



Please note:

This was the briefing pack for RSA Spark 2024-25.

RSA Spark is paused for the academic year 2025-26 and we will not be accepting student submissions.

Although we have not launched new RSA Spark briefs, we have kept our 2024-25 industry briefs and recorded learning workshops available for educators to use for teaching purposes.

Recordings of our workshops and other resources are available on the [RSA Spark webpage](#).

To find out more about why we paused, read [this blog](#).

If you have any questions, please contact rsaspark@rsa.org.uk.

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Students Changing Tomorrow 2024-2025 Briefing Pack

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I learnt more about my impact on the environment as an individual ... when you're hearing things on the news to do with climate change its always something that you can just turn off and move on with your day but, I think [RSA Spark] really made me stop and think about how I can do my bit to help the environment, and it gave me a better understanding of how, as an individual, I can help.

Ella Brown
RSA Spark beta participant

”

About RSA Spark



Introduction

What is RSA Spark?

RSA Spark marks the beginning of a new chapter, built on the foundations of 100 years of the Student Design Awards to achieve greater impact.

RSA Spark supports students aged 18 and above from around the globe to develop ideas in response to **real-world briefs** – social, economic and environmental that invite creative solutions.

RSA Spark is free to enter and open to currently enrolled and recently graduated students from all disciplines. To take part, students – working individually or in a team – should identify a creative opportunity that fits within the wider theme of one of the available briefs, come up with and test a possible solution, and then submit their idea to RSA Spark. The link to submit will be accessible from 20 May 2025 via [The RSA Spark webpage](#).

At RSA Spark, we believe great ideas come from diverse perspectives. We especially encourage students from the global majority, those who have needed financial assistance for education, those with disabilities, and first-generation university students to take part. We can offer tailored adjustments to ensure everyone can fully participate. This might include alternative submission formats, or additional guidance for example. If you or your students need adjustments, let us know by contacting rsaspark@rsa.org.uk. We're here to support you.

What are the benefits of participating in RSA Spark?

- **RSA Spark Briefs:** can connect your learning with your future career purpose and how you might use your agency, skills and creativity to make a difference
- **RSA Spark's online learning workshops:** are designed to guide you through the briefs whilst learning and applying future-proof skills based on The RSA's evidence-based [Capabilities for Life](#) framework. These are optional and not a prerequisite for participation in RSA Spark.
- **RSA Spark digital badges:** are awarded to everyone who joins or watches back a learning workshop (Explorer Badge) and submits their idea (Practitioner Badge). Those submitting in a team will receive additional recognition (Collaborator Badge). Badges can be used on CVs and education applications to validate your learning.
- **Pay it forward fellowship:** you may reference your participation in RSA Spark to strengthen your application for the [Pay it Forward Fellowship](#) scheme.
- **RSA Spark review panel feedback:** you have the option to request written feedback on your submission from RSA Fellows who have expertise in your chosen brief.

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- **RSA Spark showcase:** up to 10 ideas per brief will be considered for The RSA Spark yearly Showcase that includes a month-long exhibition at RSA House, and a year-long online exhibition on the RSA website.
- **RSA Spark brief partners connections:** those selected for the showcase will receive one-on-one feedback from brief partners, and connection opportunities at The RSA Spark Celebration opening night launching the showcase.
- **RSA Spark awards and prizes:** From the showcase nominees, one £500 Anjool Malde Innovator Prize will be given to a UK national or UK-based student who demonstrate an outstanding idea with market potential. Eight RSA Spark Entrepreneurs Awards will be offered to the most enterprising ideas from the showcase to help them develop and test their proof-of-concept. The Award includes a £1000 seed grant, a 4-month long online peer-learning journey (April to September 2026), direct mentorship from a seasoned entrepreneur, an Innovator Badge, and a one-year RSA Fellowship.

If you have any questions about RSA Spark please get in touch at rsaspark@rsa.org.uk

If you are an RSA Fellow please join the [RSA Spark Space on Circle](#) to connect with other students, educators and partners participating in the brief.

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Timeline

	Briefs launch <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ <u>September 2024</u>: All four briefs (previously shared by request) are available for download directly from RSA Spark webpage.◆ <u>25th February 2025</u>: Q&A session for interested educators
	Learning workshop series <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>12 March 2025</u>: Discover your purpose. Register or playback here.2. <u>26 March 2025</u>: Explore diverse perspectives. Register or playback here.3. <u>30 April 2025</u>: Envision futures. Register or playback here.4. <u>14 May 2025</u>: Test your impact. Register or playback here.5. <u>28 May 2025</u>: Explore enterprise. Register or playback here. <p>Playbacks to earn the Explorer Badge are or will be available via the RSA Spark webpage.</p>
	Idea submissions <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ <u>20th May</u>: Idea submissions open◆ <u>4 July at 5pm GMT</u>: Deadline for submissions to be considered for the September showcase
	Celebration and showcase <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ <u>July</u>: Full details for the Showcase Event shared with educators and students◆ <u>August</u>: Ideas selected to be showcased and for awards and prizes. Shortlisted students informed◆ <u>September</u>: In-person private opening of the showcase at RSA House◆ <u>October</u>: Showcase available for public viewing in RSA House for a month and online for a year

Please note:

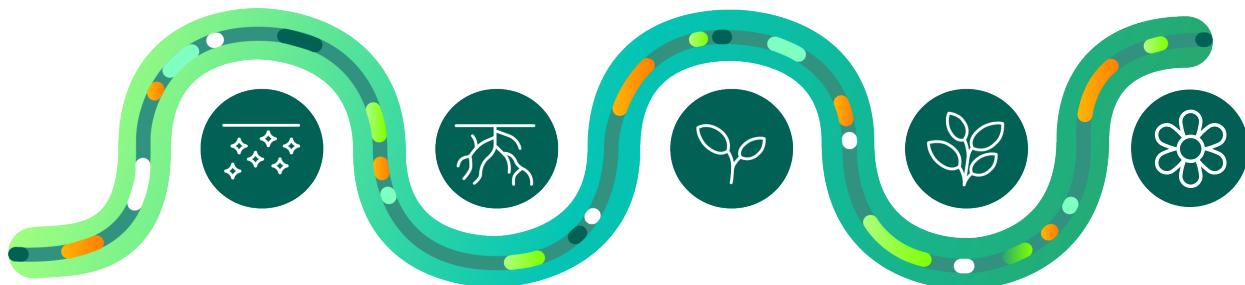
The dates provided above were for the 2024-25 cycle. As RSA Spark is paused for the next UK academic year (2025-26), these dates and deadlines do not apply.

