



Background on the Judging Program, Judging Panel and Judges' Requirements

NOTE: for answers to questions about the judging program, please see the FAQ section at the bottom of this document.

To understand the rationale behind the OAAS Judging Program Revitalization, you need to know some history behind it.

A) HISTORY

The OAAS, Districts and Agricultural Societies have had different responsibilities for the Judging Program as per the information in the “*A Guide To Organizing An OAAS Homecraft Judging School Updated October 2014*” - <https://www.ontarioagsocieties.com/assets/downloads/2016/Organizing-Homecraft-Judging-School-Handbook-2014.pdf>

This Guide was used by District Homecraft Directors to plan their Judging Schools. As well it laid out the requirements for how Judges qualified to become OAAS Judges and how to maintain those qualifications. It specifically stated that the District Homecraft Director was to give the manual to their successor upon the completion of their term. Most of the information and requirements in the “**Requirements for OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges**” document were taken from the Guide. Overall, we did not change the requirements but rather enforced them. We have decreased a couple of requirements i.e. Apprentice Judges must attend 1 rather than 2 Judging Schools.

In the past, the Judging Schools tended to be more District run and organized. As well, each District tended to interpret/enforce the requirements included in the “**A Guide To Organizing An OAAS Homecraft Judging School**” differently especially when it came to requirements for judges to attend Judging Schools every three years or removing Judges for not complying,

The OAAS responsibility was to keep the Judging Handbooks updated, post District Judges' Lists on the OAAS website and keep a list of qualified Instructors.

The issues we are getting complaints about today about not enough Judges or Instructors **are not new**. When I started as Office Manager, there were complaints then about not enough judges or instructors or Judging Schools. Many Judges' Lists on the website were not current. There were several different styles of spreadsheets. We created a new template for the Judges' List spreadsheet in 2016 and transferred the information from the previously posted spreadsheets to the new format, posted them on the website and sent the updated copies to the Districts.

B) REVITALIZATION OF JUDGING PROGRAM

The renewal of the Judging Program was started in 2017 because of the concerns and comments from the Instructors, Judges, Agricultural Societies and Districts. The Board took those concerns and comments and started the revitalization process to address those concerns and improve our Judging Program and move it to a Provincially driven program.

The comments and concerns that we had been receiving seemed to be focused on the following:

- Not enough Judges and Instructors in all Districts

- Need a clear list of requirements to become a Certified Judge or Instructor and maintain that certification. Sometimes the interpretation of the “Judges requirements” seem to vary depending on whom you are speaking to or which District you are in.
- Can we shorten the length of time and training to become a Judge?
- Not enough Judging Schools
- People don’t know when and where Judging Schools are
- Judges Lists not kept current and it takes a lot of time for the District Director and OAAS Office Manager to keep them up to date
- Consistency of programs at Judging Schools – too much variation between different Instructors and different Districts
- Not all Judges and Instructors are attending Judging Schools on a regular basis to maintain their qualifications and stay up to day with changes to Judging Standards, Judging Program and current trends
- Ensuring consistency of Judging at our Fairs
- Evaluation system for Judges and Instructors
- Need a clear process to retrain or remove Judges and Instructors who don’t or won’t meet the requirements

C) WHERE DID WE START?

- 1) **It was felt that in order to resolve the above issues and create a consistent program across all districts that the OAAS needed to create a provincial program that could create standards and training programs that would be used in each District.**
- 2) The OAAS created the ‘**Judges, Instructors and Judging Schools Program Ad-Hoc Committee**’ in 2017 to provide suggestions, guidance, direction, etc. to the OAAS Judging Committee, Board of Directors and OAAS Organization with respect to improving the current Judges, Instructors and Judging Schools Programs while creating a program that is inclusive of both the Homecraft and Agricultural & Horticultural classes.
- 3) The Ad hoc Committee created a list of recommendations and as well as draft proposals for **OAAS Judges’ and Instructors’ Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics, Requirements for OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges’, Requirements for OAAS Certified and Apprentice instructors’** and forwarded them to the Instructors for their input.
- 4) in response to the concerns that we needed more judges and the suggestion that we needed to ease the requirements to remain qualified as an OAAS judge to retain more judges, the Ad hoc Committee suggested that perhaps the requirement of attending a Judging School every 3 years be amended to attending every 6 years. [The feedback from the Instructors and others was that the requirement should remain at 3 years to ensure that judges stayed abreast of new trends, information, updates to OAAS Policies and Competition rules, etc.](#)

