

2020 NJCL Competitive Certamen – Procedures and Rules

Certamen is a game of fast recall of facts about classical civilization and its peoples, languages, and cultures. It allows students to demonstrate their knowledge of the ancient peoples, languages, and cultures, and the relationships between those topics and the modern world. Students are indeed to be commended for the hard work they have put forth in preparation for this competition. The following guidelines are presented with the purpose of making the game go quickly, smoothly, and fairly in the time allotted.

1. Levels of Competition

There are three levels of competition: Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced. **States and provinces may each enter TWO Novice teams, but only the highest scoring may advance to the Semifinal round. If a state or province enters two teams, one will be designated with the adjective “Purple,” the other “Gold.” Novice teams from the same state may not realign when heading into the Semifinal round.** States and provinces may each enter only ONE team in each of the Intermediate and Advanced levels.

The Novice level is ONLY for students who are registered as Latin ½ or Latin 1 at the convention. If a student has played on a team that advanced to the Novice Finals, even if they played in only one preliminary round, that same student MUST play at the Intermediate or the Advanced level at any subsequent NJCL convention, regardless of the level of Latin. However, level 1 students may play at the Novice level for multiple years as long as they have not played on a team that has advanced to Finals. Open Certamen play in previous years does not count against eligibility. The penalty for either willfully or unknowingly disregarding this rule is immediate disqualification from playing in the tournament and ineligibility for that player at any level of competition in the following year.

The Intermediate level is primarily for students who are registered as Latin 2 at the convention, though Latin 2, Latin 1, and Latin ½ students may compete on an Intermediate team if they wish. **Players who play on a team that advanced to the Intermediate Final Round in the previous year’s convention at the Intermediate level, even if they only played in one preliminary round, MUST play at the Advanced Level in all subsequent years.**

The Advanced level is primarily for students who are registered in a level higher than Latin 2 at the convention, though any student may compete in the Advanced level if they wish. The competition is open only to JCLers. No student may compete in more than one level.

2. Schedule of Play and the Semifinal Round

In each of the three levels of competition, teams will play three preliminary matches. The ladder of play is determined by a random draw at the Certamen Orientation, and each match is played by three teams. Each team MUST commit to playing all three preliminary rounds, regardless of scores or other convention events. After these three preliminary rounds, the nine state teams in each level that have the highest cumulative scores at that time will advance to the Semifinal round of competition. In the Semifinal round, the nine teams are seeded by their scores and grouped in threes for competition (1 vs. 6 vs. 7, 2 vs. 5 vs. 8, 3 vs. 4 vs. 9). The three winners of these matches in each level will advance to the Final round. In the event of tie scores leading into the Semifinal or Final rounds, ties will be broken as outlined below in section 15.

3. Wild Card Teams

A. Since the groupings in our ladder of play are made in multiples of three, it may be necessary to create "wild card" teams at the Orientation. These teams will be composed of alternates to the state teams that have registered to play at the convention or any other interested JCLers. Each team will have up to four players, all

from different states. Any alternate who wishes to compete for one of the spots on these Wild Card teams (if they are necessary) must attend the Orientation and listen for instructions. If a Wild Card team does not have four players, any student from any state NOT represented on that Wild Card team may request to play on that team.

B. States not having enough players may combine teams at the appropriate level with another state in similar situations. However, these “combined” teams will not be allowed to advance to Semifinals.

C. Wild Card teams are expected to play all three preliminary matches as competitively as they are able to play. They may NOT, however, advance to the Semifinal round even if their scores are among the nine highest in that level.

D. If vacancies exist on a wild card team due to a lack of registered participants, registered wild card players who were NOT placed on a team will be allowed to compete in a higher level if they wish.

4. Alternate Players and Substitutions

A team consists of up to four players during each round, but states are welcome to register up to four alternate players. These alternate players may compete during any round of competition, but they must play that entire round. No substitutions are allowed during a round. Alternates may NOT also compete in the Open Certamen competition. If an alternate player is placed on a wild card team, they thereby forfeit their position as an alternate for their state team.

