**Area VIII FFA Association**

**Policy Handbook**

**Section 26: Selection Procedure for Degree Candidates, Student and Chapter Awards**

Revised June 5, 2018

**26.1 Dates, Places and Leadership for the State Degree Check and Award Selection Conference**

(a) With the advice and consent of the Area VIII Executive Committee and Area Coordinator shall set the date and location for the Area Degree Check and Award Selection Conference. Dates for the event shall be in harmony with school calendars, national award and degree deadlines and state convention timelines. The location of the State Degree Check and Award Selection Conference shall be relatively central in the Area and have available facilities and support for conducting an efficient process.

(b) The Area VIII Coordinator shall serve as the chief coordinator of the event. The appointed chairman shall, in cooperation with the Area VIII Coordinator, appoint or re-confirm chairpersons of each committee and subcommittee.

**26.2 Procedures for Certifying District Award and Degree Candidates and Submission of Documents to the Area Degree Check and Award Selection Conference.**

(a) All award and degree recipients must be in good standing with the Area and Texas FFA Association.

(b) All award and degree documents must be properly certified by local advisers and selection committees as noted on each application and listed on the area degree and award certification roster.

(c) Applications and records submitted for awards are due by dates and times set by the Area Coordinator and Executive Committee general chairman. Late applications are accepted at the discretion of the Area Coordinator and committee chairperson until judging of applications commences with a $50 late fee per application. Committee members shall be informed of late applications. Applications for Area and proficiency awards will not be accepted once judging has commenced.

(d) Applications and records for State and American degree candidates are due on a date and at a time set by the Area Coordinator and Executive Committee. Applications submitted later than one hour past the completion of the last Area Committee will not be accepted.

**26.3 Required Documentation for Area Association**s

(a) District Presidents are to submit to the Area VIII Coordinator all district documentation requested including a list of district winners, degree candidates, adult recognition nominees, committee members and district participation counts for all award areas.

**26.4 Application Requirements for the State (Lone Star) FFA Degree, Selection, Appeals and Recognition.**

(a) As of April 1, candidates must meet minimum qualifications for the degree as listed in the Texas FFA Association Constitution. Applicants must have been FFA members for at least two years (24 months) at the time of receiving the State FFA Degree). Texas qualifications may exceed certain minimum qualifications listed in the National FFA Constitution.

(b) As of April 1, candidates must have four semesters (two credits) of instruction in agriculture, food and natural resources (AFNR) completed and recorded in the school's official records.

(c) As up April 1, candidates must have completed ten (10) activities from three different activity areas above the chapter level. The classification of an activity is based on the content or primary purpose of the event. (Example: a speaking event hosted by a stock show is still a speaking event rather than a show-related activity.) The areas are:

1. Leadership Development Events (LDE/SDE): Participation in any of the events classed as leadership development events by the Texas FFA Association as listed in the Texas FFA LDE Rules above the chapter level at an FFA sanctioned district, area, state or national event or at an invitational event. Participation in an FFA prepared public speaking, junior prepared public speaking, extemporaneous public speaking, or soil stewardship speaking at an FFA sanctioned district, area, state or national event, the Texas FFA Spanish Creed Invitational or an invitational LDE or speaking event sponsored by an FFA partner.

2. Career Development Events (CDE): Participation in any of the events classed as career development events or agriscience fair\* by the Texas FFA Association as listed in the Texas FFA CDE Rules above the chapter level at an FFA sanctioned district, area, state or national event or at an invitational event. These events may be FFA sanctioned events or invitational events hosted by FFA partners.

3. Conventions and Meetings (FFA): Participation in official FFA district, area, state or national conventions, meetings or banquets as an attendee or voting delegate.

4. Project Shows: Exhibition of SAE or course-related projects in an organized show above the chapter level. This may include the exhibiting of market or breeding livestock, agriscience fair\*, or projects built or produced by the student this in an agricultural class or in a placement SAE supervised by the agricultural science teacher.

