INTERVIEW JUDGE GUIDELINES
The Academic Decathlon is a ten-event scholastic competition for teams of high school students. The ten events include comprehensive written exams in: Art, Economics, Language and Literature, Mathematics, Music, Social Science and Science. In addition, students deliver both a prepared and impromptu speech, write an essay and communicate through a conversational interview. Students also participate in the culminating team event, open to the public, known as the Super Quiz.

The Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) inaugurated the first Ventura County Academic Decathlon in 1982 to promote learning and academic excellence through teamwork among students of all achievement levels and has continued to coordinate this competition on an annual basis. Ventura County teams have enjoyed tremendous success in the Academic Decathlon, winning both state and national championships.

A particularly unique aspect of the Academic Decathlon format is that it is designed to include students from all academic backgrounds. A team consists of nine full-time students from the ninth through twelfth grades of the same high school. Each nine-member team is comprised of three students whose grade point average falls into the "A" category (Honor students), three students in the "B" category (Scholastic students), and three students in the "C" or below category (Varsity students). All students compete in all ten events. Students in each category compete only against students in that category.

Fostering academic excellence is a cooperative education effort. Without the help and support of our sponsors, volunteers, parents and teachers, this premier scholastic competition would not be such a great success. On behalf of my office and the Ventura County Academic Decathlon, I thank you for your participation and hard work, and look forward to a fun, successful and rewarding competition.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

John E. Tarkany
Ventura County Office of Education
Day 1 Competition Schedule:

8:00 to 8:45 a.m. Judges Check-in: Breakfast served.

9:00 to 10:00 a.m. Interview Orientation

10:15 a.m. Interview Event begins

10:30 a.m. Speech Event begins

12:15 to 1:15 p.m. BREAK and LUNCH for decathletes and coaches (Some decathletes will start lunch later due to their speech and interview schedule)

1:15 p.m. Competition resumes

4:00 p.m. Day 1 Competition concludes (Conclusion time is approximate; length of day is contingent upon # of participants)
Objective
To create a professional, yet warm, environment for Decathletes to complete the Interview portion of the Academic Decathlon competition by judging all interviews in a uniform, unbiased manner throughout the day and keeping confidential thereafter the scoring results of all Decathletes’ performances.

General Format
A group of 2-3 Judges to include the Room Chair will comprise an interview judging team.

Judges will use Scantrons to evaluate each Decathlete's interview.

The Room Chair will be responsible for (a) welcoming and dismissing decathletes; (b) distributing and collecting Scantrons from the Judges, checking, collating and placing each set of completed Scantrons in a designated tray (see below); (e) addressing any scoring discrepancies and/or team member efficiency concerns. (f) In addition, s/he will be responsible for timing each interview and keeping the Judges on schedule.

Interview Room Set-up

Interview Judges seats ← 5 feet → Decathlete’s Seat

Tray for completed Scantrons

Hallway

Time Rules
Each decathlete has an assigned Interview time and room assignment. Judging teams must adhere to the time limits to ensure a fair competition. Decathletes must be excused on time. All decathletes are guaranteed the same amount of time for their interview, 7 minutes. Time interviews precisely. Admit and dismiss decathletes according to schedule.

- 1-2 minutes for introductions and instructions
- 7 minutes for the interview
- Decathlete exits room
- 5 minutes for scoring, collecting, and collating Scantrons

General Guidelines
- Cellphones must be OFF at all times while in the Interview rooms.
- Know where the restrooms are located. Unless unavoidable, restroom breaks should be restricted to the lunch hour and if applicable, when there is a No Show Decathlete.
- Decathlete scoring results must not be shared with anyone other than the event coordinators.
- Judges and the Room Chair should not make any statement to a Decathlete that would imply or convey an opinion on the outcome of that person’s performances.
• The Room Chair and/or Judge should report any Interviews of a disturbing nature and the name of the Decathlete involved to an event coordinator during the lunch hour or at the day’s end.
• Discrepancies in the execution of the role of Judge or Room Chair that cannot be resolved among the parties involved should be reported immediately to an event coordinator.
• The Room Chair must address persistent scoring discrepancies between Judges greater than a two-point spread in each category early in the day of the competition. If the Room Chair is unable to garner a general consensus among the Judges on how to score appropriately, s/he should call on an event coordinator for a resolution.
• At the end of the day, it is hoped you found this experience rewarding. Your help is invaluable. Pat yourself on the back for a job well done. Thank you!