5. Code of Conduct

A. All players must be wearing their own name tags at the start of each round in order to compete. A player will be denied the right to play for not wearing their own name tag. Players must also be in compliance with the published convention rules regarding conduct.

B. All players and coaches are expected to conduct themselves throughout the entire Certamen process with courtesy, dignity, and respect for other teams and for the Certamen staff.

C. Players may bring with them to the table their own writing instruments and paper on which to write during the round. Such paper must be blank at the start of a round or must be approved by the moderator of that round. Players must be careful not to look at what their teammates are writing during a toss-up question, though on boni questions players are encouraged to look at their teammates' writings. Players are also permitted to bring team mascots and good luck tokens as long as such items are not deemed by the Certamen staff to be distracting or inappropriate.

D. Protests should only be made by coaches or players. Protests should NOT be made by coaches to stall, intimidate, or otherwise interrupt the flow of a match or the concentration of participants. N.B. – Each state will have a limit of 5 protests allowed per each level for the three preliminary rounds. Challenges that are accepted by the Certamen staff will not count against the limit. However, if a challenge is denied by the Certamen staff, the state will lose that challenge from the total. There is no limit for Semifinals and Finals. For more on challenges see section 14.

E. During a round, coaches may encourage their teams in a general way after the scores are read (5, 10, 15, 19) - e.g. “Good job, guys! Keep it up!” HOWEVER, coaches may NOT say anything that may give their team an advantage during the round. It is NOT permitted for a coach to keep tabs on the question categories and relay that information to the players during the match. For example, a coach knows that question 20 will be a mythology question, with this knowledge, they shout out during the applause, “John, the next one is yours!” Actions such as these will result in disqualification for that team on that question.

6. Format of Each Round

A round consists of twenty questions, each of which consists of a toss-up and two boni. A correctly answered toss-up earns the team ten points, while each correctly answered bonus question earns the team five points. Thus, up to 400 points may be earned in a round. Questions from a number of categories are included

in a round; the number of questions from each category differs among the levels, according to the following:

Novice and Intermediate: 10 language, 5 history/life/geography, 5 mythology

Advanced: 8 language, 4 history/life/geography, 4 mythology, 4 literature

7. Toss-Up Questions

A. As the moderator begins to read a toss-up, any player on any team may interrupt the reading of the question by pressing their buzzer. Pressing the buzzer indicates the player's desire to give an answer immediately upon being recognized. A player should NOT press the buzzer in order to have information repeated, clarified, or spelled. When a buzzer is pressed, the moderator will stop reading the question, and the spotter will identify the signaling player by team letter and player number (e.g. A4, B3, C2). Upon being recognized by the spotter, a player is expected to give an answer within 3-5 seconds, the exact length of which will be determined by the moderator.

B. If a player answers a toss-up correctly, the team earns ten points and the right to answer two bonus questions for five points each. If a player answers a toss-up incorrectly, then no other person on that team may give an answer to that toss-up. If more than one person signals at nearly the same time, the spotter will identify each player who signaled in the order that they signaled until a correct answer is given or all answers are incorrect.

C. A toss-up will be read in its entirety no more than twice. If no team signals within five seconds after the second complete reading, time will be called on that toss-up.

8. Requests for Repetition or Spelling

Any request for repetition or spelling during a toss-up CANNOT be made after pressing the buzzer. A player wishing for such information should simply speak that request loudly and clearly to the moderator WITHOUT pressing the buzzer. **It is highly suggested that players raise their hands while asking a question during a toss-up. This indicates clearly to the moderator that what is being said is not an answer to the toss-up question.** If no team has signaled, the moderator will comply with the request unless the question has been read in its entirety twice. A toss-up may only be read twice by the moderator, not including interruptions due to signaling by players. After reading a question from start to finish twice and no team has given a correct answer, the moderator will reveal the correct answer and continue to the next toss-up.

