

AFH STUDENT DESIGN AWARDS
Information for Tutors and Students

The AfH Student Design Awards is an annual design competition for students and 2027 marks our 19th year.

AfH is committed to encouraging the next generation to become passionate about the quality of design for health and social care settings. Our goal is to celebrate the opportunities for innovation and experimentation and to bring together students from different disciplines to share their creative ideas. We are keen to engage students within all design disciplines, including landscape, creative health, interior design and architecture.

Award streams are curated annually following the receipt of submission and are typically made at BA and MA level. For the second year running, we will also have five thematic award categories, based on project type. Students are invited to select ONE category that they would like their project to be assessed for. Each category will be evaluated at Masters and Undergraduate level.

Award Categories + Descriptors

- **Public Health:** The art and science of preventing disease, promoting healthy lifestyles, and protecting populations from health threats, focusing on entire communities rather than just individual patients. It tackles root causes like poverty, poor housing, and pollution to reduce health inequalities and respond to emergencies. Typically this category focuses on projects outside of the traditional hospital/ healthcare setting - including housing, streetscapes, and nature based spaces.
- **Primary + Community Healthcare:** The first contact a person has with the health system when they have a health problem or issue that is not an emergency. It is the part of the health system that people use most and may be provided, for example, by a general practitioner (GP), physiotherapist or pharmacist. A renewed focus on Neighbourhood Health means this is category ripe for expansion.
- **Acute Healthcare:** Refers to the active, short-term treatment for sudden, severe conditions, often in emergency departments, urgent care centres, or hospitals, with the goal of stabilising the patient for discharge.
- **Mental Health:** Involves services and support for emotional, psychological, and social well-being, aiming to improve daily functioning and overall quality of life.
- **Creative Health and Wellbeing:** Creative health involves creative activities that benefit health and wellbeing, contributing to the prevention of ill-health and the promotion of healthy behaviours supporting long-term health and wellbeing and recovery from illness and injury.

  Creative health can be applied in homes, communities, cultural institutions, heritage sites and healthcare. Examples include activities aimed at conditions like dementia, Parkinson's Disease, long COVID, addiction or poor mental health.

AfH members support colleges and universities where healthcare already forms part of the curriculum, encouraging those undertaking healthcare design projects to extend and embed their learning, through reviews (crits) and seminars on request.

The brief can be used at the tutor's discretion.



AFH STUDENT DESIGN AWARDS
The Brief

Image: Our judges huddle at the 2026 awards event. The award for Best Presentation is mode on the day following presentations by students.

This brief can be used by students or tutors who do not have a health design element to their course.

The Form of Wellbeing – a Sum of Parts

We are becoming increasingly aware of the need for a healthy environment, of the problems of pollution, obesity, global warming, loneliness; the destruction of species and the emergence of super bugs that have touched and impacted on all of us in recent times.

We are now very much aware of the need for exercise, sunlight, vitamins, contact with nature and social bonds.

Even governments are shifting from their two-dimensional metric measuring national life from GDP to a wellbeing economy, putting the wellbeing of people and the planet first. It's about a holistic prosperity for humanity not only around our economy, our society, our environment and habitats but also our physical and mental health.

So how can our architecture and the spaces and landscape we inhabit, respond to this new consciousness?

Ancient cultures have already explored this. The Asclepieon, situated outside Epidaurus, was the most celebrated healing centre dating from the third or fourth century BC. It was a place where one went to be cured: a total landscape of wellbeing, built around a health centre.

Embracing temples, clinics, landscape, houses for sleeping and dream cures as well as an athletics stadium, it was of course, also a theatre for cultural, spiritual, and physical catharsis. The views out to sea and the captivating landscape were as much a part of the healing process as were the health treatments. Over the years a revival of these ideals of a healthy city have emerged in response to poverty, plague, over development and war.

The early modernists created an architecture of clinical precision, light and air, in which the interior merged into an exterior framed by trees and greenery.

The anthroposophists created an architecture based on observation of the essential, living world and in the strengthening of the mental-spiritual qualities of man; in the observation of the mineral, plant, animal and human world and in the observation, and above all strengthening, of one's own thinking, feeling and will. Health was always at the heart of the project but was very much part of wider milieu.

More recently, with the medicalisation of pivotal moments: life, birth, old age and death, the idea of an architecture for health was extracted from the mainstream of construction and ghettoised into the modern hospital and clinic, a sterile environment with its focus on healing, shifting towards an institution.

Has this "ghettoisation" of the architecture of health led to a wholesale forgetting of the importance of wellbeing in the architecture of the everyday?

In recent years, our understanding of health has progressed into an appreciation of "wellbeing". In architecture, this transition could not be more pronounced: it is the move away from the functionalist constraints of an aesthetic of hygiene, to a contemporary situation in which architecture, technology, interiors and the environment are entwined in a symbiotic relationship with occupants which will evolve, envisaging a future too different from our present.

So how will "wellbeing" manifest and evolve in the things we touch, the places we live, the places we heal and the towns and cities we live in?

Students are invited to submit responses either individually or collectively. Collaboration with other design disciplines is also welcome.



AFH STUDENT DESIGN AWARDS
Judging Criteria & Awards Ceremony

The awards ceremony will take place on Wednesday 14th July in central London. Please save the date!

Judging Process and Moderation

Judges are allocated to awards categories based on expertise and interest. Submissions are grouped and allocated to up to three judges (or judging groups) for scoring. Every student is scored. For each criteria, up to five marks are available, with a maximum score of 20 marks available in total. Scores are based on the following mark scheme:

1 – Poor
2 – Needs Improvement
3 – Satisfactory
4 – Good
5 – Outstanding / Excellent

A final moderation session is held at the end of June when high marking submissions will be reviewed by the judging panel and award-winners agreed.

Awards Ceremony

All students who have submitted a project are invited to attend for the afternoon and evening. You will have the opportunity to present your project to the group and the 'jury', comprising AfH Member practices, award sponsors and members of the jury, will vote for a winner of the 'Best Presentation' prize.

Awards will be presented for Winners and Highly Commended in each category, in addition to several special awards - notably: Best Drawing and the Susan Francis Special Award for Art and Architecture.

Students who submit work will receive a complementary AfH membership for one year as part of their registration. All submissions are captured in a beautifully designed and produced A4 bound booklet celebrating the students work and each participant will receive a copy.





Top: Students attending the 2025 ceremony enjoying the garden roof terrace at Perkins & Will, London | Bottom: Front cover of the 2026 Awards Booklet.



Omer Shekef, Adar Mizrachi - Bezalele Academy of Arts and Design
THE LIVING FILTER - A Civil Ecology for the recovery of the Yorkon
Highly Commended: Public Health (MA Category)

AFH STUDENT DESIGN AWARDS
Image Gallery

Highlights from our 2026 ceremony and submissions.







CLICK HERE
To watch the 2026 SDA showreel



Above: Ella O'Brien | University of Nottingham | "The Diabetes Research and Patient Care Institute"
Winner: PUBLIC HEALTH (BA Category) + PRIMARY + COMMUNITY HEALTH (BA Category);
Below: Rebecca Goode | Manchester School of Architecture | "Neighbourhood of Health"
Winner: PRIMARY + COMMUNITY HEALTH (MA Category);



For all enquiries, please contact SDA Awards Lead, Helen Young. e: awards@architectsforhealth.com
For key dates including nomination, registration and submission deadlines, please visit our website.