NATIONAL COUNCIL
OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

DEADLINE TO APPLY: FEBRUARY 15, 2024

3 Steps to Becoming a High School National Council of Excellence

All NatStuCo member councils should aspire to become National Councils of Excellence and your council is only 3 steps away.

- Compile and organize a collection of photos, samples, and other evidence demonstrating your council's meeting the award criteria, and ID two or three projects that will be entered as part of the online application.

- Meet with your principal to present the NCOE portfolio for the principal's review and validation of your council meeting the award criteria needed for recognition.

- Complete and submit an online NCOE application.

Important: **All council activities and projects submitted for the 2024 NCOE Award must have taken place between January 1 and December 31, 2023.**

Step 1: Review the Award Criteria Checklist and Build Portfolio.

- The Award Criteria checklist is organized into Required Evidence and Additional Evidence. Councils applying for the basic NCOE award must meet all of the Required Evidence. NCOE Gold recognition requires that a minimum number of Additional Evidence also be met.

- Use the checklist to identify and track the criteria that your council meets and to help organize your portfolio.

- Councils should create electronic or notebook-style portfolios in which they compile and organize evidence of meeting the award criteria.

Step 2: Present the Portfolio to the Principal.

- The council adviser and student members meet with the principal to present and review the completed portfolio. Be prepared to explain and respond to any questions the principal may ask.

- The school principal must affirm that the student council has included evidence of meeting all required indicators and, if applying for NCOE Gold, any additional indicators before the council completes an online application.

Step 3: Complete and Submit the Online Application.

- Designate one adviser or student with a verified NatStuCo account to complete the application on behalf of the student council. Once started, the application can only be accessed and submitted by the user who started it. The application may be accessed for review and editing at any time prior to submission.

- Sign into the online application portal using the same login credentials as for the NatStuCo website and complete all required steps.

- The adviser and principal provide their reflections on the council by responding to several questions via an email with a unique link that is created by the application program. Both will receive emails when the application is being completed by a student.

- Make a thorough review of the application once the applicant, adviser, and principal have completed their sections of the application.

- Log into the application portal and click the submit button. An application cannot be accessed by the user after it has been submitted.

*Councils submit only their completed online application. NCOE Portfolios remain with each council to serve as evidence of their achievement and an archive of their activities.

Advisers:

Advisers can log in to the application using their existing **NatStuCo website credentials.**

Students:

Students can log in to the application using an **adviser-verified student account.**

Required Evidence for High School Student Councils

I. Governance Governing Documents
- ❑ 1. A constitution and/or set of bylaws exist and are used to govern the council.
- ❑ 2. Each council member receives a copy of the constitution/bylaws, and a copy is available on the web or in the school's media center where others may review the documents.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of student-led activities and meetings.

Elections
- ❑ 1. Evidence of elections that include activities or features found in civic elections.
- ❑ 2. Written election rules and/or campaign procedures.
- ❑ 3. There is a written process for ballot counting and announcing election results.

Meetings
- ❑ 1. Copy of student council meeting calendar or list of meeting dates.
- ❑ 2. Evidence that Parliamentary Procedures are regularly used during meetings.

II. Service Participation
- ❑ 1. Evidence of a service project that addresses a school or local need.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of a council-sponsored service project that promotes full student body participation.

Serving the Community
- ❑ 1. Evidence of a community service project.

III. General Activities and Operations Spirit and Social Activities
- ❑ 1. Examples of two spirit or social activities.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of an activity that highlights the diversity in the student body, or evidence of an activity that appeals to different student audiences.

Council Operations
- ❑ 1. Copy of student council budget.
- ❑ 2. Example of council role or member participation report.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of in-person or virtual meetings with the principal or designee.
- ❑ 4. Evidence of student council participation on a school-level committee, or evidence of student council participation on a district-level committee or school board.

Leadership Training
- ❑ 1. Evidence of participation in two or more in-person or virtual leadership training sessions by all council members. (These can include adviser-led lessons or those led by a guest facilitator.)

Communications
- ❑ 1. Example of a student council memo, announcement, or video broadcast.

