

The Meridian Scholars' Programme

A Cross-Border Youth Leadership Initiative

Co-hosted by Peak Potential, Institute for Rural Development (IRD), and Oxford Diplomatic Society (ODS)

Program Overview

What Is Meridian Scholars?

The Meridian Scholars Programme is a **10-week international leadership initiative** that brings together student leaders aged 12–16 from Hong Kong, Nepal, China, Japan, and the United Kingdom to collaborate on innovative solutions to global inequality through the lens of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and the **Oxford Diplomatic Framework**.

Participants receive mentorship from the Oxford Diplomatic Society and other prestigious institutions (e.g., Caltech, Ivy League, Oxford), engaging in project-based learning and cross-border collaboration to address real community needs. The program fosters tangible impact by enabling students to develop and implement real-world solutions with professional support and organizational backing. It culminates in a pitching round where selected projects **receive direct funding and ongoing implementation support from the partner institutions of the programme**, ensuring measurable change for great ideas.

Through interactive sessions, cultural exchange, and collaborative problem-solving, Meridian Scholars develop diplomatic leadership, cross-cultural communication, and global citizenship skills. **Graduates earn an official certificate, mentor recommendations from top universities, and access to an international alumni network**, equipping them with meaningful experience and a credible foundation for future academic and leadership opportunities.

Participation directly funds the development of rural Nepalese towns for education and recreational infrastructure. Funds will also be used for providing grants to student participants for their final proposal.

Program Details

- **Program Duration:** March 7th - May 9th 2026 (10 weeks)
- **Format:** Weekly virtual sessions via Zoom (2-3 hours every Saturday)
- **Participant Age:** Years 9-12 (ages 12-17)
- **Program Fee:** \$125 USD per participant
- **Languages:** English, with cultural translation support provided by Eleven Labs



Vision & Mission

The Meridian Scholars Program is a pioneering initiative that connects students across countries—**Hong Kong, China, Japan, Bangladesh, United States, and the United Kingdom**—to co-create solutions for global inequality through the lens of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Our Mission: To transform global awareness into meaningful action by empowering young people to build cross-cultural understanding, develop diplomatic leadership skills, and collaborate on tangible projects that address real-world challenges facing rural communities.

What Makes This Program Unique



Youth-to-Youth Leadership

Students don't just learn about global issues—they work alongside international peers to solve them



Mentorship from Oxford Experts and Prestigious Institutions

Guided by members of the Oxford Diplomatic Society and mentors from top universities, participants gain access to world-class educational frameworks



Real-World Impact

100% of participation fees directly fund the construction of a multi-sport court in rural Nepal, turning learning into action



Sustainable Community Partnerships

Built on proven collaboration with ground-level NGO (IRD) serving rural Nepalese villages



The Story Behind: From One Moment to a Movement

In November 2024, four high school students from Hong Kong embarked on a trekking trip to Nepal. Surrounded by the majestic Himalayan peaks, they found themselves engaging in an impromptu volleyball game with local children. The equipment available was old and worn, barely functional, yet the children demonstrated an undeniable passion for the sport despite their limited resources.

That profound encounter ignited a powerful initiative. Peak Potential was born.

The Focus: Youth-Led Change

The founders were not experts in international development; they lacked extensive budgets or established institutional backing. They were simply students who witnessed stark inequality and resolutely refused to accept it as an immutable reality.

"Inequality is not someone else's problem — it is a collective challenge. And through decisive action, no matter how small, young people can redefine what is achievable."



Within twelve months, Peak Potential cultivated a strong partnership with the Institute for Rural Development. The initiative successfully pitched its vision and secured crucial funding at the GBA Youth Innovation Summit, allowing for deep engagement with the local community to ascertain their specific needs. Collaborating with **the Institute of Rural Development (IRD)**, they successfully constructed a multi-sport court in Simara, Nepal, which continues to serve as a vital community hub today. This court has become a gathering place for youth from all backgrounds, actively fostering inclusion and community pride.



The Enduring Significance for Future Leaders

This program stands as a testament to a fundamental truth learned by its founders: **geographical borders do not limit impact**. The same passion that propelled them to build a court in Nepal can empower you to spearhead change wherever injustice is observed. The collaborative spirit fostered between the Hong Kong and Nepalese communities serves as a model for connecting students across five countries to tackle global challenges.

