



Cornell University  
College of Architecture, Art, and Planning

Department of Architecture  
**Studio Culture Policy**

## **Contents**

02	Contents
03	Background
03	Overview
04	Program Philosophy
04	Policy
05	Time Management
05	Design Process
05	Grades
05	Collaboration
05	Interdisciplinary Learning
05	Faculty
05	Reviews and Critiques
06	Diversity
06	Plan for Implementation and Maintenance
07	Building Use Policies
09	Note of Professional Accreditation
09	Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Statement
10	References and Online Information Sources

## Background

In 2005, the National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB) issued an additional condition for accreditation: Studio Culture. Each accredited school of architecture is now required to have a written policy addressing and shaping its studio culture.

This new condition was inspired by the American Institute of Architecture Students Studio Culture Task Force report, released in December 2001, which encouraged the profession to be more explicit about the pedagogical benefits and purpose of the most unique and memorable aspect of architecture education.

Subsequently, the AIAS created another task force to address both the positive and negative aspects of studio culture and issued its report in 2002. In that report the writers call for explicit policies to support the positive aspects of studio culture, while curbing some of the more unhealthy practices. The positive values identified by the report include optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, and innovation - values which are shared and supported fully by the Department of Architecture at Cornell University.

The NAAB Studio Culture condition (condition 5) reads:

*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 [school's Architecture Program Report] 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 the students. The document on studio culture policy should be incorporated in the APR as Section 4.2.*

To download the AIAS report, go to:  
<http://www.aias.org/website/download.asp?id=314>

Students are also encouraged to consult the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) website for general information on the NAAB Conditions of Accreditation for Professional Degree Programs in Architecture, which includes information on Student Performance Criteria.

To download the NAAB Student Performance Criteria, go to: <http://www.naab.org>

## Overview

### The Studio

Historically, the European tradition has greatly influenced American architectural education and the studio model. Looking to Europe for a standard, American architects and students of architecture in the nineteenth century saw the prestigious Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris as the model for architectural education. The Ecole's philosophy was imported to the United States, and many architecture schools in the early part of this century had Paris-trained faculty. The foundation of the Beaux Arts system was the "design problem", assigned to the student early in the term and carefully developed under close tutelage. It began as an esquisse, or sketch problem, and ended en charrette. Charrette, French for "cart," refers to the carts in which the finished drawings were placed at the deadline hour for transport to the "master" for critique. The Beaux Arts teaching system relied heavily on knowledgeable teachers and "learning by doing". Competition was intense, and the end results were exquisitely drawn projects in traditional architectural vocabularies, generally developed on the basis of "good taste" and intuition. The style was predominantly neoclassical and the preferred program / building type was the monument. Projects were ultimately judged by a jury of professors and guest architects, who mostly used the same criteria by which students designed - "good taste." Most schools of architecture still use a "jury" or "final review" system today.

The architectural design studio today is unique in higher education, as it is at the same time based on a pedagogical method and on a spatial concept. It is a group of people working together, generally in a large flexible space led by an instructor where investigations take place, and students learn through doing, through making, and also through critique, through understanding, and through recycling of ideas.

Essential components are:

- **Studio Pedagogy**  
The Department believes in and supports the pedagogical benefits and purpose of the studio teaching method: problem-based learning, and learning by doing.
- **Studio Space**  
The inherent flexibility of the traditional studio space promotes interaction between students and faculty, as well as the opportunity for students to share in, learn from, and contribute to each others' work.
- **Studio Culture**  
The predominating attitudes and behavior that characterize the functioning of a group in the studio context, in this case the architectural community at Cornell (students, faculty, administration, staff, and visitors).
- **Studio Extensions**  
Extension of the traditional studio space, including shop, library, computer lab, review and exhibition spaces.

### Fundamental Values

It is expected in the Cornell architecture community that students and faculty alike understand and share fundamental common studio values of:

- **Optimism** for working towards a better world and better built environment.
- **Respect** for one another and respect for each others' work, efforts, goals, and differences.
- **Sharing** of knowledge, ideas, and assistance
- **Engagement** in the studio concept
- **Innovation** as an essential component of the studio concept

### Program Philosophy

If one could identify a singular philosophy for the architecture program at Cornell, it would be that architecture is a conceptual problem-solving discipline. The goal of the program is to produce conceptual thinkers, versed in the skills, history, theory, and science of their field. The program is oriented toward developing the student's ability to deal creatively with architectural problems on analytical, conceptual, and developmental levels. The sequence courses in design, consisting of studio work augmented by lectures and seminars dealing with theory and history, are the core of the program. Sequences of studies in culture and society, environmental sciences, structures, and building technology provide a base for the work in design. The intention has always been to instruct architecture students in issues of basic, as well as more sophisticated, formal principles, developing in them an aptitude for functional and programmatic accommodation, structural and technological integration, energy-conscious design, and materials and methods of construction. Rather than train architects who think of building as autonomous objects frozen in an assigned ideology, our goal is to produce architects who are capable of making independent judgments rooted in an ever-changing context of architectural thought.

