

# FURNITURE DESIGN COMPETITION

## CALL FOR ENTRIES 2026



**the dtic**

Department:  
Trade, Industry and Competition  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**the dtic - together, growing the economy**

the dtic Customer Contact Centre: 0861 843 384

the dtic Website: [www.thedtic.gov.za](http://www.thedtic.gov.za)

**A NATION  
THAT WORKS ALL IN**



## Are you a South African professional designer or design student?

Do you believe furniture should improve our quality of life, be functional, and complement the space in which it is located?

...then enter the Furniture Design Competition now!

**ENTRIES CLOSE**

**30<sup>th</sup> September 2026**

**the Department of Trade and Industry (the dtic), the South African Furniture Initiative (SAFI), Industrial Development corporation (IDC), Proudly South African and their industry partners.**

## ***Theme - "BACK TO SCHOOL"***

### **OUR AIM**

- We want to raise and nurture the design capabilities within this country.
- We want to raise the image of the South African Furniture Design and Manufacturing Industry, locally and internationally.
- We want to advance local industry through the introduction of new products.

### **The Context**

As we move into the second quarter of the 21st Century we are confronted with an ever-changing world. AI has become a household phenomenon. We have smart phones that can monitor all the information we need, we have cars that are more and more sophisticated to take us from point A to point B without our input. We also have cars that are more efficient in terms of clean energy, we are moving away from fossil fuels to battery operated vehicles, our whole world is rapidly changing. In thirty years, we have moved from hand written letters we posted to fax machines that could send instant messages, to email, to social media in an explosion of instant communication around the globe.

Ironically, the one thing that has lagged behind in most instances is the school desk. Students are still subjected to the same desks that were used in the first industrial revolution invented over two hundred and fifty ago. The concept grew from the need to have a production line. Put everything in boxes and to do so you need straight lines and rows. Hence the "new school" was borne. The trouble is, we have been using the same system ever since. The teacher is in the front, with a black board and the students are all in rows facing the front.

### **The Brief**

#### **THE THEME**

As mentioned before, everything has evolved very rapidly, especially in the last 25 years, except for the humble school desk. **In this brief you are tasked to reinvent the school desk to fulfill the demands of a student studying in the 21st Century.**

#### **Key things to look for;**

- Teachers are no longer required to stand in front of the class. They have become facilitators that work on a one to one basis or with groups, so the front of the class no longer exists.
- The desks have to be able to face in different directions and form different configurations, IE, circles, u-shapes, boardroom tables, individual desks etc.
- To accommodate the above the desks should be easily moveable.
- The desks need to provide for a number of different digital contacts, IE, laptops, tablets, smart phones and headphones.
- Power outlets should be considered.
- They also need to fulfill the needs of traditional functions such as writing and reading. (books, pens, postits, jotters, etc).
- Storage of personal goods as well as educational material need to be considered.
- Obviously anthropomorphic and ergonomic data need to be taken into account.

This is not a table with four legs, design an efficient space for various modes of working. Consider multilevels.

### **Categories for Entry**

- **Student category**

Design students must be registered at a South African educational institution at the time of submitting their entry

- **Professional category**

Professional designers and or manufacturing businesses with design capability, registered and operating within South Africa

## PRIZES

### Prizes include:

#### Student

- Internship for the winning student in the furniture industry.
- Profiling of the winner and the winning academic department in relevant publications & related media exposure
- Graphic Tablets/Laptop
- 6 month Furniture Design Incubation Programme by Furntech

#### Professional

- Hand Power Tools
- One-year Proudly SA membership
- One-year Institute of the Interior Design Professions (IID) Membership
- An opportunity to participate and exhibit at selected platforms like Decorex
- Profiling of winners in relevant publications & related media exposure
- Graphic Tablets/Laptop