Peak Potential unequivocally demonstrates that young students, armed with determination, teamwork, and a cross-cultural perspective, possess the capacity to create lasting change. The Meridian Scholars' Programme is designed to inherit and amplify this movement, inspiring a new cohort of young, talented students to become the architects of their own passion projects and drive impactful change.



Program Partners

● Oxford Diplomatic Society - ODS (United Kingdom)

The Oxford Diplomatic Society is one of the **University of Oxford's** largest and most influential student-led organisations, dedicated to **diplomacy, international relations, policy debate, and global dialogue**. ODS regularly engages diplomats, policymakers, academics, and practitioners, fostering rigorous discussion on international challenges and governance.

ODS members play a **central academic and mentorship role** in the programme. Drawing on **university-level frameworks** in diplomacy, development studies, and global policy, ODS mentors guide students in analysing inequality through the UN SDGs, problem analysis, and decision-making. ODS also supports the programme's pitching and evaluation process, helping students develop structured arguments, evidence-based proposals, and professional communication skills.

● Institute for Rural Development - IRD (Nepal)

The Institute for Rural Development (IRD) is a Nepal-based grassroots organisation working directly with communities in Nepal's mountain and rural regions. With years of on-the-ground experience, IRD has built trusted relationships within local communities that strengthen their role as a **contextual anchor** in the program, ensuring realistic and ethical student-designed solutions. Within IRD's established mentors, the organization connects individuals with diverse expertise in education and specialized fields to the program as guest speakers and mentors, ensuring that the programme moves beyond ideation toward meaningful, community-based impact.

● Peak Potential (Hong Kong)

Founded in 2024 by high school students from Chinese International School, Peak Potential bridges global inequalities through youth-driven, cross-border collaboration. We have successfully funded, designed, and constructed a multi-sport court in Simara, Nepal, which now serves over 200 local youth daily.

Their role is to **operationalize the vision**, mobilizing students, coordinating logistics, managing cross-cultural communication, and ensuring that the theoretical frameworks and project ideas generated during the program are grounded in the practical realities of on-the-ground implementation. Peak Potential acts as a role model for students of young age to create real-life impact in communities around the world.

Learning Objectives & Outcomes

Knowledge & Understanding

- Analyze global inequality using the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with a core focus on SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals
- Understand how cross-border collaboration enables sustainable development
- Compare cultural, educational, and community structures across Hong Kong, Nepal, China, Japan, and the United Kingdom
- Examine real-world development challenges faced by rural Nepalese communities



Skills Development

- **Cross-Cultural Communication:** Collaborate effectively across languages, cultures, and national contexts
- **Diplomatic Leadership:** Facilitate discussions, build consensus, and lead international teams
- **Problem-Solving & Innovation:** Design practical, culturally appropriate, and feasible solutions to social challenges
- **Project Development:** Apply stakeholder analysis, budgeting, feasibility assessment, and impact evaluation

Project Design & Real-World Implementation

01

Develop a complete, mentor-guided social impact proposal grounded in real community needs

02

Pitch solutions to a professional panel of mentors and judges

03

Selected teams receive programme-backed funding to implement their initiatives

04

Continue working post-programme with ongoing mentorship and institutional support from Peak Potential and IRD

Values & Leadership Growth



- Practice cultural humility through co-creation with local communities
- Strengthen youth agency, confidence, and ethical leadership skills
- Build a strong sense of global citizenship and responsibility
- Problem solution with global frameworks of the UN SDGs.
- Foster innovative problem-solving skills through hands-on engagement with real-life community initiatives.
- Develop leadership inspired by the Oxford framework, cultivating a deeper understanding of global citizenship.

Tangible Outcomes & Recognition



Digital Certificates

Issued by Peak Potential, Institute for Rural Development, and Oxford Diplomatic Society



Mentor Recommendation Letters

From leading academic institutions, subject to performance



Direct Contribution

To education and recreational infrastructure development in rural Nepal



Student Initiative Grants

Eligibility for grants awarded through the final pitching round



Alumni Network

Membership in an international Meridian Scholars Alumni Network

Program Structure & Curriculum

10

Weeks

Duration

2hr

Sessions

Weekly live via Zoom

~60

Students

Cohort Size

10

Teams

International project groups

Group Structure: 10 international project teams (5–6 students per group), each group assigned one dedicated mentor.

