

Learning Experience

15 September 2021

This document provides guidance to faculty and students so that a positive academic experience – one conducive to desired learning outcomes – is realized at the AUS College of Architecture, Art & Design. The current document has been revised to address the 2020 NAAB Conditions for Accreditation Program Criterion PC.7 on Learning and Teaching Culture, which seeks to foster and ensure a positive and respectful environment that encourages optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, and innovation among its faculty, students, administration, and staff.

The College desires that all students, faculty and staff will contribute to an educational environment that is conducive to achieving a harmonious and supportive community. The Policy endeavors to define a studio and the learning environment and culture that is highly encouraging to group and individual innovation and learning. Toward those aspirations, this document provides an overview of some of the expectations for students and faculty.

Specific environmental attributes, values, and challenges are incorporated in this document to promote the ideas critical toward achieving a dynamic learning experience. These further comprise: engagement; safety, security and support; optimism; respect; sharing; innovation; time management; critiques and reviews.

These values will provide the basis for the College to sustain a community that is enriching and highly beneficial to the students, faculty and staff. For this outcome to be realized, the inherent worth of all individuals must be recognized and valued.

1. Environment

1.1 Engagement

Faculty have the right to expect that, during studio hours, each student will be fully engaged in the task at hand or topic being discussed or presented. Additionally, students should be adequately prepared for scheduled pin-ups, and formal reviews.

Students have the right to expect of faculty a clarity of purpose, clearly articulated evaluation/grading procedures, a definitive schedule, and specific learning objectives for the course and for each assignment, as well as commentary and evaluation summaries at established benchmarks during the semester. 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.

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 elicit the desired engagement of students.

The “ground rules” and schedule for these events will be thoughtfully constructed and carefully followed. 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.

1.2 Safety, Security and Support

The CAAD building is the primary place for students, staff and faculty to work, communicate, think and learn. All members of our CAAD community must ensure that we serve as a model of mutual respect, consideration and support. Our academic mission requires that all students and faculty conduct themselves in a professional manner. Respect for others is the fundamental expectation for all students, staff and faculty in the College. Basic empathy for colleagues, staff and faculty will guide the role of noise, socialization, and propriety in the College. Behavior that disrupts the ability to study, learn, and/or communicate effectively will not be tolerated. Excessive noise, from any source, will not be tolerated at any time.

The use of mobile phones, (for voice communication or SMS), or any other communication device will not be allowed in class. Amplified music or sound from movies and videos will not be permitted in the College at any time. The use of headphones is the only acceptable method for listening to music, videos, and movies outside of class time. Every effort should be made to maintain a clean and safe working environment. As a College wide policy, food is strictly forbidden in all studios and classrooms while classes are in session. Food and liquids are forbidden in digital and technical labs at all times.

2. Values

2.1 Optimism

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

Students have the right to expect that the faculty members will value each student's contributions to the studio. The faculty members will endeavor to encourage students toward the achievement of both their progress in specific course assignments as well as professional career choices.

Faculty and students have the right to expect that students will also promote a sense of optimism, with each valuing the efforts and contributions of other colleagues.

2.2 Respect

Faculty members have the right to expect that each student will value, and thus benefit from, the diversity afforded by each individual. These opportunities include differences in culture, race, gender, education, ideas, religious beliefs, and experiences.

Students have the right to expect that each faculty member will regard every student as a unique individual – one who is deserving of special concern and attention.

Students have the right to expect that faculty come with the best interests of each student as his/her primary focus, and that students will be treated fairly and in a positive and consistent manner. As such, each faculty member is expected to direct his/her efforts toward making each student in the class as successful in his/her endeavors as is reasonably possible.

Faculty will endeavor to develop and express constructive comments regarding the work and effort and seek to recognize successes as well as shortcomings in this regard. While a faculty

member is expected to insightfully critique the work of a student, he/she will judiciously avoid criticism of the individual student or his/her abilities in a public or classroom forum. Faculty members will endeavor to invite critics that share these values of respect.

It is expected that students recognize their peers as individuals worthy of respect. Therefore, it is expected that students will maintain an attitude of mutual respect for one another, each other's work, their working environment and how their actions in studio affect other students' ability to work. Students will strive always to respect environmental quality and will maintain respect for diversity of all kinds.

2.3 Sharing

Faculty have the right to expect that each student comes to the studio with the desire to learn from others and the desire to assist others with their learning needs, 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, rather than providing a forum intended primarily for grading work or for faculty "showmanship."

Faculty and students have the right to expect that the College's limited resources (e.g. Critique spaces, lab facilities, technical equipment) will be shared and not monopolized by any one class, professor or student.

2.4 Innovation

An innovative studio culture embraces creativity and 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 is not the "end products" completed by the students, but rather the skills and knowledge that project and other assignments have provided.

The studio involves the use of imagination and the production of original work. Faculty will respect students' ideas and will not dictate personal agenda or taste on students. 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 are new and unique. Students will learn how to be comfortable with ambiguity and creativity.

In the studio context, faculty will provide opportunities and encouragement for exploration and creativity. Students have the right to expect that focused and rigorous risk-taking in the design process will be rewarded.

3. Challenges

3.1 Time Management

One of the most important attributes of a successful student or professional is effective time management. 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 class time 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 class time activities and by assignments that are directed toward efficient learning as well as reasonable products.

Studio faculty will balance outcome expectations and outside class hour. They will 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.

All year-level coordinators will work with faculty in required courses to ensure that the student workload and deadlines are distributed across the semester with minimal conflict.

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.

3.2 Critiques and Reviews

The Review is intended to be a learning environment based upon mutual respect between juror and students. It is expected that work will be carefully and thoroughly critiqued, but that the critique will be directed to the work, not to the character of the student. Therefore, it is expected that faculty will ensure that critics have adequate knowledge of the studio project before the review begins.

Faculty will provide students with a clear introduction to the structure and desired outcomes of the jury process. Faculty will endeavor to invite critics that have respect for the students and the students’ work and will critique the work, not the person. The critique will be of a reasonable length, not exceeding the time scheduled.

4. Implementation

Ultimately, the goal of a highly positive studio culture can be achieved only by the stakeholders’ full appreciation of the benefits of this shared interest, as well as a long-term commitment to the attainment of these objectives.

As such, this document is not expected to remain static. A summary of this document is included in all the Course Syllabi of the College and is introduced to students at the beginning of each academic semester. At least once each academic year, the AIAS and IDSA will be asked to conduct an informal session on this Policy with students. This assembly will review the studio culture climate in the Department of Architecture, noting successes and shortcomings. Following this session, the AIAS and IDSA are encouraged to develop specific recommendations/suggestions for both the implementation of various aspects of this document, as well as possible revisions. Once a year a Studio Learning Culture Survey is conducted to gauge problems that may exist and ways to address them.

Similarly, at least once each academic year the faculty will devote meeting time for a similar review, discussion, and recommendations for revisions to the Department of Architecture’s Studio

Culture Policy. Both the faculty and the administrative council will also address implementation strategies.

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