

ABP / MSD Studio Culture Agreement (v2.0), 2022

Overview

This **ABP / MSD Studio Culture Agreement** has been developed by students of the Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning (ABP) and the Melbourne School of Design (MSD). Development involved consultation with academic staff, via the Student Forum. This agreement outlines the goals and expectations of ABP / MSD studio culture, to be pursued and upheld by students, staff, guests and visitors, and the Faculty. Students and staff of the ABP / MSD will continually development studio culture and update this agreement. The Student Forum, formally included in the governance framework of the Faculty, is an important element of this effective and ongoing review.

The Studio Culture Agreement (v2.0) was endorsed by ABP Faculty Executive, 8 February 2022.

Studio Culture Overview

Studios are an essential element of the learning culture at the ABP / MSD, and the extended design community. Studio culture fosters creativity, productivity, positivity, collaboration, experimentation, and improvement, which are integral to the study and practice of design. Studios allow ideas of interest to be explored, tested, and extended. In doing so, students become curious about design potential. Learning — via a myriad of forms and methodologies — is the primary focus. Most projects are an individual student's work; however, studios also promote collaboration between students, which augments ideas and presentation. All students are expected to actively invest in their classmates' projects and contribute to studio discussions. A "Studio Critique", commonly known as a "Crit", forms an essential part of the design culture at the Melbourne School of Design. In Crits, rich discussions allow projects to be dissected, providing students with valuable feedback. This results in students improving their process and skills, and in turn – their project outcome. In addition, Crits allow students to develop their professionalism and presentation. During all Crits, students are treated fairly and equally. Finally, Crits cannot function without "Pin-ups", which refers to students displaying their work-in-progress for viewers to judge and provide constructive feedback. Studios are considered part of students' careers, which begins at University (often prior to entering the workforce). Studios equip students to be brilliant communicators with optimistic and proactive attitudes towards future design.

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Feedback

Feedback is provided to students during studio and Crit sessions. In order to maximally improve students' projects and skills, three types of constructive feedback can be employed:

1. Student + Student: Informal feedback.
2. Student + Tutor: Formal feedback aligned with subject handbook, and informal feedback.
3. Student + Crit panel: Crit panel should focus on each student's work and process, rather than personal character.

All feedback should be communicated respectfully, and students should have avenues to seek clarification on feedback as needed. Assessment activities which result in final, formal feedback, are undertaken in accordance with the Assessment and Results Policy (MPF1326) <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1326>.

In addition to feedback provided to students, students can provide subject-related feedback to studio coordinators. This should be stated and encouraged at the beginning of the Semester, including information about how student feedback can be communicated.

Participation & Relationships

In order to maintain great relationships between students, subject coordinators, tutors, visitors and Faculty, all parties must contribute to a positive and supportive studio culture. Communication channels that facilitate these relationships must be open, clear, actively promoted, and maintained. Furthermore, being respectful of others, and respectfully participating in open discourse, strengthens these relationships. Respect is central to creating an educational environment in which one can comfortably learn within. Subject coordinators and tutors must have zero tolerance for discrimination and disrespect. The Student Charter is an important resource for all studio participants to be aware of, and to respond to. The University frames the importance of the Charter (<https://students.unimelb.edu.au/campus-life/policy-and-conduct/student-charter>) in clear terms:

"The Student Charter embodies the key principles underpinning the partnership between students and the University. It sets out what students are responsible for and what they are entitled to expect. The Student Charter reflects the values of the University of Melbourne. We are a scholarly community committed to the common enterprise of learning in an environment that respects diversity in all its forms, and to the principles of justice, equity and the pursuit of excellence."

In the studio, there should be a particular focus on fostering a collaborative and exploratory learning environment that encourages students to push boundaries, that encourages innovation, and that helps to prepare students for practice after their studies. In addition to the above, specific responsibilities of Studio Participants are also important to note.

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Responsibilities

In Studios, students should:

- Be prepared with assigned work
- Respect the fact that studio time is valuable for all participants
- Actively engage in academic discussion, discourse, and debate
- Communicate feedback (both positive and negative) with tutors / faculty in a timely and respectful manner
- Take care of studio facilities and resources
- Be respectful of diversity

In Studios, staff should:

- Communicate and update studio goals and expectations
- Articulate learning outcomes and assessments in a timely manner
- Promote learning beyond the classroom – into the profession and community
- Allow students to engage in critical and collaborative dialogue
- Enforce timely arrival to studios by all students, especially on Crit days
- Allocate students fair and equal time to present their work
- Mediate the Crit panel to focus on clear feedback with explanations, delivered respectfully
- Set the standard of respect for diversity, which extends to beliefs, values, identity, ability, and expression
- Maintain communication channels for students to formally signal feedback, issues, concerns, or complaints

To support studio culture, the Faculty should:

- Provide students with the faculty governance structure (<https://msd.unimelb.edu.au/about/structure-and-leadership#governance-and-advisory-boards>)
- Provide communication channels to students to formally signal feedback, issues, concerns, or complaints
- Promote the Student forum and peer representatives as effective channels to communicate between students and staff
- Upkeep studio rooms to allow safe and healthy learning and working
- Articulate expectations to all ABP / MSD members
- Facilitate a challenging curriculum, with diverse components
- Manage and communicate expected financial outlays for students in a timely manner
- Regularly review subject delivery with regards to equity and consistency across assessments, content, and due dates
- Investigate and seek to resolve reported issues between or amongst students and/or tutors impacting studio culture

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Health & Wellbeing

Student and staff experiences at the MSD may be demanding, and it is each individual's responsibility to diligently maintain their time, health, and workflow. Faculty and staff should encourage students to understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy stress. Students should pursue the former. Healthy lifestyles should be considered a key part of developing a successful and professional career, and should be practiced by all. For example:

- Commit time to study. The expectation for a 25-point studio subject is 340 hours / semester.
- Identify and respond to personal needs for physical, mental, social, and sexual health
- Maintain your Circadian Rhythm, by regulating your sleep hours, sunlight exposure, and meal and exercise times
- Avoid all-nighters by planning ahead
- Eat nutritious food and drink water regularly
- Participate in extracurricular and social activities
- Undertake challenging study loads that can be achieved with hard work and support, without inducing unbearable stress
- Support peers when the Semester gets busy

Support Services

If students or staff encounter mental health or wellbeing issues, they should contact:

- Counselling and Psychological Services (<https://services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel>)
- Health Service (<https://services.unimelb.edu.au/health>)
- Safer Community Program (<https://safercommunity.unimelb.edu.au/>)

Examples of good practice for studio culture

- Subject coordinator / tutor arranges an informal drop-in session for students to engage and discuss subject matters
- Subject coordinator / tutor facilitates and responds to formal and confidential mid-semester student feedback
- Faculty supports display of students' work-in-progress throughout the MSD Building
- Students organise and attend informal study groups
- Students setup an informal communication platform to discuss a group project
- Students attend a student-student meeting held by the Student Forum, to discuss broad issues and feedback amongst student committee leaders
- Faculty openly receives and responds to broad issues and feedback, passed on from a student-student meeting, at a student-staff meeting
- Faculty promotes open studio crit presentations for all students to attend