

Avacal Arts & Sciences  
Judge & Entrant Handbook

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*Version 1*

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## **Contents**

Introduction .....	3
Entry Types.....	3
Judging Structure .....	4
Judging Form.....	5
Judging Categories .....	6
On Questioning .....	9
Advice for Entrants .....	11
Arts and Science Competitions Throughout Avacal.....	12

## Introduction

Thank you for offering to either judge or enter Avacal's Kingdom Arts & Sciences Championship. Your work makes Avacal and the SCA better. The purpose of this handbook is to give everyone involved an overview of the judging, both expectations and process, including how to use and apply the judging rubric. If you still are unclear on any aspect of the judging after reading this handbook, or any questions before, during, or after the competition, please contact the **Kingdom A&S Minister**. This handbook is not intended to replace the Avacal Arts & Sciences Competition Guidelines, but to supplement it. A copy of the most recent guidelines is available on the Kingdom of Avacal website.

Avacal does not allow judges who may have a personal bias (peers judging their students, patrons judging commissioned work, judging the work of a significant other or partner). There are other cases in which you may perceive a bias but others do not; in this case it's important to remember that in the SCA you are the holder of your own honour. If you feel you cannot be impartial for any reason on something you have been asked to judge, that reason is yours and you don't need to share it beyond saying that you can't judge that entry. There will be no judgment of those who recuse themselves, even if there are limited judges for a certain field.

## Entry Types

In Avacal, there are three entry categories designed to meet the needs of the broad range of entries possible. Each category has a type specific judging form.

**Physical entries**, these are the traditional "item" type entry such as a pie, dress, or pottery. These are entries that can be physically touched and will continue to exist throughout the judging time (though in some cases part of the entry will be gone, such as in a culinary entry). The documentation for these entries is due two weeks in advance of the competition.

**Non-Physical entries**, these are the "performance" arts such as music, dance, and storytelling, but also drama and fencing passes. These are entries that cannot be physically touched, or cannot be physically touched after the initial experience, and will not exist in a physical way throughout the judging time, though a record of it may be left. This also includes entries where the thing being entered is transient, or no longer present at the time of presentation, such as the translation of a period text where the work of translation is the entry rather than the final product. The documentation for these entries is due two weeks in advance of the competition.

**Research Papers**, these are the entries that consist solely of documentation with no item or experience attached (unless as part of a display). This includes Argumentative papers, Compare and Contrast papers, and Analytical papers, as well as other types of research papers and certain types of Experimental Archeology. The judging form for these is very different from the other two types of entries as, if we judged it only on the "documentation" section from the other judging forms, it would not be appropriately rigorous. To meet the needs of this entry type, a form has been specifically designed for research papers. All research papers are due four weeks in advance of the competition.

## Judging Structure

There will be a panel of three judges assigned to each entry. All judging is scheduled prior to the event and this schedule will be adhered to as much as possible. The documentation or research paper will have been given to the judges in advance of the competition and the judges are expected to have read them thoroughly. The entrant and all the judges will be made aware of the composition of the panel for each entry prior to judging. Note that student judges may also be present. The Judging will be done with the entrant present. This interactive format allows for an excellent learning opportunity for all participants.

Judges and entrant should introduce themselves to each other. Don't assume everyone knows each other. This also helps to ease any anxiety the entrant may be feeling.

Judges should remember that many contestants enter the Kingdom competition as a means of getting feedback from knowledgeable people. Verbal feedback during the judging is valuable, but after a long day it is often difficult to recall specifics. Please take this aspect of the role very seriously and give the entrant the benefit of your knowledge. Please make the time to give provide good, detailed, written feedback. If you think you, or someone else, can provide further information on the subject please feel free to provide contact information to the entrant in the 'comments' section of the judging form. Please feel free to use the back of the form for additional commentary and feedback.

There will typically be 60 minutes allotted for judging each entry. After a brief introduction a judging session is divided into three sections:

- 1) **Presentation:** the entrant lays out their project and gives a brief overview of it, during this you may have some questions, but it is better to restrict them to the questioning phase, so as to not cause the entrant to skip part of their presentation
- 2) **Questioning:** the judges ask questions of the entrant, attempting to clarify a section of the project or determine the depth and breadth of the entrants knowledge on the topic
- 3) **Judging:** the judges sit together and discuss the entry and how they each feel it went and how to score the entry, they also fill in the scoring sheets and write down any feedback

A suggestion for structuring this time is 30 minutes for the entrant to present and respond to questions from the judges and 30 minutes for the judges to confer, finish filling out the forms, and write feedback for the entrant.

