

Smarter Travel Student Awards Guidebook

2026 - 2027



Smarter Travel
Student Awards



For more information, visit
smartertravelstudentawards.ie

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Overview

The Smarter Travel Student Awards are a national competition that invites students to use their creativity, skills, and academic knowledge to develop projects that promote sustainable and active travel.

Run as part of the TFI Smarter Travel Programme by the National Transport Authority, the awards encourage students to develop practical, real-world projects that make it easier and more appealing to walk, cycle, use public transport, or travel more sustainably.

In 2025, a record 260 projects were submitted, with over 550 students participating from more than sixteen third-level campuses.

Students are invited to design projects that supports, facilitates, or enables smarter travel choices and these projects can look at travel on campus or beyond. Smarter Travel includes walking, cycling, public transport, electric scooters, and carpooling.

Entries are reviewed by an independent judging panel of industry experts, and shortlisted finalists are invited to attend the National Student Awards Ceremony, where winning projects are announced and showcased.

Categories

The Smarter Travel Student Awards feature three categories, designed to align with a broad range of third-level courses and academic disciplines across Ireland. These are:



Engineering & Innovation



Social Marketing



Media

These categories are designed to enable you to apply what you are learning into practice by developing real-world projects that are relevant to your coursework and field of study.

Students with a strong interest in sustainable and active travel are also encouraged to participate outside of formal coursework by submitting an extracurricular project.

Participating in the Student Awards provides you opportunity to build practical experience and contribute to innovative solutions that support smarter travel to, from, and around campus.

For more information on each Category, including information on Subcategories, projects ideas and more, please read page 9 of this Guidebook.

Benefits of Entering

The Smarter Travel Student Awards offer students an exciting opportunity to develop practical skills, to expand their networks, and enhance their professional prospects before graduating.

By taking part, you will have the opportunity to:

- ★ Compete with students from third-level institutions across Ireland, putting your ideas and creativity to the test.
- ★ Gain hands-on project experience that is relevant to your field of study or personal interests.
- ★ Have your project reviewed and assessed by a panel of industry experts.
- ★ Build a strong CV and professional portfolio by showcasing your project work.
- ★ Be shortlisted as a finalist and attend the National Smarter Travel Student Awards Ceremony, where projects are displayed and celebrated.
- ★ Receive certificates and prizes awarded by the National Transport Authority.
- ★ Avail of valuable networking opportunities, including meeting representatives from the NTA, industry professionals, academic staff, and fellow students.
- ★ Enjoy a celebratory and engaging awards event, recognising your innovation and achievement.

Who Can Enter

The Smarter Travel Student Awards are open to all students of Smarter Travel Campus Partners.

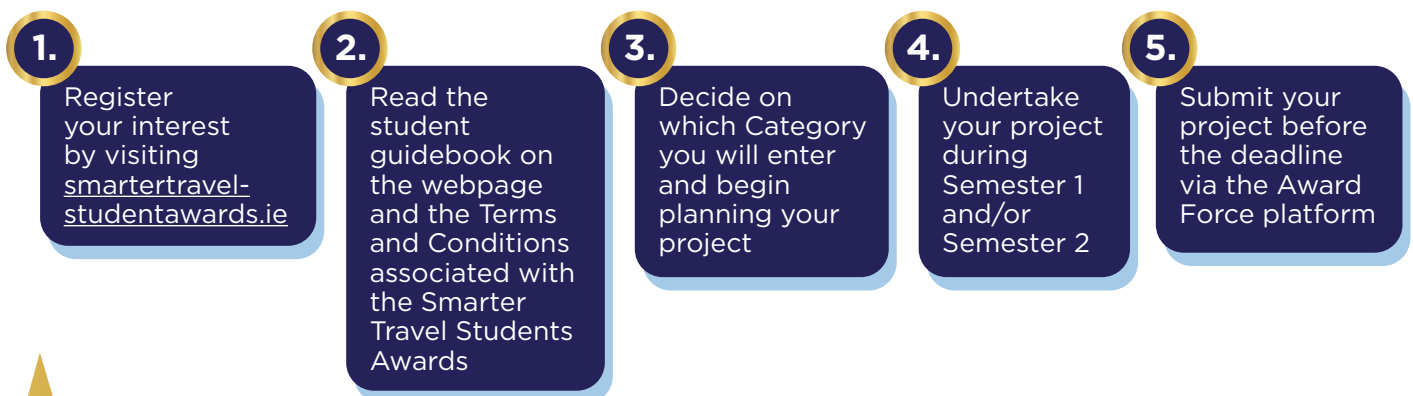
Students may submit an entry: **Individually**, or as part of **a group**

Group entry limits apply as follows:

- ★ Up to five students may enter together in the Social Marketing and Media categories.
- ★ Up to eight students may enter together in the Engineering & Innovation category.

