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Technical Note / Technical Report

The UIA Award for Innovation in Architectural Education – Three-Edition Synthesis

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Abstract

This report presents a consolidated reading of the three completed editions of the UIA Award for Innovation in Architectural Education, including the inaugural cycle of 2020/2021, the second of 2022/2023, and the third of 2025/2026. Established in 2019 under the auspices of the UIA Architectural Education Commission (EDUCOM), the triennial Award recognises pedagogical innovation across cultures and geographies, giving the work of educators the same international standing long enjoyed by built work. Drawing on official UIA announcements, jury reports, and curatorial records, the report documents the juries, the entries evaluated, growing from sixteen submissions in the first edition to thirty-two shortlisted entries from twenty-two countries in the third, and the awarded and commended programmes across all five UIA regions. Cross-edition analysis reveals consistent trends, which include community-embedded learning on real sites, integration of vernacular and traditional knowledge, learning by doing through full-scale construction, extending alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and the UNESCO-UIA Charter, and the emergence of collaborative, networked pedagogies operating across borders. The report distils lessons learned, articulates aspirations for the fourth edition, and offers practical recommendations for future entrants, concluding with directions for innovation in architectural education over the next decade.

Keywords: Innovation in architectural education; UIA Award; Pedagogical practice; Sustainable design education; Community engagement; Design-build; International Union of Architects (UIA)

Highlights

- The first consolidated synthesis of three Award editions, spanning 2020–2026 and all five UIA regions.
- Awarded programmes consistently combine community-embedded learning, vernacular knowledge, and full-scale making with measurable impact beyond the studio.
- Cross-edition analysis identifies inclusive pedagogy and cross-border collaborative networks as the defining criteria for the decade ahead.

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› 1 INTRODUCTION

The UIA Award for Innovation in Architectural Education was established in 2019 under the auspices of the UIA Architectural Education Commission (EDUCOM) to celebrate the multifaceted nature of innovation across the boundaries of cultures and geographies, and to promote inspiring pedagogical practices that contribute to the creation of sustainable environments. Operating on a triennial cycle, it has, in three editions to date, demonstrated a substantial body of evidence on how schools of architecture in different world regions are reimagining what they teach, how they teach it, and to what ends.

This report consolidates the experience of the three editions completed to date: the inaugural edition (2020/2021), the second edition (2022/2023), and the third edition (2026). It draws on the official UIA announcements, jury reports, and curatorial records to present a unified picture of the Award's evolution. The objective is to make the cumulative learning available; to document the jury panels and the entries they evaluated, to extract the trends and focus areas that emerged from the awarded and commended programmes, and to set out the lessons that should inform the fourth edition and beyond.

The structure of the report mirrors the lifecycle of the Award itself. After this introduction and a discussion of why an Award dedicated to architectural education is necessary at this moment, three parallel sections address each edition, following identical subheadings: the profile of the jury, the profile and number of entries, the trends and focus areas that emerged, and the outlines of the awarded and commended schemes. A synthesis section then distils the lessons learned across the three cycles and articulates the aspirations for the fourth edition. The report closes with recommendations for prospective entrants and a forward-looking statement on the directions that innovation in architectural education is likely to take in the next decade.

The three editions have engaged jurors and submitting institutions from every UIA region, and have generated a substantial archive of pedagogical experimentation. The Award's contribution to the global discourse on architectural education lies in this accumulation: it has made comparative reading possible across geographies and over time, and has provided an effective for the discipline to recognise the work of its educators on the same footing as the work of its practitioners.

› 2 WHY AN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION IS NECESSARY — AND WHY NOW

Architectural education sits at a moment of unusual pressure. Climate challenges, rapid urbanisation, social inequality, and accelerating technological change are reshaping the professional field on which graduates must operate. Schools are being asked to prepare practitioners who can act as civic leaders, interdisciplinary collaborators, cultural mediators, and ethical stewards of the built environment, not only as designers of buildings. The pedagogical question of how to equip a new generation for this expanded remit is now as consequential as any question facing the discipline.

Architecture has long had well-developed mechanisms for celebrating built work. Major prizes recognise individual buildings, individual architects, and individual practices. The work of educators, by contrast, has historically been less visible, unless through their own published work. The studios, courses, and curricula that prepare every new generation of architects rarely receive the same level of public recognition as the projects those graduates eventually design. The UIA Award for Innovation in Architectural Education was created to address this imbalance by giving pedagogical work the same standing, the same critical attention, and the same international platform that built work has long enjoyed.

The Award is also necessary as an instrument of mutual learning. Schools of architecture around the world operate within very different institutional, cultural, and economic conditions. A studio model that thrives in one region may need substantial adaptation to be implemented elsewhere. By documenting and disseminating the awarded and commended programmes, their pedagogical premises, their methods, their outcomes, the Award builds a transferable body of knowledge that schools can draw on when they reconsider their own curricula. It is, in this sense, a collegial mechanism for the discipline to learn from itself.

The timing matters. The UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education, updated in 2023 and revised again in 2026, frames architectural education as a regenerative practice oriented toward climate, justice, and the wellbeing of communities. The Charter sets out the principles; the Award identifies the programmes that put those principles into practice, in addition to the validation work undertaken by UNESCO-UIA Validation Council. The two instruments are complementary. Collectively, they articulate what architectural education should aspire to and recognise the schools that are realising that aspiration.

Finally, the Award is necessary because the questions facing the discipline cannot be answered by any single tradition or region. The five UIA regions hold very different pedagogical histories, different institutional architectures, different relationships between school and profession, different priorities in curriculum and studio culture. An award structured around the five regions ensures that this pluralism is preserved and made visible. The intent is not to identify a single model of excellence but to assemble a global portrait of the many forms that excellence in architectural education can take.

