



**RUTGERS**

**Landscape Architecture Graduate Student**

**Handbook**

2023

Stewardship of the environment requires creative attention and collective action, so we actively commit to work with other disciplines, communities, and groups. Knowledge, experience, and exploration foster creative solutions, so we enthusiastically encourage new ways of teaching and learning. Change requires discipline and courage, so we fearlessly embrace the challenges of the future.

**RULA Common Values**



## **Landscape Architecture Graduate Student Handbook**

In addition to the Graduate School Handbook, the Landscape Architecture Graduate Student Handbook develops policies and guidelines for successful completion of the Rutgers MLA program.

### **The Department of Landscape Architecture**

The Department of Landscape Architecture at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey is situated within the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences. We are physically located on Rutgers' historic Cook Campus.

Our Landscape Architecture program offers a four-year undergraduate professional design curriculum leading to a Bachelor of Science degree. We also offer a graduate level professional Landscape Architecture Degree. These professional programs are nationally accredited by the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB).

Course offerings cover a diverse range of subjects including site planning and design, design implementation and construction, CAD design, graphic communication, history, horticulture, plant ecology, social factors in design, and architecture.

Our Mission Statement and Goals & Objectives provide additional information about the educational philosophy and objectives of the Landscape Architecture program. For further information see the web page.

Overall, in the department are about 150 undergraduate and graduate students in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning and Design.

### **The Graduate Program of Landscape Architecture**

In 2010 the Department welcomed its first class of graduate students and received candidacy status from LAAB in 2011. In the past three years the graduate program has successfully added new courses and students, which in turn have stimulated the culture and output of the Department. The graduate program enables higher expectations for scholarship, as witnessed through research projects initiated in graduate studios and courses, faculty research projects engaging students as assistants or interns, and independent research projects and graduate theses.

The program faculty is a multidisciplinary group of 17 faculty members. These faculty advise students in the graduate program and collectively develop policies for the graduate program.

The Graduate Program is a unit of the Rutgers Graduate School of New Brunswick but housed within the Department of Landscape Architecture.

At the graduate level, our department offers three options. The accredited Master of Landscape Architecture 1 (MLA1) serves students without accredited undergraduate degrees. The MLA2 is designed for landscape architects seeking to specialize. Our 4+1 program allows students to merge undergraduate and graduate studies.

For program goals, see the [Master's Degree Learning Goals and Assessment page](#) on our website.

### **The Graduate Program in Landscape Architecture Overview**

#### *Program Director (3-year term faculty member)*

- Representative of Program students and faculty to the Graduate School-New Brunswick and the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.
- Sets policy for the program in consultation with the faculty.
- Maintains academic standards and quality of program.
- Appoints Admission Committee, Scholastic Review Committee, Curriculum Committee and Seminar Committee.
- Signs many necessary forms such as Master's Candidacy forms, credit transfer forms, Change of Status forms, Extension forms.
- Serves as primary academic advisor.

#### *Program Administrator*

- Support and contact person for all graduate students and faculty.
- Secretarial support to Program Director.
- Keeps files up to date on all students and faculty in the program.
- Distributes many necessary forms for graduate students as named above and has Special Permission Numbers for courses and Preliminary Proposal Forms, among others.

#### *Student Representatives to the Program*

- Three students: one representative of each class.
- Term runs from fall semester to fall semester.
- Voting power in all matters except faculty appointments and retention, student advancement, examination, or accreditation.
- More information in the By Laws.

### **The Graduate Faculty**

For a complete list of full and associate members of our graduate faculty please see the Landscape Architecture listing of the Graduate School-New Brunswick Catalogue:

[Grad School Catalog for Landscape Architecture](#)

**Contact People** and their relationship to you as students.

<i>Name &amp; Position</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>Telephone #</i>
Richard Alomar, Program Director	<a href="mailto:richard.alomar@rutgers.edu">richard.alomar@rutgers.edu</a>	848-932-9313
Gail McKenzie, Department Administrator	<a href="mailto:gail.mckenzie@rutgers.edu">gail.mckenzie@rutgers.edu</a>	848-932-9311
Michelle Martel, IT Systems Administrator	<a href="mailto:martel@sebs.rutgers.edu">martel@sebs.rutgers.edu</a>	848-932-8487
RUPD – non-emergency		848-932-7211
Facilities reporting		848-445-1234

