

THE ADVANCING DEVELOPMENT GOALS INTERNATIONAL CONTEST THE GENEVA CHALLENGE 2026

CHALLENGES TO THE FUTURE OF WORK

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Beyond rigorous analysis of a relevant problem area, submissions should bring forward innovative proposals to effect change. We welcome contributions by groups of 3 to 5 master's students involving at least two different disciplinary backgrounds or an interdisciplinary perspective. Contributions must be both theoretically grounded and offer pragmatic solutions to an important relevant social, political, or economic problem stemming from Challenges to the Future of Work. Innovation can relate to practices, processes or technology.

This year, we will distribute five prizes, one per continent. The five finalist teams will be invited to Geneva to showcase their projects and attend the award ceremony in November 2026.

Five prizes will be distributed; one in each of the following categories:

- *Universities located in Africa*
- *Universities located in Asia*
- *Universities located in Europe*
- *Universities located in North America and Oceania*
- *Universities located in Latin America*

1. Eligibility:

1.1. Participants of the ADG contest 2026 must be enrolled as graduate students **at the time of their registration** for the contest.

1.1.1. We consider “graduate students” to be anyone enrolled in a post bachelor level university programme with a maximum duration of 2 (two) years, or anyone who can prove to be studying towards acquiring a master's level degree or equivalent.

1.2. Participants must gather in **teams of 3** (three) **to 5** (five) graduate students. In the submitted analysis, they should contribute with an interdisciplinary approach or from at least 2 (two) different disciplinary perspectives.

1.2.1. No participation on an individual basis will be permitted.

1.2.2. The participants **can** be enrolled in the **same graduate programme** or **can collaborate with students from other programmes** from the university they are enrolled in or coordinate with students from **different universities and institutions worldwide**.

1.2.3. The **category in which the team will be placed** for the contest will be **based on the continent of the universities predominantly represented within the team**.

1.2.3.1 In case there is an equal representation of continents within the team, the team decides in which category they wish to compete.

1.3. All team members must provide a **scanned, legible copy of a document** that serves as proof of enrollment as a graduate student before the registration of the team can be confirmed and validated.

1.3.1. Any official document issued by the academic institution the student is affiliated with is accepted as proof of enrolment as long as it contains:

- a) The **name** of the student;
- b) The **program** the student is enrolled in;
- c) An **issuance date** up to three months before the registration date or
- d) **Validity beyond the registration date**.

1.4. Exceptionally, we might accept the registration of students who are transitioning into graduate studies, as long as they have already been accepted into a graduate student programme at the time of their registration.

2. Registration of teams

2.1. An online registration form will be made available from **20 February 2026** at www.graduateinstitute.ch/TheGenevaChallenge.

2.2. Registration ends at **23:59 - Central European Time (CET)** on **24 April 2026**.

2.3. The registration form must be filled out correctly along with the information required of all the participants.

2.4. Before the registration deadline, the proof of enrollment for all team members must be submitted as part of the registration form or sent to **geneva.challenge@graduateinstitute.ch**.

3. Submission requirements

3.1. Submissions must be sent by email to geneva.challenge@graduateinstitute.ch before **23:59 CET**, on **11 July 2026**.

3.2. Submissions must include an abstract and the description of the project, **all submitted in one joint PDF document**.

3.3. The abstract should be one page long and should include short biographies of each team member, a brief description of the problem addressed by the project and the solution, specifying how the proposed solution will make a difference.

3.4. The project may have a maximum length of **8000 (eight thousand)** words including any **notes, graphics, or appendixes** and must be written in **English or French**. The only

exclusion to the word limit is the abstract and the bibliography/references list.

- 3.5. The submissions will combine theoretical analyses, creativity, critical thinking on technical assistance, capacity building and on the agency of development.
- 3.6. Entries must be original. All long-listed works will go through a check for plagiarism before being forwarded to the Jury members as semi-finalists of the 2026 Geneva Challenge.
- 3.7. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) is permitted to conduct initial research, brainstorm, and assist with translations and the improvement of the project's language and structure. When participants have used AI in the creation of their project proposals, they must indicate this, either through citations or a statement in the proposal, which explains in which manner and in which sections AI was used. The Geneva Challenge urges participants to verify information obtained from AI models, considering that it may be inaccurate or outdated and suggests that they do not enter sensitive or personal data into AI models, considering that this may be stored and used by these models.

