welcome

This guide is intended to help new Penn State Landscape Architecture students deal more effectively with questions that may arise during their stay here.

It is designed to help graduate students understand the policies, requirements, and practices governing the Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) degree program. This guide repeats some information that appears in the Penn State Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin; however, the bulletin is more comprehensive and remains an invaluable source of information.

This guide contains information you need now and will use again later. Keep it for future reference.

MLA GRADUATE STUDENT GUIDE

This Graduate Student Handbook is for the guidance and convenience of graduate students, faculty, and staff in the Department of Landscape Architecture. It attempts to compile relevant and frequently requested information regarding the graduate programs. It is, however, not exhaustive and, in and of itself, does not constitute a contract in any way. Reference should be made to publications available from the University, the Graduate School, the College of Arts and Architecture,and the Office of International Programs (among others) for policies and procedures that may overrule those listed herein.
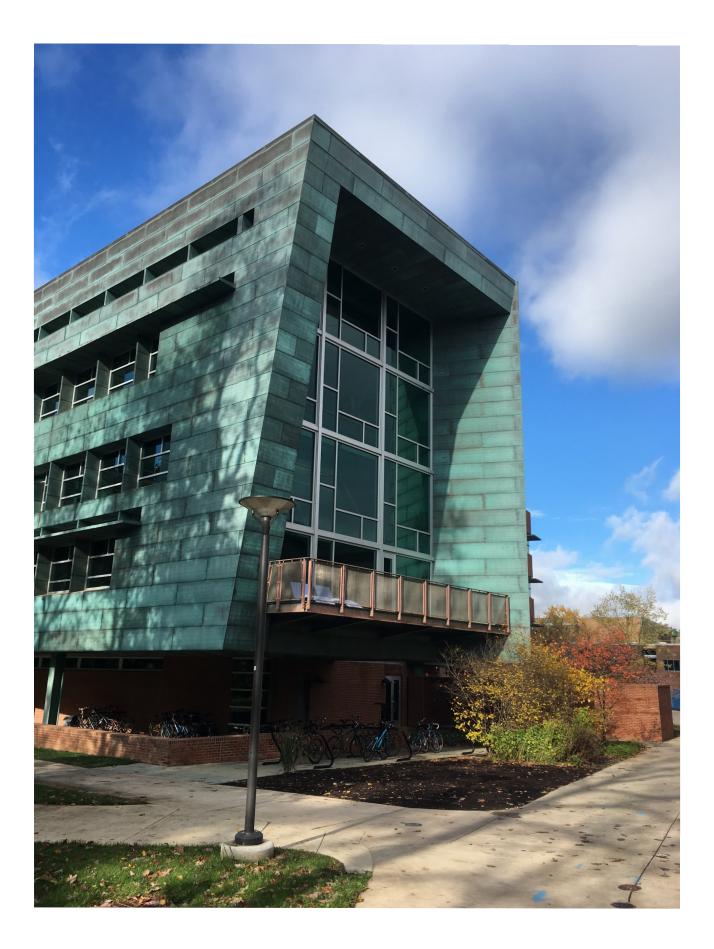
Every effort will be made to keep this handbook up-to-date and relevant. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to submit suggestions for its improvement.

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Welcome to Penn State

The Department of Landscape Architecture is part of the Stuckeman School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture in the College of Arts and Architecture at Penn State. The Stuckeman Family Building is in the middle of the College of Arts and Architecture's "Arts District," surrounded by the facilities for the Department of Art History, the Schools of Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts,, the Palmer Museum of Art, and several other college and Penn State buildings.

Completed in 2005, the 111,000-square-foot Stuckeman Family Building has a LEED Gold Rating, making it one of the first buildings on any U.S. university campus to earn that distinction. The energy-efficient design reduces the building's annual energy costs by 35 percent compared to a conventionally designed structure.

The four-story building, adjacent to both the Palmer Museum of Art and the Theatre Building on the University Park campus, has an exterior made of recycled copper, brick, and energy-conserving glazed windows with exterior sun-control louvers, which minimize glare inside. Interior sustainable features include lighting controls with automatic daylight and occupancy sensors and an HVAC system that relies on a natural ventilation system in appropriate weather conditions. Integrated landscape and parking design filters stormwater run-off to minimize pollutants.

