Overt stem awards 2026

Award Categories and Guidelines

Theme: *Building the Future Together – Delivering a World-Class STEM Event for the Arc, by the Arc*

Send submissions to:

Overt stem awards 2026 Submission Form (click link).

Sign up to the Oxford Abstracts portal to make a submission through the link above.

EVENTS TOGETHER

Contents

1. Category: STEM Education Trailblazer 3
2. Category: STEM Enrichment Initiative 4
3. Category: Cross-Curricular STEAM Integration 4
4. Category: Education for Sustainable STEM Futures 5
5. Category: Future Force in STEM – School Age (5–18) 6
6. Category: Future Force in STEM – Further/Higher Education (18–30) 7
7. Category: STEM Career Reboot 7
8. Category: STEM Research Excellence 8
9. Category: STEM Start-Up (SEED) 9
10. Category: Greentech / Sustainability Collaboration 9
11. Category: Changemaker / Lightbulb 10
12. Category: AI Impact 11
13. Category: Mentoring Excellence in STEM 12
14. Category: Women in STEM Champion 12
15. Category: DEI in STEM 13
16. Category: STEM Ambassador 14
17. Category: STEM Team 14
18. Category: Employer–Education Partnership 15
19. Category: Arc Collaboration 16
20. Category: Lifetime Impact in STEM 17
21. Category: Overall STEM Champion 18
22. Category: Heartfelt Recognition (Founder's Award) 18

How to Write a Strong Submission (Guidance for Entrants) 18

23. Send a Submission 18

Category Descriptions and Guidelines Overt stem awards 2026 Category Descriptions and Guidelines.

Theme: Celebrating Innovation, Impact and Inclusion Across the Oxford–Cambridge Arc.

1. Category: STEM Education Trailblazer

Definition

This category celebrates individuals, teams, or organisations that have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, or impact in STEM education. Submissions should highlight pioneering approaches that inspire learners, enhance teaching practices, or transform the way STEM is delivered and experienced.

Examples of eligible projects

- Teachers or educators introducing innovative teaching methods
- Individuals or teams leading new STEM programmes or outreach initiatives
- Role models inspiring underrepresented learners to pursue STEM
- Research or initiatives that have transformed STEM education practice

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Measurable improvements in learner engagement, confidence, or achievement
- Evidence of lasting influence on educational practices or curricula
- Scalable or transferable approaches benefiting wider communities
- Demonstrated leadership and inspiration within the STEM education sector

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** State objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Open to individuals, teams, and institutions
- **Judging criteria:** Innovation, leadership, measurable impact, inclusivity, and scalability

2. Category: STEM Enrichment Initiative

Definition
This category recognises programmes, projects, or initiatives that enrich STEM learning by providing additional opportunities for learners beyond the standard curriculum. Submissions should demonstrate how these initiatives enhance engagement, broaden understanding, and foster practical skills in STEM.

Examples of eligible projects

- After-school or extracurricular STEM clubs and workshops
- Competitions, hackathons, or STEM challenges for learners
- Community outreach or engagement programs offering hands-on STEM experience
- Digital or blended learning initiatives that expand access to STEM resources

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Increased learner participation, engagement, or confidence in STEM
- Skills development and practical application of STEM knowledge
- Evidence of long-term influence on learning or career pathways
- Inclusive approaches reaching underrepresented groups

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** State objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Open to individuals, teams, and institutions
- **Judging criteria:** Innovation, measurable impact, inclusivity, reach, and sustainability

3. Category: Cross-Curricular STEAM Integration

Definition

This category celebrates initiatives that successfully integrate Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) to create interdisciplinary learning experiences. Submissions should demonstrate how creative approaches foster engagement, curiosity, and skill development across multiple subject areas.

