



Introduction

The title 'Royal Designer for Industry' (RDI) is awarded annually by the RSA to designers of all disciplines who have achieved 'sustained design excellence, work of aesthetic value and significant benefit to society'. The RDI is the highest accolade for designers in the UK. Only 200 designers can hold the title. Non-UK designers may become honorary Royal Designers. The 'Royal Designers' are responsible for designing the world around us, enriching our cultural heritage, driving innovation, inspiring creativity in others and improving our quality of life. The jet engine, Routemaster bus, iPhone, and Harry Potter film sets, among thousands of objects and experiences that have been created by them.

Since it was introduced, recipients of the honour have included designers as diverse as Barnes Wallis, Vivienne Westwood, Jonathan Ive, Thomas Heatherwick and Es Devlin. The Royal Designers contribute to the RSA in numerous ways, sharing their skills and experience with the organisation, its staff and networks, in particular supporting design education through the RSA Student Design Awards, and the RSA Family of Academies. The following FAQ's and Guidance Notes aim to assist those considering nominating a designer for the RDI award and provide help in filling out the Nominations Form.

Nominations process

If you are nominating an RDI or Hon RDI you must submit the nomination form, and presentations for circulation, and be available at the two formal meetings to present your nominee, otherwise they may not be considered.

7 April 2025

Nominations deadline

15 April 2025

Nominations meeting – formal meeting for which completed forms are required together with a Preliminary Presentation

20 May 2025

Voting meeting – formal meeting for which completed forms are required together with a Final Presentation and support materials (if appropriate)

27 November 2025

RSA RDI Awards Ceremony

Guidance notes

Nomination criteria

A Highest quality design

Provide examples of meeting at least 2 of the following criteria

- 1 Design quality
May be judged from the experiential and sensorial to the aesthetic, through an exemplary or progressive approach or use of materials. Beauty of form and function that evokes delight.
- 2 Ingenuity and creativity in solutions
An exemplar, pioneer, sustained boundary-pushing, innovative, creative, influential, leader in their field, whose work or influence distinguishes them from their contemporaries.
- 3 Sensitivity and empathy to user and the context of use
User-centred approach to designing resulting in solutions that improve quality of life.
- 4 Positive social change
Work that has enabled others to improve their quality of life, education or learning.

B Measurable impact

Provide examples of meeting at least 2 of the following criteria

- 1 Public awareness and acclaim
Work that positively affects the public through urban regeneration, transformational improvement of public spaces, improved use of products, exhibitions, experiences, improving the quality of life. Specific examples of projects and communities who have benefited, and some sense of the nature and scale of the impact achieved.
- 2 Significant impact on public culture and heritage
Attracting positive international attention and cultural impact. Please include evidence.
- 3 Advancement in understanding
Enablers, influencers, role models, and sources of inspiration, sharing knowledge for the greater good, encouraging creativity in others, and contributing to and influencing design education. Please include evidence of impact and/or publications by or about the nominee.
- 4 Innovation
Applying design practice in new ways, progressive techniques and use of materials.
- 5 Commercial intelligence
Creating new business models, achieving recognition, boosting the UK economy, growth and export.

C Design career of sustained excellence

FAQS

Who can make a nomination?

Suggestions for future RDI or Hon RDI nominees may come from anyone as approved by the RSA Design Advisory Board. Nominators may propose nominees from any design discipline, but they should only do so if they have personal knowledge of the work and eligibility of the nominee. If you wish to discuss eligibility before making a nomination, contact the Master of the Faculty of RDIs, master@royaldesignersforindustry.org.

What's the difference between RDIs and Honorary RDIs?

The RDI Award is for UK Citizens only. Non-UK citizens may be awarded Hon RDI, and are expected to have an international standing and be widely recognised as global leaders in their discipline. The total number of Hon RDIs is limited to no more than 50% of the total number of RDIs.

How many RDIs are awarded each year?

Each year not more than 5 RDIs are awarded, and not more than 3 Hon RDIs; the combined total not exceeding 7.

Can I nominate design partnerships?

If the nominator can make a case for the integral and equal contribution of each partner to a body of work, they may be awarded the distinction individually, albeit for the same work.

What do I need to do to nominate?

Complete and return the nomination form to admin@royaldesignersforindustry.org by the nomination deadline. Nominators will be asked to present their proposal to RDIs at the two formal meetings (April and May, 10 minute presentations).

Should I tell the nominee?

Nominators should ask their nominee if they would be willing to be considered for RDI and make them aware that if they are elected RDI, there is an annual membership fee (RDIs only, there is no fee for Hon RDIs). All RDIs automatically become Life Fellows of the RSA as part of the award. Nominators should advise nominees that election is by no means guaranteed.

Can an unsuccessful nominee be considered again?

Two years must elapse before an unsuccessful nominee can be reconsidered for the distinction of RDI or Hon RDI.

How are new RDIs decided?

The Royal Designers are jointly responsible for considering and voting for nominations to the Faculty, and then recommending these to the RSA, as the Awarding Body. The Faculty does this through peer-attended meetings: Nominations meeting, consisting of nominator presentations and discussion; and Voting meeting, at which the nominations are re-examined, presented and a vote takes place.

Lobbying

The recommendations for the award are made through a peer-driven, democratic process, and lobbying is neither encouraged nor effective.