About the RSA Student Design Awards

This handbook includes tips and tricks to help you craft an impactful and memorable submission.

The RSA Student Design Awards are evaluated against a judging criteria. A winning proposal will demonstrate detailed engagement with this and address it with a high level of understanding and explanation.

The judging process
Each RSA brief is judged by a different panel of designers, industry experts and social innovators in two stages: anonymous shortlisting, followed by interviews with finalists. At the first stage of judging, judges view all the entries submitted for a brief and agree on a shortlist to interview. Keep in mind that the judges have a very limited time per project, so it’s important you communicate your proposal in a clear and concise way. For the second stage of judging, shortlisted candidates are invited to interview. The candidate’s submission boards will be used as support for the interviews.

Showcase your unique style
You have complete creative freedom on the layout, style and design of your boards and this is a great opportunity to showcase your own original style.

Further links

→ RSA Student Design Awards
→ Judging criteria
→ Useful resources
→ Learn how to apply systems thinking to your work by watching a presentation with Rebecca Ford (Head of Learning and Collaboration Design, RSA).

Please note: all boards presented in this document are examples only of the work made by past RSA Student Design Awards participants. You are not expected to replicate their style.
Open Brief boards
Judging criteria

The most important thing to remember is that the judges will be evaluating your work against the judging criteria, so make sure your submission boards address the questions:

Social and environmental impact:
How does your proposal make a positive difference for people and/or the natural world in your chosen context? How is your approach empowering people? How have you considered effective use of resources including materials and processes? How have you considered diversity and inclusion in your proposal?

Rigorous research and compelling insights:
How have you combined your own first-hand research with a review of existing research and wider trends? How can you show a clear path between your key insights and your proposal? How are your insights grounded in people’s needs and desires? How did you get feedback and incorporate new ideas through prototyping and iterating?

Systems thinking:
What’s the bigger picture? How have you considered the root causes of the challenge you’re exploring? How does your idea connect to a wider set of issues? What might be some unintended consequences of your proposal?

Viability:
Have you considered potential models for how your proposal could work in the real world? How could it be funded and sustained financially? What are potential barriers? How would you measure success?

Creativity and innovation:
How is your idea different from existing interventions? Are there unexpected or surprising elements in your proposal?

Further links

→ Download all of this year’s open briefs
→ View gallery of work from Student Design Award winners
Open Brief boards
Submission requirements

1 x A3 PDF hero image with a one sentence description – a singular 'poster image' that conveys the essence of your project, includes your project title and a one sentence description.

For example: 'Bare technology: a product and service design proposal to convert old computers (e-waste) into simpler, more straightforward, accessible computers for older people'.

1 x A3 written summary – a single page that summarises your big idea using the following format:

Problem (50 words max). What is the specific problem you identified within the brief topic? Who experiences this problem and how does it impact them?

Process (75 words max). How did you investigate this issue and what were your key insights? What journey did you go through to get to your final proposal?

Proposal (50 words max). What is your proposed intervention? How will it address the problem?

4 x A3 PDF boards outlining your proposal – 4 pages describing your proposal and responding to the 5 sections of the judging criteria.

Each board does not have to directly map onto the criteria, but judges should be able to understand how you are answering these different categories.

We advise numbering each board in the top right-hand corner, in the order they should be viewed by the judges. You may include relevant hyperlinks in your boards however we cannot guarantee this will be viewed by the judges.
Open Brief boards
Hero board examples

Tips:

Take time to carefully craft an impactful sentence that describes your project and supports your hero image.

Choose one engaging and vibrant image - this generally works best than a collage of small pictures.

Test your hero image to ensure it conveys the essence of your project, captures the attention of judges and is memorable.

Kuki - Emma Brookes

Pulsair - Emily VanderMey, Liz Wang and Samantha Tung

Create together - Sophie Cane
Tips:

Highlight the root cause of the problem you are addressing and share the key insights you identified through your process.

Communicate your project clearly and concisely so that the judges can quickly understand your approach and your proposal. Clearly detail how your project makes a positive difference.

Follow the word count outlined for each section of the written summary board. This requires you to describe your research process and outcomes in the simplest possible terms.

Open Brief boards
Written summary examples

Pulsair - Emily VanderMey, Liz Wang and Samantha Tung

Travel-ease - Emma Sutcliffe
Open Brief boards
Proposal examples

Tips:
Share your design-led process and highlight how you’ve met the judging criteria:

Social and environmental impact:
Demonstrate how your proposal makes a positive difference for the people and/or natural world in your chosen context.