Weekly Session Structure

Each weekly session follows a clear and predictable structure to balance learning, cultural exchange, and applied project work that is **consistent throughout all 10 weeks:**

Part I: Core Learning & Enrichment (90 minutes)

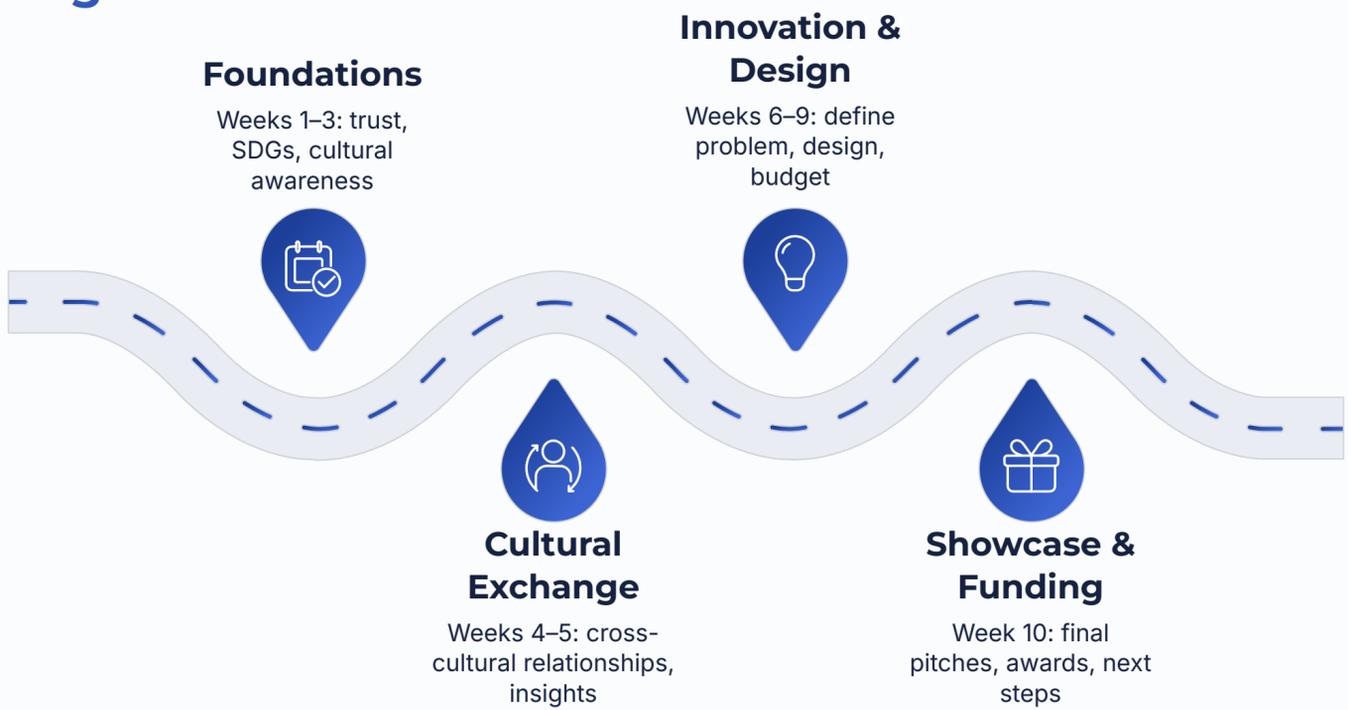
- Opening circle and global check-in from participating countries
- SDG-focused learning and case studies
- Cultural exchange activities linked to weekly themes
- Guest speakers, panels, and interactive workshops, live Q&A

Part II: Mentored Project Group Work (30 minutes)

- Small-group breakout sessions in their assigned international project teams
- Guided pitch development and solution design
- Mentor feedback and milestone check-ins with peer learning

Project development begins in Week 1 and progresses incrementally each week, ensuring students are continuously building toward a polished, fundable final proposal.

