HANDBOOK

Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA)

Department of Landscape Architecture
University of Oregon

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1. Introduction

Established in 1933, the Master in Landscape Architecture (MLA) degree at the University of Oregon is the oldest professional landscape architecture degree in the Pacific Northwest. The department offers two tracks for the MLA degree, both of which are accredited by the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB):

- Track I: 10 quarters (three years plus an introductory summer program) for students with little to no prior environmental design education

- Track II: 7 quarters (two years plus an introductory summer program) for students with prior environmental design education

Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the depth and complexity of landscape architecture and its commitment to critical social analysis, environmental stewardship, and place making.

- Demonstrate facility with the design of responsible, supportive, sustainable, socially equitable, and life-enhancing places for diverse communities.

- Demonstrate facility with the technical skills of landscape architecture.

- Demonstrate competence in a range of representational techniques and an understanding of when to optimally employ these techniques.

- Demonstrate facility in reading, critically analyzing, and applying research methods from the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, design, and the arts.

- Demonstrate recognition of the multifaceted character of research as a fundamental aspect of the profession and the many ways it can inform and enhance landscape design and management.

2. Eligibility

2.1. Track I

This track is designed for students who have completed any undergraduate degree and have little to no environmental design education. No prerequisite courses are required to apply to this track.

2.2. Track II

This track is designed for students with an undergraduate degree in an environmental design field, including landscape architecture, architecture, urban design, and environmental design. Students with an LAAB-, LAAC-, or NAAB-accredited degree have no prerequisites to enter this track. Students with other environmental design degrees must have completed at least one academic year of environmental design studios.

The curriculum for each Track II student is individually tailored based on their previous coursework prior to matriculation. Each Track II student's Program of Study is developed in coordination with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), and will typically involve a number of course waivers in the Curriculum noted below so that the student can complete the degree in seven quarters.

3. Application

Application requirements and deadlines are noted on the department's website.

4. Curriculum

The MLA curriculum begins in the summer and is followed by a core sequence of design studios supported by course sequences in media, history and theory, analysis and planning, and materials and construction, along with electives. The curriculum is completed with the Research sequence and a Master's project (Master's Project or

Thesis). For more details on the curriculum, see *Appendix A: Degree Guides.*

4.1. Introductory Summer Program

The introductory summer program is an intensive four-week class held from mid-August to mid-September. The program is intended to introduce students to the practice and techniques of design, the landscapes of Oregon, the university, and their cohort. The introductory summer program includes the following class:

- LA 608 Landscape Architectural Foundations (9 credits; Summer)

4.2. Studios

The core of a design education centers on studio-based, project-oriented instruction. The studio sequence includes the following required classes:

- LA 639 Landscape Architecture Design and Process (6 credits x 3 quarters; Fall, Winter, and Spring; Track I only)

- LA 589 Site Planning and Design (6 credits x 3 quarters; Fall, Winter, and Spring)

- LA 694 Landscape Planning and Design (6 credits; Fall)

4.3. Media

The Media sequence focuses on analog and digital representation techniques, and includes the following required classes:

- LA 551 Media I (2 credits; analysis and diagramming)

- LA 552 Media II (2 credits; 3D)

- LA 553 Media III (2 credits; CAD)

- LA 550 Advanced Landscape Media: [Topic] (2-4 credits; any quarter)

4.4. History and Theory

The History and Theory sequence covers theory, fundamental concepts, historical perspectives, and ways of thinking that underpin all aspects of landscape architecture, and include the following required classes:

- LA 572 Landscape Architectural Theory: [Topic] (4 credits; any quarter)

- LA 574 History of Landscape Architecture I (4 credits; Fall)

- LA 575 History of Landscape Architecture II (4 credits; Winter)

4.5. Analysis and Planning

The Analysis and Planning sequence covers history, theories, and methods related to land use planning, zoning, property rights and other critical issues related to land conservation and development, and include the following required classes:

- LA 513 Analyzing Land Systems (4 credits; Fall)

- LA 515 Computers in Landscape Architecture (4 credits; GIS; Winter)

- LA 540 Introduction to Land Planning Analysis (4 credits; Spring)

- LA 541 Principles of Applied Ecology (4 credits; Fall)