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How to approach the brief

In responding to an RSA Spark Brief, you have an opportunity to grow 10 Capabilities for Life, or 10 future proof skills that are important when innovating in ways that positively impact people, places and planet. You can find out more about these capabilities [here](#).

RSA Spark proposes a five-stage creative process to guide you through your brief and focus on these capabilities. To support you, we provide a series of five learning workshops that correspond with these stages to inspire how you're shaping your creative response to the brief. You can join or playback our interactive workshops if you want to strengthen your skills in these areas. The workshops are optional to attend and not a prerequisite for participating in RSA Spark.



1. **Discover your purpose:** connect with your strengths and with your energy for change as you reflect on the world as it is, the world as it needs to be, and the brief that you care most about.
2. **Explore diverse perspectives:** explore with different points of possibility, thinking about who you should work with and what you can do to better understand the context of your chosen brief.
3. **Envision futures:** shape your vision for change and a diversity of ideas that respond to your chosen brief, while carefully considering which ones are the most opportunistic.
4. **Test your impact:** consider what and how you might test your most promising ideas and how they can have the greatest impact.
5. **Explore enterprise:** explore the business and economic viability of your idea while delivering positive social and environmental impact.

Learning outcomes

The key learning outcomes from participating in RSA Spark revolve around the 10 Capabilities for Life. These are:

1. Say why I care about myself, other people and the living world, demonstrating **care**.
2. Understand that other people think and feel differently to me and still connect with them, demonstrating **care**.
3. Say how I can make a difference in my life and the world around me, demonstrating **citizenship**.
4. Feel confident in what I am good at and what I can do, demonstrating **composure**.
5. Know where to look for answers and see people, animals and even plants as teachers, demonstrating **curiosity**.

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6. Look at lots of different information and ideas before deciding what to think or do, demonstrating **critical thinking**.
7. Dream big about what is possible, demonstrating **creativity**.
8. Turn ideas into actions that make things better, demonstrating **creativity**.
9. Try new things, even when it's hard, demonstrating **courage**.
10. Work with others, even when it's hard, demonstrating **collaboration**.
11. Deal with things that are unknown or lots of new things happening quickly, demonstrating **change**.
12. Speak in a way that makes others listen, understand and act, demonstrating **communication**.

Submission process

Submit your idea

We are excited to see your / your team's idea come to life and encourage you to submit it to the RSA Spark team.

RSA Spark is free for students to enter. Access to the platform goes live from 20 May 2025 and you are welcome to submit at any time. Final submissions to be considered for the 2025 Showcase are by 5pm GMT on 4 July 2025.

What will you need to complete for a submission?

From 20 May, you will need to submit your idea via the link available on the [RSA Spark webpage](#). This will take you to our online form that includes the following sections and questions. You will be able to submit in a range of formats including text, images, video and audio. If you are submitting an idea as a team, you will only need to submit once.

You will be asked to provide:

1. **Hero image:** 1 x 'hero image' – a single 'poster image' that conveys your idea (JPEG or PDF, sized: 1280 x 720 pixels)
2. **Title:** An idea title (5 words)
3. **Idea description:** A short description of your idea that pitches its potential as clearly as possible (100 words)
4. **About you:** An introduction to you / your team and what inspires you to take positive action (100 words)
5. **Question:** The research / design question you have been answering with your work (20 words)
6. **Rigour:** The research you did to define your audience and understand their goals / needs (100 words)
7. **Impact:** An explanation of your idea and how it will have positive impact (100 words)
8. **Desirability:** An overview of how you have tested your idea and what feedback it has received (100 words)
9. **Feasibility:** An outline of how your idea can be practically delivered in the real-world (100 words)
10. **Viability:** How your idea will be financially viable and sustainable in the long-term (100 words)
11. **Learning:** What your learning has been from participating in RSA Spark (100 words)
12. **Next steps:** Any plans you have for taking this idea further beyond this submission and what support you might need (100 words)

[Optional] Up to 3 additional images that bring your process and/or idea to life (JPEG or PDF, sized: 1280 x 720 pixels each)

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[Optional] A 1-minute video/audio summary of your creative process and/or idea

To ensure RSA Spark stays true to our commitment being an inclusive programme, we will also ask you (and members of your team) to complete a short demographic questionnaire. This information will be used when considering showcase nominations, helping us put forward ideas from students of all backgrounds.

If you are unable to submit your idea online or require support, please contact
rsaspark@rsa.org.uk

Showcase criteria

For those interested in being featured in The RSA Spark Showcase, you should submit your idea by 4 July 2025. The RSA team, a panel of RSA Fellows, and our partners will then review submissions during July and August and confirm if your idea was shortlisted for the showcase by 1 September 2025. This is also when you'll find out if you have been successful for the additional awards and prizes.

All shortlisted students will receive an invitation to one-to-one feedback with a brief partner, and to a private viewing of their work at RSA House, London with key partners, educators and industry leaders. The showcase will stay up in RSA House for a full month and be featured in a year-long digital showcase on The RSA Website.

What makes for a strong submission?

A strong submission would demonstrate evidence against six criteria, as outlined below. The statements demonstrate what best practice would look like.

