

MINI-CONFERENCE GUIDE

With district CDCs, SCDC, and ICDC just around the corner, competitive preparation is more important for chapters than ever.

A perfect way to increase your chapter's competitive readiness is hosting mini-conferences, or small regional conferences organized by chapters. Their benefits are numerous – in addition to serving as opportunities for members to try new events and sharpen their communication and presentation skills, they offer leadership and project management training for the student organizers. Furthermore, they're great opportunities to involve your community as well as professional and alumni members!

Want to organize a minicon but don't know where to start? Follow the steps in this guide to bring a great DECA opportunity to your chapter's doorstep:

First things first, raise interest in the minicon.

- Make sure enough members are willing to attend the minicon to ensure it's successful. It's always a good idea to **require first-year members to attend**, as minicons give them a great opportunity to get the full DECA competition experience before their first official conference. You should also **recommend second-year members to attend**, since they will also benefit from the experience. A great way to make the minicon more engaging for more experienced members is to **recommend third- and fourth-year members to serve as judges** (see judge recruitment section below for more information).
- In addition, **reach out to local chapters** (three to four is always a good number) to see if they'd be interested in participating in and planning the minicon with you! Competing with students from other schools helps the minicon simulate official conferences even better, and can help **push students out of their comfort zone**.

Next, figure out the logistics of where the minicon will take place.

- Once you've determined an approximate number of attendees for the minicon, begin thinking about a place to hold it.
- Many chapters prefer to host minicons at their schools and often use the **cafeteria, gym, and/or a few classrooms**. If you decide to host the minicon at your school, make sure to reach out to your school's administration to **determine the school's/district's procedures** for booking facilities. You will most likely have to submit an activity proposal to ASB and administration; you may also need to fill out a separate facilities request.
- Remember, however, that **you are not limited to your school!** There are many outside venues that may work just as well as your school, so don't forget to look for a few potential ones (a few examples include your local community center or a local

university). If you decide to use an outside venue, however, keep in mind that **they might have different policies**, so make sure to follow all of them as best as possible.

Determining when you will hold the minicon is just as important as where!

- Regardless of where you decide to hold your minicon, make sure to **start planning months in advance**. There are many moving parts to a minicon, and especially since you may have to plan this in conjunction with administration or an outside party, make sure to budget enough time for a few hiccups along the way.
- First, **decide how long you want your minicon** to be. Depending on that number, determine whether you want to hold it after school **during the week or over the weekend**. Either way, make sure to **coordinate with administration** to see when your desired facilities are free (pro tip: come up with three possible dates just in case the facilities aren't available on certain dates).

Make sure to plan ahead to ensure you have all the materials you need.

- Ask yourself what you will need for the minicon to run smoothly. A few examples would be **tables, chairs, sound equipment, laptops, tape, timers, pencils, and lots of scratch paper**.
 - If **your school can provide these materials for you**, specify that you need these materials in your activity request. If not, make sure to stay in contact with administration and possibly the custodial staff so that they can provide you with everything you need.
 - If **individual officers or members can provide the materials**, determine who will bring what, and then hold them accountable for that. Let them know that the minicon can only be successful if they all do their part!

Pick what competitive events you want to offer at the minicon.

- This will vary depending on how large your minicon will be, but a **good number of events is usually around three to four**. You don't want to offer too few events, as that limits members' options, but you also don't want to offer too many, as that may cause events to have too few competitors in them.
- Make sure the events you pick are **well-distributed** and also **general enough** (so not too industry-specific) that members can apply what they learn from the minicon to whichever event they end up competing in.
 - **One event should always be a principles event**, as these events are extremely popular with first-year members. A great option is Principles of Marketing (PMK), as it's by far the most popular principles event and is still very similar to the other three events in that category.
 - **One or two events should be an individual series event**. A few great options are Marketing Communications (MCS), Business Services Marketing (BSM), and

Human Resources Management (HRM). Both Marketing Communications and Business Services Marketing are in the marketing cluster, which is usually the most popular career cluster, especially for newer members. If you know that many of the minicon attendees are planning on competing in a finance event, it may be a good idea to offer Business Finance (BFS), as finance events are quite different from events in the other career clusters.

