



SECOND ANNUAL
Atlantic Undergraduate
Policy Case Competition
OFFICIAL COMPETITION FORMAT

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1. OVERVIEW

The **Atlantic Undergraduate Policy Case Competition (AUPCC)** is an inter-university case competition designed to get students from across Atlantic Canada interested and involved in the policymaking process. Participants will spend their time researching policy options, developing clear recommendations, devising actionable implementation strategies, and delivering persuasive arguments to judges.

This document outlines the format and rules of the AUPCC and is intended to provide general expectations for participants.

2. COMPETITION FORMAT

The AUPCC challenges teams to develop an actionable policy solution to a real-world issue affecting Atlantic Canada. Each team's performance will be evaluated across two primary scored deliverables:

- **Written Policy Proposal (60% of final score):** Teams will author a formal Memorandum to Cabinet (2,000–3,000 words). This document must present a clear, concise, and actionable policy recommendation, complete with rigorous analysis and a feasible implementation plan. It is designed to test each team's ability to conduct research, think critically, and write effectively for a high-level government audience.
- **Oral Policy Presentation (40% of final score):** Teams will deliver a 15 minute presentation of their proposal to a panel of expert judges, followed by a 10-minute question period. The Policy Presentation is designed to test each team's ability to distill complex information, persuasively articulate their recommendations, and defend their ideas under scrutiny.

3. TEAMS & FACULTY ADVISORS

Each school may field a maximum of **2 teams** of up to **3–4 people each**. All students in a team must be from the same university.

Students from all fields of study are encouraged to participate, as policymaking is a multidisciplinary art that can be approached from a range of different perspectives.

Participants are encouraged to draw upon their unique backgrounds to create creative and innovative solutions to salient policy problems.

Registration opens on **September 3, 2025** and is first come, first served. Any additional teams beyond the first two per school will be put on a waiting list. If there is still room under by the end of the registration period, teams on the waiting list may be asked to join the competition.

Teams must also be accompanied by a **faculty advisor**. The faculty advisor's role is to support the team by holding regular team meetings, clarifying issues, and offering suggestions in the lead up to the AUPCC. However, it is important to note that **faculty advisors do not do the work**. They may provide feedback on the team's deliverables, but it is the students' responsibility to prepare and submit all of their materials.

4. JUDGES

The AUPCC deliverables will be judged by four experts in the field of the given policy theme. Three judges will be from one of the participating schools and the fourth judge will be an independent expert.

Judges will score submissions using a detailed rubric that evaluates the Policy Proposals and Presentations on key criteria such as formatting, strength of recommendations, feasibility of its implementation, and the quality of responses to questions.

5. POLICY THEME

The theme of this year's conference is **nation-building in the face of continued economic assaults and threats to Canada's sovereignty**. The idea is simple:

What can Atlantic Canada do to support the federal government's goal of promoting national unity and self-sufficiency?

The topic is kept intentionally broad to promote a diversity of solutions. As such, policies can be approached from various angles and include a range of different stakeholders, policy instruments, and implementation strategies. For example,

teams may choose to address areas such as *intergovernmental relations*, *infrastructure*, *trade*, *social policy*, etc. Nothing is entirely out of bounds, so long as it addresses the central theme.

Teams should keep in mind that no matter the scope, the proposed policy must be actionable, meaning that someone could theoretically follow the proposed recommendations and implement the policy in the real world. In other words, teams, as policymakers, must bridge the gap between ideas and reality.

6. POLICY PROPOSAL

The first deliverable teams will prepare for the AUPCC is the written **Policy Proposal**, which must be presented in the form of a **Memorandum to Cabinet**. Teams will spend the weeks before the competition researching, developing, and drafting this document to articulate their policy solution.

Policy Proposals must be submitted on or before **October 28, 2025**, and will be scored by judges in advance of the competition. Final Policy Proposal scores will not be disclosed until after the AUPCC has concluded.

a. What is a Memorandum to Cabinet?

In Canada, major policy decisions are primarily made by the **Federal Cabinet**. This executive decision-making body is composed of Ministers appointed by the Prime Minister, who serves as Chair of the Cabinet. The Cabinet's primary duty is to deliberate over and approve policy proposals in line with the government's strategic priorities, which will then be carried out by the federal public service.

Policies are formally initiated through what is called a **Memorandum to Cabinet (MC)**, which presents succinct analyses and recommendations on a policy issue for Cabinet's consideration. The MC is designed to be as concise as possible, because in the fast-paced environment of government, Cabinet ministers have little time to spare on reading over the hundreds of policy proposals that come their way. The MC therefore reduces the friction involved in policymaking, by communicating only what Cabinet ministers need to know.

