



IPSC IT FEST 2026

Rulebook

Hackathon

·Where Technology Meets Insight.·

The Doon School

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Field	Value
Event name	Hackathon
Participants per school	3

1. Overview

1.1 Objective. The Hackathon tests a team's ability to carry a conceptual challenge through to a market-oriented solution, combining technical execution of a functional prototype, sound business and marketing thinking, and the ability to communicate and defend the result under questioning. It combines problem-solving, product development, entrepreneurship and teamwork across a Company formed with members from several schools.

1.2 Event summary. After the Opening Ceremony, participants are grouped into cross-school Companies, each of which appoints a CEO, CTO and CMO via a chit-picking process. Once the leadership roles are appointed, Companies receive a set of Problem Statements and each selects one. From that point until the submission deadline, companies design and build a functional prototype (hardware, software, or a combination) and develop a business and marketing strategy around it. The event concludes with a 15-minute Corporate Pitch to a Judging Panel, followed by a Question-and-Answer session. Companies are scored out of 100 under Section 20.

1.3 Format. The Hackathon runs as a single continuous stage rather than a series of qualifying rounds. No elimination or advancement structure between phases applies unless announced by the Organising Committee.

1.4 Terminology.

Term	Meaning
Company	A corporate entity formed for the Hackathon, comprising participants drawn from several schools.
Company Member	Any participant assigned to a Company.
CEO	Company Member appointed to oversee overall strategic direction and task delegation.
CTO	Company Member appointed to oversee technical development of the Prototype.
CMO	Company Member appointed to oversee the marketing strategy and its presentation.
Problem Statement	One of the challenges released to Companies after leadership appointment, from which each Company selects one.

Term	Meaning
Prototype	The hardware, software, or combined product a Company builds in response to its selected Problem Statement.
Functional Prototype	A Prototype capable of being demonstrated to Judges as working, to the extent claimed by the Company.
Business Strategy	The Company's plan for how its Prototype could operate as a viable product or service.
Marketing Strategy	The Company's plan for positioning, promoting and selling its Prototype to a target user or customer.
Corporate Pitch	The 15-minute presentation each Company delivers to the Judging Panel.
Q&A	The question-and-answer session following the Corporate Pitch.
Development Period	The time between release of the Problem Statements and the submission deadline.
Submission	The material a Company formally hands in for judging (Section 17).
AI-Assisted Development	Use of AI tools during the Development Period, subject to Section 9.
Judge	An individual assessing Company performance.
Judging Panel	The Judges collectively responsible for scoring a Company.
Organising Committee	The body administering the Hackathon.
Event Head	The official holding final authority over interpretation and administration of these rules (Section 33).

2. Participation & Company Formation

2.1 Each participating school shall nominate three students, in accordance with the official IPSC IT FEST participation requirements.

2.2 Participants from the same school shall not necessarily compete together as a conventional school team. Instead, participants shall be combined with students from other participating schools to form cross-school Companies.

2.3 The purpose of cross-school Company formation is to encourage:

• collaboration between unfamiliar participants;

• exchange of ideas and approaches;

• communication across different working styles;

• delegation of responsibilities;

• leadership;

• adaptability; and

• collective decision-making.

2.4 The final number of Companies, the number of schools per Company and the number of participants constituting each Company shall be determined by the Organising Committee based on the final participation strength, and communicated to registered schools.

2.5 Company allocation shall be conducted by the method prescribed by the Organising Committee. Participants shall have no entitlement to request or alter their Company allocation.

2.6 Once Companies have been formed, participants shall remain with their assigned Company for the duration of the competition unless the Organising Committee authorises a change for exceptional administrative reasons.

2.7 For example: If 15 schools take part in the event, five companies of three schools each may be formed, giving approximately 15 members per Company.

3. Leadership within the Company

3.1 After the Opening Ceremony and Company formation, and before the Problem Statements are released, each Company shall appoint three principal leadership positions through the prescribed chit-picking process: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Technology Officer (CTO) and Chief Marketing Officer (CMO). These roles oversee task delegation, strategic choices and the day-to-day functioning of the Company.

3.2 Chief Executive Officer. The CEO shall be responsible primarily for:

• overall strategic direction;

• coordination between different workstreams;

• delegation of responsibilities;

• monitoring progress;

• resolving internal conflicts;

• ensuring that technical, financial and marketing elements remain aligned; and

• representing the Company's overall strategic position where required.