### **Funding**

For information about Awards, Internships & Financial Aid please visit: [Awards and Scholarships Page](#)

### **Academic Integrity**

The graduate program in landscape architecture maintains a high standard in academic integrity. All graduate students have a responsibility to understand and to uphold the standards of the academic community. Without a commitment from all members of the community to work honestly and fairly, intellectual inquiry will suffer. A high standard of honesty and integrity is expected of you—as a student, as a researcher, and as a teacher.

All students are expected to be familiar with the university policy: [Academic Integrity Policy](#)

Ignorance of the policy is not considered an excuse.

### **Advising**

Because of the flexibility of the program, faculty advising is essential. All full-time and part-time students must see the program director once per semester at minimum. In addition to these formal advising sessions, all members of the graduate faculty are available for conversations which will facilitate awareness of ongoing projects and potential thesis committee members.

## **Timeline for MLA 1 Students**

### *Year 1*

Introductory course work. Getting to know the program and the field. Mastering basic skills and concepts.

### *Year 2*

Advanced course work. Developing research skills and interests. At the end of the second year if the student decides on the thesis option, each student will then identify their thesis or design project topic and advisory committee. The committee must consist of three members of the graduate faculty, additional external members are allowed.

### *Year 3*

Capstone course work during the fall semester while working on the thesis research or design. The third year spring is focused on individual research or the completion of a praxis or capstone project.

## **Timeline for MLA 2 Students**

### *Year 1*

Advanced course work. Developing research skills and interests. At the end of the first year each student has identified their thesis or design project topic and advisory committee. The committee must consist of three members of the graduate faculty, additional external members are allowed.

### *Year 2*

Capstone course work during the fall semester while working on the Thesis or Design Project. The second year spring is focused on individual research or the completion of a capstone project.

For further information see the [MLA 2 Information and Requirements page](#) on our website.

## **Timeline for 4+1 Students**

### *Undergraduate Senior Year*

Admitted students will be advised to take 21 graduate credits in the MLA Program over the course of their senior year of undergraduate study. 8 of these graduate credits completed during their senior year will be applied toward the graduate degrees. To count for the graduate degree, class performance and grades will be evaluated according to graduate program standards. Upon completion of the BSLA degree, students will automatically matriculate into the graduate program with advanced standing.

Developing research skills and interests. At the end of the first year each student has identified their thesis or design project topic and advisory committee. The committee must consist of three members of the graduate faculty, additional external members are allowed.

## *Graduate Studies Year*

Capstone course work during the fall semester while working on the thesis or design project. The graduate year spring is focused on individual research or the completion of a capstone project.

Based upon the completion of a full design studio sequence 4+1 students are expected to engage in individual design or research.

## **MLA Final Project**

Graduate students will propose, develop, present, and submit an original work that explores, researches, and disseminates strategies salient for the design field. The work needs to support, justify, and document, a visual, aesthetic, or material exploration. The final project explores several avenues for a different kind of intellectual product created by the student.

The final project may be pursued as a thesis or a graduate project. Both options follow the same timeline and deadlines, oral and written components, and registration for research development. More details will be provided in Research Methods and in the MLA Final Project Section. As a general framework consider the following:

### Visual Components

- Background and Context for the project
  - Relevant precedent studies and influences on your work
  - Site or project context
- Research and Design Methods
  - Images explaining the key elements of your work including medium and techniques used.
  - Images documenting your process. These might include relevant photos of how you researched, documented, and worked with the site, medium, and/or community in your design process.

### Written Components

- Background and Context for the project
  - Describe the sources and inspiration for your work.
  - Explain how your work fits in with current projects and discourses in landscape architecture theory or practice.
- Designer statement
  - What did you create?
  - How did you create it?
  - Why did you create it?
- Project Goals
  - What is the intent and purpose of your project?
  - Who is the intended audience?

