North Carolina Band Directors Association
Concert MPA Adjudication Manual

Submitted and edited by NCBA MPA Committee
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Table of Contents:

INTRODUCTION

- NC MPA Purpose 3
- Desired Attributes for Adjudicators 3
- Adjudicator Requirements 4

ADJUDICATOR GUIDELINES (CONCERT MPA)

- NCBA Adjudication Sheets 5
- Consistency of Ratings 5
- MPA Event Evaluation 5
- Adjudicator Written Comments 6
- Consistency between Verbal or Recorded and Written Comments 6
- Adjudicator Final Ratings and the Overall Rating 6
- Adherence to Schedule 6
- Seating of Adjudicators 6
- Music Selection 7
- Sight-Reading Adjudication 7
- Adjudicator's Recordings 8
- Score Sheets 8
- Recommendations for Making Productive Recorded Commentary 9 - 10

STANDARDS OF ADJUDICATION (CONCERT MPA)

- Introduction 11
- Standards for Stage Ratings 11 - 13
- Standards for Sight-Reading Ratings 14 - 15

APPENDIX A: USING CAPTION GRADES TO DETERMINE THE FINAL RATING 16

- Samples of Caption Ratings and Appropriate Final Ratings 17

APPENDIX B: Using Final Ratings to Determine the Overall Rating

- Overall Ratings for Grades II - VI and Masterworks 18
- Unanimous Stage Rule 19
- Overall Ratings for Grade I 19
- Ratings Terminology for Awards Certificates and Publication 19

DOCUMENT REVISION HISTORY 20

North Carolina Bandmasters Association
Music Performance Adjudication Guidelines

The North Carolina Bandmasters Association (NCBA) and the Music Performance Adjudication (MPA) events of its constituent districts will:

1. Provide a performance opportunity for students and directors that offers a critical assessment of the quality of their performances by highly qualified experts in band performance.
2. Encourage participation in the only state-sanctioned event that provides a summative, standards-based assessment, designed to measure student performance as related to the goals, objectives, and grade-level competencies specified in the *North Carolina Essential Standards.*
3. Provide the opportunity for students and directors to perform for and learn from their peers in a formal concert venue.
4. Provide a model that connects quality preparation with quality performance and supports the continued musical growth of students and directors.
5. Provide a minimum daily honorarium of $300 to each adjudicator with discretion given to each district for a higher honorarium.

It has long been held that annual participation in the MPA process is a major means of authentically assessing the musical performance of bands throughout North Carolina. This type of unit/summative evaluation promotes and supports the musical growth of both students and directors. The role of the NCBA Adjudicator is integral to this process and, as a result, requires both fairness and consistency by the adjudicator in the evaluation of each musical performance.

Listed below are many, but not all, of the attributes that the NCBA feel are important for adjudicators to possess:

1. Adjudicators should have extensive experience in listening to performers of the level they are to adjudicate**.** An adjudicator can only assess these standards if he/she can apply them to students of different levels and backgrounds.
2. Adjudicators must realize the responsibility placed upon them to interpret and maintain the proper standards of performance, but they should not forget the importance of providing encouragement, especially to weaker performers.
3. Adjudicators should be careful to balance critique with encouragement.
4. When hearing groups from different grade levels, the adjudicator must remember that it is just as possible for an elementary or middle school group, or a small ensemble, to earn a high rating. Similarly, a high school group or a large ensemble may earn a lower rating

At a minimum, those who adjudicate the NCBA MPA each year must:

1. Maintain consistency by following NCBA rules and procedures.
2. Clarify expectations and standards of quality in various aspects of performance.
3. Provide constructive comments and suggestions for improvement on student performance.
4. Encourage students to continue in their musical development and participation.
5. Assist students in understanding the relationship between MPA and other music experiences.

As adjudicators often make a significant impact on students and music teachers which continues long after the MPA has passed, professional and friendly demeanor is expected throughout the day. NCBA adjudicators must attend state- and district-sanctioned training workshops prior to each event to ensure that adjudication expectations are reviewed and that each adjudicator understand the details that are particular to the NCBA.

I. ADJUDICATOR GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS (CONCERT MPA EVENTS)

The following information is provided to all NCBA Adjudicators so that adjudication procedures throughout NCBA are consistent and meet agreed-upon standards.