3.3 Chief Technology Officer. The CTO shall be responsible primarily for:

• technical architecture;

• software development;

• hardware development where applicable;

• integration of technical components;

• testing and troubleshooting;

• technical documentation; and

• ensuring that all Company Members understand the technological solution sufficiently to defend it.

3.4 Chief Marketing Officer. The CMO shall be responsible primarily for:

• target-market identification;

• product positioning;

• branding;

• customer acquisition strategy;

• promotional strategy;

• market communication; and

• integration of the marketing strategy with the Company's business model.

3.5 The designation of CEO, CTO and CMO does not restrict other Company Members from contributing to those areas.

3.6 Judges may direct questions to any Company Member regardless of their designated position.

3.7 The Company remains collectively responsible for its final submission. A participant may not claim that responsibility for a particular component belonged exclusively to another member as a justification for being unable to explain the Company's work.

4. The Challenge

4.1 Following Company formation and leadership appointment, Companies shall be presented with a set of Problem Statements organised under multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Each Company shall select one Problem Statement from the options provided and develop its solution around the selected challenge.

4.2 The Problem Statements shall be released at the time prescribed by the Organising Committee, and their content is withheld until then.

4.3 The Problem Statements shall remain confidential until their official release.

4.4 Before the Problem Statements are released, participants shall not have access to information that provides an unfair advantage concerning the specific challenge.

4.5 Once the Problem Statements are released, Companies shall be expected to:

1. interpret the challenge;

2. identify the underlying problem;

3. identify affected users or stakeholders;

4. investigate possible approaches;

5. establish the essential requirements of a solution;

6. evaluate competing approaches;

7. select an appropriate solution;

8. develop a prototype;

9. test and refine the prototype;

10. formulate a business model;

11. formulate a marketing strategy; and

12. prepare the final Corporate Pitch.

4.6 Companies are not required to solve every aspect of the Problem Statement if doing so would be unrealistic within the available development period. However, they must clearly identify what their solution addresses and justify the scope of their implementation.

4.7 A Company may prioritise a smaller number of highly functional features over a large number of incomplete features.

5. The Development Window

5.1 The Development Period shall commence following the official release of the Problem Statements and shall conclude at the submission deadline prescribed by the Organising Committee.

5.2 The Development Period shall be treated as a continuous competition period.

5.3 During this period, Companies may divide themselves into working groups according to their needs, or work as a single unit. Example working groups: technology and development; hardware and engineering; research and user analysis; finance and business; marketing and branding; and presentation and documentation.

5.4 Companies may reorganise their internal responsibilities at any point.

5.5 The Company is responsible for integrating all workstreams into one coherent final proposition.

5.6 The final product, business strategy and marketing strategy must not operate as three unrelated submissions. Judges shall assess whether these elements complement one another.

5.7 Any group chat created for communication within or between Companies (for example on WhatsApp) must include a member of the Organising Team.

6. What Every Company Must Build

Each Company must produce three interconnected outputs.

6.1 A Functional Prototype. The Company must develop a technological prototype responding directly to the selected Problem Statement. The prototype may be a software application; a web application; a mobile application; an AI-enabled system; a hardware product; an embedded system; an IoT solution; a robotic system; a combination of hardware and software; or another technological solution approved under the event rules.

6.1.1 The prototype must demonstrate its central functionality.

6.1.2 A presentation consisting only of concept art, static slides, wireframes, mock-ups, unimplemented interfaces or verbal descriptions shall not be treated as equivalent to a functioning prototype.

6.1.3 Simulations may be used where appropriate, but Companies must clearly disclose which portions are simulated rather than physically or computationally implemented. Misrepresenting simulated functionality as implemented functionality is a violation.

6.2 A Business/ Financial Strategy. Each Company must establish how its solution could operate beyond the Hackathon. The strategy should address, as applicable: what the product or service provides; who pays for it; who uses it; revenue generation; pricing; operating costs; resources required; maintenance; distribution; customer support; scalability; and long-term sustainability.

6.3 A Marketing Strategy. Each Company must establish how it intends to reach and persuade its intended users or customers. The strategy should address: target audience; market segmentation; customer needs; product positioning; value proposition; competitors and alternatives; customer acquisition; promotional channels; distribution; branding; adoption strategy; and customer retention where relevant.