## Entry Form

- Entry Forms can be downloaded at [www.thedtic.gov.za](http://www.thedtic.gov.za) or by contacting us on [FurnitureDesign@thedtic.gov.za](mailto:FurnitureDesign@thedtic.gov.za)
- No registration fees are required
- It is possible to enter multiple times provided each entry has a separate entry form
- Completed entry forms must be signed and submitted together with the compulsory submission requirements

## Compulsory Submission Requirements

- A digital (pdf) Technical drawing of the product with renderings
  - Technical drawings must include final product dimensions and 3D drawings
- Description of materials and inputs to be used in production
  - The use of locally manufactured materials and inputs wherever possible is mandatory
- A description and presentation of the design, explaining the concept and motivation not exceeding 300 words
- A brief CV if a student; or
- A company profile if a professional.

## Submissions

Submissions can be delivered by hand or posted or emailed to [FurnitureDesign@thedtic.gov.za](mailto:FurnitureDesign@thedtic.gov.za)

### By hand

Department of Trade and Industry  
Sectors Branch  
Furniture Sector Desk  
1st Floor, Building A  
77 Meintjies Street  
Pretoria

### Hand delivery:

Industrial Competitiveness and Growth  
Branch  
Furniture Sector Desk  
Department of Trade, Industry and  
Competition  
77 Meintjies Street  
Block A  
Sunnyside, Pretoria

### Courier:

Department of Trade, Industry and  
Competition  
Sectors Branch  
1st Floor, Building A  
Private Bag x84  
Pretoria  
0001



## Adjudication Criteria and Process

The adjudication criteria and weighting thereof is decided by the judges in line with the annual theme and a scorecard will be used.

- The criteria focus on the following areas:
  - Concept behind the product – responding to the theme
  - Functionality / usability of the product
  - Degree of innovation
  - Ease of manufacturing
  - Local materials and inputs used
  - Commercial viability
  - Local & export market appeal

The judging panel comprises industry experts and designers from related fields. Judging is a two-stage process.

- The finalists will be announced on/or before 30th November 2026.
- Finalists will be contacted telephonically and electronically.
- Finalists will be invited to exhibit their pieces at a chosen exhibition.
- Final judging will take place at the exhibition in February/March 2026.
- Winners will be announced at the exhibition.

## Important Dates

Entries open	March 2026
Entries close	30 September 2026
Final judging	February/ March 2027
Winners announced	February / March 2027

## Terms and Conditions

- **the dtic**, and its partners, reserves the right to refuse entry of products that are not eligible or do not comply with applicable entry criteria, or that might put in question the reputation of the competition.
- Only new concepts (designs) are eligible to enter the competition.
- The competition is **ONLY** open to students registered with South African educational institutions and locally based, registered designers and or manufacturers.
- Established manufacturers includes professional designers and or manufacturing businesses with design capability, registered and operating within South Africa.
- **Only individuals entries will be allowed (no student group entries).**
- If the design has been patented or registered as a design, a copy of the first page of all registration certificates must be submitted with the entry.
- The entry form must be completed in full and all compulsory documents submitted before the closing date to be eligible.
- Entries that do not comply with the competition requirements will be disqualified.
- **the dtic** and its partners will not be held accountable for product performance or design originality.
- The panel of adjudicators and the administrators of the competition undertake to handle all entries in the strictest confidence and not to disclose any information on entries to any other party. However, in the event of a product winning the design may be made public to the media.
- Although every reasonable precaution will be taken to ensure the safekeeping of products submitted, **the dtic** and its partners cannot be held liable for loss or damage to any entry material.
- The decision of the adjudicators is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- By entering this competition and signing the disclaimer the entrant is agreeing to all above-mentioned conditions of entry.

## CONTACT DETAILS

Website: [www.thedtic.gov.za/furnituredesigncompetition](http://www.thedtic.gov.za/furnituredesigncompetition) • Tel: 012 394 1260 / 066 290 6957

Email: [FurnitureDesign@thedtic.gov.za](mailto:FurnitureDesign@thedtic.gov.za)

