

University of Kansas
School of Architecture, Design and Planning
Department of Architecture

The 'Studio Culture' Vision and Policy Statement

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In 2005, the National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB) requested that all schools **develop a 'Studio Culture Policy' document** that serves to provide a written policy identifying how each school of architecture addresses its studio culture. This effort encouraged academia to be more explicit about the pedagogical benefits of the studio experience. Prior to that, in 2003, the AIAS Studio Culture Task Force had created a document with the goal of encouraging schools to define explicit policies to support the positive aspects of the studio culture while transforming the more unhealthy practices. Five positive values were identified in the report including optimism, respect, sharing, engagement and innovation of which the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Kansas fully shares and supports as the basis of this document.

"Schools of architecture should constantly strive to promote architecture as a profession, not just a discipline, art form or occupation. As a profession it is our responsibility to first and foremost serve all people and society through the exploration of architecture as a means to improve the health, safety and welfare of the individual, community and nation. Architectural educators, administrators and students should work together to establish and evolve the following cultures within their programs. It is anticipated that each school will find unique solutions to achieve these cultures.

1. Optimism

Schools should foster a sense of optimism in their students. Students should understand the challenges the profession faces while serving society. Consequently, they need to be engaged in discussions and projects while in school that will teach students how to design creative, thoughtful and professional solutions. Practice should be promoted as an opportunity to expand and evolve the profession, not as a difficult place to perform the art of designing. Graduates should leave school with a high level of energy and excitement with the knowledge and belief each is an important member of the current and future profession. The role of a professional program is to promote and foster success of its students, not to set a quota for failure.

2. Respect

Schools should foster and promote a sense of respect for everyone. Disparaging remarks about other disciplines, faculty, students and practitioners should not and cannot be tolerated. Every effort should be made to include all people from all backgrounds and lifestyles in the design studio to increase awareness of diversity and respect for everyone. This must go beyond the members of a particular design studio and include community members.

3. Sharing

The process of sharing knowledge, ideas and experiences is the essence of the academy. Forums should be promoted for such exchanges between students, faculty, practitioners and community members. Such sharing should happen between these groups as well as amongst peers within each group. A team approach in learning is vital to perpetuate a team approach in practice.

4. Engagement

Schools should actively work to ensure that each student obtains experience working with and engaging a specific community through the process of designing. Students should understand fully the implications of design on real people. This includes understanding the potential for the design process to strengthen communities.

5. Innovation

It is the role of the academy to promote innovation in design and practice. Schools should actively pursue creative and innovative developments in both areas equally. Particular focus should be placed on expanding professional services and methods of strengthening architects' active client base. Architects of today do not work alone or without constraints. Students need to be taught about collaborative design, budgets and codes, not as limitations on their creativity, but as opportunities for creative problem solving."

The Studio

The **studio model** is historically rooted in the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, where the “design problem” relied heavily on knowledgeable teachers and “learning by doing.” Students were required to develop drawings of their projects for critique from a jury that generally consisted of professors and guest architects that evaluated the students’ projects. This tradition of the “jury” or “final reviews” continues to be the common means of evaluation in architecture schools today, as is the case at KU’s School of Architecture.

Studio learning encourages collaboration, risk-taking, critical-thinking processing, innovative-thinking, discussion, and “hands-on” experimentation. The design studio establishes an environment where students are challenged to move between intuitive processing of information; thinking through drawing and making; experimentation with materials and form; and, developing a variety of skills and technologies. Asking questions and making proposals that explore untested ideas are developed through criticism and discussion among classmates, faculty, practicing architects and others. The goal of the program is to produce conceptual thinkers versed in history, theory and the science of the field. Intensive one-on-one instruction provides the student the ability to develop verbal, critical-thinking, spatial, aesthetic and material sensibilities. The design studio draws upon life experiences, general studies courses and specific, architectural courses to provide a synthetic form of education. Students are exposed to a variety of cultural and societal ideas through history and theory, the environmental sciences and building technologies. The studio experience aims to provide an environment whereby diverse life experiences and opinions are shared—a culture of mutual respect and open inquiry is critical to a successful learning environment.

