Entry Booklet

Information booklet for entrants to the Universal Design Grand Challenge 2025.

# What is Universal Design?

Universal Design (UD) is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement for the benefit of only a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design.

If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits. By considering the diverse needs and abilities of all throughout the design process, Universal Design creates digital and built environments, services and systems that meet peoples' needs.

Simply put, UD is **good design** that **works well for everybody**. It’s buildings and spaces where the needs of diverse users are just part of the design, not an afterthought. It’s products and services that work for people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability. And its technology-based products, platforms and software that are accessible, understandable, and usable to the end-user and make life better.

# Universal Design Grand Challenge

Are you a student with a passion for design? Have you used Universal Design in one of your projects? Are you in the last two years of study, or have you recently graduated? Then this competition is for you!

The Universal Design Grand Challenge (UDGC) is a competition that promotes and awards excellence in student projects that feature solutions that work for everyone. We invite **third level students in their final two years of study** to enter their best project which demonstrates the use of the **Principles of Universal Design.** We are delighted to accept entries from undergrads, postgrads, and recent graduates.

Each year, the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD) at the National Disability Authority (NDA) runs the UDGC Student Awards. Each year we continue to be amazed at the creativity and commitment to inclusion and Universal Design demonstrated by the students who enter, and the academic tutors/supervisors who support them.

Entries are submitted and winners are chosen in 3 categories:

1. Built Environment
2. Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
3. Products and Services

In addition, at the UDGC final each year, a Peoples' Choice Winner is chosen by audience members at the in-person award ceremony.

The winner of each category receives **a cash prize** and the coveted **Universal Design Grand Challenge trophy** for that category.

# Key Dates

* Entries open at 12:00 pm (noon) on Tuesday 01 April 2025.
* Entry deadline: 23:59 Monday 02 June 2025.

**Please note the entry deadline!** We cannot accept any late entries and no extensions will be granted.

* Awards ceremony will take place in-person on the 25 September 2025 at the Aviva Stadium, Lansdowne Road, Dublin 4.

# How to Enter

Entries are accepted through <https://universaldesign.awardsplatform.com/> .

Entrants will set up an account on the UDGC Award Force Platform, and head to the **Enter** tab to begin their application.

The entry process can be broadly described as:

* Giving a brief summary of your design idea
* Explaining how the design/solution is used
* Highlighting how the [Principles of Universal Design](https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/the-7-principles) are incorporated into your design (your design should feature at least 4 of the 7 Principles)
* Uploading supporting images, presentations or videos

You can edit your entry after submitting, right up to the entry deadline.

Please make sure **all your personal details are entered accurately**, including contact details. This is the information that will be used to contact you and as the competition progresses.

Entrants must add a mobile phone number to their personal contact details. This is only ever used to contact you if/when we can't reach you by email, but it will be necessary if you reach the finals.

Please make sure that the **contact details for your course tutor are accurate**. Without this, your entry cannot be processed.

## Entry requirements:

* You must be a student in your final two years of study, or a recent graduate (12 months) from a recognised Higher Education Institution in the Republic of Ireland.
* In your application, you must list a course tutor or school representative who knows your design and can confirm the information in your application.
* You can enter as a **solo student** or as part of **student project design team.**
* You must be available to attend the Awards Ceremony on 25 September 2025, at the Aviva Stadium, Lansdowne Road, Dublin.

Whilst we will accept individual entries, we encourage you to consider team-based submissions.

**Note:** You are eligible to enter more than one category, as long as the work submitted meets the criteria. Simply use the ‘copy’ feature to create a copy of your entry and change the category and supporting information as required.

# Filling in the application form

Once on the ENTER page, you will see some important information regarding the competition. We recommend you read this carefully, before scrolling down to the bottom of the page to ‘My entries’.

* Select the button ‘Start entry’ to begin your application.
* Move through the sections of the application by selecting ‘Save + next’.
* You can start your application and return to it at any time before the deadline by selecting ‘Save + close.’
* You can see a preview your application at any point of the process by selecting ‘Preview’.
* Once you have completed all sections of the application, select ‘Submit entry’. Don’t forget, you can still **edit your application after submitting** all the way up to the deadline.

The below tables outline the different sections of the application with a short description on what is required for each.

## Details

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category | Choose which category you are submitting your application under; Built Environment, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) or Products and Services. |
| Entry Name | This is the name of your project/design idea.  You can [review past finalists on the entry portal](https://universaldesign.awardsplatform.com/gallery/manager) to get an idea of past project names. |
| **Course and School** where project was done | This is the course name and the school/college/university where the project was done.  Remember that you must be a student of a recognised Higher Education Institution in the Republic of Ireland. |
| Full name of **the course tutor or school representative** that knows your design and can confirm your information on this entry: | This is the name of the course tutor or representative who is supporting your application.  You are **required** to have a course tutor or representative to support your application in order to submit your design.  They must be able to confirm the information in your application and they should be familiar with your design.  Please make sure that you have **permission from the individual** whose name you are using in support of your application prior to using it as part of your entry. |
| Tutor’s email address | The contact email for the named tutor/representative above. **This is required**. Your entry will not be processed without this information.  Make sure you inform your tutor of your entry, so they can expect an email after you submit your application. |

