AAU School of Architecture Learning and Teaching Culture Policy

FORMER STUDIO CULTURE POLICY
Academy of Art University, Spring 2022
School of Architecture

The Studio Culture Policy provides guidance to faculty and students so that a positive academic climate is realized at the AAU School of Architecture. It is the desire of the School that all students and all faculty will be provided an environment for education that is committed to achieving a harmonious and supportive community of scholars. The Policy endeavors to develop and sustain a studio environment and culture that is highly conducive to group and individual discovery and learning. Toward those aspirations, this document provides an overview of some of the expectations for students and faculty.

Six specific values are incorporated in this Policy to promote the ideas critical toward achieving a successful studio learning environment: **optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, innovation,** and the **worth of time**. These six values will provide the basis for the School to sustain a community that is enriching and highly beneficial to the students and to the faculty members. For this outcome to be realized, the inherent worth of all individuals must be recognized and valued.

We must develop:
- Design-thinking skills
- Design process as much as design product
- Leadership development
- Collaboration over competition
- Meaningful community engagement and service
- The importance of people, clients, users, communities, and society in design decisions
- Interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary learning
- Confidence without arrogance
- Oral and written communication to complement visual and graphic communication
- Healthy and constructive critiques
- Healthy and safe lifestyles for students
- Balance between studio and non-studio courses
- Emphasis on the value of time
- Understanding of the ethical, social, political, and economic forces that impact design
- Clear expectations and objectives for learning
- An environment that respects and promotes diversity
- Successful and clear methods of student assessment
- Innovation in creating alternative teaching and learning methodologies

CULTURE OF OPTIMISM

To create and maintain an environment that is rich in energy, passion, and idealism; faculty and students must work cooperatively in sharing the values and perspectives that each individual brings to the education process.

- Students should lead balanced lives and the Academic environment should be one that fosters healthy patterns and practices, even within a rigorous and demanding learning environment.
- Students should have the ability to participate in extra-curricular activities and receive respect by faculty for their extra-curricular design pursuits and commitments.
- Faculty will endeavor to encourage students toward the achievement of both their progress in specific course assignments as well as professional career choices.
- Students have the right to expect an engaged and optimistic faculty that promotes the individual voices and views of students.
- Faculty have the right to expect that students will also promote a sense of optimism, with each valuing the efforts and contributions of other classmates.

CULTURE OF RESPECT

To create and maintain an environment that is respectful, faculty and students alike must appreciate what each can offer. Diversity is key to our profession.

- Members of the studio have the right to expect that each person will value, and thus benefit from, the diversity afforded by each individual classmate and faculty member. These opportunities include differences in cultural history, formal education, ideas, religious beliefs, gender and experiences.
- Students and faculty have the right to expect that each member of the studio will regard each person as a unique individual who is deserving of respect, concern and attention.
- Critiques are learning experiences, not target practice. As such, there must be respect for students and faculty alike.
- Faculty and invited critics will endeavor to develop and express constructive comments regarding the work and seek to note successes as well as shortcomings in this regard. While a faculty member or reviewer will judiciously <u>avoid criticism</u> of the individual student or his/her abilities in a public or classroom forum.
- Grades can impede productive assessment and should be considered separate. Grades shift responsibility for learning from students to the professor. Students must understand where their grade is coming from. Grades are a separate form of assessment different that feedback and critique. The grades are based on a specific list of evaluative criteria and in our program are a measure of how a student meets the specified goals of the course. While most courses have an array of graded skills and required deliverables, grades in any given studio or courses are not meant to be a holistic assessment of the student.

CULTURE OF SHARING

Collaboration is the art of design. To design for many, parts of all must be included. Architecture is a profession of collaboration and sharing, school must be as well.

- Faculty have the right to expect that each student comes to the studio community with the desire to learn from others, creating a robust shared experience where thoughts, concerns, and ideas are advanced by the community as a whole.
- Students have the right to expect that each faculty will share not only his/her knowledge, but also direct students to other faculty and professionals, literature, and examples that will help the students' understanding and enrichment.
- Students have the right to expect that faculty members will organize critiques and reviews in a manner that encourages the collective learning of the class not merely grading or "showmanship" and includes external design professionals selected to respond constructively to student work.

CULTURE OF ENGAGEMENT

Engagement of faculty and students are key to having a successful school environment. Students have the right to expect an engaged faculty, and faculty has the right to expect students that are engaged in studio.