NCBA Adjudication Sheets:

1. Only NCBA-approved adjudicator sheets will be used at each District's MPA events.
2. All caption comments and caption ratings boxes should be completed by the adjudicator on the adjudicator sheet. The adjudicator should review the *Final Rating* chart in Appendix A and enter the *Final Rating* in the score sheet. The MPA Chair will review the *Final Rating* to ensure that it is accurate given the caption ratings. In the event that a band enters for "comments only", the adjudicator will make no reference, either verbal or written, as to what the caption grades or *Overall Rating* would be.
3. NCBA adjudicator sheets are designed so that the *Final Rating* is determined by a combined calculation of the caption ratings on the adjudication sheet.

Consistency of Ratings:

1. Adjudicators at Concert MPA must be adept at assigning ratings that are consistent with NCBA Standards of Adjudication.
2. At Concert MPA, adjudicators are expected to work individually when completing adjudication sheets. However, adjudicators are encouraged to confer between performances as necessary in order to maintain consistency in the caption grades and *Overall Rating* being assigned by the panel. Such discussion should be done **discretely** so that the audience does not hear what ratings a given group might be assigned. It is understood that every caption grade will not be the same from adjudicator to adjudicator, but split *Overall Ratings* with a two or more point-spread, such as I – II – III, II – III – IV, or I – III – III **should not occur**. Should such a split rating occur, the MPA chair must intervene in an attempt to resolve the discrepancy. **The aforementioned aside, the adjudicators' ratings are final.**

MPA Event Evaluation:

Each director is encouraged to share their feedback about each MPA event via the tool provided by the MPA Committee. Feedback might address areas such as quality of adjudicators' feedback and event management.

Adjudicator Written Comments:

1. Written comments should be provided within each caption. It is acceptable to write comments while listening to the performance.
2. All comments written on adjudication sheets should be neat and legible.
3. "See tape", "Comments on tape" or other similar comments are not acceptable feedback.

Consistency between Verbal or Recorded and Written Comments:

1. At Concert MPA, verbal or recorded comments should be consistent with the ratings assigned.
2. Participants at MPA will be more willing to understand the reasons for a lower rating when the adjudicator points out the conditions that brought about the *Overall Rating*.

Adjudicator Final Ratings and the Overall Rating:

5. NCBA adjudication sheets are designed to ensure that any single caption does not overbalance the others. The *Final Rating* for each adjudicator's sheet must be reviewed for accuracy by the MPA Chair. If necessary, the MPA Chair should refer to the *Final Rating Chart* (Appendix A).
6. At Concert MPA, each adjudicator's *Final Rating* is combined with those of the other three adjudicators to determine the *Overall Rating*. The *Overall Rating Chart* is included in this handbook (Appendix B).
7. Groups have the option of performing at any MPA for "comments only." For non-rated performances (comments only), the adjudicator will make no reference, either verbal or written, to what the rating would be if one were assigned.

Adherence to the Schedule:

1. It is important that all adjudicators adhere to the printed performance schedule. The MPA Chair will inform adjudicators of any adjustments to the printed schedule.

Seating of Adjudicators at Concert MPAs:

1. Adjudicators should be seated separately in the performance hall so that adjudication can be appropriately recorded.

Music Selection:

1. Each band must prepare a march of the director's choice and two (2) compositions from the Official North Carolina Bandmasters Association Music List. One composition must be from the classification as registered, the other composition may be from the same classification or from the next higher classification. Sight-reading will be based on the lower classification.
2. If a band chooses to perform music from the Masterworks List, a band must prepare a march of the director's choice and the composition(s) as required from the Official North Carolina Bandmasters Association Masterworks List.
3. The music chosen should allow a group to demonstrate its ability to perform in a variety of styles and tempos.
4. There are no restrictions as to the difficulty level of selections performed by a given group. It is recognized that the adjudication will reflect upon the quality of the performance, including the quality of the music selected and its suitability to the group.
5. The band's instrumentation should reflect the composer's intent for chord structure, ensemble timbre and individual tone color. Appropriate and aurally pleasing instrumentation adjustments are acceptable. Adjudicators may comment regarding instrumentation in affected captions.

Sight-Reading Adjudication:

1. The sight-reading adjudicator should refrain from listening to any band's stage performance or warm up.
2. The sight-reading adjudicator should adhere to the procedures for the sight-reading process and should not verbally clinic the band or director after the sight-reading performance. All comments should be confined to the adjudicator's audio recording and sight-reading sheet.
3. The sight-reading adjudicator should carefully review and adhere to the Achievement Level box on the Sight-reading MPA Rubric and Standards of Sight-Reading Adjudication from the Concert MPA Adjudication Manual.

