

# AYDA AWARDS 2025

CONVERGE: CRAFTING CULTURAL LEGACIES

FREE ENTRY

Submit Before

01/12/2025



AYDA  
AWARDS  
Since 2008

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AYDA International Awards



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AYDA International Awards



ayda-awards.com

Be part of the world's largest  
**student design awards**  
and creative community!

Stand a chance to attend the  
Design Discovery Program at  
Harvard University's  
Graduate School of Design!



As part of our commitment to sustainable design at AYDA Awards, we encourage you to print only pages 13–36 if a physical copy of the entry kit is really needed.



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## CHAPTER 1

# ABOUT AYDA AWARDS

## THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF AYDA AWARDS

The AYDA Awards (formerly known as the Asia Young Designer Awards), was first launched in 2008 as part of Nippon Paint's vision to nurture the next generation of design talents. The award serves as a platform to inspire Architectural and Interior Design students to develop their skills through cross-learning opportunities and networking with key industry players and fellow Architectural and Interior Design peers in the region.

Since then, AYDA has grown in reach and stature and has now established itself as one of Asia's premier design awards. It has received more than 59,000 entries from over 1,200 tertiary education institutions

to date across 20 geographical locations globally. Over the years, AYDA has impacted thousands of young and talented student designers, presenting them with various opportunities to engage with renowned speakers and key figures in the design industry. In addition, the platform has enabled the participants to gain first-hand industry knowledge, personalised coaching, mentoring and skills-building through various workshops by experienced lecturers and industry professionals. On top of that, this experience allowed participants to learn from their fellow peers from within and across borders.

Every year, AYDA presents yet another opportunity for young design talents to push their design boundaries further beyond the norm. Through the various experiential learnings and once-in-a-lifetime opportunities such as these, AYDA has established a close-knit design community comprising professional architects, interior designers, industry associations, partners, design schools, alumni and design students.

Join the AYDA community here:



[www.ayda-awards.com](http://www.ayda-awards.com)



[AYDA International Awards](#)



[AYDA International](#)

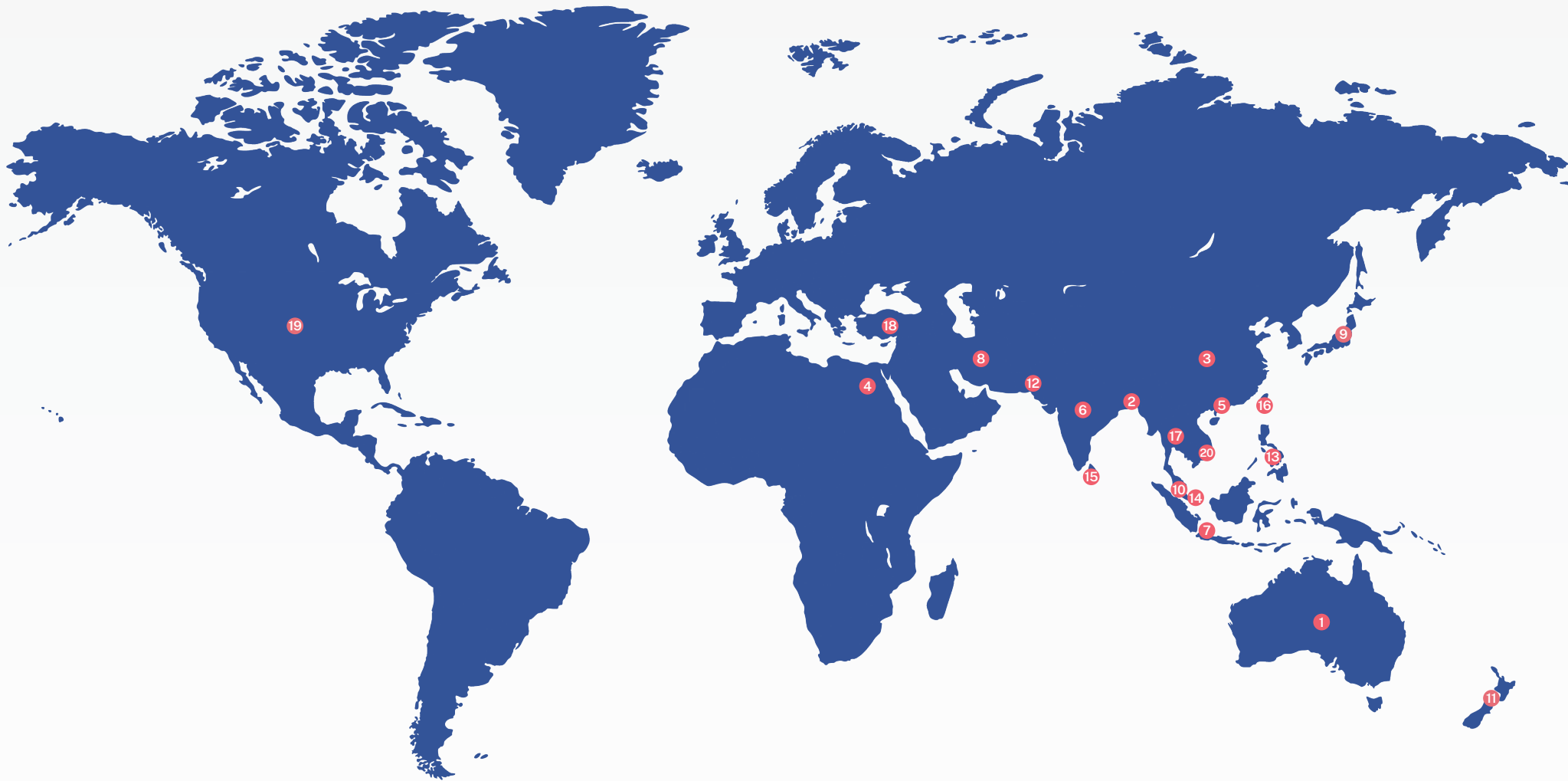


[@ayda.international](#)



[AYDA International Awards](#)

# AYDA'S GLOBAL PRESENCE



- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Australia        | 11. New Zealand   |
| 2. Bangladesh       | 12. Pakistan      |
| 3. China            | 13. Philippines   |
| 4. Egypt            | 14. Singapore     |
| 5. Hong Kong, China | 15. Sri Lanka     |
| 6. India            | 16. Taiwan, China |
| 7. Indonesia        | 17. Thailand      |
| 8. Iran             | 18. Türkiye       |
| 9. Japan            | 19. U.S.A         |
| 10. Malaysia        | 20. Vietnam       |

## FOREWORD

# EMBRACING CULTURAL CONVERGENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE FABRICS OF SOCIETY



When we embrace cultural convergence in architecture and interior design, we're committed to creating spaces where everyone feels seen and valued. It is in the intersection of cultures; we find our common humanity. Imagine us crafting environments that embrace the rich tapestry of human diversity, fostering a sense of belonging and community. Our designs resonate with elements from various cultures, making everyone feel at home, no matter where they come from. This is the power of our design—bridging cultures and nurturing global unity. Over the past 17 years, the AYDA Awards have developed into more than a competition. We are a holistic growth accelerator for budding designers and a platform where great minds can collide

and talents can be nurtured. In the truest sense of the term, AYDA is not just for students but also for active change-makers involved in spatial design. Our deepest gratitude goes out to our mentors, lecturers, and judges, who have willingly dedicated themselves to raising a new generation of designers who are socially responsible and conscious. As AYDA grows, we seek your continued support for a better and safer future for designers today and in the future.

The theme of the year “Converge: Crafting Cultural Legacies”, focuses on designers' response to the complex and demanding mission in enduring cultural legacies. The key is to navigate the delicate balance between preserving tradition

and embracing innovation. One must thoughtfully consider the evolving needs of communities while considering the long-term impact of your design. We seek your efforts in creating spaces that not only resonate with the present but also inspire future generations.

With a big heart and great expectations, I wish you the very best.

**WEE SIEW KIM**  
Group Chief Executive Officer  
NIPSEA Group

# AYDA AWARDS PANEL ADVISORS 2025/2026

We have had the privilege to work closely with these amazing gurus of the Architectural and Interior Design world in designing this year's theme and design challenge. Hear what our panel members would like to see in the future of spatial design!



**Edgar Gonzalez**  
Director, Elisava, Madrid School of Design and Engineering, Spain

In the design thinking process, divergence sparks our creativity while convergence guides us towards actionable solutions. But when we've explored all avenues and narrowed down our options, what's next?

As designers, we are not just researchers - we are creators! What unique perspectives and solutions can we bring to the table that truly make a difference? The power of cultural convergence should be channelled towards creating inclusive spaces that celebrate human diversity.



**Gu Yi**  
Founder, Not A Studio, China

To the young designers of today, I implore you to approach the future with courage and wisdom, especially in the age of AI. Intelligent design will reach unprecedented heights, and the question is not IF AI will impact our work but HOW. Can we harness its power as a tool? I yearn to see you grapple with these possibilities.

I have been deeply invested in exploring the concept of design integration that isn't just about combining different styles or colours; it's about breaking down the boundaries that traditionally define design. All design disciplines are interconnected in a rich tapestry of creativity. For instance, a fashion designer too can contribute to an architect's work.

As a designer, I believe that the true soul of a space lies in cultural integration. A space devoid of local context and significance is an empty shell and homogenised replica without depth and character. It's in the fusion of cultures, the celebration of heritage, that design truly comes alive.



**Hirante Welandawe**  
Founder, H W Architects, Sri Lanka

Understanding how architecture interacts with society and culture is crucial. As climate change threatens our natural landscapes and economies, architects need to rethink their role in mitigating these threats.

A balance between development and nature is needed now. The key is to create sustainable platforms that preserve the environment while honouring human needs. What if we took a different approach to convergence?

We have traditionally focused on human-centred design. It's time to shift our narrative. Imagine the potential if we could create a harmonious coexistence between humanity and the environment, with buildings as just one aspect of this revolutionary architecture.



## ARCHITECTURAL CATEGORY

## ARCHITECTURAL CATEGORY

# ARCHITECTURAL CATEGORY



**Safeer Shersad**  
Senior Manager, Market Expansion, Lime, USA  
*Nippon Paint's Gennosuke Obata x Harvard GSD Fund Recipient*

Rather than relying solely on individual architects, let's foster a collaborative approach where knowledge is shared and communities are empowered. By using spatial design as a platform for engagement, we can create truly impactful and sustainable solutions.

To achieve genuine cultural convergence, it's essential to delve deeply into individual cultures. A superficial pastiche of multiple cultures can come across as tokenizing or inauthentic. Instead, our focus should be on creating exceptional designs that are deeply rooted in a specific culture and tradition. This authentic approach can catalyse meaningful knowledge transfer and foster true cultural understanding.

By understanding these context-sensitive processes, we can take the first crucial step toward achieving genuine cultural convergence.



**Matthew Lim**  
Founder, Matthew Lim Associates, Malaysia  
*AYDA Awards Designer of the Year 2012*

In recent years, global challenges like climate change have taken a backseat. It's time to prioritise sustainable and green design in all our endeavours.

Design is a collaborative process that requires input from everyone involved. By combining our diverse experiences and expertise, we can develop effective solutions to pressing issues.

Let's bring together the brightest minds, innovative technologies, and practical solutions to address these challenges. Instead of competing against each other, students can benefit from collaborative journeys, working together towards a shared goal.



**Ivy Almario**  
President, Atelier Almario, Philippines

Culture and cultural convergence mean surfacing what defines us and celebrating our similarities and differences. Interior design has been my passion all my life. It is through design that I have widened my universe of friendships, which, widened by associations with peers and industry partners, makes conducting business a joy.

To future designers, I wish you grit and stickability. Projects take time, and one can keep going. All of us creatives and stakeholders share a collective conscience to use the power of design for good.



**Shahmeena Labeed**  
Urban Planner & Placemaker, Village Well, Australia  
*AYDA Awards Designer of the Year 2017*

To create effective and sustainable designs, it's essential to collect data. By using sensors in public spaces, we can gather valuable information about usage patterns and preferences. This data can inform our design decisions and ensure that our solutions are tailored to the needs of the community.

We can explore additional elements to create even more enriching spaces by integrating biophilic principles, promoting biodiversity, and providing multi-sensory experiences that can enhance the overall user experience and create sustainable, inclusive environments.

By incorporating these elements, we can design spaces that not only celebrate cultural diversity but also foster a connection with nature and promote well-being for all.