9. Disqualification During Toss-Ups

A. Players are highly encouraged not to answer a tossup question before being recognized by the spotter. A player who signals first and answers a question correctly before being verbally recognized by the spotter, will not be disqualified. However, a player who has not signaled first and blurts out an answer will be penalized by having their team disqualified for that question.

B. If a player signals but someone on another team answers first and without being recognized, the other team is disqualified from that question and the player who signaled may answer the question after being recognized.

C. If a player signals but someone else on their OWN team answers without being recognized, that team will be disqualified from that question. Other teams may still signal and answer when recognized.

D. Any word or part of a word that a player utters and a moderator hears may be construed as being part of an answer. For example, a toss-up is read and player B1 buzzes in to answer. However, before B1 has a chance to begin answering, player A2 starts talking and says, "Um..." The moderator has legitimate discretion to disqualify team A for that question. All players on all teams are encouraged to remain entirely quiet during the toss-up questions until recognized. The exception to this is rule 8 (above).

E. If a player signals accidentally after the moderator has begun reading the question, the player must give an answer when recognized. If the accidental signal is made before the moderator has begun the actual question, a warning will be given to the player on the first instance; any subsequent occurrences of this nature

will result in the player being required to give an official answer to the question, even when the signal is made before the question has begun.

F. Consultation (see next section) will result in disqualification from a toss-up.

G. See rule 5E above.

10. Consultation

Consultation is defined as giving or receiving assistance to a teammate during a toss-up. Consultation will be declared only by the moderator, though other Certamen staff members may advise the moderator of suspected consultation. The result of the declaration is that the team is disqualified for that question. This assistance can include speaking, writing messages, eye contact, nudging, throat clearing, or any other activity that the Certamen staff feels is serving as communication between players. Each player should basically ignore their teammates during the reading of a toss-up, acting as if those players were not present next to them. Consultation also includes audience members calling out or even whispering information to a player during a toss-up.

11. Answering the Toss-Up Question Appropriately

A. **Answering the question asked** - A player should be careful to answer the question as asked. A player who buzzes before the end of the question is gambling that they know what answer the question will ultimately ask. For example, if the question reads, "Two brothers vied for power in the founding of Rome. Which one prevailed?" and a player buzzes early and says, "Romulus and Remus", that answer is clearly wrong.

B. **Excessive extraneous information** - If a player's answer (after buzzing early) contains many pieces of extraneous but correct information, the moderator will ask the player to narrow down their response to **ONLY** the elements that would have been asked for. For example, suppose the question begins, "Distinguish in meaning between cur and ..." and a player buzzes early and says, "**cūr** means 'why', **currō** means 'run', **cūra** means 'care', and **cūrō** means 'take care of'", the moderator will ask the player to specify which elements of this lengthy answer fit the question as it would have been asked. If a player cannot do this, their answer will be counted incorrect. This situation also applies to toss-ups asking for a specific part of an English sentence to be given in Latin. This rule extends to all question categories, not just language questions as in the examples. **The determination of what is or is not excessive is left up to moderator discretion; however, one additional piece of correct and pertinent information will generally not be considered excessive.**

C. **Multiple Choice Answers** - When a player answers a multiple choice question, they must be prepared to NAME the needed element. A player cannot call the answer by letter or say "the next one" or "the last one" or "the first one."

D. **Spelling on Latin questions** - For questions relating to the Latin language, if a player is recognized and pronounces their answer but then chooses to spell it and spells it incorrectly, the answer will be counted as wrong. If there is a question about what a player answered, they may also be asked by the moderator to spell the answer, and that spelling must be correct.