The **architectural design studio** is based on a group of people working together in a large open studio space where students are assigned desks to develop their design projects based upon common teaching methods: problem-based learning and learning-by-doing. This regular interaction between students and faculty provides an opportunity for students to share ideas, learn from one another and contribute to each other productively. Extended spaces beyond the studio space include several university libraries including the Spencer Library and our own ‘Hatch Reading Room’; computer and media labs; wood and metal shops; and, review and exhibition spaces.

The desk critique or “**desk crit**” and “**group crits**” provide an opportunity for the student to meet with the faculty member for a one-on-one discussion of the design work. These sessions act as a form of critical feedback on the student’s progress and provide the means for discussion on how the student is addressing the stated objectives. The studio instructor often provides direction or suggests revisions that he or she feels will help the student reach a better design solution. As follow-up, it is expected that the student will more fully explore the work and advance the design work to a new level for the next class period. These steps are repeated regularly and these methods of revising the work, based upon critical-feedback are essential to the design process. Faculty incorporate this method of teaching in individual ways, as is dictated by their own perspective on how to best teach design; ultimately, design decisions are made by the student.

Design studio reviews are essential moments in the semester, whereby interaction between students, faculty and outside visitors are made possible in a formal “pin-up” manner. Reviews serve to provide a means of discussing and assessing the student work, providing feedback and serve as an opportunity to discuss broader issues of the project assignment. These reviews should be seen as an opportunity to exchange ideas and to practice effective verbal and visual presentation skills. The program supports thoughtful and respectful exchanges, open-minded debate and discussion during these presentations.

Plan for Implementation and Maintenance

The 'Studio Culture Vision and Policy Statement' serves as a device for extending conversations between students and faculty. The Studio Culture committee is comprised of two students selected by the AIAS student organization and three faculty members. In May of 2009, the document was formally adopted as our working guide. The Studio Culture will inevitably evolve with changes in technology, the profession and society. The policy must reflect the changes while nurturing a culture vital to the student experience. The Studio Culture Committee will work to maintain and further develop this stated policy through review sessions each year; these will then inform bi-annual recommendations for changes which will be forwarded to the faculty for review and implementation.

Studio Culture Policy

As the basis of this Policy, the following NAAB Conditions for Accreditation, 2004 Edition were consulted (see http://www.naab.org/accreditation/2014_Conditions.aspx). In this document there are "Thirteen Conditions of Accreditation" of which one is focused on the "Studio Culture." in order to prepare documentation for the Accreditation Program Report (APR), the following describes this most clearly:

3.5 Studio Culture

The school is expected to **demonstrate a positive and respectful learning environment** through the encouragement of the fundamental values of optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, and innovation between and among the members of its faculty, student body, administration and staff. The school should encourage students and faculty to appreciate these values as guiding principles of professional conduct throughout their careers.

The APR must **demonstrate that the school has adopted a written studio culture policy with a plan for its implementation and maintenance and provide evidence of abiding by that policy.** The plan should ***specifically address issues of time management*** on the part of both the faculty and students. The document on studio culture policy should be incorporated in the APR as Section 4.2.

The following represents the policy we have developed that is particular to our School's program. The adoption of this studio culture policy shall not infringe on the academic freedom of faculty to teach their courses, accountable and consistent with the published curriculum, in a manner that serves the best interests of the students, the profession, the School of Architecture and the University of Kansas. With a focus upon "specifically address(ing) issues of time management," we begin with the first three points of the "The Redesign of Studio Culture: A Report of the AIAS Studio Culture Task Force" (<http://www.aias.org/website/download.asp?id=314>):

1. **Students Should Lead Balanced Lives:** "Architectural education should be challenging, rigorous, and time-consuming. However, as one noted practitioner stated, "If we want professionals to lead balanced, healthy lives, we should not expect them to put off practicing that mindset until later in life." Do our current practices promote successful habits? Is too much focus placed on the time spent in the design studio? Despite the difficulty of these questions, the answers must be sought and considered."

