

AYDA AWARDS 2026

CONVERGE: EMBRACING HYPERLOCAL



FREE ENTRY

Submit Before

31.12.2026



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AYDA International Awards



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AYDA International Awards



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Nurturing the Next Generation: Nippon Paint's Vision for Design Excellence

The AYDA Awards stand proudly as Nippon Paint's Global CSR Flagship. It serves as the vital Education pillar in our mission to raise the next generation of socially conscious design leaders, truly Colouring Lives, one at a time. At its core, the mission of the AYDA Awards is clear: to identify, nurture, and empower future design leaders. By providing such a robust platform for learning, networking, and creative expression, AYDA aims to cultivate designers who are not only technically proficient – that's a given – but also deeply socially conscious, environmentally responsible, and culturally sensitive. The award truly seeks to inspire students to develop innovative solutions that genuinely address contemporary challenges, fostering a mindset of continuous learning and professional development that will serve them throughout their careers.



As part of our commitment to sustainable design at AYDA Awards, we encourage you to print only pages 11 - 31 if a physical copy of the entry kit is really needed.



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FOREWORD

Beyond Global: Hyperlocal Weaves Yesterday's Wisdom into Tomorrow's Spaces



Since we first launched it back in 2008, AYDA has truly blossomed, evolving from a promising regional initiative into a powerful, international movement. It consistently inspires young designers not just to meet but to exceed the boundaries of creativity and critical thinking. This year, we're inviting all of you to embark on what we believe will be a truly transformative journey with our compelling theme: "CONVERGE: EMBRACING HYPERLOCAL."

Now, think about it: we have till now lived in an era defined by rapid globalisation.

We're more connected than ever before, sharing technologies and ideas across continents. Yet, alongside this incredible interconnectedness, there's an equally powerful, perhaps even more vital, imperative: the profound celebration of distinct local identities. This creates a fascinating and compelling dynamic where the very forces that connect us globally actually amplify our appreciation for unique cultural heritage and the resources that are truly indigenous to a place.

The "hyperlocal" approach, as we see it, isn't about retreating from the global stage at all. Instead, it's a sophisticated, strategic, and deeply thoughtful response. *It gently yet firmly encourages designers to look inward, to truly understand and engage with the specific context of a place* – its rich history, vibrant culture, wonderful people, and its inherent, often overlooked, resources. This perspective, we believe, offers unique, context-rich solutions that can, in turn, inform, inspire, and profoundly enrich the global design conversation.

Embracing the hyperlocal, you see, goes far beyond just making things look good. It represents a truly holistic framework for sustainable development. It champions the wise utilisation of readily available resources within our immediate reach, fostering self-sufficiency and reducing our reliance on vulnerable global supply chains.

What could this mean for us who design spaces?

- ◆ **It is a commitment to "living within our means" that inherently promotes environmental responsibility,** significantly minimising our carbon footprints. At the same time, it powerfully bolsters regional economies by empowering local artisans, skilled craftspeople, and small businesses.
- ◆ **An approach that creates opportunities to strengthen the very fabric of our local economies,** and crucially, safeguards valuable skills and traditional knowledge that might otherwise fade away. Moreover, this theme effectively highlights the profound social dimension of design: creating spaces "by community, for community." This ensures that your designs genuinely serve the real needs and aspirations of the people they are intended for, fostering a strong sense of belonging and collective well-being.
- ◆ **It's about giving spatial design a new meaning** when viewed through a hyperlocal lens, providing an incredible means for preserving and rejuvenating existing spaces. It's about breathing new life into our heritage structures.
- ◆ **This isn't about freezing the past;** it's about respecting it deeply while dynamically building for the future, ensuring cultural continuity and relevance for generations to come.

The concept of convergence in this theme truly signifies the coming together of all these diverse yet beautifully interconnected elements: tradition and innovation, local wisdom and global relevance, human needs and environmental stewardship. It is precisely through this powerful convergence that truly holistic and impactful designs will emerge.

So, we lay down this challenge to you, the aspiring design leaders of tomorrow. We urge you to push your creative boundaries, think deeply and critically about your immediate surroundings, and contribute meaningfully to a future that is more sustainable, equitable, and culturally rich.

We assure you that your designs have the power to transform communities, inspire global change, and leave a lasting legacy. We are so very eager to see the innovative and authentic solutions you will present.

WEE SIEW KIM
Group Chief Executive Officer
NIPSEA Group

CHAPTER 1

ABOUT AYDA AWARDS

The Enduring Legacy and Global Influence of AYDA Awards

The AYDA Awards, previously known as the Asia Young Designer Awards, first began their journey in 2008. It was a truly pivotal initiative, born from Nippon Paint's visionary commitment to cultivating the next generation of design talent.