To see if your Campus is a Partner, please visit www.smartertravelcampus.ie.

How to Enter



Timelines, Submission and Key Dates

Submissions are accepted during two entry periods each academic year, aligned with Semester 1 and Semester 2.

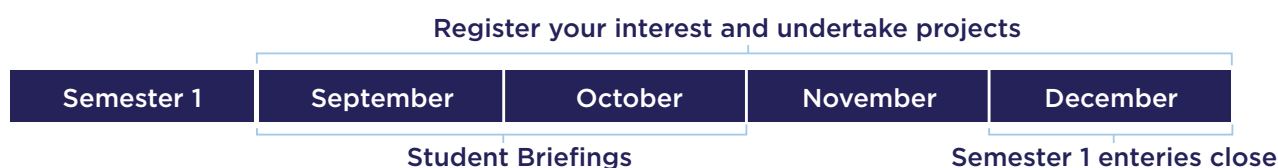
Semester 1

September – December

Students are invited to register their interest and begin developing their projects.

Student briefings take place in September and October to support students and provide guidance for project development.

Semester 1 entries close in December.



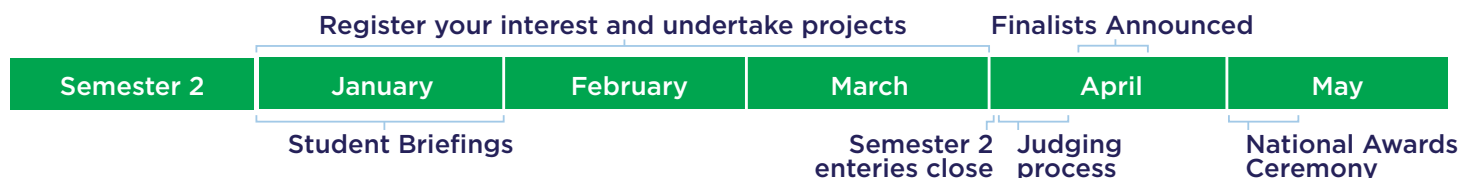
Semester 2

January – April

Students are invited to register their interest and begin developing their projects.

Student briefings take place in January to support students and provide guidance for project development.

Semester 2 entries close in March.



April – May

- ★ An internal quality check of all projects is conducted, and students are notified if their projects do not meet entry requirements.
- ★ The judging panel review student projects and finalists are announced.
- ★ Students and lecturers are invited to attend the Student Awards ceremony that takes place in May.

Register Your Interest

Students are encouraged to register their interest early to ensure they receive adequate support and guidance from the TFI Smarter Travel Team, updates, briefing invitations, and key deadline reminders throughout the year.

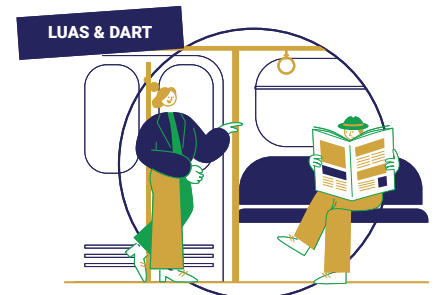
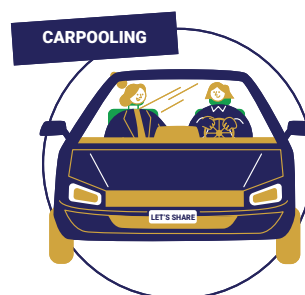
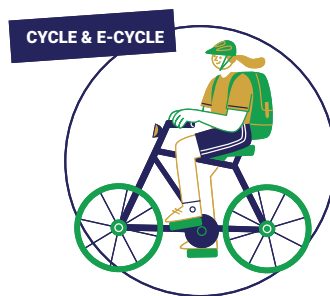
To register your interest, visit www.smartertravelstudentawards.ie.

Testimonial

A student in the Sustainability Leadership course at TU Dublin, Heidi Kelly Hogan was part of the team that won the Programmes & Advocacy prize for the Social Marketing category in 2025.



Winning the Programmes & Advocacy award was a huge achievement for me – it's definitely a career highlight that I am proud to have on my CV. It demonstrated the motivation and capability I had in my subjects, and the knowledge that our project was reviewed by industry professionals, outside of the classroom and on a national stage, gave me a lot of confidence in the merits of our work. It has already helped to shape my career. Plus the awards ceremony was a lot of fun!



Illustrations by Freepik

Idea Generation

When developing your project, begin by asking yourself a few key questions.

Step 1: Identify the Change You Want to Make



Consider the issue you would like to address and the impact you hope to create:

What do you want to change?

Where do you want to make a difference?

Step 2: Define Your Goal



Be clear about the outcome you are aiming for.

For example:

Are you trying to encourage more people to walk or cycle?

