

## Judging criteria for NSA awards: guidelines and expectations – revised February 2021

In order to address a striking degree of variance in scores provided by judges for student awards in recent years, here we offer guidelines that are meant to provide judges with a standard mind-set and students with clear expectations.

### Thurlow C. Nelson Award (Oral presentations)

- **\_ Professional demeanor and presentation** **15 points**
  - Does the presenter convey respect to his/her audience in their physical appearance?
  - Does the presenter avoid, “um”, “er”, “like, kinda”, “sorta, dude”, etc.?
  - Does the presenter try to tell a story?
  - Does the presenter project their voice to the audience (as best they can – not withstanding audio issues)?
  - Does the presenter speak clearly (accents notwithstanding)?
  - Does the presenter show enthusiasm for the subject matter?
  
- **\_ Use of media presentation tools** **15 points**
  - Is the presentation style clear and concise?
  - Is the use of words in slides judicious and precise?
  - Does the presenter use the tools well or is their delivery/use of tools distracting?
  - Is the message on the slide well conveyed?
  
- **\_ Organization and clarity of the presentation** **15 points**
  - Do you always know where you are in the presentation?
  - Was each division of the talk clear and identifiable, for example, by starting with a “topic statement”?
  - Were there adequate/competent segues among sections?
  - Is the appropriate time allocated to each segment of the talk or did they go over the time limit?
  
- **\_ Introduction, background** **5 points**
  - Was adequate background and rationale provided for an audience unfamiliar with the project/experiment?
  - Does the introduction “start the story?”
  
- **\_ Objectives of the research (e.g., hypothesis statement or defined end points)** **5 points**
  - Is it crystal clear what the experiment/study is setting out to demonstrate?
  - Is the question appropriately scaled for the available experimental approach?
  - Is the scope of work presented sufficiently concise to fit into the allotted time slot?
  
- **\_ Experimental/investigative approach** **10 points**
  - Is the design of the experiment/investigation clear?
  - Do the methods used support the question asked?
  - Is it clear that the presenter had a significant role in executing the design of the experiment?
  
- **\_ Results** **10 points**
  - Are the results conclusive (not preliminary)?
  - Was sufficient evidence presented to answer the objectives of the research?
  - Were the data statistically analyzed, where appropriate?
  - Do the statistical findings support the conclusions made?

- **\_ Discussion and conclusions** **10 points**
  - Were alternative interpretations presented?
  - Was the work placed in context of other related science, i.e., what have others done?
  - Were inconsistencies in data, if any, addressed?
  - Were limitations of conclusions adequately acknowledged?
  - Was the “bottom line” of the project succinctly presented?
  - Was the take-away message clear in the final analysis?
  - Did the presenter avoid meaningless generalizations?

- **\_ Creativity and originality** **10 points**
  - Is there a creative edge to the presentation that makes it stand out above others?
  - Is the research question original, stemming from a novel idea?
  - Will the work make an impact on the field, either practical or academic?

- **\_ Subject knowledge and question responses** **5 points**
  - During the presentation, was it clear that the presenter was adequately familiar with the background material and rationale for the work?
  - Did the presenter leave enough time for questions (minimum 2 minutes)?
  - Were the presenter’s responses to questions coherent and appropriate?

**Gunter Award (Poster presentations)**

- **\_ Title** **5 points**
  - Does the title pose, or promise an answer to, a decisive question?
  - Is the title understandable to someone in another discipline?

- **\_ Presentation style (design, visual impact)** **15 points**
  - Is space used judiciously?
  - Are the font style and size easily readable from a computer screen without zooming way in?
  - Is the style professionally rendered?
  - Is there an aesthetic quality to colors and styles used?

- **\_ Presentation organization & clarity** **15 points**
  - Can the reader easily navigate the various sections in sequence?

- **\_ Introduction (clear and succinct)** **10 points**
  - Was adequate background and rationale provided for an audience unfamiliar with the project/experiment?
  - Does the introduction “start the story?”

- **\_ Objectives of the research (e.g., hypothesis statement or defined end points)** **10 points**
  - Is it crystal clear what the experiment is setting out to demonstrate?
  - Is the question appropriately scaled for the available experimental approach?

- **\_ Experimental approach** **10 points**
  - Is the design of the experiment or investigation clear?
  - Do the methods used support the question asked?
  - Is it clear that the presenter had a significant role in executing the design of the experiment?

- **\_Results** **10 points**
  - Are the results, conclusive (not preliminary)?
  - Was sufficient evidence presented to answer the objectives of the research?
  - Were the data statistically analyzed (where appropriate)?
  - Do the statistical findings support the conclusions made?
  
- **\_Discussion and conclusions** **10 points**
  - Were alternative interpretations presented?
  - Was the work placed in context of other related science, i.e., what have others done?
  - Were inconsistencies in data, if any, addressed?
  - Were limitations of conclusions adequately acknowledged?
  - Was the “bottom line” of the project succinctly presented?
  - Was the take-away message clear in the final analysis?
  - Did the presenter avoid meaningless generalizations?
  
- **\_Creativity and originality** **10 points**
  - Is there a creative edge to the presentation that makes it stand out above others?
  - Is the research question original, stemming from a novel notion?
  
- **\_Overall impact** **5 points**
  - Are the presentation and content sufficient to adequately convey the science and the message without additional input from the presenter/author?