

Report on the 2023 SAIIA Schools Quiz on International Affairs

Showcasing the promise of youth in South Africa once again, the SAIIA Western Cape Branch Interschool Quiz on International Affairs took place on 24 August 2023.

Specifically designed to draw learners of all backgrounds from among the schools in the Western Cape, and to encourage them to read and engage with world news – especially news and analysis about South Africa’s international affairs – the quiz has had an impact on several generations of high school learners, many of whom go on to study or work in international affairs, according to alumnae of the programme. The quiz has been an annual event since 1993, taking place online during the COVID lockdowns.

This quiz differs from other ‘general knowledge’ quizzes on offer in that the focus is specifically international affairs. Since 1993, nearly 4000 learners have taken part from over 90 schools – some schools have participated every single year since the quiz started.

The quiz involves up to 50 schools from the various communities of the Western Cape. For new and developing schools, a pre-quiz workshop is offered where learners hear from previous quiz winners still involved in the Youth@SAIIA programme. The presenters introduce the learners to the field of international affairs and discuss issues such as fake news and social media in the context of reading widely, as well offer advice on preparing for the quiz. There is also a quiz preparation manual for all participating schools.

This year, a total of 48 teams took part, arriving at Bishops Mallett Centre in Rondebosch at 5pm on 23 August. Hot soup and sandwiches kept the chill at bay, both for the learners and teachers, and snack packs were provided at the tables along with SAIIA branded tote bags for each learner.

Participants were tested on their reading of ten days of online articles – between 3-7 articles a day – taken from a variety of media outlets in the two weeks preceding the quiz and distributed by email to the schools via an appointed teacher contact. The questions this year ranged from the BRICS Summit, recent developments in Ukraine, and Africa’s new free trade agreement, to environmental and energy

issues.

There were 20 questions altogether, read out by Quiz Master Advocate Murray Bridgman. Several questions included two or three parts, for 76 points total, plus three tie breaker questions ready in the event of a tie for first, second or third place.

These questions were set by international affairs specialists from academia, policy think tanks, the diplomatic corps and the private sector. The spirited responses from the audience as the Quiz Master called for answers to the questions, once all answer sheets were in, testified to the strong teacher and parental involvement in the preparation for the quiz. Three tie-breaker questions settled the identity of the winning teams, in the end.

The results of the quiz (top 10 scoring teams) were as follows.*

1st - SACS (Diplomats)

2nd - SACS (Ambassadors)

3rd - The Oracle Academy (Diplomats)

4th - San Souci Girls High School (Diplomats)

5th - Springfield Convent (Ambassadors)

5th - The Oracle Academy (Ambassadors)

7th – Garlandale High School (Diplomats)

8th – Cedar House

9th – Darul Arqam Islamic High School (Ambassadors)

9th – DF Malan High School (Ambassadors), who also received the Most Improved Trophy

* Where a school sent two teams, they were referred to as ‘Ambassadors’ or ‘Diplomats’. After the first three places, teams are noted as tied.

Besides the monetary prizes for the winning schools (see attached expense report), the two top winning teams were awarded a tour of the NCOP House of Parliament and the parliamentary library, which took place on 6 December. Both the Quiz Chair and the Quiz Coordinator joined the learners for that event.

Acknowledgements

The Quiz Committee is once again deeply grateful to the Abe Bailey Trust for its support in the form of R158,000 in 2023. Thanks are also due for several smaller donations, both in cash and in kind,

including from Bishops which continues to provide the venue and technical support without charge, organised by teacher Phil Court.

Special thanks to Quiz Coordinator Pippa Segall, whose excellent organisational skills and friendly communications make the quiz a great pleasure for the many volunteers helping to pull it together, as well as for those participating.

Finally, to the learners and their teachers, we again convey our admiration for their hard work and enthusiasm. This event continues to inspire those who attend with hope regarding the future of South African leadership.

Dr Martha Bridgman

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