Do you want to improve cyclist safety?

Are you aiming to make public transport more accessible, comfortable, or appealing?

A clearly defined goal will help guide the direction of your project and ensure focus.

Step 3: Decide on the Nature of Your Solution



Think about how your idea will be delivered. Your solution could take many forms, such as:

your solution could take many forms, such as:

- ★ A product or piece of equipment
- ★ A process or policy proposal
- ★ A technology-based solution, such as an app or digital tool
- ★ An event, campaign, or initiative designed to influence and change behaviour

Useful Questions to Consider

As you refine your idea, the following questions may help strengthen your project:

Q1) Is your idea entirely new, or is it an adaptation of an existing concept?

If it is new, consider whether it is feasible and could realistically be implemented.

If it is an adaptation, explain how it addresses a gap or an unmet need.

Q2) Have other countries or cities implemented similar ideas?

If you can find a similar model implemented in a different city or country, what can you learn from it that worked well and what did not.

Q3) Who is your target audience?

Clearly identifying who your project is for will help shape your design and messaging.

Taking the time to work through these questions will help ensure your project is well defined, relevant, and impactful.

Areas for intervention



When developing your project, remember that there are many existing organisations, initiatives, and programmes focused on active and sustainable travel. These initiatives address a wide range of themes, including accessibility, rural and regional transport, safety, behaviour change, and inclusive mobility.

Students are encouraged to explore relevant content online and review existing work in this space. Doing so may help you identify:

- ★ Gaps or unmet needs
- ★ Opportunities for improvement or innovation
- ★ Inspiration for adapting or enhancing current approaches

Engaging with existing initiatives can provide valuable context and help spark ideas for projects that are practical, relevant, and impactful. Some organisations in Ireland that you could refer to while thinking of project ideas are listed below:



Category 1: Engineering & Innovation

The Engineering & Innovation Category covers projects in the areas of product design, digital or concept design, social innovation & entrepreneurship. Projects in this category may be conceptual or practical, but should clearly demonstrate innovation, feasibility, and potential impact.

Who Should Enter?



This Category is open to **undergraduate and postgraduate students** who have an interest in Engineering, Environmental Studies, Sports Science, Transport Planning and much more.

Task



Participants are asked to develop or scope a product, service, or technological solution that could help:

Reduce the number of people driving alone, and

Encourage students to use sustainable and active modes of transport, such as walking, cycling, and public transport.

Entry Format



Students may enter individually or in groups of up to eight.

Projects must be summarised using an A2 or A3 poster, clearly outlining the idea, approach, and intended outcomes.

Optional Supplementary Video



Students may submit an optional supplementary video to demonstrate how their project works, where appropriate. Please ensure your video does not exceed 2 minutes and adheres to the Terms and Conditions.

Example Project Ideas



Projects submitted to this category may include, but are not limited to:

- ★ A new feature on the TFI live app to help students get to campus
- ★ A system to improve the security of bike parking facilities.
- ★ A product that enhances cyclist visibility, particularly during darker or colder months.
- ★ A process or concept that supports sustainable travel on campuses.
- ★ A product or service that promotes accessible travel options.
- ★ A system for pedestrians and cyclists that supports and promotes road safety

Subcategories

Product Design



This subcategory is for projects focused on the design and development of a physical product or prototype that supports or enables the use of active and sustainable transport. Projects should demonstrate practical thinking, functionality, and potential real-world application.

Digital/Concept Design



This subcategory is for projects involving the design or development of a digital solution, system, or conceptual idea, such as applications, transport re-designs and technological solutions that supports or enables active and sustainable travel choices.

Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship



This subcategory is for projects that propose a product, service, or innovative model aimed at addressing barriers to the widespread uptake of active and sustainable transport. Projects should demonstrate an understanding of social impact, inclusivity, and potential for implementation or scalability.

For more information on how to present your proposal, see **Page 16**.



Category 2: Social Marketing

The Social Marketing category covers projects in the areas of Marketing, Digital Marketing, Advocacy, Communications, Sport, and Health Promotion. Projects in this category can focus on influencing attitudes, raising awareness and encouraging behaviour change towards active travel and public transport.

Who should enter?



This category is open to both undergraduate and postgraduate students who are studying in the fields of Business, Business Management, Marketing, Digital Marketing, Advocacy, Health Promotion, Sport Science, Sports Management and much more.

Task



Participants are required to develop a programme, intervention, campaign or active travel challenge that promotes the use of sustainable and active modes of transport.

Projects should demonstrate clear objectives, a defined target audience and the impact of the proposed campaign.

Entry Format



Students may enter individually or in groups of up to five.

Projects must be summarised using an A2 or A3 poster, clearly outlining the concept, approach, and intended impact.