Adjudicator's Recordings:

1. The adjudicator should ensure that the recording device is working properly.
2. The adjudicator should state the following at the start of the recording:
   Your name
   Where you are from (school or other organization)
   Name of the event
   Date of the event
   Name of the group being evaluated
   Literature to be performed
3. The adjudicator should allow the recording to run through the performance.

Score Sheets:

Adjudicators should use both the recorder and adjudicator's sheet to offer comments and suggestions to bands. The adjudicator's sheet provides an opportunity to summarize the evaluation, as compared to recorded comments which are often more specific towards the particular musical passage being performed at that particular moment.

Caption ratings should be given on the adjudicator's sheet for each caption. Adjudicators may use a "+" or "-" in their **caption** ratings (ex. "B+"). The adjudicator's final rating must correspond with the group of caption ratings as described in Appendix A. Adjudicators **must not** use a "+" or "-" in their **final** rating of the band.

Recommendations for Making Productive Recorded Commentary:

1. Use a positive and constructive tone when making your recorded commentary.

   Each adjudicator's vocabulary should be appropriate to the age and performance level of the ensemble. In addition to identifying musical issues during a performance, it is important to reinforce good teaching through the adjudication process. For example, if a band has good basic sound, the adjudicator might say "Students, terrific work has been done in your ensemble to develop good characteristic tone production. Congratulations!" If there is little to praise musically, the adjudicator should congratulate the efforts of the students.

2. When identifying a musical issue in the performance, always provide a solution.

   The adjudicator's comments should be specific and appropriate to the age and performance level of the ensemble. It is not enough to say "Students, you are playing out-of-tune at measure 59." Instead, say "Students, somebody is playing an incorrect fingering at measure 49, causing the intonation to be adversely affected." Or, "Students, issues with left hand positions are causing the F-sharps to be out-of-tune at measure 59. Try tucking the left elbow to the left, bringing the wrist away from your body, and arching the fingers so that you can play precisely in-tune." Such specific commentary will help colleagues focus instruction after the MPA and students will learn more from the MPA experience.

3. Avoid continually repeating the same musical issue over and over.

   If a given performance has the same musical flaw throughout the performance, the adjudicator might simply refer to it as a continuing issue once, and then move on to other commentary. The adjudicator should avoid repeating the same comment over and over. For example, if a concert band has a trumpet player who is over-blowing, the adjudicator should identify the problem and provide a solution. Then, should the adjudicator hear the issue again later in the performance, he or she should acknowledge that the problem is a recurring one that needs to be addressed during class.

4. Consider the use of a private note to the director.

   Sometimes it is advisable to communicate some adjudicator comments for the director's ears only. A simple private note can be written and sent to the director via the MPA Chair. The adjudicator should avoid saying anything on the adjudication recording that might usurp the authority of the director or reflect poorly upon his/her work with students.

5. Specific Performance Errors vs. Attainment of Musical Performance Concepts.

   Part of the adjudicator's job is to identify specific performance errors such as wrong fingerings, a missed slur, etc. In addition, it's important for adjudicators to address student understanding of musical performance concepts such as tone production, intonation, blend, balance, rhythm, and interpretation. The adjudicator should work to give students a summary of how they are doing in these areas through the recorded adjudicator commentary. Adjudication should identify specific performance errors and provide an assessment of how the students understand fundamental musical concepts.

II. STANDARDS OF ADJUDICATION (CONCERT MPA)

Standards are determined by the comparison of a large number of performances. While participants are competing against a standard of achievement rather than against each other, the standard of achievement is actually determined by the participants themselves. It is inevitable that these standards will vary from locality to locality and from state to state.

It is not within the jurisdiction of the adjudicator to penalize an ensemble because he does not personally like the music selected. A director has the expectation that an adjudicator justifies his rating through written and/or recorded comments. The adjudicator should take great care to assure that the comments on the adjudication form and on the audio recording are consistent with the overall and caption ratings for that particular band and should call attention to fundamental characteristics of the group. The presence or lack of good tone quality, intonation, rhythmic precision, blend and balance, offer a basis for making brief suggestions for improvement of the group.

Standards for Stage Ratings:

A copy of these standards should be with each judge during the adjudication.

