

HMDC Presents... How to Succeed in a Specialized Committee

HMDC Presents... How to Succeed in a Specialized Committee (Directives and Crisis Updates)

This guide prepares us for the specialized committees at Harvard Model United Nations Online on December 5-6, 2026: the Futuristic Security Council of 2100 and the Mongol Empire of 1225. These committees move fast, change every hour and reward delegates who read each crisis update carefully and then work with the whole room to answer it through directives. We learn those tools now and practise them before the conference.

WHAT HARVARD SAYS ABOUT OUR DECEMBER COMMITTEES

"Specialized bodies are directive-based and small-sized, at 20 to 40 delegates each, with no backroom elements, simulating the fast-paced and unpredictable challenges that face our global leaders." (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online Committees, Last Accessed: October 2026)

Harvard lists both of our committees, the Mongol Empire of 1225 and the Futuristic Security Council, as Specialized Bodies at HMUN Online. This means there is no back room in December: no secret crisis notes and no personal portfolio arcs. All of our work happens in the front room, through directives that answer crisis updates.

WHERE THESE RULES COME FROM

Everything below that is called a Harvard rule comes from Harvard's own Guide to Delegate Preparation or its HMUN Online pages, and we name the source each time. Where Harvard's pages say nothing, this guide says so plainly, and our chair will explain the exact rules on the first day.

1. **Trusting the committee's own rules first:** Harvard says that the specific policies and resources of each crisis committee "will take precedence" over the general guide (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, A Note on Crises, September 14, 2026). If our Director explains something differently from this guide, we follow the Director.
2. **Using HMUN Online as our introduction:** Harvard's online conference features Specialized Bodies "as an introduction to crisis committees" for delegates who have never been in one (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026). Harvard also says the online conference is designed to be "the same exact format as the in-person committee sessions" (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026), so we prepare fully, but for the directive-based version that Harvard describes for its December specialized bodies.
3. **Knowing which Harvard rules apply to us in December:** Rule 37 (writing directives), Rule 38 (introducing and voting on directives) and Rule 39 (round robins) are the rules that guide our December work. Rule 40 (crisis notes) belongs to committees with a back room, so we read it only in the last section of this guide.

WHAT A SPECIALIZED COMMITTEE IS

1. **Comparing it with a General Assembly committee:** In a General Assembly committee, the agenda is fixed and the committee spends the whole weekend building a few long resolutions. In a crisis-style committee, the committee faces "a constant flow of evolving issues that change depending on the committee's responses" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, A Note on Crises, September 14, 2026). We solve many small problems quickly instead of one large problem slowly.
2. **Playing a person, not only a country:** Crisis delegates "can portray actual individuals with concrete executive power, as well as their own personal goals" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, A Note on Crises, September 14, 2026). Harvard explains that a General Assembly country cannot declare war by itself, but a single crisis character could. In the Mongol committee, for example, we may speak as a son or general of Chinggis Khan rather than as a nation. In December, we show our character's view through speeches and directives in the front room.
3. **Meeting the crisis staff:** Each crisis committee has its own crisis staff led by a Crisis Director, who creates the events that reach the committee (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, A Note on Crises, September 14, 2026). In December, we meet their work through the crisis updates they send into the room.
4. **Working in the front room:** Delegates often call the committee itself the front room, where we speak, debate and vote on directives. Harvard says its December specialized bodies have "no backroom elements" (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online Committees, Last Accessed: October 2026), so the front room is where every part of our work happens.

CRISIS UPDATES

1. **Recognising a crisis update:** A crisis update is a new event that the crisis staff send into the committee, such as a rival seizing an army or a satellite being destroyed in orbit. Harvard says these issues change "depending on the committee's responses," so our own directives can cause the next update (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, A Note on Crises, September 14, 2026). Our chair will explain how updates are delivered online, whether by video, message or shared document.
2. **Reading each update twice:** We read the update once to learn what happened, and a second time to ask who gains, who loses and what the committee can do about it. We then write one sentence that names the problem in plain words before we raise our placard.
3. **Separating fact from invention:** Our HMDC research reports mark invented events clearly, using FICTION (2100 ASSUMPTION) in the Futuristic Security Council report and CRISIS INVENTION in the Mongol report. In committee, the crisis staff may invent events that never happened, so we use real history and real evidence as our foundation and then apply it to the new situation.

DIRECTIVES

These are the Harvard rules for directives: Rule 37 tells us how to write them, Rule 38 tells us how they are introduced and voted on, and Rule 39 gives us the round robin that often comes before writing.

1. **Understanding what a directive is (Rule 37):** Instead of working papers and resolutions, crisis delegates "write a series of directives to resolve the multitude of problems presented to the committee" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 37, September 14, 2026). A directive is a short order from the whole committee that tells someone to act right now.
2. **Writing a directive clearly (Rule 37):** Directives follow the structure of a working paper, but Directors "will be generous with the format" because directives are written quickly (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 37, September 14, 2026). Harvard's sample directive has a title, a list of sponsors and signatories, and numbered actions with lettered sub-points. We keep each action specific: who does it, with what resources and by when.
3. **Passing a directive (Rule 38):** Directives are "introduced and voted upon as in any other committee," but instead of an authors' panel they are usually introduced by alternating speakers for and against, with the number of speakers and their speaking time set in the motion (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 38, September 14, 2026). Our chair will explain the exact number of sponsors and signatories each directive needs.
4. **Asking about joint directives:** Some conferences allow joint directives, written together by two committees, or directives signed by only a few characters. Harvard's guide does not describe these, so our chair will explain the exact rules if they exist in our committee.
5. **Using a round robin (Rule 39):** A round robin lets every delegate speak in turn around the room; the motion states a purpose and a speaking time and needs a simple majority (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 39, September 14, 2026). We propose one right after a large crisis update, so that the committee hears every view before writing.
6. **Knowing what our character can order:** Before the conference, we write a short list of the things our character controls, such as troops, money, land, ships or a government department, from our committee's background guide and our HMDC research report. In December we use this list to write directives that ask for actions that are realistic for the people in the room.

