# Master of Design Studies
## Policies and Procedures

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Eligibility for Matriculation into the MDS Program

Prior to entering the program, applicants must have completed an accredited Bachelor’s degree.

Enrollment Status

All definitions of enrollment status for MDS students are based on the following:

Full-time: To be considered a full-time MDS student at the BAC, a student must be enrolled in 6.0 credits per semester.

Half-time: To be considered half-time at the BAC, a student must be enrolled in a minimum of 3.0 academic credits per semester.

NON-MATRICULATING REGISTRATION
The BAC offers enrollment in certain degree program courses to non-matriculating students on a seat-available basis through its Part-Time Enrollment Program. Please contact the Registrar's Office at 617-585-0131 or registrar@the-bac.edu for further information.

Taking Onsite Elective Courses

MDS students are currently not permitted to enroll in on site courses.

Course Registration

A registration letter that clarifies all registration deadlines and procedures is mailed to all active students prior to the Fall and Spring semesters.

Returning students must clear account balances prior to Registration. Returning students who fail to meet the deadline to return these materials must pay a late fee in order to become eligible for registration.
MDS Management Team

The Master of Design Studies Management Team consists of the Head, School of Design Studies; the Director of Sustainable Design, the Director of Historic Preservation and the Head, Professional and Continuing Education. The MDS Management Team’s tasks include:

- Evaluate and approve individual applications for entry into the program
- Evaluate and approve individual requests for transfer credit
- Review and approve individual Contracts for Educational Progress
- Determine individual eligibility for graduation from the program
- Propose changes in program policies and procedures to the Provost

Transfer Credit Policy for MDS Students

The BAC welcomes MDS students to apply for transfer credit. The MDS Management Team will review materials and approve transfer credits and Admissions will communicate decisions to the Registrar’s Office, the financial Aid Office, and the Bursar.

1) Eligible Courses:

Transfer credits will not be awarded for the required MDS core / intensive courses.

Transfer credits will only be awarded for elective courses.

2) Timing of Request for Transfer Credits:

a. Application to the MDS Program:

Applicants to the MDS program are required to request transfer credit on their applications for admission.

Award of transfer credit is subject to the review and approval and will be awarded at the sole discretion of the MDS Management Team.

b. After admission into the MDS program:

Should students determine after matriculation that they have completed a course at another institution for which transfer credit might be awarded, they shall submit a request for transfer credit to their program director.

Should students want to complete a course at another institution after matriculation into the MDS program, they must obtain approval from their program director for the course and the transfer of the credit prior to enrolling in that course.
Award of transfer credit after matriculation shall be at the sole discretion of the program director.

3) Minimum Grade Required for Transfer Credit: Students must earn a grade of B- or better in order for courses to be eligible for transfer credit.

4) Maximum Number of Transfer Credit: The maximum number of transfer credits that may be transferred into the MDS program is nine (9). These nine (9) credits may consist of either

a. nine (9) credits for courses completed in other BAC programs,

or

b. a combination of courses completed in other BAC programs and a maximum of six (6) credits for courses completed at other institutions.

Satisfactory Educational Progress (SEP) and Academic Probation for MDS Students

Ongoing Satisfactory Educational Progress, and graduation requirements are met by maintaining a cumulative GPA of 2.70.

Students who do not meet the cumulative GPA requirement will be placed on probationary status. Students on probationary status will be reviewed by the Master of Design Studies Management Team. Reviewed students will be given a Contract for Educational Progress (CEP) or be dismissed from the program. The CEP is a formal contract which outlines a reasonable course of action for the student to follow in order to achieve Satisfactory Educational Progress. Contracts for Educational Progress and the result of a student’s efforts to meet the terms of the contract will be communicated to the student and placed in the student’s file. A CEP may include

- Attainment of a higher GPA in future semesters
- Repetition of a course
- Completion of additional assignments
- Taking a course for 0 credits on a pass/fail basis in order to raise a prior grade. Such a course would be paid for on a fee basis, and not be eligible for financial aid.

Failure to meet the terms of the CEP will result in reconsideration of the student’s case by the Management Team which may issue another CEP or dismiss a student from the program.

Financial aid regulations include standards for academic progress and rate of passage through the program. Students who are on academic probation for two semesters, or who are matriculated in the program for more than 6 semesters are at risk of losing financial aid.
Students placed on a CEP should contact the financial aid office to discuss the impact of CEP status on their ability to receive financial aid.

**Length of Studies**

Students are urged to complete the program with their cohort in the recommended four semester sequence. Students who are on academic probation for more than two semesters or who are matriculated in the program for more than six semesters may no longer be eligible for financial aid.