E. **Prompting for specificity** - The moderators will review the questions before they are asked and will agree on how much of an answer is necessary for each question. A moderator might then ask a player for additional information if an answer is seemingly correct but imprecise. For example, to the question "Who defeated Hannibal at Zama?" the answer "Scipio" is insufficient since there are so many Scipiones in Roman history. The moderator would ask for a more specific answer, in which case the player would have to give as much of the answer as was deemed sufficient for that question by the moderators. However, in a situation where a player is prompted for additional information and the moderators later determine that they shouldn't have been prompted, the player will NOT be punished for the extra incorrect information and scores will be adjusted accordingly.

F. **Answering in Latin versus English** - Unless otherwise specified, any question asked in Latin must be answered in Latin, and correct syntax must be maintained. Questions of this type will typically, but may not,

have a “lead in” (**Responde (aut Anglice aut) Latine**, “Listen carefully to the following passage...”, “Consider the following sentence...”, etc.) For the question, “**Quot oculi tibi sunt?**”, only “**duo**” (the nominative form) would be acceptable; neither “two” nor “**duōs**” would be acceptable, but the complete sentence, “**Habeō duōs oculos**” WOULD also be acceptable. If the answer is required to be given in Latin, the complete response must use Latin, not English pronunciation even if it includes a proper name; saying “Sissero” instead of “Kikero” or “Seezer” instead of “Kaisar” would be incorrect. Additionally, if players have learned the ecclesiastical pronunciation in class, e.g. pronouncing Cicero as “Cheechero,” those players will not be penalized for using this pronunciation for their Latin.

Responses that appear in English as cognates (such as circus = circus), when requested in English, will be accepted regardless of English, Latinate, or any other recognizable pronunciation. For instance, if the response should be “Julia and Marcus are going to the circus.” Circus may be pronounced “keerkus” or “surkus” or “cheerkus.”

G. Answering Command Questions - If the toss-up question instructs a player to carry out a command, the player should wait to be recognized before performing the command. Most importantly, players should be aware that command questions are much like the game Simon Says. If, for example, a question instructs a player to stand first, then the player should stand. If, however, a question does NOT instruct a player to stand, then the player SHOULD NOT stand. Any LARGE movement which deviates from the given instructions may result in an incorrect answer, and this will be determined by the moderator. If a player is for any reason unable to perform the command exactly as specified due to a disability or obstruction, they should describe to the moderator what they would do if they were able.

H. Answering Vocabulary Questions - Unless otherwise specified, a vocabulary item in Latin ought to be referred to by the first form to be found in a Latin dictionary. This form is generally nominative singular for nouns and masculine nominative singular for adjectives, though there are exceptions; for verbs, either the first principal part or the second principal part may be given unless otherwise specified. Vocabulary questions may begin “**Quid Anglicē significat?**” If a question asks for the definition of the verb **portō**, then “carry” or “to carry” or “I carry” are acceptable. If a question asks for the definition of the verb FORM **portō**, then “I carry” would be acceptable but “carry” or “to carry” would not. Be sure to note whether or not a verb FORM is being mentioned or requested, as that is different from a request or mention of just a verb.

I. Non-Standard Latin Forms - Unless otherwise specified, archaic, poetic, or other non-standard forms are NOT acceptable unless the player also indicates (at the time of answering the question) the exceptional nature of the answer. If the question says, “What is the present passive infinitive of **dūcō**?”, then “**dūcier**” is unacceptable unless the player says something like “**dūcier**, but that’s the archaic form”.

J. Greek vs. Roman Mythological Names - If a mythology question stipulates either Greek or Roman culture specifically, then the answer must also correspond to that culture. The wife of Zeus is Hera, not Juno, since both Zeus and Hera are the Greek names. Unless otherwise stated, a question of this nature will continue with that same culture in the boni. If the Zeus/Hera toss-up had a bonus asking who their son was, Ares, not Mars, would be correct. Naming a Roman or Greek author in a question also stipulates the given culture. When neither culture is specified, then an answer from either culture would be acceptable, but the culture selected by the player must be used in answering the subsequent boni for that question.

K. Years - No matter how obvious it may be, all years named as part of an answer must include the designation B.C. or A.D. If no such designation is given by the player, the moderator will prompt the player to make the designation.

