

CWSF Judging ? Requests for Information & Appeals

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CWSF Judging

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Executive Director

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Contact:

National Judge in Chief

1 Background

1.1 The Canada Wide Science Fair is a competition in which projects are rigorously assessed during one day of judging. During judging for the Excellence Awards, (i.e., Gold, Silver and Bronze Medals) panels of four or more judges interview finalists. The final result represents the consensus of this group of scientists, reached after exhaustive and lengthy debate. During judging for Special Awards, the projects are assessed by teams of judges, each assigned to a particular Special Award who examine all aspects of the exhibit relevant to the criteria of that Award. Again, the final result represents the consensus of a group of scientists, based on informed discussion and debate. Thus, the chance of an error being made is small. Nonetheless, a few finalists may feel that the judges did not appreciate fully the merits of their project. They want assurance that the judges did give full consideration to their work, and that no errors were made in recording the results. It occasionally happens that a project that ranks highly in one competition ranks lower in another. Perhaps a subtle flaw is identified by a judge which leads to a lower ranking. A project may win one or more Special awards yet receive no Excellence awards.

1.2 While extremely rare, it is possible that a serious breach of the rules governing eligible projects may occur. For example: A project may have been copied from a previously published work without acknowledgment; A serious breach of the rules involving the use of animals or the participation of humans may have occurred; or the work presented by the finalist was done by others. If an apparent breach is discovered before the CWSF, during the CWSF but before the Awards Ceremony, or after the Awards Ceremony and the evidence is compelling, Youth Science Canada has the authority to disqualify the offending project, thus nullifying the project's eligibility for any awards. Such a disqualification may be the subject of an Appeal. An Appeal will normally be considered only after the YSC National Judge in Chief has received a Request for Information and the delegate and finalist have received the response.

2 Scope of this document

2.1 This document pertains to Requests for Information and Appeals concerning judging results and award decisions.

3 Definitions

3.1 Days ? will mean total days, irrespective of weekends or holidays.

3.2 Participant ? refers to current CWSF registered participants and includes all delegates, alternate delegates, members of the National Policy Advisory Committee, or any other registered participant who is a stakeholder with respect to the results of the competition as it pertains to an individual project.

3.3 Appellant ? refers to the participant appealing the decision.

3.4 Respondent ? refers to the body whose result or decision is being appealed, in this case Youth Science Canada.

4 Initiating a Request for Information or Appeal

4.1 Only a Finalist may initiate a Request for Information or an Appeal.

4.2 Finalists may not submit a Request for Information directly. Delegates will submit a Request for Information on their behalf. It will be sent to the YSC National Judge in Chief. The Request for Information must be in writing, either on paper or via email.

4.3 An Appeal will not be considered until a Request for Information has been submitted and the response received. It may be initiated by any participant, and submitted to the Executive Director. Finalists may not submit an Appeal directly. Delegates will submit Appeals on their behalf.

5 Requests for Information

5.1 The vast majority of concerns about academic dishonesty or the judging process and outcomes are allayed by a thoughtful, fact-based response from the YSC National Judge in Chief. This route is strongly preferred and every effort must be made by all parties to resolve issues and concerns at this level. The following is the protocol for submitting and responding to a Request for Information.

1. Request for Information must be submitted in writing, on paper or via email, to the YSC National Judge in Chief.
2. It is incumbent on the YSC National Judge in Chief to acknowledge receipt of a Request for Information immediately and to notify simultaneously the CWSF Chief Judge and the Executive Director that a Request for Information has arrived by providing them a copy of the submission.
3. It is incumbent on the YSC National Judge in Chief to provide a timely response. In the event of delays, a legitimate reason for the delay (e.g. difficulty in contacting the judges involved) and the expected date of response must be provided.
4. The National Judging Committee and the Executive Director shall vet the YSC National Judge in Chief's draft response.
5. After revising the response based on any feedback from the National Judging Committee and the Executive Director, the YSC National Judge in Chief will issue a written response (hard copy or email) to the individual who submitted the Request for Information, with copies to the CWSF Chief Judge and the Executive Director. Under no circumstances shall the response be issued directly to a finalist.
6. A Request for Information may be submitted any time after Excellence or Special awards judging until midnight of the seventh (7th) day following the day of the Closing Ceremony. The YSC National Judge in Chief shall provide a written response within seven (7) days of receipt of the Request for Information. If a Request for Information is submitted during the CWSF, the CWSF Chief Judge shall make all reasonable efforts to provide a response before the end of the Closing Ceremony and must do so by midnight of the seventh (7th) day following the day of the Closing Ceremony.