› 3 THE INAUGURAL EDITION (2020/2021)

Launched in November 2019, the inaugural edition of the UIA Award for Innovation in Architectural Education was the first international recognition of its kind organised under the auspices of the UIA Architectural Education Commission. It established the principles, the structure, and the regional logic that have continued to shape the Award through its subsequent editions. Submissions closed on 1 April 2020 and the jury convened on 25 January 2021 to evaluate the entries received. Results were announced shortly thereafter, with the awarded and commended schemes featured at the UIA Education Commission Exhibition during the 27th UIA World Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

› 3.1 Profile of the Jury

The inaugural jury comprised ten members representing a deliberate breadth of regional and institutional expertise. The panel was chaired collectively and consisted of Oya Atalay Franck (Switzerland), Harriet Harriss (United Kingdom / USA), Derya Oktay (Turkey), Konstantin Kiyanenko (Russia), Thomas Fisher (USA), Beatriz Maturana Cossio (Chile), Mustapha Mohd Saleh (Malaysia), Lindy Osborne Burton (Australia), Carin Smuts (South Africa), and Hassan Radoine (Morocco). The composition reflected an intentional balance across the five UIA regions, with each region represented by senior academic and professional voices.

The seniority and disciplinary range of the panel signalled the institutional weight that the Award was intended to carry from the outset. Several jurors were sitting or former deans of major schools of architecture; others were established researchers in pedagogy, urban design, and the cultural dimensions of architectural practice. The breadth ensured that submissions could be assessed not against a single pedagogical orthodoxy but against the plural understandings of excellence that obtain in different regional contexts.

The Award was curated by Ashraf M. Salama (United Kingdom / Egypt), who developed the framework, criteria, and procedural architecture under which the inaugural edition was launched and assessed. The technical committee comprised Marilyns Nepomechie (United States) and Magda Mostafa (Egypt) as non-voting observers, providing methodological and procedural support to the jury throughout the evaluation process. The curatorial and technical functions established the operational template that has since governed the Award through its subsequent editions.

› 3.2 Profile, Number, and Quality of Entries

Sixteen submissions were received from nine countries across four continents. Open to colleges, schools, departments, and programmes of architecture worldwide, the call required institutions to have been established for at least ten years and to offer a professional degree recognised by the relevant national higher-education authority. UNESCO-UIA validation was not a precondition for entry. As an inaugural edition, the number of entries was modest by design, since the call was new, the platform was being introduced to the international community of schools, and the submission required a substantial documentary effort.

The quality of submissions was assessed against two key criteria: excellence in pedagogical practice and excellence in shaping a sustainable future. Aligning with the UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education, the call emphasised the role of architecture and urban design education in addressing the societal and environmental challenges facing the built environment, and in articulating the opportunities those challenges create. The jury reserved the right not to award all prizes if entries did not meet the threshold; the conferral of honourable mentions was at its discretion.

3.3 Trends and Focus Areas

Three thematic trends emerged clearly from the inaugural cohort. The first was the commitment to working with local communities on real sites, often in extreme or under-resourced contexts, where architectural learning was tied to tangible improvement of conditions on the ground. The second was the integration of traditional and vernacular knowledge, particularly building techniques and material practices, into contemporary curricula, framing them not as historical artefacts but as active resources for sustainable design today. The third was the rise of “learning by doing” through full-scale construction, where physical making and built outcomes were central to the assessment of pedagogical success.

These themes were varied by region. The European entry centred on engagement with extreme environments and the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a coherent pedagogical frame. North American work emphasised tradition-led construction and interdisciplinary, international collaboration. The Asia–Oceania entries were notable for their depth of engagement with rural communities in China, working through building traditions, physical restoration, and community revitalisation. The convergence around community and construction across these very different regional contexts suggested that the appetite for engaged, on-the-ground pedagogies was a global rather than a localised phenomenon.



› 3.4 Outlines of the Awarded Schemes

The jury awarded four entries and commended three further entries. The four awarded schemes are outlined below, followed by the three commended schemes. Representative images may be inserted in the spaces provided.

Region 1 — The Royal Danish Academy, School of Architecture, Copenhagen (Denmark)

Architectural Education Through On-Site Collaboration — Architecture and Extreme Environments

Led by David A. Garcia, this programme engaged with local communities situated in extreme environments globally, addressing all seventeen of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The jury commended its demonstrable sensitivity to environmental conditions and its integration of research into design at every stage. The programme positioned the architecture student as a participant in long-term, place-based collaboration rather than a remote designer of speculative interventions.

Region 3 — University of Washington, Seattle (USA), College of Built Environments, Department of Architecture

Seminar: Traditional Building Methods — New Adaptations

Led by Elizabeth M. Golden, this programme combined interdisciplinary and international collaboration with a sustained focus on building construction. Students engaged with traditional building methods and hands-on learning, working alongside practitioners and community members in contexts where vernacular techniques retained both cultural and environmental value. The jury recognised the programme as an innovative and powerful model of how craft-based learning can sit at the centre of a contemporary curriculum.

Region 4 — School of Architecture, Southeast University, Nanjing (China)

Living Construction in Rural Communities

Led by Zhang Tong with the staff and students at the School of Architecture, this six-year Master of Architecture programme wove together architectural, cultural, social, and environmental learning around the rural condition. The jury noted the impressive focus on issues central to rural communities, such as building traditions, physical restoration, and community revitalisation, and the way these were folded into a coherent professional curriculum rather than treated as electives or fieldwork add-ons.

Region 4 — School of Architecture, Tsinghua University (China)

Inter-learning upon Disciplinary Integration

Led by Song Yehao, this programme demonstrated, through built projects, how design can incorporate unique vernacular materials and approaches through “learning by doing.” The jury described it as a wonderful collaboration between architecture academics, students, and local communities — pedagogically and sustainably grounded, and offering an exciting range of real-world learning opportunities. The built outcomes constituted both the medium and the proof of the pedagogy.

Commended Entries

The jury further identified three entries to be commended for their inspiring proposals that successfully bridged the gap between architects and communities and between various built-environment disciplines.

Region 1 — ETSAB-UPC: Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona (Spain) *Community Architects — Arquitectos de Cabecera Studio Unit (Taller Temàtic AC)*

Programme directors Ibon Bilbao and Josep Bohigas, with Dean Félix Solaguren, led a community-architect studio that positioned students as advocates and collaborators within specific neighbourhoods, working alongside residents and local actors on questions of housing, public space, and equitable urban transformation.