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getting started

The Department of Landscape Architecture Program Coordinator and Graduate Programs Coordinator can be found in the Stuckeman School main office in 121 Stuckeman Family Building. They provide information about registration and answers to any questions you may have. The staff will also provide you with a key to your locker in the graduate studio. If you have been awarded a teaching or research assistantship, you should see the appropriate administrative assistant, located in the same office. Here, you will receive information with respect to your work assignment, your faculty supervisor, your starting date, and your stipend payments. While you are in the department office, you may want to ask the administrative assistant if the department head is available for you to introduce yourself.

If you want to reach the department office by phone, call (814) 865-0345. If you are phoning within the University system, you need only dial the last 5 numbers, in this case 5-0345. Upon arrival, you may also make an appointment to see the Graduate Program Professor in Charge (PIC), who will serve as your academic adviser until you have a capstone adviser.

The graduate studios are located on the fourth level. Graduate students have a desk and locker there. The Architecture and Landscape Architecture Library is located in 111 Stuckeman Family Building.

basic structure of the MLA program

The Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) program is for students seeking professional training in landscape architecture.

Our MLA program provides an outstanding degree for students from a diverse array of starting points, including but not limited to:

- Change-of-career students, new to design, who seek an accredited, professional education that prepares them to enter the practice of landscape architecture;
- Students who already hold a non-accredited design degree and seek an accredited, professional education that prepares them to enter the field of landscape architecture;
- Students who already hold an accredited bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and seek advanced breadth/depth of expertise.

Our MLA degree is accredited by the LAAB (Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board). Graduates are eligible to sit for the professional license exam (LARE: Landscape Architecture Registration Exam). Other opportunities are available in addition to the typical progression for self-directed inquiry for those with specific interests. See the Penn State Graduate Bulletin for the most up-to-date information.

THE UNIVERSITY'S FORMAL ORGANIZATION

Penn State is hierarchically organized, with the Graduate School having jurisdiction over all graduate programs at the University. The Graduate School thus determines and monitors the minimum standards for all of the graduate programs at Penn State. The Department of Landscape Architecture receives applications to its graduate program and recommends applicants to the (University's) Graduate School. The Graduate School in turn first admits students to the University and then to our graduate program.

The graduate faculty of the Department of Landscape Architecture establishes the graduate program and its policies, standards, and regulations. The (departmental) Graduate Affairs Committee may establish additional regulations for the graduate program. Policies established by the Department of Landscape Architecture may be more rigorous than those established by the College or the University, but not the other way around.

The graduate program in Landscape Architecture is directed by the head of the department and is administered by the Graduate Program Professor in Charge (PIC) and staff. A Graduate Curriculum Committee oversees the structure of the program.

degree requirements

The MLA curriculum develops creative insight and the knowledge, skills, and abilities essential to professional practice, fulfilling the education requirement needed in all states to be eligible to take the Landscape Architecture licensing examination. Students in the MLA degree program must also develop research understanding characteristic of graduate education, undertaking a research-based design project as a final cumulative experience to demonstrate their understanding and application of appropriate and professional research and design expertise.Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements stated in the DEGREE REQUIREMENTS section of the Graduate Bulletin.

The MLA curriculum requires completion of 57 credits of graduate work at the 400, 500, or 800 level, including a minimum of 47 credits at the 500 or 800 level, with at least 6 credits at the 500 level. In addition, to fulfill the requirements of professional accreditation, students must take 15 credits of prerequisite courses that do not count towards the M.L.A degree requirements.

060.   History of Design on the Land (3)

145.   Ecology and Plants I (3)

276.   Human Dimensions of Design: History & Theory (3)

365.   Contemporary Trends in Landscape Architecture (3) (or elective substitute)

386.   Professional Practice (3)

414.   Design & Theory V: Depth Studio (10)

815.   Grad Design I (6)

816.   Grad Design II (6)

817.   Grad Design III (6)

835.   Design Implementation I –Grading (3)

836.   Design Implementation II –Materials (3)

837.   Design Implementation III –Plants (3)

838.   Design Implementation IV –Stormwater (3)

501.   Research Writing in Landscape Architecture (3)

502.   Intellectural History & Theory of Landscape Architecture (3)

510.   Graduate Seminar in Landscape Architecture (3)

551.   FCE: Proposal (1)

552.   FCE: Production (4)

553.   FCE: Presentation & Documentation (2)

590.   Colloquium (1)

The final culminating experience for the M.L.A. is a research-based design project completed while enrolled in LARCH 551(1), LARCH 552(4), and LARCH 553(2).