INTERVIEW JUDGE GUIDELINES

Scoring
• Each Judge is assigned an ID number (1, 2 or 3) at the beginning of the day and should use Scantrons bearing that same ID number for all Decathletes throughout the competition.
• Scantrons should be filled out by Judges only after the Decathlete has left the room. Keep your Scantron face down at all other times. Make certain all of the Scantron is completed, including the No Penalty/Penalty section.
• Judges must remain unbiased by their own opinions when listening to each Decathlete’s interview and score the interview on the merits of the decathletes interview.
• A Judge must abstain from scoring any Decathlete known to him/her and write “KNOWN TO ME” in the upper right-hand corner of that presenter’s Scantron.
• Write “NO SHOW” in the upper right-hand corner of the Scantron intended for a Decathlete who does not appear in the room to give his/her interview.
• The interview should be 7 minutes in length. The Interview Room Chairperson should time the interview (discreetly) using the stop-watch that has been provided. The chairperson should not allow another question to be asked after 6 minutes and 45 seconds. The chairperson should also conclude any answer that goes beyond 7 minutes and 15 seconds.
• Judges should score each Decathlete’s interview independently, though discussion among judges after scoring is allowed.
• Decathletes should refrain from divulging the school they represent, but must not be penalized if that information is disclosed.

ROOM CHAIR GUIDELINES, SCRIPTS

• Any Decathlete who arrives 10 minutes or later should be directed to his/her coach and an event coordinator.  

Before the First Decathlete:  
• Make certain everyone’s cell phones are turned OFF.
• Confirm that your stopwatch is working properly and how to use it, and organize the timing cards on your desk.
• Give the Judges Scantrons and ask them to write their name at the top [see INTERVIEW JUDGE SCORING GUIDELINES Scantron at the back of this packet]. Make sure each Judge uses Scantrons with his/her correlating Judge ID number consistently throughout the competition.
• Verify that the name of the Decathlete on your schedule appears on the Judges’ Scantrons.
• Ask the Judges to be seated.
• Go out to the hallway and if a Decathlete is awaiting you, shake his/her hand and say:

Introductions and Instructions (1-2 minutes):
1. "Welcome to the interview room. My name is __________________________, and I will be participating as a judge and timekeeper."

2. "I would like you to meet your other judges." 
   (Judges Self Introductions)  
   1. ____________________________  
   2. ____________________________

3. "Please tell us your first name and your decathlete ID number."

4. "Please have a seat. The interview will last approximately 7 minutes."

5. "When 6 minutes have passed, I will notify the judges that a minute remains and will ask for conclusion."

6. "At the end of 7 minutes, I will notify the judges that time has expired and no more questions can be asked."

Begin the Interview (7 minutes):

7. "Let’s begin. Please tell us a little about yourself." Start stopwatch (Decathlete’s Self Introduction should take approximately 20 – 30 seconds)

8. The judges first set of questions should focus on follow up questions to the Student’s self-introduction.

9. Following the self-introduction questions, nod to the judge who will be asking the first standard question from the Topics for Oral Interview Questions.

10. Notify the judges and the decathlete when there is a minute left in the interview by saying, “1 minute.” Avoid interrupting a decathlete when he/she is speaking. Wait until he/she has completed a statement. To make announcements adjust time notification accordingly.

11. When time - 7 minutes - has expired and the decathlete completes the question, the chairperson will say, “time.”

12. "Thank you. You are excused, and we wish you the best of luck in the competition."

Topics for Oral Interview Questions

Interview topics should be based on or a variation of the topics listed below. The questions that follow are examples of what you should ask, or you may simply use these as your questions.

1. Personal Objectives and Academics
   a. “What do you enjoy most about school?”
   b. “How do you like to spend your time after school?”
   c. “Describe your biggest challenge at school?”
   d. “Do you feel it’s important to be involved in extra-curricular activities? Please explain.”
   e. “What did you do as a member of __________________________?"
   f. “How has participation in __________________________ affected you personally?”

2. Activities (During and After School)
a. “Describe the type of community service activities that you are involved in or would like to be involved in?”

b. “What meaningful experiences did you have as a _______________________?”

c. “What kinds of skills have you acquired as a _______________________ that will help you in a future job?”

d. “In what other activities would you like to have participated: how would they help you in the future?”

3. Community Interests and Activities
   a. “How do you feel your current activities (school and/or out-of-school activities) will benefit you in the future?”
   b. “What would you like to accomplish in the next five years?”
   c. “Perhaps you would share with us some of your dreams for the future.”
   d. “What are some of the things you would like to do upon graduation?”

4. Achievements
   a. “How did you become interested and/or involved in the Academic Decathlon?”
   b. “What is the most difficult event in the Academic Decathlon?”
   c. “What have been the benefits of being a Decathlon team member?”