### Policy

The Department of Architecture at Cornell believes in and supports the value of the design studio model. Studio learning encourages dialogue, collaboration, risk-taking, innovation, and a "learning by doing" pedagogy. The design studio is an environment in which students and faculty work together in asking questions and making proposals that explore unknown ground, and are further developed through criticism and discussion among class-mates, faculty, and visitors. Studio learning offers intensive one-on-one instruction, and provides the opportunity for the student to develop his/her critical thinking skills and spatial and material sensibilities. The design studio offers a synthetic form of education, where project-based learning becomes the foundation for developing an understanding of and commitment to the architecture's fundamental mission: to improve the quality of the built and natural environments.

## **Time Management**

The Department supports its students and faculty in leading balanced lives. The fact that the architecture studios are open for student use twenty-four hours a day should not be interpreted falsely. Not only at Cornell, but in architecture schools across the country; the romance of the “all-nighter” is pervasive. Students are encouraged to work intelligently and efficiently, not necessarily longer, in studio. Rational use of time in developing work habits is encouraged. The “tradition” of all night work is discouraged, as an indication of poor planning. As studios are open 24 hours, this temptation may exist, but the Department prefers to not allow this to become overly romanticized. The result is generally counterproductive.

**Courses:** The Department values all of the courses in its curriculum. Students are encouraged to distribute their efforts equally to all academic courses.

**Coordination:** Through year coordinators, the Department makes efforts to avoid conflicting deadlines for architecture courses. Deadlines for out of College courses not maintained by the Department must be handled individually.

## **Design Process**

The Department acknowledges the value of design intention and process as well as design product. The Department encourages grading for studio courses that affirms the values of respect for a student’s ideas, the development of these ideas, and the ability to make ideas spatial and material (product).

The Department encourages students to understand studio-based learning as a unique and valuable pedagogical model which promotes open-ended questions, for which there may be no “right” or “wrong” answers.

## **Grades**

Grades are one measure of a student’s performance in studio. Criticism, advising and counseling are considered integral to a student’s studio evaluation.

## **Collaboration**

In addition to individual design projects, the Department values team and group projects at every level of design research and development.

## **Interdisciplinary Learning**

The Department supports and encourages interdisciplinary activities through which students can acquire a broad range of skills and experiences in order to become effective designers, and advocates for a quality built environment.

## **Faculty**

Faculty who teach studio are expected to have the ability to inspire students to learn, to engage students in critical thinking, to bring forward their particular expertise, and to convey a sense of optimism about the field of architecture.

## **Reviews and Critiques**

### **The Desk Crit**

The desk critique, or “crit”, is a traditional unique component of design studio, a one-on-one dialogue between the student and studio instructor which acts as a form of critical feedback on both the student’s process and product in addressing assigned design problems. The studio instructor may often suggest revisions that he or she feels will better solve a particular aspect of the problem. As a follow-up to the desk crit, the student is generally expected to more fully explore and test these options and suggestions by revisiting his or her solution. This process of revisiting and revising alternative solutions, a recycling of ideas, is generally considered to be essential to the design process. The studio instructor will generally critique the quality of the student’s process of investigation and ability to reflect on his or her own process of designing and employing design strategies and thought processes. Faculty may employ this method of teaching in individual ways, some on a daily basis, and some more occasionally in deference to more general group discussions, but a general rule is that a student not present in studio during studio hours will not receive desk criticism.

## Reviews

Design studio reviews and critiques are essential elements of studio pedagogy, enabling and promoting interaction between students, faculty, and outside visitors. Reviews are simultaneously a means of assessing student work and an opportunity to facilitate discussion of greater issues and relationships, and should be seen as a unique learning experience in which a wealth of knowledge and experience is disseminated, and not as individual evaluations. Public presentation and exhibition of design studio work is essential to studio pedagogy, and vital for the development of effective verbal communication skills. Reviews may take on different formats:

*There are three types of reviews: working, preliminary, and final. Working reviews are open, where the critic and student meet to review and discuss work. Preliminary and final reviews may be open or closed. In the closed review, the student's work is evaluated in closed session without oral explanations by the student. The work is subsequently discussed in open session with the student. A modified form of the closed review is one in which students make brief oral presentations before jury deliberation in closed session.*  
(From Student, Faculty, and Staff Handbook)

In general, students and faculty alike are expected to arrive on time and remain engaged as active participants throughout the review process. Students should be prepared for the clear and coherent presentation of their work and be prepared to discuss both their work and the work of others in the studio. Instructors are responsible for informing invited outside reviewers about the expectations communicated to the students for the project to be reviewed, and the expectation that reviews will reflect the school's commitment to studio culture policy; regarding respect and values, instructors and visitors are discouraged from employing gratuitous personal criticism. The Department supports thoughtful and respectful dialogue, debate and discussion during all reviews and presentations.