Some judges have indicated that they feel that they are fully qualified to judge the categories that they are certified for and feel that the requirement to attend at least once every three years is too much. In our discussions with Instructors and Judges, they felt the following reasons for attending Judging Schools were as important as simply being qualified or knowledgeable on the category.

Why Judging Schools are important:

- To keep up to date with the current and new trends in many categories i.e. crafts, culinary arts, etc.
- To bring their experience and expertise to the Judging Schools and be mentors to the less experienced Judges and Apprentice Judges
- Provide a refresher on Judging techniques and the Judging Standards
- To introduce any new documentation or requirements that OAAS is implementing to the Judges i.e. "Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics, updated "Requirements for OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges", etc.
- To introduce new classes or requirements for District and Provincial Competitions
- To share Judges' experiences and challenges or issues at fairs with other participants to assist in finding solutions and/or allow us to provide extra education and resources
- So Judges, Instructors can make suggestions for changes/additions to current Judging Standards
- To reinforce the use of Judging Standards by all Judges and Instructors

Attending Judging schools is not just for the Judge's benefit – their attendance and participation benefits other judges and our judging program. If a Judge feels that they do not need or want to attend Judging Schools every three years, then not only are they not keeping up their certification or improving their own knowledge or skills, but they are not helping to improve and strengthen our program or assisting other judges to improve.

- 5) The Board originally created a Judging Committee composed of OAAS directors to direct the Judging Program. It was disbanded in favour of a Judging Panel as it was felt that we needed input and advice from people involved in the Judging Program to continue the process creating and updating documentation and training programs in our process to revitalize the Judging Program. We invited people from across the province with various levels of experience as Judges and Instructors to join the Panel.

D) AD HOC JUDGING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND DOCUMENTS

Some of their recommendations :

- All Judging Schools need to use the same format and guidelines, documentation to maintain consistency across the Province
- Judging Committee needs to create a Schedule as a guide for Districts to use to plan Judging Schools and the topics within a 3-year rotation to enable Judges and Instructors to become certified and retain their certifications
- Judging Committee needs to update/rename the 'A Guide to Organizing an OAAS Homecraft Judging School'. Perhaps break into specific Sections/Spreadsheets on different topics.
- Create a specific Guidelines document detailing how Judging Schools are run to ensure that Judging Schools are allowing sufficient time to cover each topic thoroughly.
- Create a Code of Conduct for Judges and Instructors
- Create Roles and Responsibilities documents re Judging Schools and Judging Program for 1) OAAS Manager; 2) Instructors; 3) Judges; 4) Districts; 5) Agricultural Societies
- Evaluations from Judging Schools - should create a standard one to be used at all Judging Schools

- Agricultural societies can initiate/ sponsor Judging Schools to meet an immediate need i.e. evening – covers a specific topic – following OAAS Requirements
- OAAS sponsored webinars - to discuss etiquette, judges tool kits that don't need hands on experience
- Discussions on how to gain more Instructors and Judges

Documents:

- 1) The original Ad-hoc Committee created the '**OAAS Judges' and Instructors' Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics'** – it was approved by the OAAS board in October 2018. The form was updated in July 2019 to add additional spaces at the bottom of the form to include Judge's contact information in addition to their signature.
- 2) The Ad hoc committee created the draft documents for the '**Requirements for OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges'** and '**Requirements for OAAS Certified and Apprentice Instructors'** to address some of the concerns that were raised and to ensure consistency across the province. To clearly define the expectations and requirements:
 - For Apprentice Judges and Instructors
 - to become an OAAS Certified Judge or Instructor
 - the requirements to maintain that certification
 - how to recertify
- 3) The '**Requirements for OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges'** document was completed by the Judging Panel and presented at Convention.

a) Inclusion of '**Grandfathering'**, '**Reinstatement'** and '**Appeal'** clauses –

When we created the original document, we included a section on grandfathering in Judges that had not recently attended Judges Schools because we felt that our Judges should not be penalized if Judging Schools had not been held in their District on a regular basis.