# INTERIOR DESIGN CATEGORY

# INTERIOR DESIGN CATEGORY

AWARDS AND PRIZES

INTERNATIONAL AWARDS



AYDA Designer of the Year

(One winner for each category: Architectural & Interior Design Category)

• • •

Immersive learning experience

The opportunity to attend a three-week, all-expenses-paid Design Discovery Program at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design, U.S.A. worth up to USD10,000 in the program’s June 2027 cohort.

*\*Acceptance into the Harvard GSD is subject to Terms & Acceptance determined in entirety and solely by the Harvard GSD’s Admission Authorities and/or its faculties.*



**Nippon Paint Colour Award**  
Cash prize of USD1,000

**Best Sustainable Design**  
Cash prize of USD1,000

**Best Design Impact**  
Cash prize of USD1,000



AYDA Best Mentor Award

• • •

A seat at the Design Discovery Virtual (DDV) Program at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design.

NATIONAL AWARDS



SILVER AWARD



GOLD AWARD



HONORARY MENTION

*\*\*National Gold Winners will represent their countries in the Architectural/ Interior Design category at the AYDA International Awards\*, around the month of June/ July 2026.*

*\* The program may be physical or virtual, depending on the winners’ visa status and availability*



FINALIST  
X 2



BEST  
COLOUR  
CHOICE



BEST GREEN  
INNOVATION



BEST MENTOR



BEST  
EDUCATION  
INSTITUTION



HIGH FIVE  
AWARD

## CHAPTER 2

# CONVERGE: CRAFTING CULTURAL LEGACIES

## DEFINING WHAT CONVERGENCE MEANS TO US AS PEOPLE

“Convergence is when a point or line meets and leads to a common result or conclusion.” AYDA Awards is committed to shaping a future where designers from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and regions can learn from each other and deliver the best solutions to common and underlying social challenges. Your role is crucial to this mission.

Global interconnectedness has surged, accelerating digital transformation and fostering innovation across sectors. These developments are pivotal to building a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future. As future leaders in spatial design,

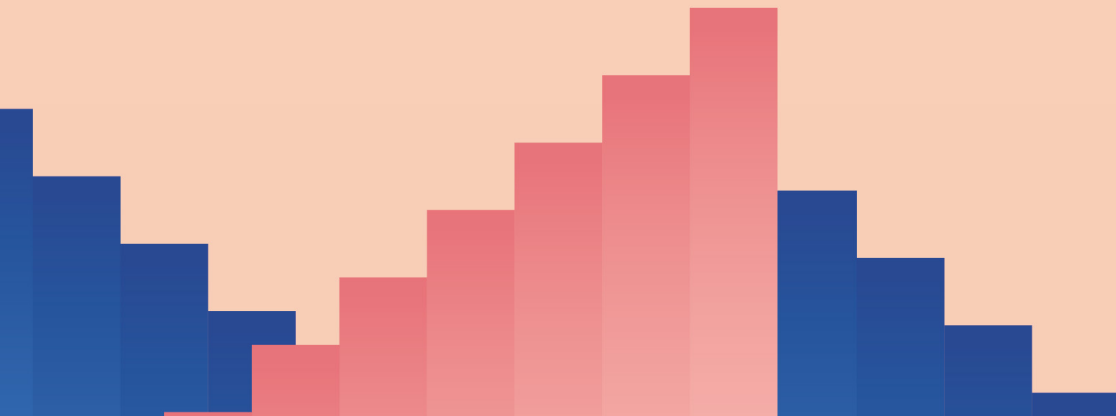
we can spotlight emerging trends and issues that require collaboration between local communities and global movements to solve the genuinely important problems. We are never alone on this journey.

The world may be vast and diverse, but there has always only been one race, the human race. Regardless of our differences, designers can collaborate and converge using universal design language and our expertise. This unity can guide us in building a future that benefits all.

Designers of tomorrow have the power to reach new heights. As a result, they

have the responsibility to consider many factors that will determine the longevity and suitability of their work and how it can positively impact people’s lives, helping them weather through thick and thin.

By embracing the concept of convergence, you will be more open-minded and keener to understand your community’s latest trends and needs. This understanding will enable you to communicate effectively with the world and ultimately provide scalable solutions for your peers in regions with similar challenges.



## Embracing our Similarities

Embrace the concept of one humanity, where we learn to see more similarities and commonalities with people from across the world despite their differences in culture, language, ethnicity, and roots.

Our needs for holistic well-being are universal, and a well-crafted design can be the key to achieving that for future generations. This design, whether it's in our cities, our technologies, or our social systems, holds the promise of a brighter, healthier future.

## Leverage on our Connectivity

This interconnected world offers new opportunities to share knowledge, expertise, and resources. We can develop innovative spatial design solutions with broader impact by leveraging these connections.

The connection we share today should help us connect and understand each other's strengths and expertise better - and our solutions for spatial design can scale from here onwards.

## Sharing ideas for maximised Convergence

Working together as one is one of AYDA's ultimate goals. Designers from different parts of the world would collaborate to solve critical and emerging social issues through the power of good design.

It's not just our problems, and it's our shared responsibility. The issues we face in our communities are the same ones our global colleagues are tackling. Let's unite our efforts and make a difference, one step at a time.

# SUB-THEME OF THE YEAR

## Sub-theme Summary

### Crafting Cultural Legacies: A Catalyst for Innovative Design without Losing its Authenticity

Culture is the heart and soul of a community, the rich tapestry of beliefs, values, customs, and traditions. Throughout history, it has played a key role in shaping individual identities and influencing collective behaviour. Preserving our cultural heritage while embracing modern influences, we tell powerful stories through our designs. We honour the past while shaping the future. Picture us weaving traditional aesthetics into modern spaces, creating designs that tell rich, meaningful stories.

When considering how our design can last a lifetime and deliver impact, we show our responsibility to the planet and future generations. Let's lead the way with eco-friendly materials and practices inspired by a global cultural shift towards

environmental stewardship. Picture our designs captivating the senses while treading lightly on the earth, embodying a blend of beauty and sustainability. By embracing cultural convergence, we're not just creating buildings but creating legacy spaces that inspire, connect, and endure. This year's theme encourages young designers to take a deep dive into one culture at a time to understand context-sensitive processes as an anchor in our efforts in creating cultural legacies which are true to the needs of our communities. By combining these perspectives, designers can identify opportunities, bridge gaps, and infuse their work with locally inspired ideas and materials. Cultural design can celebrate our past and shape a sustainable and prosperous future.



# BREAKING DOWN THE BIG IDEA FOR YOUR DESIGN BRIEF

## Understanding the Value of Craft

### (A) Defining Craft

**Craft represents a foundational model for producing physical objects that fulfil utilitarian needs.** Originating from the basic human impulse to create tools and shelter, craft has evolved to encompass creations that range from the purely functional to the highly ornamental.

Craft has developed to be the medium through which everyday objects are imbued with aesthetic value, transforming the mundane into expressions of a specific cultural identity and artistry. Through this lens, craft is not simply a method of production but a **paradigm that values the interconnectedness of people, place, and the artefacts they create.**

### (B) Craft and Culture

**Craft is a highly tactile manifestation of culture, and reflects a community's values, beliefs, and local histories.** It bridges the domestic and professional realms, engaging individuals across all ages, identities, and genders. The democratic nature of craft makes it a vital conduit for shared human experience and societal cohesion.

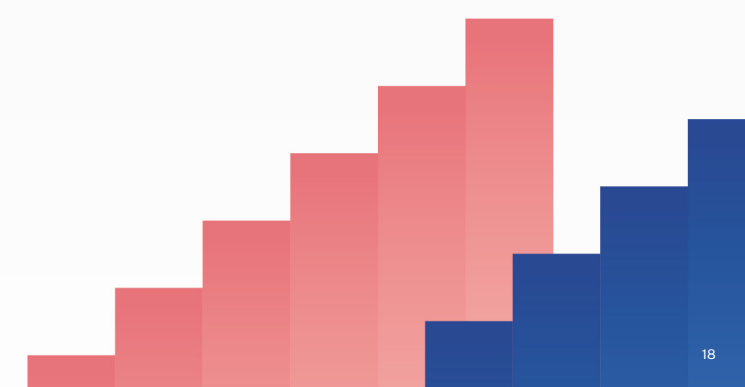
Craft has a profound capacity to shape cultures over generations. Intergenerational design processes allow for the transmission of knowledge, techniques, and narratives, embedding craft within the collective memory of a community. This continuity ensures that craft endures beyond transient trends and microtrends, offering a counterpoint to the ephemeral nature of modern production, which is built to be consumed and forgotten. **The longevity of craft practices reinforces a connection to the past while allowing for innovation** that is rooted in tradition.

### (C) Craft as an Architectural Paradigm

**Architectural craft embodies a rootedness in local expertise: a mastery of indigenous techniques and materials.** This results in structures that are not only aesthetically resonant but also ecologically advantageous. Throughout history, craft has been integral to the creation of built environments that are both functional and expressive.

Utilising local materials enhances construction efficiency and minimises environmental impact. By juxtaposing the universalizing tendencies of modern architecture with the specificity of localised craft, we can reconsider the values that drive architectural practice.

Embracing craft within architecture encourages a re-engagement with the materiality of building, the significance of place, and the social responsibility of the architect. The integration of craft into architecture represents a reclamation of the discipline's roots in material and cultural specificity. **It advocates for a practice that is as much about reinforcing community and identity as it is about constructing physical spaces.**



## Understanding the Impact of Culture

As you dive deeper into searching for a design solution, here are some contextual overviews which will help you shape your thoughts:

| Cultural Impact                                                                                                                                               | Social Impact                                                                                                                     | Economical Impact                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The delicate balance between preserving traditional aesthetics and embracing contemporary, universal influences.                                              | The need for inclusive spaces that reflect the cultural backgrounds of users.                                                     | By appealing cultural values to a global audience, designers can attract international investments and clients, enhancing economic growth. |
| Keeping the cultural narrative alive                                                                                                                          | Fosters social harmony                                                                                                            | Economical growth                                                                                                                          |
| The use of advanced technology to create immersive cultural experiences and ensure that cultural heritage is not only preserved and innovatively represented. | Booming and lasting trend with future designs which support multicultural interactions and understanding, promoting global unity. | Future will benefit from a more interconnected economy.                                                                                    |
| Innovation                                                                                                                                                    | Identifying shared experiences                                                                                                    | Learning to speak a different culture                                                                                                      |

| Environmental Impact                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A deep emphasis on sustainability in architecture and interior design, influenced by cultural shifts towards environmental responsibility.                      |
| Local empowerment                                                                                                                                               |
| Architecture and design on minimizing ecological footprints and promoting sustainable living; using context-sensitive, locally sourced practices and technique. |
| Convergence and exchange                                                                                                                                        |

## Creating a Lasting Legacy

A legacy in architecture transcends the physical structures we create; it encompasses the cultural, environmental, and educational impacts of our work that stand the test of time. Embracing a craft-based understanding of local cultures provides a framework for creating a lasting legacy by challenging existing models of architectural production. Contemporary design which favours a more universal design language has led to the marginalisation of craft-based design techniques.

Moving beyond this relegation requires acknowledging the efficacy and sophistication of craft-based techniques, and encourages a departure from the one-size-fits-all model. The integration of craft and culture introduces a new lexicon of concepts, forms, and fabrication techniques into the architectural canon.

## Critical Areas to Consider for Design Solutions

As you dive deeper into searching for a design solution, here are some areas to consider how your design can leave behind a trail of positive transformation for communities, locally and globally.

| Tradition meets Modernity                                                                                | Growth of Inclusive Spaces                                                                                                                     | Sustainable Practices                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Explore Contrast</b><br>Highlight the juxtaposition of traditional and modern elements                | <b>Accessibility</b><br>Consider the needs of people with disabilities                                                                         | <b>Environmental Footprint</b><br>Prioritise sustainable materials and practices to reduce the project's ecological footprint                                |
| <b>Respect Heritage</b><br>Ensure traditional elements are incorporated respectfully and authentically   | <b>Diversity</b><br>Create spaces that celebrate diversity and promote inclusivity through design choices                                      | <b>Local Resources</b><br>Incorporate sustainable design strategies that align with the region's specific environmental conditions and resource availability |
| <b>Innovation within Tradition</b><br>Explore how modern technology and design principles can be applied | <b>Community Engagement</b><br>Involve the community in the design process to ensure that the space meets their needs and reflects their value | <b>Long-term Sustainability</b><br>Think about long-term sustainability (and resilience) of your design ensuring its maintenance over time                   |



## Translating your Ideas into Actions

To help you find stronger inflection points in addressing common challenges shared by most of humanity, here are three pillars you can refer to when seeking inspiration and affirmation on what you can work on with your mentors and lecturers.