Related Policies:

a. All faculty (including part-time adjuncts) shall meet prior to the start of each semester. They will meet as two groups, same-year-level studio and core-architecture-elective instructors, to discuss content of the courses and deadlines of major projects and exams. (*If possible, they will coordinate deadlines to alleviate overlaps—especially at mid-term and final week prior to Stop Day.*) Studio projects are to be completed prior to Stop Day so that students may study for exams during Exam Week. Because design review space is limited, final studio reviews can occur during the Exam Week, but these must be coordinated with the students' exams so that time conflicts are avoided.

b. According to University policy, syllabi and details of the course are to be discussed with students on the first day whereby all faculty (studio and architecture courses) will announce their exam and project due dates to the students. Any obvious deadline conflicts should be discussed then, so that students are made aware and can plan accordingly. Architecture course instructors who are willing to work with studio project deadlines--by confirming alternative dates with their own students--may give "Tentative" Exam dates in the Syllabus, handed out to their students on the first day of class.

c. Typically, faculty are contracted to teach 40% of their time, perform service for 20% and engage in scholarship/research/practice for the remaining 40%. Scholarship and teaching are to be equally valued and are equally important to the quality of the school. Design studio classes are required to meet 11 hours/week (except for the first design studio which meets 8 hours/week). If faculty, or a student, must be away for conferences, practice obligations, or other such activity, a suitable substitute of time must be arranged to assure proper instruction. If students must leave the studio to work in the computer lab or woodshop, students should make the faculty aware so that they are not regarded as absent.

(Note: Policies outlined below in relation to the other two remaining points should also help students develop a healthy lifestyle.)

2. Time is More Than a Constantly Endangered Resource: "Many responses to our task force have also proposed that a major solution to several of these issues would be to teach time management skills. Most schools place little emphasis on teaching these skills, and even fewer have classes directly dedicated to this topic. Students who manage their time well typically perform much better than those who do not. Good time management usually leads to stronger design projects due to a more balanced work schedule and allowing time for reflection. Also, good time managers have more successful reviews because they have allotted time to sleep as well as prepare for their oral (written, graphic, etc.) presentations."

Related Policies:

a. Students in architectural education know that it is a time-intensive activity and experience demonstrates students' coursework demands 60+ hours per week of their time. Making priorities is an essential skill to develop. Faculty will make general requirements and deadlines clear at the start of the semester and state specific deadlines during the course; ultimately, assisting students in setting appropriate priorities and time schedules for themselves.

b. Many students must work alongside attending school. Based on previous experience, it is recommended that students set a maximum of 10 hours/week for outside employment.

c. Within the first semester of the M.Arch program, a 'time management' workshop should be given to the Freshman class, so that students understand that the architecture curriculum is especially time-demanding and that they may apply given strategies in order to lead balanced lives. This will be incorporated in the 'Professional Practice' course offered in the first semester of the program.

d. In an effort to save valuable time, certain woodshop and computer technology skills should be taught as part of the design studio experience. This will help assure that *all* students have been given basic introductory skills that ultimately are incorporated into the design studio and other courses. It is recommended that workshops be taught through the Woodshop (with shop manager) and the Bridge Lab (with computer lab manager) to assure that the material is consistently being delivered to *all* students.

3. There is a World Outside of the Design Studio: "When students spend all of their waking time, and some of their sleeping time, ... for four to six years, in the same classes, in the same building, they become disconnected from the ubiquitous public they will serve. Too often, faculty members do not encourage or even allow any unstructured time for students to develop interests and relationships outside of studio. This in large part, can lead to clients accusing the profession of arrogance and ignorance. 'If we want professionals to be involved in their communities, we should make sure that we are instilling in students a sense of involvement with others outside the architectural community.'"

