

Leading Practices for AGU Honors and Recognition Program

**Adopted by the Honors and Recognition Committee on 29 October 2019*

I. AGU Honors and Recognition Program

AGU recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of the Earth and space sciences, to the service of the community, and to public outreach. Honors and Recognition (H&R) program includes two categories: (1) Section Awards and Lectures and (2) Union-wide recognition.

- **Section Awards and Lectures:** Recognize outstanding work within a scientific field with nearly 30 named lecture presentations and 40 awards and prizes.
- **Union Medals:** Recognize individuals for their scientific body of work as well as their sustained impact within the Earth and space sciences community. These are the highest honors bestowed by AGU.
- **Union Fellows:** Attain scientific eminence in the Earth and space sciences through achievements in research.
- **Union Awards and Prizes:** Recognize individuals who have demonstrated excellence in scientific research, education, communication, and outreach.

We appreciate the efforts of everyone who provides support and commitment to AGU's Honors and Recognition Program. Dedicated AGU volunteers give valuable time and energy nominating their colleagues, serving as members of selection committees and joining in the celebration of awardees at Honors ceremonies at the Fall Meeting. We further appreciate the staff who dedicate time and energy to ensure a fair, transparent, and timely process for the Honors program.

The AGU H&R program maintains a [website](#) with links to all policies, guidelines for nominations, guidelines for new honor proposals, etc.

II. Honors and Recognition Committee Charge, Membership, Liaison with AGU Staff

A. Committee Charge, focus, and composition

The Honors and Recognition (H&R) committee works with volunteer leaders, AGU staff, and other stakeholders to celebrate and honor the achievements of Earth and Space Scientists, while leveraging their achievements to engage the broader scientific community. Annually, the committee hosts the Honors Ceremony and related activities to enhance the external visibility and showcase the achievements of the scientist, the science and AGU.

The H&R committee maintains oversight of the Union's honors and recognition programs at all levels – Union-wide (medals, fellows, awards, and prizes) and Sections. It is

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responsible for reviewing existing Honors programs, monitoring the creation of new programs, assessing criteria and eligibility, and ensuring consistency throughout the programs regarding evaluation. It reviews recommendations from selection committees regarding operational improvements to the Honor program policies and procedures.

The committee provides oversight to the Section awards program and ensures these awards are current, appropriate and balanced. It reviews proposals for new recognitions and recommends new recognition opportunities.

Key Initiatives:

- Examine and report on program data to determine whether the number and quality of AGU medal, award, prize and fellows' nominees is sufficient for vigorous competition.
- Develop strategies and initiatives to increase diversity, inclusion and equity in Honors program by increasing awareness and participation from underrepresented groups within AGU; evaluating selection committee composition and processes; providing implicit bias training to selection committees at all levels; and, ensuring program participants are adhering to AGU's professional conduct standards.
- Partner with staff to provide comprehensive training to all Union, Sections and Fellows selection committees on policies, processes and program elements to ensure that committee members are educated and fully trained on their roles and responsibilities.
- Establish and staff an oversight Canvassing Committee for all honors, prizes and awards that will engage with Section canvassing committees to provide Leading Practices.
- Work with selection committee feedback to further develop evaluation rubrics for selection committee.
- Begin to develop evaluation rubrics for Section honors.
- Publish (or some other, more appropriate word – finalize, but it should be revised frequently) a Leading Practices document for the Honors Program.
- Promote and develop new awards to enhance and support interdisciplinary collaboration and recognition.
- Provide strategies, resources and support to Sections Honors Nominating/Canvassing Committees to strengthen and promote their proactive role in the Honors Program.
- Partner with leaders, staff and other societies to resolve common issues among scientific communities' rewards and recognition programs.
- Develop opportunities and mechanisms to increase participation and engagement of current and previous Honors recipients within AGU programs and services.

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- Conduct a comprehensive review of the entire AGU Honors portfolio every three years to ensure all programs are working to achieve AGU mission, vision and strategic goals.
- Report on progress to Council twice per year, or more frequently as required.

Committee Composition:

The committee comprises 13 AGU members, including Committee Chair and Committee Chair-elect. In the AGU governance structure, the H&R Committee reports to the [AGU Council](#). The H&R Committee Chair is a voting member of the AGU Council. The chair further sits on the AGU Ethics Committee when ethics concerns regarding potential awardees are reported to the AGU Ethics Office.

