

Studio Culture Policy

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Studio Culture Policy Overview

Harvard University and the Graduate School of Design aspire to provide education and scholarship of the highest quality—to advance the frontiers of knowledge and to prepare individuals for life, work, and leadership. Achieving these aims depends on the efforts of thousands of faculty, students, and staff across the University. Some of us make our contribution by engaging directly in teaching, learning, and research, others of us, by supporting and enabling those core activities in essential ways. Whatever our individual roles, and wherever we work within Harvard, we owe it to one another to uphold certain basic values of the community:

- *Conscientious pursuit of excellence in one’s work*
- *Respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others*
- *Honesty and integrity in dealing with all members of the community*
- *Accountability for personal behavior*

Achieving the mission of the GSD requires an environment of trust and mutual respect, free expression and inquiry, and a commitment to truth, excellence, and lifelong learning. Students, program participants, faculty, staff, and alumni accept these principles when joining the Harvard Graduate School of Design community.

Community members have a personal responsibility to integrate these values into every aspect of their experience at the GSD. Through our personal commitment to these values, we can create an environment in which we all can achieve our full potential.

(Harvard GSD Community Values Statement)

The goal of the GSD studio teaching method is to achieve a free exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

At the core of all of our activities at the GSD are our collective values of excellence, respect, honesty, integrity, and accountability. The GSD has adopted a Community Values Statement (above), which is regularly communicated to all members of the GSD community.

Core Studios

The chairs are involved with core studio planning. They meet regularly with core coordinators, direct the overall pedagogy of their program's core studios and required courses, review all course and studio evaluations, meet biannually with student forum representatives, and attend mid-term and final reviews.

Prior to each semester, the program director and/or program coordinator contact core studio coordinators and instructors of other required courses to plan the semester schedule in order to factor in course and studio deadlines and time commitments.

Core studio coordinators post syllabi prior to the semester, which include: detailed studio schedule (including anticipated field trips), dates of deliverables, software requirements (technologies used and technologies taught); and approximate material cost.

Option Studios

Students are provided with detailed, accurate information prior to the start of the semester in order to aid in their selection of the most appropriate studios in the option studio lottery. An important way that they learn about the studio offerings is through a set of presentations given by the studio instructors on the day of the Options Studio Presentations and Lottery.

Instructors receive detailed requirements about the studio option presentation, such as: "It is important to explicitly state in your presentation the type of project(s) to be undertaken. All studio options are—in principle—open to all students in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and urban planning. However, not all students will possess the capabilities necessary to undertake certain projects. Please indicate as part of your presentation whether the projects you propose require knowledge of a specific discipline."

The following information is sent to each studio option instructor prior to the semester so that it is available to students prior to their studio selection. As mentioned below, "course information listed should be viewed as contractual."

Course descriptions should include:

- Topics to be Covered
- Course Objectives and Outcomes
- Course Format
- Method of Evaluation
- Prerequisites

Instructors are required to link a course syllabus to their course website. Course syllabi should include the following: detailed course schedule, dates of deliverables, software requirements (technologies used and technologies taught); approximate time expectation outside of class; and approximate material cost. Furthermore, any irregular course schedules should be clearly spelled out, and the roles and extent of availability for instructors for multiple-instructor courses should be described. Students rely on the information provided to plan their other courses; the course information listed should be viewed as contractual.

Scheduling Guidelines: An option studio instructor is responsible for eight instruction hours a week for the length of the semester (approx. 13 weeks). Option Studios are scheduled two weekdays from 2-6 PM. Instructors from out of town generally offer their studios on consecutive days, while local instructors typically schedule non-consecutive days. Option studios should not be scheduled on Mondays in order to keep one afternoon free for electives. The class structure, including schedule, dates when the instructor will be in residence, and studio site visits, must be set and approved by the chair prior to the beginning of the semester. A visiting instructor who is traveling from out of town may prearrange with the department and chair to teach alternate weeks. In that case, the instructor should chose two afternoons during the week that are the official class times, and schedule the remainder of the time during the week at times that work for student schedules. This allows the students the flexibility to schedule their other courses. As mentioned, the dates when the instructor will be in residence should be approved by the chair and posted online prior to the start of the term so the students are fully aware of the schedule for the studio.

Studio Travel Information and Costs: Prior to the Option Studio Lottery, the following information is provided on the GSD website for each studio:

- Studio site or trip location
- Studio trip date
- Estimated cost to student for site visit (not to exceed \$300 plus meals and incidentals).

Note: An effort has been made to smooth the studio costs across studios so that costs are not prohibitive for any given studio.