Since its early days, AYDA has experienced truly remarkable growth, expanding significantly in both its reach and its stature. It has, without a doubt, firmly established itself as one of Asia's pre-eminent design awards, demonstrating a profound and lasting impact on the design education landscape. To date, we've been thrilled to receive an impressive volume of participation, with over 67,000 entries pouring in from more than 1,600 tertiary education institutions across 20 geographical locations globally.

Over the years, AYDA has profoundly impacted thousands upon thousands of young and gifted student designers. It provides them with unparalleled opportunities to engage directly with renowned speakers and pivotal figures within the design industry. But it's more than just recognition.....

The platform genuinely helps participants

acquire first-hand industry knowledge, receive personalised coaching and mentoring, and develop essential skills through a diverse array of workshops. These workshops are meticulously led by experienced lecturers and seasoned industry professionals, ensuring that the learning is both practical and highly relevant to the field. Crucially, this immersive experience enables participants to learn collaboratively from their peers, not only within their national borders but also from international contexts.

The award serves as a central hub, actively shaping the future design landscape by fostering a collaborative and knowledge-sharing community that beautifully connects students, academia, and the industry. In this holistic developmental environment, we attract serious students who are seeking more than just a prize - they're pursuing comprehensive professional growth. Every single year, AYDA presents yet another exciting opportunity for emerging design talents to truly transcend conventional boundaries and push their creative limits even further. Through these varied experiential learning opportunities and

once-in-a-lifetime experiences, AYDA has meticulously cultivated a close-knit and thriving design community. This community, we're proud to say, encompasses professional architects, interior designers, industry associations, partners, design schools, esteemed alums, and, of course, our current design students, solidifying its enduring legacy in the global design sphere.

Join the AYDA community here:



www.ayda-awards.com



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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 |

AYDA AWARDS PANEL ADVISORS 2026/2027

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Founder & Principal Architect,
TTT Architects



Yasemin Arpac
Co-founder, Ofist



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 2028 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	Best Sustainable Design	Best Design Impact
Cash prize of USD1,000	Cash prize of USD1,000	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 2027.*
** 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



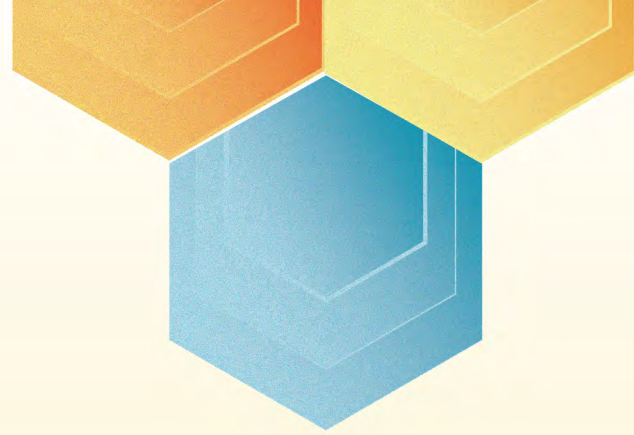
BEST
EDUCATION
INSTITUTION



HIGH FIVE
AWARD

CHAPTER 2

CONVERGE: EMBRACING HYPERLOCAL



Understanding Convergence in Design: A Human-Centred Perspective

The theme “CONVERGE” is all about the powerful dynamic that emerges when diverse elements are brought together, working in harmony, to achieve truly holistic design solutions. In the world of architecture and interior design, convergence signifies the harmonious integration of tradition and innovation, technology and craft, local wisdom and global perspectives, and human needs with environmental responsibility. It’s a clear call to move beyond singular disciplinary approaches and embrace a multidisciplinary mindset wholeheartedly.

This is where historical context, cultural nuances, technological advancements, and ecological imperatives converge, forming a beautiful coalescence. This integration, ultimately, serves to enhance human well-being and foster truly flourishing communities. The theme sets the stage for “embracing hyperlocal” by illustrating how a deep, profound understanding of specific contexts can lead to universally relevant and impactful designs that genuinely improve people’s lives and their interaction with the built environment.

The Sub-Theme of the Year: Embracing Hyperlocal

Hyperlocal Means: Championing Local Identity and Sustainable Impact

The Underlying Risk of Poorly Planned Globalisation

Globalisation, while connecting our world through shared technologies and ideas, simultaneously presents a significant risk: the potential for cultural homogenisation. Hyperlocal design, however, emerges as a powerful counter-force to this trend. It actively celebrates and preserves the distinct identities that make individual places truly special.

