



Competition Rules 'IVAN TOLPE'

STUDENT AWARD 2027

As a tribute to Ivan Tolpe, a pioneer in manure processing, VCM vzw (hereinafter referred to as VCM) and De Mestverwerkers vzw (hereinafter referred to as De Mestverwerkers) are jointly organizing the Ivan Tolpe Student Award for the second time this year. Since 2025, this award has been presented every two years alongside the regular Ivan Tolpe Award (awarded by VCM) to the author of the best bachelor's or master's thesis in the field of manure processing.

The award is aimed at students conducting innovative research related to a sustainable approach to manure processing for the future.

Through this award, VCM and De Mestverwerkers aim to stimulate and support the development of pioneering academic research, thereby helping the Flemish manure processing sector maintain its leading position. The award recognizes and rewards exceptional student talent and encourages further innovation and professionalization within this important field.

Participants

Article 1

Participation is open to any student enrolled at a university of applied sciences or university who has submitted a professional bachelor's thesis or master's thesis during one of the two academic years preceding the award ceremony (for participation in the 2027 competition, the thesis must have been completed during the 2024-2025 or 2025-2026 academic year, for example). Academic bachelor's theses are not eligible.

The thesis topic must relate to any aspect of manure processing, with a focus on:

- Technological innovation;
- Improved energy efficiency;
- Enhanced valorisation of nutrients or other by-products derived from manure.

The concept must be innovative and address a demand-driven challenge within the Flemish manure processing sector. Research focusing exclusively on the impact of manure on nature and the environment will not be considered eligible.

Article 2

Participants in the Ivan Tolpe Student Award are deemed to have taken note of these competition rules and to agree with their contents.

Criteria

Article 3

Only fully completed application forms (application file prepared according to the prescribed template), together with the annexes referenced in the application file, will be considered for evaluation.

Article 4

Eligible submissions will be evaluated based on four criteria:



1. Scientific quality;
2. Innovative concept relevant to the manure processing sector;
3. Writing style, structure, readability, and appropriate sector-specific terminology;
4. Originality and absence of plagiarism from other studies or publications. Originaliteit, geen plagiaat van andere studies of artikels

Article 5

Participation in the Student Award is free of charge. Travel and, where applicable, accommodation expenses incurred by nominated candidates will not be reimbursed and remain entirely at the nominee's own expense.

Rights

Article 6

The submission of a thesis does not constitute a transfer of copyright or any related intellectual property rights, except as provided for in Articles 7 and 8.

The author remains responsible for the content of both the thesis and its summary.

Article 7

VCM and De Mestverwerkers, as organizers of the Ivan Tolpe Student Award, acquire the right to use submitted theses and summaries for publications, provided that the source is acknowledged.

The participant shall indemnify VCM and De Mestverwerkers against any claims by third parties relating to copyright infringement.

Article 8

Participants agree that information regarding their submitted thesis may be communicated through the media, the VCM website, the VCM Newsletter, VCM study days, study days organized by De Mestverwerkers, as well as newsletters and other communication channels of De Mestverwerkers.

Participants retain the right to request corrections if inaccurate information is included in such communications.

Jury and evaluation process

Article 9

The nominees will be selected by a jury composed of:

- The Chair of VCM and the Chair/Coordinator/Representative of De Mestverwerkers;
- The Vice-Chair of VCM and the Vice-Chair/Representative of De Mestverwerkers;
- The Secretary of VCM and the Secretary of De Mestverwerkers;
- Other representatives of VCM Category A members;
- Members of the governing bodies of VCM and De Mestverwerkers who have expressed an interest and are recognized by both organizations as jury members;
- The VCM Secretariat and the Secretariat of De Mestverwerkers;
- Prof. Erik Meers (Ghent University);



- External experts jointly selected by VCM and De Mestverwerkers.

Article 10

The organizers reserve the right not to award the Student Award if an insufficient number of high-quality submissions are received.

Article 11

The jury may seek advice from external specialists when evaluating the submitted theses.

The jury may also invite candidates to an online meeting to provide additional clarification regarding their submitted dossier.

Article 12

The jury's decisions regarding the selection of nominees and the awarding of the prize will be substantiated and justified.

No appeal may be lodged against either the jury's decision or the methodology used for awarding the prize.

Article 13

If it is subsequently determined that information provided by a participant is inaccurate or misleading, the jury reserves the right to withhold or revoke the prize and designate an alternative winner.

Submission Procedure

Artikel 14

All application documents must be combined into a single PDF file and submitted by email to info@vcm-mestverwerking.be no later than Friday, 12 March 2027.

The file name must follow the format:

SURNAME_FIRSTNAME_IvanTolpeStudentAward_2027

Upon receipt, participants will receive a confirmation email acknowledging their submission.

The application file must be prepared in either Dutch or English.

Applicants must use the template provided by the organizers, available for download from the VCM website.

The submission must include:

- A digital version of the application form;
- A digital copy of the thesis;
- A summary of the thesis of no more than two pages;
- Up to three graphs and/or photographs accompanying the summary.

Article 15

Jury members will evaluate the submitted dossiers individually and score them independently. Based on the applications received, the jury will nominate a minimum of one and a maximum of four entries.



The nominated candidates will present their research during the award ceremony held in conjunction with the VCM Annual General Meeting in May 2027.

All VCM members and members of De Mestverwerkers vzw will have the opportunity to vote for the nominated theses through a voting application. Each VCM member and each member of De Mestverwerkers vzw is entitled to one vote (one voting right per organization).

In the event of a tie, a second round of voting will be held, in which votes may only be cast for the two tied candidates. Should the result remain tied, the ranking established by the jury during the nomination process will determine the winner.

Article 16 - Timeline

1. Candidates must submit the carefully completed application form, which can be downloaded from the VCM website (www.vcm-mestverwerking.be), no later than Friday, 12 March 2027.
2. The jury will select a minimum of two and a maximum of four nominees before Friday, 23 April 2027.
3. At the award ceremony (held in conjunction with the VCM Annual General Meeting at the end of May 2027), the nominees will present their thesis to the audience through a short presentation (maximum 10 minutes). This presentation may take place either in person or online. Afterwards, attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions and vote for the thesis of their choice. The winner will then be announced in the presence of the press.

Prizes

Article 17

The winner of the Ivan Tolpe Student Award will receive:

- An award and a certificate.
- A cash prize of €500.
- Recognition on the VCM website and in the VCM and/or De Mestverwerkers newsletters and press releases.
- The opportunity to present their research at the eighth edition of the international ManuREsource Conference in 2028, including free conference registration.

The other nominated projects will also be offered free participation in ManuREsource 2028 and will have the opportunity to present their research.

The other nominated projects will receive a certificate acknowledging their nomination.

Final provision

Article 18

In all cases not provided for in these regulations, VCM and De Mestverwerkers, after consultation with the jury, shall make the final decision.