MLA
FCE project

FCE REQUIREMENTS

The MLA program strives to provide a context for rigorous, substantive, and inspired graduate student inquiry into landscape architectural theory, principles, methods, and applications. A professional master's degree is one that emphasizes practical application of knowledge for solving problems. It should also demonstrate the candidate's ability to express thoughts and ideas precisely, to conduct scholarly research, and to communicate in an effective manner commensurate with master's-level inquiry.

A terminal master's FCE project is required of all MLA students. The FCE project is accomplished through the completion of LARCH 551, LARCH 552, and LARCH 553. FCE project submissions are normally in written media, with illustrations and figures, as appropriate. The FCE project typically consists of a report illustrating substantive research for the specific project as well as accompanying design explorations that either test or demonstrate research conclusions. The research topic is determined in consultation with your FCE project adviser. The FCE project must be a combination of research and design applications.

Because the FCE project is not a thesis, and need not conform to the Graduate School requirements for format, a wider range of presentation styles is permitted. Students are, however, required to submit a high-quality PDF final product to the Graduate Program PIC prior to graduation. To reiterate, a design-based inquiry must be nested within a research process and reflect the full standards discussed previously. The design problem/resolution will be only part of the inquiry. It may serve as a case study to explore a broader theme, or as a means to help answer a larger research question.

FCE PROPOSALS

The Final Culminating Experience Proposal course (LARCH 551) provides the opportunity for a student to develop an area of inquiry within the discipline of landscape architecture to be explored toward the production of the final culminating experience of the Master of Landscape Architecture degree. The student is expected to generate and refine research-based design questions, research aspects of extant questions, develop and test design ideas, or otherwise enhance her or his research interests. The form and specific criteria for the FCE project will be determined by the student and adviser, in consultation with the Landscape Architecture graduate professor-in-charge.

FCE PRODUCTION

Following signed approval of the FCE proposal (LARCH 551) by both the primary FCE adviser and FCE reader, students shall proceed to implement their research-based design project in LARCH 552. In this course students shall complete the steps as outlined in their proposal with the assistance of their faculty adviser(s). It is expected that this work shall last the duration

of one semester minimum. Additional time to complete the research may be required based on topic and resources. Students are expected to document progress in the manner appropriate to their investigation topic, and to present their findings and progress on a regular basis.

FCE PRESENTATION AND DOCUMENTATION

LARCH 553 is the third of three courses that will lead to the student's final culminating experience (FCE) for the Master of Landscape Architecture degree. In this course students shall prepare final documentation of their research-based design project, and make a public presentation/defense of their project's relevance, research/inquiry methods, design approach, and findings.

A successful FCE will research in the frontiers of knowledge in the field of landscape architecture. This documentation and presentation course is an advanced landscape research or research and design course that will culminate in the presentation of scholarly products required for the conferral of a Master of Landscape Architecture degree.

PROGRAM TIME LIMITS

The Graduate School allows a maximum of eight years for completion of the master's degree, but encourages students to finish sooner. The MLA program is designed to be completed in three years of full-time study. Students can – and regularly do – finish within this time frame. It is

each student's responsibility to manage their time well, work diligently, and maintain a high level of communication with their faculty mentors throughout all semesters.

FIRST SEMESTER
FALL
FIRST YEAR

SECOND SEMESTER
SPRING
FIRST YEAR

COURSEWORK

TYPICAL		CREDITS: 16
145	Ecological Principles	3
502	Intellectual History & Theory	3
590	Graduate Colloquium	1
815	Grad Studio I	6
835	Implementation I: Grading	3

COURSEWORK

TYPICAL		CREDITS: 15
60	Landscape Architectural History (online)	3
501	Research & Writing in LARCH	3
816	Grad Studio II	6
836	Implementation II: Materials	3

MAIN TASKS FOR COMPLETION

Discuss potential FCE research interests with pertinent faculty. Use your participation in LARCH 590 as a means to explore faculty research and expertise, hone interests, as well as to engage in project and research experiences of your fellow graduate students.

Review proposed timeline and curriculum plan and direct questions to Graduate Programs Coordinator and/or Graduate Programs PIC.

MAIN TASKS FOR COMPLETION

Identify a minimum of three potential FCE advisers and a minimum of three potential FCE topics.

