

Academic Policies

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1.1 Course Credits & GPA

Courses are assigned a credit value equivalent to their weekly duration unless otherwise decided by the Director, such as in the case of compressed courses. For example, a class of three hours per week is worth three credits. Term and year-end grades are determined by averaging these classes according to their weighted values. Credits are earned when a student achieves a grade of 60% or better in a course.

Due to the condensed nature of our programs, there are no electives and all courses within each program are mandatory.

To pass an academic year, students must achieve a yearly program average of 65% or better and earn at least 52 out of 60 credits. Students with an average below 65% but hold an attendance record of no less than 75% will receive a Letter of Attendance. Students finishing with a yearly program average of 90% or greater will graduate with Honours.

1.2 Course Outlines & Student Assessment

Students will receive a course outline on the first day of each class every term. This outline will detail course objectives, materials required, and how students will be assessed.

Assessment methods may vary by program and can include feedback during class discussions, assignments, projects, tests, and exams. See 1.9 for the grading breakdown.

If a student is unclear regarding their academic performance throughout their course, they may request an assessment from their instructor at any time.

1.3 Late Assignments, Tests, and Exams

All projects must be submitted by the specified deadline and to the appropriate instructor or teacher's assistant. Late work is subject to academic penalty. Please see Extensions (1.4) for information about extensions.

- **Projects** submitted within one week of the due date have 25% of their mark deducted. Projects submitted later than one, and within two weeks, will have 50% of their mark deducted. If an assignment is more than two weeks late, it is no longer acceptable for submission and receives a 0% unless an extension is granted (see 1.4).
- **Tests** missed during the term that are not granted an extension are marked 0%.
- **Final Projects or Exams** not handed in or missed are marked 0% unless an extension is granted. If a project or exam is completed after the end of the term, the release of the student's transcript may be delayed.

1.4 Extensions

Reasonable extensions are left to the discretion of the instructor. If a student believes their request for an Extension has been unfairly denied, they may appeal the decision under the school's Dispute Resolution Policy.

1.5 Standards of Academic Progress

Students who fall behind in assignments or fail to learn the curriculum in any course or program will be required to meet with their Instructor(s), Department Head, Academic Coordinator, and/or the Academic Dean. Failure to make reasonable academic progress renders a student vulnerable to academic penalties, including dismissal.

1.6 Attendance Policy

Students are expected to promptly inform their instructors if they will be absent from or late to any class, prior to the start of class. Students who are absent from classes are responsible for catching up on any missed material on their own.

In compliance with PTIB regulation, attendance is recorded precisely, with how late a student arrives or how early a student leaves class noted in 15-minute increments.

Absenteeism over 25% of any class will result in an Incomplete grade (0%) in that class. Excessive absence from program hours across multiple courses may result in dismissal from the school (see 4.3 for more information regarding dismissal).

Students who miss two consecutive calendar weeks of study are considered withdrawn by PDA unless they contact PDA directly with extenuating circumstances. Students holding a loan through StudentAid BC will have their loan cancelled. The weeks are defined as being from Sunday to Saturday.

The Academic Coordinator will notify students via email if their absences become a problem and may require a meeting if the student is approaching 25% absence in any course.

If the student is having difficulties attending class for excusable reasons, they should follow the process outlined in Attendance Appeal (see 1.7), or Student Accommodations.

1.7 Attendance Appeal

This policy governs academic exceptions made to help support students who experience unexpected or unavoidable circumstances during the term that interfere with their ability to attend class.

Students are responsible for reviewing their course schedule at the beginning of the term to identify any potential conflicts between course requirements and outside activities. It is the student's responsibility to resolve any conflicts as soon as possible.

If a student misses class, they will be marked absent. Absenteeism over 25% of any one class results in an Incomplete grade (0%) in that class. Please see the Attendance Policy (1.6) for more information.

If a student receives an Incomplete grade in a course and wishes to appeal this grade, they may submit an Attendance Appeal. To do so, they must complete the Attendance Appeal form, addressing the grounds for the appeal, and, providing relevant supporting documentation (e.g., from a medical or mental health professional, or by a professional qualified to assess the impact of the event on the student).

The grounds for an Attendance Appeal are:

- a. **Medical circumstances:** an acute physical or mental illness or medical circumstance that emerges or recurs during a term; the emergence of or change in a chronic physical or mental health condition.
- b. **Compassionate circumstances:** a traumatic event experienced by a student, family member, or close friend; an act of sexual misconduct experienced by a student, family member, or close friend; a death in the family or of a close friend.
- c. **Conflicting responsibilities:** attending court as a witness, jury member, or party; being required to report to a government office for immigration/citizenship proceedings; attending a meeting as required by PDA administrative staff (e.g., academic discipline); participating in a religious observance or, for First Nations, Métis, or Inuit students of Canada, a cultural observance; and, very occasionally, other conflicting responsibilities at the discretion of the Academic Dean.

No supporting documentation is required for planned religious or cultural observances.

The form and documentation must be submitted to the Academic Coordinator within five business days of the end of term. With the exception of term 3, as students graduating will need to complete this process within three business days of the end of term. This is to accommodate the tight turnaround time between the end of classes and graduation. Appeals submitted after that point will not be considered.

The Academic Coordinator will arrange a mandatory meeting for the student with the Academic Coordinator, Department Head, and Academic Dean all present. During this meeting, the student will have an opportunity to explain their absences. Due to the pace of our academic programs, students who missed more than two weeks in a row may be encouraged to withdraw from the program and return the following term or year.

After the meeting, the Academic Coordinator, Department Head, and Academic Dean will then make a final decision on whether to revoke the student's Incomplete grade. This decision will be based on the reasons for

the student's absences, the student's work in the class, and other relevant information. The decision will be presented to the student within 7 business days. This decision is final.

