



# Ashoka University, Safexpress Centre for Data, Learning and Decision Sciences is delighted to announce the **exSPLOre 2026 Best Young Researcher Paper Competition!**

**exSPLOre 2026**, our second annual Explorations in Statistics, Probability, Learning, and Optimization Research conference, is excited to launch its inaugural Best Young Researcher Paper Competition. This competition aims to recognize and celebrate outstanding research conducted by young researchers at institutes across India. Join us from January 13-17, 2026, at Ashoka University in Sonipat, Haryana, just outside Delhi.

## About the Competition

We're seeking exceptional data science research that leverages statistics, probability, learning theory, and optimization. Submissions should demonstrate a strong conceptual and methodological focus, along with the potential for real-world impact.

## Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the competition, your submission must meet the following:

- The submitted paper must have been published in a peer-reviewed conference or accepted in a journal **on or after July 1, 2024**. This means the conference must have been held, or the journal acceptance letter issued, on or after this date.
- The entrant(s) must have conducted the research while enrolled as a student (undergraduate, master's, or PhD), a pre-doc, research fellow/assistant/associate, or post-doc at an institute in India. We allow multiple main contributors to the same paper to be identified as entrants.
- While advisors or other senior researchers can be co-authors, the entrant's (or main contributors') contribution must constitute the majority of the paper. The advisor (or a senior co-author) must explicitly detail the entrant's percentage of contribution in:
  - defining the problem and initiating the research.
  - conducting the research itself.
  - writing the paper.
- Each entrant can submit only one paper. The same paper cannot be submitted by multiple entrants unless they are explicitly identified as main contributors to that paper. An entrant may co-author other submitted papers, provided a different eligible entrant submits them. So each entrant can be a main contributor to only one submitted paper.

## Submission Requirements

A complete submission includes:

- The **published paper**, clearly indicating it meets the specified eligibility dates.
- A **letter signed by both the faculty advisor (or senior co-author), and the entrant(s)**, confirming that all eligibility conditions have been met. This letter must also explicitly detail the entrant's (or main contributors') percentage of contribution to:
  - defining the problem and initiating the research.
  - conducting the research.
  - writing the paper.
- This letter is not needed if all authors of the paper are eligible entrants.

## Competition Process & Awards

Five finalist entrants will be selected to present their papers at exSPLOre 2026. A winner and a runner-up will be announced during the event from among these presenters. The award will recognize both the best paper and the corresponding entrant(s) (that is, the main contributors).

A **cash prize of Rs. 65,000** will be awarded to the **winner**, and **Rs. 35,000 to the runner-up**. In cases with multiple main contributors, the award will be divided equally among the winners.

## Award Co-chairs:

- Prof. Achal Bassamboo, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University (Applied Probability, Operations Research and Statistics)
- Prof. Siva Theja Maguluri, Georgia Tech (Optimization including Stochastic Optimization)
- Prof. Karthik Sridharan, Computer Science, Cornell University (Machine Learning and Learning Theory)

Additional program committee members will be added based on the submissions received.

## Important Dates

- Call for Submissions: **July 15, 2025**
- Paper Submission Deadline: **September 15, 2025, 23:59 midnight Indian Standard Time**
- Review Period Ends/Author Notification: **November 15, 2025**

## How to Submit

- All application materials must be submitted online.
- [Click here to submit your application](#)

## exSPLOre Steering Committee

- Vivek Borkar (IIT Bombay)
- Peter Glynn (Chair, Stanford)
- Garud Iyengar (Columbia)
- Sandeep Juneja (Ashoka)
- Praneeth Netrapalli (Google DeepMind)
- Aaditya Ramdas (Carnegie Mellon)

## For Queries

For queries, please write to:  
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