- 1. Rigour:** Research undertaken to understand audience goal / need environment
 - Clearly defined a target audience (e.g. not just 'homeless people' but 'residents in temporary accommodation in Salford')
 - Conducted primary research (even if it is with 'experts' connected to your-audience e.g. Shelter staff)
 - Formulated a more specific research question ('how might we...?') that shows awareness of local context and opportunities
- 2. Impact:** Idea has clear potential for doing more good for the economy, society and the environment
 - Idea has a clear 'theory of change' i.e. a compelling explanation of how it will address the identified challenges or opportunities and what benefits it will focus on
 - Idea shows how it would actively improve all three areas of impact
 - Idea has gathered evidence to support its claims of impact
- 3. Desirability:** The idea has been tested with a clear target audience and the feedback shows the proposed solution is wanted and needed
 - Your audience has given feedback on the idea and interacted with a prototype
 - There has been activity to evidence demand e.g. downloads, sales, attendances
- 4. Feasibility:** Idea is practical to execute operationally
 - You are clear on the materials, resources, processes, skills and technology needed and these are all available and feasible

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- You have tested different ways of executing your idea and that has informed your final iteration

5. **Viability:** The idea can be delivered in the real-world with a business model to sustain it

- Clear plans to get the partnerships and resources required to 'bring to market'
- Realistic awareness of business model or potential sources of funding
- Plans consider the economic, social and environmental cost of the idea

6. **Learning mindset:** Demonstrate commitment to growing capabilities in yourself and others

- Referenced how feedback was sought and acted upon, as well as how the idea took inspiration from local stakeholders and existing solutions
- Can reflect on capabilities gained and practiced throughout the project
- Have been thoughtful on what support might be needed in future

Urban cool brief

How might we support citizens and organisations to create cooler, greener and fairer cities that bring joy and health to everyone?



What might the future look like if we achieved this brief?

Our cities have transformed into vibrant, cool, safe, green havens that support a flourishing life for both people and planet.

These ‘urban centers’ are seen as living ecosystems, filled with different life forms, including birds, animals, plants and rivers. Now ‘living’ cities, they are also ‘public’, with community gardens, urban farms, and green spaces that everyone can use. They offer shade, food, and places where both people and nature can live well together.

Our buildings are affordable and inclusive, designed to stay cool naturally and retain warmth through specially designed insulation. New materials and designs, inspired by nature, keep our homes and workplaces comfortable, without using much energy.

Renewable energy is also widespread, giving us clean and low-cost power while helping us stay cool in a sustainable way. Businesses recognise their duty to care for the environment, and work with their local communities to act on climate change. Local markets are more in tune with local resources, and are set up in ways that benefit both people and the planet.

We respect and celebrate different traditions and the wisdom of traditional knowledge, as well as those who hold it. This makes our cities lively and culturally rich. Everyone living in cities feels responsible for keeping the city and planet cool, meaning we’ve more than met our climate targets. The changes in city climates have created new jobs and skills for everyone, while a fair and equitable approach means that no one is left out.

Background to the brief

Urban heat comes about when cities become hotter than is healthy for people and nature. It is caused by buildings, roads, cars, and a lack of natural vegetation. This heat can harm vulnerable groups, including older adults and children, and damage the environment, affecting fish, birds, animals, plants, and soil.

As global temperatures rise, it’s crucial that people from different fields – arts, policy, digital, architecture, farming, and business – collaborate. A combination of creativity and technology may offer the best solution.

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Research shows that natural elements, including trees, green roofs and parks, are vital. These green spaces – with proper water and shade structures – can cool the city and provide heat-safe habitats for both people and wildlife.

New building and street designs are also important, and we can learn from nature's cooling methods (known as biomimicry). Using heat-reflective materials and designing structures for natural airflow can keep buildings cool with less energy. Renewable energy sources, like solar panels, and hydro power in cities near running water, offer promising solutions.

Indigenous communities have long lived in harmony with nature, and we can learn from them as we create sustainable cities. Policies protecting natural systems are becoming more common, with governments creating laws to safeguard parks, rivers, and forests in urban areas.

Cities like Barcelona and Singapore are leading with green spaces and innovative designs. By working together and embracing new ideas, we can create cool, green, and vibrant cities that inspire communities to tackle climate change and allow everyone to thrive.

Inspiration for you when answering the brief

For this Brief, we want ideas that:

Activate Residents and Businesses:

How can you encourage local people and businesses to help cool the city? Think about how to provide education or support that empowers them. It's important to make sure people feel involved in climate solutions. For example, you can offer workshops or rewards for businesses supporting local projects, or using green technologies that are designed to build a culture of sustainability.

Understand Place: Good solutions match the local climate, culture, and community. How can you learn from how local nature stays cool? What local traditions or knowledge can help?

Connect Local Activities: Consider how to link different local projects, like connecting community gardens with schools or city cooling plans. Your idea might connect existing work, rather than starting something new.

Bring in Multiple Perspectives:

Understand the benefits of working with

different kinds of experts. How can your project create new collaborations, for example between businesses and community leaders, scientists and designers, or students and politicians?

People, Place, and Planet: We want ideas that connect local actions to the bigger picture. For example, if you're cleaning a local river, think about where it flows from or to, and who else may depend on it.

Support Learning: Create new ways to understand how urban cooling projects work. Encourage ongoing learning and improvement by making space for testing and feedback. How can we be creative together as a community?

Check the Toolkit for global examples where these ideas have been used successfully.

Meet the brief partner



RMIT University was founded in Melbourne in 1887 as a night school offering art, science, and technology courses. Today, RMIT has a global presence in Australia, Europe and Vietnam, and is known for its strong connections with cities and industries. The university emphasises hands-on learning and innovative research that prepares students for future careers. RMIT's focus on Regenerative Futures drives research and education efforts that tackle climate change.

At its Innovation Hub in Barcelona, RMIT researchers address urban heat challenges caused by urbanisation. The university studies urban heat islands and ways to reduce their impact, bringing together expertise in urban planning,

architecture, environmental science, and engineering. RMIT collaborates with governments, industries, and communities to develop solutions that improve urban resilience. Projects such as green infrastructure, cool roof technologies, and urban design changes are part of their work to make cities cooler and more sustainable. Innovation precincts such as the City North District in Melbourne and the 22@ District in Barcelona help create the spaces and places for urban cooling experimentation and collaboration. This aligns with Melbourne's goals to improve urban heat strategies.

RMIT and the RSA share a vision for creating a world where people, places, and the planet thrive. This brief aims to unite a global network that will empower local communities to creatively and collaboratively combat climate change.

Glossary

Urban Heat – Refers to higher temperatures in urban areas, due to the planning and design of the built environment and lack of natural vegetation. These can negatively impact the health and well-being of people and communities. Events such as drought, floods and fires may happen as a result. People may experience poor health and even death, due to heat exhaustion.

