tournament. Competitors must meet the same qualifications listed for specific events below; it is the responsibility of coaches to provide documentation to the ASC committee demonstrating qualification.
5. Qualifying Tournament Directors must apply for and be approved for AAA sanctioning before hosting a QT. Deadlines must be met. All competitors must also be qualified to compete under AAA rules. A student must have earned a 2.0 GPA for the previous semester and passed their four core classes, or be approved through a SIP program.

Seek guidance from your school's AAA representative and the AAA Handbook if you have questions about a competitor's eligibility before allowing them to compete.

ASC Individual Events Guidelines:

1. The following events will be held at the ASC:
 - a. Dramatic Interpretation (DI)
 - b. Humorous Interpretation (HI)
 - c. Original Oratory (OO)
 - d. International Extemporaneous Speaking (IX)
 - e. Domestic Extemporaneous Speaking (DX)
 - f. Informative Speaking (IF)
 - g. Program of Oral Interpretation (POI)
 - h. Duo Interpretation (DUO)
 - i. Poetry (PO)
 - j. Prose (PR)
 - k. Impromptu Speaking (IM)
 - l. Improvised Duet Acting (IDA)
 - m. Storytelling (ST)
 - n. Dramatic Song Lyric (DSL)
 - o. Solo Acting (SA)
 - p. Duet Acting (DA)
 - q. Solo Musical (SM)
 - r. Duet Musical (DM)
2. Events 1(a)-(k) must follow NSDA event rules, guidelines, and time limits.
3. Events 1(l)-(r) will follow ACTAA event rules, guidelines, and time limits.
4. ASC qualifying tournaments are responsible for ensuring that all event rules, guidelines, and time limits are communicated to coaches, judges, and competitors in the tournament invitation and tabroom.
5. Students may compete with the same selection, regardless of success with that selection. Once a selection is performed at the ASC, it may not be performed again.
6. The same cutting may NOT be double-entered at ASC.
7. ASC qualifying tournaments should conduct IE fields as follows:
 - a. If a qualifying tournament holds preliminary rounds, sections should contain no more than 10 competitors.
 - b. If a qualifying tournament holds one preliminary round, sections should contain no more than 8 competitors.
 - c. Sections should be balanced.
 - d. Events with ten (10) or less total competitors should go straight to a final round.
 - e. Events with eleven (11) or more total competitors should go to a semifinal round.
 - f. Events with more than 100 competitors should consider a quarterfinal round.
8. The ASC Committee may cancel an event if 4 or fewer entries are registered.

IE Qualification:

1. Qualification in an IE occurs when a student advances to a semi-final round in a Level I event, is a finalist in a Level II event, or places 1st, 2nd, 3rd in a Level III event. Students may compete in as many events in which they are qualified at the ASC, but the tournament schedule will NOT accommodate multiple-entry competitors. As the ASC progresses, competitors may have to make choices between events in which they advance.
2. In Duo Interpretation the selection and team must remain intact to compete at the ASC.
3. In Improvised Duet Acting, the individual competitor qualifies.
4. Students are limited to one selection in each event. If a competitor qualifies three times in an event with three different selections, ONE selection is allowed at the ASC.

IE Qualification Levels

1. Level 1 (Semis and Finals) 32+
2. Level 2 (Finals) 20-31
3. Level 3 (Top 3) 10-19
4. Level 4 (1st Place) 6-9
5. Events 5 or less need to be supplemented with host school entries (but needs to be less than majority plus one) or won't be a state qualifier.

ASC Group Events Guidelines:

1. Words and Music (WM) and Readers' Theatre (RT) will be held at the ASC.
2. It is the responsibility of the coach/sponsor to ensure that pieces performed are done so with the appropriate legal permissions secured. It is the responsibility of the tournament director (with consultation from the ASC committee) to ensure that pieces are performed within legal parameters, and that judges are thoroughly informed of event rules and selection guidelines.
3. WM and RT should have a three-judge panel in all rounds. Judges should not be recycled round to round in the same event.
4. Schools may enter more than one WM at ASC. There will be no limit on how many a school may enter at the State Tournament. These entries must have at least 3 participants.
 - a. There will be strict restrictions against plagiarism with choreography.
 - ~~b. No costumes may be used during performance.~~
 - ~~c. No props may be used during performance.~~
 - d. Student can only be in one of the school's entered WMs.