For each topic, draft a one-page summary of interest and a two- to three-page annotated bibliography per topic.

Investigate research interests of graduate faculty; continue to interview faculty for potential as FCE adviser.

THIRD SEMESTER

FALL
SECOND YEAR

COURSEWORK

TYPICAL		CREDITS: 15
510	Graduate Seminar (optional)	3
817	Grad Studio III	6
837	Implementation III: Planting Methods	3
-----	Elective	3

MAIN TASKS FOR COMPLETION

Formalize FCE adviser and reader in writing and submit to the PIC by December 15.

Draft at least a one-page summary of interest to prepare for LARCH 551 in the next semester.

FOURTH SEMESTER

SPRING
SECOND YEAR

COURSEWORK

TYPICAL		CREDITS: 12
276	Human Dimensions of Design: H&T	3
414	Design V: Depth Studio	5
551	FCE: Proposal	1
838	Implementation IV: Stormwater	3

MAIN TASKS FOR COMPLETION

Obtain proposal signature page from Graduate Programs Coordinator.

Submit final FCE project proposal with FCE adviser's and FCE reader's written approval to the Graduate Program PIC and Graduate Programs Coordinator for review by April 1.

FIFTH SEMESTER

FALL
THIRD YEAR

COURSEWORK

TYPICAL		CREDITS: 12
414	Design V: Depth Studio	5
510	Graduate Seminar	3
552	FCE: Production	4

MAIN TASKS FOR COMPLETION

Complete all final production on the FCE project by the end of the semester.

REMINDER: FCE presentation must take place before March 1.

SIXTH SEMESTER

SPRING
THIRD YEAR

COURSEWORK

TYPICAL		CREDITS: 11
386	Professional Practice	3
510	Graduate Seminar	3
553	FCE: Documentation & Presentation	2
-----	500-level Elective	3

MAIN TASKS FOR COMPLETION

Before January 31, schedule FCE Public Presentation to occur no later than March 1.

FCE Public Presentation

Submit final project for signatures to FCE adviser, FCE reader, Graduate Programs Coordinator, and Professor-in-Charge before April 15.

additional
graduate requirements

The MLA is an accredited professional graduate degree allowing students to seek licensure for the professional practice of Landscape Architecture. Being a professional accredited degree, much of the curriculum is dictated by the accreditation standards set by the LAAB (Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board). It differs from the professional undergraduate Landscape Architecture curriculum by offering research experience in addition to professional education. Students can pursue their individual interests through careful selection of graduate seminars and electives. The MLA program is different from undergraduate programs in that it requires students to be self-motivated and take charge of their own education. It is your responsibility to pursue your studies with dedication and integrity. As a graduate student you are responsible for making sure that you fulfill all the requirements for graduation set by the program and the Graduate School.

SCHOLARSHIP + RESEARCH INTEGRITY (SARI)

(from *http://www.research.psu.edu/training/sari/*)

"The Scholarship and Research Integrity (SARI) program provides graduate students with opportunities to identify, examine, and discuss ethical issues relevant to their disciplines. We are proud that Penn State is leading the way in ensuring that all graduate students at this institution will not only become accomplished scholars and researchers, but will also be prepared to conduct their professional lives with integrity and responsibility. We recognize that all scholars, from undergraduate researchers to senior investigators, confront ethical issues in their professions, and that each year, thousands of Penn State investigators conduct research and scholarly activities with integrity that would withstand the highest levels of scrutiny. Advance discussion of core principles and possible scenarios can help inform choices frequently made under pressure, helping to eliminate poor decisions. Penn State has a unique opportunity – and a responsibility – to address these issues in a proactive and deliberate manner."

"The SARI@PSU program is composed of two parts: an online course, and an interactive, discussion-based component. It encompasses content that is both interdisciplinary and discipline-specific. The online portion (Part 1), offered through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), provides a common language and understanding of the history and principles of the responsible conduct of research. The discussion-based component (Part 2) provides an opportunity for in-depth exploration of important issues unique to each field of study. This basic structure can be adapted to create an effective program for scholars at different career stages, from undergraduate researchers, to graduate students and junior faculty, to senior scholars with years of experience. Participation by faculty and students alike will help foster a rich environment for the discussion and practice of scholarly integrity."

