



WAIFC YOUNG ACADEMIC AWARD 2025

Submission Handbook

Abstract

The Young Academic Award hosted by The World Alliance of International Financial Centers (WAIFC) inviting young academics to submit papers or essays on the future of a sustainable and inclusive financial sector.

<https://award.waifc.finance>
<https://apply.waifc.finance>

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1. INTRODUCTION

The financial sector continues to evolve rapidly with new technologies enabling digital transformation, innovative trends involving artificial intelligence and quantum computing, and a greater focus on financing the net-zero transition, supply chain redesign, or financial literacy & inclusion. While we see the need for a long-term transition towards a sustainable financial industry, we need to support our communities through education and capacity-building while improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in the short term.



*Lamia Merzouki,
Chair WAIFC Board of Directors*

The World Alliance of International Financial Centers (WAIFC) is a non-profit association representing 26 leading international financial centers. Our members work with financial institutions, government, academia, and other stakeholders to drive growth and competitiveness of the financial sector. WAIFC facilitates cooperation between our members, exchanging best practices and communication with the public. Together, we collaborate on accelerating sustainable economic growth and innovation in delivering global financial services.

As the Chair of WAIFC, I am delighted to invite young academic talent to participate in our annual Young Academic Award program. Now in its fourth year, this initiative underscores our commitment to fostering innovation and collaboration between academia and the financial industry. Our award is overseen by a jury representing international financial centers and is increasingly attracting attention from renowned universities and business schools worldwide.

Thanks to their clustering and catalyst effects, financial centers are at the heart of global growth and innovation. By bridging the gap between academia and the financial sector, we can unlock new ideas, drive sustainability, turbocharge value creation, and shape the future of our industry for the better.

We encourage young researchers to submit their work on timely and wide-ranging topics such as sustainability, FinTech, or talent development, to name a few. The winning submissions will be recognized, and a platform will be provided to showcase their research and connect with leading industry professionals.

I look forward to receiving your submissions and meeting the winners in Frankfurt later this year.

Lamia Merzouki
Chair, WAIFC Board of Directors

There is a pressing need for innovative and novel solutions while challenging conventional practices to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for all. We have a collective responsibility to create that future. As we embark on the 4th edition of the YAA, the jury has expanded the areas for submission to include additional highly topical areas such as climate change finance, social finance, digital assets and currencies, and facilitation of cooperation and peace in light of the geopolitical developments.



*Akshu Campbell-Holt,
Chair of the Young Academic Award Jury*

We invite young academics to submit papers and essays on how International Financial Centers can help by addressing one or more of the following topics:

- 1) The role of international financial centers in promoting collaboration and channeling climate change finance.
- 2) How financial centers can support harmonizing and proliferating sustainable reporting standards.
- 3) The role of IFCs in financing the circular economy.
- 4) The role of the financial sector in fostering a sustainable blue (maritime) economy.
- 5) The role of the financial sector in designing products/services and due diligence practices to specifically foster social enterprises.
- 6) How financial centers can foster gender equity in the financial industry.
- 7) The impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence on the financial sector.
- 8) The impact of Quantum Computing on the financial sector.
- 9) The role digital and tokenized assets will play in the coming years.
- 10) How the financial sector can better protect consumers from fraud.
- 11) How financial centers can support talent development and re-skilling, particularly regarding sustainability and financial technology.
- 12) How the financial sector can remain an attractive employer for young talent.
- 13) The role IFCs should play in facilitating the significant transfer of wealth between generations in the coming years.

We will also consider papers on topics relevant to the work of international financial centers, even if they are not listed above. The top three finalists will have a unique opportunity to present their research at the Annual General Meeting of the WAIFC to be held in Frankfurt, Germany, on 29-30 September 2025.

Applications to submit your paper or essay may be made by 30 April 2025, while your final paper or essay must be submitted by 30 May 2025. Full details on eligibility and assessment criteria of the competition are included in this handbook. If you have any further questions, please email award@waifc.finance.

