Teaching kit for the preparation of a joint blended MUN

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Organising a MUN

Organising a Model United Nations (MUN) conference in your institution allows for greater flexibility regarding dates, schedule, venue, conference topics, and for choosing a committee, member states, and conference topics. However, it can be challenging due to the high workload and amount of time planning and organising a MUN takes. Hence, it should ideally be done in a team to divide tasks. If there are not enough capacities and resources available to organise a MUN, and for carrying it out, we advise visiting an organised MUN as participation entails only the preparatory parts for the students and not the organisation of the whole conference. There is an excellent variety of options when it comes to attending a (N)MUN conference. See Model United Nations or NMUN. Hence, there should be a good fit for everyone.

However organising a conference can also be a very enriching and valuable experience. This teaching kit for joint blended MUN provides a thorough overview of all tasks one must consider when planning a MUN conference. It provides a checklist and tips for organising a MUN and pays attention to the differences between virtual and physical conferences. The conference planning is divided into three phases: before the conference, during the conference, and after the conference. These phases are explained in detail below.

Conference organisation in presence

In the following, the process of organising a MUN in presence will be explained in detail, followed by a checklist for each of the three phases. Whenever there are vital differences in regard to virtual conferences, these will be pointed out.

Before the conference

The venue: If one wants to organise a MUN in presence, thorough attention has to be paid to the venue, participants' travel, and accommodation, and a (cultural) program at site. The cultural program and additional activities are optional. However, they play a vital role as they provide an opportunity for the students and the teachers to network and get to know each other on a deeper level. Students will have to stick to their character as a representative of a particular country during the conference which might make it harder for the ones representing certain "non-sympathetic" countries to make friends.

The timing: We advise starting organising at least half a year before the conference is going to take place because accommodations need to be booked in advance and travel arrangements have to be made. The first step is to form a team of people responsible for the organisation as well as decide on one primary coordinator who will keep an eye on the whole planning process and assign tasks. Including students in these tasks might also be an option to as they would gain valuable experiences from being part of an organisational team. In a first team meeting, everyone involved should be briefed about the timelines, given the information necessary to perform the tasks, and open questions should be answered. Ideally, at least one person of this team should have experiences with MUN and know what this kind of conference requires, in order to have a better overview of the set-up and procedures. It is helpful to use a shared list of tasks so that everyone can track the progress of the planning. Online tools might be helpful for this. Furthermore, a shared folder for all the documents needed for organising is useful. During the first meeting, a timeline and deadlines/milestones can be set so that everyone knows what has to be done and until when. For this part, it is crucial to include additional time and flexibility in the planning process, as things might not go according to plan.

The topics: When the planning process has started, it is a good idea to decide about the conference topics right away. This way, they can be integrated into the preparatory course

giving students more time to conduct their research. When thinking about which topics to choose, we advise looking at current debates at the UN, at recent events that are discussed worldwide, or choosing them according to the team members' main foci and research interests to provide enough information on them. Notably, one does not have to choose several topics. It is common to have two, but smaller conferences only have one, and the biggest conference (NMUN New York) has three. However, having two topics, even though it requires more work and research from the students, offers a greater dynamic at the conference as there will have to be debates and negotiations about which topic to address at the MUN.

Speeches: Furthermore, speakers for the opening and closing ceremony who are somehow related to the conference topics should be decided on and contacted/invited if necessary.

The dais: Crucially, a dais (1-3 people) should be found early on as they might want to be part of the planning process and course. The dais can either consist of experienced students from the own or other (partner) universities or organisation team members who know the exact procedures. Here, it is crucial to choose people with a lot of experience and knowledge about MUN as they will moderate and facilitate the whole conference which means they are responsible for procedures being carried out correctly and for the general atmosphere at the conference and learning outcomes of the students.

