

Proposal Reviewer Video Transcript:

Welcome! You're watching the NACADA Proposal Reviewer Guide put together by Kea Hunt and Wendy Schindler.

First, we want to thank you for being a proposal reviewer. This is a huge undertaking every year. Being a part of this important task makes it possible for the Annual Conference committee to put together a great program for Academic Advisors.

So, what does it take to review proposals? We'll cover five steps to guide you through the process including expectations, reading the proposals, taking notes, using the rubric, and making effective comments.

Step 1: Know the expectations of proposal reviewing.

First, consider the time commitment. On average, reviewers read 7-12 proposals and it takes about 15 minutes to read and score each one, meaning this is at least a 2-3 hour commitment.

Second, get familiar with the proposal review system before you start. The executive office will provide you with more instructions.

Third, consider the criteria and format of the proposal you're reading. Are you reading proposals for concurrent sessions? Poster session? Pre-conference session? This should make a difference in how you think about each proposal.

Finally, before you begin, remind yourself of what makes a great proposal. Effective proposals mention relevant theories and research. The author includes an outline of the presentation and describes intended learning outcomes for participants. We'll cover more things to consider shortly.

Step 2: Read all of your assigned proposals before you score them.

Reading all of the proposals first helps keep you in a similar frame of mind for each one when you start scoring. As you read, latter proposals may change your thoughts about earlier proposals. By reading them all, your scoring will be more consistent.

Step 3: Take notes as you read.

Taking notes will keep your thoughts in order when you're ready to start scoring. Jot down the strengths, concerns, questions, and overall impressions you have for each proposal.

Step 4: Use the rubric for scoring.

You'll have access to the rubric when you receive your login for the proposal review system. NACADA uses a 1-5 scoring system that you can consider like this:

- A 1 is like an F. You're saying the proposal is weak and does not meet expectations for that criteria.
- A 2 is like a D. You're saying the proposal is just fair and below expectations for that criteria.
- A 3 is like a C. You're saying the proposal is satisfactory for that criteria.
- A 4 is like a B or A-. You're saying the proposal is good for that criteria.
- and A 5 is like an A+. You're saying the proposal is excellent for that criteria.

Remember to use the whole range of numbers in your scoring. Don't just use 1s and 5s unless a proposal truly merits those scores.

The main criteria on the rubric include: interest, application, clarity, creativity, and relevance. When scoring these items, remember to think with an open mind. Most of these are pretty straight forward, but “interest” can be more complex.

Although a topic may not be of interest to you personally, consider whether the topic would be of interest to other advisors. Everyone holds implicit biases based on personal experience. Being aware of those biases allows for a more inclusive review of proposals.

For example, if you work for a large research institution, a proposal related to community colleges may not be of interest to you. But that doesn’t mean it isn’t valuable to other advisors. The same holds true for other dimensions such as race, nationality, socioeconomics, ability status, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.

There are three secondary criteria that will only apply to certain proposals: research, diversity, and preconference sessions. You’ll only choose a number for research if the proposal is actually its own research study with methods, findings, collected data, etc.

You’ll only choose a number for diversity if the proposal topic specifically deals with issues of equity, inclusion, or diversity. And you’ll only rate the last criteria if the proposal is specifically being submitted as a preconference session.

And finally, Step 5: Write helpful comments.

Helpful comments are detailed and specific. This helps the Annual Conference committee make final selections and also provides feedback to the proposal author. Give rationale for your rubric scores and provide constructive and clear suggestions, concerns, and recommendations. Here are some examples.

It is not helpful to simply say a proposal is “too specific.” This comment doesn’t adequately explain what you mean.

It would be more helpful to say, “The content of this proposal is institution specific and would be difficult to adapt to other settings.”

Here’s another example. The comment, “good proposal,” is too vague. What makes it good?

A more helpful comment would be, "This proposal is well-written and covers the topic in a new way. It is grounded in scholarship and has solid learning outcomes. I believe it would appeal to a wide audience of advisors." Of course, you can be even more specific when you have an actual proposal to reference.

Remember, the proposal author will receive your comments, so keep in mind there is an actual person with feelings at the other end of this.

Show respect for their work, even if you don’t recommend the proposal. Constructive feedback helps authors write better proposals in the future. And even if you didn’t rate it highly, it could still be accepted, so your feedback could lead to a better presentation from the author.

Hopefully, you’ve learned that proposal reviewing is as easy as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5! Review this video as often as you need to for a reminder.

Thanks again for volunteering to review proposals. NACADA wouldn’t be such an incredible organization without our amazing volunteers. Cheers!