The role of Hyperlocal as an Anchor for Unique Identity and Cultural Preservation

This approach prioritises indigenous materials – consider locally sourced timber, stone, or even earth – alongside traditional building techniques that have been lovingly passed down through generations. By focusing on these authentic elements, designers can craft spaces that profoundly resonate with a community’s specific climate, its unique geography, and its rich cultural heritage.

This deep connection to place offers numerous benefits, extending far beyond the immediate locality.

- **Inherent Sustainability:** Firstly, sustainability is inherently fostered through this approach. Reducing the need for long-distance transportation of materials significantly lowers carbon footprints, directly contributing to environmental preservation.
- **Empowering Local Economies:** Secondly, and just as significantly, it powerfully bolsters regional economies by empowering local communities. This provides vital opportunities for artisans, skilled craftspeople, and small businesses. In turn, it strengthens the local economic fabric and, crucially, preserves valuable skills and traditional knowledge that might otherwise be lost in an increasingly standardised world. Hyperlocal design is, therefore, a vital strategy for both economic resilience and the safeguarding of our intangible cultural heritage.

Embracing Hyperlocal; without losing the Global Perspective

Furthermore, embracing the hyperlocal does not mean isolating ourselves or rejecting global progress. Quite the opposite! Instead, it provides a unique and powerful lens through which to engage with international design trends. By truly understanding and creatively reinterpreting local traditions through contemporary design thinking, students are empowered to conceive innovative solutions that are both deeply rooted in their own culture and universally relevant.



Putting Hyperlocal in Practice

- Imagine, for instance, a building that intelligently adapts ancient passive cooling techniques using modern materials for enhanced energy efficiency.
- An interior space that seamlessly incorporates traditional motifs in a minimalist and contemporary manner. Such designs speak powerfully to a specific place, yet they possess the incredible capacity to inspire and inform design practices globally.
- This framework genuinely encourages students to view their particular local context not as a limitation but as a unique “design laboratory” where groundbreaking ideas can be developed that resonate worldwide, fostering a mindset of innovation and cross-cultural learning.

Your Takeaway before You Delve into the Design Solution

Ultimately, the true beauty and power of this approach lie in the dynamic dialogue it creates between the local and the global. By mastering the nuances of a specific context, designers cultivate a sensitivity and understanding applicable to diverse situations worldwide. This process fosters a mindset of resourcefulness, adaptability, and cultural awareness — qualities that are increasingly valuable and, frankly, necessary in our interconnected, globalised world. A profound understanding of the hyperlocal, therefore, provides a robust foundation for making meaningful contributions to the global design landscape.

Understanding Local vs. Hyperlocal

While often used interchangeably, ‘local’ and ‘hyperlocal’ represent distinct scales and depths of engagement within design.

LOCAL

- Local generally refers to a broader geographical area, such as a town, city, or region. In design, a ‘local’ approach might involve using materials sourced from within the region or referencing general architectural styles prevalent in the wider area. It acknowledges the immediate surroundings, but without an intense focus on granular details.

HYPERLOCAL

- Hyperlocal, by contrast, delves into the micro-scale – the immediate neighbourhood, a specific street, or even a particular block. It demands a much deeper, more intimate understanding of the unique characteristics, history, community dynamics, particular resources, and microclimates of that exact location.
- Hyperlocal design isn’t just about using regional materials; it’s about understanding the specific quarry, the particular artisan, the unique social fabric of that exact spot. It’s about celebrating the minute details that give a place its distinct character and fostering connections at the most granular level.

Principles of Hyperlocal Design in the AYDA Context

The core principles of hyperlocal design can be summarised into these: -

Principle	Context	Design Output
Rooted Identity	Champions a place's unique character by prioritising indigenous materials, traditional techniques, and community needs, fostering a strong sense of local identity.	Cultural Preservation; Enhanced Sense of Belonging
Sustainable Impact	Promotes environmental sustainability and strengthens regional resilience by reducing reliance on long-distance transportation and empowering local economies.	Reduced Carbon Footprint; Economic Resilience
Global Relevance through Locality	Understanding and creatively reinterpreting local contexts provides a robust foundation for innovative design solutions that inspire and inform global design trends.	Universal Inspiration: Fosters Resourcefulness & Cultural Awareness
Future-Proofing	Creates designs that are resilient and adaptable to future challenges by leveraging local wisdom and sustainable practices.	Long-term Viability; Reduced Vulnerability to Shocks
Heritage Reinterpretation	Values and reinterprets local traditions and historical elements in contemporary design, ensuring that cultural assets remain vibrant and relevant.	Cultural Continuity: Dynamic Evolution of Tradition

Purposeful Design and its Inspiration Source

Designing with Biophilic Design and Nature's Blueprint in Mind

How do we turn to our ancestors and ancient wisdom for design inspiration, and designs that will last a lifetime while representing our unique cultural identity?

