

SPEAK OUT FOR ENGINEERING: ORGANISERS GUIDELINES 2026

About the Competition

The competition is organised and run annually by the Young Members of the Institution. The competition was originally established in 1964 to challenge young engineers to prove that they could 'communicate effectively'. The competition has been adapted over the course of time to allow for greater participation, but the original theme of 'communicating effectively' still remains the emphasis of the competition and in 2004 changed its name to 'Speak Out for Engineering' Presentation Competition.

The competition is open to any Affiliate, Associate or Young Member of the Institution who has been professionally registered for ten years or less. It is aimed at promoting the ability to communicate mechanical engineering subjects effectively. It is specifically concerned with verbal and visual communication in describing and explaining technical subjects. It is also designed to promote interest in the art of communication. Competitors must give an oral presentation on a subject relating to mechanical engineering. The duration of the presentation must not exceed 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes for discussion and questions from the judging panel.

90% of the total marks are given for presentation with only 10% for technical content. This ensures that while all presentations must have mechanical engineering content in its broadest sense (e.g. purpose, research, design, feasibility and practicality), a topic concerning comparatively 'low' technology has an equal chance of success as one which is technologically very complex.

Prizes are awarded to 1st and 2nd places in all competition heats and the regional and global finals.

Prize money for 2026 is as follows:

Competition Heats

- 1st Prize – £300 & certificate
- 2nd Prize – £200 & certificate.

Regional Finals**

- 1st Prize – £500 & certificate
- 2nd Prize – £300 & certificate

**Americas, Europe, Middle East & Africa, North East Asia, Oceania, South Asia, South East Asia, UK & Ireland Regional Finals

Global Final

- 1st Prize – £1,000 & certificate
- 2nd Prize – £500 & certificate

Prizes are funded from the Institution's Trust for Education and Research. Any running costs associated with the competition are funded from regional budgets.

The decision of the judges on the award of the prizes shall be final.

Eligibility and Virtual Competition Rules

Prior to organising a SOfE competition all organisers **MUST** ensure that they have read through and understood the Eligibility and Competition Rules. If there are any queries regarding the competition please contact sofe@imeche.org

- Competitors **must give an oral presentation on a mechanical engineering** subject to be broken down as follows:
 - Presentation length: 20 mins
 - Question & Answer session: 10 mins
- The presentation must be made by an individual regardless of whether the subject is part of a group technical project.
- At the time of the competition, all competitors **MUST** be Young Members of the Institution. A Young Member is an Affiliate, Associate or Member of the Institution who has been professionally registered for ten years or less. In the event that a competitor is not a Young Member of the Institution they will be immediately disqualified from the competition and no prize money or certificate will be issued. It is the responsibility of the organiser to ensure all competitors are current Young Members of the Institution. If guidance is required please contact HQ at sofe@imeche.org
- There should be **no conflict of interest between organisers and entrants**. SOFE organisers cannot compete in the competition. An organiser found to be competing in the competition will not be eligible to receive prize money or certificate.
- **Prize money cannot be awarded in competitions of fewer than four participants.** Organisers should ensure there is an adequate number of participants (at least 4) so there are no automatic winners of the competition. The competition may be run locally without prize money if there are fewer than four participants. If this occurs, only a certificate will be issued to the winner.
- Organisers **must satisfactorily complete the 'Winner's Notification Form'** before payment of prizes can be made.
- **Prize money is fixed and must not be split.**
- Competitors are **required to complete the Speak Out for Engineering: Competitors' Registration Form**, which should be sent to the organiser when notification is given of the intention to enter the competition. Failure to submit the form may invalidate the entry.
- A winning entry in any year is not eligible for entry in subsequent years. In the event that a previous winning entry has participated in a subsequent competition heat, no prize money or certificate will be issued.

Competition Heats

Each region is responsible for organising their respective heats. Each SOfE organiser will be responsible for making the decision as to whether local SOfE competitions take place in person or on a virtual platform. To ensure fairness it is recommended that each SOfE competition must either be conducted fully virtually or in person. Please see appendix 1 for further information regarding running a virtual competition.

- It is recommended that each heat has a dedicated SOFE organiser.
- Regions must not exceed their annual competition heat allocations. Annual heat allocations must be agreed prior to arranging a heat. Please contact sofe@imeche.org to confirm your regions allocations.
- As soon as date is confirmed, organiser to write to sofe@imeche.org to details of the planned competition.
- Organisers may wish to run the competition heat over several occasions i.e. one Region may prefer to run the competition heat on one evening only, whilst another may prefer to hold it

over a series of evenings or during the daytime. Please note that there will only be one set of prizes available, regardless of the number of occasions the competition heat has taken place.