5. Student awards: Application above the district level for star awards, proficiency awards, John Justin “Standard of the West” Award.

6. Leadership and service: Student activities that are expressly designed for leadership development: leadership camps, conferences and workshops, greenhand camps and activities that are service-driven in nature such as district, area, state or national service projects. Courtesy corps, Ford Leadership Scholars, Foundation Ambassadors, talent, national band and chorus, and state chorus participation shall be classed in this activity area. ***\*Agriscience fair can only be claimed once under either the CDE or Project Shows category.***

(d) Candidates show growth in productively invested earnings from a documented supervised agricultural experience program or unpaid supervised agricultural experience hours worked in excess of scheduled class time to satisfy state degree requirements. As of April 1, candidates must have earned and productively invested $1,000 as a result of his or her own efforts in an agricultural experience program, which may be an animal/plant/agribusiness enterprise, farm ranch, agribusiness or agriscience placement or any combination thereof, or worked 300 hours in an unpaid documented supervised experience program, which meets the Texas Education Agency and/or Texas FFA SAE Guidelines. The combination of earnings and hours multiplied by a factor of 3.33 must be equal or greater than the number 1,000.

(e) Enterprises, and/or other eligible placement experiences must be consistent with occupations and experiences in the agriculture, food and natural resources cluster, with curricula designated by the State Board of Education as part of an agriculture, food and natural resources pathway, or with National Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources pathways.

(f) Exploratory SAEs will be allowed for the Greenhand year only and a maximum of 45 hours will be counted toward fulfilling degree requirements for advanced FFA degrees above the Chapter Degree. The Greenhand year is defined as the membership year in which the student is first enrolled in high-school credit AFNR coursework.

(g) Hours claimed must be part of a supervised agricultural experience program and not claimed to satisfy any other portions of the degree requirements.

(h) Students enrolled in full-year, multiple credit courses may count practicum hours beyond the first credit as SAE related. Students enrolled in one-credit classes may record time beyond scheduled class time. Pursuant to subsection 26.4(i)(3) of this policy such arrangements must be explained in the record book SAE plan,

(i) The application must:

(1) Be completed as of April 1. All financial records must be closed as of April 1 for degree and award purposes only.

(2) Be generated by a TEA and FFA Board of Directors-approved record book template or program.

(3) Be accompanied by all of the applicant's record books to district and area check. Texas FFA shall request record books in either hard copy or electronic format for state check. Area Coordinator will announce record book format by April 1.

(4) Be fully certified with signatures by district and area committee members.

(j) Each record book must:

(1) Be neat, legible and accurate.

(2) Opening date for first-year students is the first day of his or her AFNR class.

(3) Include a completed SAE agreement which fully explains the terms of all leases and rental agreements and which explains terms of employment and curriculum objectives for each SAE.

(k) The applicant may claim the following items in the candidate’s inventory statement to meet the productive investment requirement:

(1) Value of harvested crops, livestock, and poultry on hand must be a part of the applicant's SAEP and included in the current year's record book, must be valued at a fair and current market value or a value equal to the applicant’s investment in the enterprise as of April 1.

2) Value of investment in growing crops must not exceed actual investment as of April 1 or later. Only labor paid for in cash is to be included as an investment.

(3) Value of buildings and land must be used in connection with the operation of applicant's SAEP and valued at a fair and current market value as of April 1 or later. Operational expenses for land are optional.

(4) Value of agricultural related equipment, value of agricultural equipment and other agricultural assets must not exceed percentage of use in connection with SAE. Operational costs must be listed as expenses in the record books.

(l) The applicant may claim the following items in the candidate’s financial balance sheet statement to meet the productive investment requirement:

(1) Cash value of checking and/or savings account(s).

(2) Cash value of family relief (must be immediate family member--mother, father, legal guardian, sister or brother).

(3) Cash value of stocks and bonds.

(4) Cash value of notes receivable.