Participants: Regarding the participants, the planning depends on whether only students from the own course/university or also from other institutions are invited to join, which would necessitate a registration form and intensified advertising activities. Furthermore, there are different options of either letting the participants chose the represented member state and/or delegation themselves or assigning member states and forming delegations. There are advantages for each option, and we recommend that one should make sure particular member states who are vital for the dynamic of the conference (this mainly refers to an equal geographical distribution and the permanent member states of the security council) and for the set topic are represented. It is a good idea to keep a constantly updated participants' list from the beginning always to know the exact number of students. This list should include at least names and contact details (e-mail). Information can be added to it as necessary, e.g., dietary preferences, study program, assigned member state/delegation. As for the deadline

for the position papers, we advise setting it three to four weeks before the conference as the students will have to read all the other position papers to learn about the countries' positions on the topic and prepare for the conference by thinking about possible allies with whom they could work with during the MUN. Therefore, the submitted position papers should be distributed virtually to all participating students. This deadline should be communicated as early as possible to enable a thorough editing process and feedback e.g., from the dais or teachers.

Fees: The participants' fee and payment should be communicate from the beginning on as it might hinder participants from participating in the conference. In such a case, funding options should be available.

Travel: In case students from other universities or institutions participate, it is important to arrange and book travel and accommodation early. Hotels often allow booking a contingent of rooms which is useful when the number of participants still needs to be fixes. However, make sure that there is an option for free cancellation of the rooms if participants get sick on short notice. The same goes for flights, trains, and buses, which should be booked with a free cancellation option.

It is also possible to leave the planning of travel and accommodation to the participants. Options for hotels and travel instructions (nearest airport or train station, …) should be provided in that case. Regarding the venue, make sure that the rooms are big enough to host all participants during formal sessions and book additional smaller rooms for informal sessions where the students can work on their working papers. An appropriate venue can be on campus, in buildings belonging to the host institution, in public buildings such as the city hall, or in private buildings such as conference centres. However, the additional costs should be considered if the rooms are booked elsewhere than at the institution. The overall costs will have to be calculated and include food, drinks, snacks, and maybe the cultural program. These costs can be either covered through funding or a participation fee that students would have to pay. The participants' fee and payment should be communicate from the beginning as it might hinder participants in participating in the conference. In such a case, funding options should be available to ensure an inclusive conference.

Cultural program: As mentioned above, a physical MUN can entail a cultural program (mandatory or voluntary) that would have to be planned. It could include sightseeing, touristic visits, dinner, lunch, or other joint events. Furthermore, providing a guide for the city/venue is advisable. This guide should include restaurants, cultural, and tourist attractions, and events, as well as insider tips and a map of the city and venue. Information on public transport, medical emergencies, and on the dress code should be included as well. The guide can be used to inform the participants and facilitate their planning. The conference program should also be included in the guide, when deciding on the cultural program.

Program for the conference: The program of the conference should include the following parts:

1) A short rules training to refresh the students' memories and ensure that everyone understands the rules of procedure, which is crucial for a successful conference. This rules of procedure training should last for approximately 60-180 minutes.
2) An opening ceremony with speakers/keynote, administrative information to be given by the organisation team, formal and informal sessions in which the actual MUN simulation takes place. If the conference has several topics, the opening ceremony has to include agenda-setting, too.
3) In the conference itself, formal and informal sessions (think of providing enough rooms).
4) A voting procedure.
5) A closing ceremony with awards (if you want to hand out awards).
6) A debriefing and feedback session.
7) We learned that a faculty session each morning is helpful for finding out and speaking about any issues that arose during the MUN and discussing how to approach and solve them.

Depending on how long the MUN is planned to be, this program can be stretched over just a few hours up to a whole week. Three to four days of conference, including one to three days of cultural program, are a good timeframe, but it depends on how many students participate and on several other resources like funding.

Advertising the MUN: Regarding advertisement of the MUN, a variety of options , such as Social Media, websites, e-mails, flyers, posters, can be used. An invitation with all the information and the program in PDF format is a good way to distribute the information quickly and also to invite local/national press to attend the MUN and write pre-/post-reports to generate a greater awareness of the MUN and thus already start the advertisement process for the next conference. Some institutions offer help from a press or communication department. Others rely on own measures to be taken.

