

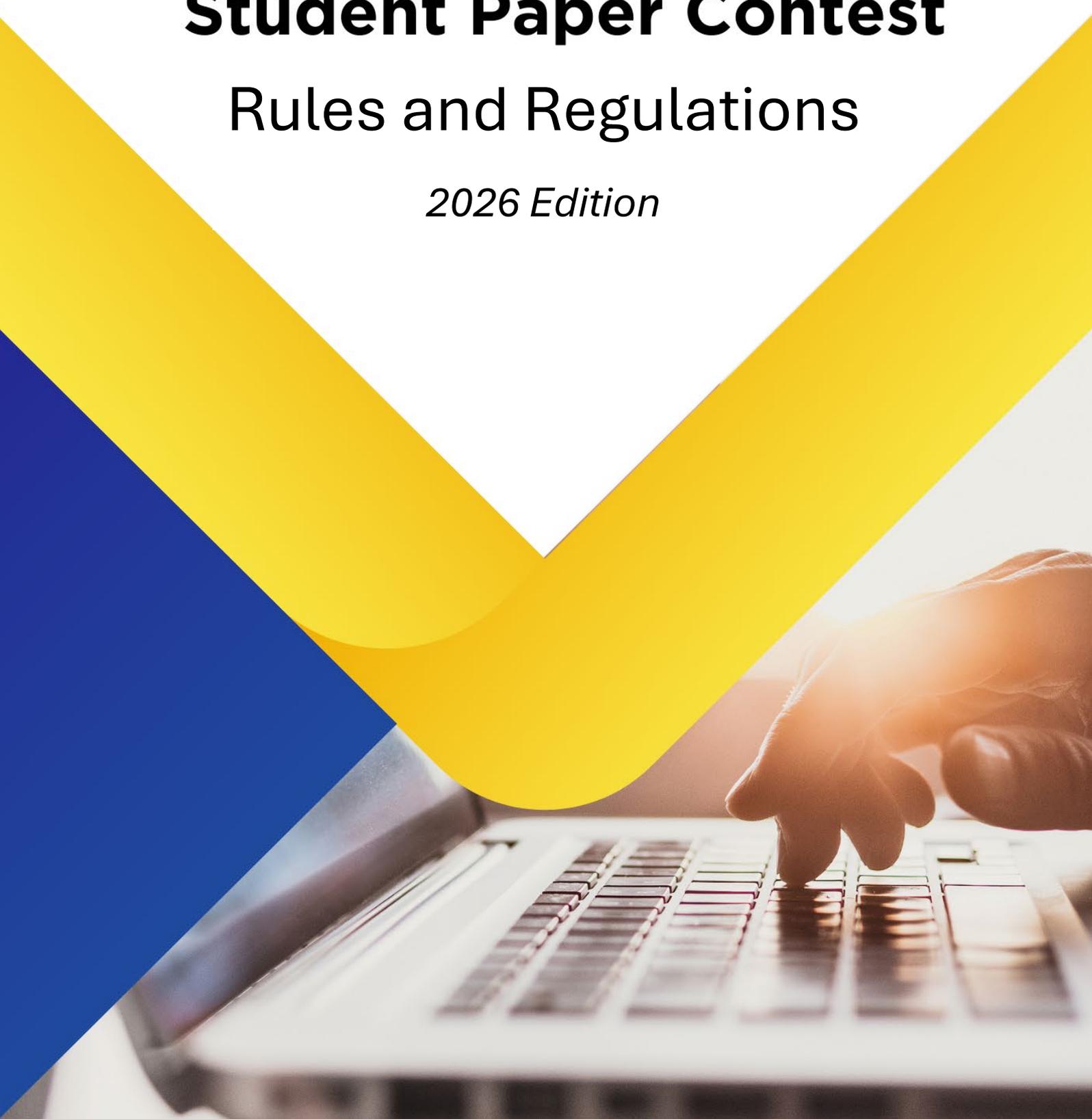


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Student Paper Contest

Rules and Regulations

2026 Edition





Student Paper Contest

Rules and Regulations
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Overview

The Student Paper Contest (SPC) is SPE's primary student competition to highlight an individual student's technical merit. Through the review of an abstract, presentation, and question and answer session, a panel of judges review technical presentations to find the most innovative, relevant, and well researched papers across SPE.