Judges are selected for their expertise in the area specific to the entry. Sometimes, as a judging team, you may want to seek further advice from another expert who may not be on this particular judging panel. Entries that are extremely complex may require some advice or insight from others better versed in the entry topic or type. The judges should feel free to ask for help.

Judging forms should be turned in to the judging table for tabulation as soon as possible. If you wish to take some time to write further comments, please make the tabulation staff aware of this. It is expected that you will aid in the tabulation by turning in the forms as soon as you can. Entrants are welcome to

ask judges for further comments about their entry at any point. Sometimes there are issues that did not come up or seemed inappropriate to discuss during the presentation and it might be easier to do so in a more relaxed setting later in the day.

If a judge or entrant has any questions before, during, or after the competition they should be directed to the Kingdom Arts & Sciences Minister.

## Judging Form

The style of form used for judging the Arts and Sciences in Avacal is called a Rubric. The form is designed such that for each question that an entrant and entry is scored on, there is a series of statements that describes what each score represents. The judge will select the statement that is closest to what the entry displays. The rubric scores entries on eighteen different questions with a possible score from one to five points. In the eighteen questions a score of one is there to identify the minimum score possible, generally indicating that there was little to no attempt in that area. A score of one is not expected to come up at Kingdom level for completed projects.

There are an additional five questions worth between zero and three points, with the maximum being different for each of the five questions, that can be awarded for specific things which are considered above and beyond what is expected of an entry. These “additional points” questions replace bonus points. Note that instead of being open to interpretation, the additional points are awarded for specific areas of going above and beyond what is expected. In the five additional points questions a score of zero is what is expected while anything above that is considered exceptional.

**Use of “additional points” is at the judge’s discretion but they should be used sparingly.**

Use of part marks are allowed on the forms. If an entry isn't quite 3 and isn't quite 4 then a score of 3.5 is appropriate.

The number associated with the statement is the actual score and there is no weighting of questions. The scores are tallied up, and the maximum score without additional points is 90, while the maximum total possible score for any entry is 100.

## Scoring

Judges are not required to score the same as the other judges; HOWEVER judges should listen to the judges on the panel and consider their thoughts, particularly those with more experience, or who are experts in the field covered by the entry. Note that judges may be called upon to explain scoring, especially if scores differ significantly between judges.

## Final Judging Thoughts

Give compliments where warranted. Be nice. You can give critical feedback without being unkind. Be mindful of how you come across in your comments. Try not to be too scary. We want people to excel, grow and learn.

## Judging Categories

### Display & Presentation

This category has to do with first impressions, the display that is provided beyond the core project, and the entrant's ability to communicate and answer questions. This category assesses how well the display and presentation of the entry enhances or detracts from the entry and its historical context. As well this evaluates how well the entrant was able to discuss the entry and address the judge's questions.

### Technical Ability

This category has to do with mastery, is this something where the entrant has a high level of skill. This is of course different between the physical & non-physical entries and the research paper. In physical & non-physical technical ability is about tools, materials, and techniques, as well as whether the entry succeeded or not, while in research paper it has to do with the mechanics and organization of the paper as well as the clarity of the writing.

### Authenticity

This category focuses on the how accurately the entry and creation process matches the source, as well as the reasonableness of the departures from this source.

### Documentation

This category covers the written documentation that is provided as part of the entry and assesses how effective, well researched, and well written it is.

### Research & Sources

For research papers this category is used instead of Authenticity. It examines the choice and use of sources, and whether the entrant had done enough research on the topic.

### Analysis & Evidence

This category, again for research papers, is where entrants are marked on their use of sources, and how well they have used their research to make a point, or examine and explain a concept.

## Key Terms Used in the Judging Forms

- **Period:** pre-1600, as according to the SCA governing documents and the Avacal Arts & Sciences Competition Guidelines
- **Entry:** everything put forward by the presenter including the project, documentation, display, and presentation.