Qualification:

1. If a tournament has 1-2 entries in RT or WM, there is no qualifier to the ASC.
2. If a tournament has 3-4 entries in RT or WM, only the 1st place winner will qualify to the ASC.
3. If a tournament has a preliminary round and then a final, those entries placing in the final round will qualify to the ASC.

4. Any school that trophies in a group event will be allowed to return that performance three (3) times before it must be retired.

Debate Event Guidelines:

1. The following events will be held at the ASC:
 - a. Novice Policy Debate
 - b. Varsity Policy Debate
 - c. Novice Public Forum Debate
 - d. Varsity Public Forum Debate
 - e. Novice Lincoln Douglas Debate
 - f. Varsity Lincoln Douglas Debate
 - g. Novice IPDA
 - h. Varsity IPDA
 - i. Congressional Debate
 - j. Big Questions Debate
 - k. World Schools Debate
 - ~~l. Mock Trial~~
2. A “novice” debater is one who is in their first year of competition.
 - a. Novices who compete in a varsity division at any point in the competitive season are still considered novices.
 - b. Novices who compete in open division at any point in the competitive season are still considered novices.
 - c. Students who compete in one debate event for more than one year and then compete in a different debate event in the same or subsequent years should enter the APPROPRIATE level of competition for their experience level, competitiveness, and skill. It is the affirmative responsibility of coaches to make ethically sound decisions about competitor placement.
 - d. Coaches may seek guidance about how to place students from TAC, ASC Committee, or Qualifying Tournament Directors. Coaches who wish to challenge a competitor’s placement should do so respectfully and discretely before competition begins to the tournament director and the chair of the TAC committee.
 - e. Coaches’ challenges require that Qualifying Tournament Directors make available a full list of competitors in a timely fashion after tournament registration
3. Congressional Debate can either be 2 prelims and a final round or 3 prelim rounds that are scored cumulatively for Level 3 size events. ASC Qualifiers need to use NSDA rules regarding time for sessions (10 minutes per student in session)
4. The current NFHS policy debate resolution must be used.
5. It is the responsibility of the qualifying tournament director to verify the topics used for LD and PF in a timely fashion.
6. The ASC committee reserves the right to collapse divisions of LD and PF at the ASC if there are too few qualifiers to justify a novice and varsity division.
7. Maverick debaters are not permitted at the ASC.

8. If a debate event has more than 64 entries in the field, a tournament director should consider a quad-, triple-, or double-octafinal round.
9. If a debate event has 32 or more entries in the field, a tournament director should consider an octafinal round.
10. If a debate event has 16 or more entries in the field, a quarterfinal must be held.
11. If a debate event has 10-15 entries in the field, a semifinal must be held.
12. If a debate event has 9 or fewer entries in the field, the event may break straight to a final round at the discretion of the tournament director.
13. Qualifying tournaments should not collapse novice and varsity divisions unless it is impossible to pair a division otherwise.
14. It is the responsibility of the tournament director to ensure that quality, qualified judges are provided for unique debate events.

Congress Qualification

1. Level 1 (All Finalists) 30+ Entries
2. Level 2 (Top 10) 20-29 Entries
3. Level 3 (Top 6) 12-19 Entries
4. Congress with 11 or less need to be supplemented with host school entries (but needs to be less than majority plus one) or won't be a state qualifier
5. ACTAA Student Congress Competitors who receive 30 points will qualify for state.

Debate Qualification Levels

1. Level 1 (Top 32 Placement or Top 10 Speakers) 64+ Entries
2. Level 2 (Top 16 or Top 10 Speakers) 40-63 Entries
3. Level 3 (Top 8 or Top 6 Speakers) 20-39 Entries
4. Level 4 (Top 4 or Top 6 Speakers) 10-19 Entries
5. Level 5 (Top 2 or Top 3 Speakers) 5-9 Entries
6. Debate with 4 or less need to be supplemented with host school entries (but needs to be less than majority plus one) or won't be a state qualifier.

