

Making YOUR experiences and worldview available to others. Global Affairs as part of the MUWCI core

Global Affairs is about intellectual and also emotional exchange. At the centre of the week's timetable, it is to provide the public space and one hour's time for intra-community communication on issues of interest.

What is 'interesting'? Issues from current affairs or issues of general relevance. Tell us if we are missing something.

Global Affairs is to be informative. And stimulating. Thought-provoking.

How does it work?

We – the activity group – choose the topic and we run the discussions. We are very open to suggestions and inputs from the outside. We very much welcome criticism and try to react to it. But a Global Affairs session is not an exercise in democracy. In most discussions there needs to be somebody in charge, to make the introduction; then somebody to steer it – the facilitator. This facilitator has special rights, can interrupt without being pointed to, can put new questions, etc. Like a teacher in the class-room, the facilitator has more rights than the other participants.

Teachers in Global Affairs are participants like all others. Most welcome to contribute. Like anybody else. Even David is not more equal. This is space for everyone. Only the facilitator stands out.

This elevation to a special position may seem unfair. But in exchange you can blame the facilitator if something goes wrong. She or he is responsible.

What makes for a good Global Affairs?

Most certainly the facilitator on her or his own is powerless.

Participation makes Global Affairs good. Active participation. Participation by the many. Participation in a constructive way (remember the Listening Workshop of Laura&co in Orientation Week?).

We do not need to reach conclusions! And Global Affairs is not about doing. If a new idea pops up, a new way of approaching a topic emerges from a Global Affairs session in a few of us, then the session has been worth our while. If our thinking – on which action may or may not be based – improves, if future decisions can be taken on a more informed basis, then Global Affairs has been worth our while.

What is constructive participation? Listen to what the others say. Don't repeat points. Don't take up more of the public space and of everybody's scarce time than necessary. But do make sure that you speak up if you have something to say. And if you do not want to speak but have something to say, put a written statement on the Global Affairs notice board. Or write an article in FTB. Or simply continue discussion during break, at lunch, or in the next class.

Public discussions are also about power. About the sharing of public space. Let us try to share it out in a fair way. Not everybody has to contribute. Some people on some topics will have more than one input. But don't speak for the sake of speaking, don't speak for the sake of standing in the limelight. Assuming the speaker role in a Global Affairs session, stepping into the centre of the whole community's attention should have as a precondition that you try to contribute something meaningful.

The basic idea of our college is to bring together people from all parts of the world into one community. Here we do things together, academic and non-academic, public and private. The difference to most other schools is that the range of backgrounds of students is much larger. The IB programme – and we spoke about this in the first Global Affairs session of this year on education – is very western. The ideals of UWCs, however, can only be put into practice if everyone contributes, makes her or his experiences and her or his own background available to the others, to the community.

We at UWCs are global nomads to some extent, we are in some sense at the forefront of globalisation. We have roots at ‘home’, we need to anchor in other places when we are away. For two years we anchor on this hill. And Mulshi taluka and Pune become a second home. Let us make sure that, during these two years, we also share our various homes, our various places of anchorage with the others. And that means more than sharing customs and songs and dances. It means the sharing of life experiences, of culture, of traditions, of ideas, of different views of the world. Different angles on the world.

That is how we can make our experience here more truly international. Less mainstream, more critical, less western.

We’ll do it in private (in friendship, in love & hate), we’ll do it in class, we’ll do it in ToK, we’ll do it in community service – by learning about the local and becoming more of a part of it – and we’ll do it in sports and other activities. Let us make sure that – through discussion, dispute, discourse – we also do it in Global Affairs.

The United World Colleges enable their students to make a difference. They provide the opportunity for highly motivated young people from diverse backgrounds to transcend the boundaries of race, religion, ethnicity, class, gender, and nationality and to develop a critical consciousness of the issues and causes of division in our world. They foster a sense of purpose and the determination to oppose narrow-minded nationalism, intolerance and injustice. Our graduates are politically and environmentally aware agents of change, with a life-long commitment to seeking creative solutions to global, regional and local conflicts.

Our mission statement will not become reality of its own accord. It will not become reality if we leave it only to the teachers to implement it. It needs an input from each and every one of us.