- **Entrant/Presenter:** the person who created or prepared the project and provides the presentation.
- **Project:** the item(s), process, performance, paper, demonstration etc. that is the core of the entry
- **Documentation:** the written information about how the project came to be, the research behind it, explanation of it, and description of process
- **Display:** the visual component of the entry beyond the project itself could include tools and materials used in creation of project, a poster showing info about the project, process photos, etc.
- **Presentation:** the oral explanation of the project and answering of questions related to it
- **Paper:** A research paper presented as the project, as opposed to documentation which supports a project
- **Inspiration:** the period item(s), concept, exemplar, recipe, etc upon which the entry is based.
- **Appropriate Sense:** the key sense for an entry, for example taste in cooking, sight or touch in costuming, smell in perfumery. If you are unsure which is the appropriate sense, ask the presenter.
  - Something that offends the appropriate sense is something that is unpleasant to that particular sense. Offence is relative to what is suitable to the entry; a sweet thing should be sweet etc.
- **Mastery:** A level of ability that shows the entrant has a comprehensive knowledge and skill in a subject or area.
  - *Mastery of Materials:* Full knowledge of and ability with a specific material and the utilization of it
  - *Mastery of Tools and Equipment or structure:* Full knowledge of and ability with specific tools, materials, or structures and the utilization of them
  - *Mastery of Skills, Techniques, Methods, or Structure:* Full knowledge of and ability when utilizing specific skills techniques, methods, or structures
- **Thesis:** The theme of a research paper, it may, but does not always, include a proposition or hypothesis which the paper purports to prove or examine; it is generally summed up in one to two sentences but may be longer.
- **Sources:** quotations or evidence taken from a third party which is used in the documentation or paper
  - *Primary Source:* direct evidence or records made when something was first made or seen or original evidence, may include photographs of items, recipes, artwork, etc.
  - *Secondary source:* an analysis, interpretation, restatement, or commentary regarding a primary source, may include books and articles that rely on primary sources, histories, biographies, reviews, etc.
  - *Tertiary source:* works which index, organize, or compile secondary sources with some primary source evidence, may include dictionaries, encyclopedias, and textbooks
- **Scholarship Consensus:** the general agreement of scholars in a particular topic area on what the probable facts in that area are.

## Clarification of Questions

Some of the questions on the judging form warrant additional clarification, as follows:

- **First Impression:** Assesses the key aspect(s) of the entry, such as the scent of perfume, the look of visual art, the taste of food, or, in the case of a research paper, how informative the writing has made the topic.
- **Clarity, Readability and Writing style:** For Research Papers, this assesses the writing itself. Assesses if the author able to write a paper that is easy to understand, that does not contradict itself, and that does not make great leaps of unexplained logic
- **Period Performance or Presentation:** For the Non-Physical entries, this assesses the method and process used. This equates to the “Period Tools and Equipment” question used for Physical entries, understanding that tools and equipment may not be elements of an entry. The question instead assesses the method of performance or presentation in terms of how similar the method and process used is to what would have occurred in period. For example, is the recitation of poetry, scene of a play, performance of dance, or completion of fencing pass executed in a manner similar to its execution in period.
- **Period Style, Design and Aesthetic:** Assesses whether an entry utilizes or expresses the style, design, aesthetic, or is similar in concept to the source(s) upon which it is based.
- **Research Depth and Breadth:** Assesses to degree to which the documentation has covered at the “5 Ws” (Who, What, Where, When, Why). More points are gained by going beyond the “5 Ws” including explaining all of the research behind the project, examining the topic beyond the particular entry by looking at other similar items and examining the context within which it was originally created.
- **Explanations and Completeness:** Assess documentation in terms of whether or not the entrant has properly and fully explained the entry itself, including the process of its creation. Top marks are allocated to documentation that is so fully expressed that it could be used by someone else to recreate the entry in its entirety.
- **Transcription of Piece:** For Non-Physical entries, this assesses the physical representation of the entry that has been provided to accompany the entry providing something physical to assess and learn from after the ephemeral presentation has ended. This may be diagrammed steps to a dance, a copy of a poem or reading, the script of a scene, a musical score, or the individual components of a fencing pass.
- **External Validity:** Assesses the entrants understanding of current and existing knowledge and research on the topic. Entrants are not expected to turn in academic journal quality research papers, however, it IS expected that an entrant will have awareness of what other people have written regarding a given topic, regardless of whether their paper agrees or disagrees with what they have said.
- **Contribution to Readers Knowledge:** For Research Papers, the overall intent is to teach, explain, expand on or argue a topic or subject. In all of these cases it is important to assess whether or not the paper does indeed add to the general readers knowledge, though depending on the expertise of the judges, they may have known the information already.