Program Phases



Date (2026)	Theme	Core Learning & Enrichment (90 min)
7 March	Opening & Global Citizenship	Programme launch; introductions from Peak Potential, IRD, and ODS; cultural showcases; introduction to SDGs and foundational discussion on global inequality as a cross-border challenge.
14 March	Understanding Inequality	ODS-led session on SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities; case study on rural vs urban Nepal; student sharing on local inequality. Student groups conduct independent research and present to the cohort.
21 March	The UN Sustainable Development Goals	Focus on the Sustainable Development Framework and successful solutions. Panel with student leaders and educators from the Oxford Diplomatic Society on applying global frameworks to youth-led action.
28 March	Digital Cultural Exchange	Training in diplomatic communication and cross-cultural sensitivity. Students explore how culture, language, and regional context shape social needs and development priorities, identifying community needs through diverse cultural perspectives.
4 April	Sports, Community & Inclusion	Role of recreation in youth development and social inclusion; storytelling and community examples; intro to human-centered design thinking principles for community-driven solutions.
11 April	Problem Definition & Stakeholders	ODS-led workshop on stakeholder analysis, systems thinking, and ethical development practice. Students learn to define social problems precisely, identify key stakeholders, and possible challenges before proposing solutions.
18 April	Solution Design Sprint	Structured brainstorming and early-stage prototyping within project teams, guided by mentors. Feedback from IRD partners on feasibility, cultural appropriateness, and sustainability in rural Nepalese contexts.
25 April	Feasibility, Budgeting & Impact	Budgeting basics, resource mapping, and basic logistical planning for social initiatives. Introducing impact metrics and developing strategies to prevent risks as students formulate solutions.
2 May	Pitch Preparation	Focused training on presentation structure, communication, and storytelling. Students refine their project narratives. Mock judging sessions provide structured feedback from mentors.
9 May	Project Showcase & Funding	Teams deliver final pitches to a judging panel composed of mentors and partner representatives. Students receive detailed feedback from IRD and ODS mentors. Selected projects are awarded programme-backed funding.

Post-Programme Continuity (Embedded Outcome)

1. Selected teams receive programme-backed funding
2. Continued mentorship from Peak Potential and IRD
3. Support for pilot implementation and impact tracking
4. All students enter the Meridian Scholars Alumni Network



Participant Requirements, Selection & Program Fee

Eligibility

- Students in Years 7-11 (ages 12-16)
- Strong English communication skills (verbal and written)
- Reliable internet access for weekly Zoom sessions
- Commitment to attend 80%+ of sessions
- Parental/guardian consent

Selection Criteria

We seek students who demonstrate:

- Genuine curiosity about other cultures and global issues
- Collaborative spirit and willingness to work in diverse teams
- Growth mindset and openness to being challenged
- Leadership potential (formal or informal)
- Commitment to see projects through to completion

Application Process

1. **Online Application Form:** Brief questionnaire about motivations and interests, with one short essay prompt (~300 words)
2. **(Optional) Teacher/Counselor Recommendation:** One reference letter
3. **Parent/Guardian Consent Form**

Application Deadline: February 20, 2025

Notification of Acceptance:
January 10, 2026

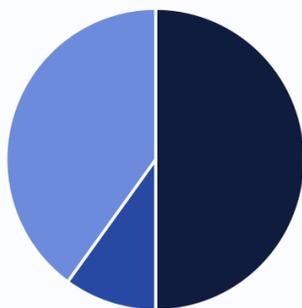
Program Orientation: January 25, 2026



Program Fee & Financial Impact

Participation Fee: per student

What Your Fee Supports:



- Direct Construction Impact
- Program Operations
- Donation Drives & Logistics

- **Direct Construction Impact (50%):** Funds materials and labor for multi-sport court in Nepal
- **Program Operations (10%):** Technology platform, digital certificates, educational materials
- **Donation Drives and Logistics (40%):** This money goes towards organizing donation drives, and covers its shipping costs from Hong Kong to Kathmandu.

Fee Transparency:

Unlike traditional programs where fees cover administrative overhead, **100% of operational costs are covered by Peak Potential's separate fundraising efforts.** Your participation fee goes directly to building tangible infrastructure that will serve 200+ Nepalese youth for years to come.

Logistics, Roles & Safety

Platform & Technology

Platform

- **Primary:** Zoom (school accounts or provided links)
- **Asynchronous Communication:** Shared Google Drive, email, and WhatsApp group
- **Project Management:** Shared digital workspace (details provided at orientation)

Technical Requirements

- Computer or tablet with a camera and microphone
- Stable internet connection (minimum 5 Mbps)
- Quiet space for focused participation
- Headphones recommended for better audio quality

Time Zone Considerations

Sessions will be scheduled to accommodate participants across multiple time zones:

- **Hong Kong:** Saturday or Sunday afternoon
- **Nepal:** Saturday or Sunday morning/afternoon (depending on DST)
- **UK:** Saturday or Sunday morning
- **Japan:** Saturday or Sunday afternoon
- **China:** Saturday or Sunday afternoon

Exact timing will be finalized based on participant availability survey

Roles & Responsibilities

For Partner Schools

- **Promotion:** Share program information with eligible students
- **Selection Support:** Provide teacher recommendations for applicants from your school
- **Supervision (Optional):** Designate a faculty advisor to check in with participants
- **Celebration:** Recognize participants' achievement within your school community