The top ranked presentations from the regional competitions will be invited to submit their full paper and join the international round to determine our International Student Paper Contest winners across Undergraduate, Master's, and PhD divisions.

The rules and information in this document are to guide participants and volunteers, as well as aid the organization of Regional and International Student Paper Contests as part of the SPE International program. Only participants from official SPE Regional Contests will be permitted to take part in the International Round at ATCE.

Similar competitions can be run by SPE Sections and Chapters, however, these do not influence the application or qualification process for participants of the SPC Program. Non-official contests are not required to follow the rules and regulations laid out in this document. The official SPE Student Paper Contests can be found listed on the [SPC Schedule Webpage](#). Only participants in these events will be considered for qualification to the international round.

The SPE International Standing Committee, the Student Development Committee (SDC) and the SPE Young Member Programs Team are the ruling bodies on changes to the Student Paper Contest program. The SDC report directly to the Board of Directors who authorise any significant changes.

Program Updates

The Student Paper Contest is under constant review for improvements, and each year amendments can be made to ensure the program meets the needs of modern participants. Any new changes made since 2024 will be highlighted using this symbol.

NEW FOR 2026

Significant changes from the last few years include; that Faculty advisors are now permitted to be listed as a co-author, though participants must still be the primary lead for the paper and presentations given. Regional participants will only be judged on the abstract and presentation given.

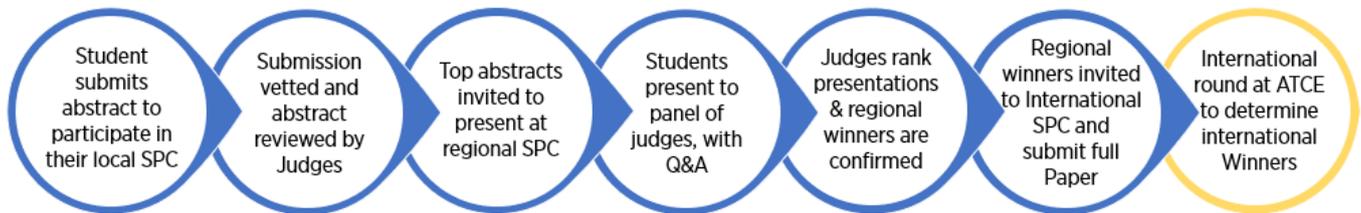
If invited to the International Student Paper Contest at ATCE, a full technical paper will be required, and this will be considered by judges when scoring presentations.

SPE International reserves the right to update the rules and regulations at any time, but we will make all efforts to ensure participants and potential applicants are made aware of these changes.

For any questions or queries relating to this program, please contact the SPE Young Member Programs Team at spc@spe.org or speak to your regional specialist who is managing your local SPC.

Competition Process

The basic overview for participating in the SPE Student Paper Contest is shown below, however, more detailed aspects are explained throughout the rules in this document.



Participation Steps (detailed)

1. In order to participate in the Student Paper Contest, all students must submit an application, including an abstract using the SPE Online Application Form. This is used by SPE staff to vet your eligibility to participate in the contest, and for judges to review your topic and abstract. Please remember that you should only apply for the Regional contest that corresponds to the university you are representing.
2. Your status and application contest is reviewed to ensure it meets the criteria for the Student Paper Contest. This includes reviewing your Membership Status, Graduation date, Sanction eligibility, Content Suitability, and the region you are applying for. If you meet all criteria, judges will then review your abstract.
3. The judges will score and rank all submitted abstracts. Depending on the capacity of the regional contest, the top candidates will be invited to participate in the Regional Contest. If a minimum number of abstracts is not met, some divisions may be merged or cancelled. The requirement to host in-person or virtually may vary from region to region depending on available AV.
4. Participants will present their work to a panel of judges. Presentations will be a maximum of 20 minutes, though may be less depending on available time. This will be followed by a question and answer period from the judges.
5. Judges will score presentations looking at relevance to industry, importance, strength of information, organization of project/work shown, novel information provided, and commerciality of information. Once all presentations have been scored, the presentations will be ranked. These rankings are combined with other judges rankings to determine the final ranking.
6. The highest ranked participants will be announced the regional SPC winners. They will be asked to provide a full technical paper and be invited to present their work as part of the ATCE International Student Paper Contest, where they will be joined by winners from other regions.
7. Regional winners will present at the Annual Technical Conference & Exhibition. The contest will follow the same procedures as the regional contest, though information in the full technical papers will also be considered during the scoring. The judge rankings will be used to determine the International Winners for that year.