Region 4 — School of Architecture, Southeast University, Nanjing (China) *Positive Intervention in Urban Transition*

Led by Han Dongqing and Bao Li with the staff and students of the School, this programme addressed urban transition through targeted, well-evidenced interventions, treating the studio as a vehicle for diagnostic urban reading as much as for design proposition.

Region 4 — School of Architecture, Southeast University, Nanjing (China) *Sustainable Design Studio*

Led by Wang Jianguo, Han Dongqing, Bao Li, and the staff and students at the School of Architecture, this studio set out an integrated approach to sustainable design across multiple scales, anchoring environmental performance within a wider cultural and urban reading of place.

› 4 THE SECOND EDITION (2022/2023)

The second edition of the Award was launched in September 2022 and concluded with the announcement of results in April 2023. Organised jointly by the UIA Architectural Education Commission and the UIA Sustainable Development Goals Commission, this edition sharpened the thematic focus around the UN Sustainable Development Goals while retaining the regional structure and core criteria established in the inaugural cycle. The awarded entries were presented at the 28th UIA World Congress in Copenhagen, Denmark, in July 2023.

› 4.1 Profile of the Jury

The second-edition jury was chaired by Deniz Incedayi (Turkey) and comprised Martha Thorne (United States / Spain), Howaida Al-Harithy (Lebanon / Saudi Arabia), Michael J. Crosbie (United States), Hermie Delport (South Africa), and Efthalia-Thaleia Grigoriadou (Greece). Anupama Kundoo (India) was named to the panel, with Deniz Incedayi and Efthalia-Thaleia Grigoriadou serving as alternate jury members in the published call. The technical committee was led by Ashraf M. Salama (Egypt / United Kingdom) as Award Curator, with Marilyns Nepomechie (USA), Iman Gawad (Egypt), and Cid Blanco (Brazil) acting as non-voting observers.

The composition concentrated expertise in three complementary domains: design pedagogy and curriculum leadership (Thorne, Crosbie), urban and heritage scholarship in the Global South (Al-Harithy, Incedayi), and applied sustainable practice (Delport, Grigoriadou, Kundoo). The result was a panel well placed to read entries on both pedagogical and substantive grounds; that is, to assess not only how programmes were taught but what they were teaching their students to do in the world. The jury convened on 14 April 2023 to debate the merits of the shortlisted projects.

› 4.2 Profile, Number, and Quality of Entries

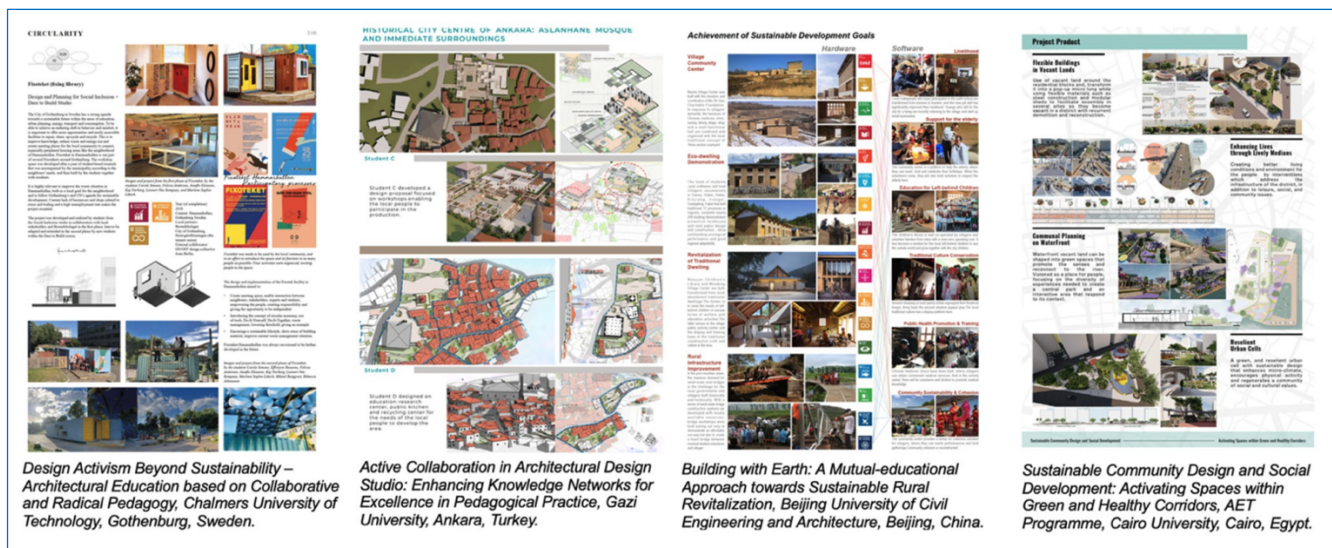
Fifteen submissions were shortlisted from over thirty-five registrations, drawn from twelve countries across four continents. The growth in registrations relative to the inaugural edition signalled that the Award was becoming established as a recognised platform in the international community of schools, and the breadth of submitting countries confirmed that the call had now reached well beyond the regions represented in the first cycle.

The criteria were sharpened: excellence in pedagogical practice based on evidence of pedagogical innovation and enhanced learning outcomes; and excellence in addressing Sustainable Development Goals based on evidence of innovation in content, identification of challenges, and development of solutions. The criteria were unpacked into six areas, adopting SDG-responsive pedagogical approaches, stimulating student inquisitiveness, enhancing diversity of learning needs, integrating research into teaching, working across disciplines, and identifying contextual priorities, which subsequently became the organising frame of the third edition.

› 4.3 Trends and Focus Areas

The second edition surfaced four converging themes. The first was collaborative and radical pedagogy — a willingness to depart from the conventional studio model in favour of co-creative processes involving residents, allied disciplines, and external partners. The second was the use of action research within studios, where students worked iteratively with municipalities and local stakeholders to address concrete urban or rural challenges. The third was the explicit foregrounding of materials and craft — particularly earth construction and other low-impact systems — as both ecological and pedagogical resources. The fourth was the move toward “real-project” learning, in which the studio brief was tied to a specific site, client, or community rather than to an abstract programme.