IV. Civic Engagement and Student Voice Civic-Based Activities
- ❑ 1. Sample of council materials explaining an activity or project's civic connection, or evidence of an in-person or virtual presentation explaining the civic connections of council activities.

Student Voice
- ❑ 1. Evidence of student council activities that provide a forum or other in-person or virtual means for student opinions and ideas to be expressed and collected.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of at-large student participation on student council committees.

Additional Evidence for High School Student Councils

To be eligible for National Gold Council of Excellence recognition, student councils must meet at least 26 of the additional evidence indicators listed below. Each indicator must be in your council's portfolio and reviewed by your principal. For each section, check all boxes that apply and then write down the total number of additional evidence indicators met at the end of this section.

I. Governance Governing Documents
- ❑ 1. Evidence of review, changes, or updates to the constitution or bylaws, or minutes from a meeting of the officers or a constitution/bylaws committee.

Elections
- ❑ 1. Involvement or contribution by local Board of Elections officials through information resources, presentations, or direct assistance.
- ❑ 2. Use of voting machines or online voting for school elections.
- ❑ 3. Student council elections include voter registration, voting precincts, or other characteristics of local/state elections.

Meetings
- ❑ 1. Samples of two meeting agendas and a description of how they are shared with the student body and faculty.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of at-large student participation on student council committees or in other supportive roles.

II. Service

Serving the School
- ❑ 1. Evidence of promoting service to members and others.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of a service project that benefits the school.
- ❑ 3. List of school needs identified by the student council that were considered as possibilities for a service project.

Serving the Community
- ❑ 1. Evidence of a student generated list of community needs.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of involvement by community leaders or groups with a council-sponsored service or service-learning project.

Service Learning
- ❑ 1. Evidence of council support for a service-learning project in the school.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of service-learning features in a student council service project, including planning, action, reflection, and celebrating success.

III. General Activities and Operations Spirit and Social Activities

- ❑ 1. Evidence in activity advertisements, goals, or statement of purpose that demonstrates the promotion of positive social behaviors.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of an activity that aids in the transition of younger students into the middle level grades.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of an activity designed to engage new students and welcome them to the student body.

Council Operations

- ❑ 1. Copy of student council budget.
- ❑ 2. Copy of treasurer's report or meeting minutes showing finance activities.
- ❑ 3. Copy of council membership roll.
- ❑ 4. Evidence of a scrapbook or similar historical record of council activities.
- ❑ 5. Evidence of student council participation on a school-level committee.
- ❑ 6. Evidence of student council participation on a district-level committee or school board.
- ❑ 7. Copy of a student survey given during the current or previous school year.
- ❑ 8. Copy of a project or activity evaluation used with the student body.
- ❑ 9. Evidence of active membership with a district, state, or regional student council organization.

Fundraising

- ❑ 1. Evidence of a council-sponsored fundraising project or a charitable collection project if fundraising is not allowed.
- ❑ 2. Copy of project revenues and contributions report.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of pre-project research on potential charities.
- ❑ 4. List of reputable charitable groups and organizations considered by the student council.

Leadership Training

- ❑ 1. Evidence of adviser participation in a professional development session on student council or leadership.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of attendance or participation in officer training.
- ❑ 3. Sample of a leadership lesson or skill-building activity.

Communications

- ❑ 1. Evidence of council members' writing or oral presentations.
- ❑ 2. Copy of student council submission for publication or presentation (print or electronic media).

Building a Positive School Climate

- ❑ 1. Evidence of an activity that contributes to the development of a positive school climate.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of an activity that fosters positive relations between faculty/staff and students.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of engaging or collaborating with a parent group connected to the school, such as PTA, PTO, boosters, etc.

Responsible Social Media Use

- ❑ 1. Example of using social media in an effective and responsible manner to communicate with council members and the student body.

