

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, MLA

Interim Chair: Louise Bordelon
Email: louise.bordelon@ucdenver.edu

Introduction

The Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) program balances theory and practice to prepare students to create health, well-being and environmental resilience through design in the public realm. Our fully accredited professional program takes full advantage of our location in the heart of Denver and the rapidly growing metro area. The program enables students to enter practice and offers distinctive opportunities for students to engage in meaningful projects that impact our communities and our built environment. We educate landscape architects to lead the design and planning process; successful graduates pursue diverse practices and occupations in public and private arenas around the world.

Our students study relevant issues through classes and immersive experiences that challenge them to think critically about the applications and implications for the work we do. While grounded in design and professional skills, the curriculum is structured to fluidly address evolving concerns for our profession, our communities and our environment through topics such as health and well-being, water in the west, food systems, and emerging sustainable practices.

The Degree

The Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) curriculum revolves around a sequence of design studios, supported by core content classes and a variety of seminar courses. We deliver a fully accredited Master of Landscape Architecture for first professional degree students and post-professional students (those already holding a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture or Bachelor of Architecture degree).

Our program balances theory and practice and emphasizes design to create health and well-being and environmental resilience through design in the public realm. The curriculum fosters an ethic of responsibility grounded in natural systems and processes and an understanding of cultural and community values. Students learn skills working on relevant urban and civic projects in both local and global contexts and at a variety of scales. Studios and courses engage current issues, define future trends, and explore the role of landscape architecture in a rapidly changing world. Throughout the program, our students learn and apply design and planning skills, approaches and technologies to enhance community, foster equity and environmental balance, conserve and regenerate resources, and create places that hold value for current and future generations.

Denver's vibrant professional design and planning community supports our students through guest lectures and participation in design reviews, internships and mentor programs, and opportunities to visit offices and meet practitioners and leaders in our fields.

Program Objectives

The department has developed five broad program objectives in support of our educational mission. These objectives identify what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate and are linked

to a series of measurable student learning outcomes. The five categories are:

- **Design:** Students will be able to formulate questions and arguments about landscape and its role as a significant cultural medium, and determine processes and practices that lead to transformative actions based on ethical, communicative and content knowledge criteria.
- **Communication and Representation:** Students will be able to create and employ appropriate representational media to effectively convey ideas on subject matter contained in the professional curriculum to a variety of audiences, and to articulate and convey ideas orally and in writing.
- **Professional Ethics:** Students will be able to critically evaluate local and global ramifications of social issues, diverse cultures, economic and ecological systems, and professional practice as guiding principles for design thinking and implementation.
- **Content Knowledge:** Students will be able to develop a critical understanding and application of the histories, theories and practices of landscape architecture and its role in reflecting and shaping culture and environments.
- **Research:** Students will be able to develop and apply a diligent, systematic and critical inquiry in support of design and scholarship.

Central Themes

The MLA program prepares students to address current and future problems and challenges in local, regional and global contexts. An issues-based approach ensures that students will be exposed to and participate in the development of new responses to emergent and ongoing crises and opportunities, emphasizing environmental and social justice as a key element for the design of livable, sustainable and resilient places and landscapes. Examples of this are deep in the department's work over the past twenty-five years, with examples such as working for five years with the local community of the Lower 9th Ward in New Orleans addressing issues around recovery after Hurricane Katrina, and the Learning Landscapes program, which successfully redesigned almost 100 schoolyards in Denver, an initiative which is now focused on Jefferson County schools. Recently we have addressed issues of water, food scarcity and urban agriculture in Denver, the redesign and recovery of post-industrial sites and mining landscapes throughout the state, and issues of health and livability in marginalized and underserved communities and neighborhoods. Many of these projects have involved multiple courses over several years, and have made major impacts on the places and communities they have engaged. Students are immersed in interdisciplinary opportunities to not just learn, but to make meaningful change, and interact with community members and professionals from many different backgrounds and disciplines, gaining invaluable experience and skills in working and communicating in interdisciplinary teams.

BIG THINKING

We believe that the issues, challenges and opportunities landscape architects face are interrelated, spanning all scales from a small private yard to neighborhood to city to region to the world, and involve a wide range of social, cultural, ecological and economic systems, requiring critical and creative thinking that transcends scales and is cross-, trans- and interdisciplinary.