### SOCIAL

**“Focus on people and their relationships with spaces we design”**

How can our spaces play a role in bringing people together, creating safer spaces and perhaps educating people on important issues that impact themselves and the world.

### URBAN

**“Focus on the growing economy and urban development”**

How can our spaces keep people clean and safe without compromising their social and cultural needs?

### ENVIRONMENT

**“Focus on helping to solve environmental challenges and leading people towards paying more attention towards environmental challenges”**

How can our spaces have a direct/indirect impact towards the environment and nature? -either to help solve an issue -or bring spotlight to said issues.

## YOUR DESIGN BRIEF AT ONE GLANCE

You are required to demonstrate and showcase elements of good designs and how it can benefit its users. “Converge: Crafting Cultural Legacy” aims to have you deep dive into the culture you would like to shed light on and ensure the design and its intended impact would leave a legacy to inspire the present and future generations.

### Guiding Questions on Cultural and Community Development

#### Understanding Cultural Context

1. What are the core values, beliefs and traditions of this culture?
2. How does this culture express itself through art, music, literature and other forms of expression?
3. What are some significant historical events that have shaped this culture?
4. How has this culture evolved over time? And, what are the key influences that have contributed to its development?

#### Identifying Cultural Elements to Incorporate

1. What are the distinctive architectural and spatial design styles, materials and techniques associated with this culture?
2. Are there specific cultural symbols, motifs and patterns that can be incorporated into the design?
3. How can the design reflect the cultural values and beliefs?

#### Inspiring the Future Generations

1. How will this design contribute to preserving and promoting cultural heritage?
2. Will the design foster a sense of belonging and identity among the community?
3. How can the design be adapted to meet the needs of the future generation without compromising its cultural roots?



You are tasked to create innovative architectural designs that embody cultural convergence. The design should serve as a lasting monument of cultural legacy, inspiring the present and future generation.

Some theme specific considerations:

- **Sense of Belonging and Identity:** How can your design bring members of the community together?
- **Cultural Integration:** How can your design reflect the diversity of the local community while preserving cultural heritage?
- **Sustainability:** What sustainable practices and materials can be incorporated into the design to minimise environmental impact?
- **Economic Viability:** How can the design contribute to economic development and create opportunities for local businesses?
- **Social Impact:** How will the design benefit the community and promote social cohesion?

Some critical spatial design elements for you to consider:

- Level of innovation and integration of technology
- Social and cultural impact
- Economic impact
- Environmental footprint and impact
- Design aesthetics (inclusive of colour and light theories)
- Human interactivity
  - Among people
  - ...with the built environment
  - ...with the natural environment

## ARCHITECTURAL CATEGORY

**Important Note:**

The aforementioned elements of convergence are examples for your reference, you do not necessarily need to follow the directions. It is a guidance to help give you a better understanding of convergence and its influence on societal changes.

## INTERIOR DESIGN CATEGORY

You are tasked to create innovative interior designs that embody cultural convergence. The design should transform spaces and encourage interaction while keeping an authentic cultural and heritage narrative.

Some theme specific considerations:

- **Sense of Belonging and Identity:** How can your design bring members of the community together?
- **Cultural Integration:** How can your design reflect the diversity of the local community while preserving cultural heritage?
- **Sustainability:** What sustainable practices and materials can be incorporated into the design to minimise environmental impact?
- **Economic Viability:** How can the design contribute to economic development and create opportunities for local businesses?
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Some critical spatial design elements for you to consider:

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- Design aesthetics (inclusive of colour and light theories)
- Human interactivity
  - Among people
  - ...with the built environment
  - ...with the natural environment

# CHAPTER 3 RESOURCES

PRO-TIPS:

## HOW TO WRITE A RELEVANT AND POWERFUL DESIGN STATEMENT?

Your write-up will be the first component to be reviewed by our judges. It should not be more than 800 words. It should also provide the structure for your oral presentation if you are shortlisted to present your design concept to the judges. It should answer the following questions:

### How to present your ideas effectively:

- Avoid starting your presentation and statement with: “This project...”
  - Instead, open with your key argument, vision, or influence.”

### How will your future-proof design concept solve and/or benefit the communities and societies around it?

- How do you envision the ecological, sociological, and technological aspects that may contribute to the well-being of humanity?
- What is your design’s impact on the environment based on its concept, materials, maintenance, energy usage and water and waste management?
- In your opinion, what is the one key component that must exist in future-proof designs?

### Your research process:

- What was your research methodology?
- Who was your main source of information and/or inspiration during your research?
- What questions and scope of work did you consider during your research process?
- Was the research methodology effective?
- What did you learn from your research findings?

PRO-TIPS:

## WHAT ELSE TO CONSIDER WHEN WRITING YOUR DESIGN STATEMENT?



### Conceptualisation

Employing critical and mature solutions through effective design concepts and communications.



### Design innovation

Thinking out-of-the-box to implement inventive and innovative interventions.



### Critical analysis

Finding strategic ways to resolve issues critically with traditions, cultures and people in mind.



### Design sensitivity

Designing with an empathetic mindset through practical, functional and well-designed considerations.



### Sustainability

Adopting a sustainable and greener sensibility to allow design and architecture to coexist harmoniously with nature and its surroundings.



### Place-making

Understanding the importance of interactions between the people as well as significant cultural contexts.



### Forward-thinking

Challenging conventional pragmatisms to re-enact new fundamentals to spatial appreciation and visual impact.

REFERENCE:

# UN SDG AS AN INSPIRATION BOARD

If you run out of ideas or do not know where to start your design solution brainstorming session. We strongly encourage you to go through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals a guideline and supplementary tool to searching an emerging trend or societal challenge that you can solve through a #Glocal design lens.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:

# WHAT IS DESIGN THINKING?

EMPATHISE



Personas  
Job Stories  
Usability Testing

DEFINE



Identify Needs  
Prioritise Needs

IDEATE



Task Flows  
Lo-Fi Sketches

PROTOTYPING



Hi-Fi Mockups  
Clickable  
Prototype

VALIDATION



Test Prototype  
Iterate

Repeat

## Empathise

- **Persona:** Create a provisional persona of a potential user based on online research and your understanding of the end user
- **Job Stories:** Explore various contexts in which a user would utilise the design and understand their motivation and desired outcome
- **Usability Testing:** Obtaining as much data as possible through qualitative and quantitative methods from the perspective of the end-user

## Ideate

- **Task Flow:** Create a task flow mapping the entire journey of a user in your design
- **Ideating the Solution:** Begin sketching and coming up with several potential solutions to each of the pain points. Have fun experimenting with different techniques to finally derive to the desired outcome

## Define

- **Identifying:** Use affinity mapping to group the pain points into similar categories on a board
- **Prioritising Pain Points:** Prioritise each pain point based on its importance to the user as well as to your design
- **Define Problem:** Establish a clear goal you would like to solve based on user feedback and your project's desired outcome

## Prototyping and Validation

- First prototypes are to gather discussion — the design may not necessarily look anything like the final design
- Visual styling helps tell a story to users
- Use navigation elements as discussion triggers
- Prototype validation should be cross-functional
- Validate the market
- Validate the design
- Validate willingness to pay

## CHAPTER 4

# PREPARING FOR YOUR SUBMISSION

Note to Countries:

We are recommending 15 minutes for the presentation duration. However, if you would like to tweak the presentation duration locally, you may do so. Do remember to tweak the duration in the table below if you do change the duration.

## PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

**Important Note:** The following presentation guidelines is a framework for you to present with maximised impact. Do speak to your mentors and lecturers for more ideas on how to best position your approaches and design.

①

### Design Concept and Inspiration (~2 minutes)

- You can start your presentation with an emphasis of your design concept, personal motivation and inspiration
- This is a good time to bring in significant learnings or life event that has led you to creating this design

②

### Design Perspectives (~10 minutes)

- Many finalists in the past spent too much time on their inspiration and have not allocated sufficient time to elaborate their design perspectives and its functions
- To illustrate/showcase exactly how/what are the design languages/techniques that you have learned, and you have employed/utilise to achieve the design statements/intentions that you have chosen
- Do take the time in breaking down your complex design perspectives and walk our judges through. We highly encourage you to prepare zoomed-in perspectives/ images in your presentation to help judges have a better view of your work

③

### Closing/ Recap (~3 minutes)

- Recap and reiterate your design solution and concept with potential elements that will improve the lives of communities (if any)

# JUDGING CRITERIA

|                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>Design Concept</div> <div>20%</div>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Clarity of Design Intent:</b> Does the concept have a clear and concise message?</li><li>• <b>Originality of Idea:</b> Is the design concept unique and fresh?</li><li>• <b>Appropriateness to Site/Programme:</b> Does the concept respond to the specific needs of the site and the programme requirements?</li><li>• <b>Overall Strength of Concept:</b> Is the design concept well-developed and cohesive?</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                       |
| <div>Functionality &amp; Relevance</div> <div>15%</div> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Space Planning and Flow:</b> Does the design create a functional and efficient layout? Is the circulation clear and intuitive?</li><li>• <b>User Needs and Activities:</b> Does the design effectively accommodate the needs and activities of the intended users?</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <div>Design Innovation</div> <div>20%</div>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Creativity and Inventiveness:</b> Does the design demonstrate a unique and innovative approach to problem-solving?</li><li>• <b>Integration of New Technologies:</b> Does the design incorporate any new or emerging technologies in a thoughtful and effective way?</li><li>• <b>Pushing the Boundaries:</b> Does the design challenge conventional ideas and push the boundaries of architectural and interior design?</li><li>• <b>Feasibility of Innovation:</b> Is the innovative aspect of the design realistic and achievable within the project constraints?</li></ul> |
| <div>Sustainability</div> <div>15%</div>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Energy Efficiency:</b> Does the design incorporate strategies to minimise energy consumption?</li><li>• <b>Material Selection:</b> Does the design utilise sustainable and environmentally friendly materials?</li><li>• <b>Water Conservation:</b> Does the design incorporate strategies to conserve water?</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>Aesthetic, Colour Usage &amp; Visual Impact</div> <div>15%</div> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Overall Aesthetics:</b> Is the design visually appealing and well-composed?</li><li>• <b>Effective Use of Colour:</b> Does the colour scheme enhance the design concept and create a desired mood or atmosphere?</li><li>• <b>Visual Communication:</b> Do the drawings, models, and presentations effectively communicate the design intent and aesthetic qualities?</li></ul>                                                                                           |
| <div>Delivery and Presence</div> <div>15%</div>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Clarity and Organisation of Presentation:</b> Are the drawings, models, and presentations clear, well-organised, and easy to understand?</li><li>• <b>Professional Quality of Presentation:</b> Do the drawings, models, and presentations meet professional standards in terms of craftsmanship and execution?</li><li>• <b>Oral Presentation Skills:</b> Can the student(s) effectively communicate their design concept and rationale during a presentation?</li></ul> |

# SUBMISSION CRITERIA AND CHECKLIST

- **Name and Theme Concept**  
All projects must start with the project title and theme/ concept.
- **Design Concept Statement**  
The design statement should not be more than 800 words and submitted as a Microsoft Word file. It must also be included in a CD/DVD during submission.
- **Presentation Boards (A2 portrait size)**
  - a. At least 3, but not more than 4, boards are to be submitted, based on the digital copy.
  - b. Board 1 must show existing site photos (if applicable), property/site developer (if applicable), floor plan, elevation, furniture layout plan and site analysis.
  - c. Boards 2, 3, and 4 must show 3D perspectives. Refer to point 7 below, on ‘Colours’ for instructions on the use of colour.
  - d. Presentation Boards must be designed in portrait orientation, not landscape orientation.
  - e. The digital version of the A2 boards of the project must be saved in a CD/DVD with a folder named “Presentation Board”, and file name set as “Your Name – Board 1”.
- **Labelling the Presentation Boards**
  - a. Label all areas on the floor plan.
  - b. Perspectives in Digital Presentation Boards 2, 3 and 4 must be in A3, A4 or A5 sizes and included on the boards.
  - c. The Entry Form must be attached or affixed as a cover page when submitting the entry in a CD/DVD submission.
  - d. Do not place your name or other identification details on your boards to ensure anonymity during the judging process.
- **Perspective Images**
  - a. Individual perspectives must be at A4 size (minimum). These files must be saved in a folder titled “Perspectives”. The JPEG file should follow the naming convention based on “area”. For example, Living room/Lobby.
  - b. All image files must be at least 300 dpi in JPEG format ONLY.
- **Photographs**
  - a. Upload a recent high resolution personal photo of yourself in JPEG format at 300dpi with your name as the file name (e.g. “Participant Name.jpeg”).
  - b. Ensure that your face is visible as this will be used for media and online publications if you are selected as the Finalist.
- **Colours**
  - a. All colours used in the project, if any, must come from Nippon Paint’s range of colours.
  - b. Indicate in the Entry Form which Nippon Paint country the colour chips are from, as each country has different sets of colour names and colour codes.
  - c. Visit [ayda.nipponpaint.lk](http://ayda.nipponpaint.lk) to view/ download the colour chips.

