LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE (MLA)

Graduate School

Program Website (https://cals.cornell.edu/landscape-architecture/programs/master-of-landscape-architecture)

CIP: 04.0601 | **HEGIS:** 0204.00 | **NYSED:** 13087

Graduate Field

Landscape Architecture (https://catalog.cornell.edu/graduate-school/landscape-architecture/)

Program Description

Our Graduate School program in landscape architecture complies with the requirements of three governing bodies: the New York State Education Department (NYSED), the Council of Landscape Architecture Registration Boards (CLARB), and the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board. Designed to accommodate students from a wide range of academic backgrounds—whether or not they have prior training in landscape architecture or architecture—the program offers two distinct paths toward the master of landscape architecture (M.L.A.) degree. Each student's curriculum is individually tailored to align with their previous experience and academic goals.

The M.L.A. program provides a comprehensive foundation in the historical, theoretical, and technical dimensions of landscape architecture that allow to ground design thinking. At the heart of the curriculum is the design studio, where students engage with core design methodologies, develop their individual design processes, and are introduced to research practices. Supplemental courses in history, theory, technology, ecology, and representation support and enrich studio work, offering essential content that is synthesized through project-based learning.

Studios expose students to diverse landscape scales, contexts, and contemporary issues. Each studio incorporates lectures, field work, guest presentations, precedent analysis, readings, and both individual and group critique. Rather than promoting a singular design philosophy, the studio sequence introduces students to a range of perspectives and approaches. The structured progression of studios builds in complexity across the curriculum, enabling students to deepen their skills and critical capacity with each semester. Small studio sizes foster meaningful interaction among peers and faculty.

A directed study aligned with the student's personal interests is required, and in their final semester, students may choose to complete a design thesis, a capstone studio, or a written research thesis.

First Professional MLA

The first professional M.L.A. (six semesters, 90 credits) is an accredited degree program that qualifies graduates for licensure. It is intended for students who do not already hold a first professional degree in landscape architecture or architecture. Eligible backgrounds may include, but are not limited to, degrees such as bachelor of landscape studies, bachelor of environmental design, bachelor of design, or bachelor of architectural studies.

Program Information

- Program Mode of Delivery: In Person
- Program Location: Ithaca, NY
- Minimum Credits for Degree: 90

Program Requirements

- All coursework for this major is in person, in Ithaca, unless otherwise noted.
- All major requirements must be taken for a letter grade.
- A grade of C- or better must be earned for all studio courses in order to move to the next studio in sequence.
- There is a tech fee of $500 every semester for all Landscape Architecture majors. This fee allows access to the makerspace, computer lab, and necessary software licenses utilized in the program.
- Students can expect costs for studio supplies and field trips.

Core Coursework

Studio Sequence (30 credits total)

Studios must be taken in sequential order listed below. Students must receive a grade of C- or higher to advance to the next studio in sequence.

Code	Title	Hours
Required Courses		
LA 5010	Composition and Theory I	5
LA 5020	Composition and Theory II	5
LA 6010	Integrating Theory and Practice I	5
LA 6020	Integrating Theory and Practice II	5
LA 7010	Urban Design and Planning	5
LA 7020	Advanced Design Studio	5

Technical Requirements (26 credits total)

All courses listed below must be taken.

Code	Title	Hours
Required Courses		
LA 5050	Graphic Communication I	3
LA 5060	Graphic Communication II	3
LA 5100	Computer Applications in Landscape Architecture	3
LA 5910	Plants in Practice	5
LA 6120	Professional Practice	2
LA 6160	Site Engineering	5
LA 6180	Site Assembly	5

History and Theory Studies (15 credits total)

MLA students are required to take five history/theory courses totaling a minimum of 15 credits to fulfill this requirement. They must take LA 5900, LA 6900, and LA 6910, along with 2 more 3-credit courses that cover history/theory studies. Below is a list of recommended courses that fulfill this requirement. Please discuss with your faculty advisor to receive approval of any courses that are not listed below.

Code	Title	Hours
Required Courses		
LA 5900	Theoretical Foundations	3
LA 6900	Methods of Landscape Architectural Inquiry	3
LA 6910	Landscape Design History II	3

Additional Recommended and Approved Courses		
LA 6070	Emerging Dimensions in Urban Ecology and Sustainable Practices	3
LA 6430	Rural Adaptation	3
LA 6930	Second World Urbanism: Landscape Infrastructures	3
LA 6941	Special Topics in LA History/Theory	1-3

Directed Study (10 credits total)

The directed study is defined by the student in consultation with their faculty advisor. Because the field of landscape architecture is broad, students are asked to define a focus area of interest within the discipline. Along with LA 6030, the students must take 3 courses, totaling at least 9 credits, to fulfill this requirement.

