

Eastern Colleges Science Conference Judging Guidelines for Platform and Poster Presentations

Both hypothesis testing and discovery-based research are acceptable for ECSC: Shortly after the abstract submission deadline, the ECSC host committee determines which abstracts are accepted for presentation. The research should be empirical, drawing conclusions from observed and/or measured phenomena, involving hypothesis testing or discovery-based research that searches for patterns in nature. (Note: While mining data banks and using informatics in search of meaningful patterns is an acceptable form of discovery-based research, a presentation that provides only a review of a topic or is entirely theoretical with no new information addressing a question is not considered empirical.) Please do not deduct points from a discovery-based research presentation because a specific hypothesis is not being tested experimentally. Instead, please look to see if the discovery-based research is designed to look for patterns that support a general hypothesis or goal.

Determining each presenter's contribution to a group research project:

When an evaluator judges a presentation involving several team members, it is not always clear what the presenting student(s) accomplished as part of that team effort. The evaluator should explicitly ask each presenter about his/her individual contribution to the presented research and factor that information into the evaluation.

Grouping the platform and poster presentations, and selection of

evaluators: The host committee will coordinate the evaluations of the platform and poster presentations. Each abstract submission includes a selected category designating the general research area. Platform presentations will be grouped into sessions by general discipline. One platform presentation evaluator will be assigned to each platform session. The poster presentations will also be grouped by general discipline, with approximately six posters per group (for some disciplines, there will be more than one group). Each poster group will have one poster evaluator. Each evaluator will be charged with judging presentations only within his/her disciplinary expertise and will be assigned presentations in such a manner as to avoid possible conflict of interest. Under no circumstances should an evaluator be assigned to judge a presentation given by a student from his/her institution.

Informing evaluators shortly before the conference: A few days before the conference, when the completed conference program is posted and accessible via linkage from the ECSC web page ECSC1.org, the host committee will send each evaluator an emailed letter of instructions with a list of the assigned presentations, identified by abstract number, as well as links to the general judging report form and the judging rubrics (posted on the ECSC web page ECSC1.org, under Judging). All these items will be included as hard copies in a folder for the evaluator to pick up at the start of the conference. Also included in the folder will be a judging report form for each presentation assigned to the evaluator, to be completed during the presentation.

The evaluation process: When the evaluator receives the folder, the judging report form for each presentation will have already been identified regarding the specific presentation and the presenter(s), so the evaluator will not have to fill in that information. Using the ECSC judging rubrics included in the folder, the evaluator will complete the judging report form for each of the evaluated presentations. For any presentation that includes more than one presenter, all presenters will have already been identified on a single judging report form. For a single presentation given by multiple presenters, the evaluator will be judging the presentation as a whole. For this reason, there will be only one judging report for each presentation, regardless of the number of presenters. (Although all presentations will be evaluated, presentations that include more than three presenters will not be eligible for an award.)

In this manner, all presentations will be evaluated, including those that had requested that they not be considered for excellence awards. Each completed judging report will be returned to the presenter(s) for feedback purposes. Most student presenters appear to pay more attention to the evaluators' comments than to the scores. The evaluator should therefore do what s/he can to include thoughtful, useful feedback in the comments section of the judging report. A central location (preferably near the poster presentations), where evaluators can go, sit down, and complete their judging reports will be specified in the letter of instructions and/or announced at the beginning of the conference. The location and deadlines for collection of all judging reports should similarly be communicated. If the evaluator is directed to turn in the completed judging reports to wandering assistants instead of a specific location, those assistants must be available and easily identified as evaluation collectors.

Selecting presentations for excellence awards: While all presentations will be evaluated for feedback purposes, any presentation that includes more than three presenters is not eligible for an excellence award. Also, there may be presenters who have indicated with their abstract submissions that they do not wish to be considered for an excellence award. Such requests will have already been noted on the appropriate judging report forms by the host committee.

For the remaining eligible platform presentations, the evaluator will select the best presentation of that session for an excellence award, unless s/he determines that none of the presentations is worthy of an award. The evaluator should clearly indicate his/her award selection near the top of the appropriate judging report before turning in the completed evaluations.

For poster presentations, each evaluator will be assigned a group of approximately six posters to evaluate, all within a particular discipline for which an award can be determined. (Related disciplines with smaller numbers of posters may be combined into a group of about six.) As is the case of the platform presentations, the evaluator will select, from the eligible poster presentations, the best presentation of his/her group of posters for an excellence award, unless s/he determines that none of the presentations is worthy of an award. No more than one award should be recommended by the evaluator per about six posters evaluated within the same group, unless the evaluator strongly feels another award is warranted. As in the case of the platform presentations, the poster presentation evaluator should clearly indicate his/her award selection near the top of the appropriate judging report.

Sometimes an evaluator forgets to indicate his/her selection for an award, although s/he had intended that an award be given. If there is no indication from the evaluator that awards should not be given to any of the presenters in the group, but no specific presentation was selected as award worthy, the host committee may select the eligible presentation with the highest evaluation score for an excellence award.

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