

# ACADEMIC CULTURE AGREEMENT

## OVERVIEW

The University of Maryland School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation's **Academic Culture Agreement** is an accord between the students, faculty, and administration to promote and maintain a positive, supportive, and academically prosperous environment. A healthy studio and academic culture empowers its students with creativity, confidence, and problem solving skills so they may innovate with today's knowledge to address tomorrow's challenges. Therefore, the MAPP+D community is dedicated to upholding these values of **Communication & Collaboration, Wellbeing & Balance, Diversity & Respect, and Constructive Evaluation & Instruction**. Together, we are all committed to uplifting and continually improving this school and community. The Academic Culture Agreement is a living document which will be reviewed and edited annually to reflect the school's continuous development and growth as a community.

## VALUES

### 1. Communication & Collaboration

- i. This school is composed of students, faculty, and staff of diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and stages in their academic/professional career. Faculty and students will respect this diversity of perspectives, and faculty will include multiple voices in discussions and activities inside the classroom and beyond it.
- ii. Students are encouraged to build a culture of excellence through generosity, shared-knowledge, and collaboration in conjunction with healthy competition that encourages outside-of-the-box thinking.
- iii. Faculty will facilitate and guide healthy debate and discussion during class time. Students will be open-minded about criticism and engage in healthy discussion and debate. Both will communicate issues and concerns as they arise.
- iv. Faculty will communicate goals, expectations, and deadlines of the course at the beginning of the semester and as they change throughout the course. They will provide documentation of schedule for classes at the beginning of the semester and be timely in their grading and feedback.
- v. Faculty will strive to collaborate with other courses—studio and non-studio—to create an intertwined and encompassing learning experience.
- vi. Faculty and administration will communicate and collaborate with each other to create a fair and positive learning environment.
- vii. Administration will communicate expectations to students and faculty.

### 2. Well-being & Balance

- i. The school will create an atmosphere which fosters creativity, positivity, and empathy among its community members. Time management will be taught and exemplified for students in their early curriculum with the intent to develop responsible habits.
- ii. The school community supports balance of school and work with personal time, mental wellness, and sleep in order to facilitate the best efforts from everyone.
- iii. Workload expectations of students and faculty will be well-communicated and realistic and will prioritize health and wellbeing for rigor. Faculty will recognize the intense demands of time, money, and concentration from the students that architecture education requires. Students will recognize the demands of time, responsibilities, and efforts from the faculty and administration that the operation of the school requires. Everyone will respond with empathy and solutions when challenges arise.

- iv. This school recognizes the diverse range of obligations that make an education possible and will not expect students, faculty, or administration to complete planning or schoolwork as if they have no other (familial, financial, etc.) obligations.
- v. This school supports and encourages a well-rounded enrichment of different course types, extracurricular activities, and exposure to diverse career opportunities.
- vi. The Administration will provide the faculty and students with the means to attain their responsibilities. They will provide and maintain a healthy and safe living and working environment. They will maintain the condition of the building and physical resources.
- vii. Adopting chronically unhealthy sleeping patterns in order to complete studio, classwork, or other work is not a tolerated facet of this school and will not be encouraged or praised.

### **3. Diversity & Respect**

- i. This school values and respects multiple perspectives of gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc. in its community members, in its teachings, and in its academic discourse. Every member of the community will embrace and respect the differences in values, background, and interests of other students, faculty, and administration.
- ii. This school recognizes the importance of encouraging a diverse range of career opportunities post-graduation, and will endeavor to reflect that in curricular instruction.
- iii. Students will operate in an atmosphere of solidarity, shared effort, and mutual support. They are expected to be understanding and supportive of the realities their peers may be facing.
- iv. Students, faculty, and administration will respect each other's property and space and will strive to keep common areas clean and functional for all.
- v. The faculty and administration will lead by example in upholding these values of respect and professionalism as well as the others listed in this document.

### **4. Constructive Evaluation & Instruction**

- i. The measurement of student performance transcends letter grading. Public review of work is a means of constructive engagement and discourse to be held in respectful dialogues of debate and discussion. Such discussions will never be critical of the person, but always be directed to the work as it stands.
- ii. Students, faculty, and administration can all be expected to put in their best efforts in their academics and work. Assignments will be given enough time to be completed based on a time management standard which centers on wellness.
- iii. Students will be evaluated according to clearly defined criteria which advances their skills in clarity of communication. For example, in design studios this includes creating tangible results from conceptual solutions to a posed problem or condition and embracing design as an opportunity to affect positive change. In non-studio courses, this includes writing assignments, research papers, and other forms of verbal expression. Faculty and administration will support creativity and exploration of new ideas across the curriculum.
- iv. Students, faculty, and administration will respect class time, each other's time, and strive to complete tasks in a timely manner. Students and faculty will come prepared to class, meetings, and other tasks, and be ready to participate in academic discourse.
- v. Faculty will provide each student with academic support and individual attention as appropriate. They will provide engaging and up-to-date academic information in their courses. They will build off of their predecessors resources with their own knowledge and experience when possible. Faculty will recognize that students benefit the most from a variety of academic activities and strive to diversify the learning experience with field trips, collaborative activities, guest lectures, etc.
- vi. The Administration will support a challenging and diverse curriculum (lectures, gallery events, field trips, etc).
- vii. The Administration will manage resources to provide as many opportunities as possible for scholarships and education abroad.

