

The Best Junior Presentation Award

For the twelfth time, junior speakers at the Benelux Meeting will contend for the Best Junior Presentation Award. As the name indicates, the prize honors the best presentation at the Benelux Meeting by a junior speaker, *i.e.*, a researcher working towards the PhD degree. The award is given specifically for presentation technique rather than for content, so in principle it would be possible that the winner gave a beautiful presentation of irrelevant, trivial or even incorrect results. This is of course not to say that content is not important; however, the BJP Award is intended to help remedy a lack of attention for presentation technique that has been sometimes perceived.

The awarding of the prize goes about as follows. The chairs of sessions in which a junior speaker gives a presentation will be asked to find three volunteers in the audience who are willing to fill out an evaluation form; an example of this form is attached. After the session, the completed forms will be collected by the Prize Commissioners who will then compute a ranking. The winner will be announced immediately after the final lectures of the meeting. The prize consists of a trophy that is made available by DISC and that is to be kept by the winner for one year (until the next Benelux Meeting). The winner will also get an award certificate. This year's Prize Commissioners are: Joseph Winkin (University of Namur-FUNDP) and Peter Heuberger (Delft University of Technology).

Some detailed information concerning the prize competition is given below for the session chairs, for the volunteers in the audience who will complete the evaluation forms, and for the prize candidates.

For the session chairs

You will receive a set of envelopes corresponding to each of the junior researchers who are giving a presentation during your session, as well as a spare envelope. Each envelope contains a set of evaluation forms. Please find three volunteers in the audience (preferably not belonging to the research group that the speaker comes from) who are willing to complete a form. After the talk please collect the forms, check that they are indeed completed, and put them back into the envelope. Please hand all envelopes to one of the Prize Commissioners.

For the jurors

The effect of the BJP Award depends on the efforts of those who volunteer as jurors; so your assistance is most appreciated. Please tick one box in each line; take the leftmost box if you agree with the statement on the left, the rightmost box if the statement on the right seems adequate, or choose a box in between to indicate an intermediate position. An attempt has been made to order the questions in such a way that you may already begin putting marks during the talk. The twelve categories appearing in the form are to be interpreted as follows.

Question 1 asks whether the speaker clearly sets out what the talk is about and why the subject is of interest. Question 2 is about the speaker's use of English. Although full grammatical correctness is not an absolute requisite for effective communication, errors such

as misuse of words and wrong pronunciation can be distracting and therefore should be counted negatively. Questions 3 and 4 deal with the speaker's ability to make effective use of facilities; question 3 is about the "human" facilities (voice, facial expression, gestures), question 4 about the technical equipment (visuals, overhead projector, beamer). Question 5 asks whether the speaker is able to make contact with the audience. Handling a question properly doesn't necessarily imply a long answer, but rather refers to an appropriate action by the speaker.

Questions 6 to 8 deal with several aspects of "clarity." The main points of the talks should not only be announced as such, but the audience should also be given sufficient time to take these points in (question 6). Talks usually have a hierarchical structure in which main goals lead to subgoals; question 7 asks whether this structure was clear. If several transparencies made you wonder about the purpose of what was written there, then you'll have to tick one of the boxes at the left end on line 7. The speaker should take into account that the attention span of the audience is limited and that some listeners may have lost the thread of the reasoning; at least every ten minutes there should be a moment where everyone is enabled to catch up, even when not all details of what was said before were understood. This is the subject of question 8.

Question 9 asks whether the speaker made a confident impression and appeared to give the talk as planned. A speaker who puts on a slide and then pulls it away after two seconds saying "oh well, this is not too important anyway" will get bad marks here. In question 10 there should be low marks both when the audience was overestimated and when it was underestimated by the speaker. Since the forms will be returned to the speaker, it will be useful if you underline "too high" or "too low" if and when appropriate.

Finally, questions 11 and 12 deal with the way that the talk is concluded. The speaker should clearly summarize what was achieved in the work described in the talk, and relate this to the goals stated at the beginning of the presentation (question 11). The talk should be timed in such a way that it can be completed without an increase of pace at the end, and with a few minutes left for discussion. Running out of time, but also finishing very early, are signs of inadequate time planning and should result in low marks for question 12.

If you have any specific hints or suggestions for the speaker, please write these on the back side of the evaluation form. As already noted, the forms will be returned to the speakers, and they will be grateful for any help you can provide in improving their presentations.

For the contestants

So, here's your chance to boost your career and to amaze your family, friends and colleagues with the shiny BJP Award that makes Oscar and Emmy look pale in comparison. All you have to do is to give a brilliant talk at the Benelux Meeting... But seriously, a few comments are in order. First of all, what counts in the first place is the scientific quality of the work that you are doing, and this is *not* what the BJP Award is for; the prize is for quality of presentation rather than for quality of content. Secondly, the ranking system associated with the prize is based on marks given by volunteers who probably do not all use the same standards, and so there is an unavoidable element of chance in the system. Therefore the prize shouldn't be taken too seriously, and certainly should not give rise to an atmosphere of fierce competition. For the proud winner: congratulations, and please take good care of the trophy since it will be awarded again next year. For all the others:

the envelope with your results will be available immediately after the winner has been announced, in the same room. Looking over your marks and reading the suggestions that some jurors may have placed on the back side of the form may give you some ideas of how to improve your presentation technique; and then take another chance next year.

For all further information regarding the BJP Award, please contact one of the Prize Commissioners, Joseph Winkin or Peter Heuberger.