7. Building the Technology

7.1 Companies shall have flexibility in selecting programming languages, frameworks, development environments, databases, APIs, libraries, hardware components and other technologies, subject to the restrictions contained in this Rulebook.

7.2 Technology should be selected based on its suitability for the Problem Statement rather than complexity for its own sake.

7.3 Judges may ask participants to explain: why a particular technology was selected; how the system works; how data flows through the system; how hardware and software interact; how errors are handled; how the system could scale; what limitations exist; and how AI-assisted components function.

7.4 Companies should prioritise: reliability; usability; maintainability; performance; security where relevant; scalability; and demonstrable functionality.

7.5 The use of sophisticated technology shall not automatically result in a higher score. Technical complexity shall be rewarded only where it contributes meaningfully to the solution.

7.6 No programming language, framework, library or tool is prohibited by default. Any additional technical restriction will be communicated by the Organising Committee.

8. Hardware, Fabrication & Physical Prototypes

8.1 Companies may develop hardware-based or hardware-software solutions where appropriate to the Problem Statement. Hardware is optional.

8.2 Campus fabrication facilities, including 3D printing, may be made available for approved hardware development, to allow rapid prototyping of physical components.

8.3 Companies shall be responsible for ensuring that their hardware is operated safely.

8.4 Hardware components should be appropriately secured and assembled.

8.5 Exposed electrical connections, unsafe wiring, unstable structures or other hazardous construction may be prohibited from demonstration.

8.6 Companies shall not intentionally construct any component designed to: damage another Company's prototype; damage school property; interfere with another Company's equipment; cause injury; or disrupt the competition.

8.7 A hardware solution shall not automatically receive additional credit merely for containing physical components, and a software-only solution shall not be disadvantaged.

8.8 For a solution that does not require hardware, equivalent technical depth may be demonstrated through software engineering, architecture, algorithms, data systems, integration or other relevant technical implementation.

9. Artificial Intelligence & Assisted Development

9.1 The use of Artificial Intelligence tools is permitted, subject to the provisions of this section. Participants may bring and use their own laptops and other development devices throughout the even.

9.2 AI may be used for appropriate purposes including: brainstorming; research assistance; coding assistance; debugging assistance; design assistance; content generation; data analysis; interface development; and other legitimate development tasks.

9.3 Companies must maintain transparency regarding their use of AI.

9.4 Each Company shall disclose: the AI tools used; the purpose for which each tool was used; and the significant components of the final product that were AI-assisted.

9.5 AI assistance does not transfer responsibility for the resulting work away from the Company.

9.6 Every Company Member must be capable of demonstrating an appropriate understanding of the Company's final output, including significant AI-assisted components.

9.7 A participant may be asked by a judge to: explain AI-generated code; modify a relevant component; explain why an AI-generated approach was selected; identify limitations or errors in AI-generated material; or explain how the relevant component interacts with the remainder of the system.

9.8 The deliberate concealment of significant AI assistance may be treated as a rule violation.

9.9 Use of AI does not permit participants to introduce prohibited pre-built solutions into the competition.

10. Originality & Development Integrity

10.1 The solution submitted must be substantially developed by the Company during the authorised Development Period.

10.2 Participants may not bring a substantially completed solution to the competition and modify it merely to appear responsive to the Problem Statement.

10.3 Pre-written code, templates or complete solutions prepared before the Problem Statements are released may not be used where they constitute a pre-built solution to the challenge.

10.4 General-purpose development knowledge, standard programming libraries and ordinarily available development tools may be used, subject to the event's technical restrictions.

10.5 Participants may not use another person's work, code, design, research or intellectual property and represent it as their own.

10.6 Where external resources are incorporated legitimately, the Company must be able to identify and explain their use.

10.7 Plagiarism, deliberate misrepresentation or submission of substantially unauthorised work may result in severe penalties or disqualification.

11. External Assistance

11.1 Only registered participants may develop the Company's solution during the competition.

11.2 Outside mentors, teachers, parents, professional developers, alumni, former participants or other non-participant advisers are not permitted to develop, debug, design or materially modify a Company's solution.

11.3 Participants may not outsource any portion of the technical, marketing or financial work.

11.4 Participants may not receive external assistance through remote access, messaging or other digital communication where such assistance constitutes prohibited development support.

11.5 The Organising Committee may permit general logistical or administrative assistance where it does not provide an unfair competitive advantage.

12. Devices, Network & Digital Resources

12.1 Participants shall bring their own laptops as required for development. The Hackathon runs on participants' own machines.

