



Federation Trophy & Polly Model Engineering Prize Frequently asked questions

Q: Who can enter?

A: Entries are open to any young person, under the age of 24, regardless of gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. All entrants must be a member of a model engineering society which is affiliated to the Federation of Model Engineering Societies (FMES).

Q: Who submits the entry form?

A: The 'Nominee' section of the entry form is completed first, by the Young Engineer (YE), and then passed (scanned/electronic copies are allowed) to their nominating adult (which can be their project mentor) to complete the relevant section. The nominating adult then submits the form, together with the supporting evidence (see below) and a nomination statement (further details are also provided below).

Q: What supporting evidence is needed? Who prepares this?

A: The supporting evidence may be prepared by either the YE or their mentor/supervisor (so long as the latter is sufficiently familiar with the progress of the entire project). It should consist of photographs showing the nominee undertaking key stages of the project, utilising machinery such as lathes and milling machines, for example, together with brief details of the progress of the work and any challenges overcome by the nominee. For those familiar with traditional apprenticeships, this is akin to an apprentice's 'portfolio'. This may sound like a daunting undertaking, but it almost writes itself, if photos are taken regularly throughout the project.

Q: What should the nomination statement include?

A: This should detail the YE's progress during the execution of the project and discuss any aspects which were not undertaken by the nominee (perhaps because suitable facilities were not available or the nominee was considered too young to operate certain items of equipment). Such 'help', where justifiable, will not adversely impact upon the candidate's chances of winning. The statement should also include details of the YE's involvement in Society activities.

Q: Is there a ‘template’ for the nomination statement?

A: A template is not provided, as this would be too restrictive – every project is different and every individual contributes differently to that project and their wider Society. Useful guidance can be gleaned from reading the past citations available on the FMES website. The [“Award Winners”](#) link in the YE section of the site contains recent examples.

Q: What about the ‘involvement in society activities’ part?

A: Involvement in a model engineering society is an important part of the judging criteria and reflects the need for YE’s to have experience of a variety of club activities. This could take the form, for example, of helping on public running days (at a railway-related club), such as assisting in setting up the track and signalling, providing support in the maintenance of club facilities, driving/guarding/signalling (where age-appropriate), assisting with club IT or websites, or any other area of the club’s activities.

Q: My model club does not run a railway or that is not my area of modelling interest – can I still enter?

A: Yes, absolutely. A model boat club, for example, may have open days at which you could help and your model entry could be that of a powered or sailing craft. The club’s facilities will require maintenance, for example draining and cleaning the boating lake, with which you could help. The club also needs running by its volunteer members; you could support in writing/editing the newsletter, mailing it to members (including assisting with e-mailing and maintaining a mailing list), even in setting up the club meeting room for its regular meetings. Essentially anything which your nominating adult feels provides a positive contribution to the successful running of the club, will count in this category. Likewise, clocks, stationary engines, miniature farmyard equipment, etc. are all valid model types and fall within the scope of the competition (and this is not an exhaustive list). If you are unsure whether or not your model will be permitted to enter, please send details to: Young.Engineers@fmes.org.uk and we will let you know.

Q: Does my model have to be a working model?

A: Your model does not have to be a working model. It should be capable of showing that you have learned skills in the practical development of the model through the quality and complexity of its construction, its design or extended maintenance, in the context of whatever prototype the model is based upon. These skills will, for example, differ markedly between a model made from wood and one made predominantly from metal. A model that is (ultimately) *capable* of working, and/or has been made using prototypical methods, is more likely to score highly than, for example, a static Airfix® kit.

Q: I plan to submit a piece of workshop tooling – what are the entry criteria for such items?

A: In the case of workshop tooling (or castings and other ‘static’ engineering parts), the item should have been designed to fulfil an engineering purpose, whether or not that purpose is yet fulfilled. For example, an engineers’ centre punch should be capable of making an indent in metal (by contrast, a 3D-printed, plastic, example would not qualify), a tailstock die holder should be capable of fitting into a lathe tailstock and safely holding a die (a photograph can be used to demonstrate this), a casting should have been produced from a pattern and mould, made by the entrant, in a form and size such that it could be machined into a working model engineering component (e.g. a cylinder, a pump-body, etc.), a part of a working model (e.g. a locomotive horn-block) or a piece of tooling, (e.g. a base-casting for a drill-stand).

Q: Does my model need to be based on a prototype?

A: No. A model can be ‘freelance’, whether of the model maker’s own design or produced from a published design. Likewise, it can be a functional piece of mechanical engineering or tooling (i.e. not a ‘model’ at all), for example: a robot arm, a 3D printer or an automaton of some form. Again, this list is not exhaustive.

Q: What are the judges looking for?

A: In terms of the project work, the judges are looking for a YE’s engagement with a project, their eagerness to progress and the quality of the resulting engineering work. The judges recognise that the availability of facilities and materials, the experience of the YE and the level of ambition of a particular project will not be equal across all societies and ages of YE. These aspects will be taken into account by the Judges, in reaching their decision, and should be highlighted by the nominating adult as a part of their nomination statement.

Q: Can I enter more than once?

A: Yes, entries are welcomed from past entrants and even from past winners. Many past entrants have progressed from being a runner-up to a winner later in their YE ‘career’. Only a single entry is, however, permitted in any given year.

Q: Does my project need to be complete/working in order for me to enter?

A: No, a project does not need to have been completed at the time of entry, however sufficient progress does need to have been made to allow the judges to assess the YE’s commitment to the project, the quality and difficulty of the workmanship involved and the likelihood that the project will reach a successful conclusion. Winners (and runners-up) are encouraged to bring along their project (whether completed or not) to exhibit at the FMES AGM, at which the FMES Trophy is presented.

Q: When/where will the Trophy be presented?

A: The FMES Trophy will be presented at the FMES AGM, which usually takes place on a Saturday in March each year. The venue changes annually and is typically either an interesting/relevant museum (for example: STEAM in Swindon, which was the venue in 2019) or is provided by a model engineering society. Winners and runners-up (and their parents/guardians) are strongly encouraged to attend, although if this is not possible for any reason, the lack of attendance will not, of itself, disbar the candidate from winning an award. Entry to the AGM is free and lunch is usually provided (also free). The award is typically presented at the start of proceedings, so there is no need to attend the whole of the AGM and YEs and their parents/guardians are free to explore the hosting venue (where relevant).

Q: What if I can't attend the AGM?

A: Whilst participants are strongly encouraged to attend the AGM, to be presented with their prize in person, it is not a requirement for entry. If you are unable to be present, the award can be presented at an appropriate event, such as a monthly meeting, at the Club or Society of which you are a member.

Q: When will I know if I have won?

A: All entrants will be informed of the judges' decision, in the case of their particular entry, at least 3 – 4 weeks prior to the AGM. This should allow sufficient time to make arrangements to attend, if appropriate. It is recommended that entrants reserve the day of the AGM in their calendar in case they are successful. The date of the AGM is published on the FMES website approximately 3 months prior to the date of the event.

Q: What is the prize?

A: An overall winner, together with one or more runners-up and occasional 'special prize' recipients are chosen. The winner will be awarded the Federation Trophy, which they can keep for life, together with a cash prize and a voucher which can be spent on anything from the Polly Model Engineering catalogue. Runners-up receive either a similar voucher or a smaller cash prize, as appropriate.