Biodiversity – The range of different plants, animals, and microorganisms (eg bacteria) living together in a specific area or as part of a joint living ecosystem.

Biophilic urbanism – Designing cities with green roofs, green walls and green balconies to bring nature into the densest parts of cities. Doing this provides green infrastructure and human health benefits.

Climate Change – A change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere. This change is in addition to natural climate variability, observed over comparable time periods.

Biomimicry – When people design things by copying how nature solves problems, for example by observing how bees build their hives. Find out more from the Biomimicry Institute: <https://biomimicry.org/>

Climate targets – Countries and businesses all set different goals to try and keep our planet healthy. One is ‘net zero’ which means making sure we only put the same amount of greenhouse gases into the air as we take out. This helps to stop the Earth’s temperature from getting warmer. The 1.5-degree climate target means we’re trying to keep the Earth’s temperature from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above the levels that existed before the Industrial Revolution. This helps us to avoid the worst effects of climate change, including extreme weather and rising sea levels.

Green infrastructure – The interconnected set of natural and constructed ecological systems, green spaces and other landscape features. It includes planted and indigenous trees, wetlands, parks, green open spaces and original grassland and woodlands, as well as possible building and street-level design interventions that incorporate vegetation.

Indigenous knowledge – Indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of care and custodianship of their environments. This knowledge encompasses languages, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, values, rituals and spirituality.

Regenerative – A fundamental shift in thinking and action in the arenas of environmental, economic and social change. It is grounded in a ‘living systems’ view of the world and recognises the interdependence of the challenges we are facing today, across climate change, social and economic inequality, and environmental degradation.

Wellbeing – A state of existence that fulfils various human needs, including material living conditions and quality of life, as well as the ability to pursue one’s goals, to thrive, and to feel satisfied with one’s life. Ecosystem wellbeing refers to the ability of ecosystems to maintain their diversity and quality.

Living systems - Living systems are natural networks, like forests or rivers, where plants, animals, and environments work together to stay healthy.

Toolkit

Sponge City Initiative, China: Implemented in several Chinese cities, this initiative promotes the use of green infrastructure and permeable surfaces, to manage stormwater and cool urban areas.

Urban Heat Island Mapping, Singapore: Uses satellite data and ground measurements to map heat islands and implement targeted cooling strategies in affected areas.

Heat-Resilient Neighborhoods, Ahmedabad, India: A project integrating green roofs, cool pavements, and increased green cover, to mitigate extreme heat in vulnerable neighborhoods.

Green Alleys Program, Chicago, USA: Converts alleys into permeable, green spaces to absorb rainwater, reduce flooding, and cool the surrounding areas.

Adobe Buildings, Southwestern USA: Indigenous communities in the American Southwest have used adobe, a natural building material made from earth, water, and organic materials, for centuries. These structures are highly energy-efficient, providing natural insulation that keeps interiors cool in hot climates, and warm in cold weather.

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Terraced Farming, Andean Highlands, Peru: The Inca civilization developed advanced terracing techniques to prevent soil erosion and manage water efficiently in mountainous regions. These terraces are still used today to grow crops sustainably in challenging environments, mitigating the impact of extreme weather.

Legal Personhood for Nature, New Zealand: The Whanganui River, considered an ancestor by the Whanganui Iwi (indigenous Maori people), was granted legal personhood in 2017. This recognition ensures the river's rights are protected and managed according to indigenous practices, promoting sustainable environmental stewardship.

Living Root Bridges, Meghalaya, India: The Khasi and Jaintia tribes in Meghalaya have developed a unique method of growing bridges from the roots of rubber trees. These living root bridges are resilient to heavy rainfall and flooding, showcasing a sustainable and adaptive approach to infrastructure in a monsoon climate.

22 District, Barcelona: <https://www.shbarcelona.com/blog/en/barcelona-22/>

City North, Melbourne: an urban heat reduction project focused on increasing green spaces and using reflective materials to cool the area.

Where people meet brief

How might we reimagine and create community spaces of the future where people are connected, places are healthy, and everyone is leading a good life?



What might the future look like if we achieved this brief?

Every community around the world, regardless of the background of their residents, now enjoys vibrant spaces and places where people and nature connect to foster solidarity and wellbeing. Previously neglected areas have become thriving centres for multiple aspects of civic life, where neighbours know each other, and everyone feels welcome.

What are these spaces like?

Unwelcoming spaces have been transformed. Unused buildings were reimagined, or new ones were built to a high standard, creating stunning centres of life and connection. Architects partner with local leaders to add beauty and nature. Some spaces have solar panels on their roof, or lush wall gardens attracting local pollinators. These spaces honour local heritage, sometimes breathing life into historic buildings or weaving stories of local people into their design. Accessible to all easily by sustainable transport, they welcome new residents warmly.

How are these spaces used?

Inside, healthy cafes, art classes, and social gatherings welcome people of all ages and physical abilities. People access and lead fun activities that keep them healthy close to home. This might be walking and cycling groups, learning to make nutritious food, or simply enjoying the company of friends. Each community space is unique and meets specific local needs. Some spaces teach parenting, crafts, and career skills, or support local businesses by sourcing materials and services from the neighbourhood. These hubs are bustling marketplaces where artisans thrive and new ideas flourish. Each project creates volunteering and paid roles for local people, boosting the economy and providing opportunities.

What did it take to make this happen?

Local people, supported by politicians and big institutions, led the way. They built new connections and ensured everyone's voice was heard, especially those previously ignored. Newcomers were welcomed, creating a safe space where people mixed freely. Organisations from the public, charitable, and business sectors worked with local people to share knowledge and resources. Each hub is now owned and run by the community.

These projects have made people happier and healthier, inspiring residents to collaborate, to believe in their power to create positive change, and to dream big for their futures.

Background to the brief

Communities coming together can be powerful forces for good. With the right support and conditions, they can create wonderful, sustainable places to meet, organise and deliver a wide range of positive activities. There is cause for optimism.