The jury observed that the strongest entries challenged two assumptions at once: that sustainability is primarily a physical or technical concern, and that pedagogical innovation lies chiefly in form-making or representation. The awarded programmes instead approached sustainability as a social, cultural, and ethical practice, and they treated pedagogical innovation as a question of how learning was organised, with whom, and toward what end. The jury also noted the value of programmes that successfully bridged the gap between thinking and making, the intellectual and the vocational, and the university campus and its wider urban or rural context.



› 4.4 Outlines of the Awarded Schemes

The jury awarded four entries and conferred one Honourable Mention. Each is outlined below.

Region 1 — Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg (Sweden)

Design Activism Beyond Sustainability — Architectural Education Based on Collaborative and Radical Pedagogy

Led by Emilio Brandao, Shea Hagy, Marco Adelfio, and Liane Thuvander at the Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering, this programme foregrounded collaborative and co-creative pedagogy through well-established processes that supported designing, prototyping, and

constructing. The jury commended its emphasis on knowledge progression and skills application in a variety of relevant contexts, achieved through experience-based learning and the development of hyper-local solutions to real-world problems. The programme engaged directly with timely concerns including circularity, environmental education for children, and urban equality.

The programme places emphasis on knowledge progression and skills application in a variety of relevant contexts through experience-based learning and the development of hyper-local solutions for real-world problems.

Region 2 — Gazi University, Ankara (Turkey)

Active Collaboration in Architectural Design Studio: Enhancing Knowledge Networks for Excellence in Pedagogical Practice

Led by Semra Arslan Selçuk, Esra Özkan Yazgan, and Aysenur Coskun at the Department of Architecture, this upper-level design studio took contextual challenges as its starting point and embedded action research within the design process. Working with municipalities and local authorities, students cultivated dialogic learning and developed skills in the reactivation of historic urban centres. The jury recognised an impactful studio in which retrofitting and adaptive reuse were treated as integral components of sustainability, with well-articulated cases that addressed multiple scales of the existing built-environment stock.

Through a community service commitment, this is an impactful studio focusing on retrofitting and adaptive reuse as integral components of sustainability with interesting well-articulated cases addressing various scales of existing built environment stock.

Region 4 — Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Beijing (China)

Building with Earth: A Mutual-Educational Approach Towards Sustainable Rural Revitalisation Empowered by Traditional Wisdom

Led by Mu Jun, Hao Shimeng, Jiang Wei, Zhou Tiegang, Jin Yibing, and Ren Zhongqi, this programme responded holistically to the SDGs in the context of China's rapid urbanisation. With a sound pedagogical foundation, it engaged actors from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines, working directly with village communities in a model where every participant learns. The programme tested earth as a building material and delivered real built projects, demonstrating that pedagogical and ecological objectives can be pursued simultaneously and that the results can carry genuine impact at the scale of villages and rural settlements.

With a very sound pedagogical approach the programme engages with a variety of players coming from different backgrounds and disciplines to work directly with the villagers where everyone learns.

Region 5 — Cairo University, Cairo (Egypt)

Sustainable Community Design and Social Development: Activating Spaces within Green and Healthy Corridors

Led by Heba Allah Essam E. Khalil within the Architectural Engineering & Technology (AET) Programme at the Faculty of Engineering, this studio addressed green and healthy urban corridors through actual projects that immersed students in real design challenges. Studio work was tied to action research, using a varied toolkit that included assessment, gaming, negotiation, observation, and communication. Students identified unused opportunities in the

city, vacant land, medians, residual spaces, in which to intervene, producing outcomes that pointed toward a more sustainable future for Cairo.

The studio work is tied to action research with a great variety of tools and techniques that include assessment, gaming, negotiation, observations, and communication. Students look for unused opportunities in their city in which to intervene, such as vacant land and medians.

Honourable Mention

The jury identified one entry for an Honourable Mention, recognising an inspiring proposal that successfully considered the relationship between the natural and the built environment with equality embedded as a key design parameter.

Region 4 — Tianjin University, Tianjin (China)

Designing with Nature and Equality

Led by Kong Yuhang, Yang Wei, Zhang Xinnan, Xin Shanchao, Song Yilin, Yang Hongwei, Guo Mengdi, and Zhang Yifan at the Department of Architecture, this programme set out a carefully considered model addressing multiple levels of student learning, with detail and rigour that the jury considered exemplary. Its longevity, over a decade in operation, spoke to its influence on the school's pedagogical culture. The programme is heavily anchored in scientific research; its international component widens its impact, and its interdisciplinary approach reflects a sustained organisational ambition.

The fact that this programme is over a decade old speaks to how much of an influence it has had on shaping a sustainable future. Heavily anchored in scientific research the international component of the programme makes its impact global, as does the interdisciplinary approach.

› 5 THE THIRD EDITION (2026)

The third edition of the Award was launched in October 2025 and concluded with the announcement of results on 17 April 2026. The awarded and commended entries are scheduled to be presented at the awards ceremony during the 29th UIA World Congress in Barcelona on 2 July 2026. The third edition is the first to be wholly aligned with the updated UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education (July 2023 edition, revised again for 2026), and is the largest and most geographically distributed cycle to date.

› 5.1 Profile of the Jury

The third-edition jury was chaired by Jana Revedin (Germany), Advisor to the UIA Architectural Education Commission and UNESCO Delegate, and comprised James B. Brown (Sweden), Karine Dupre (United States), Lindy Osborne Burton (Australia), and Jolanda Morkel (South Africa). Andrii Markovskiy (Ukraine) served as the jury alternate. The management team comprised Ashraf M. Salama (United Kingdom / Egypt) as Award Manager and Curator, with a non-voting technical committee of Selma Harrington (Ireland), Kevin Bingham (South Africa), and Kaname Yanagisawa (Japan). The panel was smaller than in previous editions, reflecting a more concentrated assessment model. Its strength lay in the depth of experience each juror brought to the categories most consequential for this cycle: Revedin's standing on the UNESCO-UIA Charter and sustainable architecture; Brown's scholarship on the contemporary studio; Dupre's work on pedagogical innovation; Osborne Burton's continuity as the only juror also present in the inaugural cycle, ensuring institutional memory; and Morkel's expertise in inclusive and open pedagogies. The composition signalled an explicit alignment with the principles of the updated Charter.

