Frequently Asked Questions

What is GEARSEF?
GEARSEF is a regional affiliate fair of the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (Intel ISEF), the world’s largest international pre-college science competition.

Who is eligible to participate?
The Greater East Alabama Regional Science & Engineering Fair (GEARSEF) is open to all students in grades 6-12 who have advanced from their local science fair (school, county, district, or community fair) and reside within the following Alabama counties: Autauga, Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Chambers, Coffee, Crenshaw, Dale, Elmore, Geneva, Henry, Houston, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Montgomery, Pike, Russell, and Tallapoosa. Students can be enrolled in public or private schools in the region or affiliated with a home school cover school.

It is recommended that students present their projects at a school or county science fair and only advance to GEARSEF if they were in the top 25% of those participating in the fair. For students already participating in a school or county science fair, Auburn University's Regional Fair is the next step forward for those winning projects. If the school district or county you reside in does not have its own fair, Auburn's Regional Fair can serve as the first competition site for top student projects pending pre-approval from the GEARSEF Science Fair Director.

My school is not participating in GEARSEF, but I have an idea for a great project. What should I do?
It is recommended that you do the following:

1. Ask a teacher at your school if they will serve as an Adult Sponsor for your Science research project. As the Adult Sponsor, the teacher should:
   a. Review the Intel ISEF Rules and Guidelines
   b. Form an SRC and IRB committee (especially important if you plan to use human participants, vertebrate animals, potentially hazardous biological agents, or controlled substances/devices.)
   c. Approve the project and complete any required forms
   d. Provide lab space (should their project require this) in which to perform the experiment. (All microbiology projects should take place in a BSL-1 or BSL-2 lab depending on specific nature of the project)
   e. Provide additional support as needed during the research process.

2. If a teacher is unwilling to serve as an Adult Sponsor, locate a responsible adult who is willing to serve as your Adult Sponsor. Often, good sponsors can be found by visiting with professionals at local colleges and universities, parents, or members of local industry. As the Adult Sponsor, the adult should:
   a. Review the Intel ISEF Rules and Guidelines
   b. Form an SRC and IRB committee (especially important if you plan to use human participants, vertebrate animals, potentially hazardous biological agents, or controlled substances/devices.)
   c. Approve the project and complete any required forms
   d. Provide lab space (should their project require this) in which to perform the experiment. (All microbiology projects should take place in a BSL-1 or BSL-2 lab depending on specific nature of the project)
   e. Provide additional support as needed during the research process.
**How do I register?**

Registration is a two-step process that begins in the fall semester prior to the science fair. Local fairs (schools, school systems) register in the fall to let GEARSEF know they will be sending their winners to AU in the spring. Then, each project is registered.

1. Local fairs (schools or school systems) should register by Friday, December 11, 2015 to send their winners to compete in GEARSEF.
2. After the completion of their local fair, winners should be given a project registration form to submit by the deadline, February 12, 2016.

**When may I register my school? My project?**

- School District Registration is open between September 1, 2015 and December 11, 2015.
- Project Registration is open between January 8, 2016 and February 12, 2016.
  - Any project that is not registered by February 12, 2016 will NOT be allowed to compete at GEARSEF. This date will be strictly enforced.

**I have a great project. Can I register directly with GEARSEF?**

Any student who attends a school that actively participates in a local (school, district, or county fair) should register with their school. Those students that reside in an area not currently participating in science fair should first attempt to locate a teacher at their school willing to serve as the Adult Sponsor and register the school for participation in GEARSEF. If this is not possible, the student should then locate a responsible adult to serve as their Adult Sponsor and seek pre-approval from the GEARSEF Science Fair Director to register without a teacher. If you are unsure whether your school district is participating, please contact the Fair Coordinator, Josh King at 334-844-8123.

**Are there any rules I should be following?**

Yes, all projects should follow the rules set forth by the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. These rules can be found at [https://student.societyforscience.org/international-rules-pre-college-science-research](https://student.societyforscience.org/international-rules-pre-college-science-research). Be diligent in adhering to these rules as projects that do not adhere to the rules may be disqualified from competition.

Note that some projects require pre-approval from your local (school or school district) Scientific Review Committee (SRC) or Internal Review Board (IRB) and/or a qualified scientist to aid you in your project. Before beginning a project review the Intel ISEF Rules and Guidelines to see if your project will require pre-approval and/or a qualified scientist.