Equipment at the venue: At the venue, there should be free Wi-Fi for all participants to use online programs to work on working papers together and conduct additional research. A projector, computer, and black-/whiteboard should be available to share the speakers' list and the current motions on the floor, as well as to provide additional information during the MUN, such as the times of the informal sessions. It would help if one ensures that all technical equipment is set up and everything works properly. However, it would be good to check the equipment a few days ahead to avoid technical issues, especially if the conference is hybrid or completely virtual.

Printing: We recommend to printing the following in advance: name tags, placards, data protection consent forms, signs for video and audio recording, and signs to find the venue and rooms. Furthermore, drafts for outcome documents (working papers, draft resolutions) should also be prepared and distributed to participants before the MUN.

Snacks and drinks: The last preparatory measures are ordering snacks and drinks for the MUN. As the days can get quite long, fresh fruits and vegetables, cookies, sweet, and salty snacks are a good option to be offered during the informal sessions and breaks. Coffee, tea and cold drinks should be provided or communicated to the participants to bring their own drinks/bottles and snacks if possible. The final part of preparation is to assign tasks to the organisation team and organisational team, as a few things need to be taken care of during the conference which will be elaborated on below. There should be two people present at all times for emergencies and questions but also a clear division of responsibilities between the organisation team members so that everyone know whom to approach if an issue arises.

During the conference

Rule Training: We strongly advise that each MUN starts with a rule training so that all students are on the same page and know the rules enforced at this conference. A short break usually follows this before the opening ceremony starts. It is possible to welcome the participants and inform them about the venue and administrative questions before/after the rule training or during the opening ceremony. As already said, at least two organisation team members should always be present for questions and in case of an emergency. The conference organisation team should support the dais during the conference, e.g., for technical and administrative issues as well as providing snacks and drinks.

The organisation team: Furthermore, the organisation team is responsible for taking care of the venue and guiding everyone through the conference as well as the cultural program. As mentioned previously, regular feedback sessions with faculty advisors and head delegates (if there are such in your conference) are a good idea to discuss things that can be improve during the MUN. If one decides to hand out awards, they should be decided on at the end of the conference in close cooperation with the dais, who will have observed the work of the students the closest.

Awards: There are several options for awards but common ones are: best position paper, best delegation, best speech, and the peer award which the participating students vote on. If required, the awards can be printed and handed out on the last day of the conference. Keep in mind that a template for the awards should be at hand and prepared in advance.

Post-conference

Closing ceremony: Will take place after the voting procedure and the last formal session, where the MUN is adjourned until the next year. It should include at least one speaker summarising the MUN experience and briefly referring back to the topics and learning outcomes. The awards can be distributed in the closing ceremony as well.

Debriefing: We suggest doing a short debriefing and collecting feedback before the participants leave. This can be done anonymously (e.g. through a survey or by providing paper where the students can note their feedback) or in an open discussion.

Post-conference: In the days following the MUN, the adopted resolutions should be published online, and a conference report with pictures should be written and published for example,

on the websites. Lastly, receipts should be handed into financial management if necessary. In addition, it would be tremendously useful to have an evaluation session with all members of the organisational team to discuss the challenges and collect ideas on how to further improve the processes and the general planning for the following conference.

Checklist for conference organisation in presence

To organise a MUN in presence, we provide checklists (before, during, after) that include the most important tasks. These checklists can be extended, shortened, and adjusted to one's own needs and circumstances.