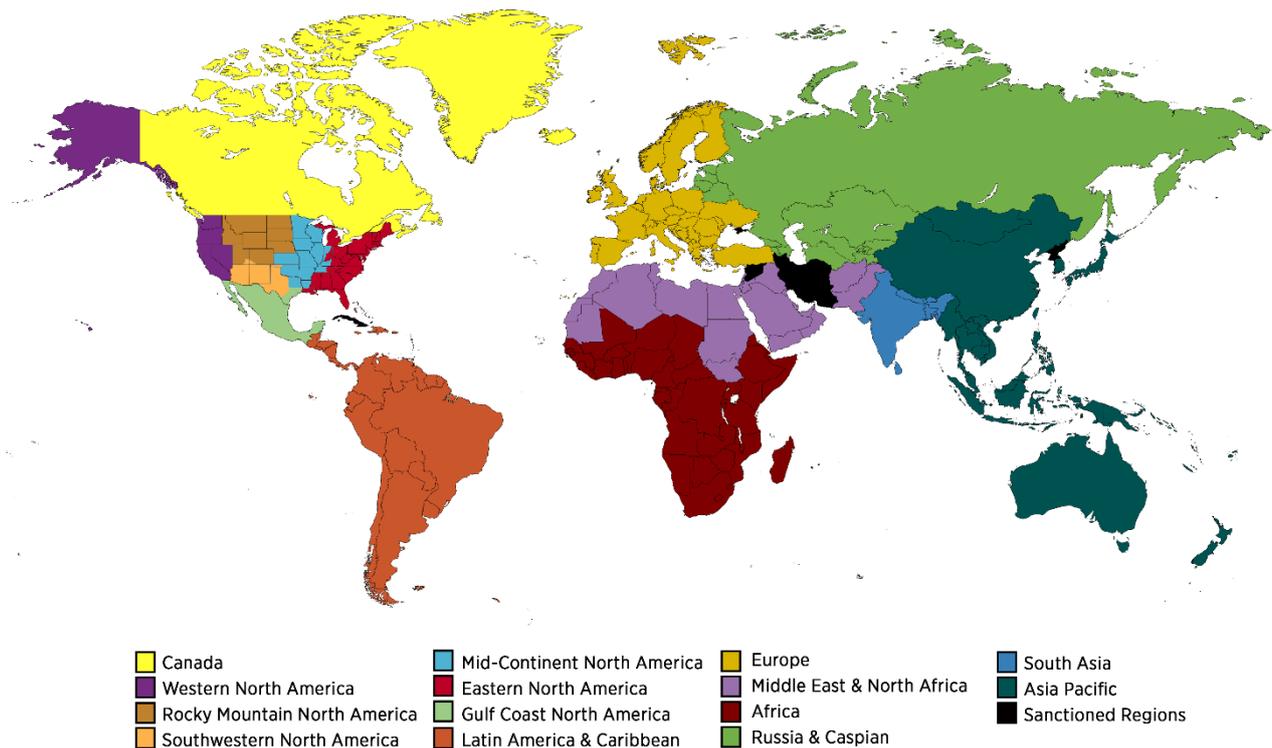
Regional Event Organization

Regional event dates, platforms and locations will be determined by SPE Staff in collaboration with SPE Regional Directors who are responsible for activities in those areas. SPE Student Chapters/Sections may be invited by SPE to host a regional contest, or they may be stand-alone events. Contests can be hosted as fully virtual events, physical events, or hybrid events (combined virtual and physical). Contests may also be hosted to accompany a major regional or SPE International conference. **The approach used for a specific Regional event will be made by SPE Staff in collaboration with the Regional Director(s) which represent that area.**

Currently, fourteen Regional Student Paper Contests are recognized by SPE, taking place as shown on the map below.

