Morgan State University
School of Architecture and Planning

Department of Graduate Built Environment Studies
Program: Master of Architecture

Studio Culture Policy   (01/25/15)

Introduction

The Studio Culture Policy has been developed through collaborative workshops involving students and faculty. The policy includes both philosophical and procedural content. This document is not a standalone document, but is to be understood in the context of the mission statements of the Graduate Program in Architecture, the School of Architecture + Planning, and Morgan State University. The core values of the studio culture embrace the core values of these mission statements.

The studio is a core learning environment. The ideal studio environment will be healthy as a physical, psychological and social environment, with engagement with the professional community, outreach, and social responsibility.

I. PHYSICAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

1. **Studio Space.** Students will have physical space for studio course work, including furniture to support the activities of studio. Lighting, environmentally controlled clean air and support spaces will be provided, meeting modern standards for health, welfare and safety.

2. **Cleanliness and Hygiene.** Students and faculty are expected to clean up after themselves, in addition to any custodial support provided by the institution. The department will have periodic "clean up days" in which everyone will participate.

3. **Illness and the Well-being of the Individual and the Community**. Students and faculty are actively encouraged to stay at home when sick, to get proper rest, and to be respectful of the health of the community by minimizing the spread of illness.

4. **Physical Access to Studio + Safety.** Our campus and surrounding neighborhoods are subject to some criminal activity, which is common to most North American urban communities. It is imperative for the health, welfare and safety of students, faculty and staff that everyone will comply with the official operational hours of our building. The hours are established each academic year by a committee of the Dean which includes student and faculty representation. The hours are coordinated with the staffing abilities of the university police department. The hours are to be posted in the studio space, and made known to everyone. Students are to respect the posted hours as important for the physical safety of themselves and others.

   At the beginning of each academic semester, the Dean requests a list of students enrolled in design studio from the Graduate and Undergraduate Program. These students will be permitted to enter the building (and studio spaces) after normal business week hours, on Saturdays, Sundays and late evenings. The Dean gives this list to the police department.

5. **Noise Management.** Students and faculty are to be respectful of other educational activities within the core learning environment. The architecture studios are designed as open classroom spaces, both in the existing building and the new building currently under construction. The open

Studio Culture Policy   (01/25/15)

      classroom concept requires everyone to be aware of other activities within the studio, and requires noise management.

6. **Scheduling Use of Group Space**. The studio has exhibition walls, review space and instructional spaces that are collectively shared among many instructors. The Graduate and Undergraduate Program Directors are to coordinate and schedule the use of these collective spaces at the beginning of the semester, and during the semester as needs arise and change.

II. SOCIAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

1. **Respect, Kindness, and Humility.** These core values of respect, kindness, and humility are to be exemplified by faculty and students equally.

2. **Human Diversity.** Respect for, and conscious development of human diversity in the staff, faculty, and student body of the Graduate Program in Architecture is a core value.

3. **Collaboration and Team Building.** It is a core value that the studio culture will support the development of the student's collaborative skills, and will offer opportunities to experience and develop team participation skills.

4. **Leadership.** It is a core value that the studio culture will support the development of the student's leadership abilities, as well as the student's ability to participate effectively as a community member, or peer member of a working team. The studio culture at Morgan State University values "bottom up" leadership, and leadership through service, which is the basis of leadership. "Gandhi never wanted to be a leader." – M. Parekh.

5. **Design in Context of All Architectural Skills + Subjects.** It is a core value that design is not valued above all other architectural skills and subjects, but it taught and learned with balance in the context of the full spectrum of architecture.

6. **Interdisciplinary Communication.** It is a core value to create opportunities for students to learn about sister disciplines in the environmental design professions, and to connect to other fields of academic study and culture throughout the university, from the sciences to the fine arts to engineering, etc. For example, between Landscape Architecture and Architecture, this may mean shared efforts on the same project. Examples of fields of study for overlapping or joint projects include drama, graphic design, sociology, sustainability, etc.

7. **Master Scheduling and Coordination.** The administrative leadership of the SA-P, and the faculty, will strive to mitigate scheduling conflicts to facilitate interdisciplinary communication.