- **One event should be a team decision making event.** Marketing Management (MTDM) and Hospitality Services (HTDM) are both great options, as neither are too industry-specific, meaning they are very applicable to other events.

Find case studies and competition exams to give members during the minicon.

- Once you have selected the events you will offer at the minicon, find case studies that have been given at past conferences. Try to **dig deep to find these**, as you want them to be role plays that members have never seen before. If you're having trouble finding these, **reach out to one of the state officers**, and they can give you some great resources. Remember that if you could find the case studies within a few seconds of a Google search, so can the minicon competitors!
- You must similarly **find cluster exams** for the events you are offering. Keep in mind that principles events use the Business Administration Core exam, not the specific cluster exams.
 - In addition, decide whether you want to offer a full-length, 100 question exam or if you would like to shorten it down to 50 questions. This can help save a lot of time at the mini-conference, as it cuts down the total time for the exam from 90 to 45 minutes.
- Based on the number of attendees registered for each event, print out the corresponding number of case studies and competition exams. Don't forget to **print out the judge scenarios** for the case studies too!

Decide if you want to offer any workshops at the minicon.

- Although the exams and case studies are some of the most important parts of the minicon, many chapters also like to offer workshops during the minicon. You can choose the topic of the workshop(s), whether it is **related specifically to competition** (for example, about how to approach answering performance indicators on role plays) or simply geared toward **preparing members to be career-ready** (for example, about how to build a professional resume).
 - These workshops can be led by a state officer, DAT officer, chapter officer, chapter advisor, alumni member, business professional, or anyone else who may be interested in running one.
 - **Keep in mind how much time the presenter has** when scheduling the workshops. Depending on the specific workshop, you may prefer to hold the

workshop for all attendees at one point during the minicon or you may want to hold the same workshop multiple times and have members rotate through it along with the aspects of their competition. (See scheduling section below for more information.)

Buy awards.

- Purchase awards for the **first, second, and third place finishers on the exam, case studies** (one for principles and team decision making events, and two for individual series events), **and overall in each event**. Don't forget that for team decision making events, the awards for the exam portion are given to individuals, but the awards for the case studies and the overall winners are given to teams.
 - It's completely up to you what you want to use as awards, but you have many options, including **trophies, medals, ribbons, and certificates**. Many chapters prefer to hand out medals or ribbons for the awards for the individual portions of each event and trophies for the overall winners in each event.
 - Some chapters also hand out **certificates of participation** to everyone who attends the minicon, so decide if you want to do so as well.
- Keep in mind that the prizes you decide to hand out will ultimately **affect the registration price attendees must pay!**

Decide if you want to order food.

- At many afterschool minicons, the competition aspect ends close to dinnertime, and at many weekend minicons, it runs through lunch. Some chapters like to buy food for the attendees, so determine if you would like to do so as well. **Fast food restaurants** like Domino's or Chipotle are always a good choice.
 - Based on the registration form, determine if and how many attendees have **dietary restrictions**, as this may limit the food you can order.
 - If you decide to order food, **figure out the logistics ahead of time** - for example, decide if someone will pick it up from the restaurant or if you will have it delivered and when.
- Keep in mind that the cost of the food will be **absorbed into the final registration cost** members must pay.

Figure out how much registration for the minicon will cost members.

- Calculate how much your chapter is spending for food, awards, materials, and anything else. Based on that number, determine how much you will charge each member to participate in minicon. Generally, registration is around \$20.
- Establish a **consistent, organized payment system**, especially for **members from different chapters**. Decide whether attendees should pay their dues to specific chapter officers, your chapter advisor, or directly to your school's student store. Finally, make

sure that the officers and advisors from the other chapters participating in the minicon know how they will transfer their members' registration dues to your chapter, depending on the share of the total cost each chapter is covering.

Create a registration form for members to submit.

- Send out either a **Google form** (this will likely be easier) or a physical form that members must fill out to participate in the minicon.
 - Include all necessary information on the form, including the **time and location**.
 - Make sure that as part of the form, **members select which event** they would like to participate in. For those members who would like to compete in a team decision making event, they should write who their partner is.
 - For third- and fourth-year members, create an option for them to say that they will be **volunteering as judges**.
 - Ask members if they have any **dietary restrictions**, as that may affect where you cater food from and what food you order.
 - Finally, highlight how much **registration costs** and remind members that they must pay if they want to participate. A great way to do this is to create a question in which members must respond yes to a statement that they will pay their dues by a certain date, as this forces members to consciously think about paying their dues on time.