Before the conference

- ☐ Find people to organise and assign responsibilities
- ☐ Decide who is going to lead the team as the main coordinator
- ☐ Start with a first team meeting to discuss open questions and get everyone on board
- ☐ Provide training and information for the organisation team so that they can do their tasks
- ☐ Set up joint folders and task lists for the team
- ☐ Set a timeline for all the tasks and a deadline when everything should be prepared
- ☐ Decide on one or two conference topics
- ☐ Find a suitable dais for the conference (e.g., experienced students/organisation team)
- ☐ Set and collect participants' fee
- ☐ Assign countries to the participants and form delegations
- ☐ Set and communicate deadline for position papers
- ☐ Book rooms for the committees at the venue
- ☐ Organise a cultural program if necessary (e.g. sightseeing, touristic visits)
- ☐ Organise lunch and dinner options/events
- ☐ Decide on and distribute the conference program
- ☐ Inform the participants about the setting, venue, and dress code
- ☐ Book travel and accommodation if necessary
- ☐ Look for and invite speakers for the opening and closing ceremony
- ☐ Prepare a guide for the city, including restaurants, cultural attractions, medical info
- ☐ Marketing measures to be taken e.g., social media, websites, e-mails, ...
- ☐ Invite local/national press to attend and report
- ☐ Make sure that there is free Wi-Fi for all participants
- ☐ Do a technical check before the conference
- ☐ Print name tags, placards, data protection consent forms, video/audio recording, photography signs, and signs for the venue and rooms

- ☐ Prepare drafts for outcome documents (working papers, draft resolutions)

- ☐ Correct and publish position papers

- ☐ Order snacks and cold/hot drinks

- ☐ Assign tasks to the organisation team during the conference

During the conference

- ☐ Opening Ceremony

- ☐ Welcome participants and inform them about venue and administrative issues.

- ☐ Be present for any questions and in case of emergency.

- ☐ Support the dais.

- ☐ Provide snacks and drinks.

- ☐ Take care of the venue and the technical equipment

- ☐ Guide through the conference and cultural program

- ☐ Hold regular feedback sessions with faculty advisors and head delegates.

- ☐ Decide on and print awards before the end.

Post-conference

- ☐ Closing Ceremony

- ☐ Grant awards

- ☐ Get feedback

- ☐ Publish resolutions (online)

- ☐ Write and publish conference reports

- ☐ Hand in receipts to financial management if necessary

- ☐ Note possible improvements for the next MUN-organisation

Organisation of a virtual conference

The primary tasks of organising a virtual MUN are the same as for a conference in presence. However, some additional aspects should be taken into account, and others, such as the cultural program, can be left out. In the following, only the aspects that differ from organising a conference in presence will be explained.

Before the conference

The first steps to start the organisation process are the same for a virtual as for a conference in presence. However, the invitation of speakers for the opening and closing ceremony related to the conference topics might be easier for a virtual conference because there is no need to travel. The same applies to the dais, who does not have to travel. Nevertheless, if the dais is from a country in another time zone, the time difference should be kept in mind, and the program adjusted accordingly.

Software: Organising and booking travel and accommodation are not necessary for a virtual conference. However, there might be a need for a license for an online conference tool. This tool should provide breakout rooms, screen-sharing, and large enough number of participants to log simultaneously. Such a license is the most significant cost factor next to organisation team cost to be considered for the participants' fee.

Fees: The participants' fee and payment should be communicate from the beginning on as it might hinder participants from participating in the conference. In such a case, funding options should be available. However, as there is no cultural program on site and no need to buy food, drinks, and snacks, the participation fee will likely be lower for virtual conferences.

Program: For a virtual MUN neither a cultural program nor a guide for the city is necessary. However, the conference program is quite similar. It should include the same parts: a short rules training for repetition of 45-60 minutes, an opening ceremony with speakers/keynote, technical information to be given by the organisation team, formal and informal sessions (including agenda-setting and voting), a closing ceremony with awards and a debriefing. The feedback session can be substituted by a link to an online feedback/evaluation survey. A faculty feedback session each morning is helpful only if the virtual conference lasts longer than one day. However, the faculty members can go to a breakout room any time during the conference to discuss current difficulties and issues.

Breaks: As online meetings are much more tiring, we advise to make enough breaks (shorter and longer ones) during which the monitors can be switched off. Furthermore, the MUN should be shorter than in presence. A few hours up to two days maximum are sufficient. The same is true for the rules training, which is much more tiring online and should be kept shorter.