› 5.2 Profile, Number, and Quality of Entries

Thirty-two entries from twenty-two countries across all five UIA regions were shortlisted out of more than seventy registrations, after the exclusion of four ineligible entries. This represents a substantial increase in scale and geographic spread relative to the first two editions: more than double the number of registrations of the second edition, and the first cycle to see active participation from Region V (Africa) at scale.

The regional distribution of shortlisted entries was as follows: Region I (Western Europe) with eight entries from Ireland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Spain, and France (La Réunion); Region II (Central and Eastern Europe, Western Asia) with five entries from Turkey, Poland, Iran, and the UAE; Region III (the Americas) with four entries from the USA, Argentina, and Peru; Region IV (Asia and Oceania) with eight entries from China, Singapore, Australia, and Bangladesh; Region V (Africa) with six entries from Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia, and Uganda; and one cross-regional entry spanning Regions III and II (USA and Palestinian Territories).

The evaluation criteria built on the foundation established in the previous editions, organised around the six areas of innovative pedagogy, impactful inquiry, inclusive learning, research-

driven design education, interdisciplinary engagement, and contextual responsiveness. Aligning with the principles of the UNESCO-UIA Charter (updated July 2023), the call underscored the critical contribution of architectural education in responding to pressing societal and environmental challenges and in revealing the opportunities those challenges create.

› 5.3 Trends and Focus Areas

The third edition surfaced six interconnected trends. The first was systemic curriculum reform: several entries operated not at the level of an individual studio or course but across an entire degree programme, in some cases across an entire national system. The second was inclusive pedagogy with direct participation: programmes that brought users with impairments into the design process as co-participants rather than as subjects of speculative accessibility projects.

The third trend was operational urbanism: programmes that converted foundational courses into city-scale design laboratories, with students executing real public-space interventions documented through measurable outcomes. The fourth was technically rigorous sustainability anchored in physical making and measurable performance, validated through realised installations, competition outcomes, and registered patents. The fifth was justice-oriented pedagogy that integrates climate justice, spatial justice, and circular material practice across a five-year curriculum. The sixth was collaborative online international learning sustained through conditions of geopolitical adversity.

Across the shortlisted entries, the jury observed a consistent willingness to bridge long-standing divides — between architecture and allied disciplines, between academic institutions and the communities they serve, between conceptual thinking and physical making, and between the campus and its broader urban, regional, and digital context. The entries offered a compelling spectrum of how architectural education is evolving to confront the complex realities of sustainable development, moving well beyond narrow environmental or technical framings to encompass social justice, civic engagement, heritage, health, and inclusion. The jury noted, distinctively, the active participation of Region V (Africa) in this cycle.

› 5.4 Outlines of the Awarded Schemes

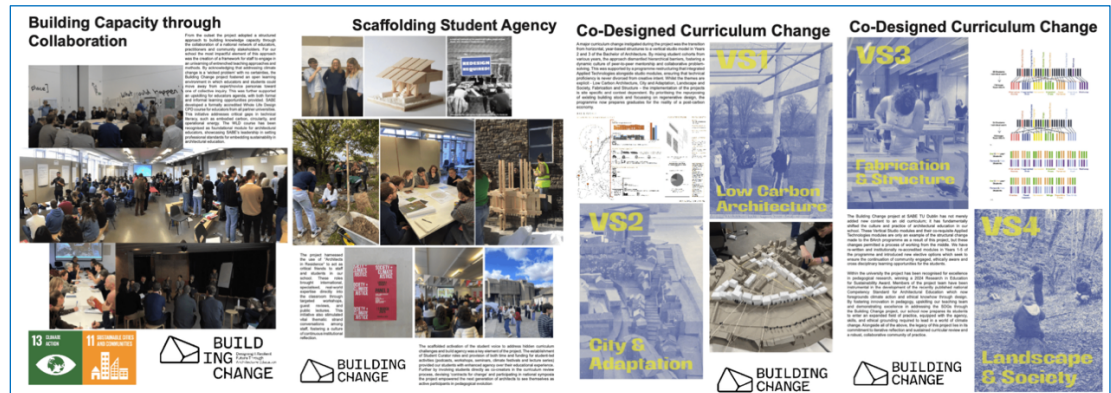
The jury awarded five entries for their excellence in pedagogy and their address of timely and pressing challenges, and commended a further four entries for their distinctive qualities and merits. Each awarded and commended scheme is outlined below.

Region I — Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), Republic of Ireland

Building Change — Bachelor of Architecture (Hons) Curriculum Reform

The jury awarded this entry for a nationally significant curriculum reform operating at a scale and policy reach that distinguishes it from most other entries in this cycle. Funded by the Irish Higher Education Authority and led by TU Dublin as national project lead, the Building Change project coordinated the transformation of architectural education across all six Irish schools of architecture, exemplifying a systemic, government-backed programme well beyond a single studio or institutional reform.

Within TU Dublin, key innovations include a vertical studio model mixing year cohorts, an Architects in Residence programme, student-devised contracts for change, and a staff unlearning framework that treats climate change as a problem with no expert solution. The development of the Whole Life Design CPD course for educators and the project team's direct contribution to revising Ireland's national Competency Standard for Architectural Education extend the programme's impact across the entire Irish architecture profession.



Region III — University of Lima, Peru

Inclusive by Design: International Online Workshop on Universal Design and Inclusive Architectural Education

The jury awarded this entry unanimously for a focused and well-argued contribution to one of the most underdeveloped areas of architectural education: the direct engagement of people with impairments as co-participants in the design process. The two-week international online workshop brought together 170 students and faculty from seven universities across five UIA regions. Its defining feature was the direct participation of students with intellectual disabilities from CEU San Pablo, Spain, shifting design thinking from projection to dialogue and repositioning Universal Design as an epistemological driver rather than a compliance requirement. The workshop applied Universal Design not only to its design briefs but to its own pedagogical structure, using multiple modes of representation to accommodate diverse cognitive approaches within international teams working across all of the UIA regions. The jury commended the entry for promoting Universal Design as a source of inquiry and for advancing cross-cultural pedagogy.