- Onsite: Faculty have the right to expect that, *during the studio hours*, each student will be fully engaged in the task at hand or topic being discussed or presented.
- Online: Faculty have the right to expect that each student will be fully engaged in the work of the assignments or topics being discussed.
- Onsite and online: Students will be expected to be adequately prepared for scheduled pin-ups and formal reviews. Students have the right to expect of faculty clarity of purpose, clearly articulated evaluation & grading procedures, a definitive schedule, and specific learning objectives for the course and for each assignment.
- Onsite: Students have the right to expect that during the studio hours the faculty member will devote his/her focus solely on the needs of the students and the studio.
- Online: Students have the right to expect that during scheduled meeting times the faculty member will devote his/her focus solely on the needs of the students and the studio.
- Onsite and online: To ensure a responsive climate at final reviews, submission deadlines will be given well in advance of the time for the critique session. The critique and review sessions will be carefully structured to illicit the desired engagement of students.
- Onsite and online: A student whose work is submitted late or is incomplete, or who is otherwise unprepared, will not assume the right to publicly present his/her work to external reviewers.
- To prepare students to serve as future leaders and active citizens, faculty will promote engagement of students with society beyond the studio. Faculty members are expected to foster a climate that both encourages and allows students to become

involved and engaged with activities and organizations within the school, in the university, and in the community.

CULTURE OF INNOVATION

Innovation is key to the development of a successful architect. Both students and faculty alike must realize they are always in need of development and further learning.

- An innovative studio culture embraces the assumption that learning can be achieved through a variety of processes, and that these will vary from student to student and with each assignment. Students and faculty will recognize that the primary rationale for the design studio experience are not the "end products" completed by the students, but rather the skills and knowledge that project and other assignments have provided.
- Faculty have the right to expect that a student will be willing to take and accept risks in the design process in seeking ideas that that are new and unique. In the studio context, faculty will provide opportunities and encouragement for exploration, inventiveness and creativity.

CULTURE OF THE WORTH OF TIME

One of the most important attributes of a successful student or professional is effective time management skill. Toward this end, faculty will endeavor, by deed and by example, to infuse the students with the importance and value of time.

- Faculty members have the right to expect that each student will endeavor to meet the course expectations and specific assignments in a timely manner and will use the scheduled studio course meeting times efficiently.Students have the right to expect that each faculty member will value the time of students — by establishing and adhering to fair and reasonable schedules for course activities and by assignments that are directed toward efficient learning as well as reasonable products.
- Studio faculty will also understand and be sensitive to the reality that most students have other academic obligations and, in many instances, demanding responsibilities apart from the university. The amount of time that is reasonably necessary for the successful completion of assignments and achieving the learning objectives is to be consistent with the credit hours for the studio course.
- While accepting that a level of competition is inherent in most human endeavors and often beneficial in the studio context, in order to safeguard the health and safety of the students, the faculty will wisely limit the scope or amount of work to be submitted. In this regard, care will be taken in grading to ensure that students do not assume that "quantity" of work is equated with "quality" of work or learning performance.
- Onsite: Time is more than a constantly endangered resource, and design process is as important as product. By knowing the realities of building operation hours and the desire for student involvement in life outside of school, faculty will always strive to put forth realistic expectations.

- Online: Time is more than a constantly endangered resource, and design process is as important as product. By knowing the realities of student responsibilities outside of the program, faculty will always strive to put forth realistic expectations while still seeking to find evidence of the course learning outcomes. Students shall also respect the time of faculty and understand that faculty must focus on every student within the studio.

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy document is not expected to remain static. At least once each academic year, the Studio Culture Policy Committee will conduct an informal roundtable session on this Policy with interested students. This assembly will review the studio culture climate in the School, noting successes and shortcomings. Following this session, the Studio Culture Policy Roundtable Committee is encouraged to develop specific recommendations/suggestions for both the implementation of various aspects of this document, as well as possible revisions. The Studio Culture Policy Roundtable will comprise student representatives, leaders of AIAS, and students interested in the development of the Studio Culture narrative.

Similarly, at least once each academic year the faculty will devote meeting time for a similar review, discussion, and recommendations for revisions to the School's Studio Culture Policy. Both the faculty and the administrative council will also address implementation strategies.