- Community ownership is on the rise. This is where a local group comes together to own a building or business and make decisions collectively, using tools like crowdfunding, community land trusts, social enterprises, and cooperative financing.
- Global health experts recognise communities and places make a huge difference to a person's wellbeing. There is consensus that the future of healthy populations is dependent on our ability to move healthcare out of hospitals and into communities. Our aim is to create places that keep people healthy rather than focus on curing sick people.
- Regenerative architecture is a growing movement. Going beyond 'net zero' or being green, it designs buildings and spaces inspired by nature, and where nature thrives together with people. We also have a belief that everyone should have access to beautiful and loved buildings, wherever they are born or live.
- As climate change and globalisation mean more people traveling to new countries and living in different ways on the planet, communities are shifting to become more resilient and welcoming to all. The benefits will be felt most by those communities who are currently overlooked.
- Devolution from central government to local governments in the UK and in other countries has the potential to lead to more political and economic power being held by local communities. This means communities don't need to wait for changes from Parliament or the Government before they act.

Inspiration for you when answering the brief

While outside places like parks, forests or rivers are great for communities gathering, this brief invites ideas which rely on physical buildings or structures to bring people together.

Which spaces can I use?

- Existing spaces: Think about places you can already use – like schools, places of worship, cafés, barbershops, or libraries. Who owns them? Who visits them?
- Unused buildings: Look for empty or less used buildings like closed shops, old chicken sheds, or shipping containers. You could turn them into something new.
- New spaces: What would it take to build a new space? Look for clear land and find local people who might help you.

How do I make this a community space?

Think about how you will make the space:

- Inviting: How can you make the space exciting and welcoming for everyone? What changes, activities or services could you add to make it more appealing?

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- Connected: How does this space connect and add to others in the area?
- Specific: What are the unique needs and opportunities in your neighbourhood for everyone to lead a good life?
- Green: How to build in low energy consumption, active travel and material reuse and recycling from the start?
- Innovative: How could emerging technology and thinking be applied to these spaces? Are there things in other areas of design and innovation that could be applied?

Community space examples (see toolkit for more):

Bolton's All Souls building is a community hub in the UK. Renovated from a church, it now provides spaces for health services, social events, and educational programs, engaging and supporting the local community.

Barefoot College is a social enterprise in Rajasthan. They train local women to be solar engineers, installing solar lights in villages. This renewable energy project improves education, health and life quality by providing community skills, clean energy and reducing health disparities.

Meet the brief partner



The Rayne Trust

Established in 1965 by Lord and Lady Rayne, the Rayne Trust prioritises activities that promote positive social change, understanding and integration here and abroad.

Lord Rayne was a key contributor to the post-war rebuilding of London. His charitable activities saw significant investment in health and wellbeing, giving money to medical research, hospitals and wider social and cultural institutions. Later, the Trust promised to help the most 'vulnerable or disadvantaged communities' and their work continues to do this.

The 'Where People Meet' programme

The Where People Meet programme is guided by the belief that people, wherever they are born or live, have the right to a good life.

That is why we want to create community spaces that support people to lead good, healthy lives. Community buildings should be a source of local pride, enabling social connection, a thriving civil society and, positive economic and environmental outcomes.

To achieve this, a long-term approach based on collective investment of resources to improve the prospects of communities, particularly those facing the most severe challenges, is required across different sectors and organisations.

We have promised to help by:

- Running a c.£2.5m fund supporting a small group of areas to create new, or improve existing, community spaces.
- Making and sharing high quality research and evaluation of our funded work.
- Building a broad network of different types of organisations, to explore the potential for a large, multi-partner, independent fund in the future

Glossary

Sustainable Transport: Environmentally friendly ways to travel, like biking or using electric buses.

Renewable Energy: Energy from natural sources that can be replenished, like solar or wind power.

Regenerative Architecture: Building designs that restore and benefit the environment.

Climate Change: Long-term changes in temperature and weather patterns, mainly due to human activities.

Devolution: The transfer of power from a central government to local or regional administrations.

Crowdfunding: Raising small amounts of money from many people, usually via the internet.

Community Land Trusts: Nonprofit organizations that hold land for the benefit of a community, ensuring long-term affordability and stewardship.

Social Enterprises: Businesses that aim to make a profit while also benefiting society and the environment.

Cooperative Financing: Financial arrangements where people or organizations pool resources to support mutual benefits.

Community Ownership: When a group of local people collectively own and manage a building or business.

Social Connection: Interactions and relationships with others that provide support and a sense of belonging.

Multi-partner Fund: A financial resource pool supported by various organizations working together.

Fabrication Labs: A small-scale workshop or space offering people access to digital making.

Toolkit

The Green House, Copenhagen, Denmark: The Green House in Copenhagen is a sustainable urban development project that integrates green spaces, affordable housing, and community facilities. The building features green roofs, rainwater harvesting systems, and renewable energy sources. It also includes communal areas, promoting a sense of collective ownership and well-being.

The Edge, Brisbane, Australia: The Edge in Brisbane is a state-of-the-art community center and innovation hub. It offers digital media studios, fabrication labs, and coworking spaces, all aimed at empowering individuals and fostering creativity and collaboration. The Edge serves as a model for community wealth building by providing resources and opportunities for local entrepreneurs and creatives to thrive.

The Rural Studio, Alabama, USA: The Rural Studio, an initiative of Auburn University, is dedicated to using design and architecture to address social and economic challenges in rural communities. For example, their 20K House provides affordable and sustainable housing solutions, while the Hale County Animal Shelter serves as both a shelter and a community gathering space.

The Africa Centre, Cape Town, South Africa: The Africa Centre in Cape Town is a cultural institution dedicated to showcasing and celebrating African art, music, and literature. The center's modern architectural design incorporates sustainable features such as passive cooling systems and rainwater harvesting.

The Kigali Genocide Memorial, Kigali, Rwanda: The Kigali Genocide Memorial in Rwanda is a powerful example of using architecture and design to promote healing, reconciliation, and remembrance, honoring the memory of those lost during the Rwandan genocide. Through educational exhibits, memorial gardens, and community outreach, it serves as a catalyst for dialogue and peacebuilding.

Taman Bacaan Pelangi (Rainbow Reading Gardens), Indonesia: Taman Bacaan Pelangi is a network of community-owned libraries housed in repurposed buildings across remote areas of Indonesia. They provide free access to books, educational resources, and literacy programs, empowering children and families to pursue lifelong learning and development.