For Students

- **Attendance:** Commit to attending 80%+ of sessions and communicating absences in advance
- **Preparation:** Complete pre-session readings and asynchronous activities
- **Engagement:** Participate actively in discussions and group work
- **Respect:** Honor diverse perspectives and maintain cultural sensitivity
- **Collaboration:** Contribute equitably to team projects

For Guardians

- **Support:** Ensure student has necessary technology and quiet space
- **Oversight:** Monitor student's time commitment and well-being
- **Communication:** Serve as point of contact for program coordinators if needed
- **Celebration:** Attend optional virtual closing ceremony to see student work

Safety & Safeguarding

Student safety is our top priority:

- All sessions will be recorded for safeguarding purposes
- Multiple adults (Peak Potential team, ODS mentors, IRD staff) are present in every session
- Students will receive digital citizenship and online safety training in Week 1
- Private messaging between students is discouraged; all communication is through moderated channels
- Clear reporting mechanism for any concerns or inappropriate behavior
- Adherence to each partner school's safeguarding policies

Frequently Asked Questions & Contact

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if I can't attend a session due to a schedule conflict?

A: Recordings will be available for review within 24 hours. However, consistent attendance is crucial for team cohesion. Please notify your team and program coordinators in advance.

Q: What if my English isn't perfect?

A: This program celebrates linguistic diversity! We have translation support available, and many participants will be non-native English speakers. The goal is communication, not perfection.

Q: Will this program help with university applications?

A: While that's not our primary goal, participants will develop highly valued skills (cross-cultural communication, project management, global awareness) and receive a certificate that can strengthen applications. More importantly, you'll gain authentic experience in global citizenship.

Q: Can I participate with a friend from my school?

A: Yes! We encourage schools to send multiple students. However, international teams will be deliberately mixed to maximize cross-cultural learning.

Q: What happens to the projects we create?

A: The top 1-2 projects selected by the panel will be piloted in Simara, Nepal, with support from IRD and our full funding. All projects will be documented and shared with the alumni network as inspiration for future iterations.

Q: Is the USD \$125 fee tax-deductible?

A: Please consult with your tax advisor regarding charitable contributions in your jurisdiction. Peak Potential can provide documentation upon request.

Contact & Application

To apply, learn more about the programme at <https://meridianscholars.org/>.

Apply for the Meridian Scholars' Programme:

[Access the Application Form Here](#)

Program Inquiries: peakpotential@cis.edu.hk

 **Application Deadline:** February 10, 2026

Program Dates: February - April 2026

Expected Cohort Size: 40-60 students across 5 countries

Partner With Us

For Schools: We welcome partnerships with schools in Hong Kong, GBA, Hangzhou, Japan, UK, Nepal, and beyond. To discuss bringing this program to your students, please contact us.

For Potential Sponsors: If your organization shares our commitment to youth empowerment and global education, we'd love to explore partnership opportunities. Sponsorships can support scholarships, expand curriculum, or enhance technology infrastructure.

We are building the next generation of global citizens who will lead with empathy, collaborate with purpose, and create lasting change.

Meridian Scholars' Programme: Project Pitch Judging Rubric

This comprehensive rubric guides the evaluation of project pitches submitted by Meridian Scholars. It assesses critical aspects of each proposal, from problem definition and solution innovation to practical feasibility, cross-cultural integration, and long-term impact. Understanding these criteria will help participants refine their projects for maximum effectiveness and impact.

1. Problem & Solution (25 points)

This section evaluates the clarity and relevance of the identified problem, as well as the originality and effectiveness of the proposed solution.

1.1 Problem Definition (10 points)

Assesses clarity, relevance, and SDG alignment of the identified issue.

Score Range	Descriptor
9-10 (Excellent)	Problem is clearly and precisely defined; demonstrates deep understanding of global inequality; explicitly and accurately linked to relevant SDGs with strong justification.
6-8 (Good)	Problem is clearly identified and linked to SDGs, though the analysis may lack depth or specificity.
3-5 (Basic)	Problem is stated but remains broad, underdeveloped, or weakly connected to SDGs.
0-2 (Insufficient)	Problem is unclear, poorly articulated, or not meaningfully connected to global inequality or SDGs.

1.2 Solution Innovation (15 points)

Assesses originality, creativity, and effectiveness of the proposed solution.