Members serve on the H&R Committee for two-year terms, beginning January and ending in December the following year.

AGU staff affiliated with the committee also attend AGU Board of Directors, Council, and Honors and Recognition committee meetings, facilitating information flow in all directions.

B. Professional Conduct by H&R Committee, Canvassing Oversight Committee and all Honors Selection Committee Members

AGU is committed to upholding the highest level of scientific integrity and professional ethics in all its activities in order to preserve and enhance its position as a global authority in the scientific community. To this end, AGU has established a set of [guidelines for scientific integrity and professional ethics](#) (PDF) for the actions of the members and the governance of the union, including in the research and peer review processes of its scientific publications.

I. Conflict of Interest

All AGU Honors and Recognition Committee members are expected to read and abide by AGU's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

The AGU Honors program has an additional [conflict of interest policy](#), which applies to the nomination and selection of AGU Fellows, Union awards, medals and prizes, and section awards and lectures.

Timing of Policy Review

The H&R Committee will review the Honors Program conflict of interest policy every three years and revisions will be forwarded to the Council Leadership Team (CLT) for approval.

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II. Confidentiality

H&R Committee, Canvassing Oversight Committee and Union Honors Selection Committee Members will adhere to AGU review policy and provide fair, impartial, prompt, and rigorous evaluations and will respect confidentiality when partaking in committee work and/or reviewing nomination packets and the work of others.

III. Volunteer Leader Code of Conduct

AGU volunteer leaders are the public face and ambassadors of AGU. They have unique responsibilities to uphold ethical and professional standards of conduct as individuals when participating in AGU affairs and/or representing AGU in an official capacity. In addition to adhering to the AGU code of conduct for its members, AGU volunteer leaders are expected to do the following:

1. Hold themselves to the highest standard of professional behavior, with honesty and integrity, and treat others, including AGU staff, with equity, fairness, and respect.
2. Conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner when participating in AGU meetings and events and when representing AGU in an official capacity.
3. Act in the best interest of AGU rather than in furtherance of personal or third-party interests.
4. Comply with all laws and regulations in conducting AGU work and comply with all laws and regulations in their professional work that, if violated, could damage the reputation and credibility of AGU.
5. Understand and comply with AGU's policies and procedures related to conflict of interest, reprisal, discrimination, harassment, and bullying.
6. Understand and comply with AGU bylaws and governing policies and procedures.
7. Understand and comply with the codes of conduct that pertain to their service as members of the AGU Board, Council, or committees.
8. Report any suspected violations of the AGU code of conduct by an AGU volunteer using the procedures established in this policy.
9. Act solely within the authority granted by virtue of their AGU volunteer position.
10. Maintain the confidentiality of any proprietary or privileged information about the AGU, its members, AGU partners, or other constituents.

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IV. Working with AGU Staff

Be courteous and respectful; to be courteous is to be friendly, polite and well-mannered with a gracious consideration towards others. It makes social interactions in the workplace run smoothly, avoid conflicts and earn respect. Respect is a positive feeling of esteem or deference for a person or organization; it is built over time and can be lost with one inconsiderate action, regardless of intention. Continued courteous interactions are required to maintain or increase the original respect gained.

III. AGU Union- and Section Canvassing Committees

To ensure a representative pool for honors, AGU encourages each Section to create a Canvassing Committee charged with finding worthy nominees, potential nominators and supporters, and with assisting nominators in putting nomination packages together. Each scientist has their own network of colleagues, former officemates, graduate student colleagues, peers, and other people whose work we are familiar with. These are the people we know and know of; they comprise our professional and sometimes personal networks. The purpose of a canvassing committee is to ensure we reach beyond our own networks and see worthy nominees whose work we personally may not be familiar with.

Committees should have a diverse membership, following AGU guidelines for committee membership. There should be early-, mid- and advanced career members, members who represent diversity in discipline and expertise, gender, race, culture and ethnicity. Committees should not be appointed by a single person. They may be recruited as volunteers, or have names suggested by multiple people in the Section.

Canvassing committee members at all levels are prohibited from submitting nomination letters or letters of support.

A. AGU Honors Program Canvassing Oversight Subcommittee

This Committee provides oversight and support for all Section Canvassing Committees. This sub-committee provides members of canvassing committees with information on implicit biases inherent in awards processes, as well as guidance and support to ensure Section Selection Committees are robust, active, and performing as intended.