## EXECUTION & IMPLEMENTATION

### Policy Review

The explicit goal of the Academic Culture Agreement is to support a positive academic and work environment within the MAPP+D Community. This goal requires the commitment of the school administration, faculty, and students. The Academic Culture Agreement must be reviewed annually by the **Academic Culture Committee**. This review will ensure that the policy reflects the school's continuous development and that all existing values are being upheld.

The Architecture Program Plan of Organization states that the Director shall appoint the members of the Academic Culture Committee. It will be comprised of no more than three Faculty members and no more than three Student representatives (at least one undergraduate and one graduate) to serve one-year renewable appointments. The Director shall designate two chairpersons, one faculty and one student, from the committee to co-chair the Academic Culture Committee. The Architecture Student Assembly (ASA) Ombuds officers (graduate and undergraduate) and one faculty representative from the Architecture Program Curriculum Committee (APCC) shall be ex-officio members of the Academic Culture Committee. The committee shall report its actions to the Director and Assembly.

The Academic Culture Committee shall be responsible to:

- a. Meet once per academic year to review the Academic Culture Agreement (ACA); Act to serve the Policy Implementation conditions and mentor the ASA student Ombuds officers; Update and modify the ACA to reflect the shared aspirations of the students and faculty of the Architecture Program.
- b. Periodically review Arbitration Requests and implement the Arbitration Review Process if necessary as per the ACA Policy and convene Academic Culture Arbitration Committees as necessary.
- c. Meet at the request of Students or Faculty to review or discuss the ACA Policy.
- d. Hold one Town Hall Meeting per academic year to solicit ideas and feedback from students and faculty

### Party Disagreements

If any party (student, faculty, admin) feels that another party is not operating in accordance with the Academic Culture Agreement and the Values set forth within this document they have the right and opportunity to raise their concerns with the necessary parties in order to resolve the issue.

**The First Step** in clarifying Academic Culture Agreement issues is Party-to-Party conversation (student to student, faculty to faculty, student to faculty, students to administration, etc.). The Academic Culture Agreement should be used as a reference during this process so either party can be held accountable for any actions that do not align with the Policy's values.

**The Second Step**, if necessary, is for both parties to meet in consultation with the Architecture Student Assembly Ombudsperson to act as a mediator between either party and aid in resolving the issue through candid discussion. An Ombuds is a student nominated by program leadership and trained by program leadership and student services in accordance with the standards set forth by the International Ombuds Association. The Ombudspersons are confidential, independent, impartial, and work informally to help the parties resolve the issue. Please see the end of the document for further information on Ombudspersons.

**The Third Step**, if necessary, is for the parties to discuss the issue in consultation with the Architecture Program Director.

**The Fourth and Final Step**, if the issue can not be resolved through the first three steps, is to seek resolution through the Policy Arbitration System. This step is the last means of resolution for an

Academic Culture Agreement issue. The Policy Arbitration Process will convene an ad-hoc Academic Culture Arbitration Committee to hear from both parties individually on the issue to then make a verbal presentation of recommendation. Please see the next section for further detail of the Policy Arbitration Process.

## Policy Arbitration Process

If any party to the Academic Culture Agreement relationship structure (student, group of students, faculty, administration) feels that another party is not acting in the spirit of the ACA then they are entitled to file an Arbitration Request with the Architecture Program Director. The intent of this process is to provide a mechanism for the timely resolution of an Academic Culture Agreement related issue within the course of a semester or outside the semester boundaries.

Once a request for Arbitration has been made, an **Academic Culture Arbitration Committee** must be formed to hear both sides of the issue presented by both parties within five school days of the request being filed with the Architecture Program Director. This committee will be comprised of the following persons: Associate Dean of Student Affairs, 2 faculty members, MAPP+D equity Officer, the ASA Ombudsperson, 2 undergraduate student representatives selected by the ASA, and 2 graduate student representatives selected by the ASA.

Once the Academic Culture Arbitration Committee convenes to hear the issue from both parties, they have two days to complete a committee report and reconvene an Arbitration Session of the parties involved in the arbitration. The Academic Culture Arbitration Committee will hear both parties explain their point of view on the issue(s) raised by the Arbitration Request individually and bring the parties together only after the Academic Culture Arbitration Committee has completed their recommendation. The committee recommendation is presented verbally at the arbitration session and serves as a guide for both parties to clarify and/or resolve the issue(s) at hand.