Code	Title	Hours
Required Courses		
LA 6030	Directed Study	1
Directed Study - Student Defined in Consultation with Faculty Advisor (3 courses)		9

University Graduation Requirements

Requirements for All Students

In order to receive a Cornell degree, a student must satisfy academic and non-academic requirements.

Academic Requirements

A student's college determines degree requirements such as residency, number of credits, distribution of credits, and grade averages. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the specific major, degree, distribution, college, and graduation requirements for completing their chosen program of study. See the individual requirements listed by each college or school or contact the college registrar's office (https://registrar.cornell.edu/service-resources/college-registrar-directory) for more information.

Non-academic Requirements

Conduct Matters. Students must satisfy any outstanding sanctions, penalties or remedies imposed or agreed to under the Student Code of Conduct (Code) or Policy 6.4. Where a formal complaint under the Code or Policy 6.4 is pending, the University will withhold awarding a degree otherwise earned until the adjudication process set forth in those procedures is complete, including the satisfaction of any sanctions, penalties or remedies imposed.

Financial Obligations. Outstanding financial obligations will not impact the awarding of a degree otherwise earned or a student's ability to access their official transcript. However, the University may withhold issuing a diploma until any outstanding financial obligations owing to the University are satisfied.

Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate knowledge of the histories of the discipline of landscape architecture internationally and a critical understanding of the breadth of theories that have shaped and currently frame design and practice.
- Integrate knowledge of living systems into designed projects [soils, plants, and animals], their physical and cultural characteristics, and their dynamic performances and adaptation capacity to today's uncertainties induced by climate change.
- Display knowledge of analytical and descriptive approaches that engage deeply with contemporary site thinking methods to generate landscape designs at a variety of scales that address the complex cultural and natural systems at work on a given or proposed site.
- Become proficient in the required technical skills (engineering and construction) necessary for practice and licensure as a professional landscape architect and pursue deep knowledge on materials: their cultural histories, modes of production, technical specificities, and responsible, sustainable use.
- Develop excellent representation skills, both analog and digital, to engage with design thinking and effectively communicate innovative designs, while being aware of the ideological implications of all representations.
- Become prepared for both independent work of the highest standards and collaboratively driven pursuits, as well as for becoming a responsible leader in ecologically and socially transformative designs; prepare to engage responsibly with communities, especially the underserved, silenced, and with other species, to contribute to a just, inclusive, and diverse planet.

Admissions

Application Requirements and Deadlines

Application Deadlines

Fall, January 18; no spring admission

Requirements Summary

All applicants are required to submit a design portfolio. The portfolio may include a wide variety of media, including freehand drawings, painting, photography, graphic design and renderings, garden design, and other creative endeavors.

Portfolios are digitally submitted along with the M.L.A. application. There is no page limit; however, your file size should be less than 20 megabytes total to be able to upload onto the Cornell Graduate School application site.

Applicants to the two-year program should hold a bachelor's degree in architecture or landscape architecture from a recognized institution. Applicants with a bachelor's degree in an area other than architecture or landscape architecture should apply to the three-year program.

- All Graduate School requirements (http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/academics/admissions/applying), including the English language proficiency requirement (https://gradschool.cornell.edu/admissions/prepare/english-language-proficiency-requirement/) for all applicants
- Two (2) letters of recommendation
- Portfolio
- Prospective foreign students without an undergraduate degree from a U.S. institution or an undergraduate degree conducted in English are required to pass the Test for English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a reading score of 22, writing score of 22, listening score of 20, and speaking score of 25. IELTS required is 7.0.

Portfolio Summary

Applicants to the M.L.A. program are required to submit a portfolio. The portfolio is used to assess your aptitude for visual thinking and design. Applicants may include a wide variety of media, including freehand drawings, painting, photography, graphic design and renderings, garden design, and other creative endeavors.

Portfolios are digitally submitted along with the M.L.A. application. There is no page limit; however, your file size should be less than 20 megabytes total to be able to upload onto the Cornell Graduate School application site. A hard copy is not required for graduate applications. Any questions can be directed to the director of graduate studies.

Admissions Contact Information

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