A [map of SPC Regions](#) can also be found on our website, but for any concerns about what region your university is represented by, please email spc@spe.org.

TIP: Please see [rule 2.8](#) for rules regarding which region students should apply for.



Dates and details for applying to individual SPC Regional Contests can be found at the SPC Webpage once they are confirmed; <https://www.spe.org/students/schedule.php>.

All students should participate in the SPC Region that covers the location of the University they are representing. Only participants that take part in the Regional Student Paper Contests listed can be selected for the International Round. On occasions regions may be merged, for example, if a large student event is taking place that covers students from multiple regions.



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In the event that a contest or a division is not held in their assigned region, a student may request to participate in an alternate region. This request is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Any applications to participate in alternate regional contest must be made to the Young Member Programs Team at spc@spe.org. This must be approved by the Regional Directors representing the SPC Regions involved, and they reserve the right to decline any such requests.

The following explanations **will not** be considered sufficient to move to another contest; Failure to meet submission deadlines, being unaware of contest dates, matters of convenience, conflict or clash of timings.

Contest Rules:

The following rules described in this document will apply to all official SPE Student Paper Contests. All rules will be enforced, and it is the responsibility of each participant to ensure that they are aware of these rules prior to the competition. We trust that our participants will adhere to the rules in good faith, and any deliberate breaking of the rules will result in immediate removal from the contest. For any questions relating to eligibility or contest processes, please contact spc@spe.org

1.0 Contest Structure

1.1 Each contest division must have at least three contestants in order to be organized. A regional contest is normally conducted in three separate divisions: Undergraduate, Master's, and PhD.

1.2 If there are entries from three or more eligible students for a division, that division must be held as part of a regional contest.

1.3 Combined Divisions:

If a Master's or PhD division contest does not have the minimum number of entries of at least three students each, they can be combined to create a "Postgraduate" division. If there are still not enough applicants to run a combined Postgraduate division, the Master's and PhD applicants should not be combined with Undergraduate division.

If an Undergraduate, or Postgraduate division, is not possible due to low participation (less than three participants), the students may be allowed to present at an alternative region if the Regional Directors are in agreement.

In the event of a combined Master's/PhD division, it should be made clear to the judges which contestants are of what level within a merged category. This ensures that they judge each student accordingly to their level of ability. However, **only one winner will result from a combined contest.** These winners will enter the division that meet their degree level in the international round.

TIP: Please see rule 7.2 for entry requirement changes for applicants per university during combined divisions.



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2.0 Entrance Requirements

- 2.1 Contestants must be SPE Members in good standing at the time of application and still be in good standing at the date of the contest.
- 2.2 If the participant has already graduated, it must have been less than 12 months before the Regional Contest. Thus, a student graduating in March 2023 must compete by March 2024. The student should only present work carried out at the educational level that corresponds with the division in which they are competing, regardless of whether they have gone on to a higher level of education. For example: A student who has earned a degree as an undergraduate less than twelve months ago, and has proceeded into a Master's degree, can still compete in the Undergraduate division, but must only present work carried out as an Undergraduate. If a student wins within his/her division at a Regional Contest, he/she will compete at the International Contest within that same division and present work on the same topic which was presented at the Regional Contest.
- 2.3 Students are not required to be a member of an SPE Student Chapter in order to participate in the contest.
- 2.4 Students must be eligible to compete in their regional contest in accordance with the USA and EU Sanction laws which SPE operates by: <http://www.spe.org/about/laws.php>. Please note that Sanction Laws may impede a student's ability to accept SPE International prizes or continue to the international round even if they are successful at a regional level. Please note that Sanction Laws also apply to virtual events, though physical travel is not required.