L. Correcting an Answer - Be careful about changing an answer while giving it. If a player speaks only part of a word (not the whole word) and catches themselves, they may correct the error with no penalty (for example, you say “Parthe-- I mean Pantheon”). If a player completes an entire word that they realize is incorrect, the player may not correct that word in the answer (for example, you say “Parthenon -- oops, I mean Pantheon”). In both of these instances, it will be the decision of the moderator as to how much of a word was said. If a player is spelling an answer and catches an error before their spelling of the word is complete, they

may start the spelling again and correct that word.

M. **Passage Questions** - For questions in which a passage is read and a question is then asked about the general content of the passage, it will be acceptable for the player to paraphrase, though answers in Latin must still be grammatically correct Latin as outlined above. If the question asks for specific information from the passage, the answer must give that specific information.

N. **Answering Respectively** - For questions involving multiple items, a player may give the answers in the order that was given in the toss-up and say something like “in that order” or “respectively” without having to repeat the items in the question. For example, if the question is “Differentiate in meaning among **cēna**, **cēra**, and **cūra**”, a player may say “dinner, wax, and care respectively” as their answer. However, if the player says “wax, dinner, and care respectively”, then the answer is wrong. If the player doesn’t specify, the moderator will assume the answers are intended to be in the order of the words in the question and proceed accordingly.

P. **Literary Devices**- Answers to questions asking for literary and rhetorical devices must use terms that [from the official NJCL Certamen list linked here](#).

12. Moderator Methodologies

A. When pronouncing Latin, moderators will strive to follow restored Classical Latin pronunciation as specified in Sidney Allen’s *Vox Latina*.

B. If the moderator feels that more information is required, they will provide a prompt or a several prompts, depending on the circumstance. The prompt(s) will be verbal in nature. Any hesitation or action by the moderator other than a verbal prompt is not, in fact, a prompt. Any additional information given by a player without a verbal prompt will be considered part of that player’s answer.

C. The moderator may, for the sake of clarity, ask a player to spell their answer. If the answer involves Latin grammar, vocabulary, or forms, the spelling by the player must then be EXACT in order for the answer to be counted as correct, **including important macra**. It is up to the moderator to decide which macra are or are not essential for each particular answer in any given question. In other question categories, the moderator will decide whether to accept approximate spellings as correct if there’s a question about pronunciation. Ultimately, it is strongly advised for students to provide the spelling of names and terms that appear in official [NJCL Certamen Sources](#). Anything less will be at the discretion of the moderators. This is especially true for non-language categories.

13. Bonus Questions

A. After answering a toss-up correctly, a team will be given two boni questions worth five points each. Team members are permitted and encouraged to discuss their answer before giving it officially. A time limit of fifteen seconds is imposed on each bonus question, beginning at the conclusion of the first reading. If no answer is given after fifteen seconds, the moderator will prompt the captain for an immediate answer. If no answer is given in the next couple of seconds, the moderator will call time and accept no answer for that bonus. If a team asks for a bonus question to be repeated or part of it to be spelled, those repetitions WILL be counted toward the team's fifteen-second time limit; in other words, the clock will not stop for repetitions or clarifications. However, the moderator may still choose to give more than fifteen seconds on a bonus question in certain rare situations, including but not limited to the following: 1) a misstatement of the question by the moderator; 2) the moderator senses a genuine lack of understanding or perception by the team.

B. On occasion, it is necessary for the boni to a toss up to be given to more than one team. In such cases, the answers will be written on scraps of paper. The normal timing rules for boni will still apply, and the captain or designate must begin writing their answer after 15 seconds and must be continually writing just as they would answer without stopping if they were answering verbally.

C. The clock does not stop for repetitions of passages during boni questions. Should a player ask for a repetition of the passage, the time will continue to run.

