

Back to Basics

Design where things are made to last

***Open to all creative disciplines**



SDC International Design Competition

Briefing pack 2027



Back to Basics

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Overview

We live in a world where we are encouraged to constantly want something new. Trends change, products are replaced and designs can quickly become yesterday's idea.

But what if we looked in the other direction?

Before throwaway culture, design was often about making fewer things but making them better. Objects, patterns, materials and spaces were created to be lived with, cared for and enjoyed for generations.

This year's brief 'Back to Basics' asks you to consider what it means to design for the long term.

Look beyond what is fashionable or commercially relevant today. Explore the small nuances, details and intricacies that can give a design lasting appeal. Think about why some designs continue to be desirable decades after they were first created, while others quickly become outdated.

We want you to draw inspiration from the past, while using your own technical knowledge, creativity and discipline to look towards the future.

Consider the principles of buy less, buy better and truly designing something to last. Think about how local materials, processes, craftsmanship, culture and heritage can influence your work.

At the heart of your design should be colour, not simply as decoration, but as an integral part of your creative thinking and final realisation.

What could you create that people would genuinely want to keep and reuse?



Back to Basics

Design where things are made to last

The Brief

For 2027, the competition is opening its doors beyond just textile disciplines, inviting students from a wider range of creative and craft-based degree courses to interpret the theme in their own way.

Whether your work is rooted in textiles, interiors, surface pattern, ceramics, product design, leather, craft or another creative discipline, we want to see how colour and considered design can create something made to last. Back to Basics challenges you to design something with longevity at its heart. We want you to move away from the idea of designing for the next trend and instead consider what makes a design desirable over time.

Your design could be inspired by a historic object, pattern, material, process or place. You might explore the work of designers and makers whose work has stood the test of time or look to your own cultural heritage and traditions for inspiration.

Think about designers such as William Morris, Josef Frank or Marimekko, whose work continues to influence and inspire us even today.

You may choose to reinterpret traditional approaches through a contemporary lens or create something entirely new based on the principles of long-lasting design.

There is no single answer to what makes a design last. It could be its beauty, functionality, craftsmanship, emotional connection, cultural significance, versatility or the small details that make people want to keep it.

Theme Focus

The SDC International Design Competition is renowned for bringing together students, researchers, industry professionals, and designers from around the world to give students a platform to showcase their creativity, technical knowledge and vision on an international scale.

Participants should consider:

Colour should be front and centre

Consider how colour influences the identity, emotion, meaning and longevity of your design.

Responsible design

Consider how designing for longevity can challenge throwaway culture and encourage people to value and keep the things they own and be more sustainable.

Symbolism and emotion

Explore how colour, form, pattern, material and detail can create an emotional connection that gives a design lasting appeal.



[illegible]

- Textiles
- Fashion and costume
- Interior design
- Surface pattern design
- Product design — including metal, woodwork and leather
- Ceramics
- Craft



Evidence

All entries should show evidence of:

- **Colour** as an integral component of the design and creative process.
- **Development of the design**, from initial concept through to final realisation, within the theme.
- **Exploration of alternative ideas** and justification of the choices made about materials and processes.
- Consideration of how your design responds to the principles of **longevity and responsible design**.
- Clear consideration of why your design could remain **desirable and relevant** over time.
- Excellent presentation and clarity of ideas.



Questions to ask yourself:

- What is your **final design** or product?
- What part does **colour** play in your final idea, product or design?
- What makes your design something that people would **want to keep**?
- How have your choice of materials, processes, techniques and details contributed to the **longevity** of your design?
- What have you learned from designs that have **stood the test of time**?





Back to Basics

Design where things are made to last

Judging

Marks will be awarded to entries that demonstrate a strong interpretation of the brief and a clear, considered approach to design.

The judges will be looking for creative and thoughtful use of colour, alongside a strong concept and evidence of how the design has developed.

Judging will be broken down into the following categories:

Creativity

An original and creative approach to the brief, demonstrating an effective and considered use of colour.

Concept

A clear and coherent concept, with strong development of ideas and a convincing interpretation of 'Back to Basics'.

Quality of Deliverables

Clear, informative and coherent presentation of the entry, supported by high-quality research and development. The final submission should demonstrate a professional and creative approach.

Narrative Strength

How effectively the design communicates its concept, inspiration and interpretation of the brief.

Aesthetic and Technical Quality

The quality of the final design, including craftsmanship, composition, colour, technical execution and visual appeal.



Back to Basics

Design where things are made to last

Deliverables

Deliverables Required for Competition Entry

Design Boards

Up to four A2 boards to evidence your design from initial concept through to development and final realisation.

Your boards can include:

- Mood boards
- Research and inspiration
- Drawings and sketches
- Development work
- CADs
- Colour palettes
- Material exploration
- Imagery



Final design visuals:

Supporting Written Commentary

A4 sheet — up to 500 words

Your written commentary should include:

- Design purpose and inspiration
- Colour inspiration
- Relevance to the brief — how did you interpret Back to Basics?
- What does the theme mean to you?
- How have you considered longevity within your design?
- An explanation of your key design decisions

Entry Requirements

- Entrants must be studying at a university which is a confirmed SDC Education Provider member
- Entrants must be studying on a course which leads to a degree within a creative discipline at a university or college at the time of entry.
- Entrants must be aged 18 or over.
- Entry is through the college tutor.
- Photographs of students' boards and supporting written commentary must be uploaded to the SDC website.
- No additional portfolio or body of work should be submitted outside of the required deliverables.
- Entrants may develop a final product, prototype or physical outcome as part of their design process, but this is not a requirement for submission.
- Additional products, samples or supporting materials may be brought to the judging presentation where they help communicate the design.

The competition is open to SDC College members within the following countries:

- **Australia**
- **Bangladesh**
- **China**
- **India**
- **Ireland**
- **New Zealand**
- **Singapore**
- **Vietnam**
- **United Kingdom**



International Design Competition 2026/27 Timeline



September 2026

Competition launch.



January - August 2027

Regional, national and international 'Heats' are held.



May 2027

UK final takes place.



November 2027

International Grand Final takes place in Beijing and overall winner announced.



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Design with colour.
Design with purpose.
Design to last.



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