

Photography Judges' Manual



**Photographic Society
of
Queensland**

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Preamble:

Photography clubs attract a wide variety of people. Almost without exception the person will join a club, hoping to become a better photographer. One important way of improving one's skill is getting inspired by seeing other people's photographic artwork and comparing those with your own.

Most Queensland photography clubs are therefore conducting monthly competitions and usually asking PSQ judges to evaluate their images.

Judges need to be aware how their decisions and comments influence club members. It was with this in mind that the Judges Executive of the Photographic Society of Queensland produced this manual.

It is hoped that this manual will guide all PSQ Judges and lead them to hone their craft through reflection and honest critique of their own performance. As a consequence it is envisaged that club photographers may be better nurtured and inspired.

The principles outlined within this manual are not prescriptive, but the Judges Executive believes that they will assist in making the task of judging more satisfying.

The PSQ Judges Executive

November 2017

Chapter 1:

SHOULD I BECOME A JUDGE?

1.1 The Pleasures of Judging

1.1.1 You are helping others to acquire satisfaction with their developing skills.

1.1.2 You get to meet others from outside your own club.

1.1.3 You get inspiration from seeing other images close up and you develop your own skills by seeing how others interpret a subject.

1.2 What Is Required?

1.2.1 A judge needs to be prepared to devote time, energy and expertise to their task.

1.2.2 A 'good' judge is a practicing photographer who (a) attends exhibitions, (b) enters competitions, (c) enjoys the presentation of the images, (d) continues his/her education by attending Workshops, Forums and Conferences and (e) has an understanding of each of the media.

1.2.3 A 'good' judge needs to be able to distinguish between images and clearly articulate the reasons behind their adjudication. The ability to present adjudication orally and visually through electronic media etc. is a valuable skill for a judge.

Chapter 2: THE PRINCIPLES OF JUDGING

2.1 The Primary Task

Although a judge may be able to contribute to club members' craft of photography, this is ultimately not their task at hand.

The main task of a PSQA (PSQ accredited judge) is to assist fellow photographers to develop as photographic artists.

The question arises: **“What is Art?”**

Considering that most art definitions mention the terms 'Emotions' or 'Feelings' it seems obvious that judging photography as art must begin by assessing the emotional content of an image. Any kind of conveyed emotions are acceptable – not just generally pleasing ones! The strength of the evoked emotion is the key factor. The photographic craft applied needs to support the image and its emotions, story etc. So judges should ask themselves,

how does the image evoke emotion, feeling, mood?

1. Impact (the WOW factor)
2. The story telling quality (you are touched by the story)
3. Some images are subtle and require longer exposure to the viewer either in order to convey the creator's message/intention or to allow time for interpretation.

“Judging of any photographic work within the formality of a competition should have as its central feature the fostering of creativity. No more and no less.

Within photography creativity is a total, uncompromising commitment to encouraging, rewarding and facilitating innovation, experimentation and the visual communication of ideas through diverse, provocative and profoundly evocative approaches to the making of imagery.”

(Des Crawley, Emeritus Professor, University of Western Sydney, Adjunct Professor, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University Professor and Director, Centre for Creative Exchange in the Tropical Environment, James Cook University, Honorary Fellow Australian Institute of Professional Photography.)

2.2 The Skills of the Judge. Know What to Say and Know What to Avoid!

2.2.1 It is good to regularly remind yourself WHY you are judging – to assist fellow photographers to develop as artists! This should guide what you say and do not say when judging images.

2.2.2 Try to see an image from the maker's view - to understand the maker's intention. Think about how difficult it may have been to TAKE/MAKE the image. Don't put them on the spot by asking them what they were trying to convey.

2.2.3 Make positive comments on every image. Look for the good things in the images, not for what is wrong with it.

2.2.4 Avoid slavishly adhering to rules when judging the technical aspects of an image – look to see if the technique supports the message of the image or not. For example,

- (a) A mono image can be quite beautiful even if it does not have the whole range tones from black to white.
- (b) A blurred image does not necessarily have to have something sharp in it.
- (c) The quality of the print should not receive more comments than the content.