(5) Cash value of accounts receivable

(6) Cash surrender value of life insurance (applicant must pay premiums).

(7) Funds used for educational expenses.

(m) Applications rejected by the review committee shall automatically be reviewed by a committee consisting of the chairperson of the Lone Star Degree committee, Area Coordinator, and the Area President. Mistakes which are transfer errors may be corrected onsite by a district or area representative. Applications which exhibit errors which constitute disqualifying deficiencies such as but not limited to: a shortfall in dollars earned and productively invested, hours worked outside of scheduled class time, or number of qualifying activities in section H of the application may not be corrected onsite, but may be resubmitted in subsequent years when qualifications are met. Area coordinator and/or area committee designees are responsible for notifying affected local advisors.

(n) Appeals must be filed in writing by the local advisor to the Area Coordinator by noon on the Tuesday following the degree check. Such appeals shall be reviewed by the Area FFA Executive Committee. The local advisor shall be notified by telephone of any decision rendered. The final roster is due to be finalized by 4:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before the State degree check.

(o) A representative shall be appointed by each district to proofread the completed roster of successful state degree candidates at the end of the review process. This roster shall be used in the publication of the state convention program and the printing of certificates for presentation. (p) Successful candidates shall be recognized in a ceremony at the state FFA convention. Candidates shall be recognized by area order starting with the area which corresponds to the last digit of the year. (Example: 2008, start with Area VIII followed by IX, X, I, II, etc.)

**26.5 Application Requirements for the American FFA Degree**

(a) Applications and supporting records must be presented and thoroughly reviewed at district and area degree checks and certified by respective chairpersons on documents submitted to the next level.

(b) Applications and record book must be presented at the Area and State Degree Check and Award Selection Conference in accordance to all deadlines and procedures.

(c) Candidates must meet all constitutional standards prescribed by the National FFA Organization and all requirements set in policies adopted by the National FFA Organization.

(d) Applicants seeking consideration for star award honors must submit a completed star application at district and area checks and be certified by respective chairpersons on documents submitted to the next level. Completed record book must accompany the application.

(e) Applications returned by National FFA for review at the State level shall be reviewed by the State Degree Check and Awards committee chair and the American Degree Check committee chair to determine veracity/procedure/conciseness of information and to obtain clarification from applicant and/or his/her representative. Final verification and acceptance/denial shall rest with the State Degree Check and Awards Committee Chair.

**26.6 Application Requirements and Selection Procedure for Star Awards**

(a) Applications for star award recognition must have a complete original application and star application placed in an award folder and two copies of the application and star application submitted by deadlines prescribed in the general rules of this policy. Applicants failing to submit the required copies shall be disqualified from consideration for top honors.

(b) The Area and Texas FFA recognizes star winners in four SAE divisions at the greenhand, chapter, state and American degree levels. Each selection committee will determine the division appropriateness for each application. An applicant may apply for recognition in one division at the state level. (1) Star Farmer: enterprises in production agriculture. (2) Star in Agribusiness: agricultural sales, services or other non-production entrepreneurial endeavors. All horticultural enterprises fall under agribusiness even if they are production oriented. (3) Star in Placement: employment-based SAE’s. (4) Star in Agriscience: programs which are aimed at developing higher order scientific knowledge and skills. Applications may be placement, entrepreneurial or experimental. (5) Applicants applying for a greenhand star award must apply in the candidate’s first membership year in which a high-school agricultural science credit is earned. Candidates for chapter degree star awards must apply during the membership year following the first membership year of high school credit instruction. Applicants for state and American Degree Star Awards must apply during the same membership year that his or her respective degree application is submitted for consideration.

(c) To be recognized as an Area/State finalist, all candidates must demonstrate fulfillment of minimum requirements of the degree level corresponding to their award and meet the criteria of the division in which they are applying. Candidates not meeting degree requirements or not meeting the criteria of the award division shall be disqualified from consideration and shall not be recognized as an Area/State finalist. District representatives shall be notified of all disqualifications and reasons for said disqualifications.