Note: As an international program, SPC administration and staffing are funded by our USA accounts, therefore even if participation is hosted outside of the USA, SPE would still be in breach of Sanction Laws if sanctioned students participate.
- 2.5 All applications will be vetted by SPE Staff before consideration. Final rulings on questionable eligibility will be made by SPE. Please direct enquiries to spc@spe.org for any concerns.
- 2.6 Only one entry per student, per year (between ATCE's) will be accepted. Multiple abstracts or entries to the SPC within the same year will not be accepted.
- 2.7 A student may participate in SPC more than once across several years, and in the same category, as long as they still meet all other eligibility requirements and do so with new and previously un-presented paper as per Rules of Form and Content of Presentation/Paper (*Please see [rule 4.0 to 4.9](#)*).
- 2.8 Students must participate in their allocated region unless their region is not hosting a contest during that SPC cycle. In the event of no contest being hosted, an alternate region may be requested, which will be clarified by SPE Staff. An Individual's inability to participate in their region cannot be considered in order to avoid a university having an unfair representation across different regions across the overall contest.

TIP: Please see item 7.0 Selection of Contestants for related information.



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3.0 Entrance and Participation Procedures

- 3.1 Each participant must adhere to the procedures and deadlines established by the contest host and that of this document.
- 3.2 A full technical paper will only be required in order to participate at the international level of the contest. **Only abstracts are necessary at the regional level.** Failure to provide this by the required deadlines will result in expulsions from the contest. Paper guidelines will be provided by SPE Staff if you are accepted to present at the international level.
- 3.3 Students must provide all that is requested from them by the host Chapter/ Section or SPE Staff – this includes papers, videos, forms, applications etc. – by the deadlines provided. Failure to provide a form or paper that is asked of them by the deadline provided may result in a forfeit of their place in the contest.
- 3.4 If virtual and hybrid events are permitted at your contest, submitting a pre-recorded version of your presentation in advance of the contest is the preferred option. In the event of any connection issues, your presentation can still be viewed by judges without impeding the overall contest, and judges' questions can be quickly hosted on an alternative platform or phone line. Live streaming your presentation may be permitted, however, poor internet connection, failure to reconnect, or participate during your assigned timeslot in the agenda may result in disqualification from the contest. You must confirm your method of presentation with regional event organizers in advance of the contest by the deadlines given.
- 3.5 If a student is unable to participate in the international round, either virtually or physically, the subsequent highest-ranking contestant in the regional division may be extended an invitation to compete internationally as the region's representative. This will only occur if ample notice is provided, considering submission deadlines, and allowing sufficient time for necessary arrangements. The decision will be made at the discretion of the SPE Young Member Programs Team.

4.0 Rules on Form and Content of Presentation/Paper

- 4.1 All abstracts/papers submitted should be written by the presenting author. Jointly written abstracts/papers are not permitted. Participants are permitted to list **one** additional co-author to their submission but they must be a supporting faculty member. That faculty member should not be the lead writer for the abstract/paper, but can have supported or guided the participant. Their permission will be required to proceed as a co-author. Participants can submit as a Sole Author if they prefer or do not receive support from their Faculty.

Researchers and contributors, such as other supervisors, tutors, or fellow students, who assisted the project, can only be acknowledged as “Contributors” to the paper and presentation but **not as an author.**

Using AI generated content as part of your abstract/paper is considered an additional author, and **is not permitted** as part of the Student Paper Contest. Only content written by the person presenting at the contest should be considered. Using content created by AI or other authors will disqualify participants from the contest.



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TIP: If you are unsure if your paper is sole authored or have concerns about co-authorship, please contact spe@spe.org to avoid disqualification at a later stage.