Examples of eligible projects

- Curriculum programmes blending STEM subjects with art, design, or creative disciplines
- Interdisciplinary projects connecting schools, universities, or community partners
- STEAM workshops, challenges, or makerspaces that encourage problem-solving
- Innovative teaching methods linking creativity and technical learning

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Evidence of enhanced creativity, problem-solving, or engagement in learners
- Measurable improvements in skills or confidence across disciplines
- Scalable or transferable approaches for wider educational use
- Inclusive participation reaching diverse learner groups

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** State objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Open to individuals, teams, and institutions
- **Judging criteria:** Creativity, interdisciplinary impact, measurable outcomes, inclusivity, and scalability

4. Category: Education for Sustainable STEM Futures

Definition

This category recognises initiatives that equip learners with the knowledge, skills, and mindset to address sustainability challenges through STEM. Submissions should highlight programmes that integrate environmental, social, and ethical considerations into STEM education.

Examples of eligible projects

- Curriculum development incorporating sustainable STEM practices
- Project-based learning tackling environmental or societal challenges
- Outreach initiatives promoting sustainability awareness in STEM
- Partnerships connecting learners with industry or community sustainability projects

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Evidence of improved understanding of sustainability principles among learners

- Demonstrable practical applications or projects addressing real-world challenges
- Engagement of underrepresented groups or communities in sustainability STEM learning
- Scalable, long-term impact on learner skills, behaviours, or career pathways

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** State objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Open to individuals, teams, and institutions
- **Judging criteria:** Innovation, measurable impact, sustainability focus, inclusivity, and scalability

5. Category: Future Force in STEM – School Age (5–18)

Definition

This category recognises school-age learners who demonstrate outstanding potential, creativity, or achievement in STEM. Submissions should highlight how individuals have applied their knowledge, skills, and curiosity to solve problems, innovate, or make a positive impact within their school or community (also open to home education pupils).

Examples of eligible projects

- Individual or group projects demonstrating STEM innovation or problem-solving
- Participation in competitions, hackathons, or STEM challenges
- Community or environmental initiatives led by learners
- Creative application of STEM knowledge to real-world problems

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Evidence of increased confidence, skills, or curiosity in STEM
- Tangible results or solutions achieved through projects or initiatives
- Inspiration to peers or community engagement
- Potential for continued STEM learning or career progression

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** State objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact

- **Eligibility:** Learners aged 5–18; individual or group submissions supported by teachers or mentors
- **Judging criteria:** Creativity, problem-solving, measurable impact, inclusivity, and potential for future growth

6. Category: Future Force in STEM – Further/Higher Education (18–30)

Definition

This category celebrates learners in further or higher education who are making a significant impact in STEM. Submissions should demonstrate how individuals have applied knowledge, research, or skills to drive innovation, solve real-world challenges, or contribute to STEM communities.

Examples of eligible projects

- Research projects or innovation initiatives with demonstrable outcomes
- Entrepreneurial or social-impact STEM projects
- Leadership in STEM clubs, societies, or community engagement
- Mentoring, outreach, or advocacy to support peers in STEM

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Evidence of skill development, confidence, or academic achievement
- Tangible contributions to research, innovation, or community projects
- Positive influence on peers, institutions, or wider STEM engagement
- Potential for future leadership or career impact

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** State objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Learners aged 18–30 in further or higher education
- **Judging criteria:** Innovation, measurable impact, leadership, inclusivity, and potential for future growth

7. Category: STEM Career Reboot

Definition

This category recognises individuals who have returned to STEM after a career break or transition and have demonstrated exceptional achievement, resilience, and impact. Submissions should highlight how individuals have re-engaged with STEM, upskilled, and contributed to their field or community.

Examples of eligible projects

- Individuals successfully retraining or returning to STEM careers
- Leadership, innovation, or projects undertaken after re-entering STEM
- Mentoring or advocacy for others re-entering STEM fields
- Contributions to organisations, research, or community initiatives

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Evidence of successful reintegration into STEM roles or projects
- Measurable personal, organisational, or community impact
- Skills development and career progression
- Inspiration and support for others returning to STEM

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** State objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Individuals re-entering STEM after a career break or transition
- **Judging criteria:** Resilience, innovation, measurable impact, inclusivity, and career progression

8. Category: STEM Research Excellence

Definition

This category recognises individuals, teams, or institutions delivering outstanding research in STEM. Submissions should highlight originality, rigor, and contribution to knowledge, as well as practical or theoretical impact in their field.