Recruit judges!

- Finding judges is extremely important, as a shortage of judges can slow down the minicon dramatically. You have numerous options of people whom you can ask to judge at the minicon, including **state officers, DAT officers, chapter officers, chapter advisors, alumni members, business professionals, and parents**. In addition, it's always a great idea to **encourage third- and fourth-year members** to be judges, as it rekindles their excitement for DECA and is a great way for them to give back to the organization by helping newer members.
 - Although it's easiest to just ask other members to be judges, try to **reach out to local businesses** to see if they can help you as well; this is a great way to involve your community and build relationships that will be very helpful in the future!
- For all judges, but especially business professionals, parents, or other people who may not have any experience judging DECA case studies, make sure to **give them the Judges Orientation Script** (attached at bottom).

Don't forget about the other staffing responsibilities you must fill!

- Remember that just as it is imperative to recruit judges, it is similarly important to fill all other positions for your minicon to run smoothly.

- Ask yourself what **specific duties** must be accomplished over the course of the minicon to prevent any hiccups, as this differs depending on the style of the minicon. As a thought starter, you will need people to check in members and judges, lead judge orientation sessions (if you are planning on doing so), proctor exams and case studies, and calculate the results. You may also need someone to pick up the food from the restaurant.
 - Try to fill all of these positions with **third- and fourth-year members!** Remind them that if they were first-year members attending the minicon, they would be very appreciative if older members volunteered their time to make the experience as positive and engaging as possible.
- It may be helpful to share a doc or spreadsheet listing each members' specific responsibilities at given times throughout the minicon. **Ensure that all facilitators know their roles well in advance** of the event!

Remember that you most likely will have to change the setup for each room you use during the minicon.

- This varies a lot depending on what facilities you're using, but you will most likely have to rearrange the rooms you're using to best suit your needs.
 - For example, in the **testing room(s)**, you can probably just arrange the desks in rows. In the **case study preparation room(s)**, you will want to put only one student at each table, and try to seat them relatively far apart from each other. In the **case study presentation room(s)**, you will need to place desks or chairs around a larger table facing each other.
- After the minicon is over, make sure to **arrange the room the way it was before you got there**. It's always a great idea to take a picture of the room before you adjust anything so that you know exactly how you should be rearranging the class at the end.
- Finally, within a week of the minicon, **write thank-you notes** to the teachers whose classrooms you used! They always appreciate these notes, and will be more likely to let you use their rooms in the future if you do so.

Don't lose track of the seemingly minor logistics!

- When members check in upon arriving to the minicon, make sure to give them their name tag. Besides their name, the **name tag should have all necessary information**, including event, section number (depending on how large your minicon is), prep room number (depending on if you are using multiple prep rooms), and prep time. Remember to let members know that they should get to their prep room 15 minutes early, as this is good practice for all official conferences.
- Make sure to also **put signs on every room** that you are using so members and judges can easily find the room they are looking for. This is as simple as taping a piece of paper

to the wall with the label of the room, but it can be immensely helpful, especially for judges or students from other chapters.

- In addition, remember to **tape the competitor instructions and scenarios to the tables in the prep room** (students cannot take these in to the presentation), as this both helps simulate official conferences and ensures that there are enough scenarios for all competitors to read. However, keep in mind that the instructions and scenarios for judges should not be taped to their table, so make sure to print out a copy for each judge.

Scheduling events might seem a bit difficult at first, but it’s actually relatively easy!