Qualifying Tournament Standards:

1. Judging
 - a. Schools will bring the number of qualified judges required to cover entries.
 - b. Directors may either assess a judging fee or reduce the number of entries a school may bring if judging requirement is not met.
 - c. Attending coaches should bring qualified judges only. A qualified judge is a person who is familiar with competition guidelines and event rules. Alumni judges are preferred.
 - d. Arkansas speech and debate alumni who have graduated from high school are eligible to judge debate and individual events. It is the responsibility of attending coaches to verify the eligibility and qualifications of judges.
 - e. Tournament directors have the right to refuse the services of any judge a coach/sponsor enters. If a coach or sponsor is aware at registration that they are

entering a “lay” or unqualified judge, it is expected that the tournament director be notified.

2. Ballots and Awards

- a. Tournament directors should strive to make ballots available five working days after the completion of a tournament.
- b. Appropriate, up-to-date ballots should be used for all events.
- c. Awards should be proportional to the entry fee assessed at a tournament.

3. Reporting to the ASC Committee

- a. Tournament directors will publish results online within 7 days of the invitational tournament. A tournament is NOT a Qualifier until the ENTIRE report is published. This includes specific ranks, win-loss per round, and division winners.
- b. No Qualifying Tournament is official until verified and audited by the ASC Committee, who will release a running spreadsheet on the ACTAA Website with all Qualifiers in the state.
- c. It is the responsibility of the ASC Committee to audit and verify the results in a timely manner.
- d. All ASC qualifying tournaments must be open invitationals
- e. Tabulation & Tabroom
 - i. The ACTAA Sanctioned Tournament Shell will be built by the ASC Committee following the annual Summer Workshop and presented for approval by the ACTAA Board of Directors at the annual Fall Conference.
 - ii. Tournament directors must utilize the ACTAA Sanctioned Shell Tournament format on Tabroom.
 - iii. Tournament directors have the authority to make changes to any aspect of the tournament as long as written notice is provided in the tournament invitation a minimum of two weeks before the drop deadline.
 - iv. Tournament directors must publish the format in which they will break competitors into out rounds. (ie. Cumulative or Sudden Death)
 - v. The ASC State Chair, Permanent Director, and Tabroom.com Arkansas Circuit Administrator must have viewing-permaneant tabbing access to all sanctioned tournaments to ensure breaks, settings, and results meet ASC sanctioned guidelines.
 - vi. Exemptions to these guidelines must be approved by the ASC committee a minimum of three weeks before the tournament drop deadline.
 - vii. ASC will provide an overview of tournaments Tabroom setup to ensure collaboration with tournament directors and adherence to ASC guidelines prior to the tournament start.
 - viii. This (section (3(d))) will go into effect upon creation of the shell and approval of the body.

Junior High Invitationals

An ACTAA member school may host a Junior High Invitational for Junior High competitors during ASC Qualifying Tournaments.

1. Junior High Invitationals may NOT cross over with any qualifying tournament-event.
2. Junior High competitors MAY NOT qualify to the ASC.
3. Junior High competitors MAY NOT compete against high school students.
4. 9th Graders have the option to compete as high school students, but once they compete on the high school level, they MAY NOT compete as junior high students.
5. High School students may judge Junior High events at Invitationals, only once they are eliminated from an ASC qualifying tournament, or if they are non-competing, or if they are from the host school.
6. It is the responsibility of the coach sponsoring a student judge to ensure the quality, maturity, and ethical character of a student judge.
7. Student judges should be up front about potential conflicts with competitors.
8. Junior High Invitationals do not have to offer all events.
9. Junior High Invitationals should only hold one preliminary round and break to appropriate elimination rounds.
10. Qualifying levels do not apply at invitational.
11. Ribbons or certificates should be given as awards if a host school opts not to give trophies for junior high events.