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. Students in grades 6-8 are entered in the "Junior Division" of GEARSEF while students grades 9-12 are considered part of the "Senior Division."

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.

When may I register my school? My project?
- Fair/school registration opens in the early Fall and should be completed as soon as possible (ideally also in the early Fall) to ensure space for projects at GEARSEF and to allow adequate time for teachers and students to register their individual projects and fill out the needed forms. Many projects also require various reviews and pre-approvals to occur before students being experimentation which should be considered in your planning.
  - Fair/school registration also requires that schools set up an account in Scienteer (the software we use to organize affiliated fairs and student paperwork/forms). Please contact Josh King if you do not yet have a Scienteer account for your school.
- Student Project Registration may begin as soon as the school fair has set up the needed accounts in Scienteer. We recommend that this is done early in the Fall semester.
  - Any project that has not submitted its full registration and paperwork to GEARSEF by February 5, 2018 will NOT be allowed to compete at GEARSEF. This date will be strictly enforced.
My school is not participating in GEARSEF, but I have an idea for a great project and want to participate. What should I do?

Any student who attends a school that actively participates in a local (school, district, or county fair) should register with their school. However, for those students that reside in an area not currently participating in science fair 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 be prepared to:
   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. Assist the student in utilizing the new online Scienteer system for completing project registration
   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.

Students may 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.

How do I register?

All projects MUST be submitted through the new online Scienteer system. This system guides students through the ISEF regulations to help ensure compliance. For questions on how to register through Scienteer, please contact Josh King at josh.king@auburn.edu. You may also review our Scienteer help page here: http://www.auburn.edu/cosam/departments/outreach/programs/gearsef/scienteer-help.htm

Registration is a two-step process that begins in the fall semester prior to the science fair.

1. Local fairs (schools, school systems, etc.) register in the fall to let GEARSEF know they will be sending their winners to AU in the spring. This includes setting up school fair accounts in Scienteer for their students to register under. If your school has not yet registered for GEARSEF, please contact Josh King.
2. Once schools/school systems are registered, individual student projects are registered under their corresponding teacher/school. This includes filling out the necessary paperwork in Scienteer before experimentation begins. If you are a student who does not yet have a Scienteer account, please contact your teacher for assistance.
**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 your experiment begins. 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.

Scienteer (the digital fair management software we use at GEARSEF) will help students follow the ISEF rules by facilitating students in filling out the appropriate ISEF forms. While this software catches many of the forms and specifications students need adhere to when properly used, we suggest teachers and students pay additional, special attention to the rules if a project involves any of the following: vertebrate animals; human subjects; potentially hazardous biological agents; or hazardous chemicals, activities, or other devices.

**What is Scienteer?**
Scienteer is an online science fair management software system that works like tax software, designed to guide students, teachers and science fair directors through a step by step process, auto-filling forms and documentation. GEARSEF requires that all participating students and schools use the Scienteer system as it helps navigate the complex ISEF rules. For questions about Scienteer, please contact Josh King.

**What is the registration fee?**
There is a $20.00 registration fee for every project submitted to compete at GEARSEF. Up to 3 students may participate as a team on the same project.

**What forms should I submit to participate in the science fair?**
The Scienteer system will guide students through a questionnaire system. Provided that the students responses are accurate, the Scienteer system will help generate the requirements for projects. By filling out all of the questions in Scienteer, students create a digital version of the necessary paperwork that will be used for GEARSEF and may be printed out if the student advances to the State or International fair.

**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 24 of the 2017-2018 Complete Intel ISEF Rules and Guidelines Booklet, available at 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. A tentative example scoresheet can be found in the teacher info packets that will be sent out to participating schools and may be found on the GEARSEF website.

What should I wear to the fair?
We recommend that you dress professionally, but comfortably for the judging interview. Girls should wear dress/skirt or slacks and a blouse. Boys should wear suit and tie or dress pants and a blazer.

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?
We recommend students keep notes for their research in a dedicated journal and bring this with them to GEARSEF. The judges will likely want to look at your project notes and raw data along with your project write-up on your display. While a project notebook is not required for GEARSEF, it may be of use during your interview with the judges.

Will lunch be provided?
No, but there will be a down period in which students may eat on campus or at any of the surrounding area restaurants.

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. A parking map will be posted on the GEARSEF website within a week or two before the event with details of where to park and if a parking pass will be required.

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 2018.
- 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 2018. The fair will take place in Pittsburgh, PA.

For any other questions, please contact Josh King at josh.king@auburn.edu or 334-844-8123.