

HMDC Presents... How to Prepare the Position Paper

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This guide shows us how to research, plan and write the position paper for Harvard Model United Nations Online, December 5-6, 2026. When we finish it, each of us will know what Harvard asks for, how to build the paper from our HMDC reports, and how to check it before we send it to the chair.

WHAT HARVARD MUN ASKS FOR

Harvard MUN Online tells delegates that it expects "a position paper based on the country assignment" (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026). The online conference is built to follow "the same exact format as the in-person committee sessions," and delegates "will be evaluated on the same criteria as HMUN" (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026). The detailed rules below come from Harvard's Guide to Delegate Preparation, which is written for the in-person conference in Boston. Harvard has not published a separate position paper guide for HMUN Online, so we follow the in-person rules unless our chair or our committee background guide tells us something different.

1. **Know why the paper matters:** Harvard says the position paper is "the focus of positional preparation before the conference" and that it "makes you think about the information you have researched" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). The committee staff also read every paper and summarize them "in order to guide the debate within the committee," so our paper shapes the room before we ever raise our placard.
2. **Keep to one page per topic:** Harvard asks for "one single-spaced page paper for each topic area," unless the committee background guide says otherwise (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). If our committee has two topics, we send one document that holds both papers.
3. **Share one paper in a double delegation:** When two of us represent one country together, Harvard asks for only one position paper between both delegates (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We write it as a team and both of us read every line.
4. **Remember the paper counts toward awards:** Harvard lists "Quality of position papers and attendance at all committee sessions" as one of its award criteria (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). HMUN Online gives "the same awards that are used in HMUN" (Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026).
5. **Know what Harvard has not published:** Harvard's guide does not set a font, margin size or citation style (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). The in-person deadline in that guide is January 16, which belongs to the Boston conference, not to December. Harvard has not published a December position paper deadline on its HMUN Online page, so the date our chair gives us is the date we follow.

HOW THE PAPER IS BUILT

Harvard describes three sections: Background of the Topic, Position Taken by Your Delegation, and Proposed Solutions (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). At HMDC we split the middle of the paper into two clear parts, because chairs want to see both what the world has already tried and where our country stands. This gives us four short parts that still fit Harvard's three sections.

1. **Open with the background:** We explain the problem as our country sees it, in three to five sentences. Harvard asks two questions here: "what are the main elements of the problem?" and "What are the root causes of these problems?" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026).
2. **Show UN and international action:** We name the most important UN resolutions, agencies and international programs on the topic, with their years. This proves we know what the world has already tried, so our solutions build on it instead of repeating it.
3. **State our country's policy:** We explain our national interests and our national policies. Harvard says national interests "are not subject to compromise," while national policies "are usually open to negotiation" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We show both, so the chair sees where we stand firm and where we can make a deal.
4. **Propose clear solutions:** We give two or three solutions our country supports, each in one or two sentences. Harvard also asks, "What do you predict will be the main opposition to your proposals?" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026), so we close with one sentence about who may disagree and how we will answer them.

HOW WE USE OUR HMDC REPORTS

We do not start from a blank page. Every December committee has an HMDC three-part report in pink, and each of us builds a Country Report on the country we were assigned. Together they hold almost everything the paper needs.

1. **Read the background guide first:** Harvard calls the background guides "the foundation of substantive preparation for each committee" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We read it, discuss it at practice, and read it again before we touch our HMDC reports.
2. **Use part one for the background:** Part one of the HMDC report covers the topic itself: the harms, the possible solutions, and the advantages and disadvantages of each. We take the two or three harms that matter most to our country and turn them into our background section.
3. **Use part two for UN action:** Part two of the HMDC report lists the UN record, including the relevant resolutions. We choose the two or three that matter most to our country and name them with their years.
4. **Use part three for international efforts:** Part three covers international efforts, past, ongoing and proposed, and shows where the UN could do better. These gaps are where our proposed solutions belong.

