SDSS Datathon 2026
Official Competition Rules & Guidelines

All participants are expected to review and adhere to the following rules and guidelines.

1. Eligibility

1.1 Participation

- Participants must be undergraduate students currently attending the University of Toronto.
- Participation is limited to registered individuals only.
- Interdisciplinary participation is strongly encouraged.

2. Team Guidelines

2.1 Team Formation

- Teams must consist of 2 to 4 participants.
- Solo participants will be assigned to a team of up to 4 members at random.
- Teams may be interdisciplinary.
- No changes to team rosters are permitted after **February 23, 2026**.

2.2 Registration

- All participants must register individually, even if registering as part of a team.
- If registering as a team, each team member must complete the registration form separately.
- Solo registrants will be matched with other solo participants or placed into incomplete teams.
- Registration deadline: **February 23, 2026**
- After registration acceptance:
    - Every team member must confirm attendance with SDSS.

2.3 Attendance

- All team members must check in at the front desk upon arrival at the opening ceremony.
- Failure to check in may affect eligibility.

3. Project & Submission Rules

3.1 Work Expectations

Original Work

- All analyses, models, code, and visualizations must be produced during the Datathon period.
- To ensure fairness, no pre-written project-specific code may be used.
- Participants may use publicly available, openly licensed libraries, APIs, and frameworks.

Team Collaboration

- Each team member is expected to contribute meaningfully to at least one component:
    - Data processing
    - Modeling
    - Visualization
    - Documentation
    - Presentation

Documentation Quality

- All work must be reproducible and well-documented.
- Code should include:
    - Clear comments
    - Logical structure
    - A complete README.md with setup and execution instructions

3.2 Deliverables

Code Submission (Required)

- All scripts or notebooks
- Must be well-organized, executable, and reproducible
- Include a README.md file and a fully executed Jupyter Notebook (.ipynb)

Video Presentation (Required)

- A narrated walkthrough of presentation slides and/or an optional demo or dashboard
- Judges will view this first.
- Must include:
    - Problem overview

    - Data approach
    - Model explanation
    - Key results
    - Final insights
- Should simulate a live presentation.
- All team members are encouraged (but not required) to participate.

Presentation Slides (Required)

- Focus on problem framing, data insights, model approach, key results, and impact.

Demo / Prototype (Optional)

- Examples include a Tableau or Power BI dashboard, an interactive web tool, or a UI mock-up.
- Must be viewable by judges without requiring local execution.

3.3 Submission Format

All project submissions must be made on the SDSS Devpost platform.

- Code:
    - Public GitHub repository link
- Video Presentation:
    - YouTube link
    - Maximum 6 minutes
- Presentation Slides:
    - PDF format only
    - Maximum 15 slides

3.4 Deadlines

- The Datathon will run over two days.
- Final submission deadlines will be announced prior to the event.
- Late submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances.

3.5 Restrictions

- All work must be completed by registered team members only.
- External assistance is not permitted, including professors, TAs, or online tutors.
- Teams may brainstorm with others, but no sharing of code, notebooks, or intermediate results is allowed.

4. AI Usage Guidelines

AI tools are allowed and encouraged, provided they are used responsibly and transparently.

4.1 Responsible Use

- AI should support learning and creativity instead of replacing the core thinking.
- Teams must be able to fully explain their code, methods, and results.
- If a team cannot explain its work during Q&A, the submission may be disqualified.

4.2 Disclosure Requirements

If AI tools are used:

- They must be disclosed in the methodology section or appendix.
- Teams must describe how AI was used (e.g., debugging, formatting, brainstorming).
- Do not cite ChatGPT, Gemini, or similar tools as academic sources. Cite original papers, documentation, or official references instead.

5. Data Guidelines

5.1 Access & Usage

- Data is provided for competition use only.
- Data may not be redistributed or published for commercial purposes.

6. Code of Conduct

6.1 Behavior

- Treat all participants, judges, and organizers with respect.
- Follow the University of Toronto Code of Student Conduct.
- Harassment, discrimination, or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated and may result in disqualification.

6.2 Academic Integrity

Participants must adhere to the University of Toronto Academic Integrity Rulebook, including but not limited to:

- No plagiarism
- No sharing of code or results between teams
- No use of AI-generated content without proper attribution