Superior: "I"

The rating is comparable to the grade of "A". This rating reflects an outstanding performance for the event and experience level of participants being evaluated. The performance of all selections demonstrates that the group is able to meet all of the technical demands of the music with a thorough awareness of the composer's intent. Bands that receive this rating should perform beyond the basic performance of notes and rhythms, and into the area of artistic expression. While the adjudicator may find some minor points to critique and may make suggestions for improvement, his comments sheet would show a majority of A's. for the various captions and his remarks would be generally complimentary for outstanding work.

Excellent: "II"

The rating is comparable to the grade of "B". This rating reflects a high level of performance for the event and experience level of participants being evaluated. The performance demonstrates that the group is able to meet nearly all of the technical demands of the music and may reflect a broad awareness of the composer's intent. Bands that receive this rating perform frequently, but not consistently, with the same technical proficiency as a band that received a rating of "Superior", but they lack the finesse and style associated with artistic expression.

The performance shows the result of sound fundamental training, but lacks the polish and finesse to qualify for a rating of superior. The adjudicator may find consistent areas to critique, but these areas do not significantly distract from the overall quality of the performance. His/her caption ratings would consist of mostly B's while his/her remarks would be indicative of a quality performance.

Average: "III"

The rating is comparable to the grade of “C”. This rating reflects a mediocre level of performance for the event and experience level of participants being evaluated. The performance demonstrates that the group is able to meet some of the technical demands of the music, but reflects an absence of awareness for the composer’s intent. The performance reflects consistent limitations in fundamental training and lacks the polish and finesse to qualify for a rating of excellent. The adjudicator will find consistent areas to critique and these areas will significantly distract from the overall quality of the performance. His/her comments sheet would consist of mostly C’s.

Below Average: "IV"

The rating is comparable to the grade of “D”. This rating reflects a level of performance that is consistently weak and filled with technical errors and intonation problems. The performance reflects inconsistent and limited demonstration of music performance fundamentals. The adjudicator will find many areas to critique that significantly distract from the overall quality of the performance. His/her comments sheet would consist of mostly D’s.

These may reflect handicaps in the way of instrumentation or lack of rehearsal time. This classification represents a performance which is generally weak and uncertain. Comments should be encouraging and contain helpful suggestions for improvement. The adjudicator might suggest such things as a more favorable schedule to allow more regular rehearsals, more effective individual practice and/or ensemble rehearsals, or more careful screening of players. The adjudicator might even make specific recommendations for ensemble or individual studies and exercises which would contribute to the development of the individual players.

Poor: "V"

The rating is comparable to the grade of “F”. The performance is unacceptable both technically and musically. It demonstrates a lack of technical proficiency and musical understanding. Careless and bad playing habits are prevalent, providing significant and ongoing evidence of poor preparation and training. The group and director should concentrate on fundamentals and/or perform less difficult music.

This rating indicates a performance which reveals much room for improvement. The director should check his methods, instrumentation, etc. with those of more successful organizations. This rating is rarely used by even the most critical adjudicators. In some cases the teaching methods of the director may be in question. If there are any commendable features in the performance they may be singled out. Perhaps there is one outstanding player in the group. He could be held up as a model. Sometimes only the stage deportment and appearance can be commented on favorably but even this may be some comfort. Remarks should be honest, but never sarcastic. They should point out the basic weaknesses and make suggestions for improvement, and above all, urge the participants and director to work toward qualifying for a higher rating next year.

Note:

Adjudicators should make every effort to employ all the rating categories when appropriate. The ratings should be interpreted literally by the titles: Superior, Excellent, Average, Below Average, and Poor. Success is not measured only by a superior rating. The other ratings have credibility and should be used in a positive and constructive way.

Standards for Sight-Reading Ratings:

A copy of these standards should be with each judge during the adjudication. The sight reading adjudicator should justify his/her rating through written and/or recorded comments. The adjudicator should take great care to assure that the comments on the adjudication form and on the audio recording are consistent with the overall and caption ratings for that particular band and should call attention to fundamental characteristics of the group. The presence or lack of good tone quality, intonation, rhythmic precision, blend and balance, offer a basis for making brief suggestions for improvement of the group.

The sight-reading adjudicator should keep in mind and take into consideration that their evaluation is on a "first reading" and may not reflect the finesse and musical expressiveness associated with a stage performance.

Superior: "I"

The rating is comparable to the grade of "A". This rating reflects a high level of performance for the event and experience level of participants being evaluated. The performance demonstrates that the group is able to meet all or nearly all of the technical demands of the music and may reflect a broad awareness of the composer's intent. Bands that receive this rating perform frequently, if not consistently, with technical proficiency, but they may lack some finesse and style associated with artistic expression. The performance shows the result of sound fundamental training, but may lack some of the polish and finesse. The adjudicator may find some areas to critique, but these areas do not significantly distract from the overall quality of the performance. His/her caption ratings would consist of mostly A's while his/her remarks would be indicative of a quality performance.