Studio Culture Policy   (01/25/15)

III. WORK ETHIC, TIME MANAGEMENT, ATTENDANCE AND GRADING

1. **Work Ethic and Time Management.** Students are expected to work in studio outside of scheduled classroom instructional hours. The minimum expectations for student time spent working on studio projects outside of scheduled classroom time expressed as ratios are as follows:

	Ratio of classroom hours to independent student work	
Undergraduate studios	1 hour requires 1 hour	Average 12 additional hrs per week
Graduate studios	1 hour requires 2 hours	Average 16 additional hrs per week

   This is considered an *absolute minimum* time commitment required to achieve a fundamental level of academic success.

   Students are expected to manage their time to avoid excessive end-of-project charrette activity. Project development should move at a regular pace, with regular evaluation intervals by faculty, with active discouragement of unhealthy behaviors including "all-nighters." Students are encouraged to live balanced lives, with appropriate rest, and to complete studio assignments at an even pace of work.

2. **Pencils Down Policy.** All faculty are asked to implement and adopt a "pencils down" policy to manage the conclusion phase of design studio projects. For example, there shall be a time period between the cessation of design and drafting and the final review, from a minimum of 48 hours to one week, at the discretion of the faculty section leader.

3. **Student Participation at Design Reviews.** Students are expected to attend design reviews for their studios for the complete time period. In other words, students are required to attend the presentations and reviews of their classmates work, and students are to manage their time to allow for their participation.

4. **Progressive Development of Studio Projects.** It is a core value that student work on studio projects will progress between scheduled studio meetings. Process critiques are valued, and are always part of the final semester student evaluations. (See statement on discouraging charrette behavior above)

5. **Attendance and Grading.** Students are required to arrive on time, and to be settled and ready to focus on the studio course at the scheduled start time. Each instructor will include a policy governing attendance, tardiness, and grading in the syllabi for the class, and the policy will be consistent to a practical extent for each program, undergraduate and graduate, but rests with the individual faculty member or section leader. Students are required to attend all scheduled studio meeting times, and to stay for the duration of the studio meeting time. On studio days that focus

Studio Culture Policy   (01/25/15)

on individual student-faculty desk critiques, students are not allowed to leave after receiving their individual critique, but are expected to remain in the studio learning environment and continuing to work on studio assignments. Equally, faculty are to be available to students for the duration of the scheduled studio meeting time. Excused absences are documented medical reasons, and personal or family emergencies. The determination of a qualified absence rests with the individual faculty member or section leader.

IV. PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY/SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY/COMMUNITY OUTREACH

1. **Active Engagement.** The Graduate Program in Architecture seeks an active engagement with the professional community of architects in Baltimore, the greater region, the State of Maryland, nationally and internationally. Faculty are encouraged to initiate and develop working relationships with architects in the professional community and others.

2. **Coordination + Management of Relationships with Professional Community**. Faculty are encouraged to communicate with, and work with, each other and their Program Director when engaging with the professional community to avoid the over-use of individual architects, and to grow the community. Faculty are encouraged to be respectful of the volunteer time of the architectural community.

3. **Multiple Levels.** The active engagement of architects in the design studio seeks a variety of roles and methods for architects' participation. Traditional studio design reviews are deemed onlyone method of engagement. Participation in studio project development, architectural office visits, reviews at office and other off-campus locations, mentoring relationships, informal lectures, desk critiques are alternative roles, among others.

4. **Social Responsibility.** Social responsibility is a core value of studio culture. The majority of projects are reflective of social responsibility, with an emphasis on the urban environment. Project types range from local urban critical building types to addressing global disaster relief.

5. **Community Engagement.** If appropriate to the student learning objectives of the specific studio course and with thoughtful planning by the faculty, engagement with community-based projects are undertaken to connect the school to the core values of social responsibility in the urban context.

6. **Adopted Neighborhood.** The Graduate Program in Architecture will consider adopting one neighborhood for a concentration or focus of studio design projects for a period of two or three years, before rotating to another neighborhood. When possible, institutional partners will be explored.

7. **Mentoring Environment.** Developing a student mentoring program specific to coursework required for the accredited architecture curriculum sequence is a goal of the Department, and will be supportive and integral to the Studio Culture.