5. **Use the Country Report for policy:** Our Country Report tells us what our government has said and done on the topic. Each delegate does this research alone, so you choose the facts that best show your own country's interests and policies.

HOW WE CITE AND CHECK OUR WORK

Harvard says delegates must "distinguish their own ideas and knowledge from any information derived from sources through the proper citation of all quoted and paraphrased material" (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We follow the same citation style we use in debate, and every sentence that is not a citation is our own writing.

1. **Name the publication and date:** We cite the source as the publication and its date, in the form "According to [Publication], [Month Day, Year]." We never cite a person's name alone or a file name.
2. **Keep citations short:** On a one-page paper, we use short citations inside the sentence. If the chair asks for a list of sources, we add it on a second page so the paper itself stays one page.
3. **Choose strong sources:** We prefer UN pages and data, university research, respected think tanks and major news publications. We never use Wikipedia, Reddit or pages we cannot open without paying.
4. **Write in our own words:** We read our sources, close them, and then write. Copying sentences from a report, even an HMDC report, is not our own work, and Harvard asks for our own ideas.
5. **Check before we send:** We read the paper aloud once, check that every number has a source, check that it fits on one page, and then send it by the date and in the format our chair asks for.

AN ANNOTATED SAMPLE

The sample below is written for the Republic of Veloria, an imaginary country, on the UNICEF topic of childhood hunger. No real country holds these positions, so the sample shows the shape of a paper without giving anyone sentences to copy. The notes in brackets explain what each part is doing.

Committee: UNICEF **Topic:** Childhood Hunger **Country:** The Republic of Veloria

Background. The Republic of Veloria believes that childhood hunger is not only a shortage of food but a failure to move food from where it is grown to where children live. In Veloria, farms in the north produce more grain than the country eats, while children in the southern cities still go to school hungry. Food is lost in storage, wasted in markets and thrown away before it reaches families.

[Note: The background names the problem and its root cause in the country's own voice, as Harvard asks.]

UN and International Action. Veloria supports Sustainable Development Goal 2, "Zero Hunger," adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, and Target 12.3, which aims to halve food waste by 2030. Veloria also welcomes the work of UNICEF and the World Food Programme on school meals. However, Veloria notes that many programs feed children for a short time without fixing the supply chains that fail them.

[Note: This part shows the delegate knows what the UN has already done, then points to a gap. A real paper adds a short citation for each fact.]

Country Policy. Veloria's national interest is a future in which no child in Veloria or its region misses a meal. Veloria's policy is to build cold storage near farms, to give tax relief to markets that donate unsold food, and to fund free lunches in public schools. Veloria is open to sharing the cost of regional programs with its neighbours.

[Note: The interest is the firm goal. The policies are the methods, and the last sentence signals room to negotiate.]

Proposed Solutions. Veloria proposes, first, a UNICEF regional fund that helps member states build food storage close to farms; second, a school meals partnership that buys food from local farmers; and third, a yearly UNICEF report on food recovery in each region. Veloria expects some states to worry about cost, and it will answer that recovered food lowers the price of every meal served.

[Note: Each solution fits in one line. The last sentence predicts the opposition and gives a short answer, just as Harvard asks.]

OUR FINAL CHECKLIST

1. **Confirm the deadline:** We write down the date and format our chair sets, and we plan to finish two days early.
2. **Match the four parts:** We check that the paper has a background, UN and international action, country policy and proposed solutions.
3. **Measure the length:** We check that each topic fits on one single-spaced page, unless the background guide says otherwise.
4. **Check every citation:** We check that each fact names a publication and a date.
5. **Practise the opening speech:** We turn the paper into our first speech, because the paper and our first minute at the placard should tell the same story.

SOURCES

1. Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online, Last Accessed: October 2026. <https://www.harvardmun.org/hmun-online>
2. Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation (HMUN 2027), Last Accessed: October 2026. <https://www.harvardmun.org/s/HMUN-2027-Guide-to-Delegate-Preparation.pdf>

HMDC Forensics, Harvard MUN Online, December 2026