

“Expanding the Reach of Sustainable Urban Development”

2026 Urban Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition Rules



Alliance of
Guangzhou International
Sister-City Universities

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The Alliance of Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities (GISU) currently represents 29 members and affiliate members, 5 continents, 26 countries, 25 cities, a combined population of approximately 107 million people, 801,000 students and 86,000 faculty and staff.

Supported by the Guangzhou Municipality, GISU’s mission is to attract and leverage the academic resources of its members in close collaboration for the sustainable development of our cities.

Urban Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition and Theme

The seventh Urban Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition sponsored by the Alliance of Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities and hosted by Guangzhou University will be held from March to October 2026.

The competition is promoted by members of the GISU Alliance and the theme of the 2026 Competition is “Expanding the Reach of Sustainable Urban Development ” focusing on the United Nations Sustainability Goals to Transform Our World. Strategic goals of each city’s economic and social development should be considered with the basic idea of promoting this year’s theme.

Eligible Participants

Eligible participants are full-time students over 18 years old or graduates within 5 years of graduation (graduates after 2021) from GISU members and affiliate member universities. Each team must have at least two participating members to include their team leader, be students of the Alliance universities and actual members of the project. The principal applicant will be considered as the team leader

Current GISU members and affiliate members include:

- Al Akhawayn University
- Almaty Management University

- Belarusian State University of Physical Culture
- Charles Darwin University
- Chiang Mai University
- Covenant University
- Daffodil International University
- Durban University of Technology
- Gorgan University of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
- Guangzhou Maritime University
- Guangzhou Medical University
- Guangzhou University
- Incheon National University
- Linkoping University
- Middle East Technical University
- National University of Laos
- Nelson Mandela University
- Polytechnic University of Valencia
- Stellenbosch University
- Tomas Bata University
- Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology
- Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana (UAM) Xochomilco
- University of Coimbra
- University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City
- University of Padova
- University of Quebec at Montreal
- University of the West of England
- University of Zaragoza
- Western Sydney University

Based on different projects and categories, competition groups include:

- **CONCEPT TEAMS:** Members of the team have not funded a company but have a business idea or project.
- **START-UP TEAMS:** Members have launched a start-up company. The company must not have been established before 2024. The equity of the legal representative of the participating enterprise shall not be less than 10% and the total equity of the participating members shall not be less than 1/3. The corporate legal representative shall not be allowed to make changes after the announcement of the contest.

Each category is valid only when the minimum of entries is more than 6 (six).

Project Requirements

The entries must be real, legal, and in good standing without any negative records. The forum and competition must not infringe on intellectual property rights of others. Inventions, patents, resources, etc. involved must have clear and legal property rights or intellectual property rights. Plagiarism, misappropriation, provision of false materials, or violation of relevant laws and

regulations will result in the project team immediately losing rights to participate and will bear all legal responsibilities.

Given this project involves the intellectual property rights of others, a complete written authorization letter, patent certificate, etc. for the owner with legal effect must be submitted. For entrepreneurial projects that have completed company registration, its profile and legal representative status, shareholding structure, and copies of other relevant certification documents must be provided. Participating projects can provide relevant financial materials, such as current financial record, details of investment received, employment status, and ecological contributions. For projects that have been funded or have earned more than ten million RMB (or equivalent in other currencies), corresponding supporting materials are recommended.

Registration for the forum and competition must come as a team. Multi-disciplinary, inter-professional, inter-university, and multinational teams are encouraged.

Each team must have at least two participating members and must be actual members of the project.

Entrepreneurship projects reported by participating teams must be projects planned or operated by the team. Borrowing projects from others is not allowed. The GISU member or affiliate member university where the project leader is currently enrolled will be taken as the home university of the project.

Registration for the forum and competition must come as a team. Multi-disciplinary, inter-professional, inter-university, and multinational teams are encouraged. Each team must have at least two participating members and must be actual members of the project.

For start-up projects that have completed company registration, the company profile and legal representative status, shareholding structure, and copies of other relevant certification documents must be provided *during the in-school competition to the relevant university.*

Registration

Participating teams register for the in-school preliminary competition according to the guidelines of each Alliance member. Please consult your designated university contact for further registration details.