# SUBMISSION PROCESS

**Important Note:** Please ensure submitted entries are complete, incomplete entries may not be entertained and accepted.

- **Online submission**
  1. Complete the online entry form at [ayda.nipponpaint.lk](http://ayda.nipponpaint.lk)
  2. Submit your entry through the link provided above.
- **Physical submission**
  1. Complete entry form in Submission, Section (c) and attach the form to the CD/DVD
  2. A CD/DVD that contains:
    - a. A folder named “Presentation Board” which has JPEG files of your presentation boards at 300dpi and named “Your Name - Board 1.jpeg”, “Your Name - Board 2.jpg”, “Your Name - Board 3.jpeg”, etc. in portrait orientation and not landscape orientation.
    - b. A folder named “Perspectives” with each perspective file in JPEG format, set at 300dpi and named appropriately (e.g. “Living Room” or “Lobby”).
    - c. Your design concept statement should not be more than 800 words and saved in a Microsoft Word file named “Design Concept Statement.docx”.
    - d. Your recent personal photo in JPEG format at 300dpi with your name as the file name (e.g. “Participant Name.jpeg”).
    - e. Mail the entry form and CD/DVD to [Name of person in charge, mailing address].

# ENTRY FORM

Please ensure to submit the entry form digitally and include the filled entry form in the zip file.

**Important remarks:** Please ensure you are an active student of an educational institution at the time of submission. AYDA reserves the right to reject submissions if participants are found to have graduated at the time of submission.

NAME |

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION |

COURSE |

(Please specify **full course name** with major and/or minor and year if applicable)

IDENTIFICATION NO. | MOBILE NO. |

MAILING ADDRESS |

CITY/STATE |

POSTCODE | COUNTRY |

E-MAIL ADDRESS |

CATEGORY | ☐ Architectural category ☐ Interior Design category

PROJECT TITLE |

TOTAL NO. OF PRESENTATION BOARDS |

COUNTRY OF NIPPON PAINT COLOUR CHIPS |

(Important note: Colour names and code differs from country to country. Please indicate which Nippon Paint colour chips and codes used in your submission. )

PROJECT LOCATION |

(if applicable)

LECTURER'S NAME |

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE |

## Rules and regulations

- Participants must be enrolled in interior design, architectural and/or other relevant courses at an educational institution upon the time of submission.
- Participants will be disqualified if the participant is found to have graduated upon the time of submission.
- This award is open to all interior design students in their second year and above, as well as architectural students in their third year and above.
- Participants must have less than one (1) year of professional working experience. University/ college mandated internships are considered as professional work experience if the one (1) year internship period happens after the participant has graduated.
- Only one entry is allowed per student.
- Entries must strictly conform to the submission guidelines and must be submitted to the contest coordinator of each school (whenever applicable).
- The final date of submission is **1st of December 2025**.
- The rights of all entries remain with the participants, Nippon Paint Group of Companies reserve the right to use the entries for promotional purposes.
- The Judges' decisions are final.
- Shortlisted candidates will be notified to make an oral presentation as part of the final judging procurement.
- Winners will be notified to attend a ceremony. Winning entries may be featured in marketing and promotional materials as deemed appropriate by the organiser and sponsor.
- Winners will bear all the expenses for travel costs and other incidentals relating to their appearance at the launch, oral presentation and national level award ceremony.
- Prizes are non-transferable and non-exchangeable for cash or credit.
- The organiser reserves the right to substitute prizes with another product of similar retail value without prior notice.
- All participating students need to have a valid passport at the time of application.
- Only international grand title winners are not allowed to participate in future AYDA Awards competition. We welcome repeat applications whenever possible.

## Disclaimer

- I hereby certify that the information above is true and accurate. This work is intended solely for the AYDA Awards 2025.
- In compliance with the Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (PDPA), your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties except for companies and/or brands collaborating with the Nippon Paint Lanka Private Limited. By submitting your data, you agree to have Nippon Paint Lanka Private Limited to process your data and access it for future use. You shall not in any way hold Nippon Paint Lanka Private Limited liable for any breach of its obligations under the PDPA.
- Notes:
  - The entries for the AYDA Awards 2025 must be the participant's own original work.
  - Each design submission must meet the submission requirements, presentation criteria and category criteria.
  - Previous entries that have been awarded the international title of Designer of the Year are ineligible for entry for AYDA Awards 2025.
  - Submissions that do not comply with the requirements will not be accepted.

## APPENDIX

# HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

(Harvard University's Design Discovery Program is applicable to AYDA Awards Designer of the Year Recipient only.)

The Harvard Design Discovery Program is a three-week summer program at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design (Harvard GSD), which welcomes people — from recent high school and college graduates to seasoned professionals — to explore and experience pursuing graduate-level studio-based education in architecture, landscape architecture, or urban planning and design. The program offers:

- A chance to learn first-hand what it is like to pursue an education or career in the architectural and interior design fields.
- A rigorous course of intensive studio work, lectures, workshops, critiques and field trips-sometimes social, and sometimes solitary.
- An immersive culture that is challenging, rewarding and exhilarating.
- An opportunity to experience and gain in-depth insight from leaders in the fields of design.

### Section L1) Disclaimer and remarks

1. AYDA Awards is an extension of Nippon Paint Holdings Singapore Pte Ltd (NIPSEA Group). It is NIPSEA's inclusive business arm promoting its education initiatives where it serves as a competition and awards recognition platform for architectural and interior design students globally.
2. The Design Discovery Program at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design (Harvard GSD) is NOT a sponsor, contributor and/or a partner of AYDA Awards or NIPSEA, its organisers and/or its associated affiliates.
3. Acceptance into the Harvard GSD is subject to Terms & Acceptance determined in entirety and solely by the Harvard GSD's Admission Authorities and/or its faculties.
4. Any and/or all decisions on entry acceptance and/or non-acceptance to its programs decided by the Harvard GSD is final. Responses and/or reasons may or may not be offered at the sole discretion of the Harvard GSD.
5. AYDA Awards and/or its associated organisers, partners, agencies, sponsors and/or its employees will not be held responsible for non-acceptance of the winner(s) of AYDA Awards due to circumstances that are not within its control and/or scope of authorisation; for whatever reason, whatsoever.
6. AYDA Awards, its associated organisers and/or its employees will endeavour to assist the winner(s) to submit and provide additional information within its scope to support their application towards the Design Discovery Program at Harvard GSD. However, the student must be responsible in finding out the requirements to apply for the program as well as to prepare and submit all necessary documents to Harvard GSD. AYDA Awards will only be assisting where necessary -primarily on matters with fee payments.
7. AYDA Awards is not responsible for applying for the required visa for the winner(s). The winner(s)' sole responsibility is to own a valid visa and/or apply for their own. However, the winner(s) can request certification and support from the organiser.

### Section L2) Cost, tuition, restrictions and conditions

1. Upon successful acceptance of your application by the Harvard GSD and Visa approval by the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and/or approvals required of you and any other Government or Institutional authorities; organisers of AYDA, NIPSEA Group and/or your local AYDA representatives will assist you with all other matters to prepare you for your program at Harvard GSD in the June 2027\* cohort.  
*\*The dates may be subjected to change.*
2. The tuition and accommodation fees during your Harvard GSD Design Discovery Program will be paid for by AYDA/NIPSEA. AYDA/ NIPSEA will undertake the following cost only up to the maximum amount of USD 10,000.00:

- One (1) Return Air Ticket inclusive of all taxes and airport charges. (Additional luggage charges, other than what’s included in the fare, are not included and will not be covered by AYDA/NIPSEA).
- Transfer to and from the airport to Harvard GSD’s Admission Office/Campus Housing.
- Tuition fees and material fees are fully paid for.
- Travel insurance with health insurance.
- Miscellaneous expenditure e.g. personal shopping, personal care products or expenses, entertainment, sightseeing, tours etc. are not included. Please prepare sufficient USD for your personal use.
- Family members and/or friends are not allowed to accompany you on this program, nor are they allowed to share the housing facility that is provided to you by AYDA/NIPSEA.

3. Reimbursement Process:

- AYDA/ NIPSEA will make the payment for the Design Discovery Program’s tuition and material fees directly to Harvard GSD.
- Winner(s) would need to first show proof of purchase of flight tickets and payment for accommodation prior to AYDA/ NIPSEA releasing the remaining funds to the winner(s).
- The remaining fund provided to the winner(s) can be used for logistical purposes, travel insurance, medical insurance and other relevant cost in relation to the Design Discovery Program.

4. Exceptions and conditions:

- You must hold a valid Visa or apply for your Visa as part of your application to Harvard GSD.
- Should your application be rejected by Harvard GSD or you are denied/fail to obtain a US entry visa, the compensation may be offered in lieu. The amount of the compensation will only be up to USD 5,000.00 only. However, it will be at the sole discretion of the organisers of AYDA/NIPSEA.
- Winner(s) are granted a maximum of two (2) years of grace period to either accept or deny the offer to either attend the Harvard GSD Design Discovery Program or accept the compensation of USD 5,000.00.

Section L3) FAQs and policies information for international students

International students

Participants of Design Discovery bring interest in the built environment from across the globe, with international participants making up about 50% of the program’s annual population. With such a culturally diverse student body, Design Discovery’s learning environment provides a unique space within which to explore the global impact of design.

International applicants supported through the AYDA Awards are encouraged to apply online and to begin the I-20 application process by February. Additional information regarding the I-20 process will be provided upon admission. A brief overview of visa requirements is outlined below.

Important Visa Information

Design Discovery is considered a full-time academic program. International participants through AYDA entering the U.S. must enter on an F-1 student visa. Neither Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) nor the B-2 visa allows full-time study. ESTA and B-2 visas are only for international travellers whose main reason for visiting the United States is tourism. Do not attempt to enter the United States on either ESTA or the B-2 visa. Attempting to enter the United States on ESTA or the B-2 visa to attend a full-time non-degree program is a violation of the US visa policy and you risk being denied entry to the United States.

International applicants currently studying in the United States

If you are currently studying in the U.S. and will not be graduating this spring, you do not need to apply for a new visa sponsored by Harvard; you may attend Design Discovery on your current F-1 visa. You must, however, ask your school’s international office for approval to attend our program.

English Proficiency Test

International applicants, except those from countries where English is the native language or who are currently enrolled in a university within the United States, must submit ONE of the following (U.S citizen and U.S.-dual citizen applicants do no fall into these requirements):

- **A valid score from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) internet-based test**

The minimum required TOEFL iBT total score is 92, with the following minimum section requirements: reading, 23; speaking, 23; listening, 23; writing, 23. Please have test results submitted to the Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design, institution code 3455. For further information about the TOEFL exam, please visit <http://www.ets.org/toefl>. International applicants who are currently enrolled in a university within the United States are exempt from this requirement.

- **Duolingo test**  
The minimum required score is 115.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- QA

I am an international student. Do I need to apply for a visa if I am currently attending a U.S. college or university?

No.
- QA

For international students, is there a minimum TOEFL score that must be achieved?

Yes. The minimum required TOEFL iBT total score is 92, with the following minimum section requirements: reading, 23; speaking, 23; listening, 23; writing, 23. The preferred total TOEFL iBT score is 104 or above, with individual section scores of 26 or above.
- QA

Can other English proficiency tests be substituted to replace TOEFL?

Yes, applicants may take the Duolingo test in lieu of the TOEFL. The minimum required score for Duolingo is 115.