Seek profound re-engagement with the natural world as the ultimate source of inspiration for architectural and interior design. It posits that by observing and emulating nature's inherent efficiencies, adaptive strategies, and aesthetic principles, designers can create spaces that are not only sustainable and resilient but also deeply restorative and harmonious for human well-being. This approach moves beyond merely incorporating natural elements; instead, it advocates for a fundamental understanding of ecological systems and natural processes to inform every design decision.

Consider how natural forms, patterns, and processes — such as fractals, spirals, branching systems, or the flow of water and air — can be translated into structural solutions, spatial arrangements, or material textures. A core aspect of this option is exploring biophilic design, which seeks to connect occupants with the natural environment through direct and indirect experiences of nature and place. This could involve optimising natural light and ventilation, integrating living systems like green walls or indoor gardens, or selecting materials that evoke natural textures and colours.

Drawing inspiration from Mother Nature is, furthermore, a powerful pathway to future-proofing. Natural ecosystems inherently possess remarkable resilience, adaptability, and resource efficiency. By learning from these biological blueprints, designers can develop buildings and interiors that are better equipped to withstand environmental stresses, minimise energy consumption, and integrate seamlessly with their surroundings. This involves understanding principles like circularity, where waste is minimised and resources are continuously cycled, mirroring nature's regenerative cycles.

Ultimately, be keen observers of the natural world, translating its timeless wisdom into innovative design solutions. This not only enhances the environmental performance of buildings but also fosters a deeper psychological and physical connection between people and their surroundings, promoting health, productivity, and a sense of belonging in a world that is increasingly seeking balance with nature.

CHAPTER 3

THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

The Design Challenge: Crafting Authentically Hyperlocal Spaces for Today and Tomorrow

So, here's the Design Challenge: **We want you to imagine a particular site within your locality.**

Your task is to develop an architectural and/or interior design proposal that deeply integrates the site's unique context, encompassing its history, culture, indigenous materials, and the specific needs of its community, to create an innovative and authentically hyperlocal space.

Your proposed design must demonstrate a clear and sophisticated understanding of how local elements can be reinterpreted and applied in a contemporary manner. This presents a dual expectation: innovation, in this context, isn't about discarding tradition; it's about finding novel and exciting ways to express and evolve it.

The real challenge lies in creating something genuinely new that feels profoundly rooted and resonant with its place. Your design contributes to a stronger sense of place and actively promotes community well-being. Additionally, your proposals must address both present needs and future sustainability, drawing inspiration from local heritage to create a space that is both resilient and deeply meaningful.

The Design Brief

You are tasked with creating innovative architectural designs that embody the principles of future-proofing. The design should serve as a resilient and adaptable example of how the built environment can evolve to meet changing needs and unforeseen challenges, ensuring its relevance and positive impact for present and future generations.

Some theme-specific considerations:

- **Adaptability and Evolution:** How can your design allow for significant changes in function, layout, or scale over time, responding to evolving societal, technological, or environmental demands?
- **Resilience to Shocks:** How can your design demonstrate robust strategies to withstand and recover from various disruptions, such as extreme climate events, resource scarcity, or demographic shifts?
- **Resource Efficiency and Circularity:** What innovative approaches to materials, energy, and water can be incorporated to minimise the environmental footprint across the building's entire lifecycle?
- **Long-term Value:** How does the design ensure enduring social, environmental, and economic value for the community over decades?
- **Integration with Context:** How does the design intelligently respond to its specific site, climate, and cultural context to enhance its future-readiness?
- **Local Material Sourcing:** How does the design prioritise the use of indigenous or locally available materials, reducing transportation impacts and supporting local economies?
- **Vernacular Wisdom:** How does the design draw inspiration from traditional or vernacular building techniques and typologies found in the local area, reinterpreting them for contemporary relevance and resilience?

ARCHITECTURAL CATEGORY

- **Community Heritage & Identity:** How does the design reflect and celebrate the unique cultural heritage, stories, and identity of the local community, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity?