The Beach Hut Cafe, Brighton, UK: The Beach Hut Cafe is a community-owned establishment located on Brighton Beach. Operated by a local residents' cooperative, it provides affordable food and drinks, as well as a venue for community events and meetings.

The Fishermen's Cooperative, Cinque Terre, Italy: The Fishermen's Cooperative in Cinque Terre is a community-owned organization that supports local fishermen and sustainable fishing practices along the Italian coastline. It operates a fish market, processing facility, and cooperative restaurant, showcasing fresh seafood caught by members of the community.

Bromley by Bow Centre, UK: The Bromley by Bow Centre in East London integrates health, arts, and social initiatives. Founded in 1984, it offers services such as primary healthcare, employment support, and creative arts programs, promoting holistic community development and well-being.

Sands End Community Centre, UK: The Sands End Community Centre in Fulham features connected pavilions around Clancarty Lodge. It provides a café, changing rooms, and flexible event spaces, all designed with sustainability and community engagement in mind.

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East Quay, Watchet, UK: East Quay in Watchet is a community-led arts and cultural center. Developed by Onion Collective, it includes studios, a gallery, and educational spaces, fostering local creativity and economic resilience.

Lynnsport, King's Lynn, UK: Lynnsport in King's Lynn offers extensive sports and recreational facilities. Community-driven, it includes gyms, swimming pools, and event spaces, promoting health and social engagement within the local area.

Hastings Pier, UK: Hastings Pier, community-owned since 2013, provides leisure and educational spaces. Following significant renovation, it now hosts events, markets, and social gatherings, boosting local culture and economy.

Nudge Community Builders, UK: A social enterprise in Plymouth that transforms unused spaces to benefit local communities. They have revitalized areas on Union Street by creating community hubs, supporting local businesses, and hosting numerous events and activities. Their initiatives boost the local economy, enhance social connections, and improve overall community well-being.

Railway 200 & beyond brief

How might we take inspiration from 200 years of railway success while innovating for an even brighter future?



What might the future look like if we achieved this brief?

In the future, the entire railway system—train platforms, bridges, electrical and signaling systems, tracks, and surrounding land—shows how we can take care of our planet, create jobs, and make our communities stronger. Railways lead the way for how all infrastructure should be.

Everything on the railway is designed to be environmentally responsible and built to last.

The railway estate produces clean energy and uses methods that help keep the air, water, and land healthy. It offers habitats that support plants and animals to thrive. The railway adapts to changing weather conditions through the adoption of new materials and construction techniques informed by data.

The railway isn't just good for the planet—it is good for our wallets too. The industry is using creative ways to make money, scaling existing ideas like renting out space under bridges for offices or setting up farmers' markets on unused land. They have also put into action new ideas—perhaps inspired by the circular economy or greater mobility. This creates local opportunities and keeps the railway running smoothly at less cost to taxpayers.

The railway also helps people in the community to learn new skills, and opens up careers to people from all backgrounds. Even more local people can work on the railway and be upskilled throughout their career.

The railway environment has become a lively centre of creativity and enterprise—reimagining what it means to travel. No longer just places to catch a train—here you can learn new things and enjoy events like art shows and workshops. They celebrate local history, protect our heritage and bring energy and new opportunities to our towns and cities.

Background to the brief

Railways inspire change around the world, from busy cities to quiet villages. They are not just about moving people—they are about creating lively, sustainable communities. As we approach the 200th anniversary of the first passenger service in 1825, we must consider how railways better meet the changing needs of future transportation.

This future is one where travelling is easier, better, and greener. The railway offers vast opportunities for social and environmental innovation.

People are travelling more for social reasons. Self-driving cars and telecommuting present new challenges. Railways can adapt by becoming more resilient and community focused.

The railway also supports our environmental and social goals. Railways offer many varied career opportunities across operations, engineering, customer service and safety, marketing and more. Beyond the trains themselves, railways can become greener, through the

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refurbishment of the existing estate, adoption of advances in material science, and the application of existing or new technology to maximise whole life cost.

Introducing more training and development, and adopting technology and other innovations, encourages companies and communities to work together, improving the upkeep and operation of railways. Open data across such a vast railway estate also allows for unique large-scale impact and meaningful change.

As the railway is integral to many communities – serving us as passengers, railway colleagues, and citizens – we should reimagine for the benefit of all people and nature.

Inspiration for you when answering the brief

This brief calls for ideas celebrating the original vision of the railway as a way of connecting communities and, reimagines this for the next 200 years! Consider how local and railway heritage near you can play a part in your ideas and how you are helping the railway to meet the needs of modern-day users. Institutions like the National Trust in the UK are good inspiration – they balance commercial, cultural and environmental aspects with a strong brand that users love.

The availability of such a vast railway estate, with ever-improving real-time data to help map it, presents an exciting opportunity. How could your idea balance the local community's future needs and insight, with the possibility of replicating at scale across a whole country?

Your idea should also consider commercial realities. With lots of funding required for maintenance and many assets (such as buildings and land) under management, can the railway find new ways to make money?

Your responses should go beyond offering purely technological solutions – for example, avoid ideas such as an app to arrange food pick-ups from your local station. Parts of the railway estate that are not open to the public (for example, staff facilities) should also be considered out of scope for this brief.

Existing ideas include:

- **Netherlands:** The Railway Zone in Utrecht repurposes old railway yards into mixed-use developments with parks, housing, and commercial spaces, fostering community integration.
- **India:** The Raahgiri Day initiative in various cities, including New Delhi, temporarily repurposes railway-adjacent streets for community activities, promoting active lifestyles and environmental awareness.

Meet the brief partner



Network Rail is responsible for managing and maintaining Britain's railway infrastructure. Their role encompasses over 20,000 miles of track plus 30,000 bridges, tunnels, stations, and signalling systems. As a public-sector body, Network Rail focuses on enhancing safety, efficiency, and sustainability across the network. They oversee major projects, including infrastructure upgrades and renewals, ensuring seamless operations for passengers and freight. Network Rail plays a crucial part in driving economic growth, supporting our communities, and shaping the future of transportation in the United Kingdom.

