

Other business: Regulations for the Kalman Prize prize for best paper

Background and request:

The Kalman Prize arose from a proposal made in early 2016 by Bernd Krauskopf, Gaven Martin, and Eamonn O'Brien to Robert McCulloch, the Chair of the Kalman Foundation. We then proposed to the President of NZMS that the prize be administered by the NZMS which was accepted in June 2016.

The regulations for the award were inspired by the Gavin Brown award offered by the Australian Math Society <https://austms.org.au/awards-grants/awards/gavin-brown-best-paper-prize/>

We selected an application process identical to that currently used by the AustMS: a paper is nominated, with the nomination letter offering reasons for its significance. No other information is provided to the committee managing the award, or to assessors.

The Kalman award was made following this application process in each of the years 2016-2018. In 2019, the NZMS changed the application process.

Nominations should include the following:

- a CV from each author of the publication, including: distinctions awarded, full list of graduate students supervised, full list of grants received (including names of co-investigators), full list of publications (including names of coauthors);

No discussion took place with the original proposers of the prize or with the Kalman Foundation which funds the award. We know of no evaluation of the original process which suggests that it was not fit for purpose.

One of us asked Vivien Kirk, Vice-President of the NZMS, for an explanation of this new regulation. She offered the following:

The main purpose is to make it easier for the committee to avoid conflicts of interest when selecting experts to comment on the papers; this is particularly important if the nominated papers lie out of the areas of expertise of the committee members. The assessors would not be provided with the CVs. For the purposes of checking for conflict of interest, we are particularly interested in co-investigators of grants, students supervised and co-authors on papers.

We are unconvinced by the above argument and question why the NZMS needs a list of "distinctions awarded". In particular, we suggested that an applicant provide a complete list of collaborators, addressing the central concern, but this was not accepted.

We are assured that only the committee sees the CVs of all authors of the publication. But it is this committee which makes the recommendation on the award. The new procedure ensures that much material which is extraneous to the decision process is presented formally to the people who make the award, and will inevitably influence judgements. Surely this is not in accord with best practice for awards committees?

We are also convinced that the more onerous procedure will impact on decisions to apply, especially regarding the need to provide CVs of collaborators from overseas.

We ask for a review of this regulation with the aim of making the regulations simpler again.

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