Some critical spatial design elements for you to consider:

- **Level of innovation and integration of technology:** How does technology support the building's adaptability, resilience, or long-term performance, perhaps by enhancing traditional methods?
- **Social and cultural impact:** What is the positive effect on community cohesion, well-being, and the preservation or evolution of cultural identity, particularly through local engagement?
- **Environmental footprint and impact:** How does the design minimise energy, water, and material consumption, and how does it contribute to a healthier local environment, specifically through local sourcing and passive design?
- **Design aesthetics (inclusive of colour and light theories):** How do the aesthetics reflect adaptability and resilience, creating spaces that are both enduring and appealing, potentially drawing from local artistic traditions or natural elements?
- **Human interactivity:**
 - ...among people (e.g., spaces that foster community and allow for diverse social interactions, perhaps echoing traditional gathering places)
 - ...with the built environment (e.g., dynamic elements that users can interact with or adapt, possibly using locally crafted components)
 - ...with the natural environment (e.g., seamless transitions, passive climate control, biophilic elements, tailored to the local ecology)

INTERIOR DESIGN CATEGORY

You are tasked with creating innovative interior designs that embody the principles of future-proofing. The design should transform indoor spaces into highly adaptable and resilient environments, ensuring they remain functional, relevant, and supportive of human well-being in the face of evolving needs and challenges.

Some theme-specific considerations:

- **Flexible Functionality:** How can your interior design allow for multiple uses or easy reconfiguration to accommodate changing activities, technologies, or user demographics?
- **Material Longevity and Adaptability:** What materials and finishes can be specified that are durable, maintainable, recyclable, or capable of being repurposed over extended periods?
- **Environmental Responsiveness:** How can the interior design respond dynamically to internal or external environmental conditions (e.g., daylight, temperature, air quality) to optimise comfort and resource use?
- **Well-being and Comfort:** How does the design proactively support the physical and psychological well-being of occupants in future scenarios, considering factors like air quality, acoustics, and access to natural elements?
- **Technological Integration (Flexible):** How can technology be integrated in a way that is easily upgradeable, replaceable, or adaptable to future advancements without requiring major overhauls of the space?

Some critical spatial design elements for you to consider:

- **Level of innovation and integration of technology:** How is technology used to enhance the adaptability, comfort, or resource efficiency of the interior space?
- **Psychological and social impact:** How does the design promote a sense of well-being, community, and flexibility for occupants?
- **Environmental footprint and impact:** How does the selection of materials, finishes, and systems minimise embodied carbon, waste, and operational energy within the interior space?
- **Design aesthetics (inclusive of colour and light theories):** How do the aesthetics convey adaptability and timelessness, creating visually appealing and calming atmospheres that can evolve?
- **Human interactivity:**
 - ...among people (e.g., adaptable furniture and layouts that encourage various social configurations)
 - ...with the built environment (e.g., modular components, reconfigurable elements, innovative systems)
 - ...with the natural environment (e.g., flexible access to natural light and ventilation, integrated planting, sensory connections to nature)

CHAPTER 4

PREPARING FOR YOUR SUBMISSIONS

Judging Criteria

Design Concept (25%)

Ideas and designs reflect the essence of the Theme

- Identifies clear and impactful project concepts and problem statements.
- Displays effective and extensive research.
- Demonstrates the ability to propose relevant and practical solutions to the design challenge.
- Indicates critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Originality, relevance and impact on users.

Suggested Questions to Ponder:

- Does your design successfully fulfil an innate human need or solve a problem?
- Does your design facilitate better functionality and purpose for its inhabitants or visitors on a human scale?
- Is your design able to deliver and demonstrate commercial or social values?
- Does your design reflect ergonomic and environmental principles that sustain physical well-being?
- Does your design offer alternative perspectives and/or ways of solving problems?

Functionality & Relevance (15%)

- **Site and Spatial Planning/Sensitivity:** The ability to deliver a layout plan which is sensitive to a specific context. The integration of appropriate design and planning of individual spaces needs to be tailored to the needs of users, with an emphasis on anthropometric and ergonomic principles.
- **Functionality:** The Design is appropriate for its intended use and will create a positive impact for the community and users.
- **Design impact:** Demonstrates significant impact on contemporary life and living environment; has strong social values and significance; actively contributes to the nurturing of the next generation and advancement of society as a whole.
- **Practicality:** The design is suitable for delivery with materials and technology readily available on the market today.

Suggested Questions to Ponder:

- Could your design be implemented using processes, materials and technologies available or in development today?
- Is your design a versatile one that supports people, activities and change?
- Does your design stand the test of time, from both an aesthetic and physical point of view?