- **Historical Context:** For Research Papers which are expected to be grounded in a historical context, this assesses the degree to which that historical content has been successfully communicated. This could be as brief as a single paragraph about what the entry was used for, or as long as an entire section on the context of the paper's topic.

## On Questioning

Judges are asked to think carefully about the types of questions you want to ask, as different types of questions will provide different information.

### Types of Questions

Some types of questions, such as *Who*, *When*, or *Where*, will yield basic factual information. While those types of questions are generally covered by the documentation, you might wish to clarify those aspects when questioning an entrant. These questions don't usually lead to an expansive answer, but rather a simple one that is straight to the point.

*What*, *How*, and *Why* are different, they ask for details. *How* is a great way of asking for a list of factual information about actions that happened in the past or something the entrant has planned for the future regarding their entry or topic of interest. *What* is a great way of delving into detail about an object, which make them a key component judging. *Why* gets to the reasoning behind decisions made which is again an important aspect of judging. However, some entrants may feel defensive in response to *why* questions and think that they are being asked to justify a choice the judge thinks is wrong. For this reason it's important to consider your questions carefully.

### The Purpose of Questions

When judging Arts & Sciences, it's not required that you know the answers to the questions you ask. What is important is to ask relevant questions. The questions you ask should focus on the entrant and entry. Your job as a judge is to discover what they know, how deep or broad their knowledge is, and sometimes to remind them of something crucial they know but forgot to include in their documentation. As a judge you are expected to have read the documentation or research paper in depth before the date of the competition.

Entries will sometimes be attached to other things, such as embellishment on a dress. Please ensure that you are asking questions about the actual entry and not the thing that it is attached to, as that may be being entered separately, or have no relevance to the entry beyond being a canvas. You are encouraged to ask the entrant which specific parts are included in the entry. Questions regarding that which is not being are not generally appropriate.

The key to these questions is to focus on the positive. A judge is not a prosecutor. You are trying to explore their knowledge and understanding and provide the opportunity for them to expand on or

introduce content overlooked in their documentation or presentation. Questions that allow the entrant to explain something new about their entry or to expand on some element of the entry are ideal.

The key to this is to be genuinely curious. The intent is NOT to ask a trap question NOR a question you intend to provide the answer to. Questions that end in the entrant saying “I don’t know” are, of course, not an issue. But questions that make the entrant wonder if they were wrong to submit this entry for judging at all, are not acceptable. As well, statements in the form of a question that you intend to provide the answer for are not appropriate as these types of questions that are about you and your knowledge rather than about the entrant’s knowledge. This is not the time or the place for you, as the judge, to demonstrate your expertise. If an entrant forgot something or did not explore their topic deeply enough you should NOT call them on it publicly. You can mention the entrant’s oversight to the other judges during scoring, or in your comments, or, better yet, approach them after and talk with them about it. The entrant is there because they are interested in their topic, if you are also interested in that topic then do talk with them about it. Help expand their knowledge by providing further resources if you are able to. The judging process is not about being right or wrong, but about encouraging excellence in the learning and knowledge of the art and sciences.

## **Presentation and Documentation**

Occasionally an entrant will not mention content during their presentation because the content is included in the documentation and is not central to the entry. This might mean that a question gets asked that the entrant briefly replies to because they know it is covered in depth in the documentation. They may, additionally neglect to reference that the complete information is properly covered in the documentation. If the judge has been thorough in reading the documentation this is not an issue. But if a judge has skimmed the documentation, this could be an issue as the judge will be missing information the entrant HAS provided. Please don’t be that judge, it looks bad on you and bad on all judges when you do that. Read the documentation. Confirm before scoring the entry that the content is not in the documentation and was missed.

## **Common Questions During Judging**

It can be helpful in questioning is to use some of the following common questions to begin your dialogue with the entrant.