Marketing: It is almost the same for a virtual MUN. Nevertheless, as the press might not be able to take pictures, screenshots can be provided, and they can join the online conference for a short time only. This might facilitate reporting because no travel to the venue is necessary, and the costs (time, money) are lower than in presence. Students for interviews can be asked before the conference and sent to breakout rooms with the journalists during the MUN.

Equipment: A technical check before the virtual MUN is necessary. This check should include the cameras and microphones of the participants as well as the used tools, e.g., the conference tool, whiteboard, note-taking applications, and screen-sharing. Participants should sign data protection consent forms either in a scanned form or electronically signed. As for a MUN in presence, drafts for outcome documents (working papers, draft resolutions) can also be prepared and distributed to the participants ahead of the MUN. Links to these documents can also be provided via the chat during the conference, and screen-sharing can be used.

During the conference

As explained before, the virtual MUN also starts with a rule training followed by a short break and then an opening ceremony. It is possible to welcome the participants and inform them about technical issues such as being on mute during formal session before/after the rule training or during the opening ceremony. Name tags are not possible online, but participants can rename themselves appropriately, for example with "Country, Name." The organisation team should support the dais during the conference, e.g., for technical and administrative issues such as breakout rooms or screen sharing. At least two organisation team members should be present at all times for questions and in case of emergency. Regarding the speakers' list, we advise using a shared document and provide a link to it. On this document, the current motions on the floor, additional information during the MUN such as the times of the informal

sessions, and links to important documents or e-mail addresses to hand in working papers and draft resolutions can be provided, too.

Post-conference

After the voting procedure, which can be done by reaction buttons such as raising a hand, and the last formal session, where the MUN is adjourned until the next year, the closing ceremony will take place in a virtual format. After the closing speech, the awards are distributed virtually. A tip is to have everyone switch out the camera, and only the award winners and speakers have their camera on so that they are better visible. We advise doing a short debriefing and collecting feedback before the participants log out. This can be done anonymously (e.g., by providing a padlet or a link to an evaluation/feedback form) or in an open discussion.

Checklist for conference organisation virtually

Before the conference

☐ Find people for organising and assign responsibilities

☐ Decide who is going to lead the team as the main coordinator

☐ Start with a first team-meeting to discuss open questions and get everyone on board

☐ Provide training and information for the organisation team so that they can do their tasks

☐ Set a timeline for all the tasks and a deadline when everything should be prepared

☐ Decide on one or two conference topics

☐ Find a suitable dais for the conference (e.g., experienced students/organisation team)

☐ Set and collect participants' fee

☐ Assign countries to the participants and form delegation

☐ Set and communicate the deadline for position papers

☐ Get a license for an online conference tool

☐ Invite speakers the for opening and closing ceremony

☐ Set and distribute the conference program

☐ Inform the participants about the program, times, and provide links

☐ Assign tasks to the organisation team during the conference

☐ Marketing measures to be taken e.g., social media, websites, e-mails, ...

☐ Invite local/national press to attend the MUN

☐ Prepare drafts for outcome documents (working papers, draft resolutions)

☐ Do a technical check before the conference (conference tool, other applications)

☐ Correct and publish position papers

During the conference

☐ Opening ceremony

☐ Welcome participants and inform the about the program and data protection consent

☐ Be present for questions and in case of emergency

☐ Support the dais

☐ Manage technical issues e.g., breakout rooms

☐ Hold regular feedback sessions with faculty advisors and head delegates

☐ Decide on awards before the end

Post-conference

- ☐ Closing ceremony
- ☐ Grant awards virtually and in written form
- ☐ Get feedback
- ☐ Publish resolutions (online)
- ☐ Write and publish conference reports
- ☐ Hand in receipts to financial management if necessary
- ☐ Write and publish conference reports
- ☐ Hand in receipts to financial management if necessary
- ☐ Note possible improvements for the next MUN-organisation