GENERAL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – DESIGN DISCOVERY

- QA

How old do I have to be to apply to Design Discovery?

Applicants must be at least 18 years of age and must have a high school diploma or the equivalent. A high level of academic skill is necessary to take full advantage of our rigorous program.
- QA

How do I submit my transcript(s)? Do I need to send an official copy with my application?

Transcripts should be submitted electronically through the online application. Applicants should scan a copy of their transcript(s) and upload these documents as part of the online application. During the application process, it is not necessary to send an official transcript.

- QA

Does my transcript need to be official, or can I scan an unofficial version?

Scanned transcripts can be unofficial or official. If we need further information, we may ask for an official transcript to be sent to our office for review.
- QA

I am having technical difficulties with the online application (such as uploading a transcript). What do I do?

You may contact the Design Discovery office at [discovery@gsd.harvard.edu](mailto:discovery@gsd.harvard.edu).
- QA

I don't have a background in design – can I apply?

Yes. Design Discovery is a program designed to introduce Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Planning & Design to those who have interest in the areas but have little to no experience within the disciplines.
- QA

Can I apply for more than one concentration at the same time?

Participants of the program are exposed to all three concentrations through lectures, but your studio work will focus on only one chosen concentration. Participants have one week to switch concentrations once the program has begun.
- QA

Does the program cover design thinking?

Yes, it does. The program is as much about the ‘mind-set’ as it is about the ‘toolset’ of designers. Many of our students have gone on to other disciplines, taking with them what is now called ‘design thinking’; the processes, mental habits, and methods of research and collaboration that are second-nature to designers which can be beneficially applied to all fields and areas of study.
- QA

When are admission decisions made?

The admission decision process begins in February and is made on a rolling basis. Applicants will be notified of final decisions by email. Only completed applications will be reviewed.

Q  
A

Where do most students live? Are there dorms?

Most participants live on campus in dormitories provided by the Harvard Law School. Others may live within walking distance of the school.

Q  
A

What kind of computer resources are there?

Participants are given access to the computer labs in Gund Hall. They also have access to all programs on the GSD network. We recommend that you bring your own laptop. Wireless internet is available in Gund Hall as well as in the dormitories.

Q  
A

After completing the program, how do I request a Design Discovery transcript?

You may request for a Design Discovery transcript by filling out the form on the Evaluation and Certificate page.

Q  
A

Can I be removed from your program's mailing list?

Yes, you may. To remove yourself from the program's mailing list, email a request to [unsubscribe@gsd.harvard.edu](mailto:unsubscribe@gsd.harvard.edu).

The following policies are established and determined at the sole discretion of Harvard Graduate School of Design and may or may not be applicable to you as a participant of AYDA. Harvard Graduate School of Design reserves all rights to enforce the policies at will accordingly; make changes, alter and or interpret without prior notice.

## Harvard Graduate School of Design

# POLICIES AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

### POLICY ON PERSONAL CONDUCT

A free environment for academic pursuits requires reasonable conduct, both in academic and non-academic affairs, by all members of the school. The faculty may impose discipline or penalties on individuals for acts that disrupt or endanger the university community's pursuit of teaching, learning, and research in an atmosphere of free inquiry and personal and psychological security. The faculty may consider sanctions whether or not civil or criminal penalties are imposed. Violation of specific domains considered here include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, sexual and racial harassment, the use of physical violence, and lying to an officer. Procedures for disciplinary hearings and sanctions are described in the section below titled Review Process.

#### The Student's Responsibility

Students are bound by those policies of Harvard University and the Graduate School of Design that govern student conduct. Access to and familiarity with the policies that govern student conduct are a right and responsibility of every student and students are expected to be familiar with those policies. Such a learning environment depends upon considerate behavior toward all members, respect for one another's privacy, and accurate representation of one's own work. Students, faculty, and staff are subject to the policies

of Harvard University that govern the conduct of members of the School as articulated in the University-wide Statement of Rights and Responsibilities. View here: [provost.harvard.edu/university-wide-statement-rights-and-responsibilities](http://provost.harvard.edu/university-wide-statement-rights-and-responsibilities)

#### Respect for Others and Their Property

Behavior should be respectful of the rights, privileges, and sensibilities of other people, whether or not they are members of the academic community, and their property, whether or not it is university property. Intimidating, threatening, or hostile behavior toward others is a violation of this policy and may subject the offender to school and university sanctions. Likewise, willful destruction, theft and vandalism of the work or possessions of another student or group of students or of any educational resource (including computers and library materials) and unauthorized use of property are unacceptable and may also subject the offender to sanctions.

#### Personal Safety

Willful behavior that endangers the personal safety of others, whether or not they are members of the GSD, is a violation of school policies and may subject the offender to sanctions. Riots, violent intimidation or threats, use of weapons, physical assault, and any

other acts that endanger the physical well-being of individuals are violations of this policy. As discussed below, the GSD has adopted the University-wide Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy (“University Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy”).

**Protests and Demonstrations**

Freedom of speech and assembly, including spontaneous and organized protests and demonstrations, is an essential part of both academic life and the culture of the United States. However, protesters and demonstrators are obliged to respect the rights of other individuals and especially to ensure personal safety for all participants. Although peaceful demonstrations are a matter of civil rights, it is a violation of this policy for any member of the GSD community to prevent or disrupt university functions, such as lectures, seminars, reviews, meetings, and other public events; and administrative, study, design, research, interview, and other non-public activities.

**Contact Persons**

Anyone who has reason to believe that a student has engaged in conduct that violated the school’s policies on academic integrity, respect for others and their property, personal safety, or protests and demonstrations should report the matter to an appropriate faculty member or program director, or to any officer of the administration. Anyone wishing to report a violation of the University Policy should begin by contacting the Harvard University Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Dispute Resolution (“ODR”) or the relevant School or unit Title IX Coordinator. In the event that the first GSD officer to whom someone reports an alleged violation of the University Policy is not the appropriate Title IX Coordinator, it is that GSD officer’s responsibility to forward the matter either to ODR or to the appropriate Title IX Coordinator.

**Discrimination  
Non-discrimination Policy**

In accordance with Harvard University policy, the Graduate School of Design does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, creed, age, national origin, ancestry, veteran status, disability, genetic information, military service, or any other legally protected basis, in admission to, access to, or employment in its programs and activities.

Every effort will be made to ensure fairness and consistency in the school’s relations with its students, faculty and staff. The GSD’s procedures for responding to incidents of discrimination are described in the section, ‘Review Process’ below.

**Contact Persons**

A student of the GSD community who believes that any form of prohibited discrimination has occurred should bring this matter forward for review. (See section ‘Review Process’ below, for a description of the review process.) The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination programs:

32 Smith Center,  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
617 495 3786  
disabilityservice@harvard.edu

Director of Human Resources  
Harvard University  
Graduate School of Design  
48 Quincy Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
617 495 4323

Dean of Students  
Harvard University  
Graduate School of Design  
48 Quincy Street,  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
617 496 1236

The University 504 Compliance Coordinator is responsible for coordinating Harvard’s efforts on behalf of individuals with disabilities. In addition, inquiries regarding the application of non-discrimination policies regarding race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, veteran status, or handicap may be referred to:

Regional Director  
Office for Civil Rights, Boston Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
J. W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse  
Room 222, 01-0061  
Boston, MA 02109-4557

**POLICY ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT**

**See separate webpage for academic misconduct policies and procedures.**

Review Process for Violations of the Policies on Student Conduct and Non-Discrimination  
Informal Complaint Process

Cases of violations of the GSD student conduct policy or discrimination may be resolved informally. The dean of students will discuss this option with the subject of the possible violation, the “complainant.” If the complainant wishes to explore that avenue, this might result in an informal conference with the complainant, the student who allegedly violated GSD policy, “the respondent,” and the dean of students. The informal review will normally be completed within 60 days of the initial report of a possible violation to the dean of students.

**Formal Complaint Process**

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be found through an informal approach, and the complainant wishes to pursue the matter (or elects not to seek an informal resolution), the complainant will confer with the dean of students and submit a written complaint to the dean of students. The written complaint should specify the following:

- a. The full name and contact information of the complainant;
- b. The name and contact information (if known) of the respondent or respondents (person or persons against whom the charge is made);
- c. A statement of the facts that support the allegation of a violation of the University Policy;
- d. The date or dates and location of the alleged acts or practices.

Attached to the complaint should be a list of any sources of

information (for example, witnesses, correspondence, and the like) that the complainant believes might be relevant to the investigation, but a complaint should not be delayed if such sources of information are unknown or unavailable.

The University does not limit the timeframe for filing a complaint, although a complainant is encouraged to file as soon as reasonably possible both for effective gathering of information, and also to allow time for the Review Board to review the case, if necessary, in the likelihood that the respondent is graduating or is no longer employed by the University.

Although the initiation of a complaint in cases involving student conduct will be addressed by the Review Board panel, however, it may also be suggested or required, depending on the circumstances, that the Harvard University Police Department be notified. In cases that involve a civil suit, the dean of students may decide to proceed with a review independently of the suit or may decline to review a case that is considered to be in the purview of the civil courts only.

**Review Board Procedures  
The Review Board**

The Review Board will be comprised of six voting members of the Faculty of Design serving staggered three-year terms, of whom one will be designated chair by the dean. Three members of the Review Board will be elected, one from each academic department. The dean will appoint three at-large members and will also appoint an officer of the administration to serve as ex-officio (non-voting) member of the board. All formal complaints and charges will be reviewed by a panel consisting of at least three faculty members normally selected from among the members of the Review Board in advance plus the nonvoting member of the board. Either the respondent or complainant may challenge participation by any member of the Review Board reviewing the case in question, by written petition to the dean of students. For good cause, as determined by the Dean of the Faculty of Design, the challenged board member shall be replaced by another board member.

### Investigation of Facts

The panel appointed by the Review Board may investigate the facts or may request that an appropriate member of the university community investigate and report in writing. The case is ordinarily considered by the panel as quickly as is reasonably possible, given the panel's schedule and the need to investigate matters carefully. Due consideration will be given to the privacy of all involved parties. The respondent and complainant or their designees will be provided with the opportunity to review the investigative report within 15 days from the date that the panel receives the report.

### Hearing

The panel may hold a hearing to consider whether any violations of institutional policy have occurred. The hearing normally will be scheduled within 30 days of completion of the investigative report.

The panel must give notice of at least 10 days to all parties prior to the aforementioned hearing. The hearing will not be open to the public. Participation will be determined by the panel. Normally, the complainant and the respondent may each bring an advisor to the hearing. Since the hearing process is not a legal proceeding, legal counsel may not be present. A record of the hearing will be kept by the dean of students for a minimum of three years and will be considered confidential. The panel's report of findings and any recommendations for sanctions will normally be completed within 30 days after the conclusion of the hearing, and the panel will forward its report to the dean. The panel will provide both parties or their designees with an opportunity to view the report. Either party may submit a response to the dean within ten days of the panel's report becoming available.

### Panel Decisions

Upon agreement of the complainant and respondent, the panel may waive any step(s) in these procedures. The panel may determine at any point in these procedures that, based on the information available, insufficient evidence exists to warrant further review or possible sanctions. The panel will notify all concerned parties of this finding and consider the matter closed, except as provided in the Appeal section below.

### Sanctions

When a violation of the GSD Policy is found to have occurred, the Review Board panel will consider the imposition of appropriate sanctions. The complainant and the respondent will be notified.

In the event that the respondent is a member of the GSD faculty, the panel will forward its findings to the dean for consideration and possible action according to the policies and procedures that govern faculty.

Students are expected to comply with all disciplinary rules from matriculation until the conferring of the degree. A degree will not be granted to a student who is not in good standing or against whom a disciplinary charge is pending.

Sanctions for a student may include, but are not limited to, the following:  
Admonition: A formal reprimand that becomes part of the student's official record but does not appear on the transcript (minor sanction).

Probation: Conditional permission to remain at the GSD. Probation becomes part of the student's official record but does not appear on the transcript (minor sanction).

Involuntary Leave of Absence: Temporary separation from the GSD for a specified period of time, after which the student is ordinarily reinstated, or may be required to request permission from the panel to be reinstated, sometimes under probation. Involuntary leave of absence is part of the student's official record and 'Leave of Absence' is noted on the student's transcript (minor sanction).