**Explanation of MDS Semester**

The typical MDS semester extends over 20 weeks and is made up of three periods:

- Week 1 to week 8: Core / “Intensive” courses occur in this period. (During week 3 of this period, students are required to attend the in-Boston “intensive” learning sessions at the Boston Architectural College.)
- Week 5 to week 12: First session elective courses occur in this period.
- Week 13 to week 20: Second session elective courses occur in this period.

**Course Change Policies for MDS Students**

Students may not reduce credits once they are enrolled for the semester.

**First Session Elective Course Period:** During the first week of the First Session elective courses only, students may replace one elective course with another elective course, provided the “swap” does not represent a reduction in credits. During this same week, students may also add or “swap” a Second Session elective course. All Adds/Swaps must occur during the first week of First Session elective courses, and be approved by the MDS Director. Please contact the Coordinator of Design Studies for an Add/Swap form.

**Second Session Elective Course Period:** Students may not add, swap or drop courses during this period. If a student becomes unable to participate in a registered course, a “W” will be recorded on the transcript (no impact on GPA), and they may appeal to the MDS Department for a tuition voucher. They may redeem the voucher during the 12 months following the semester of withdrawal, by sending it to the MDS Department along with their course selection form. (Exception: cancelled courses may be replaced with another course).

Course, Semester and Program Withdrawal Policies for MDS Students
Withdrawal from individual courses

Students may withdraw from an MDS course according to the following schedule:

**Week 1 of core/intensive course:** not later than the last day of the Intensive Study week.

**Week 1 of first session elective course period (week 5 of MDS semester):**

Elective courses that last fifteen (15) weeks: not later than the end of eleventh (11th) week of the course (week 15 of the MDS semester)

Elective courses that last eight (8) weeks: not later than the end of the fifth (5th) week of the course (week 9 of the MDS semester)

**Week 1 of second session elective course period (week 13 of MDS semester):** not later than the end of the fifth (5th) week of the course (week 17 of the MDS semester)

Students withdraw from a course by completing a Course Withdrawal Form and submitting it to the Coordinator of Design Studies who will forward it to the Registrar’s Office.

Withdrawal from a class appears as a "W" on the student's academic transcript, has a credit value of 0.0, and does not affect the student’s grade point average. It does, however, count toward credits attempted for the semester.

Students contemplating withdrawing from a course are encouraged to speak with the MDS program director concerning the curricular issues involved and progress in the program.

Students who receive financial aid should contact the Financial Aid Office to assess the consequences of withdrawing from a course.


drawing from All Courses in a Semester or from the Program

A student who elects to withdraw from all courses in a semester or from the MDS program entirely must submit a Full Withdrawal Form to the Coordinator of Design Studies who will forward it to the Registrar’s Office.

Students receiving financial aid are strongly encouraged to speak to the Financial Aid Office prior to withdrawing for a semester or from the program as such withdrawal will affect their financial aid eligibility.

Tuition refund due as a result of withdrawing from all MDS courses in a semester or from the MDS program will be calculated in accordance with the refund policy for withdrawal from individual MDS courses.
Tuition and Fee Refunds for Withdrawing from an MDS Course

An MDS student registers for all of their semester coursework prior to week one of the MDS semester. The Tuition Refund Schedule is based on the semester as a whole not when each individual course begins.

**Tuition and Fees Refund Schedule:**

100% refund, less a $50 tuition adjustment fee, if the student submits the Course Withdrawal Form to the Coordinator by the 10 am Eastern on the first day of the MDS semester.

75% refund, less a $50 tuition adjustment fee, if the student submits the Course Withdrawal Form to the Coordinator by the 10 am Eastern on the first day of the in-Boston intensive week (week 3 of the MDS semester).

0% refund, if a student submits the Course Withdrawal Form after 10 am Eastern on the first day of the in-Boston intensive week (week 3 of the MDS semester).

See tuition voucher policy regarding withdrawal from a second session elective course.

**General Policies Concerning Refunds:**

A 100% refund will be given for cancelled courses should the student not elect to take an alternate course.

Recipients of Title IV financial aid should refer to "Refunds and Financial Aid" for information about mandatory reduction of aid funds.

Refunds and Financial Aid: Federal regulations require that a designated refund schedule be used when a financial aid recipient withdraws from school before the 60% period of the semester. Financial aid recipients in a BAC degree program are subject to the Return of Title IV Funds rule. The analysis is based on a pro-rata schedule: the number of days attended divided by the number of days in the semester. The remainder of the student's aid is then returned to the source. Last date of attendance in online courses is determined by the last date of active participation in online assignments. Please be aware that the federal refund schedule does not mirror the school's refund schedule. For additional information, please contact the Financial Aid Office.

