

YAI Singapore moves youth AI hackathon finals to 31 January 2027, with sign-ups open to 2 January

Description

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YAI Singapore, a youth AI hackathon for full-time students aged 7 to 24, is taking sign-ups until 11.59pm on Saturday, 2 January 2027. Students build one AI project in teams of one to four, with the year-end school holidays as the main build time for many, and finalists present at a one-day Demo Weekend in Singapore on Sunday, 31 January 2027. The finals were first set for 16 and 17 January, and the organiser moved them to the single Sunday on 20 November.

The hackathon is run by YCESS, the Youth and Children Education Society (Singapore), a society registered in Singapore since 2019, and hosted by Canlah.ai, which runs the website, registration and operations. This is its first season.

How the hackathon works

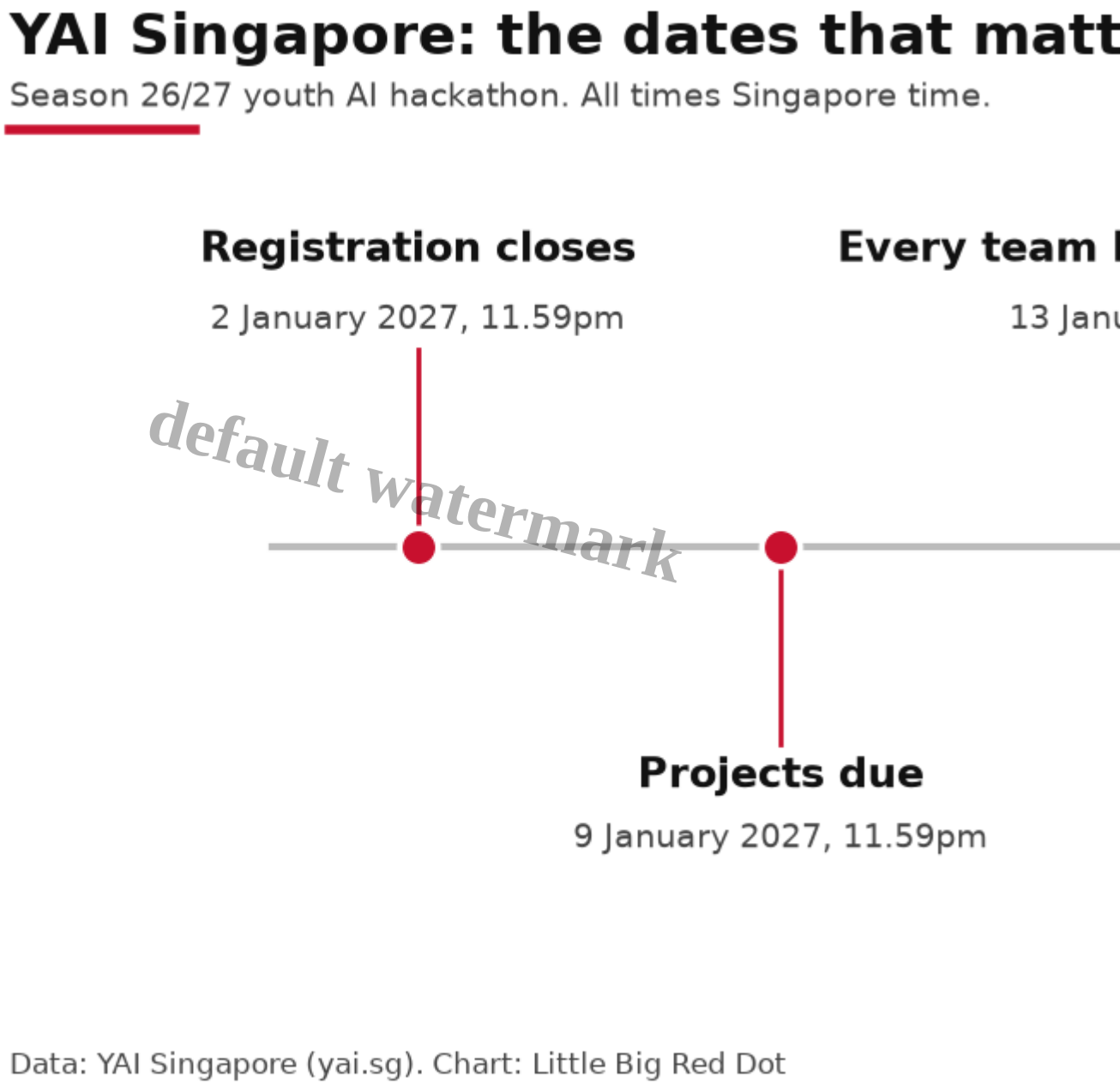
Teams pick one of four quests: AI Art, AI Robotics & Smart Devices, AI for Good or AI Agents. Each quest has its own brief.

There are three divisions, judged separately and set by birth year rather than school level. Primary covers ages 7 to 12 (born 2014 to 2020), Secondary covers 13 to 17 (born 2009 to 2013) and University covers 18 to 24 (born 2002 to 2008). A team plays in the division of its oldest member, or can choose to play up into an older one.

Registering, building and submitting all happen online. Any AI tool is allowed, and the organiser says free accounts are enough for full marks and that no kits or paid tools are needed. For under-18s, a parent or guardian sets up and looks after those accounts. Adults may teach tools and help fix problems, but the idea, the decisions and the presentation must be the studentâ??s, and all help goes into the teamâ??s process log.

Students can join from anywhere, of any nationality. Teams with a member aged 12 or under need a lead adult, a teacher or parent aged 21 or over who is not taking part.

Key dates



YAI Singapore key dates. Chart: Little Big Red Dot

Projects are due at 11.59pm on Saturday, 9 January 2027. Reviewers screen every valid submission online from 10 to 12 January, and every team hears by email on Wednesday, 13 January, whether or not it is a finalist. Between three and five finalist teams per quest in each division then present live on 31 January, followed by a showcase and the awards. Every participant is welcome to attend. The venue has not been announced.

Prizes and the cost to enter

Prizes total S$35,550. Division champions win S$2,000 in Primary, S$5,000 in Secondary and S$10,000 in University, with runner-up and Community Choice prizes below that. Eight Special Awards are open to every division. Prize money is paid per team, and a parent receives it on behalf of a minor.

Entry costs S$68 per student. That covers the challenge and resource pack, judging, certificates for every student, and Demo Weekend entry with lunch for students who attend. About 15 fee-waiver places are available for students who need financial support. Travel and lunch for accompanying adults are not included. If a student withdraws, the fee is not refunded.

The organiser says it will check on Friday, 4 December whether the eventâ??s conditions, including the number of confirmed students, have been met, and email every registered team either way. If they have not, it will postpone or cancel, with a full refund if it cancels.

How to sign up

Registration is at yai.sg/register and takes about 10 minutes. A parent or guardian confirms the place for any member under 21, and the team pays within three days of registering, by PayNow or, from outside Singapore, by card. Teachers can get a school registration link and QR code at yai.sg/schools. Full rules are at yai.sg/rules, and parentsâ?? questions are answered at yai.sg/faq.

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The DSA question

The organiser points parents to Direct School Admission, and robotics, coding and computational thinking skills are among the DSA-Sec talent areas that secondary schools offer. YAI is not an MOE programme, however, and the organiser itself says it promises no admissions outcome and that how any school treats its certificates is up to that school. Each secondary school runs its own selection, and schoolsâ?? own DSA pages say meeting their criteria does not guarantee an offer.

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