- The organiser will have the discretion to determine whether the competition will be run over more than one separate occasion and it may be necessary to limit the number of entries if there is significant interest.
- Individual regions/areas may wish to collaborate with the individual country/area panels to run a series of cross regional heats.
 - Example: within the Europe Region there may be an allocation of 8 competition heats and 1 regional final. Traditionally and in part a reflection of physical boundaries these 8 competition heats would have been run within that country/area e.g. SOfE Heat Malta and SOfE Heat Germany. With the agreement of the region as a whole – Young Member Regional Chair and regional SOfE organisers – these 8 competition heats could be run across the regions irrespective of country/area e.g. Europe Competition A, Europe Competition B. The finalist from the series of 8 competition heats would then compete in the overall regional final.
- Entries should be submitted to the local organiser and **not** directly to IMechE. The date of the competition will be at the discretion of the organiser, but they must take place in prior to the local regional final. Apart from the of the Global Final all SOfE competitions must be completed by **31 December** each year.

How to Enter

- It is the responsibility of the SOfE organiser to publicise and promote upcoming SOfE competition heats with the regional young members.
 - It is recommended that this information is available on the region's NearYou webpage.
- Competitors are required to complete the Speak Out for Engineering: Competitors' Registration Form (found on the IMechE SOfE [Webpage](#)) and return to the regional SOfE organiser by the requested date.

Judges

90% of the total marks are given for presentation with only 10% for technical content. This ensures that, while all presentations must have mechanical engineering content in its broadest sense, all presentations have the same chance of success despite varying degrees of technical content.

It is recommended that each heat has a judging panel made up of at least 3 judges. Where a competition heat is taking place over a series of days/evenings it is recommended using the same judging panel to ensure consistency.

The decision of the judges on the award of the prizes shall be final and no correspondence can be entered into.

NB judges do not need to be IMechE members.

Judges' Deliberations and Announcement of Results

It is at the discretion of each organising committee to decide how best to conduct the judges' deliberations and the announcement of the results. The options include:

- a) Deliberation and announcement of results conducted live at the heat competition. This would require a separate meeting to be held. It is essential this is a private meeting with only the judges and SOfE organiser (or other organising committee member) in attendance. The judges will deliberate and return to the competition heat to announce the results.
- b) Deliberation and announcement of the results to take place at a later date. SOfE facilitates a meeting of the judges in order for deliberation to occur. Once results are confirmed the SOfE

organiser to email competitors with the outcome. It is strongly recommended that these deliberations take place within 24 hours of the competition itself.

- c) Whatever method chosen, the winner's notification must be completed and submitted to HQ within 2 weeks of the competition.

Audience

The SOfE organiser is encouraged to attract an audience for the competition heat.

- Audience may comprise both members and non-members of the Institution.
- It is recommended that the SOfE organiser publicises the competition heat with clear instructions on how an individual may register to attend as audience member.
- For reporting purposes, organisers are requested to record the number of both member and non-member attendees and include these details on the winners' notification form.
- Encourage audience members to participate in the Q&A session.

Winners' Notification Form

A completed winners' notification form must be submitted within two weeks of the heat. A copy of the updated winners' notification form can be found on the IMechE SOfE [Webpage](#).

Top Tips for Organisers

- Select a suitable venue with presentation equipment available. Advise competitors of the venue and equipment in advance.
- The organiser should provide / advise competitors and judges to have water to drink during the competition.
- Conduct a judges briefing prior to go through the marking scheme.
- At the beginning of the competition the organiser should inform all attendees to ensure all mobile phones are switched to silent.
- *For virtual competitions* - the video conference system should be checked and tested prior to the heat competition. Ensure clear log-in instructions are issued to all attendees. At the beginning of the competition the organiser should inform all attendees to switch off their video and microphone. This should only be switched on when invited to speak or presenting.

Contact Details

Please do not hesitate to contact the SOfE team if you have any queries.

HQ SOfE Team - sofe@imeche.org

Prizes & Certificates - awards@imeche.org

Appendix 1: Virtual Heat Competition Procedures

Video Conference Requirements

It is the responsibility of the regional SOfE organiser to make the necessary arrangements for the SOfE heat and to ensure the appropriate Video Conferencing platform is selected. It is the Institution's recommendation that Microsoft Teams is used.