The Memorandum to Cabinet constitutes the bulk of the substantive work that goes into preparing for the AUPCC, something that is reflected in the **60% weight** it holds in the final score. While Memorandum to Cabinet is not designed to be comprehensive, teams should seek to draft their Policy Proposal in a manner that is both compelling and clearly actionable. In other words, it should be intuitive enough to grab the reader's attention but include enough detail for someone following the recommendations to make well-informed policy decisions.

b. Structure & Format

Policy Proposals will follow a set of Memorandum to Cabinet drafting requirements adapted from the Privy Council Office's 2013 publication, [*A Drafter's Guide to Cabinet Documents*](#).

The Policy Proposal must include the following components (with headings and subheadings):

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Ministerial Recommendations (maximum 2 pages)
 - Issue Statement
 - Recommendations
 - Rationale
- Analysis (maximum 8 pages)
 - Background and Context
 - Proposed Policy Approach
 - Alternative Options
- Implementation Plan (maximum 2 pages)
- Bibliography
- **TOTAL (~ 10 pages of substantive content)**

Additional formatting requirements:

- **Length** – ~2,000–3,000 words
- **Font** – 12pt Times New Roman, 1.15 spacing
- **Margins** – 0.5" (for body text)
- **Page Size** – Letter paper (8.5" x 11")
- **Citation Style** – Any citation style in widespread public use (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)

- **Headers, Footers, and Page Numbers** – Formatted according to your citation style of choice
- **Language** – English

For more information on MCs, refer to [A Drafter's Guide to Cabinet Documents](#). **Keep in mind, however, that the AUPCC's formatting requirements are different to those in A Drafter's Guide.**

c. Title Page

The Title Page is formatted according to the chosen citation style. It must contain the following elements:

- **Title** – A short, descriptive title that reflects the policy's intent
- **Team Members** – The first and last names of your team members
- **Affiliation** – The name of your school
- **Conference Name** – “The Atlantic Undergraduate Policy Case Competition”
- **Date** – The date of submission

d. Table of Contents

The Table of Contents facilitates navigation of your document. It must, at minimum, list the following sections (with page numbers):

- **Ministerial Recommendations**
- **Analysis**
- **Implementation Plan**
- **Bibliography**

e. Ministerial Recommendations (2 pages)

The Ministerial Recommendations act as a condensed two-page summary of the policy proposal. This section sets out the issue to be discussed, the recommended course of action, and a clear rationale for why. It is therefore important to focus on the key points of your policy to facilitate the Minister's understanding.

Issue Statement: The Ministerial Recommendations section should begin with a short Issue Statement. The Issue Statement is a one sentence explanation of the

policy issue being addressed. The sentence should be carefully written so that it provides a clear understanding of the decisions Cabinet Ministers must make and may need to be adjusted as the MC takes shape.

Teams must come up with an Issue Statement that is clearly linked to the AUPCC's theme of how Atlantic Canada can contribute to **nation-building and national self-sufficiency**. While teams can address an issue of any jurisdiction or scope, it must be framed to enable concrete policy action.

Common ways of starting the Issue Statement include the following key phrases:

- “**Whether to ...**”
- “**How to ...**”
- “**To determine ...**”

Recommendations: The Recommendations are explanatory statements of what policy decisions are being sought for formal approval by Cabinet. This subsection begins with the phrase “*it is recommended that,*” followed by an itemized list of the approvals being sought, including:

- The specific policy or initiative being recommended (as explained in the Proposed Policy Approach section);
- The specific roles and authorities of implicated stakeholders in implementing the proposal; and
- What policy instruments (e.g., legislation, grants, and contributions) will be used.

Rationale: The Rationale section clearly outlines why the Proposed Policy Approach is required to address the policy issue. The Rationale should clearly link your recommendations to the following criteria:

- The origin of the issue;
- Gaps in existing government programs and policies;
- Strategic motivations referenced in such things as the Speech from the Throne, departmental mandate letters, and past Cabinet decisions.

The Rationale section should also briefly address any considerations Ministers should be aware of before they make any decisions. This can include budgetary considerations, legislative requirements, public opinion, etc.

f. Analysis (8 Pages)

Background and Context: The Analysis section should begin with a bit of Background and Context which provides the Minister with a solid understanding of the issue. The Background and Context should explain the underlying factors behind the issue, list primary stakeholders, and detail any existing policies. The information included in this sub-section should tie into the Proposed Policy Approach and Alternative Options.

Proposed Policy Approach: Proposed Policy Approach is a clear outline of what policy solution is being put forward and what outcomes are expected, including a timeframe for implementation. This subsection should present the principal arguments and evidence in support of the recommended approach/option, including the following:

- Which policy instruments will be used to achieve the proposed outcome;
- Which stakeholders (both public and private) will be implicated and how;
- Any possible adverse consequences of either proceeding or not proceeding;
- Any trade-offs the proposed approach would require the Government to accept;
- The limitations of the approach in addressing the policy objectives;
- Strategies for addressing key risks/challenges; and
- Any other political, financial, or strategic considerations.