Region III — University of Buenos Aires (UBA), Argentina

(Inter)Urban Actions — Introduction to Design Knowledge II

The jury awarded this entry for a structurally original and operationally convincing pedagogical model that converts a compulsory first-year foundational course — serving 400 to 600 students per term at one of Latin America's largest public universities — into a city-scale design laboratory. Since 2023, more than 2,000 students have executed over 300 real public-space interventions across Buenos Aires, reaching an estimated 150,000 users. The programme's defining contribution is its insistence that a project is complete only when real effects are observed and documented, not when it is represented.

The jury identified the municipal adoption of a student street prototype, with permanent infrastructure installed within two weeks of the student intervention, as among the most compelling cross-sectoral impact outcomes in this cycle. The jury commended the entry for promoting a shift from image-making to project reasoning under real constraints, and for taking responsibility for consequences.



Region IV — South China University of Technology (SCUT), China

Proof of Design-Led Subtropical Sustainability: Dialogue, Build, Innovate

The jury awarded this entry for a technically rigorous and institutionally embedded approach to sustainability pedagogy, grounded in the humid subtropical conditions of the Pearl River Delta. The Dialogue–Build–Innovate framework structures learning as a continuous cycle: global co-creation identifies climate and social challenges; construction validates sustainable concepts through physical making; and an innovation pathway translates design research into documented technology outcomes.

The programme's defining contribution is its insistence that sustainability be demonstrated through realised physical outcomes and measured performance data. Sixteen permanent bamboo community installations, multiple Solar Decathlon completions including the 2021 Middle East championship, published research, and registered patents confirm a programme where pedagogical claims are substantiated by verifiable evidence. The jury commended the entry for developing a multiscale model based on proof.



Region V — University of Pretoria, South Africa

From Awareness to Co-Implementation: A Staged Pedagogy for Climate Justice, Spatial Justice, and Circular Material Practice

The jury awarded this entry for a theoretically grounded and institutionally sustained model of full-curriculum transformation. The five-stage developmental trajectory — awareness, philanthropy, activism, solidarity, and collaboration — functions as a deliberate curriculum architecture, progressively expanding students' ethical, methodological, and professional capacities across both the BArch (Hons) and MArch programmes.

Three thematic lines — climate justice, co-design for spatial justice, and design for material circularity — are woven throughout the curriculum rather than assigned to individual years, producing cumulative learning and long-term community partnerships. The programme operates within the specific conditions of the post-apartheid South African city, where spatial injustice, climate vulnerability, and constrained resources are sites of ethical and professional accountability rather than design parameters. The jury commended the entry for developing an overarching pedagogical vision with strong guiding principles, addressing an entire five-year programme.



Commended Entries

The jury identified four additional entries to be commended for their distinctive qualities and merits.

Region I — Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC), Spain

Arquitectes de Capçalera: City and Childhood International Workshops

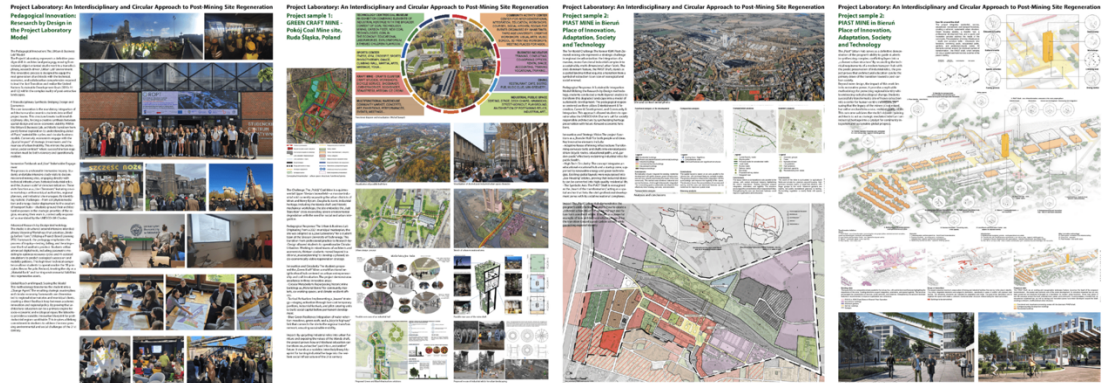
The jury commended this entry for its child-centred approach to inclusive participatory practice, running since 2010 and documented across 2023 and 2025 workshop editions delivered in Oaxaca, Mexico. The programme's defining contribution is the treatment of children as primary design stakeholders. Children's drawings of their fears — including kidnapping and darkness in public space — were used directly as design evidence, making safety a core requirement rather than an afterthought. The 2023 edition transformed 930 square metres of neglected public space in front of a primary school for approximately 900 euros in local currency, using donated and reclaimed materials.



Region II — Silesian University of Technology, Poland

Project Laboratory: An Interdisciplinary and Circular Approach to Post-Mining Site Regeneration

