

# AGO ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

## Evaluation Guidelines

For the Chapter and the Mentor



The AGO Achievement Awards are designed to assist and encourage early-level organists of any age as they improve their skills. A mentor from the chapter volunteers his/her time and energy throughout the process – from planning through completion. The candidate, who must be a chapter member, prepares the requirements independently or with the help of the mentor, teacher, chapter member, or friend. He/she may then complete the requirements at any time during one or more appointments with the mentor. After completing the requirements, the chapter prints the certificate, presents it to the member during a chapter event, and reports the results to National Headquarters. This provides a way for the chapter to involve new organists in chapter activity, and to encourage them to continue their education through AGO certification.

Please observe the following guidelines throughout the process:

- **FRIENDLY AND PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT.** The Achievement Award should be encouraging and motivating at every point in the process. Treat the matter seriously but welcome the candidate as a colleague and as a person with dignity.
- **MENTORS** should be selected or approved by the AGO chapter board from among the more positive and welcoming chapter members. Ideally they should possess an AGO certificate or a college degree in organ. Alternatively, a chapter member with thorough knowledge of the subject matter can serve. *If the candidate is a minor, a parent or guardian must be present during every contact between the candidate and the mentor.*
- **DURING THE APPOINTMENT** all requirements should be completed without notes or resources of any sort. Present all of them in the order that they appear in the list of requirements. The candidate has them in advance, and they are meant to guide his/her study. Do not substitute your own questions, and do not make them easier or harder than they are.
- **COMPLETION** of a requirement means to demonstrate to the mentor's satisfaction and without assistance a reasonable degree of understanding of the concept or competency with the skill. However, *candidates never "fail" anything in this process.* Instead, allowing a little more time to study or practice will lead to completion. Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed. Once a requirement is completed, the mentor documents it by supplying the date in the blank on the mentor's copy of the candidate record.
- **COACHING** by the mentor is encouraged, even when the candidate is attempting to complete a requirement. For example, if the he/she wrongly identifies a Krummhorn as a string, you could try to elicit the right answer by asking about the "horn" part of the name and describing the historic musical instrument on which it is based. You could then ask for the identification of another rank to complete the requirement. Don't simply turn the candidate away after one mistake! If the candidate needs more than a little help to complete a requirement, however, schedule a follow-up meeting soon to complete the requirement – when he/she can complete it without assistance. Follow-ups may need to take place at the organ, but some can be done by phone, video conferencing, etc.
- **CORRECT ANSWERS.** Remember that there is often more than one "correct" solution. In describing a good organ shoe, for example, don't insist on a certain answer for the height of the heel. Instead, if the candidate's answer demonstrates a reasonable degree of understanding, discuss other possibilities and then move on.
- **CONCERNS** may be expressed by the candidate over completing an item. The mentor should empathize with the concern, show him/her how to complete it, and offer a way to complete the item the following day or as soon as possible.
- **AFTER COMPLETION** of all requirements, the mentor notifies the appropriate chapter officer and helps them arrange to print, sign, and present the Achievement Award certificate *as soon as possible* during a chapter event. The candidate must be present to receive the award. The certificate is available for chapter leaders online (<https://www.agohq.org/chapter-documents/>). It should be printed in color on high-quality card stock, signed by the chapter dean and the mentor, and packaged carefully and attractively for presentation. Submit the name of the chapter, the mentor, the candidate, the award, and the date of completion by email to AGO Headquarters ([info@agohq.org](mailto:info@agohq.org)).
- **YOUR OPINIONS** and impressions are valuable to the Committee on Professional Certification. Please note any ideas you have and share them with the Director of that committee.