QFA Debate:

Format, Rules and Guidelines

July 2026, by

Fuseini Yakubu

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Drafted by
Fuseini Yakubu

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This document is provided as a draft for adoption into law, that which will guide debate in national assemblies and other spaces interested in improving the quality of their debates and similar discourse.

It defines and establishes the Question-for-Answer (QFA) debate format designed by Fuseini Yakubu, based on recommendations from his book *The Tragedy Called Democracy in the 21st Century* (2023). While drafted primarily between 2025 and 2026, the lessons culminating in the design of this format of debate were acquired over the span of more than a decade. This debate format is especially designed to be implemented within a democratic system, as described in the aforementioned source material.

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WHEREAS this law defines and establishes a means for debate which shall have the PURPOSE of ensuring cooperation between debating parties, towards better understanding each other, the education and enlightenment of all interested parties, the unearthing of truths, and the discovery of the best ideas amongst the parties, in an environment of honesty, decorum and universal respect, THEREFORE, for each debate that this law applies to, hereinafter referred to as "the debate," the following shall apply.

1. Format

(1) The debate shall primarily be by means of cross-examinations, which is to say, by opposing or alternative parties on an issue taking turns to completely, as much as practicable, examine or interrogate and understand each other's proposal, using questions, suggestions and other relevant means.

(2) Opposing or alternative parties, which is to say, individuals or entities with opposing or alternative proposals, hereinafter refereed to simply as ***parties***, shall, for the purposes of debate

  (a) In the case of a proposal for an action, policy or theory, each present a single-sentence ***proposal*** supported by up to ten (10) single-sentence ***key arguments***; and

  (b) In the case of a proposal for the adoption or review of a law or equivalent document or report, each present a document of same, with each clause or contestable item in the document, and the structure or organisation of the document, serving as individual proposals, without the need for a pre-published or presented list of supporting key arguments for such itemised proposals, but which key arguments may be offered in the course of debate.

(3) The objectives of each party in the debate shall be to

  (a) Explain how their key arguments warrant or justify their proposal;

  (b) Prove each of their key arguments to be true;

  (c) In respect of each key argument, invite the other party to

    (i) Agree, where that party is satisfied, with their argument; or

    (ii) Disprove, or explain why, where that party is unsatisfied with their argument;

  (d) In respect of their proposal, invite the other party to

    (i) Agree with the proposal, where that party is satisfied with its supporting arguments; or

    (ii) Disagree, with reasons, where that party is unsatisfied with its supporting arguments;

(e) Agree with the other party where they have been duly convinced by the other party to do so; and/or

(f) Disprove or disagree, with reasons, where they are unsatisfied with the other party's arguments or proposal.

(4) In furtherance of the objectives of parties to the debate, there shall be a board, which shall be known as the agreement board, to track the status of each key argument and/or proposal in the debate in terms of which is presently

(a) AGREED to by both parties;

(b) DISPUTED, with reason, by the other party;

(c) CONCEDED, or abandoned, by the proposing party; or

(d) PENDING a decision on either of the above.

(5) There may be, to further facilitate engagements in the debate, a set of audiovisual aids, or boards and screens, comprised of

(a) The agreement board;

(b) An audiovisual screen for playback;

(c) A presentation screen for each party; and

(d) A broadcast screen to enlarge viewing for audiences.

(6) There shall be a president of the debate, hereinafter referred to as the president, who shall chair the function and ensure that rules and guidelines of the debate are adhered to.

(7) There shall be floor rules which dictate time allocations and other variable conditions for the debate, according to the needs of the assembly.

(8) Members of the assembly shall be allowed to vote for their preferred proposal based on the outcome of the arguments made, at the end of the debate.

(9) There shall be a clerk of the debate who shall record minutes and resolutions of the debate in a manner approved by the assembly.

(10) For the purpose of accessibility, simplified summaries of resolutions and minutes of the debate, as well as translations of the debate and such summaries and minutes, may be may be made available to different sections of the society or relevant audiences.

2. Procedure

(1) To start the debate, a reminder of the purpose of the debate, and its main rules and guidelines shall be given to the members, audience and parties at the debate, followed by an introduction of the topic for debate and the proposals being debated, and the parties to the debate, by the president.

(2) The president shall ask the parties if either wants to start the debate, and if there is agreement on who should start, the chosen party starts, otherwise, the president shall pick a party by a random means to start the debate.

(3) The party chosen to start the debate, hereinafter referred to as Party 1, shall make opening arguments explaining their key arguments and how they warrant or justify their proposal, and the other party, hereinafter referred to as Party 2, shall do same after that.