NOTE: Judges listed on the current "**OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges Lists**", who have not attended an OAAS Judging School in the last 3 (three) years **will have until July 2020 to participate in a Judging School to maintain their certification.**

Since Judging Schools are usually held in the spring and some in the fall – this allowed a judge the option of attending Spring 2019, Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 Judging Schools.

b) Reinstatement

We also included a section on how a Judge that was removed from the list could be recertified

ii) Reinstatement

- a) **NEW** – Judges moved to "**Uncertified'** status may recertify by successfully completing 1 (one) OAAS Judging School **for those specific categories** if they have attended an OAAS Judging School for that Category **in the past 4 years**. If it has been **over 4 years**, they must redo the entire Certification Process of attending an OAAS Judging School and Apprenticing.

This allowed them one extra year after the 3 year period to be able to recertify.

c) Appeal Process

And a section on how a Judge could appeal their removal from the OAAS Certified Judges List **Appeal Process**

NEW - Judges that have been removed from the OAAS Judges lists for any reason may appeal their removal by submitting a letter appealing the decision to the OAAS Office Manager within 30 (thirty) days of receiving notification of their removal from the “**OAAS Certified and Apprentice Homecraft Judges List**” and/or the “**OAAS Certified and Apprentice Agriculture and Horticulture Judges List**” and/or “**OAAS Certified and Apprentice Instructors List**”.

d) Pandemic - We also modified the document during 2020 because of the pandemic and made a further modification in November 2021.

AMENDED November 30, 2021: Judges listed on the current “OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges Lists”, who have not attended an OAAS Judging School **since 2016 will have until January 1, 2024**, to participate in a Judging School to maintain their certification.

e) We created a table with future certification dates based on the last judging school attended. It was shared in the presentation at the District Judging Contacts & Instructors meeting on March 8th.

OAAS JUDGING RECERTIFICATION DEADLINES

Year last attended Judging School	Recertification deadline	1) Certified Judges - To remain certified or to recertify 2) Apprentice Judges- to maintain their name on the Apprentice Judges List	Years since last attended - when counting years – (skip 2020 and 2021 – pandemic)
2015 or earlier	Not applicable	must start process to become a judge from the start by attending judging school and apprenticing	2015, 2016, 2017, 2018
2016	January 1, 2024	must attend judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification	2017, 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023
2017	January 1, 2024	must attend judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification	2018, 2019, 2022, 2023
2018	January 1, 2025	must attend judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification	2019, 2022, 2023, 2024
2019	January 1, 2026	must attend judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification	2022, 2023, 2024, 2025

E) WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The Provincial OAAS Board and Judging Panel are still very committed to the OAAS Judging Program Revitalization that was started a few years ago. **The Board’s priority for the OAAS Manager over the past two years was to secure funding and resources to assist our agricultural societies to weather the hardships caused by the pandemic.** Unfortunately this meant that work on the Judging Program had to be put on hold.

Now that things are returning to normal, the Board has made the Judging Program and scheduling Judging Schools our priority for at least the next two years. We are committed to continuing to create a provincial program that will ensure that consistent requirements, training and programs are provided for our Judges in all Districts.