“Rules are the enemy of all creativity”
(Source unknown)

2.2.5 Judges need to be consistent in giving awards and be able to explain the principles or reasons behind their decisions. Judges must learn how to deal with people who do not agree with their comments – the member may have some good points of reason! If the explanation is going to be lengthy and only relevant to a specific club member, suggest that you see him/her in the break or after the meeting.

2.2.6 Face the audience while speaking. Make sure that you are understood at the back of the room. Never fix your eyes on one person only. Use pointers sparingly.

2.3 Respecting Copyright

No matter what format images are presented, they remain the property of the image maker, and the judge has no rights to use any images for any purpose without express permission of the maker.

2.4 Before the Judging

2.4.1 Have you the correct address and phone numbers of the club officers?

2.4.2 Read the instructions/definitions that the club members have been given for the competition/subject! If no subject definition has been given then you must give the subject a very wide interpretation.

2.4.3 Make sure that the club gives you an outline of how they score the images and how they grade the members.

2.4.4 If you intend to make changes to someone’s digital images make sure that the maker of the image (not just the club) doesn’t have any objections because many photographers feel it is very disrespectful to change their artwork.

2.4.5 Check the time restrictions for your presentation of your judging, and then be sure to stick to this!

Relevant reading from the Internet:

Eddy Sethna FRPS AFIAP: “An Analysis of Judging”. He also has an article on Creative photography.

<http://www.monolandscapes.talktalk.net/judging.htm> and
<http://www.monolandscapes.talktalk.net/creativity.htm>

Professor Des Crawley: <http://descrawley.com.au/publications> You can contact him from this page and he will send you information.

Chapter 3: THE METHODS/TECHNIQUES TO MAKE AN IMAGE SPECIAL

BY ACCEPTING THAT THE MAIN CRITERIA FOR JUDGING AN IMAGE IS THE EMOTIONAL CONTENT DOESN'T MEAN THAT THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS ARE NEGLEGIBLE.

JUST THE OPPOSITE:

AN IMAGE CAN ONLY HAVE A MEANINGFUL EMOTIONAL CONTENT BY APPLYING THE PHOTOGRAPHIC SKILLS APPROPRIATELY.

3.1 LIGHT is everything. The differing quality of light on the subject is where a good image can become an outstanding image. Is the light moulding the subject or is it so light/dark/flat that we cannot see the details?

3.2 Subject matter: Remember to look at the WHOLE image. Is the subject of interest to others besides the maker? Has the maker been able to convey his/her feelings to the viewer? The subject is very subjective to each individual, to the maker, the viewers and the judge.

3.3 Idea/Creativity: Is the idea or the carrying out of the presentation, inventive or original?

3.4 Execution/Craft: This contributes to the presentation of a successful image but should not dominate the judge's comments. The overall feeling/emotion/art/story in the image is the most important aspect/message that needs to be recognised.

3.4.1 Exposure: How has the lighting been controlled?

3.4.2 Contrast: Is the image flat? Does the image need more black in the shadows or has over saturation made the image too dark?

3.4.3 Sharpness/Blur: (Some people are not aware that digital images may need to be subtly sharpened). Some images may be partly or completely blurred which may or may not contribute to the art of the image. Sometimes blur can indicate movement. The Judge needs to be able to distinguish between Selective Focus, Soft Focus, Out of Focus and Blur and also to recognize when it has been used, successfully or otherwise, for a definite artistic purpose.

3.4.4 Depth of field: Does the choice of depth of field and the point of focus contribute to the story/quality/feeling of the image?

3.4.5 Composition: What could possibly have been left out of the image (though you as the judge respect their decision to leave it in)? Is the image showing prominent patterns/shapes/leading lines/balance?

3.4.7 Colour: The choice of the image being in colour or mono. Very colourful images may sometimes benefit by being in mono. Are the colours/tones complimentary (Opposite on the colour wheel) or are they juxtaposed in the image?

3.4.8 Space. Consider the positive/negative spaces within the image.

3.4.9 Perspective: Is the subject showing a pronounced perspective that could be commented on?

3.4.10 Timing: Has the image been taken at the “decisive” moment?

3.4.11 Format: Could the image be improved by being cropped in a square or other non-standard format?

3.4.12 Presentation: Could the print have been presented better? Whether it is in a black/white/coloured frame and does it really matter? If you comment on this (and other aspects!) then you should emphasize that this is your personal view.