(4) Party 1, after opening arguments have been made, shall take the floor to cross-examine Party 2's arguments, in a manner adhering to the objectives of parties in the debate, and Party 2 shall, in turn, similarly cross-examine Party 1's arguments.

(5) A party may make use of approved presentation means and facilities during opening arguments and cross-examinations.

(6) During cross-examinations, the party which has the floor may support their arguments with demonstrations or witness presentations and cross-examinations.

(7) The floor rules of the debate may allow for multiple rounds of cross-examinations.

(8) After cross-examinations, the members and audience of the assembly, hereinafter referred to as audiences, shall be allowed to question the parties in turns where relevant questions are available, with Party 1 being the first to receive audiences' questions.

(9) The floor rules of the debate may allow for multiple rounds of audiences' questions.

(10) Party 1, after audiences' questions have ended, shall take the floor to make closing arguments, and Party 2 shall, in turn, similarly make closing arguments.

(11) The president shall conduct a vote on the proposals debated, after closing arguments have been made by the parties, including the counting and declaration of results of the vote.

(12) The president shall congratulate and thank the parties and audiences for their efforts and contributions to the debate, if it has been without disruptive incident, and subsequently declare the debate concluded.

(13) The president may at any point during the debate, if they deem it necessary, and subject to the legitimate duties conferred on them, adjourn the debate.

(14) The clerk of the debate shall record minutes and the resolutions of the debate from the opening to the closing words of the president, in the manner prescribed by their duties.

3. Rules

3.1 General rules

(1) The provisions set out in this section shall be insisted on, and shall attract appropriate sanctions to an offending person or entity, if they are not complied with or enforced.

(2) The floor rules of the debate, to the extent that they do not contravene any of the provisions of this law or a superior law from which it derives its purpose, shall form part of the rules of the debate.

(3) A party to the debate shall faithfully pursue, and shall not deviate from, the objectives of a parties to the debate.

3.2 Rules of Engagement

(1) All legitimate questions during cross-examination shall be duly answered by the party being cross-examined, failing which shall result in forfeiture of the debate by that party.

(2) A legitimate question shall be a question which is demonstrably critical to the objectives of a party to the debate.

(3) The president shall have the duty to determine if a question is legitimate or not, if the legitimacy of the question is contested, and may, for the purpose of such a determination, ask the party asking a contested question to justify their question.

(4) The president may strike out a question they deem to be a deviation, which is to say, not legitimate, and if they do, the party asking the question shall discard it and proceed.

(5) A party shall be allowed a minute, or more depending on the floor rules, in silence, if they require it, to think through a question before answering it.

(6) A party shall be allowed reasonable facility by the president, to find the answer to a question, if they require it.

(7) A party shall not, in the view of the president, dawdle or stall on a question for the purpose of wasting time.

(8) A duly answered question shall take the form of a direct response to the question or an admission of lack of knowledge for an answer.

(9) The president shall have the duty to determine if a question has been duly answered or not, if the validity of a response is in question.

(10) A ***point of correction*** may be raised against a party which has the floor during cross-examination, and the party which has the floor shall have the prerogative to accept or ignore the call for a correction, and which correction, if they choose to ignore it, may be addressed by the party raising the point of correction when that party next has the floor.

(11) Whereas a party being cross-examined may seek to elaborate on an answer they have provided to a question, the party which has the floor shall have the prerogative to allow or disallow such a request to elaborate after their question has been answered, or end such an elaboration at any point if they have already allowed it.

(12) A party may seek to alter its proposal or key arguments, based on concessions and agreements made so far in the debate, where such an act is agreed to by the other party

and president, at any point between cross-examinations and voting on proposals, for the purpose of arriving at a constructive conclusion to the debate.

3.3 Rules for All

(1) A concession or agreement gained shall not be celebrated, neither by audiences nor by a party being conceded to or agreed with, except that the party being conceded to or agreed with shall humbly and in good faith thank the party conceding or agreeing with them, and that audiences may applaud the gesture accordingly.

(2) All persons regardless of age, background or nature, shall be accorded all due respect.

(3) Notwithstanding clause (2) above, a statement of fact duly submitted in debate, shall not be deemed to be an act of disrespect solely on the basis of one's perception.

(4) All persons shall desist from deliberately causing noise at the debate.

(5) No person or entity shall engage in any acts which seek to disrupt the debates.

3.4 Remedies and Sanctions

(1) The president shall be the arbiter of disputes at the debate.

(2) A party which feels a rule of the debate has been or is being violated may draw the attention of the president to it.

(3) A person other than a party to the debate, who feels that a rule of the debate has been or is being violated may draw the attention of designated authorities or assistants to it.