4.6. Materials and Construction

The Materials and Construction sequence covers plant identification, cultural requirements, planting design, site engineering, landscape materials and detailing, computer-aided design software, professional practice and other topically oriented classes. Careful sequencing and coordination between the courses and a focus on both classroom and on-the-ground projects results in meaningful and well-integrated program content. The sequence includes the following required classes:

- LA 562 Professional Practice (2 credits; Winter)

- LA 564 Landscape Materials and Construction I (4 credits; Fall)

- LA 565 Landscape Materials and Construction II (4 credits; Winter)

- LA 566 Landscape Materials and Construction III (4 credits; Spring)

4.7. Research and Master's Project

The Research sequence introduces students to the broad range of research methods applicant in landscape architecture and fosters the completion of their Master's Project. The sequence includes the following required classes:

- LA 620 Research Methods I (2 credits; Winter)

- LA 621 Research Methods II (2 credits; Spring)

- LA 699 Clinic (4 credits; Fall)

- LA 699 Clinic (9 credits x 2 quarters; Winter and Spring) if pursuing a Master's Project; LA 503 (9 credits x 2 quarters; Winter and Spring) if pursuing a Thesis.

4.8. Area of Concentration (AOC) Courses

AOC courses support the student's educational and career goals, foster exploration of topics that may be relevant to the student's AOC and inform their Master's Project. Most AOC classes are found in Geography, PPPM, Environmental Studies, Ethnic Studies, Architecture, and History of Art and Architecture. AOC courses offered outside College of Design must be approved by the DGS, the Clinic instructors, or a member of faculty (with email to DGS). When students begin the MLA program, they should consult the DGS to begin planning their AOC and relevant coursework and to receive initial approval for course selection. At any time, students may consult with any department faculty to identify courses that support their AOC and future Master's Project. To be approved, a course must be graduate level (i.e. have a 5XX or 6XX course number) and must be demonstrably related to the student's educational/career goals and/or their Master's Project topic. When in doubt or whenever you have questions, please contact the DGS.

There are new courses offered every quarter in various departments that have applicability for students in Landscape Architecture. We urge you to check the university course schedule and seek advice as to appropriate choices.

- Students must successfully complete 20 credits of courses around their AOC.

4.9. Master's Project

The Master's Project is a research-based project of high academic standard presenting independent work that contributes to the body of knowledge in Landscape Architecture. The topic may be selected from a wide range of theoretical and practical design issues. For example, it may be an original investigation, an original interpretation of existing scholarship, or an application of innovative strategies for the solution of a specific design challenge. Most importantly, the project should demonstrate a creative engagement in understanding landscapes and effectively communicating one's ideas.

Students should conceive of projects that can be completed in their three final terms specifically dedicated to the project. Prior to Fall of their final year, students complete the LA 620 Research I and LA 621 Research II sequence in which they learn about the culture and methods of landscape architectural research, and use different approaches and techniques to explore their own emerging research interests. Students are encouraged to seek guidance at any time in this process from individual faculty about how to develop a project topic.

The Master's Project can take two forms: a Master's Project or a Thesis. The student selects which option they will pursue, in consultation with the Research sequence instructors, the Fall Clinic instructor, and the DGS. Because of its greater flexibility, most students choose to pursue a Master's Project.

Students pursuing a Master's Project will complete the Master's Project as part of LA 699, while students pursuing a Thesis will complete the Thesis as part of LA 503; both will participate in the Fall, Winter, and Spring Clinics. Students pursuing a Thesis must follow university requirements regarding formatting and schedule, as noted on the Division of Graduate Studies website.

4.9. Master's Project Types

The options for Master's Project types depend on whether a student pursues a Master's Project or a Thesis:

- Master's Project: these students can select between design or non-design project types.

- Thesis: these students may only select the non-design project type.

Design Project (Master's Project only)

A Design Project culminates in a design that spans all scales, from planning to site-specific design details, as a means of demonstrating the student's full range of skills learned over the course of the degree. As the Design Project is research-based, the project must identify and build upon existing scholarship to make an original contribution to knowledge and/or practice beyond the mere provision of a unique design to a certain site. For this type, students are required to choose their project location by the Fall LA 699 Clinic. The department's intention behind the scoping and framing of the Master's Design Project is that it should be of a high-enough quality for submission to regional, national, and international student awards. Non-Design Project (Master's Project or Thesis)

A Non-Design Project culminates in a research manuscript and are encouraged to recruit a faculty advisor. Such a project will make an original contribution to knowledge and/or practice in the realm of theory, method, or application. The department's intention behind the scoping and framing of the Master's Non-Design Project is that it should be of a high-enough quality for submission to scholarly journals or presses, with one or more faculty as secondary authors. Students opting for a thesis can do so by securing a faculty advisor and adhering to the guidelines and processes set by the Division of Graduate Studies.

