The review at MIT Architecture: Values and Goals

The review is a core space of architectural culture, and an expression of our culture as a Department. As well as an important moment for students to engage with each other, faculty, and professionals, it is a place where essential values and ideas of the discipline get discussed and demonstrated through the lens of student work. We enact the values of our community in the form and character of that discussion—in its openness, transparency, and quality.

Holding a review is itself a creative act, and an evolving part of our design culture. While specific rules may not be appropriate to every review, the goals below outline our expectations and overall tools for creating the best discussion in a variety of settings and contexts, according to our community's underlying values of respect, courtesy, equity and inclusion.

What these goals attempt to navigate, amongst other dynamics, is the fact of the review as a situation where different participants have, or perceive themselves as having, different amounts of power and autonomy over a discussion that is important to all. The more we appreciate and address these dynamics, the more we can produce review discussions that advance both individual understanding and learning, and the goals of our community as a whole.

The Values and Culture of Reviews at MIT

- A review is not an evaluation of a student's project academically, but an opportunity to reflect upon the larger significance of the project and to provide context and feedback from those not intimately familiar with the work. The review is an opportunity to expand the discourse surrounding the work beyond the studio itself and to encompass a range of perspectives to aid the student in contextualizing their work within broader creative and research landscapes.
- MIT is a space of plurality that embraces a wide range of approaches to any discipline, whether it be architecture, design, art, technology, computation, or other creative or research discipline that benefits from the critique model.
- MIT maintains a culture of positive, robust, and serious attention that reflects a respect for the student's effort, time, and care that went into the work. At final

reviews, or at other significant landmarks, positive support is often expressed through applause; but, at all times, it should express itself through attention, care, and active engagement with students, colleagues, and the overall conversation.

Goals for review conveners

In convening a review discussion, we are framing an intellectual and creative context within a disciplinary context — creatively, geographically, professionally and otherwise. We are setting the limits of the discussion positively — framing what kind of discussion and attention would be most rewarding and relevant to all participants. This work can be quite literal in setting up the structure and goals for a specific discussion. It can be quite abstract in framing the intellectual and creative context for the discussion. As instructors, we also sometimes must play an essential role in setting limits in other ways — particularly if a comment falls outside the bounds of our community goals for reviews, or if the discussion is proceeding in a way that is unhelpful to the student in their work. At such moments, our intervention and articulation of values is essential to preserve the character of discussion and engagement we seek to ensure.

Goals for reviewers.

Reviews are both wide-ranging in the context they provide, and constantly rooted in the work under discussion, and the perspective and attention of the student participants. They also provide a deliberate diversity of voices and comments; work by participants to broaden and open the discussion to others is particularly essential and valuable. The goal of comments on students' work is that they are grounded in the specifics of the work presented, as well as a larger disciplinary context, and they arrive at the ear of the student so they will be understood and appreciated. Positivity, engagement, and a respect for the different context and cultures in which both students' experiences, and their projects are grounded is essential to the success of the conversation.

Goals for students.

Like any participant, students have a responsibility to help create the most supportive and engaged environment as possible for the review. This expresses itself, for example in the attention and support of classmates for the whole review. When a student's work is under discussion, they have the floor, and are encouraged to ask for clarifications and specific

examples if any feedback is not clear. If students have concerns during a review, it is important that we hear them — either at the time if appropriate or possible, or as specific feedback afterwards, which we commit to provide a space and opportunity for within each studio, and in the department as a whole. We also commit to deliberate and appropriate follow-up to any such concerns with all parties involved.