Please see the end of this document for the Arbitration Request Form.

If at any point during this process a party feels that the issue goes beyond the boundaries of the Academic Culture Agreement, they are encouraged to utilize University resources.

### University Confidential Resources:

- <https://ocrsm.umd.edu/campus-confidential-resources>

### University Reporting Resources:

- Undergraduate Reporting Options can be found [here](#).
- Graduate School Reporting Options can be found [here](#).
- Kristen Stack ([kstack@umd.edu](mailto:kstack@umd.edu)), MAPP+D Title IX Liaison [OCRSM Information](#).

## Party Disagreement Resolution Steps:

1. Party to Party Conversation
2. Both Parties meet with Student Assembly Ombudsperson
3. Both Parties meet with Architecture Program Director
4. Arbitration Process
  - i. **File Policy Arbitration Request:** Complete Arbitration Request Form and file with Director of the Architecture Program.
  - ii. **Assemble Committee:** Director receives request and assembles Academic Culture Arbitration Committee within 5 days of Request (or at the discretion of the Director).
  - iii. **Convene First Arbitration Session:** Chair of Student Affairs Committee convenes an Academic Culture Arbitration Committee Session to hear verbal positions from both parties.

- iv. **Meet to Compile Report / Recommendation:** Academic Culture Arbitration Committee meets to complete report and define recommendations
- v. **Convene Second Arbitration Session:** Academic Culture Arbitration Committee reconvenes Arbitration Session within 2 days (or at the direction of the Director) of the first Arbitration Session to make verbal presentation of recommendation.
- vi. **Process Complete**

## Ombudspersons

According to the [University of Maryland Ombuds Services](#), an ombuds is a person who can be consulted by members of the architecture program community who want information about policies relating to their activities, or who encounter problems that they cannot resolve through ordinary means. Architecture program ombudsperson listens to concerns, brainstorms strategies to address the concerns, provides resources and information, and tries to assist in addressing the concerns. Ombudspersons follow the standards of practice outlined by the International Ombuds Association.

1. **An ombuds is confidential.** Communications with an ombuds are confidential and no information or opinion presented to an ombuds (or even the fact that the ombuds has been contacted) will be shared with other parties without the express permission of the visitor. The only exceptions to confidentiality are when there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm to self or others, or if required by law, litigation, or University policies.
2. **An ombuds is independent.** The ombuds position is outside of all regular chains of authority and reporting responsibility. An ombuds emphasizes fairness in seeking solutions to problems.
3. **An ombuds is impartial.** An ombuds does not take sides or advocate any particular position. Instead, an ombuds tries to help all parties understand the viewpoint of others, and develop mutually satisfactory ways of resolving conflicts.
4. **An ombuds works informally to address concerns.** The ombuds does not keep formal records of meetings with faculty, staff or students. The ombuds provide an alternate channel of communication outside of any formal process.

Student Assembly Ombudspersons are nominated by program leadership on a semester to semester basis. There shall be one representative from the undergraduate and graduate programs. To be nominated, students must demonstrate the four qualities listed in the Standards of Practice, through their previous service to the school and academic performance. This may include leadership in school activities and student organizations, attendance to town halls and retrospectives, high level achievement in academics, university-level service, and performance as a teaching assistant (graduate students).

Each semester, selected Student Assembly Ombudspersons will receive training in accordance to the standards set forth by the [International Ombuds Association](#), which the University of Maryland follows. This training will be provided within the first two weeks of each semester, by program leadership and student services.

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# ARBITRATION REQUEST FORM

This form must be submitted to the Architecture Program Director.

**Party(ies) Filing the Request:**

Please check one of the request types below

Individual (1 student)

Group (2 or more students)

Studio / Course (all enrolled in class/section)

Class (Jr, Sr, 1st year grad, Thesis, etc.)

Faculty

Administrator

**Name(s):**

Please list up to 5 names of those parties filing the request below

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please designate the party you request be reviewed in this process below (circle one):

Student | Faculty | Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Request**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Policy Review Arbitration**

This date is to be set within 5 school days of the request.

\_\_\_\_\_

Please check the Values you feel requires review from the list below (check as many as apply):

Communication & Collaboration

Wellbeing & Balance

Diversity & Respect

Constructive Evaluation & Instruction

Please Initial below to confirm the first three steps of Party Disagreement Resolution have been completed prior to filing this request:

Step 1 Complete  
(Party to Party Conversation)

Step 2 Complete  
(Parties meet with Ombudsperson)

Step 3 Complete  
(Parties meet with Architecture Program Director)

**Issue(s) for Review**

Please provide a brief description of the issue for review by the Academic Culture Arbitration Committee.

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