

Oregon Band Directors Association Band Evaluation System

The OBDA Band Evaluation System, developed and adopted in 1983 and now known as the *OBDA/OSAA Band and Orchestra Evaluation System*, is a comprehensive method of evaluating performances at concert band and orchestra contests and festivals. It is designed to provide consistent evaluation for a wide variety of festival and competitive contest formats. It also makes adjustments for varying school size classifications.

The system consists of the following three interrelated components: *Performance Evaluation Form*, *Instrumental Evaluation Scale*, and *Judge's Worksheet*.

1. THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION FORM

This is the “judging sheet” or “ballot” band and orchestras receive on their performance. It contains all of the elements of most commonly used music evaluation forms but only four categories for scores or ratings.

The “Comments” Boxes

These boxes are used to make general and specific comments about each evaluation caption: *Quality of Sound*, *Technique*, *Musicality*, and *Other Factors*. Many adjudicators user these boxes for their summary comments at the conclusion of the performance. Because traditional captions are sometimes interrelated (e.g. tone, intonation, balance), they have been combined into more general categories (e.g. *Quality of Sound*). This allows the adjudicator to focus on the areas of greatest concern.

The “Score/Rating” boxes

Scores or ratings are written here after they are determined by using the *Instrumental Evaluation Scale* and *Judges Worksheet* (see No. 2 and 3 below). These boxes may contain the numerical scores derived from these or festival ratings (I, I-, II+ Etc.) derived from the numbers at the top of the *Instrumental Evaluation Scale*. Numerical scores should be used for ranked competitive contests. The total score or rating should identify which classification from the top of the *Instrumental Evaluation Scale* was used (5A/6A, 4A/3A, or Jr. High Middle School 2A/1A).

The Reverse Side of the Form

This page is blank and is to be used for “running commentary” on the group’s performance, similar to a recorded critique. Comments that are specific to the performance can be made as the performance is in progress. A short summary for each musical selection can be included here. Many adjudicators use a separate sheet of paper in addition to the back of the Form. If a critique is being recorded, writing on this side of the form is not necessary.

NOTE: The *Performance Evaluation Form* is usually the only thing students see which tells them about their performance. This includes the reverse side of the form. Comments must be legible and easily understood. They should include both positive and negative aspects of the performance and offer educational solutions to problems. They must justify the rating or score assigned.

2. THE INSTRUMENTAL EVALUATION SCALE

This rubric is the “key” to the OBDA Evaluation System. It makes the OBDA system strikingly different from most other band or orchestra evaluation methods. When used correctly by knowledgeable judges, this delineation scale results in improved uniformity in ratings. The “descriptors” on the rubric also imply additional information to ensembles beyond what the adjudicator actually discusses on the evaluation form.

Rationale and Purpose

The *Instrumental Evaluation Scale* is based on the premise that a group of qualified and educated musicians could probably agree fairly well on the qualities of an ensemble's performance but would less likely agree on the same relative score. For example, on a 100 point scale three adjudicators may agree verbally on the quality of a performance, but one might assign a score of 85, another of 65, and the third adjudicator a 70. The ODBA *Instrumental Evaluation Scale* gives the adjudicators a qualitative basis for assigning scores from which ratings may be derived.

Instructions for Use

1. The adjudicator selects one of the five descriptions under each caption that best fits the performance being evaluated. These descriptions are general and are directed at the middle of the point range.
2. The adjudicator then assigns a score based on the degree that the band falls within the description and that group's relationship to the other ensembles' performances. The numerical score is then entered on the *Judges Worksheet* (see below).

NOTE: The comparison between ensembles is used only in competitive contests where adjudicators are instructed to rank the groups in order of excellence. Ties should be avoided. For "festival ratings," the adjudicator uses the superimposed festival rating of the appropriate class (5A/6A, 3A/4A Etc.) found above the numerical scores on the rubric. Comparison is not necessary. However, the final rating is still derived from the total numeric points.

NOTE: An ensemble receiving a score or festival rating in a given evaluation category (the five columns in the rubric) may not necessarily qualify for the same category in the other captions (*Quality of Sound, Technique, Musicality, Other Factors*). Each caption is considered independently.

3. THE JUDGE'S WORKSHEET

The *Judge's Worksheet* helps the adjudicator with the mechanics of using the system. Proper use of the *Judge's Worksheet* serves two purposes: 1) It helps in the process of ranking and rating the ensembles in the correct order through assigning numbers by comparing caption scores for groups that are very similar. 2) It gives a simple "at a glance" visual record of how each band or orchestra's total score is derived.

Use of the Worksheet

1. When the performance has concluded and the adjudicator is ready to assign a score or rating, the numerical score for each caption is written on the worksheet (not the evaluation form).
2. Caption scores are compared to those given to other ensembles for correct ranking and comparative rating (to others in their classification). Desired adjustments are made at this time.
3. The score is totaled and double-checked for accuracy.
4. The table provided on the worksheet converts the final scores to ratings.
5. Final scores or ratings are transferred to the *Evaluation Form*.

NOTE: This worksheet is not to be used to revise a score after succeeding bands have performed. Once a score is turned in it should be final. The adjudicator must have the confidence and integrity to assign an appropriate score at the conclusion of a performance. Recall of performance qualities diminishes after hearing several ensembles.

