

Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science

AWARDS

Guidelines for Sectional and Statutory Committees

1. **TRANSPARENCY AND FAIRNESS.** Every sectional and statutory committee, as well as Council-appointed non-statutory committees, which may offer prizes, medals, certificates, or other monetary or non-monetary awards in recognition of various achievements, should prepare and document a clear and transparent set of **criteria** upon which such awards are to be made, and a fair and reasonable, yet efficient **process** to be followed when applying those criteria and deciding upon the winners of the awards.
2. **CONFORMITY.** While all such committees may formulate criteria and processes appropriate to the nature and conditions of the particular award, all such criteria and processes should conform to the general guidelines given below.
3. **COUNCIL OVERSIGHT.** Every document describing criteria and processes for giving awards should have been approved by the Council prior to implementation.
4. **COUNCIL APPROVAL.** All awards should be approved by the Council. Formally, all decisions by committees to give an award are recommendations to the Council. Under unusual circumstances, if the Council has reason to believe that the criteria or the process have not been properly followed, it may (i) defer a decision pending further clarification, (ii) refer the matter to the Awards Committee for inquiry and a recommendation, or (iii) disapprove the award. However, the Council should not substitute its judgment for that of the committee, or a duly appointed subcommittee or panel of judges recommending the award.
5. **AWARDS COMMITTEE.** All awards which are given, or intended to be given, at the Annual Sessions Inauguration should be submitted to the Awards Committee in a timely manner, so that the Awards Committee can review them and make a recommendation to the Council in time for Council approval as scheduled.
6. **ELIGIBILITY.** The criteria upon which the awards is given should clearly specify (i) the minimum criteria for eligibility for the award, and (ii) any categories of people who are NOT eligible. In general, members of the Council (unless otherwise specified for good and sufficient reasons), members of the Awards Committee who are not already members of the Council, and members of the Committee recommending the award, as well as their immediate family members (parents, siblings, spouses, and children) are NOT eligible for such awards.
7. **CRITERIA.** The criteria should be reasonably clear and specific, but should avoid unnecessary detail. They should be capable of being interpreted broadly and flexibly, so that the judges are not tied down to a formula, but have room to make a reasoned judgment.

8. **PROCESS.** The process should specify what material candidates for awards should submit, whether and when they should give presentations (and if so, the nature and duration of those presentations), and who would act as judges in making the decision (the entire committee, a subcommittee thereof, or a duly appointed panel of judges who may or may not be members of the committee). A reasonable timetable for the entire process should be included, though the dates may vary from year to year.
9. **APPEALS.** Appeals against awards decisions should not generally be allowed.
10. **OBJECTIVITY.** It should be recognised that individual judgments are nearly always subjective, regardless of attempts to quantify them by marking schemes, etc. Objectivity is achieved by the combined judgment of a group of diverse individuals. Panels of judges should have a minimum of **three** members. At the same time, it must be understood and accepted, by the Council as well as the relevant Committee, that some subjectivity is inevitable, and that the selected panel may not give an expected decision. This should not be seen as a weakness of the process.
11. **QUANTIFICATION.** Marking schemes are a common method of arriving at a decision regarding giving an award, though in some cases they may be inappropriate, or decisions could be made without attempted quantification. They should be used wherever it is possible to do so, and if used, they should be included in the written process. At the same time, they should be as flexible and simple as possible, avoiding unnecessary detail or subdivision of categories.
12. **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.** Members of the SLAAS, and especially members in decision-making positions (Council, Committees, etc.), should be always aware of possible conflicts of interest. Members of subcommittees or panels of judges should recuse themselves if conflicts of interest arise, *e.g.*, close friends (or even bitter foes), relatives, or immediate colleagues applying for an award. As a general principle, a conflict of interest should be declared, and the affected individual should refrain from participating in a process or discussion leading to a decision. Ideally, potential candidates for awards should also avoid situations where conflicts of interest arise, even if nominally eligible for the award.