

Information sheet: Montana MUN

“There is a compelling fit between the ideals of the MUN society and the aspirations Dr Max Husmann had in mind when he set up Montana in 1926. The three “I’s” – Individualism, Internationalism, Integration - are enshrined in the structure of Institut Montana Zugerberg and are values at the heart of the learning that goes on when students participate in the MUN society.”

Alexander Biner (2017) – Director & Chairman of the Board of Institut Montana Zugerberg

1. The League of Nations and the United Nations

The League of Nations (LN) was set-up at the Paris Peace Conference of the First World War in 1920 as an inter-governmental organisation with the principal mission to maintain international peace. With the outbreak of the Second World War, it was clear that the LN had failed.

In the end of the Second World War, the United Nations (UN) was founded with the signing of the UN Charter in 1945. In opposition to the LN, all major powers agreed on the UN Charter (the United States were never a member of the LN), the UN got its own armed forces (which the LN did not have) and the idea of collective security was not included (in the LN, an attack on a member country was seen as an attack on all member countries).

Whilst the LN failed to maintain peace, much due to the tensions in Europe and East Asia, the UN survived despite decades of tensions of the Cold War.

2. Model United Nations

2.1. History

Simulations of LN existed on high school and university levels already during the interwar years. With the foundation of the UN, Model United Nations (MUN) societies started in the United States in the late 1940s.

2.2. Organisation

There is no central MUN authority and most MUN conferences are organised on an individual basis. Hence, the set-up may differ between conferences, but the purpose remains the same across all conferences.

MUN conferences are organised and run by a Secretariat consisting of students' administrators with the support of their MUN Directors. The Secretariat is headed by a Secretary-General.

The conferences consist of a General Assembly, with or without subcommittees. The Delegates first build up a draft resolution which is to be passed to the Approval Panel of the Secretariat, to then be debated in the General Assembly or the relevant Committee.

MUN conferences require formal attire (Western business attire), as dressing professional is a way of showing respect to the seriousness of the topics discussed and towards the Member States represented. It is not acceptable to dress up or in any other way try to imitate the Member State one represents.

In the MUN, students are allocated UN Member States in advance of a debate and are asked to research their Member States' stand points on specific preannounced topics regarding for instance Human Rights, Environmental or Disarmament issues. The students – in the MUN referred to as Delegates – are to present position papers of the Member States that they represent, where they describe what their Member States stand for and hence which standpoints they will defend in the debates.

Typically, a Delegation consists of 1-7 Delegates, which represents the same Member State in different Committees. Hence, while some background research can be done collectively, other research must be done individually, as one Delegate may be in the Human Rights Committee, while another delegate may be in the Environmental Committee.

2.3. Purpose

The purposes of the MUN are plentiful. Students learn:

- to research (the standpoint of their countries),
- to speak publicly (when addressing the General Assembly with their Member States stand points),
- to debate (take a standpoint and argue for this, staying true to one's Member State's actual standpoints),
- to use formal manners and language (formal UN language and debating procedures are used),
- to think critically (to develop arguments for one's standpoints and anticipate other Delegates behaviour to convince a majority of the Delegates to vote in favour of one's standpoints),
- to collaborate (build alliances with other Delegates and understand that compromises may be necessary to get a point through),
- to be a leader (by Chairing a committee, by taking the lead as a Delegate creating a Bloc or by representing one's Delegation as an Ambassador),
- to learn how to deal with stress situations (e.g., caused by public speaking – can be useful for other stress situation, such as during exam sessions),
- to understand how other think (by not representing one's own native country), and
- to understand why International Relations are so tough (by being exposed to different national standpoints and realise different Member States may have very different objectives)

3. Montana MUN

3.1. History

The history of the Montana MUN society at Institut Montana dates to the 1940s and the Montana International Relations Club (or its German name *Klub für internationale Verständigung*). Articles from the Alumni magazine *Montana Blatt* from the 1940s and 1950s show that the Montana International Relations Club intended to improve the tolerance and understanding between students from different cultural backgrounds in the spirit of the newly founded United Nations.

The Montana MUN society still fulfils a similar purpose by letting students put themselves in the situation of representing UN Member States other than their own home countries. This should foster an understanding of why countries may have diametrically different opinions on matters and hence the understanding of the sources of international tension.



3.2. Present

The Montana MUN society as we know it today was founded in 2009 as an after-school activity, complementing the existing art and sport clubs, to allow students to develop their 21st century skills and give them an insight of international politics. Every year Montana MUN society attends international MUN conferences across Europe and students that have been committed to the Montana MUN society throughout the school year, who have attended at least one international conference and who has actively worked for the mock debate and the Montana MUN Conference are awarded the Montana MUN Society Certificate.

In 2021, the Montana MUN was introduced to the bilingual elementary school (BE), where an adapted version of the programme is run. Older BE students are also participating at the ordinary MUN sessions, together with students from the International Section, the Swiss Section and the Bilingual Secondary School.

3.3. In-house conferences

Since 2011, the Montana MUN society has organised a spring mock-debate, where its members present a debate for the school community to inform about and to market the Montana MUN. In addition, the students have the opportunity to show what they have learnt in the in-school sessions and at the international conferences.

In November 2017, MUN society launched its own international Montana MUN Conference. More than 100 students from 39 different countries attended this one-day conference.

The second conference - the Montana MUN 2018 - was a three-day conference held in November 2018, where schools from across Europe and the Middle East came to the Zugerberg, a format that remains still today.

Despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Montana MUN 2021 could be – as one of only very few MUN conferences – held as a live event. To accommodate for federal and school Covid-19 measures, the conference was moved to a large venue in the city of Zug. Schools from Asia and Africa had to cancel their participations, but the conference was nonetheless booked out with schools from Switzerland, France, Germany, and the Netherlands.

Past conference themes:

- 2017 Developing the opportunities for women
- 2018 Defining human dignity – immigration in a globalised world
- 2019 An evolution of cooperation or a tragedy of the common – global climate change
- 2021 At the crossroads – technological advancements
- 2022 Going beyond SDG7: sustainable energy
- 2023 Addressing the Geneva Refugee Convention - Tackling Migration in a Globalised World
- 2024 Pathways to Prosperity - United in Eradicating Poverty?
- 2025 Human Rights in the Digital Age: Ensuring Equity and Privacy
- 2026 Climate-Induced Displacement: Strengthening Civil Protection Systems for Global Resilience

3.4. Outlook

The Montana MUN is now present across the school: the International Section (IS), the Swiss Gymnasium (SG), the Bilingual Secondary School (BSS) and the Bilingual Elementary School (BE). Most of the students however come from the IS and we are focusing on to involve the SG and BSS further. Efforts are made to further institutionalise the Montana MUN at Montana.



4. Links

Montana MUN online: <https://www.montanamun.ch>

Institut Montana: <http://www.montana-zug.ch>

Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXk9NFKejUY&list=PLDBxyhXo3pm6OL3DbOB3Otq2GqBnhd7tB>

“Only through understanding we can work towards a more peaceful world and the international environment at Montana is a great starting point, where an Montana MUN student from Israel may represent Iran, while an Iranian student may represent the United States.”

PJ Widen (2009) – Founder and Director of the Montana MUN