



## **Studio Culture Policy**

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## STUDIO CULTURE POLICY

### 1. Overview

In 2005, the National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB) added an extra 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 this unique aspect of architecture education: the studio.

Explicit policies have to transmit the positive aspects of studio culture, while the unhealthier one should be as much as possible limited. As defined by the AIAS, studio culture is “the experiences, habits and patterns found within the architecture design studio”. The organization elaborates:

*“Those who have studied architecture undoubtedly have vivid memories that characterize their design studio experience. Late nights, exciting projects, extreme dedication, lasting friendships, long hours, punishing critiques, unpredictable events, a sense of community, and personal sacrifice all come to mind. Those aspects are not usually written into the curriculum or even the design assignments, but they are likely the most memorable and influential. The experiences, habits, and patterns found within the architecture design studio make up what we have termed ‘studio culture’.”*

According to the National Architectural Accreditation Board’s (NAAB), Condition 5 on Studio Culture says the following:

*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 must demonstrate that it 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.*

Studio culture at LAU is a product of 30 years of continuing efforts at improving the pedagogical framework for all students in the school, and specifically for students in architecture.

Since the inception of the program in 1992 on the Byblos campus, and the establishment of the Department of Architecture & Design in 1995, the architecture program has fostered a sense of belonging, as expressed by the successive promotions of students graduating from the program. Studio culture evolved in relation to physical and non-physical factors, mainly centered on a relationship of respect between faculty and students, a pedagogical framework based on liberal education and liberal values, and a curriculum that places the design studio at the center of an architect’s education.

Among the distinctive marks of the LAU program we can cite the following characteristics:

- a. Promotion of an experimental approach in design
- b. Use of the workshops as essential complements in the design process
- c. Using the studio time effectively as a working laboratory
- d. Openness to new ideas and theories
- e. Upholding the students’ rights to express themselves and to present their work before a review panel, where discourse and debate are encouraged

## 2. Studio Core Values

The role that Studio Culture plays in our community of students and faculty is an indispensable component of the Studio experience. In this document, we expose the core values supported by the community of faculty and students at the SARD - LAU. It is expected in the architecture community that students and faculty alike understand and share fundamental common studio values of respect, sharing, engagement and innovation.

**AUTONOMY over dependence:** The Studio process is just as important as its outcome. It is at the heart of our culture and the heart of the heart is student-instructor dynamics. Desk-critiques, lectures and site visits are just a few of the means of interaction between faculty and students. Collaboration with other studios both horizontally and vertically are welcomed and appreciated.

An instructor should encourage their student to branch out, absorb information and ideas, come back and share. Through this process students learn to be more independent and not only do student-instructor relationships become stronger but also as students our peer to peer interactions also breeds a culture of sharing and respect, which in turn helps the student become aware and critical to their own work, thus nurturing more independence. Demonstrate the ability to actively participate in studio by creating work that challenges oneself in his/her specific skill-set level.

**COLLABORATION over competition:** Just as within any architectural project, designers, contractors, business managers, engineers, and clients work together and share ideas, students must learn about the importance of collaboration, knowing that without it, architecture won't exist.

The need to understand the value of communication between students would better serve to encourage confidence, instead of defensiveness, empathy, instead of self-centeredness, and teamwork, instead of a star mentality. By encouraging these practices, students would start working together and their contributions would be valued in the design process rather than their attention on competitive studio critique.

**PROCESS vs Product:** Innovate, question, reevaluate, and redefine in order to push for forward thinking in the study and practice of architecture. No learning can be assessed without criticism, and criticism is the fuel for any kind of advancement, development, and evolution.

Criticism must be understood as a basic element of studio culture serving to build a strong ground for improvement and reinforcement. It is a constructive opportunity, not a destructive one, and a form of learning, not a target practice.

**CRITICAL Reviews:** Confidence, passion, fear, panic and an existential crisis can wash over a student in the span of five minutes. Stress is the catalyst in this concoction of emotions. Students and faculty must actively engage in the critical discourse of architecture inside and outside of the studio. It should be noted that reviews should always be discussion-oriented and never critical of the person, but always directed to the work as it stands.