For more information on SPE Publication policies please visit <https://www.spe.org/en/authors/policies/>

- 4.2 A presentation/paper should present, as completely as possible, the original work of the author in planning the investigation, performing the work, interpreting the results, and preparing the presentation/paper. **Submitting or presenting others work as your own, including AI generated content, or work already presented in a Student Paper Contest, will result in removal from the contest.**
- 4.3 The subject of a presentation/paper must be related to petroleum engineering, which is defined as the application of basic and engineering sciences to the finding, development, and recovery of oil, gas, and other resources from wells.
- 4.4 A presentation/paper based on course work, including theses and dissertations, is eligible.
- 4.5 If selected to present at the international level, participants will be required to provide a full paper on the presentation topic. Information from the technical paper will be considered when judges review presentations. You will retain all rights to your paper. **Technical Papers are not required for the regional level of the contest.**

All winners of the regional contests will be offered the opportunity to publish their paper in OnePetro, at which point copyright forms will need to be completed in order to distribute your paper. **Publishing your paper is not mandatory.** However, a copy of your paper will be necessary in advance of the presentation for the judges to review. Failure to provide a full paper for judges by the deadline given, may result in expulsion from the competition.

TIP: SPE is adopting ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID), a widely accepted unique identifier for authors, giving them control over their content and eliminating ambiguities. All SPE contributors, including those who wish to publish their work through the Student Paper Contest, will be required to have an ORCID iD starting 1 January, 2023. For more information on getting your FREE ORCID account please visit; <https://www.spe.org/en/authors/resources/orcid/>

- 4.6 All papers will be checked that they meet the SPC Rules and Regulations including authorship, word count, AI generated content, and [plagiarism](#) before we can confirm your place at the competition.
- 4.7 At time of submission, the presentation/paper must not have been accepted for publication in any [SPE peer-reviewed journal](#), or presented at previous official SPE Regional Student Presentation/Presentation. (Papers presented at non-SPC presentations, or contests sponsored by universities, SPE sections, or other organizations are allowed.)
- 4.8 The presentation/paper must be presented in the English language, the official language of SPE. All contestants that progress to the International Student Paper Contest must present in English.

- 4.9 Papers must be submitted in a typed form in English. The paper must consist of a minimum of 1,000 words of text, plus as many diagrams and supporting illustrations as necessary to clarify the subject matter. **The paper must not exceed 7,000 words equivalent of text and diagrams, with each diagram considered to be the equivalent of 250 words.**

*TIP: Word count includes everything in the main body of the text (including headings, images, tables, citations, quotes, lists, etc). References, appendices and footnotes **should not** the main body of their text. If information integral to then understanding of your paper is not in the main body of your text it may result in a lower score in clarity and communication in your paper.*

SPE Staff are able to provide templates and guidance on writing your technical paper, please visit the [SPC Webpage](#) or email spc@spe.org for more information. For publication manuscript guidance SPC follows the same [formatting guidance](#) as all other SPE Publications.

- 4.10 The presentation may not exceed 20 minutes, less presentation time may be allotted to Regional contests, to a minimum of 10 minutes for the presentation, depending on the number of contestants per category. Contest organizers will clarify the time permitted for each contest. The time allowed for questions will be at the discretion of the moderator, questions will only be invited from the judging panel, not from the audience.

TIP: It should be made clear to the students who have been selected to compete that they will have between 10-20 minutes for their presentation and that the exact time they will have will be confirmed to them nearer to the contest date once final numbers and the schedule have been determined.

- 4.11 When presenting virtually you must adhere to the guidance and format requested by SPE Staff. Virtual presentations typically are hosted via videoconferencing platforms followed by a live videoconference Q&A session. This follows the same time criteria as the physical contest. SPE highly recommends a pre-recorded video being submitted if participating virtually. In the event of a failed connection your video can be shown to judges and a live Q&A will be hosted on an alternative platform. Judges will only be able to watch your video once prior to scoring your presentation.

If for any reason a pre-recorded video is not provided, and a live connection fails, attempt to resolve the connection must be made within the planned timeframe of the event, for example rearranging the order of presenters to allow more time. Failure to meet this timeframe with result in the participant being considered a “no show”.

***Note:** To allow as much time as possible to resolve any technical issues, virtual presentations during a hybrid contest are commonly held together at the start of the contest. This allows the schedule to be rearranged if there are any technical issues. Delaying the contest beyond the planned contest time will not be possible due to the availability of volunteers, and ensuring all participants have equal time to prepare.*

- 4.12 The format of virtual presentations will consist of your presentation slides as the sole visual element, and your unaltered verbal delivery (i.e., without alterations in the voice such as fast-forwarding) as the sole audio element. In order to ensure fair comparison between physical



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and virtual presentations, if the submitted video does not meet with guidelines by the deadlines given, this may result in expulsion from the contest.

