

Judging criteria for NSA awards: guidelines and expectations – revised March 2015

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**
 - 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)?
 - Does the presenter speak clearly (accents notwithstanding)?
 - Does the presenter show enthusiasm for the subject matter?
- **Use of media presentation tools, e.g. PowerPoint** **10**
 - Is the presentation style clear and concise?
 - Is the use of words in slides judicious and precise?
 - Does the presenter use the remote and pointer well or is their delivery distracting?
 - Is the message on the slide visible to the audience?
- **Organization and clarity of the presentation** **15**
 - 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, including time for at least one question?
- **Introduction, background** **5**
 - 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**
 - 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**
 - 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**
 - Are the results conclusive (not preliminary)?

Judging criteria, page 2

- 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**
 - 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**
 - 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** **10**
 - 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**
 - 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**
 - Is space used judiciously?
 - Are the font style and size easily readable from a distance of 3-5 feet?
 - Is the style professionally rendered?
 - Is there an aesthetic quality to colors and styles used?
- **Presentation organization & clarity** **15**
 - Can the reader easily navigate the various sections in sequence?
- **Introduction (clear and succinct)** **10**
 - 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**
 - Is it crystal clear what the experiment is setting out to demonstrate?

Judging criteria, page 3

- Is the question appropriately scaled for the available experimental approach?
- **Experimental approach** **10**
 - 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**
 - Are the results conclusive (not preliminary)?
 - Was sufficient evidence presented to answer the objectives of the research?
 - Were the data statistically analyzed?
 - Do the statistical findings support the conclusions made?
- **Discussion and conclusions** **10**
 - 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**
 - 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**
 - Are the presentation and content sufficient to adequately convey the science and the message without additional input from the presenter/author?