

Common Biases & Mitigation Tips

BIAS TENDENCY	DEFINITION/EXPLANATION	BIAS MITIGATION APPROACH
Average/Central Tendency	Reviewers often find that many applications cluster around the middle of their evaluations, which can make final decision-making for scoring challenging.	Make full use of the scoring range and take notes to ensure that your decisions are consistent and aligned with the selection criteria.
Contrast	This bias arises when reviewers compare applicants against each other or against a single standout application, rather than against the established criteria.	While comparison is a natural instinct, and sometimes necessary for final decisions, it's crucial during the application review process to focus on evaluating each applicant based on the content and quality of their application, rather than in relation to others.
Extracurricular	Certain extracurricular activities (including internships, research, etc.) may seem impressive based on personal biases, potentially leading to unfair evaluations of applicants who have had different opportunities.	Focus on the evidence provided in the application. Evaluate what the applicant has shared in relation to the criteria, rather than relying on your own knowledge or feelings about the extracurricular activities.
First Impression	This occurs when initial impressions unduly influence the rest of the review process, often due to rushed or superficial evaluations.	Review the entirety of the materials presented by the applicant. Consider revisiting applications multiple times to ensure a thorough evaluation.
Gut Feeling	Relying on intuition rather than evidence, reviewers may decide an applicant's worthiness without thoroughly connecting their qualifications to the selection criteria.	Leverage the provided review rubric to guide your assessment. Identify and note the evidence presented in the application materials. If your initial gut feeling isn't supported by the evidence, rescore based on those careful notes
Halo Effect or Harshness/Horn Effect	This bias occurs when a reviewer evaluates an applicant positively (halo) or negatively (horn) based on just one characteristic, rather than considering the application as a whole.	Adhere to the review rubric and the provided weighting. Ensure you're applying the appropriate weight to each selection criterion.
Language	We often react to students' language use, mistakenly assuming it reflects their intelligence or potential. However, writing skills can be influenced by various factors, including background and access to educational resources. Rubrics do not say anything about spelling or grammar.	Focus on the content and relevance of the information provided in relation to the selection criteria. Ignore spelling, grammar, and other mechanics unless these are explicitly included in the criteria.
Leniency	Leniency bias happens when a reviewer gives a higher rating than deserved, often justified by personal rationalizations.	Monitor how your approach to applications and scoring might change due to stress, interruptions, or fatigue. Take breaks and revisit applications, especially those reviewed early or late in the process. Re-review similar scores for consistency and rescore if necessary, ensuring that your notes connect to the evidence in the application materials.
Negative Emphasis	This bias occurs when a reviewer allows minor negative details to disproportionately influence their overall assessment.	Revisit the selection criteria and the weighting provided in the review rubric. Be diligent in noting both positive and negative information.
Noise	Noise bias occurs when applicants include information they believe will appeal to reviewers, leading to responses that may not align with the selection criteria.	Cut through the noise by focusing on discernible evidence that directly connects to the selection criteria.
Recency	Recency bias happens when more recent applications are remembered and evaluated more clearly than earlier ones, potentially skewing the overall assessment.	Review applications in small batches and take thorough, consistent notes to avoid the recency bias.
Similar-to-Me	This bias arises when reviewers favor applicants with whom they share interests, experiences, or other characteristics, often leading to inflated scores based on personal affinities rather than objective criteria.	Focus on the evidence provided in the application. Distinguish between what the applicant has actually shared and your own knowledge or feelings, ensuring alignment with the selection criteria.
Stereotyping	Stereotyping occurs when a reviewer unconsciously attributes certain traits to an applicant based on their membership in a particular group, rather than on the individual's actual qualifications.	Base your evaluation on the evidence provided in the application. Be aware of assumptions you might be making and focus on what the applicant has explicitly shared. OSU's College of Engineering scholarship review committees should give no consideration to an applicant's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, citizenship, sex, pregnancy, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, disability, or veteran status.