- 1) AssistExpo had promised an online program for our Judges' List – we are still waiting. The Board has approved a program to manage all OAAS data which would include the Judges' List and other Judging Program information so we can get rid of Excel spreadsheets.
- 2) We asked for each District to create the position of a District Judging Rep so that we would have a representative to channel all Judging related information and material. We want to work with the District Judging Reps to coordinate District Judging school dates and topics so there would be less conflict of dates and topics.
- 3) Work with District Judging Reps to determine what resources they require to organize Judging Schools in their District
- 4) We are continuing the work on updating the "***A Guide To Organizing An OAAS Homecraft Judging School***" and splitting it into separate sections for Districts, Instructors, Judges, Agricultural Societies.
- 5) Reviewing and updating the '*Agriculture and Horticulture Judging Standards Handbook*'
- 6) Work to attract and train new Judges and Instructors
- 7) Work with Instructors and Judges to:
 - Create a template for Judging Schools to provide assistance for current and new Instructors and to ensure consistency for how schools are run
 - Create templates/lessons plans for individual Judging Categories to provide assistance for current and new Instructors and ensure consistency across the province in how the subject matter is taught

F) FUTURE – WHERE DO WE GO NEXT?

The OAAS is committed to continuing with the Judging Program Revitalization project and completing the initiatives that are listed above in E) Where are we now?. We feel that consistency in our Judging Schools and requirements for Judges and Instructors are essential to a strong Judging Program.

The Revitalization project was moving forward when it was derailed by the pandemic. We are asking for your patience and understanding as we work to get it back on track and move forward. The issues and concerns with the Judging Program developed over a period of time, they are going to take time to resolve.

The benefits of a strong Judging Program are many:

For Judges

- More confidence when they are equipped with the training and resources they need
- Knowledge that Judging Schools will be available for them to retain their certification
- Knowledge that the training they receive is the same no matter the District or Instructor

For Agricultural Societies

- Access to well-trained judges
- Nothing is more frustrating for an exhibitor to have inconsistent results because the judge is not adequately trained
- Nothing is more frustrating or discouraging for an agricultural society when they don't know what to expect because of inconsistent training and requirements for Judges.
- Enjoyable experiences encourages exhibitors to return next year
- More exhibits encourage more exhibitors & visitors
- More exhibitors & visitors may encourage more volunteers and members

FAQ

- **Do agricultural societies have to use OAAS judges?**

The OAAS provides leadership, guidance, education, and resources for its member Agricultural Societies. However, our agricultural societies are separate entities from the OAAS and as such, we do not/can not tell them how to run their organizations or fairs. That extends to who they choose as Judges for their competitions – **we recommend that they use OAAS Certified Judges whenever they are available, but we cannot tell them they have to use OAAS Certified Judges.** In addition, we currently do not have certified OAAS Judges available in all Districts in all Categories. In the same way, we can ask that agricultural societies allow/encourage Apprentice Judges to accompany an OAAS Certified Judge, but it is the agricultural societies' decision as to whether or not they allow it. However the OAAS does insist that District Competitions must use OAAS Certified Judges.

Side note: The "**A Guide To Organizing An OAAS Homecraft Judging School Updated October 2014**" – does indicate that Agricultural Societies must use OAAS Judges, but the updated Guide will be amended to reflect the current policy that the OAAS recommends the Agricultural Societies use OAAS Judges whenever possible. .

- **Can a District or agricultural society have a list of non-OAAS Judges?**

A District or agricultural society can have a list of non-OAAS Judges- whether they be from other organizations or former OAAS Judges that have not kept up their certification, but those judges must not be included on the District OAAS Judges' List spreadsheet that is sent to the OAAS Office.

- **Why are there so many requirements to maintain my OAAS Judge's certification?**

Being an OAAS Certified Judge is a privilege and not a right. We created the "*OAAS Requirements for Certified and Apprentice Judges*" and are working to update the rest of our Judging Program to ensure that OAAS Certified Judges have attained a specific level of training. If a person wishes to become or remain an OAAS Certified or Apprentice Judge and have their name listed on our OAAS Judges' Lists, then they must follow the requirements that are set out in the "**Requirements for OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges.**"

- **Why have there been changes to some documents and information related to the Judging Program Revitalisation project?**

This is a complex program and the documents that we create are living documents and will have to be amended as we run into different situations that are not addressed or items that need to be modified as needed to strengthen and improve the program.