4.10.   Faculty Committee

Every student pursuing a Master's Project is guided and advised by a faculty committee. The default options for the Master's Project committee are the three

Clinic instructors (Fall, Winter, and Spring). If a student is pursuing a project (design or non-design) that is closely aligned and under the guidance of a faculty member not serving as a Clinic instructor, that faculty member may be added to the committee with approval from the faculty.

4.11.   Prospectus

To ensure that students are progressing at a rate that allows them to complete their master's degree within the student's program timeline, a *draft* Master's Project Prospectus is required as the final project of LA 620 Landscape Research I. This draft prospectus must contain:

1. A clear and focused description of your topic of interest.

2. A preliminary statement of the problem your project will address and the researchable question(s) it will answer in doing so.

3. An annotated summary bibliography of relevant work by others and its relation to your problem statement.

4. A brief description of the mode of inquiry you expect to use and a process diagram of your (expected) or someone else's application of this mode.

5. A bulleted list of what you expect to produce from carrying out the work diagrammed in item 4 above.

6. The term you plan to graduate.

Students then refine their project intentions as part of LA 621 Landscape Research II, the final project of which is the student's *final* Master's Project Prospectus.

4.12.   Proposal

The Master's Project Proposal is due no later than Week 5 in LA 699 (Fall Clinic). The proposal must be approved by the Fall Clinic instructor by the end of the quarter in order to be approved to enroll in LA 503/699 Winter Clinic. Failure to earn approval

of the proposal means that the student must wait a full calendar year to graduate.

The proposal is a statement that explains the research area, thesis, objectives, methods, and schedule to be followed during the project. A typical outline for a Master's Project Proposal is as follows:

1. Cover page: title of project, author, proposed committee, and date of proposal.

2. Problem Statement: State the problem your project will address and the researchable question(s) it will answer in doing so. (Revised the one from the prospectus)

3. Literature Review: Demonstrate that you thoroughly understand the existing state of knowledge regarding the themes/concepts/ideas that will be explored in your MP. For example, a thorough literature review and interviews with experts should reveal answers to the following types of questions: What are the themes/concepts/ideas that your MP will address? If there are multiple themes/concepts/ideas, how do they relate and inform each other? Who has already done what regarding these themes/concepts/ideas? Are there precedents, case studies, or previous examples that help illustrate the themes/concepts/ideas you expect to explore?

4. Gap in knowledge: Given the answers to #2, identify the gap in knowledge that you expect to explore in your MP. What has not yet been done, and why is it worth exploring?

5. Proposed contribution to knowledge: Given the answer to #3, discuss what your original contribution to knowledge will be. This is not a prediction of what your results will be, but an identification of the general nature of your project. Is it the testing of a revised/updated method? Is it an existing theory applied to a new context? Other?

6. Research question, objectives, and goals: Given #2-4, what is your research question, objectives, and/or goals?

7. Methods: Given #5, how will you answer your research question? What methods will you use to address this gap in knowledge? Are there precedents,

case studies, or previous examples that help illustrate your methods?

8. Site introduction(s): Introduce (as in, thoroughly describe) the focus of your exploration. If you have a site, tell the audience everything they should know about the site: its natural and cultural history, its current state/status, current understanding of the site by informed commentators (scholars, academics, writers), etc.

9. Work schedule for Winter and Spring quarters

10. References

4.13.   Final deliverables

For a design project that involves a distinct and tangible design site with complex compositional challenges, the following deliverables are required:

- Presentation script

- Presentation slideshow

- A book that encompasses both the slideshow and the script.

For non-design projects, where there isn't a specific and tangible design site, the requirements are:

- Presentation script

- Presentation slideshow

- A comprehensive book that not only goes beyond the script but also includes an overview of the problem, a literature review, gap in knowledge, contribution, research questions, methodology, analysis, findings, discussion, and a conclusion, following a form of a research manuscript.

All final submissions must be of professional quality.