PRESS RELEASES AND COMMUNIQUES

1. **Asking whether public statements are allowed:** Many crisis committees let characters publish a press release or a communiqué, a public statement that the whole committee, or the whole fictional world, can read. Harvard's guide lists a Press Corps among its committees but does not explain press releases inside a crisis committee, so our chair will explain the exact rules.
2. **Using public statements with care:** If our committee allows them, we use a press release to win public support, calm a panic or warn a rival without attacking a real person. We keep it short, write it in our character's voice and make sure it matches our directives in the front room.

WORKING AS A TEAM IN THE FRONT ROOM

1. **Leading in the front room:** The chair sees our front-room work: speeches, directives and help to other delegates. We write and sponsor directives that solve the committee's real problems, because a delegate who helps the committee earns trust and votes.
2. **Building blocs quickly:** After each update, we find two or three delegates whose characters want a similar result and agree on one directive together. A small team that writes fast usually brings the first clear plan to the floor.
3. **Keeping promises to allies:** In crisis, alliances change quickly, but a delegate known for breaking every promise soon has no partners left. We make only the promises we intend to keep, and we treat every delegate with courtesy, as Harvard requires in every committee.
4. **Staying honest with our own work:** Harvard forbids pre-written documents and forbids artificial intelligence tools for any conference material, including directives and backroom notes (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Pre-Writing Policy and AI Policy, September 14, 2026). We plan our ideas at home, but we write every directive ourselves, live, during committee.

COMMON MISTAKES

1. **Staying silent:** Some delegates wait too long and never speak or sign a directive. The chair cannot reward work it cannot see, so we speak early and join a directive after every update.
2. **Asking for impossible things:** A directive that asks for a whole army or a whole planet in one step is hard for the room to support. We ask for what the characters in the room could realistically do.
3. **Writing unclear directives:** Directives are written and read in a short time, and a long, messy directive is easy to misread. We use numbered actions, short sub-points and clear names for who acts.
4. **Forgetting the committee's problem:** A directive that has nothing to do with the latest update adds little to debate. We connect each directive to space security or to the Mongol succession, whichever committee we are in.
5. **Treating fiction as fact:** Invented events in committee and in our reports are not real evidence. We never cite a FICTION or CRISIS INVENTION item as a fact in a speech.

IF WE MEET A BACKROOM AT ANOTHER CONFERENCE

Harvard's December specialized bodies have "no backroom elements" (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online Committees, Last Accessed: October 2026), so we do not plan secret notes for December. This short section is only for later conferences that do have a back room.

1. **Understanding the back room:** At some conferences, the crisis room is called the back room, and Harvard's own guide uses the phrase "backroom notes" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, AI Policy, September 14, 2026). There, delegates work publicly in the front room and privately in the back room at the same time.

2. **Understanding crisis notes (Rule 40):** Harvard says crisis notes are letters "that reflect a secret, personal agenda that their character wishes to progress" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 40, September 14, 2026). Harvard's sample note has a brief introduction, a numbered list of requests with a reason for each, a final "END GOAL" line and a one-sentence "TL;DR" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Sample Crisis Note, September 14, 2026).
3. **Planning an arc and portfolio powers:** In a backroom committee, our portfolio powers are what our character can order alone, and our arc is the story of our character across the conference. Harvard says crisis delegates may include their personal agenda in the position paper "to help the Crisis Director prepare for and help to steer your crisis arc" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, How to Write a Position Paper, September 14, 2026). We save this skill for a conference that asks for it.

ONE-PAGE CHECKLIST

1. **Preparing before the conference:** We complete each step below at home, before December 5, 2026, so that committee time is spent acting, not searching.
 - Read our committee's background guide and HMDC research report
 - List what our character controls
 - Practise writing one directive in Harvard's format
 - Plan no secret notes: December has no back room
2. **Acting during each session:** We repeat these steps every session, because crisis changes faster than any one plan.
 - Read every update twice and name the problem in one sentence
 - Propose a round robin after a large update
 - Speak, sponsor and sign helpful directives
 - Keep promises and stay courteous
 - Write everything ourselves, with no AI tools and no pre-written work

SOURCES

1. **Reading the full rules:** Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, September 14, 2026.
 - <https://www.harvardmun.org/s/HMUN-2027-Guide-to-Delegate-Preparation.pdf>
2. **Checking the online conference format:** Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026.
 - <https://www.harvardmun.org/hmun-online>
3. **Checking the December committee list:** Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online Committees, Last Accessed: October 2026.

HMDC Forensics, Harvard MUN Online, December 2026