



Old Dominion Association of Church Schools

Important Update Revision of the ODACS Competition Manual

September 6, 2025

The new ODACS Competition Manual is being revised for 2026-2030. While it will take some time yet to complete the project, this update will help you to be able to begin preparing for the 2026 competition by summarizing key changes that are coming.

The new AACS manual for national competition has already been published, and ODACS recommends that each school purchase a copy right away. You can learn more by visiting the AACS website, <https://www.aacs.org/competition/2020manual/>.

GENERAL RULES

AACS and ODACS are adopting new language regarding the appropriate and inappropriate uses of AI for competition. The new language will appear in the General Rules but will also appear throughout the manual in different areas where AI could possibly be used. Schools will need to pay careful attention to annual updates from AACS and ODACS regarding AI policies.

Class AA and Class A divisions for Fine Arts competition will not necessarily be set for a full 5-year cycle. AACS will publish the cutoff each year in an annual update. For 2026, the divisions will be as follows: Class A, 60 or fewer students in grades 9-12; Class AA, 61 or more students in grades 9-12.

For all levels of competition (regional, state, and nationals), winners in group events will earn double points for the participating school or state (6, 4, and 2). Winners in individual categories will still earn 3, 2, and 1.

BIBLE

New language regarding the use of AI has been adopted for Bible Teaching and for Bible Preaching.

For ODACS Bible Preaching competition, the sermon outline no longer needs to be in sentence format.

MUSIC

For ODACS Competition, semi-classical music composed before 1970 will now be allowed.

AACS and ODACS are adopting new language regarding the use of Digital Music (i.e., scores on digital devices and digital downloads of scores).

An accompanist must use an original copy of the score.

A new category, Classical Guitar Solo, will be added for Level II and Level III.

For Orchestra/Band, if a piano is included in the orchestration, the pianist must be a student.

Organ Solo and Sacred Piano-Organ Duet will be discontinued for ODACS Competition.

To qualify to compete in Small School Ensemble and in Small School Choir, a school must have 70 or fewer students in grades 4-12.

We are working on a new piano category, Hymn Playing. The category would be for all three levels of competition. It will be an ODACS category only; Level III winners will not advance to nationals.

SPEECH

Oral Interpretation of Scripture will be added as a new category for Level I. The rules will be the same as for Levels II and III, except that the time limit will be 2-5 minutes.

AACS and ODACS are adopting new language about the proper and improper use of AI for Original Persuasive Oratory and for Extemporaneous Speaking.

ART

AACS and ODACS are adopting new language about the proper and improper use of AI for all Art categories.

The infamous “40% Rule” is being replaced with language requiring “evidence of artistic changes.” However, copying of existing artwork is still prohibited.

The name of the Woodworking category is being changed to “Wood Furniture and Cabinetmaking.” The rules and judging form are being updated in an effort to ensure that only furniture and cabinetmaking projects are entered in this category.

ODACS submitted a recommendation to AACS to adopt the new Videography categories for Art. The national competition will now include the Videography categories, with rules based on the ODACS model. The categories will be considered group competition.

Videography categories will now require two or more contestants.

Level I students will now be required to submit an Artist’s Idea Statement.

The Photography Artist’s Idea Statement will be updated. One purpose of the update will be to clarify that the use of a smart phone to capture the image is now permitted.

The Statement of Originality will no longer appear on the Art judging forms. It will appear on the Artist’s Idea Statement, and the student’s signature on that form will be sufficient.

ACADEMICS

The Algebra/Geometry category for Level III will be divided into two separate categories.

For all Creative Writing categories, new language has been adopted regarding the proper and improper use of AI. For both regional and state competition, topics will be announced to students prior to the day of writing. For ODACS competition, the time limits for writing will be as follows: Level I, 2 hours; Level II, 2 hours; Level III, 3 hours.

For all Science Fair projects, the new minimum length of the research paper will be as follows: Level I, 3 pages; Level II, 4 pages; Level III, 5 pages.