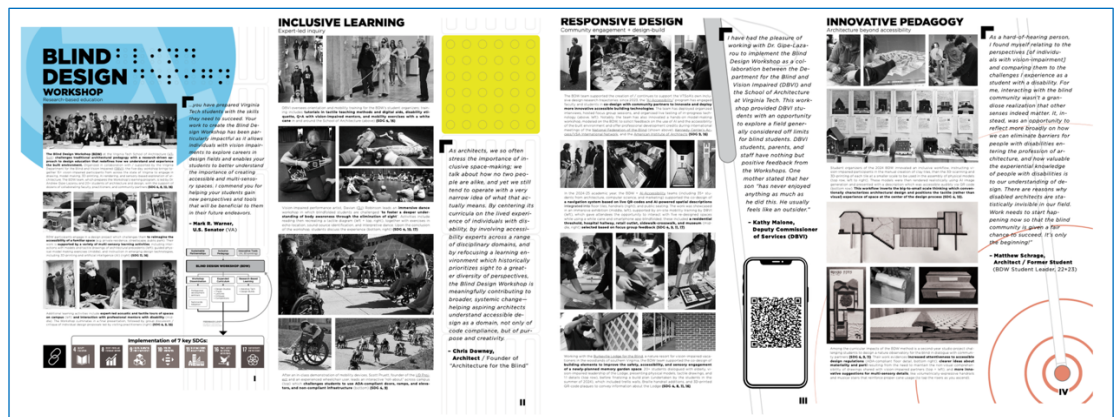
The jury commended this entry for a rigorous and deeply contextualised approach to post-industrial design education in Upper Silesia's decommissioned coal-mining region, which is navigating the social, environmental, and economic pressures of the European Just Transition. The programme's defining structural innovation is the mandatory Urban and Business Lab, which integrates architecture and economics students into unified project teams to negotiate spatial quality and socio-economic viability simultaneously. Student proposals have been integrated into the Regional Observatory of Transformation Processes policy framework — a concrete demonstration of impact well beyond the studio.



Region III — Virginia Tech, United States of America

Blind Design Workshop: Advancing Curricular Transformation with Collaborative and Inclusive Pedagogy

The jury commended this entry for a sustained, strengths-focused pedagogical initiative that positions vision-impaired participants as co-designers, critics, and knowledge-holders whose expertise is treated as indispensable to the profession. The annual five-day workshop, running since 2022 in partnership with the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, inverts the visual hierarchy of architectural education by placing tactile, acoustic, and haptic experience at the centre of design inquiry. The programme has generated documented curricular ripple effects across design studios, thesis projects, and school-wide research.



Regions III and II — Arizona State University (USA) and An-Najah National University (Palestinian Territories)

Building Futures Exchange

The jury commended this entry for a purposeful and structurally sound Collaborative Online International Learning exchange connecting more than 1,650 students across two institutions, two countries, and conditions of active geopolitical adversity, demonstrating that architectural education can sustain cross-cultural dialogue when physical exchange is constrained or impossible. The two-semester programme moves from a foundational lecture exchange building intercultural understanding to an upper-level studio designing a kindergarten for the

Ein Beit al-Ma refugee camp in Nablus. The programme's continuation and deliberate deepening of exchange after October 2023 is among the most contextually grounded and humanly significant decisions documented in this cycle.



› 6 LESSONS LEARNED AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FOURTH EDITION

Three editions of the Award have generated enough material to support a comparative reading. The inaugural cycle established the basic architecture of the programme: regional representation, twin criteria of pedagogical excellence and sustainable contribution, and a triennial rhythm. The second cycle refined the criteria into six evaluative areas and sharpened the focus on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The third cycle doubled the pool of registrations, achieved active participation from all five UIA regions for the first time, and produced the most detailed jury documentation yet. Each edition has built on the structural decisions of the one before.

› 6.1 Lessons Learned

Recognition matters, and the field has responded

The growth in registrations across the three editions confirms that schools value formal recognition of pedagogical work, and that they are prepared to invest substantial documentary effort to seek it. The increase from sixteen entries in 2020/2021 to thirty-two shortlisted entries (from over seventy registrations) in 2026 indicates that the Award has now established itself as a recognised international platform. Future editions can expect to handle a larger volume of submissions and may need to plan for this in their management structures.

Regional balance is achievable but requires sustained effort

The first two editions surfaced strong work from Regions I, III, and IV but limited engagement from Regions II and V. The third edition saw the first sustained participation from Region V (Africa), with six shortlisted entries and one awarded programme. This shift did not happen by accident; it followed targeted outreach and the inclusion of Region V voices on the management and technical committees. Continued attention to outreach in under-represented regions remains a priority for the fourth edition.

Pedagogical scale needs distinct categories

The third-edition jury observed that entries ranged across very different pedagogical scales: from individual workshops and studio courses to whole-programme curriculum reform. Comparing a focused two-week international workshop against a nationally funded six-school reform is conceptually difficult, even when both are excellent. The jury recommended that future editions consider introducing two distinct submission categories, one recognising innovation at the level of an individual course or studio, and another recognising systemic innovation across a full programme or curriculum.

Inclusive learning remains the least evidenced criterion

Across the six evaluative areas of the third edition, the jury observed that inclusive learning was the least consistently addressed. While several entries demonstrated exceptional commitment to inclusivity, the criterion as a whole was either narrowly interpreted or insufficiently evidenced in many entries. This signals a gap that future guidance to applicants

should address directly, with concrete examples of what credible documentation of inclusive learning looks like.

Real impact is the most distinguishing quality

The awarded programmes across all three editions share a common feature: their pedagogical claims are substantiated by verifiable outcomes outside the studio. Bamboo installations still standing in rural communities, municipal infrastructure adopted from student prototypes, national curriculum standards revised on the strength of school-led research, curricula transformed across full degree programmes; these are the marks of work that has moved beyond representation into consequence. The strongest entries are those that can show what changed in the world as a result of the teaching.

› **6.2 Aspirations for the Fourth Edition**

Building on the lessons of the three completed cycles, the fourth edition can be shaped around several deliberate aspirations.

- Introduce two clearly defined submission categories, one for course- or studio-level innovation, one for full-programme or curriculum-level transformation, so that entries are compared against peers of equivalent ambition and scale.
- Issue expanded guidance on the inclusive-learning criterion, drawing on the awarded entries of the third edition (notably the University of Lima's Inclusive by Design workshop and Virginia Tech's Blind Design Workshop) as worked examples of what credible engagement looks like.
- Sustain outreach to Region II and Region V schools to consolidate the gains of the third edition, and develop targeted communications to under-represented countries within each region.
- Invite lead academics from awarded and commended programmes of previous editions onto subsequent juries, ensuring that first-hand expertise informs evaluation while preserving jury independence.
- Strengthen the post-award dissemination cycle so that the awarded and commended programmes are documented in transferable form — short methodological notes, sample briefs, evaluation criteria — that other schools can adapt to their own contexts.
- Align the fourth edition explicitly with the 2026 update to the UNESCO-UIA Charter, particularly its sections on regenerative justice, the role of AI in architectural education, and the formalised triennial revision cycle.