**What is the registration fee?**

There is a $15.00 registration fee for every project submitted to compete at GEARSEF.

**What forms should I submit to participate in the science fair?**

Each project registration must include the following:

- GEARSEF registration form
- Intel ISEF Form 1
- Intel ISEF Form 1A
- Intel ISEF Form 1B
- Research Plan*
- Abstract*

*Research Plan instructions are on page two of Form 1A. Abstract information can be found on our website
Additional forms are required for projects involving human participants, vertebrate animals, controlled substances, and/or potentially hazardous biological agents. You can use the Intel ISEF Rules Wizard or call us if you are unsure which forms you will need.

**Can I work on my project with a friend?**
Team projects of up to 3 members are allowed to compete at GEARSEF. Be sure that all members of the team contribute equally and understand the project.

**I completed my project as a team, but my teammates cannot attend GEARSEF. Does my project have to be registered as a team project?**
Yes, if you worked as a team (2 – 3 members) you must register your project as a team. All members do not have to attend judging. However, it will be difficult for the judges to understand the contributions of each team member without being able to interview them. As a result, the team’s score may suffer. It is highly encouraged that all members of the team attend project interviews.

**When should I set up my project?**
Projects will be set up the morning of the event. See the Event Schedule for specifics.

**What if I can’t come to GEARSEF during the judging time?**
The judging interview is the most important component of the judging process. If you cannot come at all, we recommend that you do not set up your project.

**Do I have to stay for the entire judging period?**
Yes! The judging interview is the most important component of the judging process. During the judging time there are category judges and special award judges that are interviewing students. You need to give them an opportunity to talk to you.

**Can my parents or teacher set up my project for me?**
Yes. Just be certain that ALL materials you plan to display are present. Make sure that you are adhering to the Display and Safety Rules. These rules can be found on page 23 of the 2016 Complete Intel ISEF Rules and Guidelines Booklet, available at [https://student.societyforscience.org/international-rules-pre-college-science-research](https://student.societyforscience.org/international-rules-pre-college-science-research).

**How are individual and team projects judged?**
Individual and team projects are judged based upon the same criteria except teamwork is considered in each category. Those entering team projects should ensure that all team members contributed equally and understand the project. Team projects will receive one score from each judge. GEARSEF uses a modified version of the Intel ISEF judging guidelines which can be found at: [https://student.societyforscience.org/judging-criteria-intel-isef](https://student.societyforscience.org/judging-criteria-intel-isef)

**What should I wear to the fair?**
We recommend that you dress professionally, but comfortably for the judging interview.

**What should I bring to the fair?**
The judging process is often lengthy with some “down” time. We recommend that you bring a book to read or homework to work on after your interviews. Please do not read a book or work on your homework during the interview period.
Do I need a project notebook?
Yes. The judges will want to look at your project notes and raw data along with your project write up on your display.

Will lunch be provided?
No, but there will be a down period in which students may eat at the Auburn University Student Center or leave campus to eat somewhere off-site. A dining guide is available on this website.

May my parents/family come to the fair?
Yes, your family is welcome to come to the fair. We recommend that they come to the fair when it is open to the public and for the awards ceremony. Parents and the general public will not be allowed in the project exhibit rooms during judging.

Will parking be available?
Yes. However, all attendees will need to place the required Auburn University Science and Engineering Fair Temporary Day Pass in the front window of their car and park in the area designated on the pass. These passes will be digitally distributed to all supervising teachers.

Please note that GEARSEF occurs during the university’s normal operating hours and as such faculty, staff, and students will park in their normal designated areas. If you park outside the GEARSEF designated parking area you will risk being towed, ticketed, and/or booted at your own expense. If you need handicap access, please contact the fair director for information on the closest handicap accessible parking.

Will my valuables be secure at the fair?
We recommend that if you need to bring a computer or other valuable items with you to display at the fair that you only have them out on display while you are with your project.

Will the science fair be open to the public?
Yes. Please see the event schedule for the public viewing period times.

What happens if I win at GEARSEF?
• All students that place 1st – 3rd in their category will automatically advance to the state competition hosted by the University of Alabama Huntsville in late March/early April 2016.
• The top two finishing high school students will advance (and receive an all-expense paid trip) to the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) in May 2016. The fair will take place in Phoenix, Arizona.