## Description

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Brief summary** of the project | In 150 (one hundred and fifty) words or less write a summary that includes:   * Describe the Universal Design that you are entering. * Describe the design process you followed. * Describe what the design entry achieves for people and its future potential   This is an elevator pitch for your design. Try and describe your project in as concise a way as possible while hitting the points outlined above. |
| **Detailed description of design project** | In 600 (six hundred) words or less, write a detailed description of your design.  This is where you can go into more details about your project. Highlight how your entry is a Universal Design because it can be used by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.  You can use the questions below as a guide if applicable, but you are not obliged to do so.   * Why or what problem/challenge/issue is your design addressing? * What desk research and user research have you conducted related to the problem/challenge/issue? * How is your design different from previous attempts to solve the problem/challenge/issue? * How is your design used by people as related to the problem/challenge/issue? * How do you know your design has been successful? Include here evidence of user testing or evaluation etc. |
| Universal Design – Seven Principles and 29 Guidelines | In 500 (five hundred) words or less, please describe how your Entry aligns with at least four of the [7 Principles of Universal Design](https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/the-7-principles).  You should explain how your entry aligns with the relevant Universal Design Principles by saying how your design achieves some of the guidelines under the Principle.  E.g. If your design aligns with Principle 1: Equitable Use, say how it provides the same means of use for all users, how it avoids segregating or stigmatizing any users, how its privacy, security, and safety should be equally available to all users or how it is appealing to all users.  **Note:** focus on the most relevant of the 7 Principles and 29 Guidelines. |

## Commercialisation Award

As part of applying for the Universal Design Grand Challenge, you have the option to enter your design for consideration for the Enterprise Ireland Universal Design Commercialisation Award.

The Enterprise Ireland Universal Design Commercialisation Award will provide one of the shortlisted entrants with a **Commercial Case Feasibility Grant.** This grand is up to €15,000 and can be used:

* For an independent industry expert consultant to conduct a market opportunity assessment
* To explore potential routes to commercialisation for their technology.

### Requirements:

* This is a design IDEA competition. We are not looking for the full technical details of your design.
* The funding of up to €15,000 per project will be paid to an Irish 3rd Level Institution for the purposes of employing a consultant to explore the market/commercial opportunity for the winning entry/entries.
* If you apply for the Universal Design Commercialisation Award you must include a recognised Principal Investigator (PI) based in your 3rd level institution as a project sponsor.
* To receive the Universal Design Commercialisation Award, all Intellectual Property (IP) relating to the project must be in the ownership of a 3rd level Institution.
* Entrants shortlisted for the Universal Design Commercialisation Award must confirm IP ownership by a member of staff of the relevant 3rd level Technology Transfer Office (or equivalent) prior to the Award Ceremony on 25 September 2025, in order to receive the Universal Design Commercialisation Award.

### Principal Investigator:

If you apply for the Universal Design Commercialisation Award you must include a recognised Principal Investigator (PI) based in your 3rd level institution as a project sponsor.

Enterprise Ireland recognises all researchers, including staff on contract in 3rd level institutions (e.g. post-doctoral scientists) and non-profit research organisations and agencies in the Republic of Ireland as meeting the criteria for the position of PI.

### Intellectual Property:

To receive the Universal Design Commercialisation Award, all Intellectual Property (IP) relating to the project must be in the ownership of a 3rd level Institution.

If you have any concerns about Intellectual Property (IP) rights, please don't hesitate to contact Dr Donal Fitzpatrick in the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design on 01 6080456 or [udgc@nda.ie](mailto:udgc@nda.ie) who will be happy to talk it through with you.

**Please note:** This is a standard condition for Commercialisation Awards of this type from Enterprise Ireland.

### How will the feasibility grant be used?

In this section you will be asked to explain the following:

* Why you/your team need the Feasibility support (e.g. to address a lack of market knowledge, experience in building commercial case, industry contacts)
* How you intend to use the funding if you are successful.

You have only 300 (three hundred) words to cover both questions. You should be concise but explain fully your answer.

## Attachments

As part of your application, you can upload supporting material to support your application. You can upload one or more of the following:

* high resolution images of your project/solution e.g. JPEF 300 dpi
* A brief presentation about your design e.g. a video or PowerPoint containing narration as well as slides.

You are not obliged to upload any supporting material. However, we strongly encourage providing as much supporting material as you can. Judges will use this material while reviewing your entry, and images, a video or presentation can provide more information and details to support your application.

## Team

This is for **team entries only**. Here you can add the members of your student project design team. It is important to remember the following:

* A maximum of five team members are allowed per entry.
* Make sure that all members of the team are included.
* Make sure that all names and titles (e.g. Dr) are spelled correctly. These will be used to print on our award certificates.

### Consent

We ask all applications if they agree to be quoted, filmed, and photographed during the Universal Design Grand Challenge Awards event, and that they agree to be present on 25 September 2025. Entrants are also required to agree to fully participate in the activities and communications related to the Universal Design Grand Challenge. There is also an agreement for Team entries, that ownership will be given equally to all team members for the design.

If you have any concerns or queries on the NDA/CEUD privacy policy, you can review it [here](https://universaldesign.ie/about/privacy).

# Need Support?

Please contact the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design.

Email: [udgc@nda.ie](mailto:udgc@nda.ie)

Phone: 01 608 0456

Address: 25 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, D04 E408

Website: [https://universaldesign.ie](https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/awards/grand-challenge-student-awards)