What’s the purpose of a Terminal Studio Gate?
Design studios sit at the heart of our program’s curriculum. They carry the most credit hours and are the place where students integrate and apply knowledge gained in subject area courses. We want to set students up for success as they enter these rigorous learning environments by making sure they are adequately prepared.

The purpose of a Terminal Studio Entrance Evaluation is to gauge the level of preparedness for moving into the ARCH 485/6 studio sequence. Terminal studios are advanced, comprehensive, and independently driven, requiring students to structure their own design process, drawing from their abilities and technical knowledge. Compared to vertical studios, students must be prepared to complete a comprehensive building design that shows a culmination and integration of architectural knowledge across all subject areas using advanced techniques in computation and design media.

Do I have to participate in a Terminal Studio Gate?
A Terminal Gate is required if a student receives a grade of NP (No Pass) or MP (Marginal Pass) in either of their final two ARCH 484 studios. Marginal and Non-Passing grades in intermediate studios can be indicators that a student may not be ready to advance to the next phase of the studio sequence. Students are not eligible to enter ARCH 4/585 studios before they have completed the evaluation and continuation is recommended. The full policy for determining when a Gate review is required can be found on the departmental blog for current architecture students.

How will I be evaluated?
The Terminal Studio Entrance Evaluation Gate is a review process by a committee of Architecture faculty to determine if a student is ready to continue to the advanced ARCH 485 design studio sequence. This evaluation includes a review of your studio work and final evaluation forms from your prior and current ARCH 484 studios. You are invited to meet with the committee to offer your perspective on your development in the program.

What happens during the Gate meeting?
The meetings are typically held over Zoom and last about 30 minutes. Therefore, you’ll need to find a reasonably quiet space with a reliable internet connection to participate. After introductions, we’ll ask you to share your screen and show us some of the work from your previous design studios, with emphasis on your most recent ARCH 484 studio. The meeting is not meant to mimic a final studio critique. Therefore, it won’t be necessary to explain each project in detail and faculty won’t provide feedback on your work. Instead, we’ll ask you to use the time to briefly give us the highlights by touching on a few of your overarching design goals for each project that images alone might not convey. We also want to hear your assessment of the strengths and areas of improvement you’ve come to identify in your work. Throughout the meeting, we may ask a few clarifying questions, but we’ll mostly listen during that time. This may feel a little unusual— you are probably very accustomed to faculty talking a lot. However, in this meeting, our primary goal is to see the work and hear your perspective on your own development. At the conclusion of the meeting, you will have the opportunity to ask any follow-up questions and to share any information you deem is relevant that may have affected your experience as a design student.
When will I know the outcome of the review?
A determination will not be made in the meeting as the committee will need an opportunity for discussion and deliberation. A follow-up memo will be sent to you and your academic advisors usually within a week that explains the determination and any recommendations or conditions for moving forward.

When will the Terminal Studio Gate meeting occur? How should I prepare?
Terminal Entrance Evaluation Gates will typically occur during Week 11 (Final Exam week) in the Spring term. Students who need a Gate Review can expect an email from the Director of Undergraduate Studies around Week 8 or 9 of the Spring term to schedule a time for meeting in Week 11. You will also be asked to send a PDF or a link to a folder of your prior work in ARCH 484 studios with an emphasis on the work produced most recently. Samples of the work should be organized by studio, but it does not have to be graphically designed in the format of a portfolio. In most cases, simple images labeled by studio and assignment are best.

If I earned a marginal pass in my third 484 but passed my fourth 484 without one, will I still have to have a Gate Review?
Based on departmental policy, students who receive a grade of NP (No Pass) or MP (Marginal Pass) in either of their final two ARCH 484 studios will still be required to participate in a Terminal Studio Entrance Evaluation Gate. However, you should congratulate yourself for this progress! Demonstrating a significant level of improvement is the absolute best-case scenario for any student that will participate in a Terminal Gate review.

What to do in the meantime?
We want to make sure that you are aware of the process and feel completely prepared. Between now and your Gate meeting, we encourage you to take the time to reflect on your previous studio experience and hopefully enter your next 484 (if you still need to take a fourth) with a strong sense of purpose around improving the skills, habits, or behaviors identified in your prior final evaluation forms and exit interviews. You may even consider how the subject area classes you’re taking this term might provide opportunities to continue to do so. As previously mentioned, the most ideal scenario is that the issues that led to a Marginal Pass in one 484 are corrected in the next 484. Then, the gate review process becomes a formal opportunity to confirm, acknowledge and celebrate that progress.

In many cases where there is a history of repeated marginal passes, the committee will require taking an additional ARCH 484 prior to entering terminal studio. For students who earned a Marginal Pass in their fourth ARCH 484 studio, schedule a meeting with a College of Design advisor to consider how you might modify your schedule to accommodate a fifth ARCH 484 studio.

We also recognize that for some students, repeated Marginal Passes or Non-Passing grades may signal the need to reflect on whether your current course of study still aligns with your personal and academic goals and what factors may be impacting your academic performance. We encourage you to meet with a College of Design advisor to help you identify any resources that may be available to support your academic efforts and general wellness.