

Requirements and Information for OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges

PURPOSE

The OAAS Judging Program is an OAAS member service and the program's purpose is to provide properly trained and qualified judges for our member agricultural societies in all districts. As such, over the past few years we have been working very hard to standardize the Judges' requirements and the judging school criteria and program in each district across the province. Therefore, for a Certified or Apprentice Judge to be included on our OAAS Judges' List on our website, they must meet the criteria listed below. Districts will be required to follow our guidelines for organizing judging schools to receive funding for those schools and for the schools to be recognized.

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A) OAAS APPRENTICE JUDGE

1) Apprentice Judge Qualifications:

Apprentice Judges are individuals who are have successfully completed at least one OAAS Judging School in the Category in which they are interested in becoming a Certified Judge but have not yet completed 3 apprenticeships as per the requirements below and/or has not submitted a properly completed "**OAAS Apprentice Judge F14.11**" form to the OAAS office.

- Must support, endorse and follow the OAAS Judging Standards Handbooks.
- Must sign and abide by the "**OAAS Judges and Instructors Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics**".
- Need desire, interest, good common sense, be fair but flexible and maintain a high standard of workmanship.
- Experience as an exhibitor is encouraged but not necessary.
- A person may be an Apprentice Judge in some categories and a Certified Judge in others.

To move from the "**Apprentice Judge**" to the "**Certified Judge**" list on the OAAS website for a specific Category, an individual must successfully complete the requirements listed below under point "**2) Certified Judge Requirements – becoming a Certified Judge:**".

B) OAAS CERTIFIED JUDGE

1) Certified Judge Qualifications

Certified Judges are individuals who are appointed to make decisions at a competition. One who has the knowledge and training to make decisions according to the OAAS Judging Standards Handbooks.

- Must support, endorse and follow the "**OAAS Judging Standards Handbook**".
- Must sign and abide by the "**OAAS Judges and Instructors Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics**".

NOTE: this document only needs to be signed once during a judge's tenure.

NEW: New apprentice judges must sign the "**Code of Conduct**" document and submit it online via the AssistExpo module(preferred) or to their District Judging Contact.

Current certified or apprentice judges that have not signed/submitted the "**Code of Conduct**" form are encouraged to submit it via the AssistExpo module(preferred) or to their District Judging Contact.

- Should have demonstrated experience or knowledge of a Category before becoming a Certified Judge
- Need desire, interest, good common sense, be fair but flexible and maintain a high standard of workmanship.
- Experience as an exhibitor is encouraged but not necessary.

2) Certified Judge Requirements – becoming a Certified Judge:

To become an OAAS Certified Judge, an individual must meet the following requirements for EACH Category:

- a) Successfully complete a judging school
- b) Successfully apprentice at three different fairs
- c) Submit “OAAS Apprentice Judge F14.11” form to the OAAS office

NOTE: See below for specific details regarding the requirements.

a) SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE JUDGING SCHOOL

Individual must have successfully completed at least 1 (one) OAAS Judging School in EACH Category that they wish to become certified PRIOR to apprenticesing for that Category i.e. Quilts or Baking or Vegetables or etc.

NOTE: For the list of available Judging School Categories - see “**Appendix G - Judging Program Competition Categories** “ https://ontarioagsocieties.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Appendix-G-Judging-Program-Categories_-amended-February-2025.pdf.

IMPORTANT UPDATE:

To successfully complete a judging school, the attendee must do the following:

- i. Arrive on time. Participant must be present for the instructional portion of the classes.
- ii. Be present and actively participate for the entire class.
- iii. Cell phone, tablet and other electronic devices use limited to taking notes or photos related to the class.

IMPORTANT: A District Judging Contact/ Judging School Convenor or Instructor should not give a participant credit for the judging school unless they are satisfied that the participant successfully completed the judging school.

NOTE: the District Judging Contact/Judging School Convenor should provide the rationale for the decision not to give the participant credit for the judging school to assist the participant to determine what they need to work on.

b) SUCCESSFULLY APPRENTICE AT THREE FAIRS

- After completing the corresponding judging school, the person must successfully apprentice in EACH Category with at least 3 (three) different OAAS Certified Judges at no less than 3 (three) different fairs with hands on experience, helping to make decisions on winners. Never apprentice at your home fair.

