

Training PhD students

Session: Scientific Blitz

Evidence based debates on contemporary health issues

Skills and competencies

Critical thinking, multidisciplinary research, database search, scientific debate, contextual analysis

Duration and scheduling

15 minutes, ideally first thing in the morning
24-hour preparation for two participants (presenter and opponent)

Video: <https://youtu.be/RtGv2o-8dhE>

Outline

A structured debate on a provocative and relevant topic, the Scientific Blitz pits two students against each other, one as presenter and the other as opponent, to argue for or against a pre-assigned topic.

Objectives

- To mark the punctual start of the day
- To engage students in scientific debate
- To put students' database-search skills to use in identifying relevant literature
- To alert students to the broader social and scientific context of their research
- To require students to read rapidly and develop arguments to support the claim they have been assigned

Preparation

Facilitators

Prepare a list of topic statements, one per day, and a key reference for each topic

Identify and announce two speakers for each Blitz: one student as the lead speaker for the motion, and another as the opponent

Hand out the key reference per Blitz to all participating students one day in advance (no earlier!)

The two speakers

Expand their knowledge on the subject by searching relevant databases

Prepare their arguments for or against the topic statement

All participating students

Read the key reference

Find and read other materials around the selected topic

Steps

The facilitator opens the session and monitors time strictly

The speaker has ten minutes to introduce the topic, describe the controversy and present their argument

The opponent has two minutes to present their views

The speaker has five minutes to respond to the opponent and defend their view

The facilitator opens the floor for an eleven-minute general discussion

Outcomes

After a series of scientific blitz sessions, students should be able to:

1. Rapidly cover the background to an important research question
2. Identify materials in databases and condense them into short oral contributions
3. Feel comfortable with the concept and practice of scientific debate
Reflect on and critique the social and scientific context of specific research

Expected Learning Outcomes	Session contents		
	Critical debate on topical issues	Rapid and critical readings	Lively discussions and feedback
ELO 1	•	•	
ELO 2		•	
ELO 3			•
ELO 4	•		