

NACADA Region Conferences

Proposal Review and Feedback Guidelines

A Message from NACADA Leadership

NACADA leadership gives proposal readers the following charge:

1. Think engagement and inclusion: Look at the structure of the proposal. Does the proposal have a clear objective that will be beneficial to interested attendees? Does the proposal have relevance to current events and hot topics in academic advising and higher education? Does the proposal present a potential answer to a question that looms among advising professionals? Would this proposal give someone the opportunity to share their voice in a manner that could effectively benefit other people?

2. Think narrative: While a proposal's topic may not pique your interest, think about the person(s) on the other side of the proposal. Academic advising goes beyond retention, attrition, picking classes, and creating successful program initiatives. Academic advising is also about sharing stories and creating pathways to accomplish goals not only between the student-advisor relationships, but also from the interactions between all of us on the professional level. Be thoughtful with your feedback because you are reading into the story of another person(s).

3. Think value: In the words of Dr. Peter L. Hagen, "Empirical evidence and data are not enough". The value of a proposal comes from the experience of the proposal writer. It is our duty to assign value by thinking about how one's experience could benefit other people; even if the experience does not directly benefit you, the proposal reader.

This is an invitation to serve the NACADA community. NACADA as an organization requests you to be open-minded, thoughtful, and thorough when reading your assigned proposals while providing healthy, positive feedback, and constructive criticism when necessary. We ask you to utilize resources for reading and commenting on proposals. When in doubt, please reach out to the NACADA Executive Office for assistance (nacadar@ksu.edu).

Proposal Review Guidelines

A good session proposal should be well-written and include a complete description with background information, an overview of the presentation, and a description of the format. If the program is reporting research, a description of methods, findings and recommendations are appropriate; an emphasis on research results and collected data is highly desirable. The program description should also include learning outcomes, the relationship of the program to the conference theme, methods of audience involvement (i.e., engaging in discussion, sharing effective practices, analyzing a case study), and the familiarity and background of the presenters with the subject matter of the program.

An effective proposal description will:

- mention relevant theories and research.
- include an outline of the presentation.
- describe intended learning outcomes for participants.

- describe the institution and/or presenters.

With all the above in mind, as a reader, you can ask yourself:

- Are the objectives and learning outcomes clearly stated?
- Is the subject matter “timely?”
- Does the topic contribute to the advancement of the field of advising?
- Does the presenter offer a creative approach?
- How adaptable are the presenter’s ideas to various settings? Does the framework seem limited to the researcher’s own institutional context?
- Would you be interested in attending this session? Why or why not?
- Who is the audience for this session? Think in terms of the novice vs. more seasoned advisor. Is it geared towards advising in a specific area, institution, or interest group?
- Does the writer convince you that they have the knowledge/expertise to present on such a topic?
- Would you recommend a different format for the presentation? (e.g., pre-conference workshop, poster session, etc.)
- While this topic may have been covered many times before (“fatigue” factor), does this presentation offer a novel approach?
- Are the proposal and abstract well-written with no grammatical or typographical errors?
- For Pre-Conference Workshops, is there a clear take away? Would your boss be willing to pay extra for you to attend this session? Is there an interactive component, or is it simply a “long concurrent” session?

Feedback Guidelines

Please note that the presenters will see your comments from your review. Make sure your comments are positive and constructive. What feedback would you like to give to the presenter, especially if your recommendation was to reject the proposal?

Unproductive feedback example: “Too specific.”

Productive feedback example: “This session seems very institution-specific and would be difficult to adapt to other settings.”

Providing Feedback on NACADA Proposals

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NACADA members and non-members submit proposals to the Association in a variety of contexts, including those for Annual and Region conference presentations. We encourage reviewers to consider the following points in providing feedback on those proposals:

- Use moderate, tempered language while still conveying the essence of your opinion about the proposal. A real human being will read what you write! While many NACADA members are accustomed to receiving critical feedback on their work, others are not.
- Provide specific, positive, relevant suggestions for improving the proposal, whether you recommend its acceptance or not.
- Stay focused on the proposal, not the proposer. Ad hominem attacks are both discouraging and nonproductive.
- Analyze the proposal from the perspective of a broad audience. Whether you find the proposal interesting and relevant is certainly important, but keep in mind that others may find value where you may not.

If you have questions about your review and recommendation, please contact the NACADA office for feedback before you submit it (nacadar@ksu.edu). Thank you for your work on behalf of the Association and its members.