B. AGU Section Canvassing Committees

AGU's Section Canvassing Committees are charged with finding worthy nominees for AGU Honors programs (UAMP, Fellows, Section awards and lectures). These groups will work to find appropriate people to submit nomination packets and provide support to those crafting nomination packets where appropriate, i.e. training, resources, support, etc.

The shared goals of these canvassing committees are to:

- Increase the total number of nominations for all Honors programs

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- Work to ensure a diverse pool of nominees

The Honors Program Canvassing Oversight subcommittee, along with AGU staff will partner with these committees to provide the necessary resources and support for canvassing committees to complete their tasks by providing:

- Secure lists of their section's members to identify appropriate nominators and nominees.
- Partner with staff to provide training to all section canvassing committees on policies, procedures and best practices for the nomination process.

Canvassing committees are appointed by the Section leadership.

IV. Guidelines on Submitting a Successful AGU Honors Nomination

Most nominees for an AGU honor or award are deserving but nomination packets do not always highlight the person's work in a way that makes the impact of his or her accomplishments clear to the selection committee. To assist in writing a successful nomination package, AGU has compiled the following list of recommendations for nominators:

- In the spirit of making the nomination/evaluation process for all AGU Honors as positive an experience as possible for all parties concerned, the Union strongly urges the practice where all nomination packages remain confidential and that the nomination is not disclosed to the nominee during the entire process. Nominators and those providing statements of support for a nomination are encouraged to obtain pertinent, current information on each nominee (e.g., curriculum vitae) by contacting the nominee's direct supervisor (e.g., Department Chair, Unit Head, etc.). Members of each selection committee are not to communicate with the nominee at any time during and following the process about their nomination.
- Read the criteria for the specific honor or award carefully. Ensure that your letters discuss why the candidate is well-suited for the award goals and explicitly address the selection criteria. Explain the importance of the science/accomplishments of your candidate that are relevant to the award and make sure that the nomination materials are tailored to the award. Include the following relevant elements, where the emphasis of each is dependent on the criteria and goals of the specific award:
 - Science (specific papers that "changed" the field) and details substantiating impact
 - Service (unique impact across the community, AGU service)
 - Teaching, mentoring or outreach
- Understand the intent and criteria for each award and the required nomination items can be found on the Honors Program website www.honors.agu.org.

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- Is your nominee right for the particular award?
- Do your nomination letter and supporting letters address the specific criteria for this award?
- Additionally, questions may be addressed to AGU honors staff at honors@agu.org or to any committee member.
- Provide a complete overview of your nominee and emphasize the unique elements of his/her accomplishments that stand out from other nominations.
 - Focus on achievements in science, service, and education (depending on the goal of the award)
 - Include the impact, novelty, creativity, depth and breadth of the nominee's research rather than focusing unduly on one particular metric (e.g., number of publications, h-index, etc.).
 - Mention other accolades (e.g., membership in international scholarly societies, national academies and other significant recognitions).
 - Distinguish and highlight the role of the nominee (e.g., is the nominee a motivator/leader/implementer?).
 - Mention professional associations with students, postdocs, mentors, and collaborators. If the nominee has a large research group, highlight the intellectual contributions made by the individual to the work. Also, mention the success of colleagues that the nominee has positively influenced (students, postdocs, adjunct faculty, etc.).
- For science medals and fellows, focus on transformational science documented by specific publications and how they might have changed the course of research in the field. Link to specific papers in a bibliography or on the CV and discuss why they are important. Always support with evidence for each criterion.
 - Emphasize service to AGU and the science community, including contributions to science education. These can be important tie breakers.
 - Ask yourself if supporting letter writers followed the above guidelines? If not, consider discussing with them efforts to improve the focus of their letters.
- Submit a concise, well-written nomination packet.
 - Strictly follow the nomination requirements (e.g., number of pages, format, CV, bibliography, etc.).
 - As the nominator, build upon statements made by your support letter writers whenever possible. Avoid ambiguous phrases such as "I know of no one else more deserving of this award" or "this person is an excellent candidate" (can be read as suggesting they might be considered but should not win).
- Solicit strong support from others that will strengthen the nomination.
 - Summarize the qualifications of the letter writers.
 - Present the supporting evidence in the letters in a way that educates or informs the committee members (who may otherwise not be knowledgeable about the candidate). Know the fields of the reviewing

