

**University of Colorado Denver
College of Architecture and Planning, Department of Architecture**

Learning and Teaching Culture Policy

Introduction

Within architectural education, the studio plays a key role. However, studio-based education is not the sole component of a comprehensive and professional architectural education. Lectures, seminars, and field-based learning all contribute to our practice. It is both an analytic and synthetic form of education. This complex form of education requires a serious commitment of students and faculty in terms of time and effort. The studio integrates critical discourse, creative thinking, and learning through making. This requires serious commitment of the institution regarding the allocation of faculty, space, and supporting facilities. For these reasons having a clear and well-articulated understanding of our shared culture is of central importance to faculty, students, and administrators.

Purpose

The Learning and Teaching Culture Policy (LTCP) aims to establish a standard of understanding and respectful relationships between faculty and students to create a rich, ethical, healthy, and collaborative learning environment. This document is based on our shared values which include collaboration, mutual respect, health & well-being, as well as a commitment to diversity and inclusion. To achieve this outcome, the LTCP is designed to be revisited as often as necessary by faculty, students, and administrators to ensure it reflects the ever-changing complexities of architectural education.

1. Collaborative Community: Faculty-Student Relations

The attitudes of faculty and students do much to set the tone for our learning and teaching culture. Honoring essential interpersonal relationships is fundamental. Therefore, it is expected that:

- 1.1. Faculty and students will develop a supportive and collegial atmosphere in all educational settings respecting each other's physical and emotional boundaries.
- 1.2. Faculty and students will recognize each other as people with unique life experiences committed to participating in the best education possible and treat each other as such.
- 1.3. Faculty and students will respect and celebrate diversity of all kinds, including differences in race, culture, age, religion, sexual orientation and identity, socioeconomic background, and other social identities and life experiences.
- 1.4. Faculty and students will endeavor to get to know each other as individuals and celebrate each other's individuality.
- 1.5. Faculty and students will recognize that there is merit in each other's experiences and that they will be willing to learn from one another.

2. Expectations of Faculty

In general, it is the expectation that faculty possess the knowledge and expertise appropriate for the course to which they are assigned. Therefore, it is expected that:

- 2.1. Faculty will have the necessary background to teach class and should be prepared for class every day.
- 2.2. Faculty will attend class as required and make sure to notify students ahead of time in the unlikely event rescheduling is needed.
- 2.3. Faculty will always try to give every student equal attention.
- 2.4. Faculty will maintain an awareness of the mental and physical toll that architecture school can take on their students.
- 2.5. Faculty will clearly communicate their ideas and expectations to the students before the assignment is due.

- 2.6. Faculty will post and maintain regular office hours. It is expected that those students needing additional instruction make every effort to attend those office hours.
- 2.7. Faculty will be able to demonstrate the skills and concepts they are teaching to provide examples for assigned work. Likewise, course prerequisites are the responsibility of students.
- 2.8. Faculty will foster creativity and strive to provide a class environment that is open and equal to all.
- 2.9. Faculty will maintain an appreciation for each student recognizing the unique skills, talents, abilities, and background they bring to the learning environment.
- 2.10. Faculty and the administration will make every effort to keep all sections of each given studio in the same space in order to promote the exchange of ideas and strategies between sections.
- 2.11. Faculty will grade assignments in a timely manner and submit final grades before the date required by the university.
- 2.12. Faculty will acknowledge individual needs to ensure ample time for all students to succeed equally.
- 2.13. Faculty should consider assigned project costs, attempt to constrain or offset student incurred costs, and communicate this clearly and early on in the semester.

3. Expectations of Students

In general, it is the expectation that students take responsibility for their own education and take responsibility for their relationships with other students and faculty within the studio. Therefore, it is expected that:

- 3.1. Students will attend class as required, notifying the faculty member and following syllabus guidelines if there is an absence.
- 3.2. Students will come to class prepared, academically and socially open-minded, and eager to learn.
- 3.3. Students will approach their education with a grown mindset, willing to take risks, and learn to iterate and innovate in order to grow.
- 3.4. Students will communicate concerns in a civil and timely manner to faculty.
- 3.5. Students will perform assigned tasks on time, to the best of their ability, and with the goal of working towards positive design solutions.
- 3.6. Students are willing to be self-learners who are comfortable in not having everything spelled out and curious explorers.
- 3.7. 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.
- 3.8. Students agree to adhere to the academic integrity policy at CU Denver
- 3.9. Students are responsible for meeting all course prerequisites before enrolling in a class.

4. Time Management, School-Life-Work Balance, and Health & Wellbeing

We are all attempting to balance various commitments and life roles. Therefore, course assignments are expected to be reasonable, recognizing that students have other classes but commensurate with the CU Denver guidelines. Therefore, it is expected that:

- 4.1. Faculty will maintain reasonable scheduling of assignments.
- 4.2. Faculty will provide syllabi and a schedule of work for the semester in a timely manner and will adhere to them as much as possible.
- 4.3. Faculty will maintain a reasonable workload commensurate with the credit hour load of each class.
- 4.4. Faculty will allow students time for reflection and integration between introducing new material and concepts.
- 4.5. In order to maintain positive work-life balance, productivity, and professional readiness, workload expectations of the students and faculty will be well communicated and realistic, and they will prioritize health and well-being.
- 4.6. Faculty will offer help to help build time management skills or refer students to the appropriate resources.