If the student does not attend the meeting, their Appeal will not be considered.

Granting an Appeal shall not lower academic standards, remove the need for evaluation, or remove the need to meet academic requirements/learning outcomes.

1.8 Academic Leave

A student who has been or will be away for an extended period and wishes to complete their studies later must arrange a meeting with the Academic Coordinator and Department Head to discuss possible options.

1.9 Grading Breakdown

GRADE	PERCENTAGE	DESCRIPTOR
A+	95-100	Exceptional
A	90-94	Excellent
A-	85-89	Very good
B+	80-84	
B	75-79	Good
B-	70-74	Satisfactory
C+	65-69	
C	60-64	Pass
F	< 59	Fail
I	0	Incomplete

Students receive an "I" if they fall below 75% attendance.

1.10 Student Grade Appeal Policy

The process by which a student may appeal a grade received in a course at PDA is as follows:

1.10.1 Informal Grade Appeal Process

A student who wishes to appeal a grade in a course should first ask the instructor to review the assigned grade before initiating the Formal Grade Appeal Process.

The Instructor must receive the grade review request from the student via email within 5 business days after the assignment in question has been returned to the class.

The instructor should review the assignment and present a decision to the student via email within 7 business days of receiving the review request. If the review process takes longer than 7 business days, the instructor should inform the student of the reason (e.g. extra time is needed to arrange a meeting) and the date by which the review will be completed.

At their discretion, the instructor may ask the student to submit their request for review in writing and/or ask the Department Head or Academic Dean to be present at in-person meetings.

1.10.2 Formal Grade Appeal Process

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the student may request a formal review by the relevant Department Head or the Academic Dean via email.

Department Heads shall review appeals related to courses by instructors in their departments.

The Academic Dean shall review appeals related to courses taught by Department Heads and those that cannot otherwise be resolved.

The student must submit the Formal Grade Appeal Form, available through the Academic Coordinator, to the Academic Coordinator via email within 5 business days of receiving the instructor's decision.

The Formal Grade Appeal must include all relevant information and documentation (e.g., the assignment, instructor comments, supporting evidence if relevant) as well as the basis for the appeal and why the student believes a better grade is justified.

The Formal Grade Appeal must not include compassionate grounds (e.g., illness, death in the family), which should be addressed through the Extensions process (see 3.3). It also must not include accessibility grounds, which should be addressed through the Accommodations Process (see 5.1).

If the Department Head cannot resolve the issue, the student may submit an appeal to the Academic Dean within 5 business days of receiving a decision from the Department Head.

The grade determined by the Academic Dean shall be the final grade, regardless of whether it is higher, lower, or identical to the original grade.

In cases concerning the interpretation of course policy, the Department Head or Academic Dean will defer to the course syllabus whenever possible and otherwise will make a ruling on the matter.

1.11 Work Experience (applicable for Interior Design and Practice of Building Technology)

The Work Experience practicum is a program requirement for Interior Design (ID) and Practice of Building Technology (PBT). Working alongside industry professionals enables students to develop their careers by networking and gaining practical skills. It must be relevant to the program's body of knowledge and requires the completion of two terms for participation.

Below details the process by which the student will complete their work experience:

1. Finding a placement:

- 1.1. Students will be offered a list of relevant host organizations to choose from but are also encouraged to seek out their own placement if there is an acceptable designer or firm they wish to work for. These will need to be approved by the Department Head.
- 1.2. Contact the organization(s) the student is interested in working for to express their interest, arrange an interview, and secure the placement.
- 1.3. If the student is unable to arrange an appropriate work experience, the Department Head or Academic Dean will make the placement.

2. Work Experience Agreement:

- 2.1. Once the student has secured their placement, PDA, the host organization and the student will enter into a written agreement (the Work Experience Agreement form, made available to the student by the Academic Coordinator) detailing each party's responsibilities and the activities that the student will undertake during the work experience.
- 2.2. This form, signed by all three parties, must be submitted to the Academic Coordinator (admin@pacificdesignacademy.com) **before the start date of the work experience**. A copy of the authorized agreement will be kept in the student's file.

3. Work Experience Evaluation:

- 3.1. The student will be evaluated by the supervisor at the host organization, using PDA's Work Experience Student Evaluation form.
 - 3.1.1. The evaluation criteria fall into two categories:
 - 3.1.1.1. Professionalism in the workplace.
 - 3.1.1.2. Technical competencies associated with program learning outcomes.
- 3.2. The Academic Coordinator will send the evaluation form to the supervisor listed in the agreement for them to fill out and send back upon the completion of the work experience.

PDA will evaluate the fulfilment of the work experience criteria upon completion of 80 hours (PBT; one-year program) and 160 hours (ID; two-year program) and the submission of the following documentation to the Academic Coordinator:

- The Work Experience Agreement form signed by the student, host organization, and PDA representative, due before the start of the work experience.
- The Work Experience Student Evaluation form is completed and signed by the host organization supervisor, which is due at the end of the work experience.

For Interior Design: the completion of 160 hours can be completed in the following ways:

- 80 hours during the summer between years one and two and the summer after graduation with one host organization or two different ones.
- 160 hours throughout one summer with one host organization.
- During the academic year, after the completion of their first two terms, and so long as it does not conflict with their studies and will not impact their attendance.

For Practice of Building Technology: the completion of 80 hours can be completed:

- During the summer after the completion of the academic year.

- During their third term, after the competition of their first two terms, and so long as it does not conflict with their studies and will not impact their attendance.

1.12 Course Experience Surveys

Students will be given the opportunity to provide written feedback on each of their instructors and courses. Students may also meet with the Department Head and/or the Academic Coordinator to discuss the program, which can include concerns or suggestions about the courses and instructors.