

THE ORDER OF THE SEA STAG

ON OUR STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

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The Kingdom of Atlantia's Order of the Sea Stag is an award that recognizes excellence in the teaching of combat arts, specifically for the rapier and armored fields. Kingdom Law (section B.4.5) defines the role of Order as (underline added for emphasis):

*The Order of the Sea Stag honors and recognizes those subjects who have distinguished themselves by their teaching of armored combat and rapier combat.*¹

Most SCA awards can be categorized into one of three categories: service, arts & sciences, or martial prowess. The Sea Stag is unusual because it does not fit cleanly into one of those categories, rather incorporating elements of all three.

This article tries to give some insight into our expectations when considering a candidate for addition to our order. It should enable you to write a better recommendation letter that addresses how your suggested person fits the standards for this award. That in turn, will allow us to do a better job of recognizing worthy candidates.

Like the other Awards of High Merit and the Peerages, the Order of the Sea Stag is a polling order. That means that all candidates for the order are discussed and evaluated by the current membership of the order. The actual decision to elevate the candidate belongs to the Crowns, but they must ask for the advice of the order before making that decision. This process can be lengthy; months to years can pass between recommendation and recognition. Candidly, sometimes it never happens.

So, what we are charged with recognizing is high quality martial instruction. By far, the most frequent question that we ask in order meetings is "who are their students?" What we're after when we discuss that is understanding how effective the teaching has been. If they are producing high quality fighters then they may be distinguished teachers.

The amount of of teaching is useful information for us to know, but it is not in and of itself sufficient. If a candidate has been the Knight Marshal of your Barony for 10 years and has taught all of your new fighters in that time, that's a lot of work that should be recognized, but without the additional data on how those fighters are performing, a service award might be a better fit for the person. If they teach a lot of period techniques at University or Pennsic then perhaps an A&S award is the correct recognition.

¹ At the time that this was written, the description of the Order on the Awards Recommendation site incorrectly includes "combat and target archery, thrown weapons, siege warfare, or youth combat." Kingdom Law is correct and hopefully this inconsistency will be corrected shortly.

If the person is providing the quality instruction that the Sea Stag is chartered to recognize, it should be possible to document the results of that instruction. Things like that 10 year Knight Marshal producing students that go on to become Knights, Dukes, White Scarves or MoDs or even reliably advancing a cadre of complete newbies into journeymen that are well prepared for someone else to provide advanced training to. Or that period technique instructor introducing new techniques that have allowed multiple people to become more serious tournament threats. Another possibility is a melee unit commander who has noticeably improved the effectiveness of his group's unit.

So, as you're writing your recommendation to our order, please do try to include information about where and how long they've taught. But, more importantly, also document who they've taught (could be names, could be something like "all of our mid-level fighters"), how they've taught ("adapting their instruction to the fighter's needs" for example) and what the effect of that teaching has been (student accomplishments, war contributions, etc.). If we have that information, then we can do a much better job of evaluating the candidate and advising Their Majesties on who they should recognized.