12.2 Internet access shall be provided by the host school, subject to network availability and applicable restrictions.

12.3 Mobile phones and personal hotspots are prohibited during the competition, except where the Organising Committee expressly permits their use for a specific operational purpose.

12.4 Participants shall not use personal hotspots to circumvent school network restrictions.

12.5 Participants shall not attempt to interfere with: school networks; another Company's devices; competition systems; judging systems; or another Company's data.

12.6 Unauthorised access to another Company's files, code, accounts, devices or systems shall constitute a serious violation.

12.7 Campus fabrication resources, including 3D printing, are provided for hardware-based projects.

12.8 The online services reachable or blocked on the host network will be communicated by the Organising Committee.

13. Research & Information Gathering

13.1 Companies may conduct research necessary to understand the Problem Statement and develop their solution, subject to the event's network and resource rules.

13.2 Research may include: market research; competitor research; technical research; user research; publicly available data; academic or industry information; and product research.

13.3 Companies should distinguish between verified information, assumptions, estimates and projections.

13.4 Financial and market claims presented to judges should be supported by reasonable evidence wherever practicable.

13.5 Fabricated market statistics, false customer testimonials or deliberately misleading evidence shall constitute a serious breach of competition integrity.

14. Financial Model & Commercial Requirements

Each Company must be able to explain the economics of its proposed solution.

14.1 Companies should establish: initial development costs; production costs; recurring operating costs; technology costs; marketing costs; staffing requirements; maintenance costs; distribution costs; selling price; revenue model; and potential profitability.

14.2 Where applicable, Companies should distinguish between Fixed Costs and Variable Costs.

14.3 Companies should be prepared to explain their assumptions.

14.4 Companies shall not be expected to produce perfectly accurate real-world financial forecasts. Judges shall assess the reasonableness, consistency and justification of the assumptions.

15. Market Strategy

15.1 The marketing strategy must identify a specific and meaningful target audience.

15.2 Companies should be able to distinguish between the user of the product, the customer, and the buyer/payer, where these differ.

15.3 Marketing strategies may include: social media; digital advertising; institutional partnerships; direct sales; retail distribution; influencer or community marketing; educational partnerships; subscription acquisition; demonstrations; referral systems; or other appropriate channels.

15.4 Companies should select marketing channels based on the behaviour of their target audience rather than simply listing popular platforms.

15.5 Marketing claims must remain consistent with the actual capabilities of the prototype.

16. Company Records & Working Documentation

16.1 The Organising Committee may require Companies to maintain or submit documentation of their development process.

16.2 Such documentation may include: development logs; design decisions; AI-use declarations; technical architecture; financial calculations; market research; testing records; and prototype iterations.

16.3 The purpose of documentation is to allow judges to understand the Company's development process and verify the authenticity of its work.

16.4 Companies should retain sufficient evidence to demonstrate that their work was developed within the permitted competition period.

17. Submission of the Final Solution

17.1 Every Company must submit its final work through the mechanism specified by the Organising Committee.

17.2 The final submission shall contain the components prescribed in the official Submission Specification.

17.3 The submission may include, as applicable: executable prototype/application; source code; hardware prototype; technical documentation; business strategy; financial model; marketing strategy; presentation; the submission shall include an AI-use declaration as required under Section 9.4, alongside the other applicable submission components specified in the official Submission Specification.

17.4 The exact submission format, file naming requirements, platform and deadline shall be communicated before the Development Period concludes.

17.5 A Company is responsible for ensuring that its submission is accessible, functional, complete, correctly labelled and submitted before the deadline.

17.6 Late submissions may be subject to penalties or may be rejected, according to the final submission policy. Submission format violations may likewise be penalised.

18. The Corporate Pitch

18.1 The Hackathon shall conclude with a formal Corporate Pitch before the Judging Panel.

18.2 Each Company shall receive 15 minutes for its presentation.

18.3 The presentation should communicate the Company's proposition as a complete and coherent story.

18.4 Companies are strongly encouraged to structure their pitch around:

Problem → Insight → User → Solution → Prototype → Technology → Market → Business Model → Financials → Future.

18.5 The presentation should establish: what problem exists; why the problem matters; who experiences it; what the Company has developed; how the prototype works; why the technological approach was selected; why users would adopt the solution; how the Company intends to reach them; how the Company intends to generate revenue; what the solution costs; whether it can operate sustainably; and how it could develop beyond the competition.