**Leave of Absence**

A Leave of Absence (LOA) is a period of time in which a degree program student is not attending classes. Students must complete a Leave of Absence form and submit it to the Coordinator of Design Studies, prior to the start of the in-Boston intensive week. Students who wish to take a Leave of Absence should first meet with the Program Director in order to assess
the implications that taking a leave would have on their progress. Students who receive financial aid must also contact the Financial Aid Office to assess their options and obligations. Leave of Absence forms are valid for one semester only. A new form must be completed before each additional semester of leave. A maximum leave of four consecutive semesters is allowed in both the bachelor's and master's programs.

Change of Address

Students are responsible for informing the Registrar of any address changes that occur during the semester.

Change of Name

Students are responsible for informing the Registrar of any name changes that occur during the semester. Proof of the name change must be submitted along with the request.

Grades

Students may access their grades via their Self-Service accounts. Grades will display as soon as they are recorded. Inquiries regarding grades not received or grades in question should be directed to the Registrar. Under no circumstances will grades be released by anyone other than the Registrar.

Grade Change

Grades may be given or changed only by instructors, except in extraordinary cases where the appropriate Program Head may intervene. Grade changes must be completed by the end of the semester immediately following the one in which the original course was taken. After that time, a student must petition the Appeals Committee for permission to have a grade changed.

Grade Appeal

A student may appeal a grade s/he believes was awarded unfairly. A student should first contact the instructor to clarify his or her reasons for awarding the grade. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, the student may contact the appropriate academic program director, who will review the student’s complaint in order to ascertain the merits of the complaint.

In cases where a director ascertains that the appeal has merit, the director will meet with the instructor to allow him/her to review his/her grade. In unresolved cases, directors may also review the student’s work him/herself and award a new grade.
In unusual circumstances, the student may request that the Provost review the director’s decision. The Provost will only review the director’s decision if the student feels that the director did not follow the appeals process properly or that the director’s decision was based on personal bias. The original appeal should not be submitted; instead, a new appeal, outlining the reasons for the super appeal — consistent with these stated guidelines — should be submitted to the Provost within ten business days of the director’s notification to the student. The Provost will investigate the super appeal and may request a meeting with the student. She will then issue a final decision, which cannot be further appealed, within ten business days of the conclusion of her investigation.

Grades may be challenged only through the end of the semester following the one in which the disputed grade was earned. This deadline may be extended only by permission of the Appeals Committee.

Course Incompletes

Incompletes may be granted, upon presentation by the student to the instructor of acceptable evidence of extenuating circumstances that prevent completion of the course requirements within the assigned time. The instructor may grant an extension of up to seven weeks beyond the end date of the semester in which the course was taken. If the instructor fails to direct the Registrar to change the Incomplete to another letter grade by the published deadline, the Incomplete automatically converts to RF seven weeks after the conclusion of the semester in which it was earned. The student is responsible for ensuring that the Registrar has been notified by the instructor of the grade change.

RF/Repetition of Courses

A student may repeat any course in which s/he has received a failing grade. Upon passing the course, the original grade will convert to NC and the new grade will be used in computing the student’s GPA. If a student receives more than one failing grade for a course, only the most recent failing mark will be replaced. Other instances of failing marks for the course will remain on the transcript and count toward calculation of the student’s GPA. Please note that a course may only be taken a third time by permission of the applicable Program Head.

Note: Grade changes will occur automatically when the same course is retaken (e.g., an RF in Structures will be replaced after the Structures course has been successfully repeated). However, if a student desires a grade replacement by a different course that is within the same discipline, s/he must initiate this change by submitting the request in writing to the Registrar.
Hotel Policy for Local Students

Participation in group living arrangements during in-Boston intensives has many advantages. It enables an educational day which may start at 8 am or earlier and continue until 10 pm or later. It connects students to their colleagues in the program. It keeps students focused on the educational components of the week rather than the management of their living arrangements. For these reasons, MDS students are required to participate in group living arrangements with other students during the first Intensive. Those with local alternative accommodation arrangements will be given the opportunity to petition not to pay the hotel portion of the Intensive Fee subject to an Opt-Out Intensive Fee. Upgrades are available to single occupancy and additional night stays for additional fees (subject to availability).

Attendance Policy

Attendance at in-Boston Intensive Class Week:

During selected semesters, students are required to participate in an intensive orientation and learning session of 8 days duration conducted at the Boston Architectural College in Boston. Accommodations during this “Intensive” week are included in program fees for each semester. Transportation and meals are not included. Attendance policy the “Intensive” week is as follows:

Two days of Intensive missed: Possibility of lower grade for the course.

Three days of Intensive missed: Possibility of failure of course.

BAC faculty members have the authority to issue individual class policies that are more restrictive than the standard BAC policy described here.