(d) To be considered for top honors and recognized as an Area/State finalist, applicants must appear before the selection committee for an interview. Extenuating circumstances which prevent a candidate from appearing shall be described in writing and considered by the Area Executive Committee. Under such conditions, the Executive Committee may request that the committee consider such an application for star award honors or allow the candidate to be recognized as a state finalist.

(e) Selection committees shall review and score each application in accordance to standards adopted by the Texas FFA Association. Each committee member shall submit a confidential ranking to the committee chair. The candidate with the majority of first place votes shall be declared the winner. If there is not a candidate with a majority of first-place votes, the placing shall be tallied with the high and low rank removed. The candidate with the low score shall be declared the winner. The results of the balloting are not public information and shall be kept in strictest confidence. The winner of the selection process shall be announced at the Area convention.

**26.7 Application Requirements and Selection Procedure for Proficiency Awards**

(a) A member may not win a state level proficiency area more than once. However, a member may apply for a similar proficiency award if a category changes—consolidation of two categories or split of a single category.

(b) To be eligible for a Texas FFA Proficiency Award, applicants must have one full calendar year of SAE records. Due to national judging standards, all financial records must be closed on December 31. Achievements described in the resume after December 31 may be included since the December 31 closing dates affects only the financial portion of the application. Applications not reflecting a full year (12 months) of records or containing hours or dollars related to the proficiency area shall be disqualified.

(c) SAE’s described in an application must meet the National FFA Organization’s criteria for the respective award area. The committee may disqualify applications not meet the award criteria

(d) Applicants must be currently enrolled in high school at the entry level award selection or be out of high school for no more than one year. Applicants graduated from high school must have completed at least three full years (six semesters of enrollment) of agricultural science instruction. Verification of enrollment will be requested only in cases of protest.

(e) Record books MUST accompany applications.

(f) Placement applications must reflect a supervised experience program of employment or an unpaid internship. All placement applications must be certified by an employer or supervisor. An entrepreneurship application must reflect an enterprise owned and operated by the applicant.

(g) District Presidents shall be notified of all disqualifications and reasons for said disqualifications.

(h) Individual committee or subcommittee members shall review and score applications according to the state-approved standards and scoring methods. Applications should be judged “as-is” and not ranked according to perceived potential. Preference is given to the most technically correct application. Grammar usage and spelling may be of concern to the committee, but should be used only to separate close entries. Spelling and grammar concerns should be noted and corrected before certification for national competition.

(i) Based on judging criteria, applications shall be rated as gold, silver or bronze. Evaluators shall be given the discretion to rate any or none of the applications gold based on level of achievement and quality of the presentation of the program in the application. Only gold rated applicants are eligible to be recognized as winners, receive related award scholarships and to be submitted by the state for national consideration.

**26.8 Application Requirements and Selection Procedures for the John Justin “Standard of the West” Award**

(a) In 1998, Justin Boot Company began a partnership with the Texas FFA Association by sponsoring the John Justin “Standard of the West” Award. The “Standard of the West” Award is designed to recognize those FFA members who exemplify the spirit of agriculture, along with its work ethic and family values. The selection criteria for the award are based upon the individual’s integrity, honesty, helpfulness, perseverance, grades, and school attendance.

(b) Area VIII will select one John Justin “Standard of the West” Award winner. The area winner will receive a product-gift certificate, a plaque, and a $500 stipend during the Texas FFA Convention. This individual will also be highlighted in one of the six issues of the Texas FFA News magazine. The state winner will receive another product-gift certificate and plaque. He or she will also receive a $2,500 stipend. In addition, the advisor(s) of the state winner will receive a pair of full quill ostrich boots.

(c) The John Justin “Standard of the West” Award is offered to any member of the Texas FFA. The member need not be a senior.

(d) The application must:

(1) Be typed on the latest revised application.

(2) Be accompanied by an official transcript.

