

2026-2027 SEFMD Scientific Integrity Policy (Rev B)

BACKGROUND:

In 2026, Science Fairs nationwide noticed an increase in inappropriate use of Artificial Intelligence. Locally the Science and Engineering Fair of Metro Detroit and the Michigan Science Fair had to disqualify five students due to fraud, forgery, inappropriate use of AI, and plagiarism. Two students were banned for life for their inappropriate actions. In addition, two schools were placed on probation with the Science Fair. The following policy has been implemented for the 2026-2027 Science Fair and consists of multiple actions.

SCHOOL AFFILIATIONS:

When a school affiliates with the Science Fair (or a fair affiliates with the Michigan Science Fair), the school must (1) agree to validate all student projects that list a project mentor, qualified scientist, or researcher by contacting the appropriate researcher to determine whether the student actually did the work they claimed to have done. (2) Teachers must review with their students the acceptable and unacceptable use of AI in the research (refer to attached). (3) Teachers must also validate the bibliography section of all high school projects. (4) Teachers must also train and educate students on 'peer reviews' which will be required for high school projects (see below).

PEER REVIEWS:

Peer reviews are a normal part of scientific research and will be required for all high school projects in 2026-2027. After the entry form deadline, HS Students will be assigned 1 or 2 high school student projects for peer review. A student must conduct the peer reviews, using a form (draft attached) for each of the projects, and submit the information not later than 7 days prior to judging. If a student fails to provide meaningful peer reviews, their project will be moved from the normal competition to the exhibition category and not eligible for professional awards or additional competition. Elementary and Middle School students are recommended to use the peer review worksheet on their project.

PROJECT CONCERNS:

If a teacher, student, or judge has a concern regarding the scientific integrity of a particular project, there will be a structured form that must be submitted. Project concerns may be submitted no later than 24 hours after judging results are announced and will be investigated by a separate ethics panel. Project concerns may not be submitted anonymously – full contact information of the reviewer must be provided.

In conclusion, doing a science fair project is a learning experience. The above changes are meant to further educate students as to what is acceptable and what is not. Teachers will have the primary role in this with their students. We are committed to working with all schools and teachers to ensure that the integrity of the Science Fair is maintained going forward.

There will be several workshops in October that deal with this issue and its implementation.