

The Inette Austin-Smith Work Experience Competition 2026

Introduction

RIBA Cornwall, Exeter and Plymouth are once again working together to organise a competition which is open to all school-age work experience students in Cornwall and Devon. Entries will be judged in September and the first place winners will receive a prize in the Autumn.

This competition is intended to give you a taster of the life of an architect from analysing a client's brief, studying the requirements and constraints, researching background and precedence, creating a design concept, developing the design and communicating it. All in a week!

It is essential to show how you have arrived at your final design, so your worked-up sketches and thought processes are as important as the quality of the finished product. But most important of all is for you to enjoy the experience!

Design Project and Brief

Tourism is a significant and competitive industry in Devon and Cornwall, and everyone is trying to attract visitors to stay at their hotel. Some have fantastic views, others are located in popular seaside resorts, and some are close to other major attractions.

Mr and Mrs Trevithick have owned 20 hectares of woodland for many years, and it attracts a wide variety of birds and animals in the trees and amongst the undergrowth. They have seen an opportunity to invite people to stay in their woodland, to enjoy it, and also to preserve it. Their business plan is to offer "bedrooms in the trees" to their holiday guests.

You are to design a bedroom and living suite that hotel guests could book for a week's holiday. Each suite is to be able to sleep 2 adults, and provide space for them to sit and enjoy the woodland environment around them. To preserve the woodland, each suite is to be built up in the trees and not touch the ground except for access to the bedroom.

The other selling point for the hotel accommodation is that the bedroom suites are to have a 'wow factor' that shows some sustainable, or recyclable consideration either through the materials, energy production, or in teaching the guests something about the impact of the building on the environment.

Requirements:

- Space to sit and enjoy their surroundings as well as sleep, wash, and change.
- Be usable all year round.
- Access does not have to comply with the Equality Act. This matter is addressed elsewhere, by others.
- The overall footprint of the suite should not be more than 6 x 5 meters.
- The suite is to have a lifespan of at least 10 years.
- This suite is one of 25 built in the trees. Dining and washing facilities are centrally located in a hotel complex building which everyone has access to.
- Consideration should be given to prevent people from falling to the ground.

Assumptions:

- Although the only option for guests is to walk the 200 meters from the car park to their bedrooms, small vehicles can be used during the construction period.
- Drainage, electrical and water supplies will be provided within the ground at each location, if needed.
- The budget is unlimited, and any material is available.
- The next nearest bedroom suite is 50 meters away.
- The Architects in your practice will act as Structural Engineers and take the responsibility for working out how to support your bedroom suite in position.

Submission Requirements

- Your practice will need to pay a submission fee of £5 per entry to cover competition expenses. Please see the entry form for payment details
- The submission is to be one A1 sized sheet, landscape orientation.
- No practice logo or name on your sheet.
- Please include your name and age on your entry sheet.
- Concept & design development sketches must be included on your A1 sheet.
- Plans / sections / elevations / views, sufficient to describe your design.
- 3D computer model view, photograph of physical model, or visualisation/drawing.
- Written design statement (approximately 300 words).
- 1 paper copy and 1 digital version (JPEG is preferred over PDF) of each entry to be entered. Paper copies posted to: CFD Architects, 18 Belle Vue Road, Saltash, PL12 6ES.

Competition Regulations

- Entrants must be in school years 10-12. Individual entries only.
- If your work experience is for longer than one week, this competition must be completed in the first week with the architectural practice.
- Any information not on your A1 sheet will not be judged.
- The judging criteria is; compliance with brief 10% - written explanation 10% - design 50% - development sketches 20% - presentation 10%.
- The judging panel will consist of members of the RIBA and students from the University of Plymouth.
- Intellectual Property Rights: The RIBA (Cornwall, Exeter and Plymouth branches) retains the right to share your entry in the public domain and use it for future projects. They will ensure that the work is not altered or adapted in any way that would prejudice your reputation and will recognise you as the author of the works.
- Deadline for submissions: 21st August. Judging will take place in October. You will be notified of the results in October/November.

Your week of work experience should give you a flavour of the life of an architect in practice and what they typically have to do throughout a project. This mini project will hopefully give you that experience whilst having some fun at the same time. Remember, your mentor is there to support you, but it is your project, not theirs!

Entries should be submitted using this online form:

<https://forms.gle/6wLZxGL9Ci86WDk89>

Please ask your mentor/practice to pay the compulsory £5 entry fee.

Any surplus monies will be forwarded to the RIBA South West general fund.

CFD Architects Ltd Sort Code: 60-83-71 Account No. 82090155 Payment Reference: [student name]

