Judging Criteria, Purpose, and Procedures

The Research and Creative Achievement Week (RCAW) is an occasion for the display, performance, and evaluation of student research and creative activity projects, whether originating solely from student(s) or carried out collaboratively with faculty.

A successful RCAW will achieve several student-learner objectives:

- Enhance self-concept
- Develop inquiry and problem-solving skills
- Develop creativity
- Improve organizational ability
- Develop both written and oral communication skills
- Improve in-depth knowledge of a discipline or field
- Enhance the experience of working collaboratively with other students and/or faculty

A successful RCAW will address the following educational goals:

- Exploration of real-world issues important to the student
- Hands-on/minds-on approach
- Knowledge
- Inquiry skills
- Higher order thinking skills
- Habits of mind
- Integration
- Social skills

Guidelines for Judges

The attitudes and conduct of the judges determine the success of any Research and Creative Achievement Week (RCAW) activity. Therefore, it is vital that each judge understands thoroughly his or her duties and obligations. Judges should also have knowledge of all the requirements of the participants. All judges need to have a genuine interest in students combined with a desire to offer encouragement and guidance in their efforts to pursue learning in the various fields or disciplines.

Guidelines for Judging Posters and Oral Sessions

- At least two judges will judge each project.
- During oral sessions, students will present their research in person and then answer questions. For virtual poster sessions, students will include a video overview (less than 3 min) to accompany each poster. Judges are expected to have viewed the poster and the video before the assigned synchronous discussion session.
- For individual projects, the student will give the oral presentation of the project and then answer questions about the work on the project.
For team projects (for which there are multiple presenters), a team spokesperson will likely be designated to give the oral presentation of the project. All team members should be able to answer questions pertaining to the project. If not addressed in the presentation, judges should ask each team member for a brief description of their contributions to the project, and ask the team to address how they worked together.

Judges should be exceptionally courteous to all students. The students should be put at ease, especially any who appear nervous during questioning.

After the student’s presentation, judges should feel free to question the student on the materials and tools used and the methods, terms used, sources of information, and the amount and type of assistance enlisted in the preparation of the project. It is also proper to ask questions within the discipline or subject matter involved at the student’s level of learning.

Judges should try to determine the span of the student’s sustained interest in the field or discipline, as well as the approximate amount of time spent in developing the project being evaluated. Some premiums should be granted for considerably extended interest and effort to encourage the quality of persistence that is demonstrated.

Judges should not be too harsh in making their assessments, nor should they be rewarding performance excessively. A balanced evaluation is needed in order not to discourage students from future participation. Outstanding, superior ratings should only be used when it is truly warranted.

Discussion and final scoring of the project should be at a considerable distance from the student since disclosure of scores is delayed until judging is completed.

Each judge shall score independently of the other judge and must confer with the other judge afterwards to come up with one winner.

For those groups with a Super Judge (when there is more than one judging group), in addition to conferring with the other assigned judge, confer with the Super Judge about your final winner. For poster sessions, a designated time will be provided.

We will collect all judging forms and send them to each student for feedback, so written notes on each presentation are important!

All judging will be done via a Qualtrics judging form. For oral (in person) judging, judges are asked to bring a device (laptop etc). Some loaner iPads will be available for those that do not have them.

Do not hurry a judgment. Constructive comments (1) indicating reasons for the rating and (2) making suggestions for improvement shall be written on the scoresheet to be returned to the student after the event. Most importantly, comments (positive and negative) are important so that the student can use the feedback for improvement.

Judges should evaluate students against CRITERIA, not against other students.

Judges should consider the student’s class level when completing their evaluations.

Judges should take into consideration independent vs. collaborative projects with a mentor. Mentoring of students and professionals alike is common and expected in the university world of training and education. Although ECU expects all students to enlist the help of advisors and/or mentors for projects, students must demonstrate involvement in and contribution to the development and conduct of a project. Judges are directed to base their ratings on the level of the student’s research involvement and contribution. Judges are cautioned to realize that a student’s access to mentors may be
limited. Judges are directed not to bias their ratings either for or against students with or without mentors.

- Judges should evaluate theoretical and applied projects without bias toward either.
- Only RCAW officials may inform the student of the scores or ratings after judging.

Judging Criteria

The following section includes an interpretation of the various criteria on which the student’s project or exhibit will be judged.

