

Secondary Students Debate – Sustainability Culture (Ages 12–18)

July 2, 2026 (on Zoom)

0900-1100 UTC: Secondary Students Debate

1130-1200 UTC: Secondary Student Awards

The secondary students will take part in a live, quickfire debate on the following motion,
“This house believes that governments don’t give enough priority to sustainability culture when trying to achieve the UN SDGs”.

Round 1: Introductory videos (3 mins) – introduce your team & key arguments.

Round 2: Rebuttals – the teams will take turns challenging the arguments of their opponents and defending their own points. To keep things lively, each speaking slot will be just 1 min long.

Round 3: Closing arguments – each team will summarise its closing points (1 min).

Round 4: Questions from the audience – teams will be invited to respond to questions from the online audience.

Teams will be randomly assigned to either support or oppose the motion – the teams will be notified at their first debate prep sessions on **June 17-19** (dates/times TBC – see further details below).

Students are invited to think critically about whether governments place enough priority on sustainability culture when trying to achieve the UN SDGs. The goal is not just to win the debate, but to explore pathways for effective communication and sustainability action amongst young people.

Teams should prepare structured arguments (introduction, key points, rebuttals, conclusion), with team members conducting their own research to support their arguments. This is a chance for students to show their understanding of the topic, think on their feet and respond to different ideas with confidence and respect.

During the two weeks leading up to the Debates, TSL will host a series of preparatory sessions for each team (approx. 1.5 hrs each week – dates/times TBC):

- **Debate Prep Session 1 (June 17, 18 or 19)** – meet your teammates & plot strategy
- **Debate Prep Session 2 (June 24, 25 or 26)** – finalise your points & submit your video to schools@trustforsustainableliving.org

Safety Guidance

The Debates will be completely online to allow for more inclusive and international participation (on Zoom – invites to follow). To ensure student safeguarding is met, cameras will be turned off until it is each team’s turn to present. We encourage diversity, and the debates are intended to be a safe space for students to speak. Differing and unique arguments are widely supported so the students can express themselves and their opinions. To help ensure student safety, reasonable precautions should be taken by supporting adults and schools. Please notify TSL staff if you observe suspicious behaviour. Inappropriate and hateful language is prohibited and students may be removed from the debates if these rules are violated.