Excellent: "II"

The rating is comparable to the grade of "B". This rating reflects a high level of performance for the event and experience level of participants being evaluated. The performance demonstrates that the group is able to meet most of the technical demands of the music and may at times reflect a broad awareness of the composer's intent. The performance reflects few, if any, limitations in fundamental issues but may lack the polish and finesse to qualify for a rating of superior. The adjudicator may occasionally find areas to critique; these areas may distract from the overall quality of the performance. His/her caption ratings would consist of mostly B's while his/her remarks would be indicative of a quality performance.

Average: "III"

The rating is comparable to the grade of “C”. This rating reflects a mediocre level of performance for the event and experience level of participants being evaluated. The performance demonstrates that the group is able to meet some of the technical demands of the music, but reflects an absence of awareness for the composer’s intent. The performance reflects consistent limitations in fundamental training and lacks the polish and finesse to qualify for a rating of excellent. The adjudicator will find consistent areas to critique and these areas will significantly distract from the overall quality of the performance. His/her comments sheet would consist of mostly C’s.

Below Average: "IV"

The rating is comparable to the grade of “D”. This rating reflects a level of performance that is consistently weak and filled with technical errors and intonation problems. The performance very rarely reflects performance fundamentals. The adjudicator will find many areas to critique that significantly distract from the overall quality of the performance. This classification represents a performance that is generally weak and uncertain. Comments should be encouraging and contain helpful suggestions for improvement. His/her comments sheet would consist of mostly D’s.

Poor: "V"

The rating is comparable to the grade of “F”. The performance is unacceptable both technically and musically. It demonstrates a lack of technical proficiency and musical understanding. Careless and bad playing habits are prevalent, providing significant and ongoing evidence of poor preparation and training. This rating indicates a performance that reveals much room for improvement. Remarks should be honest, but never sarcastic. They should point out the basic weaknesses and make suggestions for improvement, and above all, urge the participants and director to work toward qualifying for a higher rating next year. His/her comments sheet would consist of mostly F’s.

Note:

Adjudicators should make every effort to employ all the rating categories when appropriate. The ratings should be interpreted literally by the titles: Superior, Excellent, Average, Below Average, and Poor. Success is not measured only by a superior rating. The other ratings have credibility and should be used in a positive and constructive way.

APPENDIX A: Using Caption Grades to Determine the Final Rating

The MPA Chair will review the adjudicator's caption letter grades to ensure that they have properly "translated" the letter grades into numeric scores of 1, 2 , 3 , 4 or 5. Scoring will follow the scoring method of the NCBA *Overall Ratings* where the highest grade is equivalent to a numeric score of 1, the second-highest grade is equivalent to a numeric score of 2 and so on up to a numeric score of 5 for the lowest grade.

Adjudicators may add a "+" or "-" to the caption ratings, but these do not impact the numeric score. A caption rating of "B+" receives a numeric score of 2 and a caption rating of "A-" receives a numerical score of 1.

To summarize:

Caption Grade	Numerical Score
A	1
B	2
C	3
D	4
F	5

The MPA Chair will review the numeric scores of all captions to ensure that the *Final Rating* for each adjudicator is accurate. The *Final Rating* must follow these scoring ranges:

Final Rating	Caption Score Total
Superior – I	7 - 10
Excellent – II	11 - 17
Average – III	18 - 24
Below Average – IV	25 - 31
Poor – V	32 - 35

Three sample combinations of Caption Grades and the appropriate Final Ratings are listed below:

EXAMPLE ONE	Tone Quality	Intonation	Balance/ Blend	Precision	Basic Musicianship	Interpretive Musicianship	General Factors	TOTAL
CAPTION GRADE	A	B	A	A	B	B	A	
NUMERIC SCORE	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	**10**
FINAL RATING	***SUPERIOR***							

EXAMPLE TWO	Tone Quality	Intonation	Balance/ Blend	Precision	Basic Musicianship	Interpretive Musicianship	General Factors	TOTAL
CAPTION GRADE	B	B	A	A	C	B	B	
NUMERIC SCORE	2	2	1	1	3	2	2	**13**
FINAL RATING	***EXCELLENT***							