Graduate students are required to complete the online portion as well as five hours of additional training before they are allowed to graduate. SARI requirements are coordinated by the Graduate Program PIC.

other information

Quality graduate education depends on effective student-faculty relationships characterized by mutual respect, clearly stated expectations, open lines of communications and the existence and application of effective mechanisms for dealing with problems, should they occur. The following resources are offered for consultation when appropriate. **Students are expected to assume responsibility for knowing and adhering to the regulations, policies, and requirements of the University and Graduate School** as described in:

- The Graduate Bulletin, current edition. See in particular Academic Information and Procedures concerning regulations and pertinent procedures related to scholarly activities and assistantships. Please see the Graduate Student Policies for full details on all Penn State policies regarding graduate students (see *http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/student/*).
- Guiding Principles for Good Practice in Graduate Education available from the Graduate School (see *gradschool.psu.edu/faculty-and-staff/faculty/guiding*)
- Other checklists, forms, and publications as may be available from the Graduate School

ROLES + RESPONSIBILITIES

The Department Head is ultimately responsible for the overall direction and soundness of all programs within the department.

The Graduate Program Professor in Charge (PIC) oversees all of the graduate programs within the department. S/he helps recruit students, meets with prospective graduate students, conducts orientation for new graduate students, advises new students on the selection of first-semester course work, assigns teaching assistantships, helps coordinate research assistantships, and provides general guidance to all program graduate students throughout their residency. The Graduate Program PIC conducts final checks of course audits and final research products prior to graduation, and facilitates interaction among students, faculty, centers, and the wider academic community. He/she also interacts with the associate deans for research and for academic affairs in the College of Arts and Architecture, and representatives of the Graduate School.

FCE project advisers are graduate faculty who supervise MLA students for their FCE project. Readers are not required to be chosen from among the graduate faculty list. They are the ones who will sign off on the project. The FCE adviser submits the final grade.

The Graduate Affairs Committee assists the Graduate Program PIC and Department Head in monitoring and developing the graduate programs, with an emphasis on curriculum planning, department graduate program policy, and review of graduate applicants.

Graduate faculty have a broad obligation of involvement in all of the graduate degree programs. They are generally available for involvement in graduate student research and related activities and may be appointed by the department head to teach graduate courses. Sometimes, they receive external grants from which research assistantships may be funded.

FULL-TIME ACADEMIC STATUS + CREDIT LOAD

The University considers a full-time graduate student to be one who takes a minimum of nine credits per semester. These nine credits may be a combination of courses, independent studies, and thesis credits. When students are appointed to teaching assistantships, however, the Graduate Bulletin stipulates the following range of minimum and maximum credits for full-time students (*gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-funding/funding/assistantships*):

Half-time assistantship
(average twenty hours per week): 9 to 12 credits

Quarter-time assistantship
(average ten hours per week): 9 to 14 credits

TAs taking credit loads higher than those noted above require the approval of the Graduate Program PIC and the Graduate School.

COURSE NUMBERING + RELATED ISSUES

Courses at Penn State are numbered from 001 to 699 with some professional courses having 700–999 designations. You may take courses at any level but can only receive credit toward the MLA degree for courses at the 400 level or above. You must earn 47 or more credits at the 500 level or above.

Please note that courses taken below the 400 level are given a grade and that grade will be averaged into your G.P.A. even if the course will not count towards your degree. You should also be aware of some special course numbers created for graduate students and some departmental restrictions regarding their use.

LARCH 596 enables you to create an independent course with an instructor. Such a course results from the desire and willingness of a faculty member and a student to do a course of study not currently offered in the University at a time the student can enroll. The professor bears no institutional responsibility to offer such courses and they usually involve an extra load for the faculty. To register, the department requires that you and the faculty member have agreed upon the conditions of the course in writing. It is your responsibility to notify the departmental administrative assistant of this arrangement. LARCH 596 and other "independent study" courses are intended to fill in gaps. They are not to be used to substitute for courses.

COURSE GRADING

To maintain your status in the graduate program, the Graduate School requires that you maintain a 3.0 grade point average (G.P.A.). Thus you can receive lower than a B in a course as long as the G.P.A. is not less than 3.0.

If you fall below the 3.0 average, you are subject to being suspended from the program and Penn State at the discretion of the department. Further, if you receive one or more failing grades, you are also subject to suspension. Keep in mind that a D is a failing grade for graduate students and an F is immediate grounds for suspension. Additionally, earning a D or F in any course is grounds for denial of one or more future assistantships.