Network Rail have previously partnered with the RSA's Student Design Awards. They are excited to set this Brief, as it sits within a wider cross-industry partnership set to celebrate 200 years of the modern railway. Starting in January 2025, Railway 200 will be a year-long UK campaign designed to celebrate rail's remarkable past, and its role today. It will also explore the railway's importance for a sustainable future, and its role in inspiring a new generation of young people to choose a career in rail.

Glossary

Mobility as a Service (Maas) – a digitally enabled approach aiming to make travel simpler, better, and greener, ensuring safety, sustainability, stewardship, and satisfaction for all.

Railway Estate - All the land and buildings owned by the railway company, including train platforms, bridges, and tracks.

Circular Economy - A system where we design products that create less waste, reuse and recycle materials, and last longer. Circular supply chains focus on using fewer resources and recycling so everything can be reused or repurposed, reducing waste and protecting the environment.

Taxpayers - People who pay taxes to the government, which is money used for public services.

Self-driving Cars - Cars that can drive themselves without a human controlling them.

Telecommuting - Working from home using the internet, instead of going to an office.

Heritage - Things from the past that are valued and preserved, like old buildings and traditions.

National Trust - An organisation in the UK that protects and cares for historic places and natural beauty.

Real-time Data - Information that is available immediately as events happen, without any delay.

Infrastructure - The basic physical structures and facilities needed for a society to operate, like roads, bridges, and railways.

Toolkit

Japan: The Echigo-Tsumari Art Field transforms disused rural railway stations into art installations and cultural hubs, attracting tourists and revitalising local economies.

Canada: The Evergreen Brick Works in Toronto, a former industrial site adjacent to a railway, has been transformed into a community environmental center promoting sustainability and green living.

Baltic Countries: Rail Baltica introduced a sustainable railway connecting the Baltic countries. Their approach modernised transportation infrastructure to reduce carbon emissions whilst boosting trade and tourism.

France: Station F in Paris transformed a disused railway station into the world's largest start-up campus, turning railway infrastructure into a center for the digital economy.

Sweden: Sweden's Circular Economy Railway Project used recycled materials to build and repair railway infrastructure.

RESOLVE Collective, UK: RESOLVE is an interdisciplinary design collective that combines architecture, engineering, technology and art to address social challenges. They have delivered numerous projects, workshops, publications, and talks in the UK and across the world, all of which look toward realising just and equitable visions of change in our built environment.

Indian Railways trains local communities through its apprenticeship program, offering hands-on experience in various sectors such as electrical work, engineering, and maintenance. It plays a crucial role in upskilling rural populations.^[SEP]

Futures is an umbrella term for tools like horizon scanning, trend analysis, scenario planning and **Delphi**. These methods are used to analyse emerging trends, anticipate their impact and build stories about possible futures.

Architecture 2030: 40% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions come from buildings and, if left unchecked, they're set to double by 2050. It is crucial to explore ways to disrupt our current emissions trend.

Creative communities brief

How might we make creative education and careers accessible to everyone, everywhere?



What might the future look like if we achieved this brief?

No matter where they live, every person can enjoy amazing arts and cultural opportunities close to home. Arts and culture education and careers are open to everyone.

In education, creativity is learned from an early age and is as important as reading, writing, and maths. Parents and schools see these skills as essential for growing up, helping society, and nurturing our planet. Art classes, music or textile lessons, digital and virtual reality workshops all help us practice creativity every day and gain skills in the real-world.

As students look for careers, they find a creative sector that welcomes them and values their diverse backgrounds. Jobs in the arts are stable, financially rewarding and offer many opportunities for growth and flexibility.

The arts are respected as an important part of our culture and, recognised as necessary for a happy society. Governments and businesses invest in the creative industries, with big budgets and commitment for the long term. Local people are proud to see their own cultures represented within this space.

We recognise how arts and cultural activities can help people and places heal from trauma. Every community has easy access to art programmes that improve mental health and bring people together. Creative skills are also used to tackle climate change and environmental challenges. Artists, architects, and designers lead the way in creating eco-friendly materials, circular products, and services that centre people and planet. This shows how important creativity is for a better future.

In this world, culture and creativity are a right for everyone, seen as essential in education, community well-being, and environmental care.

Background to the brief

The creative sector includes many different activities like architecture, design, publishing, music, fashion, performance, and fine arts. It covers modern fields like video games, coding, and virtual reality (VR). These areas show how colourful and exciting the creative sector is.

Nowadays, people working in this sector can face challenges. Many are freelancers who have unstable jobs, making it hard to have a steady income. Pressures on government funding for cultural and creative sectors, compared to other industries, results in less money available to start and nurture creative people and projects. In schools, there is a strong focus on 'hard' skills like reading and science, while creative skills do not get as much attention. This can stop kids from developing their artistic talents and enjoying the arts.

There are significant efforts being made globally to increase representation within the arts and cultural sectors. We need women, disabled, and LGBTQI+ people, as well as people from all countries and ethnic backgrounds, to participate equally.

This is because we know creativity can really help communities. Art therapy and creative experiences can support people living with difficult situations, such as migrating from their home or dealing with conflict. Through cultural activities, we can feel closer to the natural world and learn to take care of it. The creative sector has a lot to offer society. By recognising and supporting the arts, we can create more jobs, help communities become healthier, and take better care of our environment.

Inspiration for you when answering the brief

This brief welcomes ideas that bring together arts and the environment, beautifying our world while protecting nature. Crea-tech, blending creativity and technology, combines art, design, and digital innovation to create new experiences and solutions. According to a Nesta report, it has the potential to revolutionise our interaction with art and nature.

The intersection of the economy and creativity, as studied by the UK's Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, shows how powerful this combination can be. One idea they are exploring is linking universities across the North of England to offer multi-organisation degrees.

Another innovation might be to create professional development and competency frameworks for creative professionals to ensure their continuous growth and excellence. Projects can also consider how to help people apply creative skills in the real-world to build their portfolio and confidence for employment.

Public investment in creative skills, like Venezuela's El Sistema program, highlights the benefits of nationwide support for the arts. Another example is the Universal Basic Income trial for artists in Ireland. Imagine if artists reimagined the economy through the lens of feminist economics – they could bring about profound change.