Chapter 4.

TYPES OF JUDGING:

4.1 Impact: Images are presented at the meeting and you are seeing them for the first time. Try to look at them before the meeting or while the “housekeeping” is being discussed. Sometimes the images are placed on tabletops where the members cannot see what you are looking at. Be sure to hold them up so that they can be seen. Sometimes the images will be placed on boards. With both methods shuffle the images around when preparing to speak so that you have the potential award winners in one area. That will help you think which ones will or will not get awards. Discuss every image with consideration of the time the club has allotted for the judging.

In **impact judging** one needs to be aware that some images without immediate impact can be overlooked. Try to see beyond the impact and look for the emotion and storytelling attributes of the image.

4.2 Considered: The images have been sent to you beforehand and you have time to see them all in good light, probably in your home (take care that family members do not touch the images).

4.3 Panel: 3-5 judges sit together to look at the images, usually using an electronic score system to give each image a score from 1 (-5) -9 (depending on the scoring system). The high scoring images are then brought back for the judges to view and then discussion ensues between the judges to decide on the place getters.

It is important to score from the minimum (1) to the maximum. If you start scoring from the middle you don't have enough latitude for the different quality of images. Consider if the set subject images actually fulfil the criteria. If not they should receive the minimum score.

4.4 Internet/web site: You are directed how to access the club's images to be judged then you either write the comments below the image or you write a word document and send it by email to the club. Judge's comments should not be too long but be a concise paragraph. The club may not have time to read them and then the judge's thoughts might not be communicated to the members.

4.5 CD/DVD: You send a word document of your comments. Do not make the comments too long as they will not have time to read them and your thoughts might not be communicated to the members.

4.6 Video Recording: You record your spoken comments as an audio file (MP3 or the like) or record the images and comments on a video file and send that to the club. Once again brevity is important.

4.7 By using Skype (or similar program): This gives live feedback in real time. Images should be viewed beforehand and notes on each image prepared as well as the awards recorded. Arrange for backup by phone if necessary.

4.8 There are other recording methods but all of the above apply.

Chapter 5.

Judge's Categories	
There are two levels of judges including those who aspire to become a judge. All levels are members of PSQ, either as a club or private member.	
Understudy	This level is for a competent photographer and speaker who is deemed capable by a mentor or similar, to undergo 3 judgings and one presentation under supervision. Upon submitting satisfactory scores (usually an average score of 3.5 for all of the 3 judgings) as reported by a mentor and the clubs, the person is accredited with the title PSQA and is available for club and other judgings. Additionally it is recommended to attend at least one Judges Forum.
Accredited	A largely self-regulating system where a judge satisfies certain criteria annually: in attending a number of seminars and/or exhibitions to further their knowledge, at least 2 club judgings, and preferably one presentation.

Chapter 6.

HOW TO BECOME A JUDGE:

6.1 The prospective Understudy asks an Accredited Judge to be his/her mentor, or if that is not achievable, they can request that PSQ nominate a Mentor.

6.2 The club fills out the form that can be downloaded from the PSQ web site and forward it together with the \$20 administration fee to the PSQ Secretary.

6.3 An Understudy Judge has to provide proof of their photographic expertise, experience and achievements by forwarding a portfolio of 12 images to the PSQ Judges Executive. These are to be in a diversity of subjects.

Images to be provided electronically through Dropbox or similar. Alternatively, if you have awards, acceptances, at a State, National or International level, these can be forwarded for consideration instead.

6.4 After acceptance as an USJ their details are posted on the PSQ web site. Clubs use this site as a source for judges for their competitions. Further, it would be appropriate for an USJ to be proactive and offer their services to clubs.

6.5 An USJ has to perform at least 3 (three) judgings and one 30-60 minute talk/presentation before being able to be considered for Accreditation. One of the three required judgings can be done in their own club as can the talk/presentation (the subject of which is up to the USJ themselves). A USJ may be asked to provide a recording of their presentation to the Judges Executive.