5. Influences and Values
   a. “Who do you consider to be the most influential person in your life?”
   b. “How has this person influenced your personal growth?”
   c. “What values do you consider to have most strongly influenced your life?”

6. Miscellaneous Ideas
   a. “What personal quality do you possess that will benefit society or your community and why?”
   b. “If you could travel anywhere, where would you go and why?”
   c. “If you could solve a social problem, what would it be, and how do you think you would solve it?”

General Recommendations: The success of the interview depends on how well and how quickly you can create a pleasant understanding with the decathlete, treating them at all times with respect.

1. Determining Environment: Manner, attitude, and tone of voice are important in creating the proper interviewing climate. In the short time available, establish a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in which the decathlete is assured of your sincere interest and attention. Encourage the decathlete to talk about himself/herself.
   - Ensure privacy without interruptions - closed door, etc.
   - Maintain an attitude of pleasant receptiveness, quiet confidence, and intelligent objectivity.
   - Establish rapport and put candidate at ease.

2. Managing Interview: The judges are in charge of the interview process. Control, direct, and guide the interview. Set a steady pace and ask the questions according to the structured interview format.
   - Keep initiative but be responsive.
   - Cover all of the topics and devote enough time to each part.
   - Conduct the interview so the decathlete plays the dominant role and the interviewer is the stage manager.
   - Steer the conversation without intruding on it—refrain from expressing your personal opinion or values—be objective.
   - Encourage decathlete to talk openly and freely.
   - Pace questions so that decathlete can give adequate replies without dwelling on irrelevant information.
• Indicate when the interview is coming to a conclusion.

3. **Listening Intelligently:**
   • Concentrate on what the decathlete is saying.
   • Allow decathlete to complete remarks without interruption or second-guessing.
   • Listen attentively.
   • Show interest.
   • Give decathletes the time they need to think of examples and answer the questions.

4. **Coming To The Conclusion:**
   • Empathy, fairness, and good judgment are working tools for a good interview.
   • Bring interview to an end gracefully and naturally without rushing to a close.

5. **Silent Gaps:**
   • Summarize points made by the decathlete and lead into the next question.
   • Keep asking for specific examples.
   • Give encouragement by rephrasing question.
Description of Interview Evaluation Form

Delivery:
- **Voice** is the way a speaker controls volume, flexibility, and expressiveness of voice to gain greater audibility. Voice should have a variety of rate, volume, and pitch to engage interest, hold attention and convey self-assurance.

- **Language Usage** refers to the appropriate choice of words, grammar and correct enunciation. Language should promote clear understanding of thoughts and be appropriate for the occasion.

- **Interpersonal Skills** means that there is rapport and involvement between the candidate and the judges.

- **Non-verbal Language** refers to the manner in which the candidate uses gestures, facial expressions and physical involvement for effective communication.

- **Manner** the candidate should speak with enthusiasm and assurance, showing interest in the interviewers and confidence in their reactions.

- **Appearance** the candidate is appropriately dressed for the interview. Team uniforms are not allowed. It is strongly recommended that the candidate refrain from mentioning his/her school location.

Content:
- **Listening Skills** is the ability to analyze and interpret what is being asked. In order to answer skillfully and address the issue being considered, the candidate must listen carefully and attentively. The candidate’s response to the questions will give an indication of his/her level of attention and ability to identify, sort, and process information being requested.

- **Answering Skills** is the ability to: Address the issue being considered; present information in a clear, concise manner; organize information in a logical and sequential order; adjust response appropriately to a variety of audiences; and pace conversation to convey necessary information and achieve purpose. Order, logic, imagination, intelligence, and other personal qualities are reflected in the way answers are given.

- **Responses** engage the interviewers attention and gives insight into the candidate’s personal qualities, skills, goals, and experiences. The answers are supported by relevant examples and illustrations. All information presented should be relevant to the question being asked.

- **Overall Effectiveness** measures the: Nature of information provided; manner in which it was communicated; overall impression it created; and rapport established between the interviewer and candidate. Some of the questions to consider are: Did the candidate provide the information requested in a skillfull manner? Was the information relevant and meaningful? Was the candidate able to achieve a positive impression of his/her skills, experiences, and personal qualities?

Through the interview process, the individual reveals:

- Problem Solving Skills
- Analytical Skills
- Creating/Developing Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Promotional Skills

When asking questions of the candidate, keep these skills in mind. Help the decathlete to develop experience in answering questions that reveal these skills.
# U.S. Academic Decathlon

## Interview Evaluation Form

**Directions:**
1. Make dark marks.
2. Erase completely to change.
3. Enter student's name and number.
4. Mark 1 student per form.

- **Use No. 2 pencil only.**

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