

Information Note
Sponsored Thesis Project Competition
on
Re-imagining Urban Rivers

A competition for students of Architecture or Planning disciplines

What is the objective of the competition?

The purpose of this sponsored thesis competition is to tap into the intellect and creativity of students to arrive at innovative solutions for re-imagining the outlook and management of rivers that flow through cities and their associated features.

This competition provides an opportunity for students with relevant academic background to align their academic thesis research with the themes of the competition described in the next section.

The competition is organized by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and the National Institute for Urban Affairs (NIUA) under a joint project that the two organizations are implementing to promulgate river-sensitive development in our cities.

What are the competition themes?

The competition has three themes:

Theme 1: Re-imagining water bodies and/or wetlands

Water bodies and wetlands are intrinsically linked to rivers. Many wetlands are located near rivers, and act as a natural buffer to protect the river from pollution. They also serve as sinks when the water level in the river rises. Similarly, well-maintained water bodies are an excellent avenue for groundwater recharge, which can complement the water supply in a city and reduce the stress on the river. However, in most cities water bodies and wetlands are in a sorry state. The first step to reversing this trend is to create a value for these features. And what we value, we usually care for.

This theme shall focus on creating a value for a water body/wetland that will make it more attractive residents in the city. This could be recreational value, social value, economic value, aesthetic value, and others, or a combination of all. The student has all the flexibility to imagine. For this theme, the student shall pick an actual water body/wetland in any city of the Ganga River Basin for the research, and demonstrate through the research how its value shall be enhanced.

Examples of possible projects include (but are not limited to) reviving a water body using nature-based solutions; developing a water body as a recreational avenue for residents; rejuvenating a water body to serve as a groundwater recharge zone; and several others.

Theme 2: Developing eco-friendly riverfront projects

Riverfront projects add both aesthetic and economic value to the river. It serves as a medium to bring the rivers to the forefront. It is also a major avenue for recreational opportunities. In doing so, riverfronts become a wonderful instrument to connect citizens to the river, which is missing in many cities today. Riverfront projects are often envisaged as large projects such as shopping plazas, condominiums, promenades, etc but such projects can be implemented at much smaller scales as well in the form of ghats, biodiversity parks, gardens, etc.

For this theme, the student shall focus on planning/designing a sustainable, nature-friendly riverfront project for any city in the Ganga River Basin. The scale and scope of the riverfront development can be identified as per the project area and its need.

Examples of possible projects include (but are not limited to) promenades; plazas; biodiversity parks; herbal gardens; and several others.

Theme 3: Promoting river tourism

In many parts of the world, river tourism has made considerable contribution to the city's economy. It supports the livelihoods of different sections of society, and therefore contributes to the overall development of the town. As a result, there is an inherent respect for the rivers among its citizens. The river tourism potential in Indian cities is relatively untapped. If harnessed in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner, it can go a long way in creating a tangible value for the rivers.

For this theme, students shall focus on preparing a detailed development strategy or action plan for promoting any kind of eco-friendly river tourism activities in any river town of the Ganga River Basin. Particular care must be taken to ensure that the proposed project does not disturb the river health.

Examples of possible projects include (but are not limited to) water sports; river markets; river cruise; water taxis; and several others.

Where should the thesis study area be?

The study area will need to be restricted to the Ganga River Basin only, which covers eleven Indian States—Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. Students can select any city or town in the Basin.

Who can participate?

Students enrolled in post-graduate programmes of Architecture or Planning (any specialisation) in any University/School/Institution across India.

What are the rewards?

- o All students selected for sponsorship will be awarded a grant of INR 50,000 each, to undertake the research activities associated with the project.
- o All students selected for sponsorship will receive a special Certificate of Meritorious Achievement, subject to completion and submission of the thesis.
- o All students selected for sponsorship and their supervisors will be invited to participate in a two-day write-shop in Delhi (if the COVID-19 threat subsides) or online.
- o The top three projects will be recognized and awarded.
- o All students selected for sponsorship will be invited to develop short papers on their projects to be published in a special issue publication of a reputed journal.