Unlike the majority of students throughout the University, who finish the semester with scheduled final exams, the culmination of the architecture student's semester is usually the Final Review, a public event in which faculty and outside critics discuss and critique final projects, and students respond. The "Final Review" period occurs at the end of every semester, is coordinated so as not to conflict with final exams, and work by every level of studio is presented. Students are highly encouraged to attend all levels of Final Reviews to enrich their exposure and learning experience.

## Diversity

The Department supports active and open dialogue in the studio, an environment in which diverse life experiences and opinions are shared. A culture of mutual respect and open inquiry supports a life-long learning process that begins in architecture school.

## Plan for Implementation and Maintenance

The College of Architecture, Art & Planning at Cornell University has long maintained the Student, Faculty, and Staff Handbook as a guiding document for the College community. This handbook has long served as a College-wide guiding handbook for studio culture (studio teaching, though somewhat different in nature, also exists in the Departments of Art and Planning in the College). In the spring of 2006 the Department created a handbook for the new M.Arch. program.

This Studio Culture Policy is seen as a document not only for the B.Arch. and M.Arch. Professional Programs, but also for the post-professional degree program, recognizing similar conditions within the three degree programs. It is not meant to replace or supersede either, the Student, Faculty, and Staff Handbook, nor the M.Arch. Handbook.

## Evolving Studio Culture: Review by Studio Culture Committee

Studio culture will inevitably evolve with shifts and changes in technology, in the profession and in society. An obvious example is that the desk in the studio is gradually giving way to the laptop computer, which, together with wireless technology, can be used anywhere, expanding and changing the spatial nature of the traditional studio. While continuing to embrace new technologies and new spatial configurations, the Department must sustain and nurture a studio culture vital to the student experience. The policy must continually reflect changes while maintaining the integrity and professionalism that characterize the study and practice of architecture. Through sustaining a studio culture that emphasizes mutual respect, professionalism and shared awareness and responsibilities among students, faculty, staff, and administration, the school and the profession will be able to evolve and shift in ways that will better serve the needs of the future.

The Studio Culture Policy will be reviewed and revised on an annual basis, to maintain and further develop working principles for achieving the balance and integration of diverse goals and perspectives of the University, the College, and the Architecture Program.

It is our plan to establish a working mechanism for review and further development of the policy through creating a Studio Culture Committee as a sub-committee of the Curriculum Committee, composed of Faculty, Student Representatives, AIAS Student leaders, Faculty Program Directors and coordinators, and alumni participants. The Studio Culture Committee will work to maintain and develop the Studio Culture Policy through review sessions each semester, from which emerge annual recommendations forwarded to the faculty for review and implementation.

## Building Use Policies

1. The four College buildings – Sibley Hall, Milstein Hall, Rand Hall, and Tjaden Hall, are open to the public every weekday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. After 5:00 p.m. there is card access only on evenings and weekends. Users outside the College of AAP who request access to the CIT lab in Tjaden have access until 11:00 p.m. The Foundry is restricted to Art faculty and approved student users.

Each building has the following restrictions after hours and on weekends:

Milstein Hall – 24/7 for Architecture and AAP students with card access privileges

Rand Hall – open late and weekends to campus for Fine Arts Library hours, then 24/7 as for Milstein

Sibley Hall – open 24/7 but labs and other rooms locked selected hours

Tjaden Hall – open to campus CIT Mac lab hours then Art students

The Foundry – prox. access only for approved Art, AAP or other Cornell students

2. This privilege of access may be revoked at any time for cause. All use of the Architecture design studios is subject to the Studio Culture Policy.

3. The use of extension cords is prohibited, as well as the joining of one extension cord to another. UL approved power strips are allowed but they cannot be plugged into each other.

4. The use of small or hidden video cameras for installations is prohibited except with prior permission from the Dean's office and Department head. Signs must be posted warning public of their use.

5. The use of plaster, aerosol spray paints, hand-held torches, or toxic resins is absolutely prohibited—except in the spaces specially provided for these purposes in the Foundry, Tjaden or the Rand Hall shop. The spray booths in Rand and Tjaden must be used for any project using spray paints and must be used according to posted instructions.