Design Innovation (20%)	● Displays a high level of originality and creativity. ● Showcases the ability to deliver innovative and forward-driven interventions with the integration of technology. <i>Suggested Questions to Ponder:</i> ● Does your design maximise or leverage tech-enabled connectivity and/or intelligence? ● Is your design original in its execution?
Sustainability (15%)	● Demonstrates the capacity to support the needs of people and the environment in a long-term and impactful approach. (e.g. Demonstrates climate and energy responsiveness. ● Displays effective thought process and the use of renewable resources and life cycle throughout the development and maintenance of the design. ● Displays long-lasting design and universality. <i>Suggested Questions to Ponder:</i> ● Does your design incorporate sustainable and eco-friendly elements that help preserve the natural environment?
Aesthetic, Colour Usage and Visual Impact (15%)	<i>Aesthetic and Visual Impact:</i> ● Design is aesthetically pleasing and effectively integrates social and cultural aspects for the users. ● Place-making: Creates opportunities for users to interact with the space. <i>Colour Usage:</i> ● Showcases brilliant and creative use of colours. ● Showcases a brilliant display of balance between colours, materials and design outputs. ● Demonstrates the use of colour for the enhancement of materials and facades, etc.
Delivery and Presence (10%)	● Presentation showcases a high level of clarity, creativity and interactivity. ● Presentation is cohesive and demonstrates a high level of understanding of the design challenges and solutions presented, paired with appropriate visual aids, graphics, and/or animations. ● Presentation focuses on both your project deliverables and design philosophy, including the journey and concept.

Presentation Duration Guideline	
Design Concept and Inspiration (~3 minutes)	● You can start your presentation with an emphasis on your design concept, personal motivation and inspiration ● This is a good time to bring in significant learnings or a life event that has led you to create this design
Design Project and Perspectives (~9 minutes)	● Many finalists in the past spent too much time on their inspiration and have not allocated sufficient time to elaborate on their design perspectives and their functions ● Do take the time to break down your complex design perspectives and walk our judges through (<i>highly encouraged for you to prepare zoomed-in perspectives in your presentation to help judges have a better view of your work</i>)
Closing (~3 minutes)	● Recap and reiterate your design solution and concept with potential elements that will improve the lives of communities (if any)

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 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
 2. Submit your entry through the link provided above.
- **Physical submission (Optional)**
 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
Prasad Dushmantha,
Nippon Paint Lanka (pvt) Ltd.
No. 69A, Buthgamuwa Road, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka
eMail: prasadd@nipponpaint.com.lk Tel: (+94) 76 897 6695

Entry Form

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 31st of December, 2026.
- 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 2026.
- In compliance with the NIPSEA Group's Privacy Policy, your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties except for companies and/or brands collaborating with the Nippon Paint Lanka (Pvt) Ltd. By submitting your data, you agree to have Nippon Paint Lanka (Pvt) Ltd to process your data and access it for future use. You shall not in any way hold Nippon Paint Lanka (Pvt) Ltd liable for any breach of its obligations under the NIPSEA Group's Privacy Policy.
- Notes:
 - The entries for the AYDA Awards 2026 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 2026.
 - Submissions that do not comply with the requirements will not be accepted.

CHAPTER 5

RESOURCES FOR YOUR DESIGN JOURNEY

Follow through, by the end of Chapter 3, you can establish strong thought processes, inspirations and statements to support your ideas.

Crafting a Powerful Design Statement

A genuinely compelling design statement is crucial for effectively communicating the depth and Impact of your project. It's advisable to avoid generic openings, such as "This project..." Instead, a powerful statement should immediately capture attention by opening with your key argument, your overarching vision, or the primary influence behind your design. This approach immediately sets a compelling tone for your entire narrative.

To help guide you in developing a robust and insightful design statement, we encourage you to consider addressing the following critical questions:

- **Ecological, Sociological, and Technological Impact:** How does your design envision contributing to the well-being of humanity across these interconnected dimensions? This encourages holistic thinking that extends beyond mere aesthetics, prompting a comprehensive consideration of your project's broader implications.
- **Environmental Footprint:** What is your design's specific Impact on the environment? Consider its core concept, the materials you've chosen, its maintenance requirements, energy usage, and your strategies for managing water and waste. This prompts a detailed narrative on sustainability, demonstrating a thorough understanding of your project's ecological responsibility.
- **Future-Proofing Core:** In your opinion, what is the single most critical component that must exist in future-proof designs? This question demands vital reflection and a clear prioritisation of resilience, adaptability, or other key attributes for long-term viability.
- **Community and Societal Benefit:** How will your future-proof design concept specifically solve existing challenges and/or benefit the communities and societies within its sphere of influence? This directly links your design to its social Impact, reinforcing that "community for community" aspect so central to our hyperlocal theme.

- **Research Methodology:** What specific research methodology did you employ? Who served as your primary source of information and/or inspiration during your research phase? What key questions and scope of work did you consider during your research process? Was your chosen research methodology effective in achieving its objectives, and what significant learnings were derived from your research findings? This section is crucial for demonstrating academic rigour and that "design ethnographer" approach we talked about earlier, illustrating the intellectual depth and societal relevance of your project. A powerful design statement for AYDA, then, isn't just about what you designed, but why you created it, how you researched it, and what broader Impact it truly aims to achieve. This guides students to develop strong communication skills, articulating the intellectual depth and societal relevance of their projects.