Requirement to Withdraw: The requirement to withdraw normally is effective immediately upon the decision of the panel. A student who is required to withdraw, for whatever reason, is not in good standing until readmitted. The student must apply for readmission to the panel and through the regular admissions process. The reason for withdrawal is part of the student's official record but is not specified on the student's transcript, although the withdrawal is noted on the transcript (minor sanction).

Dismissal: An action taken in serious disciplinary cases that ends a

student's connection with the University and requires a two-thirds vote by the Student Sanctions Committee (see below). The action taken by the panel is a recommendation to the Student Sanctions Committee that the student be dismissed.

The sanction of dismissal does not necessarily preclude a student's return to the GSD. A dismissed student may petition for readmission and be readmitted only upon a two-thirds vote in favor by members of the Student Sanctions Committee, of which 7 of the 9 committee members must be present, in addition to applying for admission through the regular admissions process. A dismissed student is not in good standing until readmitted. Dismissal becomes part of a student's official record and will appear on the student's official transcript (major sanction).

Expulsion: The action taken by the panel is a recommendation to the Student Sanctions Committee that the student be expelled. Requires a two-thirds vote by the Student Sanctions Committee (see below). The student may not reapply and expulsion is part of the student's official record and is noted on the student's transcript, though the reason for the expulsion is not specified on the transcript (major sanction).

If minor sanctions (e.g., admonition, probation, involuntary leave of absence, requirement to withdraw) are recommended by the panel, the dean will review the panel's recommendations, with supporting materials, and take appropriate action. The decision of the dean will be made within 30 days of receipt of the panel's report, and is final, except as provided in the Appeal section below.

If major sanctions (dismissal or expulsion) are recommended by the panel, the Student Sanctions Committee will meet to review the recommendation and take final action. At least seven (7) of the nine (9) Committee members must be present. In accordance with the Eleventh Statute of the University, no student shall be dismissed or expelled except by two thirds (2/3) vote in favor by members of the Committee present and voting thereon. The final action of the Committee shall be communicated to the parties in writing within 15 days. A summary of the case, with participants' names withheld, and the final action taken by Committee, will be reported to the full voting faculty at its next meeting.

The decision of the Student Sanctions Committee is final, except as provided in the Appeal section below. The decision shall be communicated to the parties in writing within 15 days.

### Appeals

All sanctions or other decisions (including denial of a hearing) are subject to appeal. An appeal may be directed to the dean within 30 days of the decision in question. Appeals will generally be granted only on the basis of new evidence or significant procedural error. In cases where the appeal pertains to a lesser sanction, the dean's ruling on the appeal will be made within 30 days and is final. In cases where the appeal pertains to a major sanction, and the result of the appeal is a recommendation by the dean for a change in sanction, a new vote of the Student Sanctions Committee is required. At that time, the Committee's decision is final. All parties in a case will be notified in writing of the final decision of the appeal within 30 days of the decision.

### Disclosure

The GSD is allowed to disclose the results of a disciplinary proceeding against an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence to the alleged victim of that crime without the prior written consent of the alleged perpetrator.

### Panel Discretion

The panel may, in its discretion and for good cause, alter any deadlines in these procedures.

### Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment

The GSD has adopted the University-wide Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy.

The University Policy is reproduced in its entirety below.

Harvard University is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy educational and work environment in which no member of the University community is, on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination in any University program or activity. Gender-based and sexual harassment, including sexual violence, are forms of sex discrimination in that they deny or limit an individual's

ability to participate in or benefit from University programs or activities.

This Policy is designed to ensure a safe and non-discriminatory educational and work environment and to meet legal requirements, including: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in the University’s programs or activities; relevant sections of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in employment; and Massachusetts laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity. It does not preclude application or enforcement of other University or School policies.

It is the policy of the University to provide educational, preventative and training programs regarding sexual or gender-based harassment; to encourage reporting of incidents; to prevent incidents of sexual and gender-based harassment from denying or limiting an individual’s ability to participate in or benefit from the University’s programs; to make available timely services for those who have been affected by discrimination; and to provide prompt and equitable methods of investigation and resolution to stop discrimination, remedy any harm, and prevent its recurrence. Violations of this Policy may result in the imposition of sanctions up to, and including, termination, dismissal, or expulsion, as determined by the appropriate officials at the School or unit.

Retaliation against an individual for raising an allegation of sexual or gender-based harassment, for cooperating in an investigation of such a complaint, or for opposing discriminatory practices is prohibited. Submitting a complaint that is not in good faith or providing false or misleading information in any investigation of complaints is also prohibited.

Nothing in this Policy shall be construed to abridge academic freedom and inquiry, principles of free speech, or the University’s educational mission.

**Definitions**  
***Sexual Harassment***

Sexual harassment is defined as the unwelcome conduct of a

sexual nature, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, graphic, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when: (1) submission to or rejection of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a condition of an individual’s employment or academic standing or is used as the basis for employment decisions or for academic evaluation, grades, or advancement (quid pro quo); or (2) such conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it interferes with or limits a person’s ability to participate in or benefit from the University’s education or work programs or activities (hostile environment).

Quid pro quo sexual harassment can occur whether a person resists and suffers the threatened harm, or the person submits and avoids the threatened harm. Both situations could constitute discrimination on the basis of sex.

A hostile environment can be created by persistent or pervasive conduct or by a single severe episode. The more severe the conduct, the less need there is to show a repetitive series of incidents to prove a hostile environment. Sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, and domestic and dating violence, is a form of sexual harassment. In addition, the following conduct may violate this Policy:

- Observing, photographing, videotaping, or making other visual or auditory records of sexual activity or nudity, where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, without the knowledge and consent of all parties
- Sharing visual or auditory records of sexual activity or nudity without the knowledge and consent of all recorded parties and recipient(s)
- Sexual advances, whether or not they involve physical touching
- Commenting about or inappropriately touching an individual’s body
- Requests for sexual favors in exchange for actual or promised job benefits, such as favorable reviews, salary increases, promotions, increased benefits, or continued employment
- Lewd or sexually suggestive comments, jokes, innuendoes, or gestures
- Stalking

Other verbal, nonverbal, graphic, or physical conduct may create a hostile environment if the conduct is sufficiently persistent, pervasive, or severe so as to deny a person equal access to the University’s programs or activities. Whether the conduct creates a hostile environment may depend on a variety of factors, including: the degree to which the conduct affected one or more person’s education or employment; the type, frequency, and duration of the conduct; the relationship between the parties; the number of people involved; and the context in which the conduct occurred.

**Unwelcome Conduct**  
Unwelcome conduct is defined as the behavior that was not (1) requested or invited and (2) undesirable or offensive. That a person welcomes some sexual contact does not necessarily mean that person welcomes other sexual contact. Similarly, that a person willingly participates in conduct on one occasion does not necessarily mean that the same conduct is welcome on a subsequent occasion.

Whether conduct is unwelcome is determined based on the totality of the circumstances, including various objective and subjective factors. The following types of information may be helpful in making that determination: statements by any witnesses to the alleged incident; information about the relative credibility of the parties and witnesses; the detail and consistency of each person’s account; the absence of corroborating information where it should logically exist; information that the Respondent has been found to have harassed others; information that the Complainant has been found to have made false allegations against others; information about the Complainant’s reaction or behavior after the alleged incident; and information about any actions the parties took immediately following the incident, including reporting the matter to others.

In addition, when a person is so impaired or incapacitated as to be incapable of requesting or inviting the conduct, conduct of a sexual nature is deemed unwelcome, provided that the Respondent knew or reasonably should have known of the person’s impairment or incapacity. The person may be impaired or incapacitated as a result of drugs or alcohol or for some other reason, such as sleep or unconsciousness. A Respondent’s impairment at the time of the incident as a result of drugs or alcohol does not, however, diminish the Respondent’s responsibility for sexual or gender-based harassment

under this Policy.

**Gender-Based Harassment**  
Gender-based harassment is verbal, nonverbal, graphic, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostile conduct based on sex, sex-stereotyping, sexual orientation or gender identity, but not involving conduct of a sexual nature, when such conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it interferes with or limits a person’s ability to participate in or benefit from the University’s education or work programs or activities. For example, persistent disparagement of a person based on a perceived lack of stereotypical masculinity or femininity or exclusion from an activity based on sexual orientation or gender identity also may violate this Policy.

**Jurisdiction**  
This Policy applies to sexual or gender-based harassment that is committed by students, faculty, staff, Harvard appointees, or third parties, whenever the misconduct occurs:  
1. On Harvard property; or  
2. Off Harvard property, if:  
a) the conduct was in connection with a University or University-recognized program or activity; or  
b) the conduct may have the effect of creating a hostile environment for a member of the University community.

**Monitoring and Confidentiality**  
A variety of resources are available at the University and in the area to assist those who have experienced gender-based or sexual harassment, including sexual violence.

Individuals considering making a disclosure to University resources should make sure they have informed expectations concerning privacy and confidentiality. The University is committed to providing all possible assistance in understanding these issues and helping individuals to make an informed decision.

It is important to understand that, while the University will treat information it has received with appropriate sensitivity, University personnel may nonetheless need to share certain information with those at the University responsible for stopping or preventing sexual or gender-based harassment. For example, University officers,

other than those who are prohibited from reporting because of a legal confidentiality obligation or prohibition against reporting, must promptly notify the School or unit Title IX Coordinator about possible sexual or gender-based harassment, regardless of whether a complaint is filed. Such reporting is necessary for various reasons, including to ensure that persons possibly subjected to such conduct receive appropriate services and information; that the University can track incidents and identify patterns; and that, where appropriate, the University can take steps to protect the Harvard community. This reporting by University officers will not necessarily result in a complaint; rather, the School or unit Title IX Coordinator, in consultation with the Title IX Officer, will assess the information and determine what action, if any, will be taken. Information will be disclosed in this manner only to those at the University who, in the judgment of the Title IX Officer or School or unit Title IX Coordinator, have a need to know.

Should individuals desire to discuss an incident or other information only with persons who are subject to a legal confidentiality obligation or prohibition against reporting, they should ask University officers for information about such resources, which are available both at the University and elsewhere. University officers are available to discuss these other resources and to assist individuals in making an informed decision.

**Violations of Other Rules**

The University encourages the reporting of all concerns regarding sexual or gender-based harassment. Sometimes individuals are hesitant to report instances of sexual or gender-based harassment because they fear they may be charged with other policy violations, such as underage alcohol consumption. Because the University has a paramount interest in protecting the well-being of its community and remedying sexual or gender-based harassment, other policy violations will be considered, if necessary, separately from allegations under this Policy.

**Resources**

- Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (24 hours) | 617-495-9100
- Harvard University Police Department | 617-495-1212 (Provides transportation to the Beth Israel Hospital or a hospital of your choice.)

- Harvard University Health Services | 617-495-5711
- HUHS Behavioral Health Services | 617-495-2323
- Bureau of Study Counsel | 617-495-2581• Harvard Chaplains | 617-495-5529
- Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center Rape Crisis Intervention Center | 617-667-8141
- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center | 617-492-8306 or 1-800-841-8371
- Cambridge Police Department | 617-349-3300
- Employee Assistance Program | 877-327-4278

**Other Forms of Harassment**

The following addresses the GSD’s policies governing harassment that is not covered by the University Policy. Harassment can create an environment in which access to education and employment is diminished. The GSD seeks to maintain an atmosphere free of harassment. There are obligations of civility and respect for others that underlie rational discourse. Harassment not only shows grave disrespect for the dignity of others but also impedes the free discussion and exchange of ideas. This policy statement seeks to define the circumstances under which behavior affecting the GSD community may constitute impermissible harassment and grounds for disciplinary action. It also seeks to clarify the point at which protected free expression ends and prohibited harassment begins.

**Policy**

It is impermissible for any member of the GSD community to engage in harassment of others. This includes, but is not limited to, harassment based on characteristics such as race, color, national origin, religion, age, creed, ancestry, veteran status, or disability. Harassment is particularly objectionable when it involves the abuse of GSD authority. Such behavior, as defined in the following section, may be grounds for disciplinary action such as censure, probation, separation, dismissal, or expulsion.

**Definitions**

***Physical Harassment***

Certain physical acts may constitute harassment. These include, but are not limited to, assault, unwelcome touching, physical intimidation, defacing or damaging property, interference with freedom of

movement, and other forms of behavior that violate federal or state civil rights law. Such acts are impermissible whether or not they are based on characteristics such as race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, age, political beliefs, veteran status, or disability status. The fact that physical harassment may be accompanied by verbal or symbolic expression does not make the physical harassment less punishable.

