

# SADA

South Australian Debating Association Inc

## **JUNIOR A, GRAND FINAL**

*“That teachers should not encourage students to favour STEM subjects over Humanities”*

### **1. Type of Topic**

This is a normative topic. Normative debates require the affirmative team to propose a model, which is a policy change from the current status quo. The negative team can either support the status quo or provide a countermodel, but should explicitly state their stance to make it clear for the opposition and adjudicator. Teams should spend time detailing their model to ensure that everyone has a clear idea of what they're supporting. The affirmative team has “fiat” within a normative debate, or the right to assume feasibility of their model. This means that the negative team should not argue that teachers would not be able to encourage students to favour STEM subjects over Humanities, or that there would not be sufficient funding for the affirmative's model. However, fiat does not prevent the negative team from arguing that the affirmative's model would have negative consequences on society.

### **2. Background/context**

STEM is an acronym that stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics. STEM subjects generally include biology, chemistry, physics, maths, information and technology (IT) and so on. On the other hand, Humanities subjects include the study of different languages, law, history, philosophy, performing arts and visual arts. Currently, most high schools and universities offer a variety of both STEM and Humanities subjects, but there has been a strong, ongoing emphasis placed on students to take STEM subjects over Humanities subjects.

There are several reasons for this bias, including some believing that STEM professions, such as engineers, computer scientists and software developers, are in higher demand as these are rapidly growing industries. As such, many try to push students to study STEM subjects at school to allow them to study STEM subjects at university and later join this industry.

Teachers can promote STEM subjects over humanities through a variety of means, including putting up posters around school, talking to individual students, or organising days with guest speakers or special excursions to promote STEM fields.

However, there have been concerns about encouraging STEM subjects at the expense of the Humanities. The Humanities also provide important skills including communication skills, cultural awareness and critical thinking, and there are still many workplaces where Humanities subjects

are useful. This debate requires the affirmative team to argue that teachers should stop encouraging students to favour STEM subjects over the Humanities, whereas the negative must support teachers favouring STEM over the Humanities.

### 3. Specific Questions for consideration

- What are the main roles and responsibilities of teachers?
- Why might favouring STEM subjects over Humanities be harmful to students?
  - Why might this be harmful to society as a whole?
- Would focusing on mainly STEM subjects be beneficial to a student's future?
  - How does it benefit students?
  - How does it benefit society more broadly?
- Why are Humanities important to students or society?
  - What practical applications do Humanities have to society?
- What effects does encouraging or not encouraging students to take STEM subjects have on the workforce?
- What should students be focusing on at high school or university?
- How much influence do teachers have on their students and what subjects they choose to take?
  - How do they exert this influence?
- Do teachers have a right to try and influence a student's choice?

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