Studio Reviews

To assist in organizing their midterm and final reviews, the academic departments provides core and option studio instructors the following guidelines:

- Invited jurors must reflect a diversity of backgrounds (women, people of color) with expertise relevant to the studio subject matter;
- Instructors must communicate with jurors in advance of their visit, thanking them for their participation and describing adequately the studio problem, the day's schedule, and the instructor's expectations;
- All students are entitled to the same quality and quantity of jury comments; if a juror cannot stay until the end of a review, another juror should be arranged to take their place;
- Reviews must start and end reasonably close to the times announced in advance (the responsibility of both instructor and students);
- Students must attend the full review.

Mid-Term Warning Letters

All studio instructors are sent the following guideline regarding mid-term feedback. Additionally, the academic department staff reminds them to correspond to students close to mid-semester. Course and studio instructors send midterm warning letters approximately eight weeks into the term to those students who are experiencing academic difficulty. The purpose of these letters is to inform students that if their academic performance does not improve, they may receive a grade of low pass or fail. Students experiencing academic difficulty after the middle of the term may also receive a written warning. Failure

on the part of the instructor to submit a warning letter to the student does not preclude the instructor from assigning a low pass or fail. A copy of the letter must be forwarded to the program coordinator, to the student's faculty advisor and to the registrar for permanent inclusion in the student's file, regardless of the student's final grade.

Studio Evaluations

On-line course evaluations are completed at the end of the semester. These evaluations must be filled out before grades are released. The data and comments are distributed in anonymous aggregate format to both the Chair and the studio instructors. Instructors use the information in their evaluations to improve their instruction in future iterations of their classes and the Chair uses the material in planning future studios, courses, and in determining future teaching assignments

At the end of the year, the data from course evaluations is printed and made available in the departmental offices for student reference.

In addition to the summative, end-of-term evaluations, students are sent a short anonymous survey by the academic department to assess if there are any areas to be addressed as the semester progresses. These are sent out around the mid-term point of the semester and are evaluated by the program administration, Chair, and Dean's office.

Instructional Support

To reinforce software skills taught in core studios, tutorials and workshops are scheduled in the evening throughout each semester. These courses cover a variety of digital skills and a range of software and are scheduled as to provide support for core studios and required classes that require students to have a minimum level of proficiency with particular abilities. Additionally, the academic departments offer pre-semester workshops to prepare students for the following semester. A pre-term, summer workshop is available to all incoming MArch I students and is required of students whose academic background does not prove mastery of specific design software.

Health and Wellbeing

The student experience at the GSD can be intense and rigorous, and at times can be stressful or overwhelming. All GSD students are highly qualified and often come from previous educational experiences where they were top of their classes. It can be difficult for them to realize that they may not be accomplishing their goals as easily as in the past. Additionally, students for whom English is not their native language may struggle more than they had expected communicating their ideas.

If a student is encountering problems in their courses or studio, their academic advisors and program director are available to help them work through possible solutions. Additionally, the dean of students is the primary resource for students with emotional, medical or disability concerns, difficulty with the English language, as well as any issues within the GSD that students would like to discuss.

There are a number of resources available within the GSD and the University—from assistance with the English language, to finding the right person to talk with at [Harvard University Health Services](#), or just someone to advise on resolving an emotional difficulty.

In addition, the GSD recognizes a need for wellness that transcends mind and body. To this end, the GSD provides a variety of free healthy activities to enable students to balance their academic commitments with other aspects of their lives.

Printed resources are provided at the start of each academic year, with regular follow up emails regarding programs and resources, including:

- Koru Mindfulness workshops. 4 week long workshops run at the GSD every semester by clinicians from the Center for Wellness.
- Yoga GSD. Open to students of all levels, these hour-long, twice weekly free classes provide a meditative environment for focus, strengthening, and healing.
- Destressing with Dogs. A very popular event for students. Volunteers bring trained dogs to interact with students for several hours at the end of each semester.
- Pop-up Massages. Evening massage and Reiki sessions are scheduled sporadically throughout the academic year.

Nondiscrimination Policy

In accordance with Harvard University policy, the Graduate School of Design does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, veteran status, or handicap, in admission to, access to, or employment in its programs and activities. Every effort will be made to ensure fairness and consistency in the school's relations with its students, faculty and staff. A student of the GSD community who believes that any form of prohibited discrimination has occurred should bring this matter forward for review. These processes and policies are described in more detail in the Review Process section of the Policy on Personal Conduct student resource (<http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/resources/personal-conduct/>).

Other resources

Dean's Diversity Initiative: <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/diversity/deans-diversity-initiative/>

Student Groups: <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/diversity/student-groups/>

Student Group Directory: <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/resources/gsd-student-group-directory/>

Academic Conduct Policies: <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/resources/academic-conduct>

Student Policy Resources Homepage: <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/resources/gsd-student-policies/>.