

Stories of materials

QCAM science writing competition

Have a passion for materials? Want to practice writing for the public?

Then this competition is for you!

Competition overview

Enter this writing competition by submitting an article focusing on functional materials and written for a general audience.

Your article must describe the development and applications of functional materials. You may address different aspects of materials science: a theoretical concept, a scientific article, a research project or an internship.

We also encourage entrants to place their topic into the broader context of current societal issues (i.e. by referring to the climate emergency or the UN Sustainable Development Goals) and to consider its wider impact.

The competition is open to all QCAM student and postdoctoral members, both anglophones and francophones.

Rules and regulations

The text must be between 450 and 550 words.

It can be written in English or in French.

It must be submitted as Word file to Matteo Duca (matteo.duca@umontreal.ca) no later than [10 January 2022 at 11:59 pm](#).

Evaluation criteria and prizes

The articles will be assessed for:

- originality of the topic
- quality of writing
- using a style appropriate for a broad audience
- scientific rigour

Two panels, one francophone and one anglophone, will judge the entries in accordance with an identical set of criteria. The prize winners will be announced on 28 February 2022 during the QCAM Student Day.

The winning French-language entry will be published on QCAM's blog [Matériaux en action](#), hosted on the Agence Science-Pressé website.

The winning English-language entry will be published in the [« blog » section](#) of the QCAM website (alongside the translations of the blog posts from [Matériaux en action](#)).

The two winners will receive each a monetary prize of 150 \$, sponsored by the Materials Division of the CIC. We will also award honorable mentions to runners-up.

Please review the toolbox provided on page 2

Ready, set, write!

Many thanks to our sponsors



Chemical Institute of Canada | ***For Our Future***
Institut de chimie du Canada | ***Pour notre avenir***

•Materials Division (1st prize)

•Quebec City section

Toolbox

Here is a brief introduction to journalistic and popular science writing. These tools will help you to craft an engaging text with a structure and style that are accessible to a general audience.

The structure of a news article

A news article will begin with a lead or “hook” that aims to grab the reader’s attention. You can highlight a striking, surprising, fun, paradoxical fact or ask a question relevant to the topic. The lead must make the reader want to carry on reading!

The article will then open with an introduction, that gives an overview of the topic while also posing questions or hinting at the plot of the story. The aim is again to engage the reader.

In the paragraphs, that follows, a news article must address the 5 Ws: *Who, What, Where, When, Why*. In other words, the reader must be able to learn who did what, where, when and why. This logical structuring will increase clarity and allow the reader to easily understand the information you are sharing.

Writing to engage the reader

Here are a few guidelines for writing a lively, captivating text:

- *Craft a great title-- it's the gateway to the text!*
 - *Humanise the text*
 - *Share an anecdote*
 - *Use a dash of humour*
- *Tell a story instead of explaining*

The text will end with a conclusion that provides an answer or a solution. The conclusion can also touch on the broader significance of the research project, or on its future developments.

Writing to get your message across

Here are some good practices you can adopt and a few questions you should ask yourself if you want to write an accessible text:

- Step back from what you know and ask yourself if a non-specialist reader will understand the terms and concepts used in the text.
- Are all of technical terms you’ve used really indispensable for getting the message across?
- Is there an everyday word that could replace a technical term or allow you to explain a phenomenon?
- Is there an image or an analogy that would better describe a concept or a methodology?
- Are there any acronyms that you haven't explained?

Useful links

<https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2020/20-questions-toward-achieving-civic-clarity-in-your-writing/>

<https://massivesci.com/consortium/resources/storytelling-101/>

<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2015/07/14/good-beginnings/>

<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2015/12/15/the-human-element-bringing-science-to-life-with-profiles/>

<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2014/11/11/finding-narrative/>