Position Papers
‘Iolani MUN Workshop

What is a position paper?

Often a requirement of many committees and conferences, a position paper is a short essay (usually a page in length) detailing the policies and procedures of your country that regard to a certain topic. It is always a good idea to write a position paper because it helps to get a better idea of the actions you should take in committee while representing your country.

When should you write and submit?

You should start thinking about the position paper as you begin to research the topic and your country at least one month in advance. Information about where to send the document as well as the deadline can usually be found in the first pages of your background guide. Some chairs ask you to write more than one position paper for multiple topics, so read carefully. For most conferences, position papers are due a week or two in advance, so be sure to plan ahead and make time for this process.

Why should you write a position paper?

Writing a position paper is really helpful in developing your game plan and strategies for the conference. It will make you a more prepared delegate and better equipped to face challenges and unexpected occurrences, which will most likely happen. If you want to be considered for an award (not that that’s what MUN is about, you go to conferences to LEARN), you should write a position paper. Failure to do so reflects poorly upon you and may cause chairs to judge you in advance. Don’t worry, though! It’s okay if your paper is not the greatest, no one is grading you. Just have something thoughtful and thorough.

General tips for writing a position paper

- Make an outline of the topics/points you want to address/your plan
- Check how your chair wants you to format the paper and entitle it (this can differ from conference to conference)
- Use 12 point Times New Roman (or some other respectable font)
- Include a heading:
  - Name
  - Committee
  - Topic(s)
Country
- Use a wide variety of resources
  - Good News Sources
    - BBC - Has helpful timelines for countries (ex. China, Japan) and major events (ex. North Korean nuclear aggression)
    - NPR - Known as being mostly in the middle regarding news stories
    - Your country’s national news source (if they have one)
  - Good Databases
    - Wikipedia - good country background
    - Encyclopedia Britannica - Good overviews of countries
    - CIA World Factbook - Has all the numbers (ex. GDP, exports, imports)

How to write a position paper

It can seem very intimidating and like a lot of work to write a position paper, but once you get the ball rolling, it is easy to do.

Before you start,
1) Read through your background guide. This will show you what the chair is looking for and what he/she would like you to address.
2) Isolate the main topics of your position paper. These are often given in the background guide
3) Start researching by topic.
4) Organize your research as you go, this may be through making an outline. Make sure to note your country’s stance and the stance of its “enemies” and allies. Also note the US’s stance and that of other relevant, influential countries.

The First Draft
1) Organize your paper. According to BestDelegate.com, it is a good idea to discuss: topic background, past UN actions, national policy, and proposed solutions. You can use these discussion points as sections for your paper.
2) Make an outline. Decide what you’re going to say without the specifics
3) Fill in the outline and write your paper. (Don't forget to add the heading at the top left corner.)

Editing and Revision
1) Review the paper with your fellow delegates, although don’t give all your secrets away to delegates in your committee.
2) Review with your advisor and teachers.
3) Read through the paper yourself. Don’t be too wordy, but be thorough.

Sending It In
1) To turn in your paper, **follow your chair's instructions**, usually given in the background guide.

2) **Method of turning-in can vary.** Sometimes chairs will instruct you to turn it in manually, via email, via google docs, etc.

3) If you have any **conflicts or confusion**, you should definitely **email your chair**. It is much better to address a concern early on. Don't be be nervous to talk to your chair because they want to help you learn!

4) **Include a cover letter** to be polite (if emailing or mailing)

**Additional Resources**