NOTE: District 15 - due to distance between fairs and a judge's home, a Judge must successfully complete **at least 3 apprenticeships** but instead of apprenticesing at 3 different fairs, may apprentice at the same fair twice with 2 (two) different judges.

January 1, 2026 – a 2-year trial period is in effect to allow District 12 judges the same exemption as District 15 regarding apprenticesing.

➤ **Individual must successfully complete the judging school prior to apprenticesing.**

FYI - The requirement to successfully complete a judging school prior to apprenticesing is to ensure that the apprentice is already familiar with the OAAS Judging Standards, and has some experience judging the Category. Agricultural societies have engaged judges to judge the entries in their competitions. The OAAS greatly appreciates that societies have agreed to

allow apprentices to accompany these judges and we cannot jeopardize this goodwill by taking a judge's focus from the job they were engaged to do when an apprentice does not have the basic training/knowledge that is provided at a judging school.

NOTE: The only exception that may be made for apprenticing prior to successfully completing the judging school is if the following 3 criteria have been met: 1) person is already an OAAS Certified Judge, 2) the person has reviewed the OAAS Judging Standards for that Category and 3) the OAAS office has approved the online request for an exception.

The “**OAAS Apprenticeship Exemption F14.13**” form must be submitted a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the date of the apprenticeship – no allowances for late forms. A maximum of 1 apprenticeship prior to successfully completing the Judging School for that Category would be allowed.

The form is located on the OAAS website on the following page

<https://ontarioagsocieties.com/judging-requirements-and-information/>

➤ Availability of OAAS Certified Judges

NOTE: If there are no OAAS Certified Judges available for specific Categories e.g. field crops, maple syrup, honey, then the apprentice can apply for an exemption to apprentice with a qualified non-OAAS judge providing 1) the Apprentice judge submitted the “**OAAS Judge Apprenticeship Exemption F14.13**” form and 2) the OAAS office has approved the online request for an exception.

NEW: The “**OAAS Judge Apprenticeship Exemption F14.13**” form must be submitted a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the date of the apprenticeship – no allowances for late forms. A maximum of 1 apprenticeship with a qualified non-OAAS Certified Judge per Category would be allowed. The form is located on the OAAS website on the following page
<https://ontarioagsocieties.com/judging-requirements-and-information/>

NEW: Guidelines/suggestions - obtaining Apprenticeships

- Apprentices should endeavour to network with certified judges at judging schools to let them know you are interested in apprenticing and the Categories you are interested in.
- It is the apprentice's responsibility to contact judges to set up apprenticeships. Judges may contact apprentices.
- Apprentices SHALL NOT contact agricultural societies to set up an apprenticeship as it is up to each judge if they wish to accept apprentices and/or who they apprentice with.
- An apprentice may contact agricultural societies to ask for the judges' names for specific categories so the apprentice can contact the judge regarding apprenticing.
- If a judge is planning on working with an apprentice judge, the judge should confirm and/or ask permission of the agricultural society prior to the fair.

NEW: A judge should only accept one apprentice per Category at a given fair.

NEW: A judge should have a minimum experience of judging at two fairs as a certified judge in a Category prior to accepting an apprentice for that Category.

IMPORTANT UPDATES:

To successfully complete each fair apprenticeship, the apprentice must do the following:

- Be present and involved for the entire time that they are actively engaged with the judge while they are judging that Category
- Follow the same expectations that a judge must follow when judging those Categories, including but not limited to:
 - Arrive on time and remain until the entire judging process for all the classes for the Category/Categories are completed.
 - Prepare and carry a fully stocked Judges' Kit – the Kit contents list is in the “OAAS *Judging Standards Handbook*” and on the OAAS website on the following page <https://ontarioagsocieties.com/judging-requirements-and-information/>
 - Must know or be willing to become familiar with the techniques used to produce the articles to be judged.
 - Follow the expectations/requirements for attire, cell phone or electronic device usage, smoking, vaping, eating, etc. in the “**Judging Etiquette and Responsibilities of Judge at the Fair**” section in Homecraft Judging Standards Handbook or on the OAAS website on the following page <https://ontarioagsocieties.com/judging-requirements-and-information/> .
 - Have the judge sign the “**OAAS Apprentice Judge**” form upon successful completion of the apprenticeship.

NOTE: an apprentice judge may apprentice with the same judge for more than one Category on the same day with the expectation that the apprentice must fulfill all the requirements of **each** apprenticeship.