Microsoft Teams is currently being rolled out to all IMechE volunteers in stages. If an account has not yet been set up, SOfE organisers are to make themselves known to HQ by emailing sofe@imeche.org to set them up with an IMechE teams account, ideally at least 1 month prior to the heat. Only the SOfE organiser will require access to a Teams account from which they will send out the meeting invite and host the competition heat. All competitors, judges and audience members will be able to join the competition heat as guests. If for any reason Teams is not used, the following requirements must be considered when selecting a Video Conference (VC) platform:

- All SOfE attendees – competitors, judges, and audience members – can easily access the VC platform.
- All competitors should be on screen and visible to all throughout their Q&A session.
- There should be a chat function facility to allow audience members to submit questions.
- It must be possible to stream pre-recorded videos.
- Email addresses and contact details must not be visible during the meeting.

Pre-recorded videos

All competitors are required to submit a pre-recorded video in advance of the competition.

- It is the organiser's responsibility to establish a deadline for receipt of videos and ensure that all videos have been received by that date.
- It is organiser's responsibility to advise competitors as how videos should be submitted e.g. either by email or a secure online storage platform such as Google Drive, Dropbox etc.
- It is the organiser's responsibility to ensure all videos received can be played on the chosen video conference platform. The organiser should notify a competitor if there are problems in viewing the submitted video. In such a situation it would be at the discretion of the local organiser to decide whether a video can be resubmitted.
- Videos may be recorded on a mobile device. Competitors may use Power Point presentation or similar. To avoid possible distortion when streaming, it is strongly recommended that the competitors should not use animation in their presentations.
- Competitors are to clearly state their name at the beginning of their video.
- Further information and guidance regarding video streaming using the Microsoft Teams platform can be found [here](#). It is the organiser's responsibility to provide guidance for video streaming if an alternative video conferencing platform has been chosen.
- By submitting a video, the competitor has agreed that this video, for the purpose of the SOfE competition, can be shared with the judging panel, audience members and organising committee. If a competitor has any queries regarding this item please contact HQ at sofe@imeche.org or your SOfE organiser prior to submission.
- These videos may also be uploaded to the IMechE website and IMechE YouTube channel for others to view and be used in future IMechE marketing campaigns. In this scenario, HQ, prior to upload, will contact the individual competitors to gain consent.

Presentation: Viewing the pre-recorded videos

The SOfE organiser will determine how best to view the pre-recorded presentation videos. There are a number of options:

- a) The pre-recorded videos are streamed live at the competition heat for all to see. Judges are to allocate marks based on this viewing.

- In the event of issues with video streaming quality, the judges may be permitted to review the pre-recorded presentation outside of the competition and instead mark the presentation based on this second viewing.
- b) Judges are sent the pre-recorded videos in advance of the competition heat and marks for this section awarded and submitted to the organiser prior to the competition heat.
 - In the event videos are not streamed live at the competition the organiser may wish to upload all videos to a secure online storage platform such as Google Drive, Dropbox etc. where they will be made accessible for audience members and other competitors to view.

Question & Answer Session

In all scenarios the 10-minute Q&A session must be conducted live with the competitor and all judges in attendance.

- If connectivity problems arise for either the competitor or the judges, this section may be temporarily paused while the situation is rectified.
- During this session, the competitor must be visible to all attendees.
- The chat box should be used by audience members wishing to submit a question. It is the responsibility of the organiser and not the competitor to monitor this chat box.

Top Tips: Pre-Recorded Videos

- Make sure you are in a quiet environment which is free from distractions.
- Make sure you are familiar with the functionality of your chosen recording software.
 - Whilst the IMechE will not limit what software you use; it is to be noted that it should be able to record video and audio clearly and be easily transferable between file storage locations.
 - Microsoft PowerPoint has the functionality to record audio and video that can be replayed, however other software packages offer the same functionality and it is up to the competitor to choose.
- If using supporting slides, ensure that they can be read easily during the video recording.
- Make sure you watch the final version of the video and ensure that you are happy with the quality. Prior to submission it is advised you try to transfer the file and ensure it will play on a different media device.
- You can record the presentation as many times as you would like, so make sure to select the best version for submission. It is advisable that a friend or colleague watches it first, as they may be able to provide useful feedback.
- If you would like to have an audience whilst recording this may help you feel more comfortable whilst presenting.