Wellness

- ❑ 1. Evidence of a council-led or hosted activity focused on healthy habits (exercise, nutrition, sleep, staying hydrated, etc.).
- ❑ 2. Evidence of an activity or instruction specifically for council members that focuses on their mental health (managing stress, emotions, personal/relaxation time, etc).
- ❑ 3. Evidence of an activity or instruction specifically for council members that focuses on the importance of student leaders' wellness through healthy habits. (exercise, social connectedness (relationships), nutrition, sleep, etc.).

IV. Civic Engagement and Student Voice Civic-Based Activities

- ❑ 1. Evidence of involvement by community leaders or agencies in a council project or activity.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of a council officer presentation to a civic board or committee, such as the school board, city council, or county board/committee, or civic club.

V. Other Council Activities Local and State Involvement

- ❑ 1. Evidence of introducing or applying skills, knowledge, or ideas that were learned while attending a local or state event.
- ❑ 2. Student council hosts or participates in a joint activity with another school.

Other Leadership Training

- ❑ 1. Evidence of regular leadership training activities for student council members.
- ❑ 2. Evidence of leadership training provided to other clubs or to the general population of the student body.
- ❑ 3. Evidence of council members sharing their leadership skills by leading a training session or activity with younger students.

Total Number of Additional Evidence Indicators: _____

(Minimum 26 for Gold NCOE)

NCOE PROJECT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Student councils applying for NCOE must enter a minimum of two (2) projects into their NCOE online application, or three (3) projects for Gold-level recognition.

- Each project entered must be identified in a different database category. Categories are:

Appreciation & Recognition	Holiday Activities
Ceremonies	Homecoming
Character Building	Leadership Development
Citizenship Development	Mental Health and Wellness
Civic-Based Activities/Event	School Spirit/Student Engagement
Fundraising for School/Group	Service to the Community
Fundraising for Charity	Service to the School/School Improvement
Green Projects	Student Voice

- Projects must have taken place between January 1 and December 31 of the previous calendar year to the award (i.e., for 2023, the projects must have been run during 2022). Projects of extended length such as yearlong must have launched prior to the award year.

- There are three questions requiring responses for each project and those are entered directly into the online application.

- Projects similar to those of a previous year (e.g., homecoming, prom, etc.) may be submitted by including the year date of the project (e.g., "Spirit Week 2025").

- Include photos of council members engaged in projects and any related video and media links.

Councils are also encouraged to submit projects to the National Student Project Database to share projects with fellow NatStuCo members searching for ideas.

The following types of activities will not be approved as "student council projects" for the NCOE awards:

- Elections, committee, and council meetings, etc. that are required operational (business) and governance activities per the council constitution.

- Attendance as delegates to conferences, workshops, or similar events.

- School events, assemblies, etc., in which council members have no significant leadership roles or responsibilities.

Questions? Contact us at:
✉ NatStuCo@NatStuCo.org
📞 703-860-0200
www.NatStuCo.org/NCOE

PROJECT ENTRIES

Use this form to prepare your project entries and transfer the information directly into your NCOE online application.

Compose and edit project responses in a Word document and then copy and paste the text into the application.

Project 1 Title:

Project 1 Category:

(Each project listed on the NCOE application must be from a different project category as listed on the previous page.)

Project 1 Responses:
- Explain why the council chose to do this project and identify those who benefited from it and how.
- Share a description of the project that explains what it was about and how it was run.
- Reflect on the outcome of the project including its impact on those who benefited, and share one or two memorable highlights that illustrate the project's success.

Project 2 Title:

Project 2 Category:

(Each project listed on the NCOE application must be from a different project category as listed on the previous page.)

Project 2 Responses:
- Explain why the council chose to do this project and identify those who benefited from it and how.
- Share a description of the project that explains what it was about and how it was run.
- Reflect on the outcome of the project including its impact on those who benefited, and share one or two memorable highlights that illustrate the project's success.

Project 3 Title:

Project 3 Category:

(Each project listed on the NCOE application must be from a different project category as listed on the previous page.)

Project 3 Responses:
- Explain why the council chose to do this project and identify those who benefited from it and how.
- Share a description of the project that explains what it was about and how it was run.
- Reflect on the outcome of the project including its impact on those who benefited, and share one or two memorable highlights that illustrate the project's success.