- 4.7. University sanctioned breaks and holidays will be honored and designated as a time for students and faculty to rest.
- 4.8. The university provides resources for the health and well-being of our students and faculty. Private and confidential mental health services can be accessed through the CU Denver Counseling Center.

5. Constructive Evaluations and Instruction

Assessment is a reality of the university. It is expected that the methods and means of assessment be fair and equitable. Student assessment, specifically the design studio review (or 'jury') is intended to provide a learning environment based upon mutual respect between faculty, outside reviewers, and students. It is expected that work will be carefully and thoroughly critiqued, but the critique will be directed to the work, not the student's character or personhood. Similarly, work submitted for non-studio classes will be evaluated with attention to student learning and advancement. Therefore, it is expected that:

- 5.1. Faculty will critique the work, not the person.
- 5.2. Reviews and critiques will be discussion oriented.
- 5.3. Faculty will evaluate students' knowledge, technique, and execution.
- 5.4. Faculty will ensure that outside reviewers have adequate knowledge of the studio project before the review begins.
- 5.5. Jurors will have respect for the students and the students' work and will critique the work in a positive manner to provide constructive feedback on their process and methodology.
- 5.6. Reviews and critiques will be of a reasonable length, not exceeding the time scheduled.
- 5.7. Faculty will provide students with a clear introduction to the structure and desired outcomes of the review process.
- 5.8. Clear expectations and student assessment methodologies will be established and communicated in writing.
- 5.9. Students and faculty recognize that assessing a creative endeavor with quantitative grading is difficult.
- 5.10. Assessments and feedback will be provided in a timely manner throughout the semester so that students receive timely guidance on their work.
- 5.11. Faculty will provide regular, valuable, and informative feedback during the semester to prepare students for reviews and final grading.
- 5.12. Faculty will do their best to evaluate the students' work without bias.
- 5.13. Students should be proud of the work they have accomplished while detaching themselves from it in order to accept constructive criticism.

6. Diversity and Solidarity

Given the demands and stresses of our mutual work and the amount of time we spend together, we realize that not just collaboration but an ongoing ethic of respect and collegial support needs to be an integral part of our culture. Therefore:

- 6.1. The school is committed to an education that is open to all. This includes but is not limited to a diversity of culture, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic background, and identity.
- 6.2. The school is committed to a diverse education in the field and practice of architecture. This includes a diversity of authors, precedents, buildings, books, and ideas.
- 6.3. For those facing financial barriers, the school will make every effort to provide accommodation so the student can fully participate.
- 6.4. The school will act as a safe space for open discussions around justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- 6.5. As a community, we recognize each of our students' various backgrounds and skillsets. We encourage a culture of collaboration where sharing ideas, resources, and skillsets for the success of the whole is valued over the success of the individual.
- 6.6. The school is committed to encouraging the different talents and abilities of each of our students. Therefore, our curriculum will reflect the diversity or career options the profession has to offer.

7. Respectful Stewardship and Space Management

We work closely together in the studios, labs, classrooms, and field. Often, we are challenged to fairly and equitably share and schedule space and resources. We believe that our commitments to collaboration, mutual respect and well-being need to be carried over into the immediate settings of our work.

Therefore:

- 7.1. Students, faculty, and staff will respect the rights, property, and space of one another.
- 7.2. School property, including classrooms, studio, pin-up spaces, computer labs, shops, and other public amenities, are provided to serve the community. As such, they should be treated with respect and left as they were found.
- 7.3. For the health and well-being of the community, toxic and hazardous materials should not be used on the school premises. Only approved materials should be used in labs and studio spaces. When in doubt, refer to charts posted on each floor or speak with a shop monitor.
- 7.4. Every effort should be taken to minimize waste and recycle unwanted materials in the proper bins provided on each floor. The school will make every effort to offer multiple options for waste stream management.
- 7.5. The health, safety, and welfare of the building occupants are essential to our profession. All members of the school agree to abide by the regulations instituted by the university, fire department, and campus security.

8. Promotion and Maintenance of the Studio Culture Policy

In order to continuously promote and maintain the desired studio culture, this document is expected to be disseminated and maintained regularly. Therefore, it is expected that:

- 8.1. Student government and the administration will convene regular Learning and Teaching Culture Committee meetings as needed to keep the policy updated.
- 8.2. There will be multiple opportunities throughout the semester for faculty and students' feedback on compliance with the policy.
- 8.3. The LCTP will be a component of the syllabi.
- 8.4. Disputes concerning failure to adhere to the LCTP will be the charge of the Student Affairs Committee and, if not resolved, should be brought to the attention of either the department chair or the student representative.
- 8.5. Grade appeals shall be considered under the College Grade Appeal Policy and not the Learning and Teaching Culture Policy.