Examples of eligible projects

- Academic or applied STEM research with innovative methodologies
- Collaborative research addressing real-world challenges
- Interdisciplinary research bridging multiple STEM fields
- Publications, prototypes, or solutions demonstrating significant advancement

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Evidence of advancing knowledge or practice in STEM
- Measurable contribution to industry, society, or academia
- Recognition, awards, or publications supporting impact
- Potential for long-term influence or replication

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** State objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Individuals, teams, or institutions engaged in STEM research
- **Judging criteria:** Innovation, originality, measurable impact, collaboration, and scalability

9. Category: STEM Start-Up (SEED)

Definition

This category recognises early-stage STEM start-ups (5 years or less) demonstrating innovation, growth potential, and measurable impact. Submissions should highlight how the start-up addresses challenges in STEM, demonstrates entrepreneurial excellence, and contributes to the sector or society.

Examples of eligible projects

- Start-ups delivering innovative STEM products, services, or technologies
- Early-stage companies creating social, environmental, or economic impact
- Teams demonstrating scalable business models and growth potential
- Collaborative or interdisciplinary STEM ventures

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Evidence of product, service, or solution adoption and success
- Business growth, investment, or recognition achievements
- Positive impact on communities, industry, or the STEM ecosystem
- Potential for scaling, replication, or long-term sustainability

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** State objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Early-stage STEM start-ups (seed or pre-seed stage)
- **Judging criteria:** Innovation, impact, scalability, entrepreneurship, and sector contribution

10. Category: Greentech / Sustainability Collaboration

Definition

This award recognises collaborative initiatives that advance green technology or sustainability in STEM. Submissions should highlight how partnerships have

created innovative solutions addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable practices.

Examples of eligible projects

- Industry–academic partnerships developing green technologies
- Community or multi-organisation initiatives addressing sustainability challenges
- Collaborative projects implementing renewable energy, low-carbon, or circular economy solutions
- Research or applied innovation with measurable environmental impact

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Tangible environmental, social, or economic benefits
- Evidence of collaborative innovation and problem-solving
- Scalable, transferable, or replicable approaches
- Engagement of diverse stakeholders and communities

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** Objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Collaborative initiatives involving multiple organisations
- **Judging criteria:** Innovation, sustainability impact, collaboration, inclusivity, and scalability

11. Category: Changemaker / Lightbulb

Definition

This award recognises an individual, team, or organisation whose idea, project, or initiative has sparked meaningful change in STEM. Submissions should highlight fresh thinking, bold action, and the tangible difference their innovation has made in education, research, industry, or community engagement.

Examples of eligible projects or contributions

- Breakthrough ideas or approaches that solved a pressing STEM challenge
- Creative collaborations between academia, industry, or community groups
- Initiatives that opened new opportunities for underrepresented groups in STEM
- Innovations that changed how people learn, work, or engage with STEM

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Clear evidence of positive change resulting from the idea or initiative
- Demonstrated influence on people, organisations, or the wider STEM ecosystem
- Stories of inspiration - how this spark encouraged others to act or think differently
- Measurable benefits, such as improved access, adoption of new practices, or real-world applications

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** Describe the idea, why it mattered, how it was implemented, and the results achieved
- **Eligibility:** Individuals, teams, or organisations with an innovation launched within the last 5 years
- **Judging criteria:** Originality, measurable impact, inclusivity, inspiration, and potential for wider adoption

12. Category: AI Impact

Definition

This category recognises projects, research, or initiatives demonstrating impactful use of Artificial Intelligence. Submissions should highlight innovation, practical application, and measurable outcomes achieved through AI technologies.

