

## OCSEF Schedule & Multi-Step Process

### Step 1: Project Registration - **Monday, February 3, 2025** (at 11:59pm PT) **Deadline**

- OCSEF uses an online application system ([ocsef.smapply.io/](https://ocsef.smapply.io/)) hosted by SurveyMonkey for both Registration (step 1) and Submission (step 3).
- Preapproval of Certification Forms are required for: use of vertebrate animals, human subjects, surveys/questionnaires, and hazards (chemicals, organisms, tissues, equipment, tools, devices and dangerous materials). Students will need to get project approval **BEFORE** they start the project. These students need to complete the corresponding Certification Forms and Project Registration as soon as possible. Forms are on our website ([ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/](https://ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/)).
- Students are required to receive teacher approval as part of Registration. They can choose to either upload a hard copy of the form ([ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/](https://ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/)) or initiate an online approval process.
- Students provide: project category, division, title, summary along with student, teacher, school & partner info (if a team)
- Students choose the project type (science, engineering, math/computer science) and provide details:
  - Science: what is your scientific question? What is your hypothesis? What materials, chemicals, organisms, and/or equipment are you using? What are you testing, what data are you collecting, & how are you collecting it?
  - Engineering: what is your problem and the constraints? Describe the design and what it will do. What materials, equipment, devices and/or tools are you using? How are you building and testing your design and what data will you be collecting?
  - Math/Computer Science: What theorem/conjecture are you proving (Math) or what problem are you solving (Computer Science)? Why is this important? Outline the steps for your proof/solution or algorithm.

### Step 2: OCSEF SRC Approval

- Approval by the OCSEF Scientific Review Committee (SRC) is required before projects move to Step 3.
- The SRC will send an email with either approval or a request for additional information based on the project description provided. A copy of this notification will also be sent to the teacher and parent email addresses entered on the student's application.
- Students & teachers should check their email often (including spam folder) for notifications from [noreply@mail.smapply.net](mailto:noreply@mail.smapply.net).
- Note for students with a school/district fair: If your project is registered and approved by the OCSEF SRC before your school/district fair, your project must still meet eligibility requirements through your school/district fair in order to submit your project to OCSEF for judging.

### Step 3: Project Submission - **Monday, February 24, 2025** (at 11:59pm PT) **Deadline**

- Students upload a slide deck, video, & lab notebook images to their online application ([ocsef.smapply.io/](https://ocsef.smapply.io/)), following guidelines on our website ([ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/](https://ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/)).
- Students who conduct their project at an industrial lab, university, hospital, or other institution will also need to upload a completed Regulated Research Certification Form ([ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/](https://ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/)).

### Step 4: Project Review

- Final approval by OCSEF is required before projects are allowed to participate in Step 5.

### Step 5: Virtual Judging - **Wednesday, March 12, 2025** (afternoon)

- Projects are judged virtually for Board Category Awards by a judging panel that occurs via Zoom (interview times assigned by OCSEF). Students are given six minutes to present their project and are then asked questions by the panel.

### Step 6: In-Person Awards Ceremony - **Sunday, March 23, 2025**

- All participants with OCSEF judged projects are invited to attend our in-person awards ceremony at Chapman University.  
\*\* date/location are subject to change \*\*

### OCSEF Ethics Statement

Student researchers as well as adults who have a role in projects are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Scientific fraud and misconduct are not condoned at any level of research or competition. This includes plagiarism, fabrication, or falsification of research data.

### Key OCSEF Rules

The OCSEF Board expects all students to conduct their project safely while meeting the ethical standards for scientific research and following the Rules of OCSEF, California and federal laws, the California Education Code, and the Rules of the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). **Here are a few key OCSEF Rules but be sure to review all OCSEF Rules and Regulations ([ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/](https://ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/)) to make sure your project is compliant:**

- Students must be in the 6th-12th grade AND attend an Orange County, CA school (public, private, or home school). Students in an enrichment or after school program must enter their project through the OC school they attend.
- All projects must be checked and approved by a sponsoring teacher or administrator from the OC school they attend.
- If your school has a school and/or district science fair, then your project must be selected through that fair in order to be eligible for OCSEF.
- Only one project allowed per student. Students may enter an individual project or team project (max 3 students per team).
- Team projects can only include students attending the same Orange County, CA school.
- Students are responsible for selecting an appropriate category in which to enter their project ([ocsef.org/project-categories/](https://ocsef.org/project-categories/)). **The chosen category should be the FOCUS of the project.** This will be how the project is judged.
- Students should have a **Lab Notebook**, which is a daily record of when they worked on their project, what they did, how they did it, and why. A lab notebook can be handwritten or digital.
- Culturing organisms (bacteria, viruses, protozoa, fungi, etc.) in the home environment is prohibited. All cultures must be incubated in a properly equipped laboratory (school, industrial lab, or institution) under qualified supervision.
- If your project involves Vertebrate Animals, Human Subjects, Hazards (chemicals, organisms, tissues, equipment, tools, devices or dangerous materials) then you will need to complete the corresponding Certification Form. Additional details can be found on our website and on the first page of each Certification Form ([ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/](https://ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/)).
- If your project is conducted in a college, university, or industrial lab, then you will also need the Regulated Research Certification Form completed by the principal investigator of that lab. Additional details can be found on our website and on the first page of the corresponding Certification Form ([ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/](https://ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/)).
- Continuation projects must be a substantial expansion from prior work and will be judged on experiment/data collection performed from April 2024 to March 2025.

### Key Tips for Online Application

The online application system includes numerous tasks that the student must complete. Students can create an account and start their application at [ocsef.smapply.io/](https://ocsef.smapply.io/).

- Students should create a SurveyMonkey account with their own information (not a parent/guardian name).
- Students should use a personal email address (not a school email address).
- Do NOT create duplicate applications.
- Team projects: Only one student creates an application, and then adds the other partner(s) as Collaborators to the application.
- All tasks must be marked “Complete” by the student before they can click “Submit” to finalize project registration (step 1) and also project submission (step 3). **IMPORTANT:** Student must click “Submit” by the deadlines for each step.
- Students will receive email notifications from [noreply@mail.smapply.net](mailto:noreply@mail.smapply.net) (check spam folder).
- If you are having technical difficulties, contact OCSEF at [info@ocsef.org](mailto:info@ocsef.org). Please read the instructions carefully before contacting OCSEF.
- Students must submit Certification Forms ([ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/](https://ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/)) for project registration & submission, if required.
- Students must use one of our digital templates ([ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/](https://ocsef.org/ocsef-rules/)) to create a slide deck of their project (max 12 slides, pdf file, max 10 MB).
- Students need to create a video (max 3 minutes, YouTube link) about their project for the judges.
- Students must submit 5 individual & different images of their lab notebook (file types: jpg/jpeg/png/pdf, max 10 MB each).