Rigorous research and compelling insights:
Communicate the different types of research you’ve carried out and how your insights are grounded in users’ needs and desires. Show how you’ve prototyped and tested your idea.

Systems Thinking:
Illustrate how you investigated the root causes of the problem and considered the wider set of issues related.

Viability:
Show you have considered the potential viability of your proposal.

Creativity and innovation:
Convey your unique, forward thinking and creative problem solving approach.
Open Brief boards
Proposal examples

Tips:
These boards can have any layout, so think about the best way to display your research creatively and communicate your unique proposal. Whatever your choice, try to avoid large blocks of uninterrupted text.
MOVING PICTURES
BOARDS
Moving Pictures boards

Judging criteria

Alongside your animation file, the judges will review your submission boards and evaluate them against the judging criteria so make sure you address the questions:

**Rigorous research and communication**
How did you investigate the audio subject matter? How did you go about the process of iteration, gathering and incorporating new ideas and feedback? How did you apply your research insights to most effectively communicate the speaker’s message and enhance the viewer’s understanding of the issues explored?

**Execution**
How did you approach the planning and design of your animation? What have you considered and implemented to ensure the film is executed to a high technical standard? Have you considered the structure and pace of your animation? Does it flow and finish with a flourish?

**Aesthetic quality and originality**
How does your animation engage and delight the eye? What did you consider in order to make the visuals striking and memorable? How have you applied a distinctive style, concept, storytelling approach or choice of visual metaphors to make sure your film stands out in a crowded online landscape, and reaches the widest possible audience?

Further links

→ [Download this year’s Moving Pictures briefs](#)

→ [View previous Moving Pictures Student Design Award winners](#)
Moving Pictures
Submission requirements

1 x animation file submitted in either MP4 or MOV format – the maximum file size is 60MB, and your animation must not exceed the original audio file length plus 5 seconds. You may choose the ratio or dimensions for your video that best convey your message.

1 x A3 PDF hero image with a one sentence description – a single image that conveys the essence of your project and includes your project title and a one sentence description. Your image should aim to bring your concept to life – make sure it is vibrant and engaging.

For example: ‘Age pride, an animation that highlights the negative stereotypes our western culture has of older people and argues that these views are wrong and outdated, emphasising the message that age really is just a number and is not what defines us’.

4 x A3 PDF pages of supporting material illustrating your development process – the purpose of this material is to show to the judges the thinking behind your design choices and the work required to complete your style of animation. Share further relevant information about your concept and research process as applicable, this could be scanned pages of your sketchbook, storyboarding, etc.
Moving Pictures
Hero image examples

→ Watch the animation

Age pride
by Eleanor Russell-Jones

Clear and concise description of animation

→ Watch the animation

How to be a Good Ancestor
by Zoe McCarthy

Tips:

We're interested in the shareable potential of your animation. Make it accessible and consider where you would want this animation to be shared.

Investigate your topic and use this to influence and inspire your animation.

Be organised and spend time on every element. Think about pace and how to keep a smooth flow throughout without long pauses.

Create a striking start and end, make it visually impactful. Technical skills will be taken into consideration, but the real value is in originality.

Choose the right medium for you - stop motion, illustrative 2D animation, kinetic typography and more! There is no limit to the kind of creative direction you can take.

Get inspiration from the rich archive of videos the RSA has produced including RSA Animates, RSA Minimates, RSA Shorts and RSA Insights.

→ Watch on RSA YouTube
Moving Pictures
Supporting page examples

**KEY INSIGHTS**

Identification of key insights and research informing visual development

**VISUAL LANGUAGE**

Aesthetic quality and originality:
Detail the reasons for your creative choices and how you have created a uniquely memorable video.

**STORYBOARD**

Rigorous research and compelling insights:
Communicate the different types of research you’ve carried out and how you applied these insights to enhance communicating the key message of the video.

**FINAL**

Execution:
Don’t forget to document your work as you go. These boards allow you to showcase the work-in-progress. You could include additional images of your storyboards, experimentation with different visuals and more.

- **How to be a Good Ancestor - Zoe McCarthy**
- **Age pride - Eleanor Russell-Jones**
- **A sinking feeling - Mark Churcher**

Tips:
Include any further work that expands on how your animation meets the judging criteria.
Student Design Awards

Submissions open for entries in January and close in March. Find out more about the RSA Student Design Awards and submit entries online → Visit our website

Keep up to date with latest news and competition development → Subscribe to our newsletter

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