Alternative Options: The Policy Proposal should also include at least two other Alternative Options for consideration. This subsection should present the principal strengths and weaknesses of each option, including whether any of the principal stakeholders would support any of the Alternative Options.

g. Implementation Plan (2 Pages)

The **Implementation Plan** links to the Proposed Policy Approach and provides additional detail on how the proposed option would be implemented, operated and terminated over its timeline. This section should include the following:

- Key milestones in the timeline and expected results at key junctures (e.g., the end of the fiscal year or annual anniversary of the initiative's launch);
- Budgetary requirements (provide a rough cost estimation);

- Sources of funding (who will pay for your proposal); and
- When stated objectives would be achieved, and at which point the initiative would be wound up.

h. Bibliography

The Policy Proposal must include a well-sourced bibliography. Teams should look to official government documents – such as mandate letters, reports, and memos – for inspiration and supplement their work with credible academic sources.

i. Policy Writing Tips and Considerations

When drafting a Policy Proposal, the following principles should be taken into consideration:

- Avoid technical terms, jargon or acronyms that would be unfamiliar to a broad audience;
- Avoid long complicated sentences and paragraphs;
- Build the narrative and arguments step by step;
- Read over and polish every sentence until each word counts;
- Keep your audience in mind – who will be receiving this information and how do you want them to interpret it?; and
- Consider what the policy would look like in practice – avoid implementation strategies that are overly complex or burdensome.

7. POLICY PRESENTATION

The primary focus of the AUPCC is the oral **Policy Presentation**. Teams will condense the ideas found in their Policy Proposal into a succinct PowerPoint slide deck for presentation in front of a panel of four judges and other AUPCC attendees. After the end of their presentation, teams will field questions from the judges and the audience. Teams will receive a score based on the quality of their presentation and the precision of their responses to questions. These will be **worth a combined 40%** of each team's final score.

Each team will have a total of **25 minutes** to present their policy and answer questions from the audience and judges. The time slots are divided as follows:

- **Presentation** – 15 Minutes
- **Questions** – 10 Minutes

Presentations should be as close to the allotted time as possible. **Presentations longer than 15 minutes will have points deducted.** In addition, **the order of presentations will be assigned randomly**, to ensure that the competition is fair.

When not presenting, participants are encouraged to watch other teams' presentations and ask questions during the allotted time. Teams will also have an opportunity to practice their presentations in a rehearsal space before the competition begins.

a. Presentation Tips and Considerations

When creating a Policy Presentation, the following principles should be taken into consideration:

- Avoid technical terms, jargon or acronyms that would be unfamiliar to a broad audience;
- Be concise and stick to the key points. Include only what is essential to understanding your policy;
- Divide complicated topics into smaller, easily digestible points;
- Use images, figures, and diagrams as visual aids;
- Present as a group (no one person should dominate the discussion and group members should have roughly equally speaking time);
- Avoid reciting from the PowerPoint (be prepared well in advance);
- Remain calm and confident;
- Pay attention to other groups' presentations – they may inform your own;
- Be polite to the people asking you questions;
- Be prepared for unexpected questions (know your topic inside and out); and
- Do not make up answers to questions – don't be afraid to say that you don't know the answer.

8. DATES AND DEADLINES

Event	Date
Team Registration & Paper Submission Window Open	September 3, 2025
Team Registration Deadline	September 26, 2025 @ 11:59 PM
Paper Submission Deadline	October 28, 2025 @ 11:59 PM
Presentation Submission Deadline	November 4, 2025 @ 11:59 PM
Conference Dates	November 7–8, 2025

9. SUBMISSIONS

All PAPERS are due by 11:59 PM ADT on **Tuesday, October 28, 2025**. Proposals must be submitted by email to atlanticpolicycompetition@gmail.com as a **Microsoft Word document (DOCX)**.

All PRESENTATIONS are due by 11:59 P.M. ADT on **Tuesday, November 4, 2025**. Presentations must be submitted by email to atlanticpolicycompetition@gmail.com and be formatted as either a **PowerPoint presentation (PPTX)** or a **PDF file**. Competition organizers will provide the technology required to display presentations.

All EMAIL SUBMISSIONS must be clearly marked and include the names of your group members, your faculty advisor, and your school. All submissions must meet the previously stated [content and formatting requirements](#).

10. INTEGRITY AND MISCONDUCT

All policies and deliverables must be the work of the student team members submitting them. Failure to meet this requirement may be classified as competition misconduct.

Examples of misconduct include, but are not limited to plagiarism, submitting policies or deliverables used in another competition or in course work, and failing to cite resources used to create policies or deliverables.

Teams are not permitted to use generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) programs, including ChatGPT, during any part of the competition process. Failure to uphold competition integrity may be grounds for disqualification from the AUPCC at the discretion of the judging panel.

11. CONTACT

For any questions, concerns, or comments about the AUPCC and its rules, rubrics, schedule, etc., please contact atlanticpolicycompetition@gmail.com.