Akshu Campbell-Holt
Chair, WAIFC Young Academic Award Jury

2. SUBMISSIONS – HOW TO ENTER

We invite young academics to submit papers or essays addressing one or more of the following topics:

- 1) The role of international financial centers in promoting collaboration and channeling climate change finance.
- 2) How financial centers can support harmonizing and proliferating sustainable reporting standards.
- 3) The role of IFCs in financing the circular economy.
- 4) The role of the financial sector in fostering a sustainable blue (maritime) economy.
- 5) The role of the financial sector in designing products/services and due diligence practices to specifically foster social enterprises.
- 6) How financial centers can foster gender equity in the financial industry.
- 7) The impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence on the financial sector.
- 8) The impact of Quantum Computing on the financial sector.
- 9) The role digital and tokenized assets will play in the coming years.
- 10) How the financial sector can better protect consumers from fraud.
- 11) How financial centers can support talent development and re-skilling, particularly regarding sustainability and financial technology.
- 12) How the financial sector can remain an attractive employer for young talent.
- 13) The role IFCs should play in facilitating the significant transfer of wealth between generations in the coming years.

We will also consider papers on topics relevant to the work of international financial centers but not listed above.

General Submission Criteria, Author Acknowledgement & Permissions

- Papers or essays should be previously unpublished or, if published, not earlier than 2024.
- Multiple authors can contribute to a paper or essay, but at least one author must be under the age of 35 as of 30 May 2025.
- Applicants consent to processing personal data in compliance with EU GDPR.
- Shortlisted applicants agree to provide bios and headshots.
- Shortlisted applicants grant WAIFC and its members permission to publish author information with paper or essay details as part of the Award social media campaign.
- Shortlisted applicants grant permission to WAIFC and its members to publish (electronically) their papers or essays with full attribution to the author(s).

Application for Submission

- Applications for submission must be made by 30 April 2025.
- Applications must be made by completing the [submission form](#).*
- Applications must include an abstract of between 200 and 500 words and have a table of contents of the entire paper or essay.

- Applications must be in the English language.

*** If you cannot access the submission form, please email award@waifc.finance.**

Submission of Paper or Essay

- The final paper or essay must be submitted by 30 May 2025.
- Submissions can be uploaded to our website: <https://award.waifc.finance/>
- Submissions must be between 5 and 25 pages (without the bibliography, tables, charts, and pictures). ¹
- Submissions must be written in or translated into the English language.
- Submissions must be in Microsoft Word or PDF format (PDF format preferred).

3. WHO CAN ENTER?

WAIFC is a global organization, and we aim to make this a global competition. We invite young academics from around the world to make a submission. The Award is open to all countries, including non-WAIFC member countries.

As our focus is on the financial sector, we particularly encourage submissions from students, Ph.D. students, post-docs, or junior professors in finance, economics, mathematics, computer science, or other similar fields to participate. However, we seek new ideas, so a background in any field of study is welcome as long as your paper or essay relates to finance and meets our submission criteria. Submissions are welcome from those in universities, research institutes, think tanks, and other similar institutions.

Multiple authors can contribute to a paper or essay, but as we seek ideas from bright young minds, at least one author must be under the age of 35 as of 30 May 2025. Authors currently employed by, or collaborating with, the WAIFC or any of its members or observers (refer to the list at the end of this handbook) are not eligible to participate.

4. THE JURY & SELECTION CRITERIA

A jury will conduct a detailed evaluation of submissions. The jury will comprise of WAIFC Board Members, its management, and leading academics internationally. Jury members will not be permitted to vote on submissions from their own country to ensure impartiality and fairness.

Submissions will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Novelty

¹ WAIFC reserves the right to accept slightly shorter or longer papers. Substantially shorter or longer papers will be rejected.

- Topicality
- Innovative thinking
- Scientific merit
- Relevance for financial centers
- Practical applicability

The jury will decide on the top three finalists. Feedback on submissions will only be provided to the three finalists during their presentations in September. No other feedback or ratings will be provided to submitters. The decision of the jury is final.

All applicants will be notified as to whether they have made it through to the top three. Upon notification that you are one of the three finalists, details of WAIFC's Annual General Meeting in October will be confirmed.

5. DEADLINES & DATES

The website will be open for submissions from 13 February to 30 May 2025. All submissions will be reviewed and assessed between 1 June and 16 July 2025. Applicants will be notified as to whether they are among the finalists in July.