Beyond Aesthetics: Core Considerations for Your Design

Beyond purely aesthetic appeal, a truly successful design for this competition must embed and articulate several key qualitative criteria throughout its development and presentation. These criteria reflect the core values and expectations of the AYDA Awards, ensuring that winning designs are not only visually compelling but also intellectually robust, socially responsible, and environmentally conscious.

- **Conceptualisation:** This refers to the depth, originality, and clarity of the underlying idea, as well as how directly and effectively it addresses the competition theme. A strong concept forms the very bedrock of an impactful design.
- **Design Innovation:** This criterion assesses the novelty and creativity you demonstrate in applying design principles, selecting materials, and integrating technologies, particularly in the innovative reinterpretation of local elements.
- **Critical Analysis:** The ability to rigorously evaluate your chosen site, its context, and your proposed design solutions is paramount. This demonstrates a thoughtful, informed, and analytical approach to problem-solving.
- **Design Sensitivity:** This evaluates the empathy you show towards the community, its culture, and the surrounding environment. A sensitive design is respectful, responsive, and deeply attuned to its specific context, aligning perfectly with the "design ethnographer" role outlined earlier.
- **Sustainability:** The comprehensive integration of environmentally responsible practices, conscientious material choices, and energy-efficient strategies is vital, directly linking to the future-proofing aspect of our theme.
- **Place-making:** This criterion focuses on your design's capacity to create spaces that foster a strong sense of identity, belonging, and positive interaction within the community, reinforcing the immense importance of community well-being.
- **Forward-thinking:** This assesses the vision for your design's long-term relevance, its adaptability to future changes, and its potential contribution to addressing future challenges, extending the Impact far beyond the immediate present. This comprehensive list, we hope, clearly communicates what truly constitutes "excellence" in the context of the AYDA Awards. It provides students with a clear rubric for self-assessment and project development, ensuring they address the multi-dimensional aspects of the brief.

Designing with the Communities in Mind: The 15-Minute Communities Concept

Note: This is an important concept; learn and master the art of planning around communities!

The concept of “15-Minute Communities” provides a tangible framework for putting into practice the “community for community” aspect of hyperlocal design. This urban planning principle focuses on creating self-sufficient neighbourhoods where residents can access their daily necessities – things like work, shopping, education, healthcare, and recreation – all within a short walk or cycle from their homes. This concept serves as a practical, scalable model for implementing hyperlocal design at a neighbourhood level, beautifully demonstrating how abstract principles can be concretely realised in spatial design.

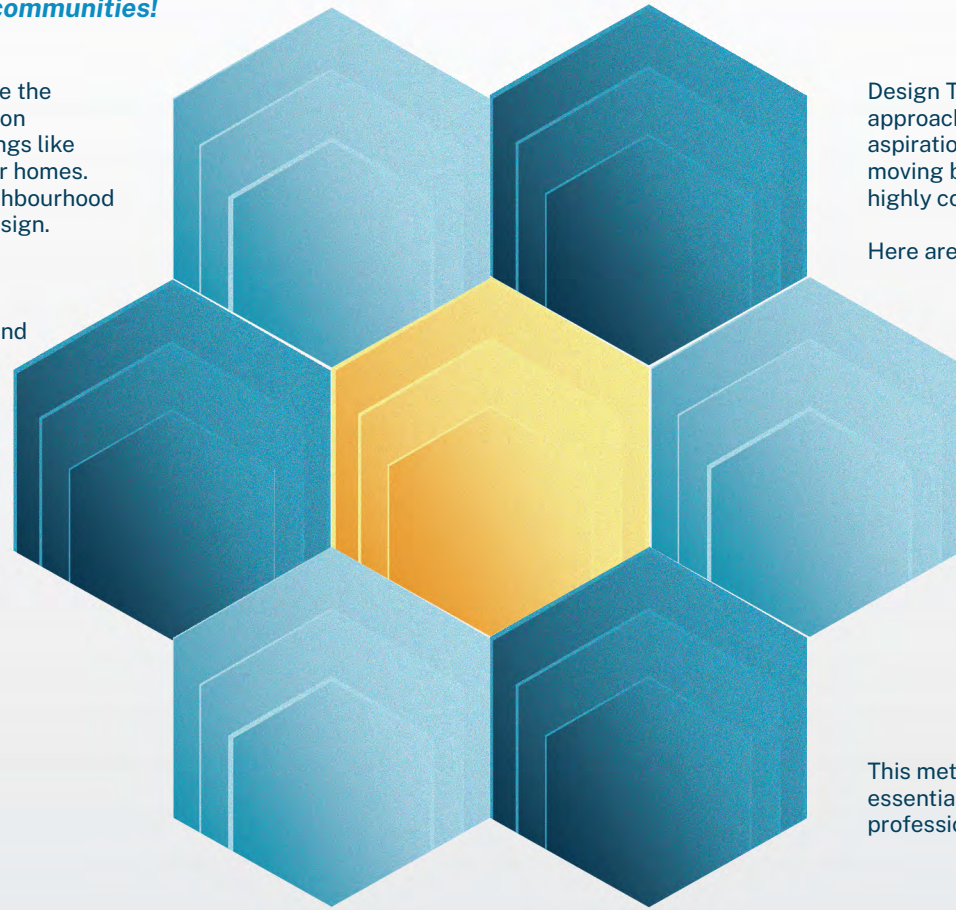
Here are some examples illustrating how you can apply this concept:

Mixed-Use Developments: Design projects that seamlessly integrate residential, commercial, and

- community spaces within a walkable radius, thereby significantly reducing the need for long commutes and fostering a vibrant local atmosphere.

Community Hubs: Design central spaces that can serve as versatile gathering points for social interaction, local markets, or community events. Such hubs are instrumental in fostering a strong sense of regional identity and belonging among residents.

Local Resource Integration: Incorporate local food production initiatives, such as community gardens, or actively support local businesses and services right within the neighbourhood. This strengthens local economies and promotes self-sufficiency.



The Design Thinking Approach: A Human-Centred Process for Problem-Solving

Design Thinking is a highly recommended methodology that encourages a human-centred, iterative approach to problem-solving. It places a strong emphasis on deeply understanding the needs and aspirations of the local community. This reinforces the role of the designer as a “design ethnographer,” moving beyond abstract concepts to engage directly with real human needs. This positions design as a highly collaborative, empathetic, and responsive process, rather than just a product.

Here are some examples of how Design Thinking can be applied:

- **Empathy Mapping:** Conduct thorough research to truly understand the experiences, needs, and pain points of the local community members who will ultimately use your designed space. This involves gathering qualitative data and immersing oneself deeply in user experiences.
- **Participatory Design:** Actively involve community members in your design process through workshops, surveys, or feedback sessions. This collaborative approach ensures that your final design truly reflects their needs and desires, fostering a sense of ownership that is genuinely wonderful.
- **Prototyping and Testing:** Create scaled models or mock-ups of design elements to gather early feedback and refine your design based on user interaction and experience. This iterative process allows for early identification and correction of any issues.
- **Iterative Refinement:** Embrace a flexible design process that allows for continuous adjustments and improvements based on ongoing learning and feedback from both the community and other stakeholders. This ensures your design remains responsive and evolves effectively.

This methodology provides students with a robust framework for approaching their projects, fostering essential skills in research, collaboration, and critical self-evaluation – all of which are crucial for professional practice.

The UN SDGs as an Inspiration Board: A Framework for Innovative Solutions

For students who may feel stuck, run out of ideas, or be unsure of where to begin their design solution brainstorming session, we highly recommend a valuable resource: the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs serve as a comprehensive guideline and a fantastic supplementary tool for identifying emerging trends or significant societal challenges that can be effectively addressed through a #hyperlocal lens.

The table below illustrates how specific SDGs can be addressed through hyperlocal design principles:

Important note: It's a reference, not a compulsory element



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Designing spaces that enhance the livability and inclusivity of local communities, providing access to green spaces, promoting sustainable transportation, and preserving local culture and heritage.



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Creating accessible and inclusive designs that cater to the diverse needs of the local population, respecting cultural differences and promoting social equity.



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Prioritising the use of locally sourced, sustainable materials, minimising waste during construction and operation, and designing for durability and longevity.



13 CLIMATE ACTION
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Implementing energy-efficient design strategies, utilising renewable energy sources where appropriate, and minimising the building's carbon footprint throughout its lifecycle.

APPENDIX

ATTENDING THE DESIGN DISCOVERY PROGRAM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

“The awarding of this opportunity is subject to Harvard University’s policies regarding the admission of international students at the time of application. In the event that international students are not permitted to enroll, the organizers shall provide the winner with a cash prize of USD 5,000. The winner may, at their sole discretion, allocate a portion of this prize toward enrollment in the Virtual Design Discovery Program offered by Harvard GSD.”



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. 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.
- 7.

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

Q
A

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.

Q
A

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.

Q
A

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

Q
A

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.

Q
A

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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

A large blue 'Q' and a large orange 'A' are positioned to the left of the text.

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.

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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 from our mailing list with your name and address to discovery@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

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. 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.