18.6 The prototype should be integrated meaningfully into the presentation.

18.7 A Company should not spend the majority of its presentation describing an idea without demonstrating its actual implementation.

18.8 All Company Members should participate meaningfully in the final presentation.

18.9 The Company must remain within the prescribed presentation duration.

19. Question & Answer Session

19.1 Following the Corporate Pitch, the Judging Panel shall conduct a Question-and-Answer session.

19.2 The precise duration of the Q&A shall be specified by the Organising Committee before the event.

19.3 Questions may address any legitimate aspect of the Company's submission, including: technical architecture; programming; hardware; AI usage; problem interpretation; user requirements; market assumptions; competitors; pricing; costs; revenue; scalability; operational requirements; risks; testing; and future development.

19.4 Judges may direct different questions to different Company Members.

19.5 A Company should answer questions based on its actual work and should not invent information to avoid acknowledging limitations.

19.6 A thoughtful acknowledgement of a genuine limitation, accompanied by a credible proposed solution, shall generally be preferable to an unsupported or inaccurate claim.

20. Judging & Scoring

20.1 The Judging Panel shall score each Company out of 100 in accordance with the published Judging Rubric, which sets out what judges look for under each criterion.

20.2 Marks are allocated across three pillars and eighteen criteria as follows:

Pillar / Criterion	Points
A. Programming, Technology & Product Development	40
A1. Understanding of Problem & Technical Approach	6
A2. Core Functionality & Working Prototype	14
A3. Technical Complexity & Quality of Implementation	6
A4. UI/UX & Product Design	5
A5. Innovation & Technical Creativity	5

Pillar / Criterion	Points
A6. Testing, Reliability & Performance	4
B. Marketing & Market Strategy	35
B1. Target Market & Customer Understanding	7
B2. Value Proposition & Product Positioning	7
B3. Marketing Strategy & Customer Acquisition	7
B4. Competitive Differentiation	4
B5. Branding, Communication & Promotional Strategy	4
B6. Marketing Feasibility & Product Integration	6
C. Financial & Business Viability	25
C1. Business Model & Revenue Generation	5
C2. Costing & Budgeting	5
C3. Pricing Strategy	4
C4. Financial Viability & Sustainability	5
C5. Resource & Operational Planning	3
C6. Financial Assumptions, Risk & Scalability	3
Overall total	100

20.3 Judges assess the evidence a Company presents through its Prototype, Submission, Corporate Pitch and Q&A.

20.4 Hardware integration and AI transparency are not marked criteria. Hardware is optional, and AI use must be declared and understood.

20.5 The decision of the judges is final and abiding. Ties are resolved under Section 27.

21. What the Judges Are Looking For

A Company aiming for the highest level of performance should be able to demonstrate all of the following.

Problem

• We understand the actual problem.

• We understand who experiences it.

• We know why existing approaches are insufficient.

Technology

• We built a functional solution.

• The core functionality works.

• We understand our own technology.

• We tested it and improved it.

• Our technology choices are justified.

Product

• The solution is usable.

• The design reflects its users.

• The prototype demonstrates genuine value.

Innovation

• Our approach contains meaningful originality.

• Our innovation is purposeful rather than complexity for its own sake.

Market

• We know who will use it.

• We know who will pay.

• We know why they would choose it.

• We know how we will reach them.

Business

• We know what the product costs.

• We know how it makes money.

• Our pricing makes sense.

• Our assumptions are defensible.

• The model can potentially sustain itself.

Company

• All members understand the solution.

• Members can defend decisions.

• The final pitch is coherent.

• The team can respond intelligently to unexpected questions.

22. Time Management

22.1 Companies are expected to manage their own time throughout the Development Period.

22.2 The Organising Committee shall communicate the applicable: Problem Statement release time; development deadline; submission deadline; pitch schedule; presentation reporting time; and other event milestones.

22.3 Companies are responsible for arriving at required checkpoints on time.

22.4 Failure to use the available Development Period effectively shall not ordinarily constitute grounds for additional time.

22.5 The Organising Committee may provide time warnings during the final development period where operationally feasible.

23. Safety & Responsible Technology

23.1 All participants must comply with school safety regulations and instructions issued by the Organising Committee.

23.2 Companies working with electrical, mechanical, electronic or fabrication equipment must use such equipment responsibly.