***Verbal or Symbolic Harassment***

Certain purely verbal or symbolic expressions may also constitute harassment. Epithets, threats and other abusive expressions, or unwelcome comments may constitute harassment and are impermissible if, from the standpoint of a reasonable person, they are sufficiently severe or pervasive to adversely affect an individual’s working or learning environment. This category includes but is not limited to, expressions based on such characteristics as race, ethnic group, religious belief, disability status, or age. Depending on the circumstances, verbal expressions may be punishable where, from the standpoint of a reasonable person, they (1) are addressed directly to an individual or several individuals; (2) insult, stigmatize, or intimidate the individual(s); and (3) evince on the part of the speaker(s) grave disrespect and intent to demean the individual(s).

***Racial Harassment***

The GSD seeks to maintain an instructional environment free from racial harassment. The GSD defines racial and ethnic harassment as actions on the part of an individual or group that demean or abuse another individual or group because of race, national origin, or ancestry. Such actions may include but are not restricted to using racial epithets, making racially derogatory remarks, and using racial or ethnic stereotypes.

**Resolution of Harassment Concerns**

GSD has incorporated the University’s Procedures for Handling Complaints Involving Students Pursuant to the University’s Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy. In connection with concerns relating to other forms of harassment, a student of the GSD community who believes that harassment has occurred or would like clarification or information on the GSD complaint and resolution procedures, is encouraged to bring this matter to the attention of the dean of students. (See ‘Review Policies’ for a description of the review process.)

**Consensual Romantic Relationships**  
***Unprofessional Conduct in Relationships between Individuals of Different University Status***

Amorous relationships that might be appropriate in other circumstances always have inherent dangers when they occur between any teacher or officer of the university and any person for whom he or she has a professional responsibility (i.e., as teacher, advisor, evaluator, supervisor). Implicit in the idea of professionalism is the recognition by those in positions of authority that in their relationships with students or staff there is always an element of power. It is incumbent upon those with authority not to abuse, nor seem to abuse, the power with which they are entrusted.

GSD officers and other members of the teaching staff should be aware that any romantic involvement with their students may make them liable for formal action against them. Even when both parties have consented at the outset to the development of such a relationship, it is the officer or instructor who, by virtue of his or her special responsibility and educational mission, will be held accountable for unprofessional behavior. Teaching fellows, or teaching assistants may be less accustomed than faculty members to thinking of themselves as holding professional responsibilities, but they, too, are subject to this policy. They may need to exercise special care in their relationships with students whom they instruct, evaluate, or otherwise supervise, recognizing that their students might view them as more powerful than they may perceive themselves to be.

Amorous relationships between members of the faculty and/or with students that occur outside of any direct or formal relationship can also lead to difficulties. In personal relationships between individuals with whom there is no current, direct line of professional responsibility and authority, the senior person should be sensitive to the constant possibility that he or she may unexpectedly be placed in a position of responsibility for a student’s instruction or a faculty member’s evaluation. This could involve being called upon to write a letter of recommendation or to serve on an admissions or selection committee involving the other individual. In addition, one should be aware that others may speculate that a specific power relationship exists even when there is none, giving rise to assumptions of inequitable academic or professional advantage for the student or faculty member involved. Relationships between officers and

students or senior and junior faculty are categorically discouraged by the GSD, and may fall under the purview of this policy.

### Review Process

#### Review Process for Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Cases

The GSD has incorporated the University’s procedures for handling complaints involving students pursuant to the [University’s] Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy, including for purposes of student discipline. The procedures with respect to alleged harassment by a Harvard student are contained in the University policies available here: [diversity.harvard.edu/pages/title-ix-sexual-harassment](https://diversity.harvard.edu/pages/title-ix-sexual-harassment). None of the provisions outlined here contradict or replace any provisions of the University Procedures. These provisions are intended to supplement the University Procedures and detail the GSD role at moments when the University Procedures refer to actions taken or decisions made by the “School or unit.” To the extent any existing GSD policies and procedures interfere with compliance with the University Policy and Procedures, application of such GSD policies and procedures should be suspended. The provisions in the University Procedures are not reproduced below. For a complete understanding of the procedures concerning alleged sexual or gender-based harassment by GSD students, students should review the University Procedures in conjunction with these supplemental provisions.

The Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) has been charged with implementing the procedures for students pursuant to the University Policy. The ODR operates under the Office of the Provost, working in partnership with the University’s Title IX Officer, School or unit Title IX Coordinators, and other School or unit leadership.

Harvard students, faculty, staff, other Harvard appointees, or third parties who believe they are directly affected by the conduct of a Harvard student (collectively, “initiating parties”) may: request information or advice, including whether certain conduct may violate the University Policy; seek informal resolution; or file a formal complaint. Initiating parties are encouraged to bring their concerns to the relevant School or unit Title IX Coordinator, the Title IX Officer, or staff in ODR, but may, if they choose, contact another School or University officer, who will refer the matter as appropriate.

As set forth below, interim measures designed to support and

protect the initiating party or the University community may be considered or implemented at any time, including during a request for information or advice, informal resolution, or a formal complaint proceeding. Consistent with GSD policy, interim measures might include, among others: restrictions on contact; course-schedule or work-schedule alteration; changes in housing; leaves of absence; or increased monitoring of certain areas of the campus. These interim measures are subject to review and revision throughout the processes described below, and the initiating party can discuss them with the GSD’s Title IX coordinator or the ODR at any time.

When the allegations, if true, might constitute criminal conduct, the party against whom they are brought is hereby advised to seek legal counsel before making any written or oral statements. Those facing allegations may wish to obtain legal advice about how this process could affect any criminal case in which they are or may become involved.

### Informal Review

An informal complaint may be made either orally or in writing. It operates as a request to the Title IX coordinator, the Title IX officer, or the Director of ODR to initiate efforts to aid the parties in finding a mutually acceptable resolution. The individual should identify the alleged harasser (if known) and describe the allegations with specificity. The Title IX coordinator, the Title IX officer, or the Director of ODR in consultation with the Title IX Officer will assess the severity of the alleged harassment and the potential risk of a hostile environment for others in the community to determine whether informal resolution may be appropriate. The Title IX coordinator or Title IX officer will also consider whether to put in place any interim measures designed to support the complainant (the person making the complaint) and/or the University community.

Upon determining that informal resolution is appropriate, the Director of ODR will assign an investigator who, in collaboration with the Title IX coordinator or the Title IX Officer or designee will consult further with the person initiating the request, inform the person who is the subject of the allegations, and gather relevant information and communicate with the parties and others, as necessary. The Title IX coordinator will explore with the complainant various alternatives for resolving the matter. These may include, among other possibilities,

an informal conference with the complainant, the subject of the possible violation, and others, as appropriate. The Title IX coordinator or the Title IX Officer also may put in place any appropriate interim measures to protect the educational and work environment. At any time, students interested in confidential counseling about options and resources can also contact the Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (<http://osapr.harvard.edu>). A matter will be deemed satisfactorily resolved when both parties expressly agree to an outcome that is also acceptable to the School or unit Title coordinator. At any point prior to such an express agreement, the person who brought the complaint may withdraw the request for informal resolution and initiate a formal complaint under these procedures.

Ordinarily, the informal resolution process will be concluded within two to three weeks of the date of the initial report of a possible violation. Please note that the Title IX officer may not approve an informal resolution if it is a sexual assault allegation.

### Initiation of Formal Complaint

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be found through an informal approach, and the complainant wishes to pursue the matter (or would prefer to file a formal complaint alleging a violation of the University Policy), the complainant can file a formal complaint with ODR. The complaint must be in writing and signed and dated by the complainant. The complaint should specify the following:

- a. The full name and address of the complainant;
- b. The name and address (if known) of the respondent or respondents (person or persons against whom the charge is made);
- c. A statement of the facts that support the allegation of a violation of the University Policy;
- d. The date or dates and location of the alleged acts or practices.

Attached to the complaint should be a list of any sources of information (for example, witnesses, correspondence, and the like) that the complainant believes might be relevant to the investigation, but a complaint should not be delayed if such sources of information are unknown or unavailable.

The University does not limit the timeframe for filing a complaint, although a complainant is encouraged to file as soon as reasonably possible both for effective gathering of information, and also to allow time for a disciplinary body to review the case in the likelihood that the respondent is graduating or is no longer employed by the University.

### Referral of Complaints Against Staff, Faculty, Other Harvard Appointees, or Third Parties

If the subject of the possible violation is a faculty member, staff member, other Harvard appointee, or third party, ODR promptly will provide the appropriate Title IX coordinator with a copy of the complaint. The School or unit Title IX coordinator, in consultation with other Harvard officers, will determine whether some or all of the allegations will be handled at the School or unit level, or whether ODR will conduct all or part of any investigation.

### The Formal Complaint Process

In the event a complaint is raised against a GSD student, once the complaint is received by the ODR, the Director of ODR will assign the case to an investigator for an initial review. The GSD may assign another individual, the “designee” to work jointly with the investigator. The investigative team will contact the complainant in an attempt to gather a more complete understanding of the allegations, as well as any related conduct that may implicate the University Policy. The investigative team will gather information and determine whether the information, if true, would constitute a violation of the policy such that an investigation is warranted. This decision will be communicated to the complainant, the Director of ODR, the Title IX officer, and the GSD’s Title IX coordinator. Ordinarily, the initial review will be concluded within one week of the date the complaint was received.

Following the decision to begin an investigation, the investigative team will notify the respondent in writing of the allegations and will provide a copy of the University Policy and the University Procedures. The respondent will have one week in which to submit a written statement in response to the allegations.

If the decision is made to begin an investigation in a case where the complainant is unwilling to participate but the School has assessed the severity of the allegations and the potential risk of a hostile

environment for others in the community and has determined to proceed, then for the purposes of the University Procedures, the School Title IX coordinator or a designee will be considered the complainant.

Both the complainant and the respondent may bring a personal advisor to any interviews with the Investigative Team. A personal advisor should be an officer of the University who is affiliated with the School or unit in which the advisee is enrolled or employed, but may not be related to anyone involved in the complaint or have any other involvement in the process. In the case of students enrolled in interdisciplinary programs, their official academic advisor also may serve as their personal advisor. Personal advisors may view a redacted version of the complaint or other documents provided to the parties, offer feedback on their advisee's written statements, and provide general advice. During interviews, personal advisors may not speak for their advisees, although they may ask to suspend the interviews briefly if they feel their advisees would benefit from a short break.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigative team will evaluate the evidence and make findings of fact, applying a preponderance of the evidence standard, and will determine whether there has been a violation of the policy. The investigative team will draft an investigative report. Both parties have the opportunity to review the report before it is finalized and will have one week in which to give written feedback. The report will then be finalized and sent to the parties and the School of the respondent. If a violation is found, disciplinary action is determined by the School's administrative board. If the respondent is a GSD student, the case then goes before the GSD's Review Board, as discussed.

### The Review Board

The Review Board will be comprised of six voting members of the Faculty of Design serving staggered three-year terms, of whom one will be designated chair by the dean. Three members of the Review Board will be elected, one from each academic department. The dean will appoint three at-large members and will also appoint an officer of the administration to serve as an ex-officio (nonvoting) member of the board. All formal complaints and charges will be reviewed by a panel consisting of at least three faculty members normally selected

from among the members of the Review Board in advance plus the nonvoting member of the board. Either the respondent or complainant may challenge participation by any member of the Review Board reviewing the case in question, by written petition to the Dean of Students. For good cause, as determined by the Dean of the Faculty of Design, the challenged board member shall be replaced by another board member.

### Review Board Procedures in Sexual/Gender-Based Harassment Cases

#### Sanctions

When a violation of the University Policy is found to have occurred, the GSD's Review Board panel will consider the imposition of appropriate sanctions. The complainant and the respondent will be notified. Within three days of notification, the complainant and respondent may each submit a written statement to the Review Board. The statements will be provided to the other party as well as other officers of Harvard as the Review Board panel deems appropriate. The statements may not challenge the validity of the findings and conclusions contained in the final report, and also may not introduce facts that could have been presented to the Investigative team or that conflict with any of the findings in the final report.

The panel will accept as final and non-reviewable the report's findings of fact and its conclusions as to whether a violation of the University Policy has occurred. The Review Board's disciplinary proceedings against the respondent based on conduct addressed by the report will proceed with the understanding that the final report carries the same validity as a determination reached by the Review Board itself.