6 Grounds for Appeal

6.1 Not every judging result and/or award decision may be appealed. A judging result and/or award decision cannot be appealed, nor can an appeal be heard, on grounds relating to the merit of the science contained in the project or the quality of other aspects of the project, as assessed by the team (or teams) of judges. Judging results and/or award decisions can only be appealed, and appeals may only be heard, on procedural grounds, the procedures being strictly attributable to the Respondent. Examples include:

1. making a decision concerning a judging result or an award for which the Respondent did not have the authority or jurisdiction as set out in Youth Science Canada's governing documents;
2. failing to follow procedures as laid out in the procedures or policies of Youth Science Canada; or
3. reaching a judging result or making an award decision that was influenced by bias.

7 Appeals

7.1 An Appeal is permitted only if a valid Request for Information on the same matter has been made and the response received.

7.2 Appeals are made to Youth Science Canada and submitted to the Executive Director.

7.3 Appeals must be submitted by midnight of the seventh (7th) day following the day on which the response to the Request for

Information was received.

7.4 An appeal must be in writing, include the Request for Information and the associated response, and be accompanied by an administrative fee of \$100.00. The fee will be refunded if the Appeal is successful.

7.5 Members of the Appeal Panel

1. The Appeal Panel will be comprised of three individuals who will have no significant relationship with the affected parties, will have had no involvement with the decision being appealed, and will be free from any other actual or perceived bias or conflict.
2. The National Judge in Chief and the Executive Director will appoint the Appeal Panel.
3. The Panel's members will select from themselves a Chairperson (voting).
4. The Executive Director will serve as secretary (non-voting) to the Panel.
5. Members of the panel will be selected from current members of the NJC, who are at arm's length to the matter being appealed, past CWSF Chief Judges, or people with similar experience.

7.6 Preliminary Conference

1. The Panel may determine that the circumstances of the Appeal warrant a preliminary conference. The matters which may be considered at a preliminary conference include:
 1. dates the Appeal is to be heard;
 2. format of the appeal, whether it be by telephone, by email, or online;
 3. timelines for exchange of documents;
 4. clarification of issues in dispute;
 5. clarification of evidence to be presented to the Panel;
 6. order and procedure of hearing;
 7. identification of witnesses (if any and if appropriate); and
 8. other procedural matters which may assist in expediting the appeal proceedings.
2. The Panel may delegate to its Chairperson the authority to deal with these preliminary matters.

7.7 Procedure for conducting a Telephone Hearing

1. Where the Panel has determined that the appeal will be held by way of a telephone conference call (or series of conference calls), it will govern the appeal by such procedures as it deems appropriate provided that:
 1. The hearing will be held within 15 days of the Panel's appointment.
 2. The Appellant and Respondent will be given 10 days written notice of the date, time and place of the hearing.
 3. A quorum will be all three Panel members.
 4. Decisions will be by majority vote, where the Chairperson carries a vote.
 5. If the decision of the Panel may affect another party to the extent that the other party would have recourse to an appeal in their own right, that party will become a party to the appeal in question.
 6. A representative or advisor, including legal counsel, may accompany any of the parties.
 7. The Panel may direct that any other person participate in the appeal.
 8. The Panel may consult the Appellant, the relevant judges and Award Chair, the YSC National Judge in Chief, external experts, or anyone else it deems necessary.

7.8 Procedure for Documentary Hearing

1. Where the Panel has determined that the Appeal will be held by way of documentary submissions, it will govern the Appeal by such procedures as it deems appropriate provided that:
 1. All parties shall be given a reasonable opportunity to provide written submissions to the Panel, to review written submissions of the other parties, and to provide written rebuttal and argument.
 2. The applicable principles and timelines set out in Section 7.7 are respected.

7.9 A draft of the decision of the Appeal Panel shall be conveyed in writing to the Executive Director.

7.10 The Executive Director shall review the draft decision to ensure consistency with Youth Science Canada policy, clarity, and appropriate tone.

7.11 The Executive Director is responsible for delivering the final version of the Appeal decision to the person who initiated the Appeal.

7.12 The appeal decision is normally to be received within twenty-one (21) days of submission of the appeal itself. If there are extenuating circumstances that will prevent the delivery of the decision within this 21-day period, the complainant must be so notified in writing and provided with reasons for the delay.

7.13 The decision of the Appeal Panel is final. No further Appeals on a given matter will be considered by Youth Science Canada.

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