Key dates:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| • 30 April 2025 | Deadline for applications for submission |
| • 30 May 2025 | Deadline for submission of full paper or essay |
| • 16 July 2025 | Jury completes judging/assessing submissions |
| • 17-18 July 2025 | Applicants notified whether or not among the finalists |
| • Late July 2025 | Finalists' travel logistics confirmed |
| • 29-30 September 2025 | Presentations at WAIFC AGM in Frankfurt ² |

6. THE AWARDS

The Young Academic Award 2025 will be held at the Annual General Meeting of the WAIFC in Frankfurt, Germany, in September 2025 ², where the three finalists will be invited to present their submissions to the WAIFC Board of Directors and other invited observers and guests. The awards will be presented to the winners by members of the Board of Directors.

A prize will be awarded to each of the top three finalists as follows:

- EUR €3,000 – 1st place
- EUR €2,000 – 2nd place
- EUR €1,000 – 3rd place

² WAIFC reserves the right to change the location and date of its Annual General Meeting at its own discretion. If another location or date is selected, WAIFC will announce the change to the Young Academic Award participants in a timely manner.

This year we have a special prize for the winner of the best paper in addition to the prize money mentioned above. The winner will receive a complimentary ticket to [Money 20/20 Europe](#) 2026 (retail value: approximately €3900), sponsored by [Ascential](#), the organizer of Money 20/20.

WAIFC will cover the cost of economy flights to Frankfurt, hotel accommodation for two nights at a hotel chosen by WAIFC, and other travel expenses as agreed with the three finalists (e.g., visa fees and transfers). Travel logistics will be coordinated with the finalists in late July 2025.

Please note: Only one author per submission will have their travel and accommodation expenses covered by WAIFC. If there are multiple authors to a paper or essay, it is up to the authors to decide who will present. If additional authors want to participate in the presentation and are willing to bear their travel expenses, WAIFC will do its best to have them attend the presentation.

To celebrate the winner and two runners-up, all three will be promoted on the WAIFC website. The winner will also be interviewed for WAIFC's monthly newsletter.

7. TERMS & CONDITIONS

The automated creation of parts of the work using AI applications such as Chat GPT is not explicitly prohibited. However, it must be stated at the end of the work which parts were created automatically.

By submitting an application and a paper or essay, you agree to the following:

- WAIFC may share submitted material with its members, Award Jury, staff, and partners involved in the award process.
- Applicants consent to the processing of personal data in compliance with EU GDPR.
- Shortlisted applicants agree to provide bios and headshots.
- Shortlisted applicants grant WAIFC and its members permission to publish author information with paper or essay details as part of the Award social media campaign.
- Shortlisted applicants grant WAIFC and its members permission to publish their (electronic version) papers or essays with full attribution to the author(s).
- If selected as a finalist, you will be able to travel to Frankfurt to present your work on 29-30 September 2025.
- The decision of the Jury in selecting the three finalists is deemed to be final.

APPENDIX – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The World Alliance of International Financial Centers (WAIFC) is a non-profit association registered in Belgium representing 26 leading international financial centers across five continents. WAIFC members are government agencies, associations, and similar institutions developing and promoting their financial centers. WAIFC facilitates cooperation between its members, exchanging best practices and communication with the general public.

For more details, please visit <https://waifc.finance>.

For questions relating to our Young Academic Award, please email award@waifc.finance.

WAIFC Members:

- Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM)
- Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC)
- Busan Finance Center (BFC)
- Casablanca Finance City (CFC)
- Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)
- EnterpriseNGR, Lagos
- FinanceMalta
- Frankfurt Main Finance (FMF)
- Future Finance Poland, Warsaw
- Hong Kong Financial Services Development Council (FSDC)
- Istanbul Financial Center (IFC)
- Jersey Finance
- Luxembourg for Finance (LFF)
- Rwanda Finance
- Stuttgart Financial
- The Capital Market Authority of Oman (CMA)
- The Economic Development Board Mauritius (EDB)
- The Qatar Financial Centre (QFC)
- TheCityUK
- Two Rivers International Finance & Innovation Centre (TRIFIC), Nairobi

WAIFC Observers:

- Beijing Financial Street
- Connecticut Hedge Fund Association
- FIBA, Miami
- Guernsey Finance
- Lujiazui Financial City Authority, Shanghai
- The Strategic Reforms Agency Uzbekistan

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