CRITICAL ISSUES

We strongly believe that Landscape Architecture is uniquely positioned to make major contributions to the big and urgent questions and issues

that affect human and non-human systems. Climate change, resource scarcity, water and food are as critical as the design and building of landscapes and places that are about more than just sustainability and resilience and provide opportunities for people to thrive.

MEANINGFUL CHANGE

While the functioning and performances of human and non-human systems are critical, good design does more than just provide solutions to problems. It provides opportunities for people to interact with places over time, and it empowers them to understand the dynamics that affect their environments and to participate in the ongoing processes of changing place and changing communities, thus becoming authors and co-authors of the places they shape and inhabit.

Prerequisites

Students are expected to have achieved a basic level of computer literacy prior to enrolling in the first semester of classes. The department offers an Introductory Skills Workshop for students before classes begin that is particularly helpful for students who do not have a background in drawing or computer graphics. The workshop is scheduled each year prior to the beginning of fall semester.

Program Requirements

The landscape architecture program offers first professional and post-professional graduate courses leading to the degree Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA). The program is fully accredited by the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB) and recognized by the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA).

- The first-professional degree program requires a six-semester sequence of course work totaling 90 semester hours.
- The post-professional degree program is for qualified students who have already earned a first professional degree in landscape architecture (BLA) or related discipline. It requires a minimum of 60 semester hours. Advanced standing is based on prior academic accomplishment.
- Students completing the College of Architecture and Planning’s BS Arch degree or an accredited undergraduate design degree at another institution may be given advanced standing in the three-year program. Advanced standing is based on prior academic accomplishment, and is evaluated on an individual basis upon acceptance into the program.

The curriculum consists of core and elective course work, including the integral (interdisciplinary) and the immersive semester.

Course Requirements (First Professional Degree)

(90-semester-hour MLA for students without a professional degree in landscape architecture or related professional field)

Code	Title	Hours
Design Studios		33
LDAR 5501	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 1	
LDAR 5502	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 2 ¹	
LDAR 5503	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 3	
LDAR 6604	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 4	
LDAR 6605	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 5	

LDAR 6706	Advanced Landscape Architecture Design Studio Immersive I	
LDAR 6707	Advanced Landscape Architecture Design Studio Immersive II	
LDAR 6607	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 7	
LDAR 6608	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 8	
History and Theory		12
LDAR 5521	History of Landscape Architecture	
LDAR 6620	Landscape Architecture Theory and Criticism	
LDAR 6949	Research Tools & Methods	
LDAR 6740	Advanced History/Theory Seminar - Immersive Semester ²	
or LDAR 6745	Advanced Media/Technology Seminar - Immersive Semester	
Site Works		12
LDAR 5572	Landscape Ecology	
LDAR 5532	Landform Manipulation	
LDAR 6631	Landscape Construction Materials and Methods	
LDAR 6670	Plants in Design	
Media		9
LDAR 5510	Graphic Media in Landscape Architecture	
LDAR 5540	Introduction to GIS ¹	
LDAR 6641	Computer Applications in Landscape Architecture	
Critical Practice		6
LDAR 6630	Site, Society and Environment	
LDAR 6750	Professional Practice	
MLA Electives		9
9 hours of LDAR electives		
General Electives		9
9 hours of open graduate-level electives		
Total Hours		90

¹ Beginning with the fall 2021 cohort, LDAR 5540 Introduction to GIS will be a pre-requisite to LDAR 5502 Landscape Architecture Design Studio 2.

² Students are required to take either LDAR 6740 or LDAR 6745, dependent upon which course is offered in conjunction with LDAR 6706/LDAR 6707 in the semester in which they register in the Immersive curriculum.

Course Requirements (Advanced Professional Degree)

(60-semester-hour MLA for students with a professional degree in landscape architecture or related disciplines)

The curriculum typically requires 60 semester hours and two years of full-time study, with the Integral Studio in the fall of the first year, and the Immersive Studio and its concurrent courses in the fall of the second year. The core curriculum consists of four groups:

Code	Title	Hours
Design		24
History and Theory		9-12
Media		3-12

Electives	3-12
Total Hours	39-60

The department chair or associate chair will advise each student engaged in this program of study.

