

Reflections from the Ethics Cup Final Team

Being part of the ethics cup team, this year has been nothing short of an incredible privilege. It's easy to focus on the result, achingly so, but I think my favourite moments have come in the times of uncertainty or discomfort - whether that be picking the most appropriate team for a case, personal struggles or even just a tricky question, it was the scenarios in which we found ourselves up against it that really exposed the trust, integrity and sheer excellence our team members possessed.

It was during our celebratory dinner (courtesy of Zizzi's) that we first realised that prior to the competition, none of us had been particularly close. The speed at which we were able to form a cohesive unit is thus frankly startling to me, and all facilitated by the nature of the Ethics cup. Framing the competition as an amicable discussion led to our preparatory meetings being devoid of the stubborn grandstanding, relentless ad-hominems and perpetual straw-manning that plagues many debate teams and indeed a great deal of public discourse nowadays.

Instead, we used room 9 as an open arena to explore views, no matter how controversial, and pin down what we found valuable within them. That modularity broadened our understanding enormously, enabling a kind of empathy that is sorely lacking at times and is something I hope to cultivate moving forward. Indeed it was crucial during the course of the finals, where encountering other teams with differing positions was inevitable given the nuanced ethical landscape, and understanding the crux of their argumentation and potential flaws whilst celebrating the ample merits was vital to move the discussion forward meaningfully.

The degree of care and complexity intrinsic to every position explored and developed throughout the day was stunning and truly eye-opening given the often-homogeneous outlook that sprouts from the similitude of our upbringings. The whole experience from room 9 at Reading to School III at St Andrews is something that I've learnt so much from and will cherish dearly.

For that, I thank the rest of my team, Geraldine, St Andrews, and every single student, staff and tutor involved in making this incredible event possible. Can't wait for next year!!!

Aashmit

The Ethics Cup is a national debate held by the University of St. Andrews which invites 75 schools from across the nation to discuss topics which may be regarded as sensitive and controversial. To me, it has been a great pleasure to work with these topics as a team from our group sessions to the regionals, and finally to the nationals. The Ethics Cup's mission to underscore these issues and facilitate an environment for discussions to a younger audience is truly noteworthy and I am beyond grateful to have been a part of it.

The biggest takeaway from this experience is our teamwork and dedication to our craft. We have placed our team chemistry in the forefront of it all and it has been vital to our success; being able to share worldviews—which may differ from time to time—has opened my understanding on certain topics which I otherwise would never have discovered. I have learnt so much about my teammates and I am so grateful for the pleasure of getting to know them more.

The experience of the entire process itself is something I am sure we will cherish for a major portion of our lives. And to my teammates and Geraldine, this cup is representative of our passion, hard work, and the long-lasting friendships we have created.

Mikhail

Participating in the Ethics Cup competition was an honour, and as a team we achieved something far more valuable than victory - we went into the day with a team, and through trial and tribulation, we survived the test of time, thriving as we went head to head with various schools from across the country. Our viewpoints were challenged, and discussing such topical and relevant issues with others holding contrasting perspectives was fascinating. We secured a strong victory in the first round, boosting confidence at the start of the challenge, before being caught by surprise in the second and third, suffering two losses. Nevertheless, we conversed and reflected, tweaking our strategy before getting back on our feet in the fourth round, and storming into the fifth to secure a landslide victory. Morale was high, and our team had become outstandingly stronger over the course of the first few hours! The final was next, and whilst The Grammar School from Leeds put up serious competition, we put our reflection into practice, delivering a stunning response to our case. Our victory was earned through highs and lows, and is something that we will never forget.

George

The Ethics Cup is so much more than just the competition days. There was never a boring moment during our meetings and therein lies what I appreciate the most about it all – the people. We are endlessly diverse in every sense of the word, and yet every single one of us came together as teammates, but more importantly we came together as friends. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to get to know so many thoughtful, bright, and inspiring people through this process. That, for me, is maybe not what I primarily had in mind when I joined the Ethics Cup, but it is what I still hold on to as the most rewarding aspect after it's all said and done.

Tejas

Participating in the Ethics Cup these past months has truly been an incredible experience. Rarely do opportunities arise to collaborate with teams of such perspicacious individuals, exchange ideas, perspectives and worldviews and deliver nuanced and insightful presentations at the end of it all, and I am incredibly grateful to have been provided with one. The standard of ethical discourse, at times challenging me, perpetually enlightening me, has really rubbed off on me. It would be remiss not to acknowledge St Andrews' role in this, facilitating a style of discussion which allowed for collaboration between opposing teams to construct the most infallible position, enlightening me to what I now believe to be the ideal means of handling the interpretative and subjective nature of ethical discourse. The experience has been so gratifying for so many reasons.

Remi

Participating in the Ethics Cup has been one of the highlights of my year! It was a pleasure to have discussed different cases with teams from around the country, and collaborated with them to not only strengthen and deepen my understanding of my own position, but also to understand and approach other worldviews and thought processes to form more nuanced positions as well. This was only possible due to the unique structure of the presentations at the Ethics Cup, which allowed for a much more civil discussion. One of the best parts from my experience with the Ethics Cup was getting to work with my amazing teammates. Our collaboration and dedication to supporting each other even beyond the cases themselves as what made the Ethics Cup so amazing to participate in, for me.

Jaden

In an age where a desire for virality has driven discourse into discord, the Ethics cup has carved out a space for discussion unlike any other. Having the opportunity to work with students from across England to better understand a range of political and social issues has been invaluable for broadening and developing my perspectives. The thoughtfulness behind every idea presented over the course of the regionals and the finals allowed me to learn so much more deeply about the issues that effect our world. Most importantly, the competition gave me the chance to develop as an individual. The chance to lead such an incredible team to victory taught me more than I could have hoped about what leadership really means.

Indiana

Personally, I posit the most significant moment during this whole endeavour was after the second match at the finals. Up until that point in time, all we had ever experienced was victory, both at the regional level and at our first match in the nationals, albeit with the last being by a razor-thin margin. However, that could not have changed more drastically for in this round, we suddenly found ourselves almost dumbstruck after losing by a massive 13 point difference. At this point, the morale of the team dropped significantly, only exacerbated by a similar loss in the 3rd round and for each and every one of us, it was a very emotionally charged battle to fight.

However, through all of this, we never gave in and instead made some drastic changes to our lineup and strategy, which ultimately was what ended up enabling us to win the competition. Nevertheless, the real treasure we found in St Andrews was something greater than any trophy; this whole competition has made us all so much more prepared for a life beyond Reading School than almost any other experience. We have people who want to be lawyers, doctors and actors but no matter what path we decide to go on this process of being able to go on an arc from losing two matches in a row by quite a large margin to winning the entire thing at the very end. That's going to stick with us for life.

Sumi

Dear All,

If we have ever stopped to reflect, we will have raised the question

'what is it all about?'

I suggest that we have answered it in part in St. Andrews.

'It' is about teamwork.

Let's not forget the next time that (pesky) question arises.

To those who doubt it is about teamwork, then I say it must be about fish and chips.

Well done all eight team members.

It was a lot of fun, and more besides,

Geraldine