4.14.   Registration and Grading

While taking the Research and Master's Project sequence of classes (From LA 620, LA 621, LA 699/503 Fall Clinic, LA 699/503 Winter Clinic, and LA 699/503 Spring Clinic), the student must pass each class to be eligible to register in the subsequent class. In a case where a student is unprepared to enroll in a subsequent class, they will be required to wait until the following year to complete their Master's Project.

Each class in the Research and Master's Project sequence of classes is graded Pass/No Pass. Completed Master's Projects

Completed projects are available for review in one of two ways:

- Older projects (up until 2016?) that were only printed in hard copy are available from the department; located in the department head's office.

- Recent projects (2016-2022?) available as both hard copy and digitally are available from the department and online through the university's Scholar's Bank, respectively.

- The latest projects, which were not required to be printed in hard copy, are only available online through the university's Scholar's Bank.

5. Advising

All MLA students have access to multiple levels of advising: administrative, departmental, and ad-hoc.

5.1. Departmental advising

The department's Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) serves as the departmental advisor for all MLA students. In this role, the DGS can provide general advice and counseling on academic, departmental, and professional matters. For all students, the DGS approves all course substitutions and waivers, and approves final degree audits in the quarter prior to graduation. For and in consultation with Track II students, the DGS will develop a Program of Study for each student. The DGS is available via email and/or by appointment during office hours.

5.2. Ad-hoc advising

Students may seek out any faculty member for ad-hoc advising for guidance on academic, departmental, and professional matters. Faculty are available via email and/or by appointment during office hours.

5.3. Administrative advising

Administrative advising is provided by Student Services in the College of Design, and is the primary resource for curriculum planning, degree progress, financial aid, and other administrative matters. Student Services is available via email and/or by appointment.

5.4. Student role

The student should keep their instructors, the DGS, and/or Student Services informed about matters concerning their degree progress. This may include personal matters such as finances, health problems, etc. if these interfere with satisfactory progress in the department. Advisors need to be informed about these matters so that they can act effectively as advocates for students should it be necessary. The time spent with advisors is left to the student's discretion. The student is expected to take the initiative in arranging such meetings as they require them. However, on occasion, an advisor may request meetings with the student. Unless noted otherwise by university policy, the student-advisor relationship is treated as confidential so that both parties can feel free to be honest and candid in their discussions.

6. Financial Assistance

6.1. Recruitment funding

Financial assistance in the form of recruitment funding may be allocated by the University to the department and offered to highly-qualified applicants. Applicants are notified if they are the recipient of such funding after being awarded admission

and before they are required to accept their admission offer. Funding amounts, if available, will vary year-to-year.

6.2. Scholarships and grants

Financial assistance in the form of scholarships and grants may be available from the department, school, college, or university by competitive application. Applications for these opportunities are advertised directly to students throughout the year, with most opportunities advertised in Winter term and results announced in Spring term.

In addition to internal (to the university) scholarship and grant opportunities, there may be external opportunities available through various academic, professional, and non-profit organizations. These opportunities are shared with students as the department becomes aware of them. However, it is the student's responsibility to seek out these opportunities.

7. Graduate Employees

Graduate Employee (GE) positions are employment positions in support of the teaching, research, and administrative efforts of the university and are available through competitive application. Compensation typically includes a tuition waiver, a monthly stipend, and a contribution to most insurance/fees for the quarter(s) of employment. Details on GE compensation can be found on the Division of Graduate Studies website.

For information on departmental policies regarding GE appointments, see the department's General Duties and Responsibilities Statement (GDRS), found on the Division of Graduate Studies website.

7.1. Instructional GEs

Each year, the department may be allocated instructional GEs, and the number of allocated GEs can vary from year-to-year. Instructional GE opportunities for the following academic year are usually advertised to students in Winter or Spring

quarters, with applications due in Winter or Spring quarters, and results announced in Spring quarter. Instructional GEs are awarded to students on the basis of their experience and qualifications for the class(es) in question. They are usually awarded to returning students, with occasional exceptions when an in-coming student is exceptionally qualified by virtue of prior academic and/or professional experience. Applicants should check their upcoming course schedules to ensure that their courses and teaching positions do not conflict.

Each term of an instructional GE appointment requires that the student/candidate participate as a reviewer in a final studio review.

Instructional GE opportunities from other departments may be available to landscape architecture students, depending on student experience/qualifications; these opportunities are advertised through the Division of Graduate Studies website.