23.3 Participants must not construct or deploy systems intended to: cause physical harm; damage property; interfere with other teams; disrupt networks; compromise devices without authorisation; or create an unreasonable safety risk.

23.4 Cybersecurity-related features may be developed where they are directly relevant to the Problem Statement, but participants may not attack, compromise or interfere with systems belonging to the school, organisers, judges or other Companies.

23.5 The Organising Committee may stop the operation of any prototype considered unsafe.

23.6 A Company may be required to modify, deactivate or withdraw a component that presents a safety risk.

24. Fair Play & Professional Conduct

24.1 Participants are expected to maintain professional conduct throughout the competition.

24.2 Companies must not: interfere with another Company's work; access another Company's files; copy another Company's solution; deliberately mislead judges; sabotage another Company's prototype; impersonate another participant; obtain unauthorised assistance; deliberately circumvent event restrictions; or exploit technical loopholes in a manner inconsistent with the spirit of the competition.

24.3 Participants must follow reasonable instructions from the Event Head, the Organising Committee, designated technical staff, judges and authorised school personnel.

24.4 Abusive, threatening, discriminatory or seriously disruptive conduct may result in removal from the competition or further disciplinary action.

25. Penalties

Penalties shall be separate from the Company's 100-mark judging score wherever practicable.

25.1 Depending on severity, violations may result in: a warning; mark deduction; rejection of a particular component; invalidation of a demonstration; cancellation of a submission; disqualification from a particular stage; or disqualification from the entire Hackathon.

25.2 The following may constitute grounds for significant penalty or disqualification:

Violation	Possible consequence
Undeclared significant AI assistance	Penalty / component invalidation / disqualification, depending on severity
Use of prohibited pre-built code or other prohibited resources	Penalty / disqualification
Outside development assistance	Disqualification
Plagiarism	Disqualification
Deliberate misrepresentation of prototype capabilities	Severe penalty / disqualification
Unauthorised access to another Company's work	Disqualification
Deliberate interference with another Company, including tampering with its prototype or materials	Disqualification
Network/system interference	Disqualification
Unsafe use of equipment	Severe penalty / disqualification
Deliberate fabrication of evidence or financial data	Severe penalty / disqualification
Missing the Submission deadline or submission format violations	Penalty or rejection
Refusal to comply with authorised instructions	Penalty / disqualification
Serious misconduct	Removal / disqualification

25.3 The Organising Committee reserves the right to distinguish between accidental, minor and deliberate violations.

25.4 A Company shall not be disqualified solely because its prototype experiences an ordinary technical failure.

26. Inspection & Verification

26.1 The Organising Committee and Judging Panel reserve the right to inspect a Company's: prototype; source code; development environment; AI-use declaration; documentation; financial calculations; and other relevant competition materials.

26.2 A Company may be required to demonstrate that it understands a particular portion of its submission.

26.3 Inspection may take place: during development; immediately before the Corporate Pitch; during the Q&A; or after the conclusion of judging where necessary to investigate a suspected violation.

26.4 A Company refusing a legitimate inspection may be subject to penalty or disqualification.

27. Tie-Breaking

If two or more Companies receive the same final score, the following tie-breaking sequence shall be applied:

1. Higher Programming, Technology & Product Development score.

2. Higher Core Functionality & Working Prototype score.

3. Higher Financial & Business Viability score.

4. Higher Marketing & Market Strategy score.

5. Judging Panel deliberation based on the overall effectiveness of the solution in addressing the Problem Statement.

27.1 The tie-breaking procedure shall be applied only where Companies have equal final scores.

28. Judging Integrity

29.1 Judges shall assess Companies independently and according to the published rubric.

29.2 Judges should evaluate the solution presented rather than: the reputation of the participating school; the identity of participants; the perceived prestige of technologies used; the personal preferences of participants; or assumptions about what a Company could have built.

29.3 Judges should not reward complexity that does not contribute meaningfully to the solution.

29.4 Judges should consider the constraints under which Companies operated during the Hackathon.

29.5 Judges should reward clear reasoning and evidence-backed decisions.

29.6 Where multiple approaches can legitimately solve the Problem Statement, judges should not favour one approach merely because it differs from their personal preferred solution.

29. Intellectual Property & Use of Submissions

30.1 Participants retain responsibility for the intellectual property contained within their work, subject to applicable school and event policies.

