



Call for Papers

World Alliance Young Academic Award 2026

The 2026 Young Academic Award, hosted by the World Alliance of International Financial Centers, invites submissions that explore the evolving role of international financial centers in shaping the future of global finance.

Topics address the most pressing forces transforming the financial system, including the transition to net zero and sustainable economic models, the rise of artificial intelligence, digital assets, and next-generation market infrastructure, the need for more inclusive and impact-driven finance, the development of future-ready financial talent, and the growing importance of geopolitical resilience and cross-border cooperation among IFCs. Submissions should ideally combine academic rigor with practical insights, offering actionable recommendations that can inform policymakers, regulators, financial institutions, and IFCs worldwide.

1) Climate and Sustainability Finance

- 1.1. The role of international financial centers in financing the net-zero transition
- 1.2. The role of international financial centers in financing the circular economy.
- 1.3. The role of the financial sector in fostering a sustainable blue (maritime) economy and creating biodiversity solutions.
- 1.4. The role of international financial centers in global sustainability reporting interoperability connecting ISSB, ESRS, GRI, and taxonomies.

2) Social Impact and Inclusion

- 2.1. How international financial centers can foster diversity and inclusion in the financial industry.
- 2.2. The role of international financial institutions in designing financial products and due diligence methods to promote the growth of social enterprises and social finance.

3) Digital Finance and Technology

- 3.1. The impact of agentic artificial intelligence on the financial sector.
- 3.2. The impact of quantum computing on the financial sector.
- 3.3. How can IFCs lead in establishing global tokenized capital markets and competitive regulatory ecosystems to develop digital assets and tokenization of real-world assets?
- 3.4. How will new forms of digital money, such as Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) and stablecoins, transform payments and banking?
- 3.5. The role of the financial sector in better protecting consumers from fraud.

4) Talent and Skills for the Future

- 4.1. How international financial centers can support talent development and re-skilling.
- 4.2. How the financial sector can remain an attractive employer for young talent.

We will also consider papers on topics not mentioned above but relevant to the work of international financial centers. Papers must be either unpublished or published no earlier than 2025. An English translation is required if the paper is written in a language other than English.

The top three finalists will have the unique opportunity to present their research at our Annual General Meeting, to be held in Busan, South Korea, in the week from September 14 to 18, 2026. The World Alliance will cover the travel expenses to Busan, as stated in the [Award Handbook](#).

Our Chair will announce the winner of the best paper and award a prize of €3,000. The runners-up will be awarded prizes of €2,000 (2nd place) and €1,000 (3rd place).

Who can enter?

We invite young academics from around the world to make a submission. We are an international organization, and we aim to make this a global competition. The Award is open to all countries, including non-World Alliance member countries. As our focus is on finance, we particularly encourage submissions from Ph.D. students in finance, economics, mathematics, computer science, or other related fields. We are, however, seeking 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 35 as of 30 May 2026.

How will the winners be selected?

We will assess the papers against the following criteria: (1) novelty, (2) topicality, (3) innovative thinking, (4) scientific merit, (5) relevance for financial centers, and (6) practical applicability.

How to apply?

Applications to submit your paper or essay may be made by 30 April 2026 via our [submission form](#). Your final paper or essay must be submitted no later than 30 May 2026.

Full details on who can enter, how to enter, assessment criteria, and so on are detailed within our [Award Handbook](#). If you have any further questions or if you are unable to access the submission form, please email award@waifc.finance.

We look forward to receiving your submissions and to meeting the winners in Busan later this year.

About the World Alliance

The World Alliance of International Financial Centers is a non-profit association registered in Belgium that represents 27 leading international financial centers globally. Its members are government agencies, associations, and similar institutions that develop and promote their financial centers. The World Alliance facilitates cooperation among its members, exchanging best practices, and communicating with the general public.

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

World Alliance of International Financial Centers, 208 Avenue Louise, 1050 Brussels, Belgium