- 4.13** Participants will maintain all rights to their presentation, abstract, paper, or pre-recorded videos, and can withdraw permission to share at any time, even if prior consent has been given. If successful at the regional level, participants will be offered the opportunity to publish their paper in OnePetro, at which point transfer of copyright to SPE is a requirement for publication.

TIP: SPE Staff are able to provide best practices on how to record your video which is also available on the SPC Webpage.

5.0 Financial Assistance for Participants

Students should be encouraged to approach their sponsoring Section and/or local companies to apply for financial assistance for the costs of travelling to the Regional Qualifier contests. SPE International cannot provide any funding for regional contest travel. Funding for International participants may vary year on year and cannot be guaranteed.

6.0 Selection of Judges and Moderators

The host group / SPE Staff are responsible for:

- Selecting a “review panel” to review abstracts where a contest is open-applications (not applicable where Chapters submit representative candidates).
- Selecting judges to review abstracts and oral presentations on the day of the contest.
- Providing a non-voting moderator for the presentations.
- Ensuring all judges and moderators are up to date with contest procedures and rule updates.

The following guidelines apply to the selection of judges for the contest:

- A minimum of three and a maximum of six judges should participate for each division of the contest. It is recommended to recruit more than the minimum number of judges to account for potential dropouts.
- Preferably an odd number of judges should participate in case of a tie break situation.
- It is recommended to have only one judge per university, where possible, to address any (perceived) conflicts of interests.
- Judges in the undergraduate division must hold at least an undergraduate degree in engineering or applied science. Judges in the master’s division must hold at least a master’s degree. Judges in the PhD division must hold a PhD degree.
- A balance among representatives from different technical disciplines including research, production, management, and education should be considered in selecting the judges.
- Ideally each judge should be a member of SPE.

7.0 Selection of Contestants

- 7.1** No more than two contestants can be from each Student Chapter or university for each division of the contest.



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- 7.2 In the event of combined divisions, two contestants may be from the same chapter/university for each degree category. For example: In a combined Master's/PhD Division, two contestants from a student chapter/ university may present Master's papers and two from the chapter/university may present PhD papers.
- 7.3 In contests with open applications, students of that region shall receive notification of the call for abstracts and the deadline by which they must submit their abstracts, and any other necessary forms, and who to submit them to. The review panel must then select from the abstracts which contestants will advance to the regional contest to compete. Abstracts will be submitted to the review panel anonymously to protect members of the review panel from potential conflicts of interest. In contests of open applications, the review panel shall confer via phone or email to select the finalists to present at the contest, as well as the alternates should a finalist be unable to present.
- 7.4 Some SPE Chapters may decide to host their own preliminary contest in order to determine which two students may represent their university in the regional contest in order to adhere to rule 7.1. In these cases, Chapters of that region must host their contests prior to the official Regional Contest. Chapters will receive notification of the call for abstracts and the deadline by which they must submit their two candidates, their abstracts, and any other necessary forms. Chapters may then host their own paper contests to select their two candidates for the regional contest. Chapter led selection processes may vary from official SPC rules, and participation at a Chapter run contest does not guarantee acceptance to the Regional Contest if SPC eligibility criteria is not met. Chapter contest winners will still be required to apply using the normal regional application process.

8.0 Judging of Presentations and Selection of Winners

Judges must use the official SPE Student Paper Contest Judge Score Form to determine the ranking of their contestants. These forms can be accessed by emailing spc@spe.org or your Regional Activities Specialist. These forms are used for evaluating contestants' presentations and must adhere to the following procedures:

