GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSIONS / DEBATES

Learning to participate as an effective listener and contributor during discussions is important in academic environments. Listening well to others, contributing our own ideas and participating as an active member of the discussion are not easy, but these skills can be developed with practice in time. The debates/discussions in this course are designed with the aim of developing these discussion skills as well as providing opportunities for spontaneous language production and fluency practice. Follow the guidelines presented below to become an active participant and to perform well in discussions/debates:

1. **Participant engagement**

* Everyone is expected to participate and share their views about the topic
* The quality of your arguments is as important as the number of turns you take to participate in the discussion. You may participate in the following ways:
  + Introduce a new argument to support your stance
  + Add to the ideas presented by others in your group
  + Ask questions to other groups/participants
  + Respond to the ideas of other participants
  + Challenge the ideas of the opposing groups
* Try to use evidence, concrete examples, anecdotes etc. to clarify your points
* Be willing to take risks – to think out loud
* Encourage your peers to participate in the discussion

1. **Preparation**

* Do research
* Come up with specific comments and questions you may use to support your stance
* Think about the opposing views and get ready to refute these during the discussion/debate

1. **Active listening**

* Follow the ideas presented by other participants
* Respond to the opposing ideas presented by the other participants
* Stay on topic, but know when to move on to another aspect pf the issue
* Try not to repeat others

1. **Style**

* Criticize and comment on ideas, not people
* Maintain eye contact with peers
* Make careful use of interruptions
* Address other participants, not the instructor
* Do not dominate the discussion
* Use the expressions in the “***Speaking Help***” section in Unit 2.