› 7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ENTRIES

The strongest entries across all three editions share a set of practical qualities that prospective applicants would do well to internalise. These are not formal requirements beyond the published criteria, but they are the qualities that have, in practice, distinguished awarded and commended schemes from the wider field.

› 7.1 Frame the pedagogy, not just the project

The Award is for pedagogical innovation, not for built work, urban projects, or research outputs taken in isolation. Submissions that lead with the building or installation, and leave the pedagogy implicit, tend to lose ground to submissions that articulate explicitly how learning is organised: what students do, in what sequence, with what guidance, and to what assessable outcome. The pedagogical argument should be the spine of the submission, with the projects and outcomes presented in support of it.

› 7.2 Show evidence of learning, not only of activity

Juries look for evidence that learning outcomes have been enhanced; student work, evaluations, longitudinal tracking, external recognition, downstream effects on student careers, or comparative data from before and after the pedagogical change. Submissions that describe extensive activity but offer no evidence of its effect on student capability are weaker than submissions that show, even modestly, what students learned that they could not previously do.

› 7.3 Locate the work in its context

Contextual responsiveness is one of the six evaluative areas and a strong predictor of success. The most highly regarded entries situate their pedagogical decisions within the specific conditions of their region, institutional, political, environmental, cultural, and explain why those conditions made the particular choices the right ones. Generic language that could apply to any school in any region tends to undercut the strength of an otherwise strong submission.

› 7.4 Document inclusive learning concretely

Given the gap identified by the third-edition jury, the inclusive-learning criterion deserves particular attention. Credible documentation goes beyond statements of intent: it shows how the programme accommodates diverse cognitive, sensory, linguistic, and cultural learning needs; how multiple legitimate pathways through the curriculum are enabled; how student voice is registered and acted on; and how the assessment regime is calibrated to different forms of demonstrating competence.

› 7.5 Demonstrate impact beyond the studio

Across the three editions, the most consistently awarded programmes are those that produce verifiable effects outside the classroom: built outcomes that endure, policy documents that incorporate student work, municipal infrastructure that adopts student proposals, curricula

revised on the strength of school-led research. Submissions should document such effects directly, with dates, partners, and evidence of continuity.

› 7.6 Respect the visual brief

The Award's assessment is conducted primarily through submission boards. The clarity, legibility, and structure of those boards materially affect the jury's ability to read the work. Submissions that follow the published visual brief, use a clear hierarchy, and avoid dense unstructured text consistently fare better than equally substantial submissions that bury their argument in undifferentiated material.

› 8 CONCLUSION — DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF INNOVATION IN ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

Three editions of the Award have made one thing clear: innovation in architectural education is not a marginal pursuit confined to a small number of experimental programmes. It is happening across every UIA region, at every scale from the individual workshop to the full degree programme, and across a broad spectrum of focus areas. The schools that have submitted and the schools that have been recognised are not outliers; they are reading the moment correctly and acting on what they read.

Several directions for the future emerge from this body of work. The first is that pedagogical innovation will increasingly be measured by its effects beyond the studio. The strongest awarded programmes do not stop at the seminar room or the studio crit. They produce permanent installations in real communities, infrastructure adopted by municipalities, curricula revised across national systems, and policy frameworks that cite student work. The boundary between teaching and practice is becoming more porous, and the Award is one of the instruments by which that porosity is being made visible.

The second direction is the deepening alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and with the principles of the UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education. Across the three editions, the focus areas of the awarded programmes have tracked the evolving understanding of sustainable development, from environmental performance to social equity, from technical solutions to justice-oriented practice. The 2026 update to the Charter, framing architecture as regenerative justice and introducing guidance on artificial intelligence in education, signals the next phase of this evolution. Future editions of the Award will need to register how schools are responding to both agendas.

The third direction is the consolidation of inclusive pedagogy. The third-edition jury identified inclusive learning as the least consistently evidenced criterion and pointed to the programmes that did it well as exemplars. The next decade is likely to see this criterion become more central, not less, as schools confront the diversity of their student populations, the urgency of decolonising the curriculum, and the demands of cognitive and bodily accessibility. Programmes that build inclusion into their pedagogical core, rather than appending it as an after-thought, will set the standard.

The fourth direction is the growing significance of collaborative, networked pedagogies that operate across institutions, countries, and regions. From the international online workshop on Universal Design, to the Collaborative Online International Learning exchange between Arizona State and An-Najah, to the multi-institution networks anchored at South China University of Technology, recent editions of the Award have surfaced programmes that take collaboration across borders as a structural feature rather than an enrichment. This trajectory will accelerate, and the Award will be well placed to recognise and document the most effective examples.

The fifth direction concerns the architecture of the discipline itself. The awarded programmes consistently treat architecture as a discipline that overlaps with civic life, public health, environmental science, economics, anthropology, computing, and the arts. They train graduates who are comfortable working across these overlaps and who see the overlaps as constitutive of contemporary practice rather than as deviations from it. The Award is, in a quiet way, an instrument for redefining what counts as architecture by recognising the programmes that are doing this redefinition well.

The conclusion that follows from these directions is straightforward. Architectural education in the next decade will be more outward-facing, more justice-oriented, more inclusive, more collaborative, and more confidently interdisciplinary than it has been at any previous moment in the discipline's modern history. The UIA Award for Innovation in Architectural Education exists to recognise the schools that are already there, to make their work transferable, and to raise the standard for everyone else. Three editions in, the case for the Award is stronger than it was at the outset, and the work it is bringing to light is more consequential than ever.

The fourth edition begins from a position of confidence. The platform is established, the jury culture is mature, the criteria are well understood, and the field of submitting schools is global. The next cycle should consolidate these strengths, address the gaps identified by the third-edition jury, and continue to do what the Award has done from the start: to celebrate the multifaceted nature of innovation in architectural education across the boundaries of cultures and geographies, and to promote the inspiring pedagogical practices that contribute to the creation of sustainable environments.



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