How is the competition organized?

The competition will proceed in six stages

Stage 1: Call for project ideas

15 September 2020

Launch of the competition

Stage 2: Submission of project ideas

Deadline 19 October 2020

Students will develop a conceptual idea for a thesis project under any **one** of the three themes—Reimagining water bodies and/or wetlands; Developing eco-friendly riverfront projects; Promoting river tourism. Students are expected to develop their ideas in close consultation with their supervisors. Students must use the template provided in *Annexure* to submit their entries of project ideas. Any entries that do not follow the template will, unfortunately, have to be rejected.

Stage 3: Evaluation of the project ideas

19 October-31 October 2020

An panel will evaluate the project ideas received based on the following criteria and scores.

- o Is the project idea comprehensible and clear? : 30 Points
- o Is the level of detail provided adequate? : 20 Points
- o Is the project idea innovative and unique? : 20 Points
- o Is the project idea practical? : 20 Points
- o How well has the project idea been presented : 10 Points

Based on the recommendations of the panel, 10 project ideas will be selected for sponsorship. Additional ideas may be supported if they are found to be exceptionally innovative.

Stage 4: Announcement of selected projects

02 November 2020

All participants will be apprised about the outcomes of their entries. Additionally, the selected project ideas will also be displayed on the NIUA and NMCG websites. An official communication will be made to the selected students

Stage 5: WriteShop with the sponsored students and their supervisors

26-27 November 2020

The sponsored students and their supervisors will be required to attend a 2-day WriteShop in Delhi (if found feasible and safe) or online. The purpose of this WriteShop will be to help students (a) further fine-tune their project ideas; (b) discuss data requirements for the thesis; (c) familiarize themselves with the urban river management planning framework developed by NIUA and NMCG; (d) have interaction with urban river management practitioners and experts. The costs of participation of the students and their supervisors will be covered by NIUA.

Stage 6: Project/Thesis undertaking period

December 2020-June 2021

Students will undertake the project work at their own institutes with visits to the study area as per their schedules. An online meeting of each student and their supervisor with NIUA and NMCG representatives will be organized once in every two months to discuss the progress and address any challenge that may have arisen.

Note: Students will take the final examinations/jury of the Schools/Institutes as per their official schedules.

Stage 7: Final Presentations

18 June 2021

All sponsored will be invited to Delhi to make their final presentation to a panel. The top three presentations will be recognized and awarded. Certificates of merit will be issued to all participants. NMCG will also liaise with the Commissioners of the study area cities to arrange a meeting for the students to present their work, with the hope that the work will be taken up for actual implementation.

Before the presentation, the sponsored students will be required to submit the project report in a format that will be shared later.

How to submit an entry?

- Interested students should use the template in Annexure to make their submission of project ideas.
- No late entries shall be entertained.
- **All entries, in PDF format, should be sent by email to nmadan@niua.org and jyoti.verma@nic.in**

Some additional information

- **The research grant for the sponsored students will be given to their respective institutes.** It is the responsibility of the institute to further allocate the grant to the students.
- It is the responsibility of the student to discuss their project idea with the assigned supervisor. Additionally, the students need to submit an affirmation from any Authorised Representative of their Institution/School/University, in the template provided in *Annexure* (Part 2)
- Only students selected for the sponsorship will be contacted.
- Due to the large volume of applications envisaged, it will not be possible to provide individual feedback on entries received.
- The final jury conducted by the institute for each sponsored students, may involve one representative member from the NMCG-NIUA project team.
- Further details may be circulated by the competition organisers from time-to-time during this entire period of engagement.
- All the relevant details can also be accessed at www.niua.org

Do you have a query?

Please feel free to get in touch with our team members.

1. Nikita Madan, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)
nmadan@niua.org, +91 9968 723 790
2. Jyoti Verma, National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)
jyoti.verma@nic.in, +91 7405 403 625