IMPORTANT: A Judge should not sign the “**OAAS Apprentice Judge F14.11**” form unless they are satisfied that the Apprentice Judge has successfully met all the requirements and successfully completed the apprenticeship.

If an Apprentice did not meet all the requirements, the Judge shall:

- **NEW** - Enter their reasons for non-completion in the “**Certified Judge’s Signature/Comments**” field.
- provide the rationale to the apprentice judge to assist them to determine what they need to work on.

c) SUBMIT “OAAS APPRENTICE JUDGE FORM F14.11”

The apprentice must complete one “**OAAS Apprentice Judge F14.11**” form for **EACH** Category and submit to the OAAS by either:

- 1) email – oaas@oaasfairs.com
- 2) mail – OAAS, 1911 Foxboro-Stirling Rd, Stirling ON K0K 3E0

DO NOT enter multiple Categories on a form.

NOTE: If a scanned copy or photo of the form is submitted, it must be clear and legible!

IMPORTANT: Do not submit the completed form unless at least 1 judging school and at least 3 apprenticeships for the specific Category are listed on the form.

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY: the “**OAAS Apprentice Judge F14.11**” form is to be sent to the OAAS, and not the district.

The OAAS reserves the right to accept or refuse any applications based on the completeness of the submitted “**OAAS Apprentice Judge F14.11**” form, and/or the applicant’s demonstrated judging ability and knowledge of the Categories and the OAAS Judging Program. The OAAS may consult the Judging Program Advisory Committee, the judges the applicant has apprenticed with and the district judging contact in making their decision.

d) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION - UPDATED

- Apprentice judges should endeavour to complete their apprenticeship within 4 years of applying to become an apprentice judge **for a specific Category**.
- Only apprenticeships completed within 4 years of the related judging school can be counted towards the apprenticeship.

REMINDER: If the apprentice judge has not completed their apprenticeship within 4 years, they are still required to successfully complete a judging school at least once within every 4 years to maintain their apprentice judge status.

3) Certified Judge Requirements – remaining a Certified Judge:

To remain a Certified Judge, a person must meet the following requirements:

a) SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE JUDGING SCHOOL

UPDATE- Effective January 1, 2026 - Must successfully complete an OAAS Judging School at least once every 4 (four) years in EACH Category they are certified to maintain their expertise, keep in touch and be familiar with changes in the judging process and learn about new techniques and classes. (NEW: This has been changed from “at least once every 3 years”)

b) FAIR JUDGING ASSIGNMENT RECORDS:

NOTE: If a Certified Judge would like to track their yearly Fair Judging Assignments, the OAAS provides 2 tools for them to do so.

UPDATED: Tracking this information is **optional** but Fair Judging Assignment records will be used by the OAAS to determine an individual’s eligibility if they wish to become an Apprentice Instructor.

- Judges may input the information on the **AssistExpo Judges’ Profile** module <https://www.assistexpo.ca/oaas-judges> under the “**Judging Assignments Record**” page.

OR

- Judges may input their information on the “**OAAS Certified Judges Fair Assignments F14.14**” form - https://ontarioagsocieties.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/OAAS_Certified-Judges-Fair-Assignments_April-2025-F14.14.pdf and keep this form for their records. **DO NOT** submit this form to the OAAS unless it is part of your request to become an Apprentice Instructor – see below.

UPDATE – Effective January 1, 2026 – we are adding a second option to be eligible to become an Apprentice Instructor. In addition to the current requirement, **Option 1) Must have been a Certified OAAS Judge in that Category for at least 5 years**, we are adding a second option - **Option 2) Must have been a Certified OAAS Judge for a minimum of 3 years with minimum of 5 judging assignments for that Category**.

IMPORTANT: If an individual wishes to pursue Option 2, they must provide proof of the 5 judging assignments by 1) inputting their assignments in AssistExpo **OR** 2) submitting copies of the “OAAS Certified Judges Fair Assignments F14.4” form **OR** 3) a combination of both.

C) PROCESS FOR REMOVAL OR REINSTATEMENT OF JUDGES

1) Process for removal or reinstatement of Certified Judges on OAAS Judges List:

a) REMOVAL:

If an OAAS Certified Judge has not successfully completed an OAAS Judging School on a specific Category **within the last 4 (four) years**, the AssistExpo program will automatically remove those Judges from the OAAS Judges List on the website for that Category. Judges not listed on the OAAS website will be considered “**Inactive**” and their name and information will remain in the AssistExpo database for a minimum of 10 years unless the OAAS receives a request from the judge or the district to remove the judge.