- There are many different ways to schedule events, so **you will have to find the system you like the best**. Remember that this depends heavily on how many events you are offering at your minicon and how many members are competing in each event.
- Based on the number of students in each event, figure out if you will have to divide each event into sections or if all competitors in each event can compete at the same time.
- Using **rotations** will probably be your easiest option.
 - In this method, students are grouped by event. For example, let’s say that you’re offering Principles of Marketing (PMK), Business Services Marketing Series (BMS), and Hospitality Management Team Decision Making (HTDM). In the first rotation, members competing in PMK would prep and perform their case studies, those in BMS would attend a workshop, and those in HTDM would take their exam. In the next rotation, the members would switch; those in PMK would take their exam, BMS would perform their case studies, and HTDM would attend the workshop. In the final rotation, PMK would attend the workshop, BMS would take their exam, and HTDM would perform their case studies.
 - This chart depicts the example of rotations described above:

Event Rotation	Rotation 1	Rotation 2	Rotation 3
PMK	Case Studies	Exam	Workshop
BMS	Workshop	Case Studies	Exam
HTDM	Exam	Workshop	Case Studies

- It is generally easiest to put each aspect of the rotation (exam, case study, workshop) in a **different room**.
- Remember that within each rotation, you will probably need to **stagger start times for the case study**, as each case study take less time than an exam or workshop. Keep in mind that prep time and presentation time for principles and

series events are each 10 minutes, whereas for team decision making events, prep time is 30 minutes and presentation time is 15 minutes.

- Another possible option could be to **hold all exams, case studies, and/or workshops at the same time.**
 - In this method, all members take their exam at the exact same time. In addition, all members prep and perform their case studies during the same window of time.
 - For case studies, all members who are scheduled for a certain prep time go into prep at the same time, regardless of event. For example, if case studies begin at 4:00 at an afterschool minicon, the 4:00 students for every section go into prep at that time. At 4:10, the 4:00 students for every section go into compete while the 4:10 students for every section go into prep. Note that this schedule will be a bit different for team decision making events, since their prep time is 30 minutes and their presentation time is 15 minutes.

Coordinate every aspect of the opening and awards/closing sessions.

- First, determine if you want to hold an opening session or if you want members to just go straight to their competition and/or workshop.
- Identify everything you want to include in these sessions, and then incorporate all of those aspects into a **script**.
- Find one or two officers (often chapter presidents) who will lead the sessions. **Time out everything** in the script and **write out who will present** each part.
- In addition, for the awards ceremony, identify **who will announce the results** and **who will hand out the awards**. Since there are so few events at a minicon, you can probably just assign one or two people to each of these roles.
 - For the members who will be presenting or speaking at the opening and/or closing sessions, ensure that they **rehearse many times** before the event!

No matter how you end up structuring your minicon, make sure that you schedule everything to a certain time!

- Don't just give yourself general approximations for when each section of the minicon will start and end. Instead, try to **identify the exact starting and ending times** you will aim for.
 - This way, you can **check whether you're running ahead of or behind schedule** during the minicon and then **adjust accordingly!**
- Remember to **share these times with everyone else** who is running the minicon with you! It always helps to have other people who can help you get the minicon back on track (timing-wise) if you ever need to.

Finally, remember that *minicons vary a lot*, and *you have a lot of room to make it your own*, so don't feel bound to the steps in this guide! Feel free to use whichever parts of this guide are most helpful to you, and make sure to reach out to the state officers if you need any additional assistance in planning your minicon. Now take a deep breath and get ready to run an amazing minicon!

JUDGES ORIENTATION SCRIPT

Welcome

Purpose of minicon: To give students an expectation of competition.

Events:

Explain:

- Students have event materials taped to desk; given scratch paper to take notes
- Judges will have same info, plus judges' instructions
- If student is stumbling during approach, judge can assist to get going
 - Introduce self
 - Tell student "you may begin the role play"
- Judges role is indicated on judge's instructions

Wrap-up hints and how-to's for all judges:

- **PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE COLLECT THE STUDENTS NOTES!!!!**
- After 3 or 4 role plays, adjust previous scores; may be high or low
- Score in pencil; never give a perfect score
- Be consistent: same questions of all students in section
- Invite students to sit; they should stand until you give them permission to take a seat
- Take up to 5 points off under last item on rubric for inappropriate dress and make note of reason in comments
- Watch the time; event manager or assistant should cue you to wrap-up
- PLEASE GIVE WRITTEN FEEDBACK! Students can use this to prepare for area competition
- Try not to score lower than a 60% unless the student truly makes no attempt at the role play!
- No cell phones unless they're being used as part of role play
- Have Fun!