Score Range	Descriptor
13-15 (Excellent)	Solution is highly original, well-reasoned, and clearly addresses the defined problem in a novel and effective way.
9-12 (Good)	Solution is logical and effective, with some innovative elements, but builds largely on existing approaches.
5-8 (Basic)	Solution addresses the problem but lacks originality or clear differentiation.
0-4 (Insufficient)	Solution is vague, impractical, or poorly aligned with the stated problem.

2. Cross-Cultural Element (15 points)

This category evaluates how well the project incorporates diverse cultural viewpoints and its potential for global applicability.

2.1 Diverse Perspectives (7 points)

Assesses integration of multiple cultural viewpoints and voices.

Score Range	Descriptor
6-7 (Excellent)	Proposal clearly incorporates insights from multiple cultural or national perspectives, including local community input.
4-5 (Good)	Evidence of cross-cultural consideration, though integration may be limited or uneven.
2-3 (Basic)	Cultural perspectives are acknowledged but not meaningfully incorporated.
0-1 (Insufficient)	Little to no consideration of cultural diversity or context.

2.2 Global Applicability (8 points)

Assesses adaptability of the solution across different contexts.

Score Range	Descriptor
7-8 (Excellent)	Solution is adaptable and scalable across different cultural or geographic contexts.
5-6 (Good)	Solution is applicable beyond one setting with minor adjustments.
3-4 (Basic)	Solution is highly context-specific with limited adaptability.
0-2 (Insufficient)	Solution cannot realistically function outside a single, narrow context.

3. Practicality (25 points)

This section examines the realism of implementation and the foresight applied to managing potential challenges.

3.1 Feasibility (15 points)

Assesses realism of implementation.

Score Range	Descriptor
13-15 (Excellent)	Clear, realistic budget; coherent timeline; strong understanding of logistical constraints.
9-12 (Good)	Generally feasible plan with minor gaps or assumptions.
5-8 (Basic)	Plan is partially realistic but lacks detail or clarity.
0-4 (Insufficient)	Plan is unrealistic or lacks essential implementation details.

3.2 Risk Management (10 points)

Assesses identification and mitigation of challenges.

Score Range	Descriptor
9-10 (Excellent)	Key risks clearly identified with thoughtful, realistic mitigation strategies.
6-8 (Good)	Some risks identified with basic mitigation measures.
3-5 (Basic)	Risks mentioned but mitigation strategies are weak or vague.
0-2 (Insufficient)	Little to no recognition of risks.

4. Impact (25 points)

This category measures the potential scale and depth of positive change, along with the long-term viability of the project.

4.1 Reach & Significance (15 points)

Assesses scale and depth of impact.

Score Range	Descriptor
13-15 (Excellent)	Strong potential to benefit a significant number of people with meaningful, measurable change.
9-12 (Good)	Clear positive impact, though scale or depth may be moderate.
5-8 (Basic)	Limited reach or unclear impact measurement.
0-4 (Insufficient)	Minimal or speculative impact.

4.2 Sustainability (10 points)

Assesses long-term viability.

Score Range	Descriptor
9-10 (Excellent)	Clear plan for long-term continuation, ownership, and growth beyond initial funding.
6-8 (Good)	Some sustainability planning, though long-term details may be underdeveloped.
3-5 (Basic)	Sustainability mentioned but not convincingly planned.
0-2 (Insufficient)	No consideration of long-term sustainability.

5. Presentation (10 points)

This final section evaluates the clarity, structure, and professionalism of the project pitch delivery.

5.1 Communication Clarity (5 points)

Assesses clarity and structure of delivery.

Score Range	Descriptor
5 (Excellent)	Presentation is clear, well-structured, and easily understood.
3-4 (Good)	Generally clear with minor issues in organization or pacing.
1-2 (Basic)	Message is difficult to follow or poorly structured.
0 (Insufficient)	Presentation lacks clarity.

5.2 Professionalism (5 points)

Assesses visual quality and responses to questions.

Score Range	Descriptor
5 (Excellent)	High-quality visuals; confident, thoughtful responses to questions.
3-4 (Good)	Adequate visuals and competent responses.
1-2 (Basic)	Weak visuals or limited engagement during Q&A.
0 (Insufficient)	Unprofessional or incomplete presentation.

Judging Notes

- **Maximum Score:** 100 points
- **Minimum Qualifying Score:** 60 points
- **Tiebreaker:** Higher score in Impact (Section 4)
- Each criterion is scored independently to ensure fairness and consistency.