4. Evaluation procedures

- 4.1. The entries will be evaluated in **three phases** and by **two distinct panels**.
- 4.2. In the **first phase**, all the valid submissions will be evaluated by the **Academic Steering Committee (ASC)**, an interdisciplinary committee of professors who will look into the compatibility of the submissions with the material criteria of the contest (see section 5).
 - 4.2.1. Teams that do not provide proof of enrollment for all members and/or do not submit their entry before the deadline mentioned in 3.1 will be automatically disqualified and their entries will not be evaluated by the ASC.
- 4.3. In the **second phase** (semi-finalists), three submissions per continent selected by the ASC as representing the best match with the contest's design and criteria will be forwarded to an independent high level **Jury Panel** composed of policy makers, academics, young talents, and experienced professionals, who will select the competition's finalists.
- 4.4. In the **third and last phase** of evaluation, one finalist team per continent category will be invited to the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva to publicly present their projects in front of the Jury and answer questions about their entries. On this occasion, the Jury will rank the five finalist teams (one will win 1st place, two will come in 2nd place, and two in 3rd place) and the prizes will be delivered in an award ceremony preceded by a high-level keynote speech.
- 4.5. Unfortunately, due to the high number of submissions and the multiple activities, which the ASC and Jury members are engaged in, the ADG contest organisers cannot offer personalised feedback on the submissions.
- 4.6. The decisions of the ASC and of the Jury Panel are final and not subject to appeal.

5. Evaluation criteria

5.1. The ADG contest offers an opportunity for master's students to use theoretical tools to frame a development issue and offer a creative, feasible and potentially effective solution to the identified vulnerability. The ASC and the Jury will be looking for the following characteristics in the proposals:

- 5.1.1. The **relevance** of the research question proposed by the team. The submission must identify a **real-world problem**, not just an interesting research question, thereby bridging the gap between academic analysis and policy.
- 5.1.2. The **impact** of the proposed solution on the identified problem. There should be depth of understanding in the proposal on its effect (from different perspectives) on the stakeholders, community, and region of the problem.
- 5.1.3. The entry must display **analytical rigour** and academic competence in the choice of sources, the structure of the arguments and the ability to discuss, question and build upon previous perspectives on the topic (**critical approach**);
- 5.1.4. The **practicality of solutions** and **feasibility** embedded within the proposals. There should be development on why and how the idea presented is effective in addressing the issue raised by the team, and how it would be implemented;
- 5.1.5. All submissions must be **original** and especially developed for participation in the 2026 ADG contest. Originality here implies that significant sections of other works should not be reused in the submission to the Geneva Challenge. Entries that have already participated in other contests will not be accepted. However, ideas may be transposed from a different context and adapted to the specific problem the students decide to focus on.
- 5.1.6. The outreach of the solution, that is, the amount of people that will directly or indirectly benefit from the project is not an evaluation criterion as long as the solution is potentially transposable (scalable) to similar situations.
- 5.1.7. Regarding the finalist presentations in Geneva, the Jury will be looking into inter alia:
 - a) The clarity of the oral presentations;
 - b) The perspective of a practical linkage with the beneficiaries of the action proposed;
 - c) The quality of the response to questions from the Jury and from the public.
 - d) The oral presentation should ensure that the students do their work themselves but will not be crucial in ranking the finalists.

6. Prizes

- 6.1. All shortlisted submissions selected by the ASC are published and promoted (if authorised by the teams) on the [Geneva Challenge website](#), providing visibility to the teams and their work.
- 6.2. All members of the five finalist teams will be invited to come to Geneva for an oral

presentation where they will defend their proposals and answer questions from the Jury and the public.

6.2.1. At least 2 members from each finalist team should confirm their availability to come to Geneva for the oral presentation of their submission. If only one member is available or in case there is no reaction to the invitation to come to Geneva after 7 days of the communication of the results, this will be considered a withdrawal from the competition.

6.3. The finalists will also be present at the awards ceremony where the results of the contest will be announced, preceded by a high-level keynote speech on **Challenges to the Future of Work**.

6.4. Travel expenses such as flights, visa requests and accommodation are covered by the organisation of the contest for this purpose.

6.5. The presentations and submissions of the finalists will be promoted for information in relevant publications and international organisation fora, creating professional networking opportunities, as well as opportunities for a guidance network for the potential implementation of the proposed projects.

6.6. The **winning project** will receive a **cash prize** of **CHF 10 '000** (ten thousand Swiss Francs). The **two teams in second place** will receive **CHF 5 '000 each**. The **two teams in third place**, **CHF 2 '500 each**.

6.7. The Jury Panel can decide not to distribute one of the prizes if there is no project meeting the conditions or criteria listed under 5.

6.8. The Jury Panel can decide to distribute the prizes in another order.