6.6 **The Mentor Judge should accompany an USJ (if possible) to each of the 3 judgings so this needs to be considered before an USJ accepts an invitation to judge.**

6.7 If the images are send to the USJ before the judging the USJ needs to look at those WITH the mentor (at least for the first judging).

6.8 After the receipt of all feedback forms of a minimum of three (3) Judgings and one (1) Presentation the PSQ Judges Executive will assess those reports and if satisfactory will recommend the PSQ Committee to grant the accreditation.

6.9 After granting the accreditation the PSQ Committee will notify the new judge. He/she will be given a badge and awarded the PSQA (Photographic Society of Queensland Associate) and the name will be placed on the web site as an accredited judge.

6.10 Accreditation should ideally be achieved in a timely manner, preferably within 12 months.

6.11 In exceptional circumstances PSQ reserves the right to withdraw an Associateship.

Chapter 7.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MENTORS:

7.1 When a judge has been asked to be a mentor he has to make sure that the Understudy Judge (USJ) has been nominated by his club, i.e. the appropriate form has been downloaded from the PSQ website, has been filled out by the nominating club and has been forwarded together with the fee to the PSQ Treasurer or Secretary.

7.2 The mentor will stay in contact with the USJ and help him/her organise the club talk of 30-60 minutes and the 3 judgings (one can be at the USJ's club). It is recommended that at least the first judging is not an impact judging!

7.3 The mentor should advise the USJ how to stand (not in front of the image), how to project his/her voice, where to look in the "audience" etc. The USJ may also need help with how to use "L" squares, the Pointer, microphone etc.

7.4 For the first judging the Mentor will go through the images with the USJ. He will listen to the USJ's comments and pointing to issues that the USJ has missed. It is preferable to do this in the USJ's home. Where, because of long distance, this is not possible then the Mentor should arrange that the club will send a copy of the digital images to the USJ and the mentor so that the images can be discussed over the phone or via Skype. The prints could be viewed together via Skype so that both can see the images at the same time. If the USJ is competent and the mentor feels that the USJ can cope, it is not necessary to go to the USJ's home to view the images for the next 2 judgings. The mentor needs to discuss, with the USJ, what he/she will present for the talk.

7.5 The mentor must go to the talk and to each of the USJ's judgings (if possible) and write a report that is then sent to the PSQ Judges Executive. The mentor should make sure that the club is also sending a report. Both reports should be discussed with the USJ so that he/she can find out how to improve.

7.6 The mentor should encourage the USJ to finalize the whole process in a timely manner.

7.7 Because the USJ's travel expenses will be reimbursed by the club the mentor should try to share the car with the USJ in order to keep his own travel expenses down.

If that is not possible the mentor can apply with the PSQ Treasurer to get his expenses reimbursed from the PSQ.

Chapter 8.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLUBS:

8.1 To obtain a Judge or Understudy Judge refer to the lists on the PSQ web site and phone or email a prospective judge to arrange a judging time.

8.2 Send the judge an email with

- (a) the club's address (a map if the judge has never been there)
- (b) the set subject/s if applicable
- (c) the definition of the set subject
- (d) the time that you would like the judge to arrive
- (e) the time available for the judging presentation.
- (f) Discuss with the judge the travel re-imburement.
- (g) Discuss whether the judge may or may not have time to show some of his/her images.

8.3 Ask the judge about himself so that you can introduce him to the members.

8.4 At the club greet the judge and show him/her where to put the images (if applicable).

8.5 Introduce the Judge to the members.

8.6 Make sure that the judge is one of the first to be given some supper.

8.7 Thank/pay the judge. (Make sure that the pay covers the judge's travel expenses – min. 35 cents per distance kilometre from the judge's residence to the club's meeting venue or negotiate with the judge before the event.)

8.8 Make sure that the judge knows how to start off on the way home from the club.

8.9 Send written comments to the judge about how you felt the delivery of the judging went so that he/she can improve the judging process in the future. This is for their own personal improvement and not for public use.

8.10 The PSQ Judges Executive recommends that clubs send at least the digital images to the judge several days before the judging takes place. By doing that it allows not only images with high impact to be selected but also the subtle story telling images that require longer viewing. Those images would often miss out with impact judging. The judge will then have more time to view the prints at the club.

8.11 Encourage proficient members of your club to become a judge!