Examples of eligible projects

- AI-driven solutions
- Research using AI to solve complex problems
- AI applications improving efficiency, accessibility, or inclusivity
- Interdisciplinary AI projects bridging STEM and society

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Measurable problem-solving or innovation achieved using AI
- Evidence of improved processes, decision-making, or research outcomes
- Positive societal, environmental, or economic impact
- Scalability, reproducibility, or potential for broader adoption

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** State objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Individuals, teams, organisations, or institutions using AI

- **Judging criteria:** Innovation, measurable impact, AI application, inclusivity, and scalability

13. Category: Mentoring Excellence in STEM

Definition
This award recognises individuals or organisations that have demonstrated exceptional commitment to mentoring in STEM fields. Submissions should highlight how mentoring has led to the development of mentees' skills, confidence, and career progression in STEM disciplines.

Examples of eligible projects

- One-on-one or group mentoring programmes fostering STEM talent
- Initiatives supporting underrepresented groups in STEM through mentorship
- Collaborative mentoring efforts between academia, industry, and community organisations

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Documented success stories of mentees advancing in STEM careers
- Evidence of sustained mentoring relationships and their impact
- Initiatives that have been scaled or replicated to benefit a broader audience

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** Objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Open to individuals, teams, and institutions
- **Judging criteria:** Innovation, mentorship effectiveness, measurable impact, inclusivity, and scalability

14. Category: Women in STEM Champion

Definition
This award honours an individual who has made significant contributions to promoting and advancing women in STEM. Submissions should demonstrate how the nominee has inspired, mentored, or created opportunities for women in STEM fields. Women call also self-nominate to show how they have progressed their own career in STEM.

Examples of eligible projects

- Leadership in initiatives aimed at increasing female participation in STEM

- Mentorship programmes specifically targeting women in STEM
- Advocacy for policies or practices that support women in STEM careers

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Increased representation of women in STEM roles or education
- Development of programmes or resources that support women in STEM
- Personal achievements that serve as inspiration for others

Submission guidelines

- **Abstract length:** Maximum 300 words
- **Format:** Career overview, leadership examples, achievements in promoting women in STEM, and additional reasons for nomination
- **Eligibility:** Open to individuals of any gender
- **Judging criteria:** Leadership, impact, innovation, and advocacy for women in STEM

15. Category: DEI in STEM

Definition

This award recognises individuals or teams that have made significant strides in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within STEM fields. Submissions should highlight initiatives that have created more inclusive and equitable environments in STEM education, research, or industry.

Examples of eligible projects

- Development of programmes that increase access to STEM for underrepresented groups
- Initiatives that address systemic barriers in STEM education or careers
- Research or policies that promote DEI in STEM organisations

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Measurable improvements in diversity and inclusion metrics
- Success stories of individuals from underrepresented groups advancing in STEM
- Long-term sustainability and scalability of DEI initiatives

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** Objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Open to individuals, teams, and institutions
- **Judging criteria:** Innovation, measurable impact, inclusivity, and sustainability

16. Category: STEM Ambassador

Definition

This award celebrates individuals who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to promoting STEM education and careers. Submissions should showcase how the nominee has inspired and engaged others in STEM through outreach, advocacy, or community involvement.

Examples of eligible projects

- Volunteering in schools or community organisations to promote STEM
- Organising or participating in STEM events, workshops, or outreach programmes
- Advocacy for STEM education policies or initiatives

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Increased interest and participation in STEM among target audiences
- Evidence of sustained engagement and outreach efforts
- Development of resources or programmes that have had a lasting impact

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** Objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Open to individuals of any background
- **Judging criteria:** Engagement, innovation, impact, and sustainability

17. Category: STEM Team

Definition

This award recognises an exceptional STEM team that has achieved outstanding results through collaboration, innovation, and impact. Submissions

should demonstrate how the team's collective efforts have driven success in research, education, or industry.