Compulsary Project Submission Requirements in English

- Project demonstration video: MP4 format, maximum five-minute video duration with size to not exceed set limits. Videos submitted should be encoded as H.264 while audio is encoded as AAC with the resolution being 800 * 600.
- Project presentation powerpoint: in the format of ppt or pptx with the size to not exceed 20M, for maximum five-minute presentation duration.
- Business Plan: PDF format.
- Summary of project: brief summary of the project, about 300 words, to be published on the promotional website for the competition hosted by Guangzhou University.

Please nominate the file as follows:

TEAMNAME_PROJECT_VIDEO,

TEAMNAME_PROJECT_PPT,

TEAMNAME_BUSINESS_PLAN,

TEAMNAME_PROJECT_SUMMARY.

Stages of Competition

1. IN-SCHOOL PRELIMINARY COMPETITION TO BE COMPLETED BY MAY 29, 2026

The competition stages and selection methods of this preliminary round are determined by each GISU member or affiliate member university. Each Alliance university is responsible to ideally select no less than five participating teams to enter the online semi-final competition.

Submission of the entries for the preliminary competition

Project presentation videos, PPT, business plans and summary for the online semi-final competition need to be uploaded to the designated online system or sent to the designated mailbox by the member university.

Deadline to upload the team entries: June 12, 2026

2. SEMI-FINAL ONLINE TO BE HELD JULY 10, 2026

The online semi-final competition is organized by Guangzhou University and the Secretariat Office and its expert judges will select from the compulsory project submission requirements submitted by the participating teams recommended by each member and affiliate member university through the network to finalize 12 teams (12 for the Concept category and 12 for the Start-up category) to compete in the final.

List of semi-finalists to be announced by July 18, 2026

3. FINAL COMPETITION TO BE HELD IN EARLY OCTOBER 2026 (EXACT DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED)

The final competition will be held either virtually or in-person in Guangzhou, China for the 12 teams selected. The finals will take the competition form of presentations by participating teams with panel group interviews.

Judging Criteria

Competition Finalists will be judged by the following criteria but not limited to:

- Innovation – Assessment of the level of innovation;
- Team – Assessment of the qualifications of team members, teamwork and external partners;
- Commerciality – Assessment of business feasibility, operating performance, growth potential and cash flow;
- Social Benefits – Assessment of contributions driving employment and other sustainable developments;
- Communication – Assessment of presentation.

Final Competition Awards and Bonuses

There will be gold, silver, bronze awards presented in the finals. Some awards may be vacant according to the number of entries. All awards are subject to applicable taxes. The forum and competition organizing committee will issue award certificates, medals and bonuses.

• FINAL AWARDS FOR CONCEPT TEAMS

Awards	Number	Bonus
		<i>*All award money is subject to applicable taxes.</i>

GOLD	1	50,000 RMB (or equivalent)
SILVER	2	25,000 RMB (or equivalent)
BRONZE	3	10,000 RMB (or equivalent)

- FINAL AWARDS FOR START-UP TEAMS**

Awards	Number	Bonus <i>*All award money is subject to applicable taxes.</i>
GOLD	1	50,000 RMB (or equivalent)
SILVER	2	25,000 RMB (or equivalent)
BRONZE	3	10,000 RMB (or equivalent)

Competition Disclaimer

The Secretariat Office of the Alliance of Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities (GISU) reserves the right to require competitors to sign an affidavit that they meet each of the eligibility requirements as outlined in the application process.

By participating in the competition, competitors agree that the Secretariat Office of the Alliance of Guangzhou International Sister-City Universities and its members and affiliate members assume no liability, and shall have no liability or obligation whatsoever for disclosures of information provided by a competitor as part of a submission or otherwise during the course of the forum and competitions.

Failure to comply with competition requirements may result in disqualification at any time in the sole discretion of the Entrepreneurship Competition organizing committee. The Secretariat Office reserves the final say in all disputes and may at any time require that a finalist or winner of any cash or service award that failed to comply with requirements as outlined in the application process forfeit and/or repay any such award. Guidelines, rules and awards for the competitions are subject to change at any time as might be required by the Secretariat Office. All award money is subject to applicable taxes.

Contact Information

For further information, the primary contact for Guangzhou University and the Alliance Secretariat for the 2026 competition is:

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