USE OF THE OBDA/OSAA BAND AND ORCHESTRA EVALUATION SYSTEM IN FESTIVALS OR OTHER NON-RANKED SITUATIONS:

This system was designed to provide consistency between performances in competitive, ranked competitions and non-competitive festivals where ratings against a standard are assigned. It works particularly well in a “hybrid” situation where an Oregon league or festival’s directors must select a winner or state contest qualifier but wish to downplay the competitive aspect of the experience for the other bands and orchestras. It can identify the most exemplary groups who need recognition (e.g. divisional winner and runner-up or a sweepstakes award) without the other groups knowing how they ranked against each other or having that information made public.

The choice of a Contest versus Festival format is entirely up to the directors or festival organizers. However, bands and orchestras who plan to use their performances to qualify for the OSAA State Band and Orchestra Championships must receive numerical ratings on their sheets to be declared a district winner or qualify to enter the OSAA “tape pool.” This is particularly important where more than one high school group receives a I or I- rating in an Oregon contest or festival.

Procedure for Converting Points to Ratings in Non-ranked Festivals

1. Numerical scores are written only on the *Judge’s Worksheet*.
2. The points assigned in each category determine the “divisional rating” of I, II, III or IV. These are shown on the top of the *Instrumental Evaluation Scale*.
3. The ratings for each category are entered on the *Performance Evaluation Form*.
4. Points are totaled on the *Judge’s Worksheet* and the worksheet’s “Festival Ratings” chart determines the final rating.
5. The final rating is written on the *Performance Evaluation Form*.

NOTE: Preconceived notions of what constitutes a rating do not apply to the OBDA system. The points are determined strictly from the *Instrumental Evaluation Scale* and in turn determine the ratings. Numerical scores are given in all performances, although the directors and students will not see these in non-ranked festivals. Ratings must not be determined first with points subsequently assigned to correspond, since each adjudicator’s opinion of what constitutes a “I” or “II” will vary. The Instrumental Evaluation Scale determines the ratings.

USE OF THE OBDA/OSAA BAND AND ORCHESTRA EVALUATION SYSTEM WITH DISPARATE AGES OR SCHOOL SIZES:

The system has three different applications or standards. These are designed for the needs of bands and orchestras from various school sizes or experience while maintaining the integrity of the criteria and the fundamental principle that ratings or points are derived solely from the *Instrumental Evaluation Scale*. The three applications are achieved by a “sliding scale” of numbers that produce different results (total score or festival rating) depending on the type of event and the schools involved.

The three applications/classifications are:

1. 5A/6A High School. This is the system as it was designed, refined, and originally used. The other applications are based on this. This scale is found directly above the written rubric on the *Instrumental Evaluation Scale*.

2. 3A/4A High School. The point values that are assigned in each criteria column have been adjusted to give a slightly higher reward for achievement. This is based on the premise that smaller programs do not have as large a “talent pool” to draw from, making it less likely that they will achieve ratings equal to the larger 5A or 6A groups. This scale is also used for younger or non-auditioned “second” bands or orchestras in a 5A or 6A school. Higher scores and ratings are produced to help encourage the students. This scale is found second from the top on the *Instrumental Evaluation Scale*.
3. 1A/2A High School/Middle School. This scale was originally intended for use with very small high school programs. It is also applicable for middle and junior high schools, though there are no real allowances for school size or experience between these younger ensembles. The “mechanical” adjustment of shifting the scale even further to the left in comparison to the 3A/4A scale keeps the criteria consistent but creates a less stringent score/rating result. The 5th column is eliminated because it would be very extraordinary for bands and orchestras at this size or experience to achieve the level of performance set in that column. This scale is also used for “third” bands or orchestras from large high school programs. It appears on the top line of the *Instrumental Evaluation Scale*.

This system achieves the goal of meeting the various needs of bands in these situations while maintaining a single, thorough evaluation system. The techniques involved in judging do not change. The evaluation form does not change. The conversion from numerical score to rating does not change. And, most importantly, the criteria used in evaluating the performance does not change. As an added bonus, this sliding scale can be used to correct mistakes in classification of a school (e.g. a judge not realizing that they were hearing a school’s “second” band). The original points assigned can be easily converted onto one of the other classification scales by lining them up visually on the form.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON CLASSIFICATIONS:

1. A group’s classification can be determined by OSAA classification, by the use of a required music list (in festivals), or by a director’s choice (very small, inexperience program in a large school). In the latter two instances, scores may not be used for OSAA state qualification.
2. All schools involved in a ranked competition must use the same scale for comparison. In the event of a “sweepstakes” award being determined from schools across all classifications, the 1A/2A and 3A/4A scores may be converted to the 5A/6A scale for comparison.
3. Adjudicators must not mentally insert phrases such as “for a 9th grade band” or “for such a tiny, rural school” into the language of the rubric.

Source: The original version of this document was adopted by the Oregon Band Directors Association in 1983 and presented by its authors Larry Graves and David Becker at the National MENC Conference in Anaheim, CA in 1986. It was revised in 2011 by David Becker to reflect minor modifications and corrections, creation of the State Band and Orchestra Championships in 1987, and changes to the Oregon School Activities Association school size classifications in 2005.