D. The official answer to a bonus question should be given by a designated team captain whose

identity has been made known to the Certamen staff before the round has begun. A captain may defer their authority to another player for a specific answer if the captain feels uncomfortable or uncertain about giving that answer. Team members should be careful to speak in low tones when discussing their bonus answers; if a remark is made loud enough to be heard beyond the table, it might be construed by the moderator as an official answer. If a team does not know the answer to a bonus question, the captain may guess an answer or may simply say "we don't know" or "no answer."

14. Challenges and Score Modifications

If a player or coach wishes to challenge the accuracy of an answer during the first three rounds of play, then they must do so within fifteen minutes of the conclusion of the round. If the challenge is made during the round, the moderator will note the grounds for the challenge and will consult the published Certamen sources at the end of the round. If the published sources are not able to resolve a challenge in our reasonable discretion, the Certamen staff reserves the right to consult other sources as deemed appropriate. If the dispute involves a toss-up, the moderator might require that the disputing teams write their answers to the boni so that their correctness may be checked and points assigned later when the toss-up dispute is settled. A resolution of any disputes in the first three rounds will be made before the next round of play begins. If a resolution involves a toss-up question, it may require that two teams be brought together to play a make-up question.

If a player or coach wishes to challenge the accuracy of an answer during a Semifinal or Final round, such a challenge must be made to the moderator before the conclusion of the round. No new challenges will be accepted after the conclusion of the semifinal or final round.

The Certamen staff carefully reviews each preliminary round after their conclusion to ensure that all rounds were played accurately and fairly. In some instances score adjustments may be made after each of the first three rounds when errors are discovered, such as answers that were not accepted but should have been counted as correct, or answers that were erroneously accepted as correct.

15. Tiebreakers

In the preliminary rounds, a tie at the end of a match will not be broken, since qualification for the semifinal round is based on total points scored and not on a team's win-loss record.

If at the end of the three preliminary rounds of play there are two or more teams in the same level with identical cumulative scores, a short tie-breaker round will be played, either to determine which of the teams advances to semifinal play or to determine the seeding of the teams involved if they both qualify for the semifinal round. The tie-breaker shall consist of five toss-ups with no boni. In the Novice and Intermediate Levels, the five toss-ups shall include the following: three language questions, one mythology question, and one history question. In the Advanced level, the five toss-ups shall include the following: two language questions, one mythology question, one history question, and one literature question. If the tie-breaking round results in another tie, similar tie-breaking rounds will be played as long as is necessary.

If at the end of the final round there are two teams with identical scores, a tie-breaking round will be played as outlined above. Only the teams involved will play the tie-breaking round.

16. The Final Round

The Final round in each division of competition will feature the three state teams that have won their respective semifinal matches in their division (excluding Wild Card teams, teams combined from different states, and the second ranked Novice team from a single state, all of which are barred from reaching Semifinals). The format and procedures for this round shall be the same as all other rounds, except that all protests must be filed before the conclusion of the round.

The seating of teams at the three tables for the final round shall be determined not by a random draw but based on the cumulative scores of those three teams during their previous four matches. The team with the highest cumulative score will be given first choice, the second highest team will have the second choice, and the

third highest team will have the third choice.

17. Players with Disabilities

If a player has a disability that may affect their ability to play Certamen, the player must notify Certamen Chair during the registration process. If during the round a question is asked in such a way that the player's disability affects their ability to answer the question as asked, the player is welcome to signal, wait to be recognized, and then offer an explanation of the question and why they cannot answer it. For example, if a player is visually impaired, and a question asks the player to make a visual identification, the player may signal and indicate what the question is asking, though they may not be able to answer it. This is also the approach that should be taken if the environment prevents a player from accurately carrying out a command. In such situations the moderator will decide whether to accept the explanation, ask for more information, or count the response as incorrect.

18. Changes and Updates to these Guidelines

The Certamen staff reserves the right to amend or change these guidelines before or during the convention. Any changes will be announced no later than the Competitive Certamen Orientation to all competitors before they are implemented.