NJSRS Judges Guidelines and Procedures

Eligibility

Judges may include:
- University faculty and graduate students
- Industry STEM professionals
- STEM educators
- Qualified alumni and researchers
- PhD Candidates

Judges may not:
- Judge students they personally know
- Judge students from their own school, lab, or program
- Judge categories in which they have a direct conflict of interest
- Serve as judges if they are involved in organizing or competing in the fair

All judges must complete a conflict-of-interest confirmation prior to the event.

Expectations

Judges are expected to:
- Arrive on time and remain for their full assignment block
- Adhere strictly to scoring rubrics
- Maintain confidentiality of scores and deliberations
- Evaluate projects solely on merit, not on student background or resources
- Be respectful, professional, and constructive during Q&A

Project Assignment

- Judges are randomly assigned to projects within their category of expertise
- Each category includes three judges whenever possible
- Categories correspond to standard ISEF/JSHS-style divisions (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics & Computer Science)
- Judges will receive assignments, abstracts, schedules, and room locations at least 3 days prior to the fair

Event Day Schedule for Judges

8:00 - 8:30 AM - Check-in and set-up for participants and judges

8:30 AM - 12:00 PM – Category judging in classrooms

12:00 – 1:00 PM – Lunch for students and judges (Lunch provided for judges; category judges may leave the fair after this time.)

1:00 – 3:30 PM – Finals for category winners (Located in the auditorium)

- During this time, judges for **special awards** will view the posters set up to shortlist candidates for their award. This will provide judges an opportunity to view and select candidates prior to interviews.

3:45 – 5:00 PM – Poster Session for Special Award Judging

- During this time, students will be at their posters, and judges for **special awards** will go to their shortlisted candidates and ask them to present a short version of their project (~3-5 minutes), or simply ask additional questions as they see fit. **Special award judges must complete their viewing of the posters by 4:30 PM. Once they complete viewing, they must make their decision of the award winners by 5:00 PM (submit to portal).**
- While participants are at their posters, finals judges can use this time to deliberate and determine the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners of the Grand Prizes.

5:00 – 5:30 PM – Final deliberation for winners of special awards and award printing

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM - Awards ceremony and closing remarks.

Category Judging Procedures

Presentation Format

Each oral presentation includes:
- 10 minute oral presentation using slides
- 5 minutes of judge Q&A
- 3 minutes of audience Q&A
  - **Judges will step into the hallway and finalize their scoring during the audience Q&A.**

- 2 minutes of transition

Judges should focus questions on:
- Research motivation and originality
- Experimental design and methodology
- Data analysis and interpretation
- Limitations and future directions
- Student ownership and understanding

Scoring Process

- Judges enter scores individually using the official scoring app
- Scores must be submitted promptly after each presentation

At the end of the morning session, judges will identify the category winner, who advances to the final round.

Grand Prize Judging Procedures

- Category winners
- Each finalist gives a **10-minute presentation**
- **No judge or audience Q&A** during finals
- Judges score based solely on:
    - Scientific merit
    - Clarity of communication
    - Rigor and originality

A minimum of five judges will score all finalist presentations for consistency.

Scoring System

Scoring Platform

Judges will use an online scoring app integrated with Google Forms
- Submit rubric-based evaluations
- Automatically aggregate scores
- Reduce manual calculation errors

Rubrics

- Presentation Scoring: Official JSHS Oral Presentation Rubric

- Judges must adhere to rubric criteria while applying professional judgment
- Final decisions are based on composite scores, not individual impressions

Ethical Judging Standards

Judges must:
- Ignore student age, grade, or school (not disclosed)
- Avoid assumptions based on presentation style or resources
- Focus on student-driven work and understanding
- Flag suspected violations discreetly to organizers

Automatic disqualifications include:
- Fabricated or falsified data
- Plagiarism
- Unsafe research practices
- Undisclosed or unethical AI use

Judging Debrief

Morning Orientation

Before judging begins, organizers will:
- Review the schedule and judging flow
- Clarify scoring expectations
- Address last-minute questions

Thank You

The NJSRS organizing committee sincerely thanks all judges for contributing their time, expertise, and mentorship. Your participation helps sustain meaningful, high-quality research opportunities for New Jersey students.

For questions prior to the event, please contact fair staff at faircommittee@njsrs.org. For questions on the day of the event, please contact the Judging Outreach Committee or event staff at check-in.