- What was the greatest thing for you about working on this project?
- How have you grown by doing this?
- What skills did you learn that you didn’t know before starting this project?
- How will others benefit from the work/research you did?
- What would you do differently if you were to redo this?
- If you had unlimited time or money what would you have done differently?
- How long has this project been a goal/idea for you?
- What was the most surprising complication when doing this project?
- What was the inspiration? Where did you get the idea?
- What was the most work? What was hardest to do?

- What would you change? What would you do differently?
- What compromises did you make? Why?
- What did you want to do that didn't work out?
- What did you learn in doing this entry?

## Advice for Entrants

The Kingdom A&S Championship is designed to be the most challenging arts and sciences competition in the Kingdom. However it is not just about creating a pretty object. It is also about the process involved in learning the methods used during the period and trying to follow these methods as closely as possible. Obviously it is not necessarily possible to re-create these items with all the materials and methods used in period; however you should still have done the research to know what these were and explain how yours differs. The judges are not looking for museum replicas of period objects, but they are looking for entries based on the period ideals and techniques. For example, if you are making an item from Celtic Britain you would not decorate it with a pattern from Renaissance Italy, unless you can provide documentation establishing this was indeed possible that the pattern was found in both contexts.

This does not preclude an entrant from using creativity in creating their entry but any theories used should be backed up with a logical reasoning for their use. This is particularly necessary for early period items where the entrant may not necessarily have much in way of research materials and must hypothesize in his or her theories. The judges would like to see concrete examples that explain of why you chose to do something in a particular way as much as is reasonably possible whenever reasonably possible.

When using modern materials or techniques instead of period materials, for whatever reason, the entrant should try to use a modern replacement that resembles the period material or method as closely as possible. Substituting materials for availability, health and cost reasons are all completely valid - just be prepared to explain and support your choices. Explain how the substituted materials do or do not perform, look, handle or function as the period material would. The important point is the thought behind the choice.

During your presentation you should be clear about what you are entering. If you are entering the embroidery on a dress, ensure that the judges are aware that the dress is not part of the entry. If you are entering the dress and embroidery separately ensure that the judges of the dress are aware that the embroidery is being judged separately. You must also be clear what category (Physical, Non-Physical, or Research Paper) you are entering in, as this is sometimes unclear.

All entrants are advised to review and use the judging forms to evaluate your entries throughout your process to gauge your preparation for the competition.

As mentioned in the Avacal Arts & Sciences Competition Guidelines all documentation must be submitted two (2) weeks before the competition, and all research papers must be submitted four (4) weeks before the competition.

## **Tips for Success**

The following tips are designed to help you be your best:

1. Do not be too scared. The judges want you to do well, they have entered contests themselves, and they know how you feel.
2. Rehearse what you want to say. Run through your presentation a few times with someone there to provide you with feedback. Time it so that you do not feel rushed or like you were too brief.
3. Read the Kingdom of Avacal A&S Competition Guidelines
4. Talk to past champions and prior entrants. Ask for pointers.
5. Plan out the full entry creation and documentation process. Don't leave too much to the last minute. A good set of Kingdom Arts & Sciences entries should take months to prepare. You cannot do your best work or properly showcase your skills if you finish your entries the week before the event.
6. Ask for Support. Consider having someone you trust to help you with your entries, particularly if you have large or elaborate entries. Have someone check in on you through the day to ensure you are fed and watered.
7. Rest. Get some sleep the night before. Eat a good meal and make sure you have snacks and drinks on hand throughout the day so you can be at your best.

## **Arts and Science Competitions Throughout Avacal**

The Kingdom Arts & Sciences Judging Forms have been specifically designed to be suitable and functional for use in arts and sciences competitions at any level.

The general concept behind the forms is that a score of 4 or 5 is what is being looked for at the Kingdom level, while a score of 3 or 4 is what is being looked for at Baronial level, and a 2 or 3 is what is looked for at Shire level. All scores, from 1 to 5, are possible at any level of competition, but scores above the expected level of competition (i.e. 4 or 5 at a shire level) should be considered to be additional points as this performance is above and beyond the expectations of that level.

With this understanding, the forms have been designed to be used at multiple levels of competition throughout Avacal. All entrants are advised to use the forms to evaluate your entries to see how you feel it would fare in a competition.