Related Policies:

- a. The School of Architecture is committed to bringing outside lecturers to provide examples of innovative scholarship and practice. Typically, these lectures are scheduled from 11:30-12:30 (during studio periods). Participation is highly recommended. See the School's website for current, scheduled lectures (<http://architecture.ku.edu/calendar/architecture-ubpl>).
- b. The School is committed to bringing outside critics to provide comment on studio projects and deliver lectures within courses. Often, it is advantageous to hold reviews at firm locations (such as Kansas City) so that many practitioners are readily available to provide feedback.
- c. Extra curricular activities are encouraged as a valuable aspect of a student's development, while being respectful of curricular demands. Students are encouraged to engage service, memberships and activities outside the School as a way of balancing (and broadening) student life. (Students should not assume that they will automatically allowed to engage in non-studio activities during studio hours; this must be negotiated with the critic ahead of time.) The School of Architecture and Urban Planning and the University of Kansas offers several student organizations to help students develop connections to outside practitioners and community activities. See both <http://www.sadp.ku.edu/school/people/students/orgs> and <http://www.silc.ku.edu>.
- d. We seek to have our students become leaders in a globalized profession. We therefore require study abroad or practicum experiences that foster student engagement in a unique situation. Students may study abroad for one week during a semester; one month during the summer or winter break; or go abroad for half or all of an academic year. See <http://studyabroad.ku.edu/ProgramTypes/>. The Global Awareness Program (GAP) is a KU initiative that recognizes undergraduates' international experiences. Students can receive transcript certification for experiences including study abroad, classes with an international focus, foreign language study and international co-curricular activities. See <http://www.international.ku.edu/gap/> for more details.
- e. We seek opportunities for Service-Learning opportunities through studio design projects. This is well-established in the Studio 804 program and other opportunities have been developed in other studio courses. See <http://kubuildingtech.org/creativework/> for current work. In addition to posting on the website, the School aims to provide frequent student-work exhibitions and hold brown bag lunches for discussion of the work. The Center for Service Learning provides support and resources for faculty in designing and implementing service learning courses. Through KU's Center, students have the opportunity to become certified in service learning as a way to enhance their academic career. Upon completion of all requirements, the designation, "Certification in Service Learning," will appear on the student's official KU transcript. See <http://ccsr.ku.edu/about-service-learning> for more details.
- f. In order to assist students in their application to scholarships, unique topical studios employment opportunities, and Study Abroad opportunities (all that potentially require portfolios for application), students should be made aware of the need to document their work from the first semester. In order to support this, it is recommended that students develop documentation of their studio process and products in written and graphic ways. It is recommended that students do this for each of their design studios. Also, it is recommended that students save the images in a digital format for future portfolio-reconfiguration. With this, we believe that students will develop their abilities to reflect upon their work and will have material readily available.
- g. The Research Experience Program (REP) is one of three undergraduate certificate programs at KU aimed at providing official recognition of an identified experience on a student's academic transcript. REP provides KU students with a unique learning opportunity grounded in KU's role as a major national research university. See <http://ugresearch.ku.edu/student/rep/overview> for more information.

For further definition, see the 2002 AIAS Task Force Report (<http://www.aias.org/website/download.asp?id=314>):

4. **Design is the Integration of Many Parts**
5. **Design Process is as Important as Product**
6. **Collaboration is the Art of Design**
7. **Design is Inherently an Interdisciplinary Act**
8. **Even Educators Can Learn**
9. **The Good of Students Must Prevail (yet to come: studio selection process)**
10. **Grades Can Impede Productive Assessment**
11. **Critiques are Learning Experiences, Not Target Practice**

12. To Design for Many, Parts of All Must be Included

The Design Studio Syllabus

Communication of core studio culture issues is best integrated into the design studio syllabi issued each semester. Beyond the typical elements included in syllabi (description of the course, basic information about the course, contact information, coursework required for successful completion, attendance policy and course schedule), other elements that affect our 'Studio Culture' and should be included in the syllabi are:

1. **NAAB Criteria Policy:** "The National Architectural Accreditation Board accredits professional-degree seeking schools as they complete the basic requirements. Please see (<http://architecture.ku.edu/naab-1>) for details (Note: each design studio has its own particular NAAB criteria to be addressed, see the 'SPC matrix' at <http://architecture.ku.edu/naab-1>).

