

Examples of what judges are looking for (surveyed from 2014 FWEA SDC judges)

Overall:

1. **Relevance.** Your presentation and report need to show how your design and final recommendation is relevant to the industry. The project must also be a design, not just a study. The project is designed to test a student's abilities to develop a course of action based on a defined problem, apply design standards and offer a recommendation based on accepted engineering practices.
2. **Level of Detail.** There needs to be an appropriate amount of detail in both the presentation and report. Don't overload the presentation or report with extraneous data/tables. You will never be able to fit every detail into your slides or the main body of the report. We need to see that you are able to effectively summarize all of this information in a clear and concise manner. Refer to methodologies, tools or calculations that were used to prepare the presentation without getting into every minute detail. Be prepared for in depth questions for any tools you reference.
3. **Final Recommendation.** You need to show the results of your analyses, but you also need to present a clear recommendation. It's important to show that you were able to draw conclusions from the results you obtained and to clearly state your recommendation. We also want to see how you got to your final recommendation. How did you analyze alternatives?
4. **Work with a mentor.** Consider working with an outside mentor to give you advice or constructive criticism on your idea, methods, report, results, etc. A mentor can provide you with valuable feedback and also give you an insight as to what is expected in the industry. **Keep in mind all work must be done by the students. Make sure to provide the name of the mentor and firm they work for to ensure no conflict of interest in the judging.**
5. **Consider analyzing alternatives and explain (and back up) why you chose a particular method.** If you are recommending an alternative because it is more cost-effective, you need to back this up with numbers. Why is it more cost effective?
6. **Carefully read through the example judge's score card and make sure your report/presentation will meet all of the criteria.** Follow the guidelines provided for both the report and presentation. There are some very specific guides as to length, time and participants for both. Failure to follow these guides can result in a loss of points.

Report:

- Clearly state all assumptions.
- Reports should have appropriate references (including in-text references). Some English departments offer free proof reading and may offer assistance with learning how to add references correctly.
- Try to limit the number of graphics/tables from referenced materials. We like to see your original work, when possible. Referenced figures/tables can always be included in the Appendix.

- Be clear about what your final recommendation is.
- If a team from your school presented last year, talk to them about their experience. Take a look at their report and the comments they received from the judges.

Presentation:

- The presentation needs to flow in a way that makes sense. Much as with writing a paper it should present the problem, discuss the alternatives and then provide a final outcome.
- Don't read word for word from the slides. Slides should contain a summary of what you will say. Also, don't overwhelm the slide with too many images or complicated animations. When a presentation has too much information the message and meaning gets lost. Slides should be clean and easy to read with a common theme.
- Be sure to recognize team members that were not able to present and anyone who provided mentorship throughout your project. Also, if you worked with a client, be sure to mention them, too. Consider including a "Thank you" slide in your presentation.
- Each speaker should have somewhat equal time presenting. It should not be mostly one person presenting and three other people standing next to them. It is also nice to see everyone be able to answer questions from the judges, instead of one person answering each question.
- Clearly state the main points, assumptions, and conclusions. You will have to make assumptions in the real world, so it is nice for us to see and understand your thought process.
- Understand that there is a balance to the amount of background information that should be presented. You can assume there might be people in your audience (including judges) that might not be familiar with your topic, so a little background is helpful, but it should be limited, since it is not the main purpose of the competition.
- Discuss the challenges that you were faced with and how that affected the outcome. It's ok to talk about an experiment that didn't work or turn out as expected.
- Practice presenting and answering questions in front of an audience. If you are working with a local utility, consider presenting to them for feedback. The judges understand that you are still in school, but like to see that you understand the basic engineering principles; that you can think about their questions and come up with a reasonable answer.
- Consider videotaping yourself during a practice presentation and make notes of distracting mannerisms (i.e. saying "ummm" or "like" too often).
- Practice timing yourself. It might be helpful to know which slide you should be on every 5 minutes. You could have one person keep track of time during the presentation and give the other team members subtle cues if they are running long. The rules allow you to use a fifth team member to advance the slides; you may want to use this person as a time keeper as well. Working on the coordination of timing with this person will also help practice the presentation.
- Make sure you dress for the part. You are presenting as though you are trying to win a job. Attire should be professional.