

best practice paper:

**regulations
and best
practices for
organising
design award
competitions**

ico-D. Leading creatively.

ico-D is the world body for professional design. It is a non-profit, non-partisan, member-based network of independent organisations and stakeholders working within the multidisciplinary scope of design and expanded media. Founded in 1963, ico-D actively promotes the value of design practice, thinking, education, research and policy, representing more than 140 organisations in 67 countries and regions globally.

ico-D's members believe in interdisciplinary collaboration and the effectiveness of a collective voice to represent the design industry.

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Introduction

Design award competitions differ from competitions for contract work. Award competitions are aimed at evaluating and recognising existing work. The purpose is to illustrate and define current benchmarks, and to highlight leading social, cultural and economic markers that may influence future design projects.

The success of a competition depends on the rules. Individual designers or teams of designers are invited to enter. They are offered prizes relevant to the complexity and importance of the topic or theme.

The ico-D Secretariat provides general advice to organisers on developing rules and guidelines and on appointing jurors. We provide substantial consultation for endorsed events, which is a free service to members and offered on a fee basis to non-members.

This document includes regulations and best practices governing the organisation of award competitions. Rules are the instructions given to the participant, regulations are the conditions ico-D requires for endorsement and best practices are non-binding advice that should be applied where possible.

ico-D recommends that its members abstain from entering or acting as jurors for award competitions that do not comply with this document.

For information on competitions for contract work, please see ico-D's professional practice paper **Soliciting work from professional designers**.

Where an award competition is endorsed by ico-D, this document must be circulated to the jury chair in advance of the competition.

Unintentional breach of these regulations and best practices by an ico-D-endorsed competition will result in a letter of warning. Any subsequent breach will result in the withdrawal of the endorsement.

About award competitions

The main objectives of award programs are typically:

- to recognise the merit of existing work;
- to raise standards of design; and
- to promote a better and wider use of design.

Award competitions give awards in the form of medals, trophies, certificates, and/or cash prizes. In general, the guidelines for design award competitions conform to those governing competitions for contract work, subject to differences in objectives and methods, resulting in the rule differences.

Award competitions do not require participants to produce original designs, unless a competition has a specific theme.

Award competition cash prizes, if offered, may be of lesser value than prescribed for prizes for competitions for contract work.

Award competition rules must insist that compliant entries include the names and addresses of entrants.

Regulations

1.1 Jury

The jury for award competitions must include at least five people.

The majority of the jurors must be professional designers who are members of a member association of ico-D. Jurors who are not practising designers must have expertise relevant to the competition.

For an award competition to be called “international”, the jury must include jurors from at least two of these six regions of the world (North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Western Asia, Asia, Oceania).

For an award competition to be called “regional”, the jury must include jurors from at least three countries of that region.

Where a competition is an annual event, no more than 45% of the jurors can serve on consecutive juries.

No juror, nor any member of their immediate family, firm, or design teams (designers who collaborate on a regular basis) may compete in the competition.

The names of the jurors must be published in the Call for Submissions.

1.2 Duties of the jurors

The jurors will attend all official meetings of the panel, which can take place face-to-face, via telecommunication or in an online environment.

If the organisers of the award competition have not nominated a chairperson, the jurors will elect a jury chairperson from amongst themselves.

If the organisers of the award competition have not stipulated a decision-making process, the jury will choose what to do.

The jurors will examine all the designs submitted by the entrants, determine whether they meet the rules and exclude those that do not.

The jury chairperson will prepare a written report of the voting results.

Regulations

1.3 Independent moderator

An independent moderator (“Moderator”) must be appointed by the organiser to act amongst the organiser, the jury and the entrants. The name of the moderator must be announced at the same time as the announcement of the competition.

The Moderator is responsible for:

- receiving all submissions;
- receiving written questions within the time limit stated in the rules;
- passing the written questions received, without disclosing any names, to the jury or to a juror appointed by the jury chairperson for answering questions;
- sending all the questions and the jury’s corresponding answers to all entrants, by a date mentioned in the rules;
- opening the submissions after the deadline of the competition;
- keeping a register of all submissions;
- passing the submissions to the jury;
- ensuring all submissions are returned (unless other arrangements have been agreed upon).

The moderator may not act as a secretary to the jury, nor take part in the jury’s work in any way.

1.4 Time frame

There must be a minimum of one month and no more than six months between the Call for Submissions and the closing date for submissions.

1.5 The brief

The rules shall clearly define and explain the objectives and the topic/theme of the award competition. Full information shall be provided on all aspects of the competition.

Regulations

1.6 Copyright and patents

Organisers must comply with the clause on copyright and patents that appears in ico-D's International conditions of contract and engagement for communication designers.

1.7 Identification of submissions

The names and address of the participant must be shown on all submissions.

1.8 Awards and prizes

The form and number of awards and prizes must be clearly defined in the Call for Submissions. If cash prizes are included, their monetary value must be stated. It must also be stated whether the jury, at its discretion, may withhold the awards or prizes or divide the total prize money in other proportions.

Awards and any cash prizes must be paid within one month of the announcement of the awards. In countries where currency restrictions are in force, the organiser is responsible for arranging permission to remit the prize money to foreign participants.

1.9 Protection and return

The organiser is responsible for the safety of all submissions received. Organisers must include in their regulations a statement regarding whether submissions will be returned, and the terms and conditions regarding who pays for the return and when it will happen.

1.10 Report

When a competition is endorsed by ico-D, the organiser will provide a full report to ico-D once the judging process has been completed.

This report must include the number of entrants, the names of the jurors, the names of the winners and comments by the jurors on the quality of the work submitted.

Best practices

2.1 Pre-selection committee

We recommend a pre-selection committee where it may be necessary to convene a jury panel meeting for more than two or three days.

The organiser should appoint five or more committee members. The majority of the committee members should be practising designers.

The work of the pre-selection committee should be limited to ensuring that submissions meet the rules outlined in the Call for Submissions.

The pre-selection committee must not be asked to judge the quality of the design of any submissions.

2.2 Jury composition

We recommend that gender should be a consideration when constructing juries.

2.3 Reimbursement of jurors

We recommend that the organiser pay jurors' travel, provide accommodation and per diems.

2.4 Publication of results

All entrants should be advised of the names of the prize winners within two months of the closing date of the competition.

2.5 Exhibition

All entrants should be informed, within two months of the closing date, whether the organisers intend to arrange a public exhibition or intend to publish the designs submitted.

Unsuccessful entrants have the right to refuse publication of their work.

2.6 Protection and return

If the organiser fails to include a statement regarding whether submissions will be returned, and the terms and conditions regarding who pays for that and when it will happen, they are obligated to fulfill all requests for return of work received within two months of the awards decision at the organiser's cost, and to fulfil those requests within two months of receipt.

Student award programmes

Introduction

All regulations for award competitions also apply to student award competitions.

3.1 Supervision by teaching staff

The extent to which the teaching staff may assist or participate in submissions must be clearly stated in the rules. If collaborative or group submissions are allowed, then this must be clearly stated.

3.2 Allocation of prizes

We recommend that schools have a clear and transparent policy shared with students regarding how awards and prizes will be shared when won by students.

3.3 Awards programs as part of school curriculum

Organisers may arrange so that an award competition conforms to and becomes part of the education institution's curriculum. We recommend that schools consider students to have complied with curriculum requirements if they complete the creative brief. Students have the option to submit or not submit the work to the competition.

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