Optional Supplementary Video



Students may submit an optional supplementary video to demonstrate how their project works, where appropriate. Please ensure your video does not exceed 2 minutes and adheres to the Terms and Conditions.

Project Ideas



- ★ An active travel challenge for students and staff on campuses across Ireland.
- ★ An on-campus campaign that promotes cycling facilities.
- ★ A poster highlighting cost savings from using public transport.
- ★ A viral social media challenge encouraging sustainable travel choices.
- ★ An advocacy campaign highlighting the importance of accessibility in public transport.
- ★ A public event centred on sustainable modes of travel.
- ★ New ideas or adaptations for existing campaigns delivered by TFI Local Link, Irish Rail, Dublin Bus, Go-Ahead Ireland, Luas, Bus Éireann or Transport for Ireland (TFI).

Subcategories

Marketing and Communications



This subcategory involves the design of a physical or digital marketing campaign that promotes active and sustainable travel. Students are encouraged to think creatively about messaging, branding, and engagement.

Consider memorable advertisements or campaigns that stayed with you, can you create something equally compelling for your campus, workplace, or the wider public?

Programmes and Advocacy



This subcategory is for aimed at changing attitudes and supporting behaviour change in favour of sustainable and active travel. Projects should help people make informed travel choices and may include:

- ★ Health promotion campaigns
- ★ Active travel challenges
- ★ Educational or online resources (for example, bike maintenance or safety guides).
- ★ Advocacy initiatives that communicate the social, environmental, or health benefits of sustainable travel.

For more information on how to present your proposal, see **Page 16**.



Category 3: Media

The Media Category covers projects in the areas of animation, audio, graphic design, illustration, and video. Projects in this category should use creative media tools to promote sustainable and active commuting modes of travel in a clear, engaging, and impactful way.

Who should enter?



This Category is open to both undergraduate and postgraduate students who are studying in the fields of Creative Design, Media, Digital Media Production, Graphic & Illustration, Media and Film Production, Animation, Software and Games Development, and much more.

Task



Participants are required to develop a relevant and engaging piece of media to promote sustainable and active commuting modes of travel.

Projects can use different media formats, and it should communicate a clear message, be visually or creatively engaging, and be designed with a target audience in mind.

Entry Format



Students may enter individually or in groups of up to five.

Projects must be summarised using an A2 or A3 poster, clearly outlining the concept, target audience, and key message.

Optional Supplementary Video



Students may submit an optional supplementary video to demonstrate how their project works, where appropriate. Please ensure your video does not exceed 2 minutes and adheres to the Terms and Conditions.

Time Limit



Animation, audio and video entries should not exceed the maximum time limit of 45 seconds.

Project Ideas



- ★ A piece of media demonstrating how to use the Student Leap Card.
- ★ Promotional content highlighting local greenways.
- ★ A piece of media promoting bike maintenance facilities on campus.
- ★ A video explaining the use and benefits of the JAM Card.
- ★ A poster or visual asset promoting transport initiatives such as Metrolink.

Subcategories

Students entering the Media category may choose from the following subcategories:

- Animation
- Video
- Audio
- Graphic Design & Illustration

For more information on the acceptable file type and file size for your submissions, students should refer to the requirements outlined in the Terms and Conditions.

For more information on how to present your proposal, see **Page 16**.



Judging criteria

The Smarter Travel Student Awards will be judged by a panel of industry experts, who bring extensive experience, knowledge and enthusiasm to reviewing your work.

Innovation and Creativity (10 marks)



- Assesses how original and innovative the proposed idea is, as well as the creativity of the overall approach or solution

Feasibility and Practical Implementation (10 marks)



- Considers the practicality of the proposed project, including whether it is achievable and could realistically be implemented in Ireland.

Research and Understanding of Sustainable Travel (10 marks)



- Evaluates the depth, relevance, and quality of research relating to sustainable and active travel.

Impact on Sustainability and Active Travel (10 marks)



- Examines how well the project integrates with existing travel modes and its potential impact and if the idea could be applied on campus or at a national level to encourage sustainable and active commuting.

Presentation and Communication (10 marks)



- Assesses the clarity, structure, and visual quality of the submission. Attention to detail is important; projects should be free from errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and presented in a clear and engaging manner.

For the full marking rubric and for a complete list of the judging panel, please visit www.smartertravelstudentawards.ie.



Poster Template and Requirements

All submissions must be presented using the official poster template provided as part of the Smarter Travel Student Awards.

Poster Requirements:



Poster Size: A2 or A3. You must use the poster template provided.

Orientation: Landscape or Portrait

File Type: JPG., PDF, MP4, PNG, MP3 & Adobe Acrobat Document.

Important Notes:



1. All posters must contain the Project Title and Campus Logo.

2. Do NOT include your student ID on submitted posters.

Failure to adhere to these requirements may result in a submission being deemed ineligible.





For more information, visit
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