A. Knowledge or Experience Achieved (considering student’s academic level)

- Has there been a correct understanding and use of discipline terms?
- Is there evidence of an acquisition of in-depth knowledge through the research and/or creating the project?
- Does the student show evidence of knowing what the underlying principle(s) is (are)?
- In brief, has the student actually learned content through the study, research and/or creative activity?
- Check the references (if appropriate) to assist in making a fair determination of the scope and depth of the literature research. Where appropriate, the quantity and quality of the references should be considered to evaluate the student’s research methodology.
- Where applicable with some creative activities, has the student created the aesthetic or artistic experience that the student intended? Has the student achieved something that is meaningful and advances human understanding of the topic or issue at hand?

B. Effective Use of Methods or Medium

- Does the student have a clear-cut idea of the purpose of the project, or is it something thrown together and manipulated?
- Did the student choose an appropriate method or medium? Has the student collected an appropriate amount of information?
- Where appropriate, is the number of subjects or specimens adequate to generalize to the larger group that the sample is intended to represent?
- Is the student aware of other approaches or theories relative to this problem or project?
- Is there evidence of both contemporary literature search and fundamental survey of knowledge with results?
- Has the student been thorough in the methodology?
- Has the student analyzed results in a logical manner and drawn valid conclusions?
- Where applicable with some creative activities, has the student chosen an appropriate medium for which to express their views and advance audience understanding of a topic?
- Is the use of the medium innovative and specifically appropriate for the topic at hand?

Teamwork (this section applicable only in the case of multiple presenters)

- All team members must be present to be considered as part of the judging process.
• Each team should appoint a team leader to coordinate the work and act as spokesperson. However, each member of the team should be able to serve as spokesperson, be fully involved with the project, and be familiar with all aspects of the project.
• If not addressed in the presentation, the judges should ask each team member for a one or two sentence description about their contributions to the project.
• The final work should reflect the coordinated efforts of all team members, and some description about how the team worked together should be provided.

C. Clarity of Expression and Response to Questions

• Does the student explain (orally) the project and the findings concisely and well?
• Does the student answer questions from the audience or judges in a professional and convincing manner?
• Judges should try to weigh evidence of a student’s nervousness. Listen carefully to a student’s presentation for understanding of basic ideas, principles, and results.
• Has the student expressed themselves well in all written material, such as the abstract and presentation visuals? Judges might consider asking students about the words or terminology used in the abstract and presentation to validate that the student clearly understands their use and that the student carried out the research and/or created the project. Judges may also ask what specific knowledge or information came from specific references from the literature.
• Does the student’s presentation make a visual impact and express clarity graphically? In the case of posters, is the physical display neat and sufficiently definitive to act as a stand-alone summary of the student’s entire project?
• Note misspelled words and weak or imprecise grammar.
• Do the research and/or the creative project presentations (paper or poster) include the components or parts expected of a standard project? Do they follow an accepted form of reporting given the student’s discipline?
• Where applicable with some creative activities, what impact did the activity have on the audience? Was the audience engaged? Did the project excel in communicating meaning, symbolism, beauty, and even controversy (if appropriate) to observers?

D. Originality and Creativity

• It is true that the approach may not be new to the judge, but is the problem, approach to the problem, or activity developed in a particularly significant or unique manner?
• Has the student used a new approach to an old subject?
• Has the student provided a unique presentation or organization of materials?
• Does the project show evidence of critical thinking skills? Does the project show evidence of originality and creativity relative to the standards of the student’s discipline; whether it is the use of technology, the development of a survey device, the use of an archival collection or statistical database, the design of experimentation, or use of a creative activity medium?
• Is there evidence of initiative? Place a premium on the ingenious uses of available materials. Collections and manufactured apparatus can be creative if they are assembled and used to achieve, show, or support a stated purpose or provide effective comparison
with previously collected or published data. Has a creative medium been used in an innovative way?

- Where applicable with some creative activities, did the work communicate a depth of understanding and perspective on an issue that is unique and not commonly seen or heard? If the project addresses a well-known idea, did the student bring something new to its presentation? Was there evidence of significant thought and reflection behind the creative project?

Minimum number of points for each rating (see Criteria below):

All Projects:

Superior 36, Excellent 24, Good 12, Satisfactory 4

For a superior rating, an individual or team student shall receive a minimum of 36 points based on the criteria of (1) knowledge achieved, (2) effective use of methods and/or media (including teamwork), (3) clarity of expression and response to questions, and (4) originality and creativity.

JUDGING CRITERIA for ORAL and POSTER SESSIONS RATINGS

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