



DREXEL UNIVERSITY

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Drexel Architecture

Teaching and Learning Culture Policy

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I. Introduction

This Learning & Teaching Culture Policy (LTCP) is a living document, maintained by a committee of students, faculty, and administrators in the Architecture and Architectural Studies programs at Drexel University. This policy is designed to guide our learning community toward an ethical environment that fosters productive learning and champions healthy, capable, and intelligent students and faculty. This goal can only be achieved through collaboration by the committed members of this learning community.

The Drexel Architecture Community strives to be an environment of respect, growth, professionalism, constructive evaluation, and instruction. We believe that collaboration, time management, and school-work-life balance, health and well-being, diversity and solidarity, respectful stewardship and space management, and well-rounded enrichment are all essential to the success of all members of our teaching and learning community¹

II. Design Inquiry

The design studio environment should support the pursuit of architectural excellence and enable students to develop individually in their architectural pursuits.

- The design studio is the foundation of the Architecture and Architectural Studies programs. The faculty expects that learning from other courses and outside interests will be integrated into the design process. Students should be encouraged to pursue architectural ideas that are meaningful to them and to investigate questions that extend beyond immediate practical constraints.
- The faculty have a responsibility to articulate the values of good design, establish clear educational objectives, and guide students toward thoughtful and innovative design solutions.
- Students are expected to engage actively in the design process, explore emerging technologies and contemporary issues, and take intellectual risks in pursuit of meaningful architectural work.
- Faculty should encourage multiple approaches to design and support students as they develop individual methods of inquiry and creative practice.

III. Learning Community

The learning and teaching culture should create a climate of support and respect in which ideas and feedback may be freely exchanged among students and faculty.

- The teaching and learning culture should create a climate of support and respect in which ideas, feedback, and constructive criticism can be exchanged freely among students, faculty, and reviewers.
- The Drexel Architecture Community values diverse educational backgrounds, life experiences, identities, and perspectives, recognizing that these differences enrich architectural discourse.

¹ Developed and adapted from the AIAS Model Learning & Teaching Culture Policy Project (July 2020)

- Students should expect to be treated as emerging professionals whose ideas deserve thoughtful consideration.
- Faculty should strive to understand the individual strengths and needs of students and create opportunities for meaningful participation.
- All members of the community share responsibility for maintaining an environment free from harassment, discrimination, intimidation, and disrespectful conduct.
- Mentorship is an essential part of our community, students, both mentees and mentors understand their roles in supporting the well-being and success of not only individuals but of the Drexel Architecture community.

IV. Communication and Conduct

An effective learning and teaching culture depends upon professionalism, preparedness, clear communication, and mutual respect among students, faculty, and guest reviewers.

- The design studio and other architecture courses should model the expectations of professional practice while remaining supportive environments for learning, experimentation, and growth.
- Students and faculty share responsibility for creating an atmosphere in which expectations are communicated clearly, feedback is exchanged constructively, and time is valued as a critical resource.
- Faculty have the responsibility to establish clear goals, schedules, project requirements, methods of evaluation, and expectations for participation.
- Students should expect that faculty will be prepared for class, available for consultation during established office hours, and committed to providing timely, meaningful feedback that supports continued development.
- Students have the responsibility to attend and actively participate in design studio and class sessions, discussions, reviews, and other learning activities. Students are expected to arrive prepared, complete assigned work according to established schedules, and communicate proactively when circumstances affect their ability to meet expectations.
- Both students and faculty should recognize that architectural education depends upon effective communication and professional conduct. All members of the community are expected to communicate respectfully, respond to correspondence promptly, and engage in discussions with openness and integrity.
- Differences of opinion are an essential part of design education and should be approached as opportunities for learning rather than sources of conflict.

V. Critique and Assessment

Constructive critique is central to architectural education and serves as a primary means by which students develop their design thinking, communication skills, and professional judgment.

- Reviews, discussions, and design critiques should foster an environment in which ideas can be openly examined and challenged in a manner that supports learning.
- The purpose of critique is not to judge the individual, but rather to evaluate the work, the design process, and the concepts being explored. Students should feel empowered to present their ideas confidently and to engage in meaningful dialogue about their work and that of their peers.
- Faculty and guest reviewers have a responsibility to provide feedback that is respectful, constructive, and actionable. Critiques should identify both strengths and opportunities for improvement while offering clear guidance for future development.
- Criticism should be directed toward advancing the quality of the work and should never diminish the dignity or confidence of the student.
- Students are expected to approach critiques as active participants in the learning process. They should arrive prepared to present their work, articulate their intentions, engage thoughtfully with questions and comments, and critically reflect on the feedback they receive.