(4) The president may warn, or order the removal of, any person or entity at the debate, for violation of any of the rules of the debate, depending on the severity of the offence, whereas a removal of the person or entity shall be warranted in the case of offenses that seek to disrupt the debate.

4. Guidelines

(1) The provisions set out in this section shall be offered only as advice, being profoundly wise nonetheless to be adhered to by all persons as they benefit those who adhere to them in debate, as well as other participants and society as a whole concerned with that debate.

(2) It shall be noted that there is neither winning and losing nor competition under this debate format because, by allowing parties to only work to understand each other better, it only serves to create learning, cooperation and discovery of brilliant ideas, for all.

(3) With respect to the logic of arguments, a party shall be advised to, in debate

(a) Remember, key arguments deal with the "why" of a proposal, as in, answering the question "why should a particular proposal be pursued?" so that the reasons become the key arguments; and

(b) Address the argument, as this debate format is based on the superiority of logic over authority, to wit, a person must address the argument rather than the person or source, which is to say, further

(i) If an argument is purely logical or theoretical – which is to say, observing or drawing linkages between verifiable facts, or making conclusions or deductions thereof – a person must address the logic of that argument, and/or the facts it is supposedly relying on, rather than who it is coming from; that

1. In other words, an argument may be defended as true or not, NOT because "x or y person says so" or because "xyz number of people say so," but because of the proof within the argument itself;

2. The truth is neither in the authority of a person nor in the number of people behind an idea, but in the substance of their argument or observation, which remains to be defended, even if one is merely adopting that argument from an authority – as in, "I argue this to be true, because of 'x and y' logic, reasons or calculations [as observed by 'x or y person'];" and

3. An argument cannot be dismissed based on who it is coming from and their perceived lack of authority, because an argument can only be dismissed based on a proven flaw in the argument itself; whereas

(ii) Sources may be challenged for arguments that are empirical in nature, as in, for example, if one makes an argument like

1. 'X' number of people or amount did 'X' and 'Y;'

2. Entity 'A' said or did 'X' and 'Y;'

3. 'X' and 'Y' are at location '123;'

4. 'X' cost 'Y' amount;

5. 'X' is 'Y' old; or

6. 'X' happened in year 'Y.'

(4) With respect to argument style, a party shall be advised to, in debate

(a) Never hasten to respond to a question, but be at liberty to pause and reflect for a minute on the question before responding, if the answer is not readily available;

(b) Before countering an argument, consider for a moment if the other party might be right in any way at all, and admit where they might be right, before making subsequent arguments if any;

(c) If a party disagrees with or rejects one's argument, rather than agitate over it, simply probe the disagreement further;

(d) Always approach others' argument with genuine curiosity;

(e) Never presume a person's argument, and always ask to confirm their position;

(f) Favor suggestive arguments rather than assertive ones – as in, for example, starting arguments with "I think" – since suggestive arguments create room for revision, which one may need at any time for a number of reasons, whereas assertive arguments set one up for embarrassment if a revision becomes necessary thereby forcing a person into dishonest, aggressive, irrational or illogical behaviour to defend themselves from such avoidable embarrassment in debate;

(g) Always offer calm and collected arguments rather than loud and aggressive ones, since the strength of an argument lies only in its logic rather than in its volume or aggressiveness, and since the latter as well only set one up for embarrassment in the manner of assertive arguments described above;

(h) Always approach arguments with a constant readiness to be corrected or enlightened as to an error or gap in one's knowledge or assumptions, to make such corrections or enlightenment delightfully welcome if and when they arrive;

(i) Remember that a positive attitude to learning from any and all persons does not in any way undermine a person's respect but rather, on the contrary, elevates it in the eyes of others; and

(j) Remember to be humble, patient, respectful and encouraging of others in pointing out their errors, as one perceives them, since it takes great effort for a person to leave their own ideas for others'.

(5) A party shall be advised to address the people, which is to say, the members or audience, and the other party to the debate, in their arguments, rather than the president, except where the president is specifically the target of a conversation.

(6) For the purpose of honorifics, a party may invoke the honour of the president and members of the assembly, such as with an "honourable" title.

(7) All persons shall be advised to approach every other person with genuine respect and humility, regardless of their age, background or other nature.

5. Appendix

5.1 Definitions

The following definitions shall apply as the understanding of this law

Assembly: any gathering or community or group for whom the debate is being held.

Floor: the space and opportunity to speak or argue, given as of right.

Members: those who have the right or authority to vote on proposals being debated.

5.2 Attributions

(1) This law was designed and drafted by

(a) Fuseini Yakubu

5.3 Certificate of Adoption

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- The discovery of the best ideas amongst the parties;
- In an environment of honesty, decorum and universal respect.

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