

## **Terms of Reference**

### **American Meteorological Society Scientific and Technological Activities Commission**

#### **Guidelines for Board/Committee Student Awards**

**(Updated 9 February 2015)**

This document describes recommended processes to be used by the American Meteorological Society (AMS) Scientific and Technological Activities Commission (STAC) boards and committees to select student best paper awards and travel awards. These guidelines are intended to ensure that the selection process is relatively uniform across STAC and as fair and unbiased as possible.

When determining the winners of student best paper (oral or poster) and travel awards, the selections should be based upon input from a group of independent judges. On many occasions, these judges are board/committee members, as judging often is considered part of the responsibilities of membership. However, students competing for these awards may be advised by board/committee members, thus creating a real or perceived conflict of interest or bias. When this situation occurs it is recommended that the judges selected have no professional relationship (adviser, teacher, same university or organization) with the students or their advisers. This may require asking other meeting attendees to serve as judges. Best practice is to always have some judges selected from outside the AMS board/committee when practical. However, adding judges from outside the board/committee also can raise fairness issues as these judges may have students at the meeting. A judging approach may need to be developed in which the judges only evaluate a subset of the student papers and results from several judges combined in order to remove clear conflict of interest situations. Since it is very difficult to design a set of guidelines that covers every possible situation, the AMS board/committee members are responsible for ensuring that the award selection process is as fair and unbiased as possible given the constraints of the meeting and its attendees.

In the special case when a student member of a board/committee is being considered for a paper or travel award, then the board/committee needs to be especially careful and sensitive to perceived conflict of interest. Here it is recommended that a majority of the judges be from outside the board/committee, have no professional relationship with the students being considered or their advisers, and board/committee members should recuse themselves from voting when the student member paper/application is discussed.

An example Best Student Paper or Poster Sample Evaluation Form is found on the STAC Chair and Member Information Page under the Meetings link.