- Assessment should be transparent, equitable, and clearly communicated. Faculty should establish and communicate evaluation criteria, project objectives, and grading expectations in advance so that students understand how their work will be assessed.
- Evaluations should recognize both the quality of the final product and the rigor of the design process, including research, experimentation, critical inquiry, responsiveness to feedback, and sustained engagement throughout the project.

VI. Health and Well-being

The Drexel Architecture Community recognizes that meaningful learning, creativity, and academic success depend upon the health and well-being of both students and faculty.

- Physical health, mental well-being, adequate sleep, proper nutrition, and effective time management are essential components of a productive studio culture. They should be regarded as fundamental to learning rather than secondary to it.
- While architectural education is rigorous and demanding, the Drexel Architecture Program does not view excessive workloads, chronic sleep deprivation, or unhealthy work habits as indicators of dedication or success.
- Faculty are encouraged to establish realistic project schedules and expectations that promote thoughtful work, reflection, and personal well-being.
- The Drexel Architecture Community acknowledges that students and faculty often balance academic responsibilities with professional employment, family commitments, caregiving responsibilities, community engagement, and other personal obligations.
- A culture of empathy and mutual respect requires recognition of these realities and an understanding that individuals may experience periods of increased personal or professional demands. University holidays, scheduled breaks, and periods of rest should be respected as important opportunities for renewal and personal wellbeing.

VII. Community of Belonging

A learning environment in which all students, faculty, staff, and guests are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness is essential to our collective success.

- The study and practice of architecture require engagement with a wide range of people, cultures, communities, and lived experiences. As such, students and faculty are expected to cultivate an inclusive culture through their words, actions, and professional conduct.
- Meaningful design discourse emerges when individuals are encouraged to share their ideas, engage with differing viewpoints, and contribute their unique experiences to the collective learning process
- Diversity in and among architecture is essential and demands its own cultivation of an inclusive culture in the words we speak, the actions we take, the history we teach, the behaviors we model, and the buildings we design. The Drexel Architecture Community will provide opportunities and safe spaces to have those open discussions.
- Respecting the backgrounds (which could include any combination of, but are not limited to, culture, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic background, identity) of its students.
- Respectful dialogue and thoughtful consideration of diverse viewpoints are essential components of design education and professional preparation.
- The Drexel Architecture Community values equitable access to educational opportunities and adheres to accommodations that support student success in accordance with university policies.

VIII. Shared Spaces

The studio environment is a shared resource that supports learning, creativity, collaboration, and community engagement. Students, faculty, and staff share responsibility for maintaining studio spaces, classrooms, alcoves, workshops, equipment, and common areas in a manner that promotes respect, safety, and productivity.

- Studio spaces, classrooms, equipment, and shared resources within the programs, the Department of Architecture, Design & Urbanism, Westphal College, and Drexel University. They must be treated with care.
- Students and instructors are responsible for resetting spaces after each class session, review, or informal use. This includes removing all models, materials, trash, food, and containers and leaving the space ready for the next user.
- Designated department and program spaces can be used by students even outside of scheduled class times. However, these spaces are non-reservable and should always be open for shared use. No individual or group should claim, reserve, or block off a space when it's not actively being used.
- Members of the Drexel Architecture community will clear out personal belongings, materials, tools, and work immediately after using a space and at least 15 minutes before the next class and reset classrooms, alcoves, and shared areas to their usual setup.
- Use of materials and equipment must be safe and responsible.
- Sustainable practices, recycling, and waste reduction should be incorporated whenever possible.
- All members share responsibility for maintaining a safe and productive environment.

IX. Continuous Improvement

- This policy will be reviewed regularly with participation from students, faculty, and administration.
- Feedback regarding studio culture should be encouraged and considered in future revisions.
- The committee will remain responsive to evolving educational needs, accreditation expectations, and community concerns.

Acknowledgment

By participating in the Architecture, Design & Urbanism program, students, faculty, and administrators affirm their commitment to fostering a culture of creativity, respect, collaboration, well-being, and professional growth.