Thesis

The graduate thesis in landscape architecture provides an opportunity for students to conduct independent research and design investigations that demonstrate their capacity for rigorous original thinking. The thesis is not required for graduation and not all students are approved to write a thesis. Choosing to pursue a thesis project constitutes a significant commitment to the endeavor; the topic must be chosen with care and thoughtfully and critically developed. Topics can explore material that has been previously unstudied, reinterpret existing material in a new light, or engage research and design practices in ways that strengthen and define the final project. For all theses, the research and products must meet the highest standards of academic excellence and contribute significantly to the discipline and/or profession.

Pursuing a thesis requires students to enroll in a three-course sequence for a maximum total of 12 semester hours. Students are required to formulate their research proposals two full semesters prior to their enrollment for the 6-semester-hour thesis, typically taken in lieu of the final studio. To proceed through the sequence, students must have completed and passed the research tools and methods class (LDAR 6949 Research Tools & Methods) and have secured departmental approval of the thesis proposal. The completion of the thesis is dependent on acceptance of the student's work by the faculty member acting as the thesis chair and by the committee. For work to be accepted it must meet the standards established by the University of Colorado Denver for graduate thesis projects.

Dual Degree and Certificate Options

Students may enroll in a dual degree program with Architecture (MArch) or Urban and Regional Planning (MURP).

Students may apply to the Overlapping Degree Option for the one-year (36 credit) Master of Urban Design (MUD) degree.

A certificate in Geospatial Information Science (GIS) for Landscape Architecture is also available to students interested in pursuing geospatial design.

Course Sequence (First Professional Degree)

(90-semester-hour MLA for students without a professional degree in landscape architecture or related professional field)

The curriculum consists of core and elective course work, including the integral (interdisciplinary) and the immersive semester.

Typical 90-semester-hour sequence of courses for the first professional MLA degree (subject to change)

Course	Title	Hours
First Year		
Fall		
LDAR 5510	Graphic Media in Landscape Architecture	3
LDAR 5521	History of Landscape Architecture	3

LDAR 5572	Landscape Ecology	3
LDAR 6631	Landscape Construction Materials and Methods	3
LDAR 6641	Computer Applications in Landscape Architecture	3

Hours 15

Spring

LDAR 5500	Introductory Landscape Architecture Design Studio	3
LDAR 5532	Landform Manipulation	3
LDAR 5540	Introduction to GIS ¹	3
LDAR 6620	Landscape Architecture Theory and Criticism	3
LDAR 6630	Site, Society and Environment	3

Hours 15

Second Year

Fall

LDAR 5502	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 2 (Integral Studio) ¹	6
LDAR 6949	Research Tools & Methods	3
LDAR 6670	Plants in Design	3
MLA Elective or Open Elective		3

Hours 15

Spring

LDAR 5503	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 3	6
LDAR 6604	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 4	3
LDAR 6605	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 5	3
MLA Elective or Open Elective		3

Hours 15

Third Year

Fall-Immersive

LDAR 6706	Advanced Landscape Architecture Design Studio Immersive I (travel may be required)	4
LDAR 6707	Advanced Landscape Architecture Design Studio Immersive II	2
LDAR 6740 or LDAR 6745	Advanced History/Theory Seminar - Immersive Semester ² or Advanced Media/Technology Seminar - Immersive Semester	3

LDAR 6750	Professional Practice	3
MLA Elective or Open Elective		3

Hours 15

Spring

LDAR 6607	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 7	3
LDAR 6608	Landscape Architecture Design Studio 8	3

OR LDAR 6951 (with Chair approval)

MLA Elective or Open Elective		3
MLA Elective or Open Elective		3
MLA Elective or Open Elective		3

Hours 15

Total Hours 90

4 Landscape Architecture, MLA

¹ Beginning with the fall 2021 cohort, LDAR 5540 Introduction to GIS will be a pre-requisite to LDAR 5502 Landscape Architecture Design Studio 2.

² Students are required to take either LDAR 6740 or LDAR 6745, dependent upon which course is offered in conjunction with LDAR 6706/LDAR 6707 in the semester in which they register in the Immersive curriculum.