BAC Policy on Participation in Online Courses:

Students are expected to participate in all online classes. An instructor may lower a student’s final grade due to a student’s unexcused failure to participate in required online coursework. Unexcused participation is defined as a lack of participation for which the student did not receive permission in advance from the instructor.

For elective 15-week and 16-week classes, if a student fails to participate as required over three weeks, an instructor may lower a students’ grade one letter. If a student fails to participate as required over four weeks, an instructor to fail a student.

For elective eight-week computer classes, one unexcused absence is grounds for an instructor to lower a student’s grade one letter, and two unexcused absences are grounds for an instructor to fail a student.
For elective eight-week classes, if a student fails to participate as required over two weeks, an instructor may lower a student’s grade one letter. If a student fails to participate as required over three weeks, an instructor may fail a student.

In the case of an accident, illness, or other emergency that causes a student to be unable to participate in the required coursework, a student must notify the instructor.

Work-related obligations and/or deadlines are not considered appropriate excuses for failure to participate in the coursework as required.

**Fees**

**Intensive Week Fee**

There is a fee for each in-Boston intensive class week. This fee includes a standard, double-occupancy room. A limited number of single rooms are available for an additional fee. Students are responsible for their own transportation costs to and from Boston. For more information, please contact the Coordinator for Design Studies.

In addition, there will be fees associated with admission, registration, and attendance at the BAC. Fees are non-refundable except as noted and may be adjusted or new fees added during the year as needed; such changes will be posted to the BAC website. You can access the most up to date fee information here: [http://the-bac.edu/admissions-and-financial-aid/tuition-and-fees](http://the-bac.edu/admissions-and-financial-aid/tuition-and-fees)

**FERPA (Family Education Rights & Privacy Act) and Student Records**

The Family Education Rights & Privacy Act of 1974, commonly known as FERPA, provides that all records pertaining to a student that are maintained by the college must be open for inspection by the student and may not be made available to any other person without the written authorization of the student.

The following items are considered Directory Information and may be released without the written consent of the student: name, address, telephone number, enrollment status, dates of attendance, major, and degree conferred (including dates). The Boston Architectural College may disclose these items without prior written consent, unless notified by the student in writing to the contrary. Nondisclosure stipulations remain in effect until removed in writing by the student, even if the student has withdrawn or graduated. A request form to prevent disclosure of Directory Information is available to students from the Registrar's Office.
BAC tuition waiver program for MDS courses for qualified staff, dependent spouses and dependent children

**Master of Design Studies program**  Persons desiring to use the Tuition Waiver Program for completing a Master of Design Studies degree must apply for matriculation into an MDS cohort. Electives within the program (12 credits) but not core courses (21 credits) are available for tuition waiver. Waived tuition may be reportable as taxable income (see “Taxation of Benefits” section of BAC Tuition Waiver Guidelines). Other BAC guidelines for the Tuition Waiver program apply to MDS classes.

**Free MDS courses for BAC Faculty**

Faculty desiring to use the Free Course Program for completing a Master of Design Studies degree must apply for matriculation into an MDS cohort. Electives within the program (12 credits) but not core courses (21 credits) are available as free courses. General BAC guidelines concerning faculty eligibility for free courses apply to the MDS.

Administrative Guidelines for free MDS courses or tuition waiver for BAC faculty and staff:

If a BAC staff or faculty member seeks a tuition waiver, they should submit a form to the Manager of Educational Services

The Manager of Educational Services will confirm that the student is an eligible instructor as defined by the BAC’s tuition waiver guidelines and will submit form to the MDS department

The Coordinator for Design Studies will review and sign off on the form and submit a copy of the form to the Financial Aid Office.

Financial Aid processes this requests and the tuition waiver amount transmitted as anticipated aid on the students account.

When the student registers they will have a pending credit available for the approved course.

The Coordinator for Design Studies insures that only tuition for electives, and only for a maximum of 3 credits per semester, are waived.

When aid is disbursed each semester Financial Aid and the Bursar will work together to finalize this waiver as it will then be transmitted to Accounting.

**Policy Appeals**

In the event of an extenuating circumstance which prevents a student from complying with these policies, a student may submit an appeal to the Appeals Committee for an exception to all
college policies. In such a circumstance, the student is to contact the Coordinator of Design Studies for information regarding how an appeal is made.

Status of This Document

This statement of program policies and procedures is provided as a reference guide. It constitutes a living document and as such is subject to change by the BAC. Accordingly, it is not, and should not be construed as, a contract or part of a contract. Its provision may be modified, revoked, or changed by the BAC without prior notice at any time, but the BAC will endeavor to inform BAC students of major changes that occur.