

Project name: Icelandic Nature and Design: Grants for MA students in Design**Objectives and short description**

The objective is to fund graduate level students to study at the Department of Design and Architecture at the Iceland Academy of the Arts with the aim of working on design projects that relate to Iceland's natural environment and interior highlands.

Formulating a vision of how we want to develop access to and management of Iceland's vast landscape constitutes a design challenge. The tuition scholarship for MA programme students in Design is awarded by the Pálmi Jónsson Conservation Fund with the objective of developing a venue for research and communication of knowledge that relates to human interference in the nature and landscape of Iceland. The project is developed in accordance with NPJ's objectives.

Emphasis is placed on strengthening research opportunities within the Department of Design and Architecture that focus on Icelandic nature and that build on the experience and knowledge of the department's experts with the aim of contributing to an increased understanding of the Icelandic natural environment. Students' research and design projects would focus on formulating individual proposals and solutions developed with the guidance of a faculty member in close collaboration with, for example, the organizers of the proposal for the foundation of a national park in the highlands, if appropriate, and in accordance with the 2015-2026 national policy on the future development of the Icelandic interior.

The final results of these artistic research and design projects would contribute to a further understanding of issues related to Iceland's natural environment.

Further description

Formulating a vision on how we want to approach and treat Iceland's vast and diverse landscape is one of the most important design challenges of our time. In a global context Iceland occupies a particular position. Geographic conditions divide it into two different parts: the populated area in the lowlands and the vast landscape of the interior, which is steadily becoming more and more accessible to the general tourist. It is of ever-greater importance to develop approaches and methods that relate to our interference in this context and which cohere with present demands for nature conservancy, but also with demands for increased access to the area.

Designers' training in the master's programme is focused on finding ways to apply holistic design thinking to the different systems our society is based on. New knowledge is created when design and other fields of knowledge are joined. Graduate design student's work at the IAA is the result of a research process during which the appropriate knowledge is acquired and specialized knowledge is created at the intersection between different fields of knowledge, which, in turn, creates a new context. Design methods offer opportunities to develop new solutions for the protection of the Icelandic interior highlands and to create a venue for collaboration between different agencies as to access and usage as envisioned by the proposal for the foundation of a national park in the interior.

The MA programme in Design is a full-time, 120 ECTS two-year course of study which completion awards an MA degree in Design. Each semester students are expected to complete 30 ECTS of theoretical and practical courses. The practical element of the course is divided in two parts: a *Design Team*, a theme-related studio group course, and an *Individual Project*. Projects completed in the *Design Team* course as well as in the *Individual Project* course can be further developed as MA projects. The tuition scholarship is particularly focused on *Individual Projects* that students develop with the guidance of a faculty member. *Individual Projects* can also be developed as an MA project that is composed of the actual project as well as a dissertation and a report on the final project. For further information see the link <http://www.lhi.is/um-namid-0>.

The department's research and development projects range across a wide spectrum of philosophy and design, such as the importance of emphasizing the aesthetic values of landscape in the development of decision making processes that relate to structuring human-oriented action (Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir, philosopher), to study the effects of product design on our experience of wild nature (Tinna Gunnarsdóttir, product designer), to strengthen and communicate our understanding of information that relates to sustainability and the natural environment (Lóa Auðunsdóttir and Dóra Ísleifsdóttir, graphic designers), to contribute to sustainable material cycles and their usage (Garðar Eyjólfsson and Thomas Pausz, product designers) and to design spaces and urban planning to increase our awareness and experience of the particular nature of our culture and natural environment (Massimo Santanicchia og Sigrún Birgisdóttir, architects). For further information on research studies at LHÍ see the link <http://rannsoknagrunnur.lhi.is/is/rannsoknir/>.

Collaboration and cooperation are key elements in every design process. At the Department of Design and Architecture the number of permanent faculty members is usually around 24, and each year up to 150 temporary lecturers and visitors work at the department. The department is therefore a dynamic community of specialists and professionals at the forefront of design in our community. The department enjoys a strong network of contacts and it aims to strengthen its connection with appropriate institutions and agencies, as well as other universities and research centers that might relate to the project.