Some places have already started thinking in these new ways:

Fundación Mi Sangre (Colombia) uses art and music to empower youth and promote peace and social change in Colombia.

Arterial Network (Africa) strengthens the arts across the continent by supporting artists, promoting cultural policies, and enhancing regional collaborations.

Creative New Zealand provides funding and resources for Māori and Pasifika artists to promote cultural diversity and creativity in New Zealand.

Meet the brief partner



The Marketing Trust (the operating name of the Chartered Institute of Marketing Charitable Trust) is a UK-based charity founded in 1978. The Trust promotes education, training and research into the art and science of marketing and provides grants to individuals and organisations for projects that advance those skills. By fostering professional development, supporting research, and promoting innovation within the industry, the Trust strengthens the sector's overall growth and effectiveness.

The Marketing Trust are long-term partners of the RSA, having collaboratively funded design challenges, as part of the RSA Student Design Awards, for 25 years. This Brief has been devised in collaboration with the Creative Corridors work of the RSA. Creative industries have been showing consistent growth over the last decade in the UK, and there is a wealth of evidence that shows the benefits of culture and creativity for local communities and individuals. Inspired by that progress, Creative Corridors is an initiative that explores how investment in the cultural and creative sectors can be harnessed on a larger scale, and across different geographic locations, to strengthen its economic and social impact.

Glossary

Creative Economy: The part of the economy that involves creative industries and professions, such as art, design, media, and entertainment. It focuses on the value of creativity as a driver of economic growth and innovation.

Creative Sector: Encompasses all fields related to creativity and the arts, including but not limited to visual arts, music, performing arts, design, and digital media.

Competency Framework: A guide that lists the skills and knowledge you need to be good at a job or profession. It helps you organise what you need to learn and practice into clear categories, so you know exactly how to improve and succeed.

Freelancer: A person who works independently, often on a project-by-project basis, rather than being employed full-time by a single organisation.

Creative PEC (Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre): A UK organisation partnered with the RSA and Newcastle University. They study the impact of the creative sector on the economy and society. They promote policies that support creative industries.

Universal Basic Income (UBI): A model of social security where all citizens get a regular sum of money from the government to cover basic living expenses – without having to do any specific job or be unemployed.

Toolkit

Representation in the Creative Sector

By Gender: A study by the UNESCO (2018) showed that women are underrepresented in key creative roles in film, music, and media. For example, only 7% of directors and 13% of screenwriters in the global film industry are women. In the music industry, women make up only 21.7% of artists, 12.3% of songwriters, and 2.1% of producers.

By Racial and Ethnic Background: The Creative Diversity Network (CDN) in the UK found that Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals are underrepresented in the UK television industry. Only 13% of the workforce in this sector come from BAME backgrounds, compared to 14% of the UK population. In the United States, the National Endowment for the Arts reported that minorities are underrepresented in arts occupations compared to their share of the overall workforce. For example, African Americans make up 9.7% of the arts workforce compared to 11.9% of the total workforce .

By Disability status: According to the CND, only 4.5% of the workforce in the UK television industry identify as disabled, which is significantly lower than the 18% of the UK working-age population who identify as disabled .

For LGBTQ+ creatives: GLAAD's Studio Responsibility Index reported that in 2021, only 18.6% of major studio films included LGBTQ+ characters, showing a need for greater inclusion and representation in film.

Workshops run by the PEC for the Northern Creative Corridors available [here](#).

Feminist Economics: An approach to economics that emphasises the importance of gender equality and considers how economic policies impact different genders. Reimagining the economy through this lens can lead to more inclusive and equitable economic systems. Find out how it relates creative industries [here](#).

Creative Industries Council information on crea-tech:

<https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/createch>

Creative Access (UK) provides opportunities for young people from underrepresented backgrounds to enter the creative industries through internships and training programs.

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Entry guidelines

1. To be considered for the RSA Spark 2025 Showcase, the entrant(s) must upload their submission with any corresponding content (e.g. video, audio, image files) to the RSA Spark online submission link, which opens for submissions on 20 May 2025 and closes 5pm GMT on 4 July 2025.
2. The entrant(s) must be the original creator of the idea and must have obtained the necessary permissions for the inclusion of any copyrighted music, audio and/or images, as well as any content featuring third party participants (e.g. quotes from workshop participants). The submission must not infringe the rights of privacy and publicity, copyright, trademarks or intellectual property rights of any person or organisation.
3. By entering this programme, the entrant(s) agree that the RSA and our brief partners may: (i) showcase their idea (including any extract from the submitted materials) on their websites, as well as any other media in connection with RSA Spark; (ii) use their names, likenesses, photographs, voices, sounds and/or biographical information and films for advertising, publicity, and promotional purposes without additional compensation.
4. Intellectual property rights of all entries submitted to RSA Spark remain with the entrant.
5. The maximum file size for any optional video or audio file is 60MB.
6. The RSA reserves the right to refuse or disqualify at any time any submission in its sole discretion. No entry may contain unlawful or potentially libelous, defamatory, or disparaging material; it may not infringe third party's copyright; it may not have failed to obtain the necessary consents as set out in these terms & conditions.
7. The decisions of the Review Panel and Brief Partners on the Showcase nominations are final, and no correspondence or discussion to reverse the decision shall be entered into. Feedback can be requested on any entry and will be provided.
8. This is an international programme, open to currently enrolled students and/or recent graduates over 18 years of age from any tertiary education institution. We welcome submissions from anywhere in the world, but all entries must be in English. A transcript is available, and we encourage entrants to use free translation software to assist with their interpretation.
9. The entrant agrees that the RSA shall not be liable for any claims, costs, liabilities, damages, expenses, and losses arising out of (i) the RSA's use of submitted materials; (ii) the entrant's participation in RSA Spark; (iii) technical failures of any kind including, but not limited to, problems or delays arising from software or equipment malfunctions or computer viruses; (iv) any events outside the RSA's reasonable control

Please note:

The guidelines provided above were for the 2024-25 cycle. As RSA Spark is paused for the next UK academic year (2025-26), these guidelines do not apply.