Examples of eligible projects

- Teams delivering innovative STEM solutions or research
- Collaborative school, university, or industry teams achieving measurable outcomes
- Interdisciplinary teams solving complex STEM challenges
- Teams promoting inclusive and effective team practices

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Demonstrable results achieved through teamwork
- Evidence of innovation, problem-solving, and collaboration
- Positive impact on communities, organisations, or the STEM sector
- Scalable or transferable team practices

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** Objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Teams from any STEM sector
- **Judging criteria:** Teamwork, innovation, measurable impact, inclusivity, and collaboration

18. Category: Employer–Education Partnership

Definition

This award celebrates partnerships between employers and educational institutions that have successfully enhanced STEM learning, skills development, or career readiness. Submissions should demonstrate how collaboration creates opportunities, bridges skills gaps, and prepares learners for STEM careers.

Examples of eligible projects

- Work-based learning, apprenticeships, or internship programmes
- Curriculum co-design between industry and education
- Outreach projects connecting students with STEM employers
- Mentorship or career support schemes linking learners with professionals

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Evidence of improved learner skills, employability, or confidence
- Measurable industry or educational outcomes from the partnership
- Inclusivity and engagement of diverse learners
- Sustainable or replicable partnership models

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** Objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Partnerships between employers and educational institutions
- **Judging criteria:** Collaboration effectiveness, measurable impact, innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability

19. Category: Arc Collaboration

Definition

This award celebrates partnerships and collaborative projects specifically within the Oxford–Cambridge Arc region. Submissions should demonstrate how collaborative efforts drive STEM innovation, education, and regional growth.

Examples of eligible projects

- Cross-regional industry–academic collaborations
- Multi-partner initiatives solving STEM challenges in the Arc region
- Community or education–industry programmes promoting STEM development
- Regional networks enabling shared learning, research, or innovation

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Measurable impact on the regional STEM ecosystem
- Evidence of effective collaboration and stakeholder engagement
- Contributions to skills development, research, or innovation in the Arc
- Sustainable and scalable models for regional growth

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** Objectives, approach, outcomes, and impact
- **Eligibility:** Collaborative projects within the Oxford–Cambridge Arc or South Midlands

- **Judging criteria:** Regional impact, collaboration effectiveness, innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability

20. Category: Lifetime Impact in STEM

Definition

This award recognises an individual whose career has had a profound and sustained impact on STEM. Submissions should highlight long-term achievements, leadership, innovation, and influence in education, research, industry, or community initiatives.

Examples of eligible projects or contributions

- Significant contributions to STEM research, education, or policy
- Leadership that has shaped organisations, sectors, or communities
- Mentorship or advocacy impacting generations of STEM learners or professionals
- Pioneering initiatives that have transformed STEM practice

Outcomes and impact to emphasise

- Long-term, measurable impact on STEM education, research, or industry
- Evidence of inspiring or enabling others in STEM
- Recognised achievements, awards, or career milestones
- Sustained influence and legacy in the STEM ecosystem

Submission guidelines

- **Format:** Career overview, key achievements, outcomes, and lasting impact
- **Eligibility:** Individuals with a demonstrable lifelong contribution to STEM
- **Judging criteria:** Leadership, innovation, measurable impact, inclusivity, and legacy

21. Category: Overall STEM Champion

Definition
This award celebrates an individual who has scored the highest overall.

Note that this award is not for submission

22. Category: Heartfelt Recognition (Founder's Award)

Definition

A special thanks from the founder, Meena Chander.

Note that this award is not for submission

How to Write a Strong Submission (Guidance for Entrants)

- Be clear and concise – avoid jargon where possible.
- Show evidence of impact – use facts, figures, or examples.
- Highlight collaboration, inclusion, or sustainability – even if not the main focus.
- Tell a story – explain why this work matters and how it inspires others.
- Match your answers to the judging criteria – innovation, impact, scalability, and leadership.

23. Send a Submission

Send submissions to: Overt stem awards 2026 Submission Form (click link).

Sign up to the Oxford Abstracts portal to make a submission through the link above.

If you have further question, please contact **Meena Chander: meena@events-together.co.uk**