2. **'Studio Culture':** "According to the "NAAB Conditions for Accreditation, 2014 Edition" (see http://www.naab.org/accreditation/2014_Conditions.aspx), the school has created its 'Studio Culture Vision and Policy Statement' as stated on the School's website:

<http://www.architecture.ku.edu/sites/architecture.ku.edu/files/docs/StudioCulture.pdf>

3. **Building Use Policies:** "Marvin Hall, Marvin Annex and Snow Hall are open 24 hours per day, every day of the year accessible to students and faculty of the Architecture Program. For the safety, health, courtesy and sense of community: proper use of the studio space is expected; students are responsible for all costs incurred for painting and/or repair; misuse of space will result in loss of studio privileges; it is the student's responsibility to see that all materials are removed from classrooms (including review rooms) at the end of each class period, and that no materials are left in public corridors, lobbies, stairs or other paths of egress; at the end of the semester, all personal and course materials must be removed from the buildings by the posted deadline or they will be discarded; it is the responsibility of each student to keep their area tidy from debris, carrying excess items to the trash can, dumpster or recycling bins; radio/sound systems are permitted only via headphones; no smoking in the building; cutting is to be done on lay-off tables and cutting boards only; the pin-up spaces immediately outside the studio are *not* for model-building or other tasks that can be performed inside the studio; the use of power tools is restricted to the indoor and outdoor shop spaces; and spraying of any kind is *prohibited* inside the building (use the outdoor building yard for any spraying)."

3. **2010 Imperative:** "To successfully impact global warming and world resource depletion, it is imperative that ecological literacy become a central tenet of design education. Yet today, the interdependent relationship between ecology and design is virtually absent in many professional curricula. To meet the immediate and future challenges facing our professions, a major transformation of the academic design community must begin today. All project statements in the design studio shall include the criterion that "the design engage the environment in a way that dramatically reduces or eliminates the need for fossil fuel." More information can be found at http://www.architecture2030.org/2010_imperative/index.html.

4. **'Students with Disabilities' Policy:** "The KU Office of Disability Resources (DR), 22 Strong Hall, 785-864-2620, coordinates accommodations and services for all eligible students with disabilities. If you have a disability and wish to request accommodations and have not contacted DR, please do so as soon as possible. Information about their services can be found at <http://www.disability.ku.edu>. Please also contact your professor privately in regard to your needs in this course."

5. **Religious Holidays:** "Any student in this course who plans to observe a religious holiday which conflicts with the course schedule or requirements should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to discuss alternate accommodations."

6. **'Academic Misconduct' Policy:** "Academic misconduct by a student shall include, but not be limited to, disruption of classes; threatening an instructor or fellow student in an academic setting; giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on examinations or in the preparation of notebooks, themes, reports or other assignments; knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work; unauthorized changing of grades; unauthorized use of University approvals or forging of signatures; falsification of research results; plagiarizing of another's work; violation of regulations or ethical codes for the treatment of human and animal subjects; or otherwise acting dishonestly in research. When academic misconduct is alleged, the clear university policies and procedures expressed in the academic misconduct section, available at <http://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect6> will be followed. The University of Kansas is committed to programs and activities that are free of racial, sexual or ethnic discrimination. For assistance or information on policies, please contact the University Ombuds Office

(<http://www.ombuds.ku.edu/>) or the Department of Human Resources & Equal Opportunity
(<http://www.hreo.ku.edu>.)