The Review Board panel will determine any recommendations of sanctions and will forward any such recommendations to the dean. The panel's report will be supported, where appropriate, by a statement of the reasons for the specific sanction and the principles or policies on which the panel relied in recommending the sanction. The panel will provide both parties or their designees with an opportunity to view its written report in the Office of Student Services. Either party may submit a response to the dean within three days of the panel's report becoming available. However, the only opportunity to appeal the findings related to the University Policy is provided by the ODR. Appeals within the GSD, including appeals

to the dean, pertain only to the decision of the Review Board in determining discipline.

Degree will not be granted to a student who is not in good standing or against whom a disciplinary charge is pending.

Sanctions for a student may include, but are not limited to, admonition, probation, separation, requirements to withdraw, dismissal, or expulsion. If minor sanctions (e.g., admonition, probation, or separation) or withdrawal are recommended by the panel, the dean will review the panel's recommendations, with supporting materials, and take appropriate action. If major sanctions (dismissal, or expulsion) are recommended by the panel, the Student Sanctions Committee will meet to review the recommendation and take final action. At least seven (7) of the nine (9) Committee members must be present. In accordance with the Eleventh Statute of the University, no student shall be dismissed or expelled except by two thirds (2/3) vote in favor by members of the Committee present and voting thereon. The final action of the Committee shall be communicated to the parties in writing within 15 days. A summary of the case, and the final action taken by Committee will be reported to the full voting faculty at its next meeting.

The sanction of 'dismissal' does not necessarily preclude a student's return to the GSD. A dismissed student may petition for readmission and be readmitted only upon two thirds (2/3) vote in favor by members of the Committee. At least of seven (7) of the nine (9) Committee members must be present.

### Appeals

Either party may appeal the faculty's decision in writing within three days after the faculty's decision is communicated. Again, however, the appeal may pertain only to the disciplinary recommendation.

In cases where the appeal pertains to a major sanction, and the result of the appeal is a recommendation by the dean for a change in sanction, a new vote of the Student Sanctions Committee is required. At that time, the Committee's decision is final,

### Disclosure

Disclosure of the final sanctions decision shall be made as appropriate to the respondent and the complainant.

### Panel Discretion

The panel may, in its discretion and for good cause, alter any deadlines in these procedures.

## POLICY ON THE GENERAL ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

The general mission of the GSD is to promote the development of design excellence through teaching, learning, and research. Successful pursuit of this mission is predicated on the considerate behavior and integrity of all members in the academic community. Student membership in the GSD community is a privilege conditional upon ethical conduct in academic matters. In addition, all students share in the GSD's responsibility to maintain an environment conducive to intellectual freedom and the pursuit of knowledge.

### Academic Integrity

The GSD seeks to maintain a learning and working environment characterized by academic integrity and fair access to educational resources. The GSD expects all students to honor these principles. Actions that violate these principles include, but are not limited to, the following, and may be the basis for disciplinary action:

- Cheating on examinations, either by copying the work of other students or through the use of unauthorized aids;
- Fraudulent presentation of the work of others (either written or visual) as one's own work (plagiarism), notwithstanding the academically acceptable tradition of incorporating assistance, which is freely offered by GSD classmates, in the final thesis presentation (although the assistance must be acknowledged);
- Simultaneous or repeated submission without permission of substantially the same work (either written or visual) to more than one course;
- Alteration or misrepresentation of academic records;
- Unauthorized collaboration or paid assistance;
- Deliberate interference with the integrity of the work of others;
- Fabrication or falsification of data.

**Cases of academic misconduct adhere to the Guidelines described below.**

**Guidelines for Communicating Expectations**

Students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the school's standards for academic integrity and conduct. It also is suggested that instructors communicate expectations for academic conduct, and, if relevant, the following should be discussed:

- Basic expectations for papers and exams. Specify what resources are permitted (including internet resources).
- If students are collaborating on projects, some general assumptions about group work.
- Submission of coursework for one or more courses simultaneously.
- Use of outside copy editing services (as opposed to content editing).
- There are helpful resources available to students at the GSD. The library's Write and Cite website (<http://guides.library.harvard.edu/gsd/write>) is excellent. This guide offers information on writing resources, citation style guides, and academic writing expectations and best practices. Students who need additional information about these issues may also meet with writing tutors through Academic Writing Services, a free service through Frances Loeb Library (<https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/resources/advising-academic-support/>).

**Dealing with Violations**

Course and studio instructors must report all suspected cases of plagiarism, cheating, or other sorts of academic dishonesty to the Dean of Students. This notification should include a written statement explaining the basis of suspicion. If plagiarism is suspected, the statement should include a copy of the source of the plagiarism and the plagiarized material. The contents of the statement will remain confidential to protect the student's privacy since the facts will not yet have been determined. The instructor may wish to meet with the student at this time to informally discuss the suspicions. The Dean of Students will meet with the instructor to discuss the statement, and then the Dean of Students and the instructor will meet with the student to present the statement and to seek the student's account of the events. If it is determined that the student has plagiarized or cheated, one of the following may be imposed:

1. Having to redo the assignment

2. Failing the assignment
3. Failing the course
4. Referral to Academic Misconduct Panel

**Additional and/or alternative remedial steps may be imposed.**

Often the first three measures are made in cases where it is apparent that the student did not fully understand his or her obligations or if the offense is considered not severe enough to warrant a hearing with the Academic Misconduct Panel. If any of steps one through three are decided upon, a written record describing the offense and subsequent course of action is signed by the Dean of Students, the faculty member, and the student, and is filed in the Dean of Students' office. As a follow up to the decision, the student will meet with the Dean of Students to review the GSD's policies. The student is then informed that, if another case of misconduct occurs, the subsequent case will move directly to the Academic Misconduct Panel. At any point in pursuing the foregoing steps, the Dean of Students may consult with the Chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel.

**Referral to GSD Academic Misconduct Panel**

A case will go to the Academic Misconduct Panel if:

1. The finding of academic misconduct is not the first offense.
2. The severity of the misconduct warrants direct review by the Academic Misconduct Panel.
3. A resolution cannot be reached among the student, instructor, and Dean of Students.
4. The student wishes to appeal the decision.

A letter will be sent to the student from the Dean of Students notifying the student that it has been determined that the case will go to the GSD Academic Misconduct Panel.

Students are expected to comply with all disciplinary rules from matriculation until the conferring of the degree. A degree will not be granted to a student who is not in good standing or against whom a disciplinary charge is pending.

**GSD Academic Misconduct Panel**

The Academic Misconduct Panel will be convened only in cases of academic misconduct. Once a case comes forward to the GSD Review Board, three members will be selected from the faculty appointees to the Review Board. The Review Board Chair serves as Chair of the

Academic Misconduct Panel. An alternate will be picked from the Review Board when a member of the Academic Misconduct Panel is a complainant in the case. The term of appointments to the Panel is the length of the Review Board appointments. The responsibilities of the Panel are to investigate claims of academic misconduct in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined below.

**Academic Misconduct Panel Review**

The registrar or other designated official of the University will staff the Panel and will initiate disciplinary proceedings by sending a letter to the student, with relevant materials, including:

1. A copy of the instructor's written statement of alleged misconduct.
2. The composition of the Academic Misconduct Panel, with notification that within three days of being notified of the composition of the Panel, the student may challenge participation by any member of the Panel reviewing the case in question by written petition to the registrar or other official staffing the panel. For good cause, as determined by the Dean of the Faculty of Design, the challenged Panel member shall be replaced by an alternate member.
3. A copy of the School's Policy on Academic Conduct and Dealing with Violations.
4. A copy of documents related to student's prior cases of academic misconduct, if applicable, with the statement, 'The review will take into account prior instances of academic misconduct.'
5. Notification of the student's right to respond within seven days from receipt of the charge by submitting a response to the registrar or other designated official who is staffing the Panel.
6. Notification that the registrar or other designated official is available to discuss the process with the student with the caveat that the registrar or other official will be providing staff support to the Panel, but is not a voting member.

The registrar or other designated official of the University also will notify the instructor of the composition of the Academic Misconduct Panel. Within three days of notification of the composition of the Panel, the instructor also may challenge participation by any member of the Panel reviewing the case in question, by written petition to the

registrar. For good cause, as determined by the Dean of the Faculty of Design, the challenged Panel member shall be replaced by an alternate member.

Copies of all the materials above (including the letter to the student) will be sent to the members of the Academic Misconduct Panel. As noted in #5 above, the student has the right to submit a written statement to the Panel and to offer any evidence bearing on the matter. The student is encouraged to meet with their academic advisor, another faculty member, or administrator to review this statement or to discuss the situation.

During the academic year the Panel will meet as quickly as is reasonably possible, given the Panel's schedule and the need to investigate matters carefully. Outside the academic year, an extension of time for the meeting may be necessary. The student has a right to meet with the Academic Misconduct Panel as part of the hearing process. A student may be accompanied by a designated advisor (chosen by the student) from within the GSD community. Since the hearing process is not a legal proceeding, legal counsel may not be present. The respondent must notify the registrar or other designated official of the name of the designated advisor at least 24 hours prior to the meeting with the Panel. The Panel will make a finding as to whether or not academic misconduct has occurred and, if it has, determine which sanctions if any are appropriate. Sanctions that may be imposed in cases of misconduct are described below:

Admonition: A formal reprimand that becomes part of the student's official record but does not appear on the transcript (minor sanction).

Probation: Conditional permission to remain at the GSD. Probation becomes part of the student's official record but does not appear on the transcript (minor sanction).

Involuntary Leave of Absence: Temporary separation from the GSD for a specified period of time, after which the student is ordinarily reinstated, or may be required to request permission from the Academic Misconduct Panel to be reinstated, sometimes under probation. Involuntary leave of absence is part of the student's official record and Leave of Absence is noted on the student's transcript (minor sanction).

**Requirement to Withdraw:** The requirement to withdraw normally is effective immediately upon the decision of the Academic Misconduct Panel. A student who is required to withdraw, for whatever reason, is not in good standing until readmitted. The student must apply for readmission to the Academic Misconduct Panel and through the regular admissions process. The reason for withdrawal is part of the student's official record but is not specified on the student's transcript, although withdrawal is noted on the transcript (minor sanction).

**Dismissal:** An action taken in serious disciplinary cases that ends a student's connection with the University and requires a two-thirds vote by the Student Sanctions Committee (see below). The action taken by the Panel is a recommendation to the Student Sanctions Committee that the student be dismissed.

The sanction of dismissal does not necessarily preclude a student's return to the GSD. A dismissed student may petition for readmission and be readmitted only upon a two-thirds vote in favor by members of the Student Sanctions Committee of which 7 of the 9 committee members must be present, in addition to applying for admission through the regular admissions process. A dismissed student is not in good standing until readmitted. Dismissal becomes part of a student's official record and will appear on the student's official transcript (major sanction).

**Expulsion:** Requires a two-thirds vote by the Student Sanctions Committee (see below). The action taken by the Panel is a recommendation to the Student Sanctions Committee that the student be expelled. The student may not reapply and expulsion is part of the student's official record and is noted on the student's transcript, though the reason for expulsion is not specified on the transcript (major sanction).

The registrar or other designated official shall send a copy of the decision of the Academic Misconduct Panel to the student.

Decisions of the Panel are final, except for those recommending dismissal or expulsion, which require a two-thirds vote by the Student Sanctions Committee (of which 7 of the 9 Committee members must be present). When a disciplinary case is referred to the Student

Sanctions Committee for a vote of dismissal or expulsion, the Chair of the Panel will present the facts of the case in a written report to the Committee. If the Committee fails to accept by two-thirds vote a recommendation by the Academic Misconduct Panel for dismissal or expulsion, the case shall be returned to the Panel for reconsideration of an alternate sanction.

The final action of the Student Sanctions Committee shall be communicated to the parties in writing within 15 days of the decision. A summary of the case, with the participants' names withheld, and the final action taken by the Committee, will be reported to the full voting faculty at its next meeting.

### **Appeals**

All sanctions or other decisions made by the Academic Misconduct Panel or Student Sanctions Committee are subject to appeal. An appeal may be directed to the dean within 30 days of the decision in question. Appeals will generally be granted only on the basis of new evidence or significant procedural error.

The dean's ruling on the appeal will be made within 30 days and is final. In cases where the appeal pertains to dismissal or expulsion, and the result of the appeal is a recommendation by the dean for a change in sanction, a new vote of the Student Sanctions Committee is required. The student will be notified in writing of the final decision.

