

SAIC DESIGN CHALLENGE 2026 - CMF

Introduction

For the first time in Europe, the SAIC DESIGN CHALLENGE (SDC) is introducing a dedicated CMF Track, creating an exciting new opportunity for emerging Colour, Material and Finish designers to showcase their creativity within a global advanced design environment.

As mobility design evolves, CMF has become one of the most influential disciplines shaping emotional connection, sustainability, brand identity and future user experiences. This new track recognises the growing importance of CMF as a core driver of innovation within automotive design.

CMF is also one of the clearest ways a brand becomes recognisable. Through consistent and intentional choices in colour, materiality, finish, tactility and sensory detail, CMF translates brand values into physical and emotional cues that audiences can instantly identify, remember and associate with MG.

The SDC CMF Track has been created to discover bold new creative voices capable of bringing fresh thinking, cultural awareness and material intelligence into the future of MG.

Participants are invited to explore how colour, materials, finishes and storytelling can redefine the experience of an iconic modern sports car through the MG Cyberster.

More than simply creating attractive surfaces, this challenge is about using CMF to communicate emotion, performance, culture, craftsmanship and future thinking in meaningful and authentic ways.

The challenge is open to undergraduate, postgraduate and recently graduated students from CMF, automotive, fashion, textiles, industrial design or broader creative disciplines with a strong interest in materials, storytelling and future mobility experiences.

CMF Track: 'Game On'

Sport has always reflected culture, identity, aspiration and community. From grassroots traditions to global spectacles, sport creates emotion, ritual, tribalism, performance innovation and visual language that resonates far beyond the game itself.

Whether rooted in heritage or driven by emerging technologies, sport continually evolves through material innovation, sustainability, personal expression and human ambition.

For this year's CMF track, participants are invited to explore the world of sport to inspire a unique CMF vision for the MG Cyberster.

Entrants should investigate a particular sport, ideally connected to British culture, and use its stories, materials, craftsmanship, energy, performance mindset or visual identity to develop a compelling CMF concept that enhances MG's sports car heritage within a new era of intelligent electric mobility.

We encourage projects that move beyond superficial aesthetics and instead uncover deeper cultural narratives, emotional experiences and future focused material innovation.

Themes may explore:

- Performance and movement
- Heritage and ritual
- Sustainability and future materials
- Team identity and belonging
- Technical innovation and lightweight thinking
- Fashion, equipment or sporting craftsmanship
- Inclusivity and accessibility within sport
- Emotional connection between athlete, machine and environment

The interpretation is intentionally broad to encourage originality, intelligence and strong storytelling.

What We Are Looking For

The SDC values creativity, potential and design thinking.

Participants are asked to develop a complete CMF proposal for the MG Cyberster inspired by a chosen sport and its surrounding culture. The proposal should enhance and reinterpret MG's sporting DNA for a new generation through colour, materials, finishes, detailing and sensory experience.

We are particularly interested in how CMF can create recognisable brand signatures and emotional distinction through intelligent use of colour, materiality, tactility and sensory

experience, helping to strengthen MG's identity while expressing a fresh future facing character.

Submissions should demonstrate:

- Original CMF thinking and storytelling
- Strong understanding of colour, material and finish application
- Relevance to contemporary culture and future lifestyles
- Innovative material exploration and sustainability awareness
- A compelling emotional narrative connected to sport and MG
- Strong visual communication and presentation quality
- Sensitivity to brand, proportion and vehicle architecture
- Awareness of how CMF can strengthen brand identity, recognition and distinctiveness
- Creative ambition, curiosity and individuality
- Potential to grow within a professional advanced design environment

We encourage entrants to move beyond literal or expected interpretations of sport.

This challenge is not about applying obvious visual cues, direct team liveries or superficial references. We are less interested in cliché executions such as sports graphics, logo inspired schemes or direct material replications like tennis ball fabrics, football textures or racing stripe applications.

Instead, we encourage participants to explore deeper and more thoughtful interpretations of sport and culture through CMF.