30.2 Participants must ensure that they have the right to use external assets, libraries, datasets, images, fonts, APIs or other resources incorporated into their solution.

30.3 Where third-party resources impose attribution or licensing requirements, Companies should comply with those requirements.

30.4 The Organising Committee may photograph, record or document the Hackathon and its presentations for legitimate event-related purposes, subject to applicable school policies.

30.5 The Organising Committee may request permission to showcase winning or participating solutions as part of IPSC IT FEST documentation or publicity, subject to the applicable event and school policies.

30. Confidentiality of the Problem Statements

31.1 The Problem Statements shall be treated as confidential before their official release.

31.2 Participants shall not attempt to obtain, request, photograph, copy, leak or otherwise access the Problem Statements before their authorised release.

31.3 Any participant receiving the Problem Statements inadvertently before their official release must immediately notify the Organising Committee and must not share or use the information.

31.4 Deliberate attempts to obtain advance knowledge of the Problem Statements may result in disqualification.

31. Unforeseen Circumstances

32.1 The Organising Committee reserves the right to modify operational arrangements where necessary due to: technical failure; network outage; equipment failure; safety concerns; power failure; venue restrictions; emergency circumstances; or other factors beyond reasonable organisational control.

32.2 Where possible, Companies shall be informed of any material change before it affects their participation.

32.3 No Company shall receive an unfair advantage as a consequence of an operational modification.

32.4 If a technical or venue failure materially affects a Company's ability to compete, the Organising Committee may determine an appropriate remedy, including an extension, replacement demonstration or re-scheduling where feasible.

32. Final Authority

33.1 The Event Head shall have final authority over the interpretation and administration of these rules, subject to the overall IPSC IT FEST regulations.

33.2 The Organising Committee may issue official clarifications where a provision is ambiguous.

33.3 Such clarifications shall apply equally to all Companies.

33.4 No participant may claim an exception solely on the basis that another participant previously misunderstood a rule.

33.5 The spirit of the Hackathon is to encourage innovation, technical competence, commercial thinking and responsible collaboration. Participants are expected to compete fairly even where a specific situation is not explicitly addressed by a written rule.

33. Competition Flow

The intended progression of the Hackathon is:

1. Registration

2. Opening Ceremony

3. Cross-School Company Formation

4. CEO / CTO / CMO Appointment

5. Problem Statement Release

6. Problem Analysis & Ideation

7. Prototype Development

8. Testing & Iteration

9. Business & Financial Planning

10. Marketing Strategy Development

11. Final Submission

12. 15-Minute Corporate Pitch

13. Question & Answer Session

14. Judging & Score Consolidation

15. Results & Closing Ceremony

Stage	Responsible
Opening Ceremony (triggers Company formation)	Organisers
Company formation and leadership appointment	Companies
Problem Statement release	Organisers
Development Period (prototype, business strategy, marketing strategy)	Companies
Corporate Pitch	Companies
Q&A	Judging Panel
Scoring and results	Judging Panel

35. The Standard for a Winning Company

A winning Company should demonstrate that it can answer three fundamental questions convincingly:

Can you build it? The Company has developed a functional, reliable, well-designed and technically justified solution.

Can you sell it? The Company understands its users, market, competitors, value proposition and route to adoption.

Can you sustain it? The Company has a realistic business model, defensible financial assumptions and a credible path towards operational and financial sustainability.

The final distinction between Companies should not be based simply on who has the most impressive code or the most polished presentation. It should be based on which Company has best transformed a problem into a solution that works, matters, can reach its users and could realistically exist beyond the Hackathon.

Do’s & Don’ts

Participants MAY	Participants MAY NOT
Use permitted programming languages and frameworks	Bring a pre-built solution to the Problem Statement
Use permitted AI tools	Conceal significant AI assistance
Use internet research	Use prohibited external assistance
Conduct competitor and market research	Ask non-participants to develop or debug
Use permitted APIs and libraries	Plagiarise another Company’s work
Develop software solutions	Access another Company’s files or devices
Develop hardware solutions	Interfere with another Company’s prototype
Use available fabrication facilities	Use unsafe equipment or construction
Divide work among Company Members	Outsource work
Test and iterate their prototype	Misrepresent simulated functionality as implemented functionality
Develop financial projections	Fabricate evidence or financial data
Create branding and promotional material	Use mobile phones/personal hotspots where prohibited
Use AI for legitimate assistance	Claim understanding of code they cannot explain