Example: if a person successfully completed a judging school for Quilts in 2023 then they must successfully complete a judging school by December 31, 2027 to maintain their certification for Quilts. On January 1, 2028, the judge’s name would not show up on the Certified Judges’ List on the OAAS website for that specific category.

EXCEPTIONS: view the continued modifications for Judging Schools taken prior to 2023 in the table below.

b) REINSTATEMENT:

NOTE: Judges may be “**Certified**” in some categories and “**Inactive**” in others depending upon when they last successfully completed an OAAS Judging School.

- Judges moved to “**Inactive**” status may recertify by successfully completing 1 OAAS Judging School for those specific categories if they have successfully completed an OAAS Judging School for that Category in the past 5 years.
- If it has been over 5 years and under 10 years, they must successfully complete 1 OAAS Judging School and apprentice at a minimum of 1 fair.
- If it has been over 10 years and they must redo the entire process.

c) APPEAL PROCESS

Judges that have been removed from the OAAS Judges’ lists for not successfully completing Judging Schools as per a) **REMOVAL:** may appeal their removal by submitting proof of successful completion of a Judging School or extenuating circumstances to the OAAS at oaas@oaasfairs.com .

2) Process for removal or reinstatement of Apprentice Judges on OAAS Apprentice Judges list:

a) REMOVAL:

If an Apprentice Judge has not successfully completed an OAAS Judging School on a specific Category **within the last 4 (four) years**, the AssistExpo program will automatically remove those judges from the Apprentice Judges List on the website for that Category.

Example: if a person successfully completed a judging school for Quilts in 2023 then they must successfully complete a Judging School by December 31, 2027 to maintain their

Apprentice status for Quilts. On January 1, 2028, the judge's name would not show up on the Apprentice Judges' List on the OAAS website for that specific Category e.g. Quilts.

FYI: Apprentice judges may be removed from some categories and remain in others depending upon when they last successfully completed an OAAS Judging School for those Categories.

b) REINSTATEMENT

Apprentice Judges removed from the Apprentice Judges list must successfully complete 1 OAAS Judging School for those specific categories to be added to the Apprentice Judges' List.

NOTE: If an Apprentice Judge had completed 1 or 2 apprenticeships but was removed from the list because they did not successfully complete a judging school then they maintain any apprenticeships completed within the past 4 years.

c) APPEAL PROCESS

Apprentice judges that have been removed from the OAAS Apprentice Judges' lists for not successfully completing judging schools as per a) **REMOVAL:** may appeal their removal by submitting proof of successful completion of a judging school or extenuating circumstances to the OAAS

3) OAAS Judges Recertification Deadlines Table

OAAS JUDGES RECERTIFICATION DEADLINES		
Year last attended Judging School	Recertification deadline	
	Revised Jan 2026	1) Certified Judges - To remain certified 2) Apprentice Judges- to maintain their name on the Apprentice Judges List
2018 or earlier	Not applicable	See the "Requirements and Information for OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges" under the "Reinstatement" section for the specific requirements to re-certify.
2019	December 1, 2026	must successfully complete judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification
Continued overlap/extension due to the Pandemic		
2020	December 1, 2026	must successfully complete judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification
2021	December 1, 2026	must successfully complete judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification
2022	December 1, 2026	must successfully complete judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification
4-year requirement to maintain certification as of January 1, 2026		
2023	December 31, 2027	must successfully complete judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification
2024	December 31, 2028	must successfully complete judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification
2025	December 31, 2029	must attend judging school in each category no later than this date to maintain certification

4) Removal for Code of Conduct/Ethics Violation

If it has been reported that a Certified or Apprentice Judge **has not abided by or has violated the “OAAS Judges and Instructors Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics”**, the Judge will be contacted to present their explanation of the events. The OAAS Executive Director will review each case, in consultation with the *Judging Program Advisory Committee* and the District Judging Contact. The Executive Director will notify the judge of their decision/removal by registered letter.

a) APPEAL PROCESS

Apprentice or Certified Judges that have been removed from the OAAS Judges' lists for Code of Conduct/Ethics violation may appeal their removal or disciplinary action by submitting a letter appealing the decision to the OAAS Executive Director at oaas@oaasfairs.com within 30 days of receiving notification.