Some courses permit you to receive a pass (P) or fail (F) grade in lieu of a "quality grade," i.e., an A, B, C, D or F. Other courses permit the faculty member to assign an R grade for passing work, when the nature of continuing work does not permit a quality grade to be assigned at the end of the semester. In this case, the quality grade may be assigned at a later date. Only specific courses are authorized to assign P, F or R grades. If adequate performance has not been shown, the faculty member is authorized to assign you a D or an F in lieu of an R grade.

Penn State also authorizes the use of the DF (deferred) grade for situations in which the student was not able to complete the work within the time limits. The deferred grade is authorized only in cases where the failure to complete the work within the semester was beyond the student's control. In this case, the student must complete the requirements and receive a letter grade within the first nine weeks of the next semester or the grade will change to an F.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

If you have been awarded a graduate assistantship as a teaching assistant (TA) or research assistant (RA), you have already signed the contracts and are familiar with some of the conditions. The time frame for the assistantship, 17 weeks, is longer than the 15-week academic calendar. Typically, your assistantship responsibility begins one week before the start of classes and extends to one week after classes end. Be sure to check your copy of the contract and/or consult with the administrative assistant. Then, prior to the semester assigned, discuss the calendar with the faculty member you are assisting and come to an understanding of the conditions.

If you are a graduate assistant for two semesters on general funds or a fellowship, you are eligible to receive summer tuition assistance for the summer semester if you are taking required courses in residence (NOTE: this does not apply to study abroad programs). Keep this in mind as you are planning your program; it is an excellent way of covering a summer of study when you may not have an assistantship. All funding and assistantships are contingent on maintaining good standing in the graduate program including: required classwork, assigned work responsibilities, and adequate progress in your FCE.

SUMMER COURSES

The Department of Landscape Architecture offers summer studio abroad options that can satisy an advanced LARCH 414 depth studio requirement. For current opportunities, please see: https://stuckeman.psu.edu/larch/study-abroad-program-option.

TRANSFERRING CREDITS

If you have transferred into the Department of Landscape Architecture from another major/department at Penn State, there is no limit to the number of credits you may transfer in. You may transfer all courses approved by the department.

If you have transferred from another university, the Graduate School limits the number of transferable credits to ten with a grade of B and above. Non-quality grades are ineligible. The transferability of course work outside of Penn State must meet the requirements of the Graduate School and is subject to the approval of the department.

In order to transfer credits from another institution, you must fill out the appropriate Graduate School form and have this form approved by the Graduate Program PIC. You must then submit the form to the Graduate School for final approval. Make sure that you keep a copy of the approval notification.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE

Penn State requires a 3.0 cumulative grade point average for graduation. In addition, the department will consider the length of time a student has been enrolled in the program and may terminate any student whose cumulative grade point average at any time is less than a 3.0.

PROVISIONAL STATUS

A student admitted as a master's degree candidate on a provisional basis must satisfy the conditions of the admission within the time period specified. Failure to do so is grounds for dismissal.

RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

The University is unequivocally committed to promoting, encouraging, and facilitating ethical and responsible academic and clinical research efforts of Penn State faculty, staff, and students in the broad area of general or specific measurements of human development, health, and performance. Federal, state, and University regulations (Penn State Policy) require that the use of human participants in research be reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). For more information, see the IRB website at https://www.research.psu.edu/irb

application procedures

All application materials need to be uploaded at the Penn State Graduate School website. Applicants must meet all requirements for both the Penn State Graduate School and the Department of Landscape Architecture.

PENN STATE GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

- Application to the Penns State Graduate School for admission (*gradsch.psu.edu/index.cfm/apply/*)
- **Transcripts:** Copies of transcripts, degree/study certificates, and diplomas in the language of instruction from all institutions of higher education attended, both undergraduate and graduate, should be uploaded online as part of the Graduate School Application. If English is not the language of instruction, copies of all transcripts/documents in the English translation also must be uploaded.

    Please note that once an applicant has accepted an offer of admission, he/she will be notified by the Graduate School that official/original transcripts/documents and their official English translation must be sent from the originating institutions for review by the Graduate School, in order to confirm the offer of admission. Notarized copies are not sufficient.

