

The GYA Selection process: Frequently asked Questions

Q. Who can apply to join the GYA?

Applications are sought from leading, early-to-mid career researchers, scholars, and scientists from around the world. By early-to-mid career, we mean that applicants should be embarking on the early stages of their independent research careers. The majority of our members have completed a PhD and postdoctoral training (or have equivalent expertise), are 5-10 years out from completing their highest degree and are aged 30-40. We encourage applications from all disciplines, including the physical, natural and social sciences, humanities, the arts, medicine, engineering and mathematics. Candidates may work in academia, government, non-governmental organizations, or private industry.

Q. What are the selection criteria?

A. All applicants are judged against 3 factors:

(i) 'academic' excellence, judged by: research record; publications and citations; career history; awards and prizes; and any other relevant information provided.

(ii) 'non-academic' excellence, judged by: engagement with industry, business, government and the general public; successful commercialization or widespread adoption of research; starting a successful research-based company, and other relevant factors provided.

(iii) commitment to 'service', as shown by: demonstrated support for young researchers at a national level; launching or holding a senior role in a national young academy; public communication of science or scholarship; and commitment to the goals of the GYA.

It is not necessary for candidates to score at the highest level in all 3 categories, but strong applicants score well in either or both of categories (i) and (ii), and very highly in category (iii). By scoring applications against multiple criteria, we try to provide a balanced application process for candidates, whether they work in academic or non-academic sectors.

Q. How are applications judged?

A. Each application is scored by at least one panel of judges, comprising members from diverse countries and research disciplines. Applications judged to be 'middle-ranking' after the first round of marking are rescored by a second panel of judges, with the results from both panels combined to reach a final score. The main factor in the final selection is based on the applicant's average score. Secondary factors are the applicant's discipline, sector and country of origin. Our aim in considering these secondary factors is to further increase the diversity of the GYA. Given two equally strong applications, our preference is for candidates from countries where the GYA currently has no representatives, or for disciplines or employment sectors (e.g. industry or government) where we have few members. You can find information about our current membership on our website.

Q. Is there an age limit? Can I resubmit an application next year?

A. There is no limit to how many times you can submit an application to the GYA. There is no hard age limit for applicants. However, as we note on the application form, most of our members are aged 30-40 and are in the early years of their independent research or working careers. Generally, age is not considered a significant factor for applicants aged 40 years old or less in the year that they would be first admitted. Applicants aged over 40 may be admitted if they can demonstrate a good reason for being considered – for example, a significant career break due to national circumstances, family duties, ill-health etc. If you are over 40, please explain carefully why your application should be considered.

Q. Can you provide information about successful applicants?

A. All successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified of the result in early January. Once successful applicants accept their nomination, we will post their names on our website, along with a photograph and a short biography. We encourage you to check our website for updates if you are interested in this information. As application forms are received in confidence, we are unable to share any other personal information.

Q. Can you share any tips for writing a successful application?

A. The GYA is an organization that is driven by its members. We are not an honorific society, and we expect all of our members to participate actively in our programs. We are looking for highly successful researchers or scholars with a passion for ‘making a difference’ in the world. This really needs to shine through strongly in your application.

Some specific points:

- Please follow all instructions on the application form very carefully – they are there to help you! For example, submitting a 20-page CV will not result in automatic rejection, but it will not increase your scores.
- A clearly written, grammatically correct and well-formatted application makes the judges’ task much easier. We accept that English may not be a first language for many applicants, and we do take this into account. However, if at all possible, try to have someone you trust read and comment on your application before you submit it.
- When discussing your research experience, imagine that you are talking to a neighbor or a family relative who is not a specialist in your field. Your application will be judged by scientists and non-scientists from many disciplines, and using specialized terms or jargon may make it hard to appreciate what you have achieved.
- We put a lot of emphasis on your answers to the ‘essay’ questions in the main body of the form. Please think carefully about how to address these questions. Short or cursory answers will see your application score very poorly. Illustrating your answers with specific examples from your own career is much better than making general statements. The instructions for the reference letter give examples of the sort of achievements that we look for. We are looking for passion and genuine interest, so please avoid copying material from other sources (e.g. our website).
- Please supply reference letters that are written by your referees in their own words. Please do not write the letter yourself and ask the referees to sign it – we require an independent assessment of your abilities and motivation for joining the GYA. Submitting multiple, identical reference letters from different referees is not helpful for your application.