7.2. Research GEs

Research GEs may be available through individual faculty to support their research projects. As these opportunities are funded by research grants, the presence and quantity of these opportunities will vary from year-to-year. They will be advertised to students as and when they are available.

7.3. Administrative GEs

Administrative GEs may be available to support the administrative operations of a particular unit (department, school, college, or university). The presence and quantity of these opportunities will vary from year-to-year. They will be advertised to students as and when they are available.

8. Practices and policies

8.1. Student participation

The Department believes in the broadest possible participation by all members of its community. While many decisions are made by faculty according to departmental governance policies, students may be asked to share in the responsibility for making decisions regarding the department. These may include, for example: lecture series, field trips, new course offerings, and course sequencing.

The department has a number of important meeting times that afford opportunities for participation by students and faculty, such as:
- Beginning of Term Meeting: first studio afternoon of each quarter, all faculty and students attend
- Department Meetings: Wednesdays as needed, 12-1 pm, open to all faculty and student representatives

8.2. Studio Preferencing

Students must preference design studios in academic terms where more than one option is offered at their studio level. The Department Head supervises the assignment of students into studios (typically a maximum of 16) based on student preferences, studio enrollment balance, and an assessment of which studio may best serve individual student's needs based on past coursework. In conjunction with registration each term, students will be asked to submit their preferences to the department. Once students are assigned by the Department Head, students will then be pre-authorized for studio registration.

8.3. Studio substitutions

Students are allowed to substitute one studio in the studio sequence: either the Fall or Winter offering of LA 589 or 594 (694). Either of these two studios may be substituted by:
- A UO landscape architecture studio taken during the summer while a UO student;
- A non-landscape architecture UO SAE studio taken during the same quarter as the substituted studio;

- A non-landscape architecture UO SAE studio taken during the summer while a UO student; or
- An environmental design studio offered by another institution taken during the summer while a UO student

Studio substitutions must be approved by the studio instructor and the DGS prior to the quarter of the substituted studio by submitting a Curricular Substitution Petition, available from the department's website.

8.4. Studio reviews

During Week 10 of each regular academic term (the week before Final Exams, a.k.a. Dead Week), Architecture and Landscape Architecture classes are cancelled so that studio classes, undergraduate Comprehensive Projects, and graduate projects, theses and dissertations can be scheduled for final reviews. This is an important tradition in the College of Design because it gives all students and faculty the opportunity to view and discuss the design and planning work completed during the term.

Faculty above 0.5 FTE participate in midterm and final reviews of student work.

8.5. Course Waivers

Based on their undergraduate courses and/or work experience, students are allowed to petition to waive required non-studio courses and their associated credits while still meeting minimum Division of Graduate Studies requirements. Students who wish to make such a petition must show equivalent competency in those areas, normally through previous course work or professional experience.

Substitution is replacing one non-studio required class with another class. In this case, students need to take an advanced version of the same topic or another course approved by DGS. Course   substitutions must be approved by the instructor and the DGS prior to the quarter of the substituted by submitting a Curricular Substitution Petition, available from the department's website.

8.6. Satisfactory progress in the department

At the conclusion of Spring Term, the faculty conducts a review of each student's overall progress in the department. If a student, in the opinion of faculty members, is not making satisfactory academic progress, the student will either be invited to a counseling session with the Department Head and advisor or will be advised in writing about the department's concerns with regard to the student's work. A student must pass three 539 studios to advance to 589 and likewise pass three 589 to advance to 694/699,

8.7. Computer Requirement

Digital tools are a necessary tool for all landscape architects. The department requires all students to have unlimited access to their own personal computer. Because of the professional application of complex graphic programs and large data files for most coursework, the department's computer requirements exceed the average user's computing needs. See the department's website for recommended specifications and departmental requirements. Landscape Architecture Technology and Materials Requirements | School of Architecture & Environment (uoregon.edu)

9. Codes of Conduct

Being a member of the Landscape Architecture community comes with rights as well as responsibilities. We expect all members of the community to treat each other with respect and openness and to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. The University of Oregon has developed comprehensive standards and guidelines for codes of conduct as well as policies and procedures for addressing concerns and violations.

Resources are available within the department as well as the broader university community. If students have questions or concerns, the Landscape Architecture faculty and/or the Department Head can offer guidance or connect students with the appropriate campus resources. If students prefer, they can go directly to resources available at the University level. See Provost's Office website for current policies.