6. Proper use of 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.

7. 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.

8. Bicycles are not to be brought into the buildings at any time.

9. All students in architectural design are provided with drawer or locker space. Students furnish their own padlocks. At the end of each term padlocks must be removed and drawers or lockers cleaned out; otherwise padlocks will be filed off and personal materials left in drawers or lockers will be removed and discarded.

10. Architecture students enrolled in design studio are provided with studio space. At the end of the term all personal and course materials must be removed from the buildings by the posted deadline or they will be discarded.

11. Studio Fees: Each student is charged a fee each semester to help defray the continuing costs of refurbishing and replacing equipment.

12. Student Mail: Mail for students received by the Department office will be placed in student mailboxes in East Sibley Hall.

13. Studio workspaces are for groups of people, and it is expected that individuals will respect the need of the group for a good working environment.
14. Smoking and the use of intoxicating liquors in the buildings is prohibited at all times.
15. Students may not use hot plates or other electrical devices in the drafting rooms or studios except with special permission.
16. Students may not display in studios pictures, calendars, cartoons, or other material with sexual content that is or may be a form of sexual harassment as defined by Cornell University policy (see reference: CORNELL POLICY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT).
17. No pets will be allowed in any areas of Sibley, Milstein, Rand, the Foundry or Tjaden at any time with the exception of guide or assistance animals.
18. Radios and personal stereos may not be played during scheduled class time.



### **Note on Professional Accreditation**

In the United States, most state registration boards require a degree from an accredited professional degree program as a prerequisite for licensure. The National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), which is the sole agency authorized to accredit U.S. professional degree programs in architecture, recognizes three types of degrees: the bachelor of architecture, the master of architecture, and the doctor of architecture. A program may be granted a six-year, three-year, or two-year term of accreditation, depending on the extent of its conformance with established educational standards. Master's degree programs may consist of a pre-professional undergraduate degree and a professional graduate degree, which, when earned sequentially, constitute an accredited professional education. The pre-professional degree, however, is not, by itself, recognized as an accredited degree.

The NAAB grants candidacy status to new programs that have developed viable plans for achieving initial accreditation. Candidacy status indicates that a program should be accredited within 6 years of achieving candidacy, if its plan is properly implemented.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Statement**

It is the policy of Cornell University actively to support equality of educational and employment opportunity. No person shall be denied admission to any educational program or activity or be denied employment on the basis of any legally prohibited discrimination involving, but not limited to, such factors as race, color, creed, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, or handicap. The University is committed to the affirmative action programs that will assure the continuation of such equality of opportunity. Sexual harassment is an act of discrimination and, as such, will not be tolerated. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities receiving federal assistance.

Cornell University is committed to assisting persons with disabilities who have special needs. A brochure describing services for persons with disabilities may be obtained from the Student Disability Services Office, Center for Learning and Teaching, 420 Computing and Communications Center, Ithaca, New York, 14853-2601. The

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) extension is 607 255-7665. Other questions or requests for special assistance may be directed to that office.

Inquiries concerning the application of Title IX, affirmative action, sexual harassment, or persons with disabilities may be referred to the director of the Office of Workforce Diversity and Inclusion, Cornell University, 160 Day Hall, Ithaca, New York 14853-2801. The office telephone number is 607 255-3976.

## References and Online Information Sources

- COURSES OF STUDY CATALOG  
Online: <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/Courses/>).
- OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR  
Online: <http://www.sws.cornell.edu/OUR/student/transcripts.html>)
- CAMPUS CODE OF CONDUCT (includes discussion of academic integrity)  
Online: [http://www.policy.cornell.edu/Campus\\_Code\\_of\\_Conduct.cfm](http://www.policy.cornell.edu/Campus_Code_of_Conduct.cfm))
- COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE, ART, & PLANNING WEBSITE  
Online: <http://www.aap.cornell.edu/>
- CORNELL ARCHITECTURE WEBSITE  
Online: <http://www.architecture.cornell.edu/>)
- CORNELL IN ROME PROGRAM  
Online: <http://www.rome.cornell.edu/>).
- LIBRARIES AND RELATED FACILITIES  
Sibley Fine Arts Library, Cornell Library system  
Online: <http://www.library.cornell.edu/>  
Knight Visual Resources Facility, B-56 Sibley  
Online: <http://www.aapvrf.cornell.edu/index.htm>).
- CORNELL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES (information, resources, and tools)  
Online: <http://www.cit.cornell.edu/computer/>)
- CORNELL POLICY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT  
Online: [http://www.policy.cornell.edu/vol6\\_4.cfm](http://www.policy.cornell.edu/vol6_4.cfm))