The strongest proposals will uncover:

- Emotional storytelling and atmosphere
- Cultural relevance and contemporary identity
- Sustainability and future material innovation
- Rituals, behaviours and human connection within sport
- Performance psychology and sensory experience
- Craftsmanship, tactility and authenticity
- Progressive luxury and desirability
- Intelligent use of colour, material and finish to create meaning

Projects may consider:

- Exterior colour and finish strategy
- Interior material storytelling

- Sustainable or future material innovation
- Trim, graphics and detailing
- Lighting or sensory experience
- Fabrication techniques and craftsmanship
- User interaction and emotional touchpoints
- Seasonal, emotional or environmental influences

We are looking for concepts that feel sophisticated, future focused and emotionally resonant rather than obvious or decorative. The goal is to reinterpret the spirit, energy and emotional connection of sport into a compelling next generation vision for MG and the Cyberster.

Deliverables

Entrants are required to submit a series of 2D presentation pages communicating the concept, research, CMF thinking and final proposal.

It is important to note that entrants are not expected to fully resolve or physically realise every aspect of the proposal at submission stage. The initial entry should clearly communicate the core idea, concept, narrative and creative direction behind the CMF vision.

For selected finalists, the internship opportunity will provide the platform to further develop the proposal through deeper material exploration, physical sampling, refinement, prototyping and advanced visualisation within the studio environment alongside the SAIC DESIGN ADVANCED LONDON team.

We are looking for strong ideas, creative intelligence and future potential as much as finished outcomes.

Submissions may include:

- Moodboards and cultural research
- Material exploration and innovation
- Colour strategy and palettes
- Material samples or speculative future materials
- Interior and exterior CMF visualisations
- Texture, tactility and sensory thinking
- Storytelling and narrative development
- Rendered imagery and presentation visuals

The format is intentionally flexible to encourage creative freedom and individuality.

Submission Deadline & Process

The deadline for submissions is Sunday 7 June 2026.

All entries should be submitted through the official submission form on the SAIC Design Challenge website: saicdesignchallenge.com.

Submissions should follow the website requirements, including a maximum of 10 pages, A3 format (420 x 297mm), image files at a minimum of 300 DPI, and a maximum file size of 3MB per page.

Accepted file types include images, videos and documents such as PDFs. 3D data, compressed files such as ZIP or RAR, and external FTP links cannot be accepted; any 3D work should be shown through images or animations.

Entrants should clearly include their name, university, year of study, year of graduation, nationality and a photograph on the title page of their work. A CV may also be submitted alongside the proposal, and entrants should indicate whether they have a UK visa or the right to work in the UK.

Eligibility

Applicants must currently be in higher education or have graduated within the last 1–2 years.

Students studying within the UK, including overseas students with the relevant eligibility to work in the UK, are welcome to apply.

Finalists considered for internship opportunities must hold the appropriate right to work or relevant visa status for the UK. International applicants studying outside the UK should independently check visa eligibility requirements prior to application.

In exceptional circumstances, remote internships may be considered, although an onsite placement is strongly preferred to maximise collaboration, development and studio experience.

Opportunities & Benefits

The SAIC DESIGN CHALLENGE has become one of the industry's most recognised and rewarding emerging talent programmes.

Selected finalists may receive:

- An internship opportunity at SAIC DESIGN ADVANCED LONDON
- Financial support during placement
- Professional mentoring and creative coaching
- Exposure to senior global design leadership
- Peer review within an advanced design studio environment
- Opportunity to travel to Shanghai for the Final Ceremony event in November

In exceptional cases, the overall winner may also be considered for a permanent full time design role within SAIC DESIGN ADVANCED LONDON or the wider SAIC DESIGN GLOBAL DESIGN network.

All awards, internships and opportunities remain subject to terms, eligibility and final review criteria.

Finally, we want to thank everyone for participating in and supporting this initiative. The community continues to make this competition what it is, and we are proud of the achievements of everyone involved across students, universities and staff.