EXAMPLE THREE	Tone Quality	Intonation	Balance/ Blend	Precision	Basic Musicianship	Interpretive Musicianship	General Factors	TOTAL
CAPTION GRADE	C	B	C	B	C	C	C	
NUMERIC SCORE	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	**19**
FINAL RATING	***AVERAGE***							

APPENDIX B: Using Final Ratings to Determine the Overall Rating

Overall Ratings for Grades II - VI and Masterworks

The following chart will be used as a guide in arriving at a final rating when using **four adjudicators** (Three adjudicators from the concert portion and one adjudicator from the sight-reading portion). All possible combinations are included. The Roman numerals at the top refer to the *Overall Rating*; the numbers below refer to the numeric equivalent for the *Final Rating*s given by each adjudicator.

Rating I	Rating II	Rating III	Rating IV	Rating V
Total = 4 - 6	**Total = 7 - 10**	**Total = 11 - 14**	**Total = 15 - 18**	**Total = 19 - 20**
1 1 1 1	1 1 1 4	1 1 4 5	1 4 5 5	4 5 5 5
1 1 1 2	1 1 1 5	1 1 5 5	1 5 5 5	5 5 5 5
1 1 1 3	1 1 2 3	1 2 3 5	2 3 5 5	
1 1 2 2	1 1 2 4	1 2 4 4	2 4 4 5	
	1 1 2 5	1 2 4 5	2 4 5 5	
	1 1 3 3	1 2 5 5	3 3 4 5	
	1 1 3 4	1 3 3 4	3 3 5 5	
	1 1 3 5	1 3 3 5	3 4 4 4	
	1 1 4 4	1 3 4 4	3 4 4 5	
	1 2 2 2	1 3 4 5	3 5 5 5	
	1 2 2 3	1 3 5 5	4 4 4 4	
	1 2 2 4	1 4 4 4	4 4 4 5	
	1 2 2 5	1 4 4 5	4 4 5 5	
	1 2 3 3	2 2 2 5		
	1 2 3 4	2 2 3 4		
	1 3 3 3	2 2 3 5		
	2 2 2 2	2 2 4 4		
	2 2 2 3	2 2 4 5		
	2 2 2 4	2 2 5 5		
	2 2 3 3	2 3 3 3		
		2 3 3 4		
		2 3 3 5		
		2 3 4 4		
		2 3 4 5		
		2 4 4 4		
		3 3 3 3		
		3 3 3 4		
		3 3 3 5		
		3 3 4 4		

Unanimous Stage Rule
If a band receives straight "threes - III's", "Fours - IV's" or "Fives - V's" on stage then they will receive that score as their overall rating regardless of the sight-reading score.

The ratings affected are:

3 3 3 - 1 would become a Rating III
4 4 4 - 1 would become a Rating IV
4 4 4 - 2 would become a Rating IV
5 5 5 - 1 would become a Rating V
5 5 5 - 2 would become a Rating V
5 5 5 - 3 would become a Rating V

Overall Ratings for Grade I

The following chart will be used as a guide in arriving at a final rating when using **three adjudicators** from the concert portion. All possible combinations are included. The roman numerals at the top refer to the *Overall Rating*; the numbers below refer to the numeric equivalent of the *Final Ratings* given by each adjudicator.

RATING I	RATING II	RATING III	RATING IV	RATING V
1 1 1	1 2 2	1 3 3	1 4 4	1 5 5
1 1 2	1 2 3	2 3 4	3 4 5	2 5 5
1 1 3	2 2 2	3 3 2	4 4 2	3 5 5
1 1 4	2 2 3	3 3 3	4 4 3	4 5 5
1 1 5	2 2 4	3 3 4	4 4 4	5 5 5
	2 2 5	3 3 5	4 4 5	

Ratings Terminology for Award Certificates and Publication

Although for purposes of reckoning the I, II, III, IV, V system is a convenience, please be sure that the numbers are not inscribed on the certificates of award or given to the media. According to our rules, the correct designations are given in the right-hand column below:

RATING	CORRECT DESIGNATION
I	Superior
II	Excellent
III	Average
IV	Below Average
V	Poor

DOCUMENT REVISION HISTORY:

- July 2011 - Original draft and edit. (Mary May, Chair)
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- May 2017 – Addition of minimum honorarium for adjudicators on page 3. (Ruth Petersen, webmaster)
- January 2018 – Removal of edit marks (Ruth Petersen, webmaster)
- March 2018 – Correction of captions on page 17 (Ruth Petersen, webmaster)