Students and Faculty should refer to the Studio Review procedure in case of any problem. Students must demonstrate continuous effort and aptitude to be able to present in a final critique scenario.

**ENGAGEMENT:** Students are encouraged to develop interests and relationships outside the studio, as well as develop a sense of involvement with others outside the architectural community.

**DIVERSITY:** The main reason behind social interaction, culture evolution, and mature mentality is diversity. In both our campuses, diversity, mainly religious, is encouraged and respected. Students are expected to maintain these standards when involved with their peers in a studio setting:

- Respect one another with regard to race, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and differences in experiences and ideas;
- Be communicative with peers about all pertinent issues regarding studio and its culture

- Understand your personal boundaries and respect the space of others;
- Support one another, learn from each other, and be open-minded when collaborating;
- Participate in the discourse of studio, feed off of the ideas of classmates, while maintaining core values;
- Practice high standards of personal hygiene and cleanliness;
- Practice equality and fairness in group work settings.

### 3. Guidelines for Improving Studio Culture

Studio culture will evolve along the years, in line with technological changes and curriculum adaptations. Maintaining a studio culture policy that reflect these changes and preserves the core values that distinguishes the study and practice of architecture requires from both faculty and students to follow a set of guidelines.

#### Implementation and maintenance:

- Once a year, during the Orientation day, the Studio Culture policy is introduced to faculty and students.
- Students and faculty can meet in several forums to discuss matters pertaining to studio culture.
- The studio culture committee reflects the composition of the school and integrates faculty, student and student organization representative, directors and coordinators.

#### Governance, Student/faculty interaction:

Faculty are integral to the architectural education process. Students use the faculty's knowledge and advice as a resource - therefore, faculty are expected to bring their passion into the studio during every session. Like students, faculty must promote the School's core values to the best of their abilities.

The student body is expected to respect all faculty members and consider them a part of the studio community. Without them, advancement in architectural education would be impossible. Students must be diligent in their studies, and they are expected to maintain a positive relationship with their studio faculty. Specifically, the student body must uphold these standards when working with faculty:

- Come to studio with an open mind and a positive attitude;
- Push to meet & exceed expectations in all areas;
- Understand and consider all feedback given – think and react according to individual processes;
- Communicate with the faculty: the positives and the negatives - be curious;
- Participate in studio discussions

Students are involved in the life of the school:

- Through their participation in some committees such as lectures series, students' affaire committee, students become an active part of the life of the school and their respective department.
- An AIAS Chapter is established and maintains a link with other school and universities.
- Architecture student organization staffed and run by the students of the school.

#### 4. Appendix [policies and procedures related to student life, studio and resources in the school]

Here under is a list of the available policies and guidelines that regulate some important aspect of the academic life of the School and Department of Architecture and Interior Design. Some of these guidelines are particular to the SArD and come in addition to those implemented at University level.

<b>Policy and Procedures</b>	<b>Date of revision</b>	
Lebanese American University student code of conduct	September 2016	
SArD Plagiarism Guidelines	June 2016	All school policies and procedure are available on the website: sard.lau.lb
SArD Grade Appeals Procedure	June 2016	
SArD Studio Review Procedures.	March 2017	
Student Computer Centers_User Handbook	October 2016	
Fabrication & Digital Lab User Handbook	October 2016	

##### Building use policies

1. 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.
2. All students in the School of architecture and 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.
3. 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.
4. It is the student's responsibility to see that all materials are removed from classrooms at the end of each class period, and that no materials are left in public corridors, lobbies, stairs, or other paths of egress.
5. 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.
6. The use of plaster, aerosol spray paints, hand-held torches, or toxic resins is absolutely prohibited inside the studio and any common interior space.
7. Overnight permission is to be sent to the main office with a minimum of 24h advance notice. The security office can reject the request if information is missing.
8. Smoking and the use of intoxicating liquors in the buildings is prohibited at all times.
9. Students may not use hot plates or other electrical devices in the studios except with special permission.
10. Radios and personal stereos may not be played during scheduled class time.
11. Students using the workshops must have signed the Fabrication Lab agreement.
12. Students must abide by the rules of the computer and printing labs.