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- committee members. Will the write-ups of your seismologist candidate be understood by an oceanographer panelist? Avoid jargon.
- There should be a diversity of supporters with regard to institutional affiliations, disciplines or sub-disciplines, or career stages. In other words, it should be clear that the nomination is not only coming from people within a single university or institution who are trying to advance one of their own, but rather that the nominee has had influence broadly in his/her scientific community.
 - Each candidate or nominee for an AGU award, honor, other type of AGU recognition, or governance position is required to answer a set of questions provided by AGU Ethics on the nomination form. Any matter described in the Ethics Policy must be disclosed even if the matter is still pending. Please refer to the [AGU Scientific Integrity and Professional Ethics Policy](#) for further information. Self-disclosure does not mean disqualification. Each disclosure will receive a confidential review and follow-up discussion if there are areas of concern.
 - If at first, you don't succeed ...resubmit! Many excellent submissions are received annually, and the pool of nominations can be competitive. Solicit feedback from the selection committee. As long as your nominee meets the criteria of the honor, review and update the submission for the following cycle and resubmit.

V. AGU Honors and Awards Selection Committees

Having the most deserving and most diverse group of award winners is important for many reasons. Awardees symbolize the highest achievement in our field. They inspire all of us, and especially those at an early career stage, to do our best science. They become among the most visible spokespersons and leadership models for our profession. Therefore, selection committees should consider the most deserving and most diverse group of nominees.

A. Selection Committee Composition

Honors selection committees should represent the range of AGU members within the section. Committees should have a diverse membership, following AGU guidelines for committee membership. There should be early-, mid- and advanced career members, members who represent diversity in discipline and expertise, gender, race, culture and ethnicity. Committees should not be appointed by a single person. They may be recruited as volunteers, or have names suggested by multiple people in the Section.

For Prizes with cash awards, donors are prohibited from serving on the H&R Committee, canvassing committees or selection committees for that particular award or prize.

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B. Setting Guidelines for Selection Process

Before the Selection Committee begins evaluating nomination materials, the Selection Committee must meet (virtually). The first meeting should be held at least 30-45 days prior to the start of the review period to establish a clear evaluation process for the upcoming review period.

The topics to be covered during the first meeting include:

- a. Chairs should remind all committee members of the **confidential** nature of deliberations, **conflict of interest guidelines**, and the criteria for the honor under deliberation. Discussions must be and should remain afterwards, always strictly confidential.
- b. Chairs should remind committee members to think broadly, as no single metric provides a complete picture of the full breadth and dimensions of accomplishment. It is prohibited to use the h-index as part of the evaluation process for nominees. The chair should go over the **(1)** award criteria and **(2)** the evaluation process for selecting the final nominee with the committee **prior** to the start of the review period. Below are overall observations that should be considered during this process:
 - Quality and impact of their work
 - Extent to which their work reaches a large or unrepresented audience
 - Originality of their work
 - Extent their work goes above and beyond their normal duties
 - Strength of recommendations
 - Multiplier effect (How well is the nominee increasing the capacity of the community)
 - Scope of reach (Local, national, International)
 - Innovation
- c. At no time should rankings or listings of the nominees other than alphabetical be distributed.
- d. Chairs should ensure that the discussion is open and fair. No one member should be allowed to dominate the conversation; all members should speak. It may be beneficial to engage one other committee member to assist in ensuring a fair and open discussion.
- e. Engage one member who will help keep track of who has spoken and who has not.
- f. It is the role of the chair to make sure that the committee is applying the leading practices identified by the H&R Committee. Staff are not in a position to manage the proceedings or outcomes.

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- g. Keep notes to improve process by establishing a note-taker at each meeting, update criteria, and improve this document for next round.
- h. Remind committee members that it is expected that they will have read all files with an appropriate level of examination and detail.
- i. Determine what will be the schedule of subsequent meetings. Generally, one or two to make the selection (one may be needed to create a short list and a second for the final selection); and one final meeting to evaluate the process and provide feedback to AGU H&R staff.
- j. Make sure your prioritized list matches the public criteria for the award - <https://www.agu.org/Honor-and-Recognize/Honors>. Research has shown that implicit bias can enter via inadvertent “criteria shifting” after nominees are discussed. It is advisable to create a rubric that lays out: what are the criteria for the award, how is that measured, and how will the criteria be ranked?
- k. While use of email for the business of the Committee is of course encouraged, there must be at least one confidential verbal discussion held where all nominees will be discussed (preferable if the number is small).
- l. AGU staff are available for consultation and clarification at any point in the committee’s deliberations should questions arise. Chairs are encouraged to reach out for support and assistance should the need arise.

