

## Expectations and Guidelines for Judges at OUR Events

Presenting at a research conference is a milestone for undergraduate researchers. Judges play an important role in supporting students' professional development and contributing to the success of Purdue Undergraduate Research Conferences. The primary responsibility of a judge is to evaluate students on how effectively they communicate their research to a generally educated audience, rather than assess the scholarly merits of the research itself.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide judges with clear expectations and consistent standards for evaluating undergraduate research presentations in a fair and constructive manner that encourages students' continued professional development.

### Judging Expectations and Evaluation Standards

1. **Recognize Differences Across Presenters.** Evaluate students using the established criteria, recognizing that they:
  - represent a range of disciplines and experience levels; and
  - present their research or projects at various stages of the development process, including work in progress.
2. **Review Evaluation Criteria Consistently.** Apply ratings for each criterion fairly and consistently across all presenters, based solely on their presentation, regardless of:
  - presentation topic, format, or discipline, and
  - your personal/professional interests, biases, or opinions.
3. **Complete Evaluations Thoroughly and Honestly.**
  - The three rating levels are designed to support consistency across judges and reduce subjectivity.
    - **Not Observed:** No evidence of the criterion during presentation.
    - **Observed:** Evidence of the criterion during presentation, regardless of quality.
    - **Observed with High Merit:** Exemplary evidence of the criterion during presentation typically seen in someone who recently entered their field (i.e., a first-year graduate student, early-career researcher, or entry-level professional).
  - Evaluate only the criteria demonstrated during the presentation, recognizing that time limits may prevent students from addressing every area. Use the full range of rating options when warranted.
4. **Respect Disciplinary Differences.** Expect different norms of communication across disciplines and avoid penalizing unfamiliar formats, terminology, or methods.
  - Focus on whether or not the student communicates their work to a general audience.
  - Consider how effectively the student adapts terminology, context, and detail for an educated, non-expert audience.
5. **Provide Constructive Feedback.** In addition to completing the rated criteria, judges are encouraged to provide open-ended feedback. Judges should focus on observations that help students understand what they communicated well and identify practical ways to strengthen future presentations.
  - This feedback will be shared with student presenters; useful comments are specific, actionable, and focused on the students' communication.
  - Open-ended comments are meant to support students' growth and confidence.
  - Open-ended comments should avoid discouraging comments and personal judgements on preparation,

student appearance, research topic, discipline, etc.

- Example Feedback:
  - “Your explanation of [...] was clear”.
  - “I better understood the value of your work when you described the project purpose near the end of the presentation. “
  - “Did you consider stating the purpose earlier so your audience has a framework for understanding the rest of the presentation?”
  - "Elements of the presentation that were strong included..."
  - "The student may wish to work on..."
- 6. **Avoid Conflicts of Interest.** Judges should not formally evaluate presenters they know well, particularly their own mentees, students, or research collaborators. Notify event organizers of any existing or perceived conflicts of interest so the presenter can be reassigned to another judge.
- 7. **Engage professionally with students.** Follow the guidelines for professional conduct when interacting with presenters.

## Professional Conduct and Student Interaction

Judge conduct significantly shapes the student experience. Please follow these guidelines to support a respectful, supportive, and constructive environment:

### During the Event

- Arrive on time for the sessions you volunteered to attend and be attentive.
- Treat all student presenters with respect, courtesy, and encouragement.
- Remain impartial and objective.
- Prioritize assigned judging responsibilities during the session.
- Uphold a positive and welcoming environment:
  - Be inclusive and respect human differences.
  - Minimize extra conversations that might distract presenters.
  - Adapt communication as needed to support accessibility and understanding.

### During Each Presentation

- Introduce yourself as a judge at the appropriate time so students understand your role.
- Listen actively and attentively within the constraints of the event environment.
- Maintain open, respectful, and appropriate nonverbal communication.
- Judges may take notes within the form to support their feedback but should not submit the electronic evaluation until after the presentation is complete.
- When asking questions:
  - Ask questions when prompted.
  - Ask questions within the scope of the student’s project or presentation.
  - Use a supportive and curious tone.
  - Give the student time to think and respond.
  - Acknowledge thoughtful answers.
- Judges should avoid:
  - Using an aggressive or dismissive tone.
  - Interrupting during the presentation.
  - Asking technical questions beyond the scope of the project.
  - Asking irrelevant questions.
  - Asking questions intended to put the presenter on the spot.

## Supporting Student Presenters

- Approach interactions as an opportunity to coach and support undergraduate researchers.
- Be constructive and supportive.
- Offer clear guidance that helps students strengthen their communication, build confidence, and continue developing as researchers.
- Recognize that many presenters may be sharing their work for the first time, particularly in a research setting.
- Encourage reflection on process, interpretation, and communication.

Thank you for devoting your time and energy to support Purdue's undergraduate researchers. Your thoughtful evaluations, encouraging questions, and constructive feedback help create a welcoming conference experience where students can feel respected, encouraged, and motivated to continue growing as scholars.