(3) Be accompanied by three letters of recommendation, preferably one from the local FFA adviser, one from a citizen of the community and one from a past or present employer or school administrator.

(4) Include a recent head and shoulders photograph in official dress.

(5) Include six clear photographs of the applicant’s activities which best capture the character and scope of the candidate’s activities.

(e) A selection committee shall interview each area applicant to determine which candidate most exemplifies the values set forth in the selection criteria. Each committee member shall submit a confidential score to the committee chair. The points shall be tallied with the high and low score removed and the candidate with the highest score shall be declared the winner.

(f) Candidates must appear before the committee to be considered for top honors. Candidates must be in official dress during the selection process. Area winners must be present to receive their award at the State FFA convention unless an extenuating circumstance which prevents such attendance is approved by the Texas FFA Executive Board.

**26.9 Application Requirements and Selection Procedure for the National Chapter Award**

(a) The National Chapter Award program recognizes chapter’s development and the use of a written program of activities (POA) that addresses quality standards in three divisions: student development, chapter development and community development.

(b) Any chapter in good standing which completes an activity related to each of the fifteen quality standards prescribed by the National FFA Organization will be recognized as a Superior Chapter. Chapters must submit a typewritten and fully certified Form I application to the district and area degree check and award selection meetings to receive this recognition. Area coordinators shall submit all qualifying applications to the State Degree Check and Award Selection Conference. All applications must be submitted pursuant to timelines described in 26.2(c) of this policy.

(c) Form II Applications shall be ranked using methods and standards as near to national standards as possible and rate each application as a gold, silver or bronze. There shall be no minimum number of application in any merit classification, but pursuant to national rules, no more than ten percent of the state’s chapters may be rated as gold. Only gold rated applications shall be certified and submitted for national judging. Applications which are incomplete may be disqualified or designated as “participant.” Potentially disqualifying deficiencies, such as but not limited to missing pages, may be corrected before the review committee chair declares the full committee’s deliberations adjourned.

(d) The top ten chapters shall be recognized at the annual state FFA convention.

**26.10 Application Requirements and Selection Procedure for the Golden Horizon Chapter Award**

(a) FFA is an integral part of the agricultural education instructional curriculum. A well rounded local FFA chapter with an inclusive, progressive, aggressive program of activities that promotes maximum participation is a key element in delivering the leadership component of agricultural education. Such efforts must produce measurable results. The Golden Horizon Chapter Recognition program was implemented to provide a measurement tool for chapter officers and advisors and to provide recognition for chapters who succeed in involving a large number of members in the diverse array of activities available through the FFA.

(b) All chapters in good standing are eligible to apply.

(c) Points are accumulated only between June 1 of the previous calendar year and May 31 of the current calendar year.

(d) Applications should be submitted to district and area checks to be verified for accuracy. District and area committees shall verify participation in district and area level activities and state certification of teams. If invalid points are claimed, the application may be rejected.

(e) Chapters may need to modify applications in the weeks following area award selection process to reflect activities or accomplishments that occur after that event. Area coordinators should be apprised of any such changes. The area should verify all amendments to the application before submission to the state degree and award check. Point totals on the application must match point totals submitted to the state association by the area coordinator.

(f) Chapters in which there is only one full-time or part-time certified agricultural science teacher recognized by the school district as an FFA advisor may apply for recognition in Division I. Schools with more than one such advisor must submit an application in Division II

(g) Career Development Events claimed for point credit must be an elimination or state contest. A single contest may be used only once for credit. For example, some districts may use an area contest to determine area rankings. However, some districts in the state do not recognize spring teams. Thus, an area level contest may be used for area credit only. District points may be claimed if a separate district event is hosted by the district FFA association.

(h) All applications shall be ranked in their respective divisions. The top quarter award winning chapters will receive the gold award. The remaining chapters will be silver or bronze—split as evenly as possible or at the point where the natural break occurs.

(i) Chapters rated as “gold” will be recognized during the Texas FFA Convention