C. Second Meeting: Overview of Nominations

- a. List your personal top nominees in alphabetical order before hearing the recommendations of others. This can help mitigate the undue influence of one member and ensure that the committee’s list of viable candidates will be as large as possible.
- b. Create short lists using inclusive rather than exclusive methods. Select candidates for consideration because they are outstanding, rather than finding reasons to eliminate candidates.
- c. The Chair will introduce each nominee in alphabetical order for discussion and invite committee members to comment or discuss.
- d. Ensure that every committee member’s voice is heard. Budget adequate time to decide and moderate selection discussions to include all members. Studies show that implicit bias is lessened when committees have time for thoughtful reflection and discussion.
- e. Make sure that all members know the society’s conflict of interest policy. Committee members should make clear any connection with a person under consideration for an award so that the committee can come to a decision with respect to participation in further discussions.

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- f. Obvious pitfalls must be avoided – i.e. discussion including (even inadvertent) ageism, sexism, focusing on personalities rather than achievements, stereotypes of any kind, etc.
- g. A “consensus” must be reached by the committee. “Consensus” is a general agreement and need not be unanimous.

D. Final Meeting: Evaluation

Please provide the following (and any additional comments you may have) feedback to H&R Committee:

- Were there enough nominees (four or more)?
- Were the nominees of sufficiently high quality?
- Do nominators need more help in developing nomination packets?
- What constructive feedback should be given to each lead nominator?
- Did the software work for your needs?

VI. Guidelines for Submitting a Proposal for a new Honor

The Honors and Recognition Committee has purview on reviewing new Union and Section level honors (medals, awards, prizes) proposals. All Union honors require both Council and Board approval upon recommendations of the Honors and Recognition Committee.

A. Definitions of Award, Medal and Prize - Union Level

AGU presents a variety of awards, medals, and prizes to recognize individuals whose excellence and leadership in research, education and innovation have significantly advanced Earth and space science. Rewarding that excellence in scientific research, education, and outreach not only strengthens our science but can further its impact and value to society. Each year, we honor these exceptional individuals at our Fall Meeting.

To submit a proposal for a new Union-level honor, visit the **Quick Links** section on the AGU Honors Program homepage: <https://www.agu.org/Honor-and-Recognize/Honors/>.

B. Section-Level

Each year, sections of AGU recognize outstanding work within their scientific discipline by hosting nearly 25 named lecture presentations and presenting more than 30 awards and prizes. Awardees in various stages of their careers who represent some of the most innovative minds in their disciplines are chosen for

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their meritorious work or service toward the advancement and promotion of discovery in Earth and space science.

To submit a proposal for a new Union-level honor, visit the **Quick Links** section on the AGU Honors Program homepage: <https://www.agu.org/Honor-and-Recognize/Honors/>.

VII. Technology Tools

Timing of Policy Review

AGU's Honors program utilizes a dynamic platform for nomination submission and review called Open Water (<https://aguhonors.secure-platform.com/a>). The platform provides a logic based intuitive user interface for members to submit nominations and for review committees to accomplish their work for all UAMP, Union Fellows and Section honors.

Zoom Virtual Meetings

AGU staff provides licenses for Zoom Virtual meetings to all review committees to assist with their deliberation. Staff will also conduct review committee orientation and training via Zoom. You can reach out to staff to request access to those licenses at honors@agu.org.

AGU Connect

AGU's online community platform for members is called AGU Connect <https://connect.agu.org>. Staff can provide communities for collaboration to small groups like canvassing committees and review committees to help with their work.

AGU.org

AGU's recently launched a new platform for members and the Earth and space science community at large. In the future, this platform will be well integrated with the Honors program to help members identify both potential nominations and to find those that have been honored in the past through dynamic profile pages.

Honors Program homepage: <https://www.agu.org/Honor-and-Recognize/Honors/>.

Member Lists for Canvassing

AGU staff will prepare password protected lists of Section members for canvassing committees to find appropriate nominators and nominees for all AGU honors. Those lists will contain important demographics (i.e. gender, country of origin, primary/secondary sections) to assist canvassing committees with discovering potential nominees from

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underserved populations as well as increasing nominations for undersubscribed honors.
Contact, honors@agu.org, for the appropriate member lists.