

ABP / MSD STUDIO CULTURE AGREEMENT

The Studio Culture Agreement has been developed by undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne, in consultation with academic staff, through the ABP Student Forum.

Overview

Design studios are an essential element of the broad learning culture in the Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, and the Melbourne School of Design, and the extended design community. The studio environment provides a space for collaboration, experimentation and development that is integral to the study and practice of design. The Studio Culture Agreement delivers common goals and expectations to foster a positive and productive learning environment for students, tutors and the faculty. This Agreement requires the commitment of the faculty, tutors and students.

The Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, and the Melbourne School of Design are dedicated to continual development of the Studio Culture Agreement. The Student Forum, formally included in the governance framework of the Faculty, is an important element of this effective and ongoing review.

Studio Focus

Design studios are creative, rigorous and supportive learning environments. They are spaces to test and extend ideas and explore areas of interest. They incite curiosity in the student about the near infinite potential of space. Learning — via a myriad of forms and methodologies — is the primary focus. While most projects are an individual student's work, design studios are spaces of communication and collaboration between all students; spaces where it is known, acknowledged and encouraged that working with a team augments ideas and their presentation. Every student's contribution to class discussion is respected. There is an active investment in classmates' projects.

The "Studio Critique" forms an essential part of the design culture at the Melbourne School of Design. These feedback sessions are to dissect ideas and give direction to students. They offer the opportunity for students to practice skills of presentation and professional engagement, and offer a rich collaborative learning discussion. All students are treated fairly and equally during these critiques. "Pin-ups" are to guide students in their moving forward in a project and therefore, they are always constructive dialogues.

Studio is seen as being part of a career that begins during university (and often prior to students entering the built industry workforce). Studio equips students with skills and strategies enabling them to become highly effective communicators with constructive attitudes towards taking the next step in the design process.

Studio Feedback

To make full use of the learning experience, there should be four forms of feedback, readily available to students throughout semester. All feedback should be communicated respectfully. Each form provides different sources of learning and consequently require different expectations for maximum value. Assessment activities, including feedback will be undertaken in accordance with the Assessment and Results Policy (MPF1326)

- Student + student: Students should be encouraged to provide informal constructive feedback to peers.
- Student + tutor: Tutors should provide formal (in line with handbook expectations) and informal constructive feedback throughout semester. Students have the right to ask for further clarifications.
- Student + crit panel: Crit panel members should focus on the student's work and process and how they can move forward – not on the character of the students themselves.
- Student + subject: Students can provide course-related feedback to studio coordinators throughout the semester. This should be made clear at the beginning of semester.

Studio Participants

In order to maintain strong, positive relationships between students, subject coordinators, tutors, visitors and the Faculty itself, all parties must be committed to contributing to a positive learning environment. Channels of communication that facilitate and develop the relationships between each of these groups must therefore be clear and open. In the unique environment of a studio classroom, having respect for each other, as well as participating in respectful and open discourse, strengthens these relationships by contributing to a culture where students feel comfortable giving and receiving feedback from their tutors and peers. Subject coordinators and tutors must ensure a positive and respectful studio environment, with zero tolerance for discrimination, disrespectful language and/or behavior.

The Student Charter (<https://students.unimelb.edu.au/explore/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 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 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.

Student Responsibilities

- Be prepared for class with assigned work, participate in academic discourse and respect class time;
- Engage in healthy discussion and debate with peers and tutors;
- Be open minded about criticism and look for ways to improve;
- Communicate concerns, problems or positive feedback with tutors / faculty in a timely and respectful manner;
- Respect, support and encourage peers by embracing differences in values, backgrounds and interests;
- Take care of Faculty / studio spaces, associated resources and facilities and treat these with respect;
- Uphold cultural sensitivity in research, fieldwork and design.

Tutor Responsibilities

- Communicate class goals and expectations at the beginning of the semester, and update if they change throughout, so students can develop relevant skills in a timely fashion and to an individual capacity;
- Provide clear information about learning outcomes, assignments and assessment to students to inform their work in advance;
- Promote the ideals that learning extends further than the classroom, students will benefit from engaging with their profession and community;
- Seek a professional and supportive teaching relationship with students and promote a community which allows students to share their thoughts on feedback. Critical dialogue and collaboration should be encouraged between students;
- Communicate the expectation that students will arrive to class on time, particularly during critical reviews, and allowing a student the allocated time to present their work;
- Communicate the expectation that guest critics will provide clear feedback on the work presented with explanation, and will deliver this feedback respectfully;
- Communicate the importance of accepting and embracing diversity. This extends to the cultural beliefs and values of peers, their gender, and technical ability. Accordingly, all students will be treated with equal respect and dignity and individual expression will be embraced.

Faculty Responsibilities

- Provide a healthy and safe learning and work environment (through maintaining building and physical resources for students to achieve expectations of course and facilitate studio activities)
- Communicate expectations clearly to students and staff
- Support a challenging and diverse curriculum
- Manage financial outlays for students and communicate these in advance
- Review tutors and courses to ensure equity and consistency across deliverables and expectations, course content and due dates
- Responding to student queries and resolving issues between student-student or student-tutor

Health and Wellbeing

Although the experience at MSD may be demanding and overwhelming for students, it is students' responsibility to rigorously monitor their personal workflows and manage time effectively. Faculty and staff should encourage students to have a healthy lifestyle which becomes a step towards developing the professional career.

- Time commitment: students are expected to make an academic commitment of 340 hours per semester for a 25pt studio subject
- Developing a healthy lifestyle
- Avoiding all-nighters by planning ahead (e.g. setting own completion date a few days before the formal submission date)
- Having a balanced diet (nutritious meals and drinking water regularly)
- Having regular breaks from working on computers
- Participating in extracurricular activities that enrich their personal lives (e.g. music, clubs and societies, volunteering, sports, etc.)
- Working with peers to actively offer psychological supports among themselves in the busy and stressful times

If students are encountering any issues or concerns in regards to health and wellbeing, they should get in touch with the university support services such as:

- 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/support>)