- **Scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE):** Please request ETS to electronically submit to: PSU institution code 2660 and Landscape Architecture Department code 4405.
- **TOEFL scores** from non-native speakers of English need to be submitted to: PSU (institution code 2660). The Department of Landscape Architecture requires

a minimum acceptable total score for the TOEFL of 90 with a 19 on the speaking section or a cumulative minimum IELTS score of 6.5. Please note that the TOEFL requirement for the Department of Landscape Architecture is higher than the Graduate School requirements at Penn State. See Graduate School website for more information; all test scores must be sent from ETS.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the materials required by the Penn State Graduate School, the Department of Landscape Architecture requires submission of applicant information specific to our programs. These materials will also need to be uploaded at the Penn State Graduate School application website.

If you have any questions, or if you are unable to submit a portfolio electronically and need to make arrangements to submit a physical portfolio, please contact the Graduate Programs Coordinator.

- **Statement of Purpose**: Individual MLA application statement stating why the applicant wishes to enroll for the MLA at Penn State. The statement should include:
    - A description of their professional interests and goals;
    - Relevant information (if any) about previous educational/professional experience that has prepared them for or shaped their interest in landscape architecture;
    - Potential alignment with the research centers/initiatives in our department/school and/or individual

faculty members whose research/professional interests intersect with their own.

- **GPA reporting:** All applicants are required to report their GPA, using the U.S. 4.0 system, for previous degrees. If needed the GPA should be recalculated into the U.S. 4.0 system using the link provided below. This information should then be added to your graduate school application. This link will assist you with calculating your GPA: *foreigncredits.com/Resources/GPA-Calculator/*.

- **Curriculum Vitae (CV):** One-page CV listing educational history, research experience, employment history, and any other relevant information.

- **Portfolio:** Evidence of creative work should be submitted either through a digital portfolio (not to exceed 12 MB) or through examples of writing or some other creative outlet.

- **Recommendation letters:** Three letters of recommendation from individuals familiar with the applicant's academic history; employer recommendations are also welcome.

Applications will be considered incomplete if ALL required components of the application are not uploaded.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Graduate students attending Penn State have a wide range of options for financial aid, depending on their particular needs and circumstances. The department awards and administers a number of teaching assistantships through funds from the College of Arts and Architecture, the Graduate School, and the University. Faculty in the department also receive external research grants on an ad hoc basis, often providing exciting opportunities for graduate students to serve as research assistants on cutting-edge projects.

Financial help may also be available from the Graduate School, the Office of Student Aid, and sources external to Penn State. Minority graduate scholar awards, external fellowships, and traineeships are also available. Each entails its own application process. Penn State's Office of Student Aid (http://studentaid.psu.edu/) is the best source for information on financial aid opportunities from the local to the federal level. Refer to the Graduate Funding section of the Graduate School's current student page (*http://www.gradsch. psu.edu/index.cfm/graduate-funding/*).

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

Teaching assistantships (TAs) are awarded as available on a competitive, semester-by-semester basis. The Graduate Program PIC has the responsibility of coordinating teaching assistant assignments, in coordination with the Department Head, and reserves the right to award assistantships as appropriate. Criteria that are considered in making appointments include academic performance, prior TA proficiency (where applicable), and the match between the specific skills held by the graduate student and the task at hand.

Any teaching or research assistantships, quarter- to half-time, are usually reserved for sutdents with special expertise that we need in courses or research. Half-time assistantships may entail support in two different contexts (10 hours per week as a teaching assistant plus 10 hours per week as a research assistantship, for example). All TA responsibilities extend for

17 weeks, including one week of preparation before classes begin and during finals week, after classes end.

RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS + FELLOWSHIPS

Some faculty receive external research funding, which may support research assistantships (RAs). In these cases, the assistantship is a matter between the grantor and grantee; that is, the organization providing funds and the principal investigator. Since there is no definite pattern to these awards, students are encouraged to periodically express their interest in RAs to the Graduate Program PIC as well as to individual graduate faculty.

ASSISTANTSHIP DECISIONS

Just as we carefully seek a strong fit between incoming graduate students and our program, we work hard to place students in teaching or research assistantships where their interests and strengths match the tasks at hand as effectively as possible. Students who receive assistantships are assigned a TA or RA based on assessment of student credentials in combination with departmental needs. Students are not guaranteed teaching or research assistantships, but every effort is made to use those resources to support as many students as possible.