



To: High school newspaper, yearbook, broadcasting and other media advisers

Re: MARK OF EXCELLENCE CONTEST AT WKU

High school journalists play an important role in their communities. From developing important skills to tackling controversial issues, the annual Mark of Excellence Competition recognizes budding journalists for their talent and hard work.

The 2021 Kentucky Mark of Excellence Competition, sponsored by the Western Kentucky University School of Media, rewards the outstanding efforts of high school journalists throughout the region. We urge high school newspaper, magazine, yearbook, website and broadcasting advisers to enter their staffers in one or more categories described in the enclosed material.

Winners will be announced online by April 23 and be mailed a certificate.

All entries must be submitted online. This will save your school on postage and eliminate delays in mail handling. There are separate entry forms for newspaper/magazine/online categories, broadcasting categories, and most valuable staffer categories. All forms can be accessed at www.wku.edu/khsmi/moe.

Entries must be received by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, March 16.

Please read the enclosed rules carefully; any entries not received by the deadline, or that do not meet the requirements will be disqualified without notice. You will receive an email confirmation when your entry has been successfully submitted.

If you have any questions please email me at samual.oldenburg@wku.edu or call me at 270-745-3055.

Good Luck!

Sam Oldenburg
Kentucky High School Media Institute Coordinator
Western Kentucky University

The Spirit Makes the Master

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2021 Contest Categories

Newspaper/Magazine (print or online)

- N1. Best news story
- N2. Best feature story
- N3. Best editorial
- N4. Best review or column
- N5. Best sports story
- N6. Best news/feature photography
- N7. Best sports photography
- N8. Best editorial cartoon
- N9. Best front page design
- N10. Best page design, inside page/spread
- N11. Best multimedia production
- N12. Best high school news publication
- N13. Best high school news website

Broadcasting

- B1. Best news story
- B2. Best sports story
- B3. Best feature story
- B4. Best news videography
- B5. Best music video
- B6. Best narrative film
- B7. Best high school broadcast/newscast

Most valuable staffer

- V1. Most valuable yearbook staff member
- V2. Most valuable broadcast staff member
- V3. Most valuable newspaper/magazine staff member

General contest rules

- Entries must have been published or aired during the 2020 – 2021 school year or during the spring semester of 2020. Unpublished work is not eligible.
- Only student-produced work is eligible for entry.
- Each school may submit only one entry per category.
- At least three entries must be received in each category for judging to take place.
- All decisions are final, and entries that do not meet requirements will be disqualified.

Category specific rules

Categories N1 – N5

- Submit one piece of writing per category.
- Entry should be submitted as a PDF file (maximum size 10 MB) showing the story as it was originally published on the page or a URL link if the piece was originally published online.
- The piece may be written by one student or multiple students, but only one entry per category will be accepted from each school.

Categories N6 – N7

- Submit one photograph per category.
- Photographs must have been published during time period above. Unpublished work is not eligible for entry.
- Entry should be submitted as a JPEG file (maximum size 10 MB).
- Captions should be included in the appropriate field on the entry form.

Category N8

- Submit one editorial cartoon.

- Entry should be submitted as a PDF file (maximum size 10 MB) showing the editorial cartoon as it was originally published on the page or a URL link if the piece was originally published online.

Category N9

- Submit one front page design as it was printed.
- Entry should be submitted as a PDF (maximum size 10 MB).

Category N10

- Submit one page or spread other than a front page.
- Entry should be submitted as a PDF (maximum size 10 MB).

Category N11

- Multimedia refers to a combination of different content forms used to tell a story. A production that meets the judging criteria should include a combination of text, audio, still images, animation, video and interactivity.
- Any video entries must be under eight minutes.
- Submit one URL link to the page where the multimedia production can be viewed.

Category N12

- Submit one complete issue of the publication as it was presented to the student body.
- Entry should be submitted as one PDF file (maximum size 25 MB) combining all pages of the publication.
- Publications published as an online PDF but not printed are also eligible

Category N13

- A news website refers to a website with the primary purpose of reporting news and events.
- Websites will be judged based on overall presentation and content.
- The entry must include the URL to the site homepage as well as three URLs for individual pieces published during the time period above.

Category B1

- Reports must have a hard news focus, regardless of subject.
- Entries must be based on coverage of breaking or developing news stories related to campus, community, national or international issues, sports, business, investigative, science, weather or other current newsworthy matters.
- Submit a URL link to where the piece can be viewed online.

Category B2

- Submit a story about a sports topic. Subject may include, but are not limited to, breaking news or features.
- Entry may not exceed four minutes.
- Play by play of a sporting event is not eligible.
- Submit a URL link to where the piece can be viewed online.

Category B3

- Entries must be non-deadline reporting of personalities, events or issues.
- Submit a URL link to where the piece can be viewed online.

Category B4

- Submit a URL link to where the piece can be viewed online.
- News videography will be judged on the following criteria:
 - Lighting (dark, light, white balance)
 - Shot sequence (establisher, medium-close-up; 180-degree rule)
 - Shot steadiness (shaky; pans and zooms)
 - Video editing, flash frames/jump-cuts; use of outsource video; edits in camera movement shots (editing while in pan or zoom mode)
 - Referencing in narrative (if applicable in a package); video matching reporter
 - Audio-NAT sound (clarity, good background use of music/sound-effects)
 - Use of sound-bites (if applicable for photo essay's or packages)
 - Overall impact; compelling/boring video has conclusion; precise/vague message

Category B5

- Submit a URL link to where the piece can be viewed online.
- The music video category will be judged on the following criteria:
 - Is the music original (if so, quality of the recording)
 - How well does it convey the intent of the music/lyrics.
 - Concept originality
 - Production value: shooting, lighting, use of color (visual aesthetic, camera craft, effective composition)

- Post production: editing, special effects, integration of sound & picture (cutting to the music, or in a way that enhances the music)
- Entertainment level for the viewer (storytelling? cohesive theme?)

Category B6

- The Narrative Short Film category encompasses all works of scripted, fictitious cinema, and must be no longer than five minutes. Unlike documentaries or news packages, narrative works are not a direct recording of genuine, unstaged events.
- Entry may not exceed five minutes.
- Submit a URL link to where the piece can be viewed online.

Category B7

- Entries in the category will be judged on the overall work of a staff or team.
- One complete broadcast must be submitted just as it was aired to the student body or the public.
- Provide airdate, method of telecast, and audience
- Newscasts will be judged on the following:
 - Lead story selection
 - Based on lead story, story “flow” to end of first block
 - Based on first story in “B” block, “pace” to the end of second block
 - Story writing (including grammar and spelling)
 - Tease and bump writing
 - Use of graphics (including written content; size)
 - Anchor positioning

Categories V1 – V3

- Submit three to five examples of the entrant’s work as PDFs or URL links.
- The entrant must be a 202 graduating senior.
- The application must include a nomination letter from the media adviser.