

Western Counties Photographic Federation (wcpf)

Competition Guidelines for Clubs

In setting out these guidelines the WCPF recognise that clubs have complete autonomy in how they should organise their competitions. Competitions are a major constituent of most clubs programmes and there is a desire to obtain the services of competent and informed judges. The Federation provides training and mentoring for both new and existing judges on their lists (see the companion Guidelines for Judges). A successful competition is a partnership between the Club and the Judge. The Club set the rules and competition structure and the judge comments on the images and arrives at an informed and unbiased decision.

The purpose of these guidelines is to suggest some principles of good practice so the club can fulfil their responsibility without impeding the judge's task. We would ask that each club reads these guidelines and examines their competition rules with them in mind. We would also strongly advise that the Club uses judges listed either in the WCPF Directory or the PAGB Handbook All of those listed will have received some form of approved training.

It is important to select judges appropriate for the competition, to help with this, judge profiles of all our listed judges are provided on the WCPF web site. The judges who have recently attended a judging seminar need as much experience as they can get, to improve and gain confidence. They need to be asked to judge, they may make some mistakes but with suitable mentoring and evaluation (which we provide) they should soon make the grade. At this level, judges should think carefully about judging cold on the night and we advise them not to undertake it. We would encourage all clubs to choose judges from the "Recently Appointed List" for appropriate competitions. On successful completion of a judging seminar, attendees will be issued with the contact details of their local clubs to encourage contact.

If a competition is to be successful the initial dialogue between the Club's competition secretary and the judge needs to be as comprehensive and informative as possible. Both parties should understand what they have each signed up for and this should be confirmed in writing (post or email). The current edition of the WCPF Directory contains a summary of the PAGB conditions governing lecturers and judges. This deals comprehensively with the written confirmation. It does not however deal with any of the essential information that the judge needs to know prior to agreeing to accept the invitation to judge. These are laid out and discussed in detail below.

Venue.

Clubs must give as much support to the judge as possible. Clear directions to the club are essential and emergency phone numbers need to be exchanged. Details of car parking should be explained and as judges are advised to arrive at the venue in good time. The club must ensure somebody is there to greet them. Judges need to be aware of the room layout and how the pictures are to be displayed (see below)

Date and Time.

Detailed timings for the evening should be given, start, break and finish. It is particularly important that if buildings must be vacated by a set time the judge is aware of this. This information is required so that the judge knows exactly how much time is available for the competition. one and a half to two hours is probably the ideal time.

Open or titled competition.

If the competition has a title the club should provide an agreed definition of the title which should be given both to the judge and the club members. Leaving the interpretation of the title, to the judge is unfair and can lead to dissatisfaction amongst your membership. It is the club competition secretary's responsibility to decide if an image conforms to the definition. Judges will comment on all images presented to them.

Expected Entry

This needs to be considered alongside the time available. Clubs must appreciate that the larger the entry less time is available for each comment. We advise judges that they should spend between one and two minutes commenting on each image. If there are around 2 hours available for the competition, a piece of simple maths shows that the total entry for an evening should be around 80. We have had reports of entries in excess of 120. To be fair to the judge and members, clubs need to adopt entry strategies which limit entries to an acceptable level. Please remember that the prospect of hearing the considered comments of the judge are often what attracts entrants to submit work and the audience to attend the competition evening. It is to nobody's advantage if the judge has to hurry through the critiques. With regard to time management a prompt start is essential and notices should be kept to a minimum. Modern projected digital imaging software allow notices to be projected.

The judge should be informed of the ability range of the entrants.

Judging, on the night or in advance.

This is a contentious area. Traditionally areas within the Federation opt for one or the other and strongly advocate their choice. Judging cold requires a high level of skill and experience. The WCPF advises inexperienced judges to have the work in advance this enables them to consider their comments and work out their timings.

Marking, Marks or no marks, places or no places or anywhere in between!

Another difficult area. There are almost as many systems in use as there are clubs. Remember that judging is purely subjective, there are no agreed clear criteria to use and no two judges will totally agree. It is for this reason that some object to the term judge and words like assessment analysis and appraisal are used. The marks given are just one judge's opinion of a specific set of images. There is a strong argument for not awarding marks at all. It often appears the only reason for having marks is so an overall winner of the season's aggregate competition should be found. The only thing we will definitely agree on is to disagree.

We advise judges to place the work in bands choosing their 1st 2nd and 3rd places (if required) from the top band. It is for the judge to decide how to allocate the marks (if required) down from this top band. Clubs often request that judges use the full range of marks from 1 -10. In our opinion it is very demotivating to receive 1 mark. It is the judge's comments which are the most important part of the evening and these should justify the inclusion of an image within a high or low band. Inevitably some images will be in the bottom band but the range order is established without the reinforcement of a low mark.

Clubs have complete autonomy to choose their own marking system but it should be simple and the club must consider if it is helping or hindering the judge in their job. Is it reasonable for example to ask a judge, judging cold to grade the top images from 1 to 15?

Medium - prints, slides, projected digital images and AV

Most judges are prepared to judge all mediums any exceptions are listed in the Directory and in the Judges Profiles on the website. Judges need to be aware of the room layout and how the pictures are displayed.

Prints: Ideally all prints should be displayed at all times, with a separate print stand and light for the image being judged, multi-print stands allow comparison of images.

Projected Digital Images: We strongly recommend the use of a competition software programme, the WCPF use Dicentra. This versatile programme will allow images to be held back and viewed together in a light box mode, it can be used with or without marks. It also has a series of test screens to allow the correct setting up of the projector. It is the club's responsibility to ensure that the images are projected correctly.

Slides The judge should be introduced to the projectionist and a system for holding back the top images agreed.

Evaluation

We are encouraging judges to undertake a process of self evaluation with a view to improving their performance. As part of this the club and its members may be asked to complete a feedback sheet which will be supplied by the judge. We would ask that you co-operate.