

AIA
COTE Top Ten
for Students



2025 Competition **FRAMEWORK GUIDE**

COTE TOP TEN FOR STUDENTS COMPETITION

The Framework for Design Excellence: Ten Questions

The AIA Framework for Design Excellence can be expressed as a set of questions to ask yourself throughout the design process:

- 1. Design for Integration**
What's the big idea behind this project? What is its purpose? How do its separate pieces fit together into a coherent whole?
- 2. Design for Equitable Community**
Who gets to use this building and how does it benefit its users and its community? How has the community been engaged to shape the design? Who is invited in, who is excluded? How does its location and design promote equitable access to its benefits, strengthen its community, and reinforce means of transportation that support health and reduce emissions?
- 3. Design for Ecosystems**
How does this project benefit the earth? How does it impact the living systems around it?
- 4. Design for Water**
How does this project work with and delight in water, and how does it use water wisely?
- 5. Design for Economy**
How do you provide abundance with an economy of means?
- 6. Design for Energy**
How does the design work with, rather than fight, local climate to provide a comfortable place for people with the least energy use and carbon emissions?
- 7. Design for Well-Being**
How does the design promote the health of those who spend time in it?
- 8. Design for Resources**
Why did you select the materials you did? Where do they come from, what's their impact (including the pollution and carbon impact of their manufacture), and where will they go after the building is gone?
- 9. Design for Change**
How is the project designed for a long life, yet with a 'loose fit' that allows it to be adapted to changing needs? How does the design anticipate a changing climate and recovery after disaster? How does it build social, economic, and community resilience in the face of climate change and natural disasters?
- 10. Design for Discovery**
How does your design allow the building to learn from its users, and allow its users to learn from the building? What lessons have you learned from the project? Where have you failed, fallen short? What will you carry forward?