- Following each presentation, judges must score each speaker on the **Official Judges' Score Form**, retaining copies of all sheets until the session is completed. Based on the Scores, the judge will rank each presentations in order of preference. This ranking should be recorded on the **Judges Ranking Sheet** and given to the Moderator. In the event of a tie score, the judge should determine which they prefer to rank higher.
- Based on the judges ranking, a score is allocated to each contestant per judge. For example, in a contest of 10 people the top ranked place will get 10 points, and the lowest ranked will get 1 point. Each judge will complete a ranking form which will be given to the Moderator after all presentations have been viewed.
- Each judges' ranking score is recorded on the **Official Moderator's Score Card** by the Moderator at the end of the contest to collate the ranking scores.
- The Moderator(s) will check the results with SPE Staff or the Judges (if no staff are available) to confirm the top participants. The result should be agreed by the panel of judges before being announced.
- There is no provision for tie votes; ties must be resolved by the judges. In the event of a tie, judges will collectively agree on the final ranking of contests, and the final ranking may vary from the individual scores of judges.



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- Winners are to be named as follows:
 - If there are six or more contestants in the division, first, second, and third place winners shall be named.
 - If there are four or five contestants in the division, only first and second-place winners shall be named.
 - If there are only three contestants in the division, only a first-place winner shall be named.
- Judges individual scores will not be shared to participants. however, Judges feedback or ranking can be provided to students where appropriate to assist them with the continuous development of their presentation skills.

The first-place winners of each division from each SPE Regional Student Paper Contest will automatically qualify for the International Student Paper Contest to be held in conjunction with the Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition. The contestants shall follow the submission format and schedule of the conference as provided to them by SPE's Young Member Programs team at spc@spe.org.

9.0 Awards and Funding

- 9.1 Funding for participation in regional paper contests will not be provided for by SPE International. Sections and Chapters are encouraged to source sponsorship to cover costs of running the program.
- 9.2 Prizes: For the first-place Regional contestants, SPE International will invite them to participate in the ATCE International Round, covering flights, accommodation, VISA fees, and ATCE registration. All Regional winners will be listed on the SPE International Website.
- 9.3 All regional winners will be offered the opportunity to publish their paper in OnePetro. This is considered part of the Prize but it is not a mandatory requirement to publish with SPE, and if you choose not to do so, this will not impact your scores in the contest. Your full paper will still be required for Judges to review prior to the contest, but your paper does not have to be published.
- 9.4 SPE may also grant runner-up prize money to second and third place contestants, with the amount to be confirmed year on year. The decision to grant additional awards, honourable mentions, and honorariums to contestants who did not reach finalist status but deserve recognition is at the discretion of the regional host.
- 9.5 Presentation of Awards: SPE will provide certificates to each participant in the International Student Paper Contest. SPE can provide a template for regional certificates for hosts. Awards and certificates should be presented by an SPE Officer or Director, a member of the SPE Student Development Committee, or a representative of the host group.



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10.0 Responsibilities of Host Group

Where relevant, SPE will notify the SPE Section or Student Chapter of its opportunity to host the Regional Student Paper Contest. The host group assumes responsibility for the conduct of the contest and for adhering to the rules laid out in this document. The first task is to determine the date, time, and site of the oral presentations.

The contest should be conducted in connection with an SPE technical conference or regional meeting whenever possible. In such cases, SPE suggests that:

- The oral presentations be held within the same week and preferably integrated into the conference program rather than appended onto the beginning or end of the conference.
- The decision on the date, time, and site of the presentations should be discussed with the chairperson of the Conference Program Committee.
- The host group may add an amount to the conference fee to cover contest costs.
- Consideration should be given to providing all contestants and judges with complimentary tickets to award/presentation functions.
- The host group for the conference has the option to arrange for assistance with travel and accommodation expenses for contestants if appropriate.
- Contestants should be afforded the status and privileges of other authors presenting technical papers at the conference, including complementary registration at the conference/exhibition.
- The host group should maintain the professional standards of SPE International events and the [SPE Code of Conduct](#).

For any queries or concerns with the rules and procedures featured in this document please email spc@spe.org for more information.

Staff Lead: SPE Young Member Programs Team

E-mail: spc@spe.org

Webpage: www.spe.org/en/students/contest



The Student Paper Contest is regulated by the Student Development Committee (SDC), and changes to the program are ratified by the SPE Board of Directors. Both parties reserve the right to update and review the rules and regulation at any stage.