- Research and Design Methods
  - Explain the context of your work - medium, process, techniques, and influences.
  - Describe the process of engaging with the study site, topic, or community you worked with.

## **Thesis Committee Structure and Guidelines**

### *Role of the Thesis Committee Chair*

The committee chair will determine a schedule of meetings directly with the student. The minimum number of meetings is two times per semester.

The committee chair will take the lead in guiding student research or design work, meeting frequently with the student, and reading drafts of student work on a regular basis. The committee chair will set up expectations directly with the student.

The student will be expected to meet with their full committee in the fall semester of the 3rd year to present the development of their research or design work and describe their progress to the committee. At this meeting the committee will evaluate the progress and agree on a timeline for completion. The student has at this meeting the final opportunity to decide between completing the thesis and opting for a final capstone studio.

This meeting will be followed by a brief closed meeting with the committee members, at which time the committee chair will set up and describe expectations for committee members. At this time a determination might be made to reorganize the structure of the committee to work with these established expectations. After this meeting the committee will send the student a summary of their recommendations going forward.

### *Role of committee members*

Committee members are expected to be available for committee meetings as determined in discussion with the Committee Chair.

Committee members are expected to read a draft of the thesis and make comments prior to revisions and final submission of the thesis. This draft must be submitted by the student a minimum of one week in advance of expected comments and must be arranged in clear communication with all committee members.

There will be different expectations for any outside committee members such that their participation in the thesis committee will align with their disciplinary norms.

## **MLA Guidelines on Time for Review and Assessment of Qualifying Papers and Thesis Work**

For both degrees offered, the professional three year MLA 1 and the post professional two year MLA2, students are required to conduct original scholarly work or creative design.

In spring of MLA 1 year 2, thesis proposals are presented and discussed with LA graduate faculty in the class 16:550:582 Research Methods, enabling to align thesis topics with faculty research interests, supporting the formation of thesis advisory committees. Generally, students are advised to start information gathering (site visits) during the summer and schedule regular thesis advising meetings during fall and spring of their final year. As a general rule, material (draft of text and or pdf/jpg of drawings) will be submitted by the student at least two weeks before an advising meeting and at least two weeks (but not more than four weeks) should be allowed the faculty member for informing students of the assessment. At the advising meeting, scale prints of drawings are required.

Because thesis work is a two way relationship between faculty and student, appropriate review times will be built into the time line for thesis year. Final work must be submitted a minimum of 6 weeks for paper review before grad school submission, allowing faculty review and student revision.

### **Deadlines Master's Final Project (Thesis and Graduate Project)**

#### *For May graduation:*

- Late March: Exam presentations according to graduate school guidelines 5.5.II
- April 1st: Diploma form deadline.
- Includes signature from committee and GPD that work will be sufficient for May graduation.
- April 15th at 4:30 pm: Upload of all forms and final thesis.
- Late April, early May: Public presentation of boards.

#### *For October Graduation:*

- The Diploma form can be reused. You don't have to register again.
- Late April, early May: Public presentation of boards.
- October 1st: Upload of all forms and final thesis.



## **Graduation Requirements Master of Landscape Architecture**

In addition to the requirements of the Graduate School of New Brunswick, students of the accredited first professional degree (MLA 1) have to prove professional competence and engage original scholarly work, while students of the post -professional degree (MLA 2) are expected to show leadership of their individual scholarly work from day one.

### Professional competence MLA 1

#### *Design Competence*

- 16:550:531 Studio One (Fundamentals), 5 cr.
- 16:550:532 Studio Two (Urban/Suburban Design), 5 cr.
- 16:550:535 Studio —Housing and Open Space, 5 cr.
- 16:550:536 Studio —Special Topics, 5 cr.

#### *Visualization Competence*

- 16:550:541 Representation I—Drawing, 2 cr.
- 11:550:338 Visualization 2A – Intro Digital Design 1.5cr.
- 11:550:339 Visualization 2B – Intro Digital Drafting 1.5cr.

#### *Environmental Planning Competence*

- 16:550:545 Introduction to Geomatics, 3 cr.
- 16:550:533 Studio—Ecological Land Arch Design, 5 cr.

#### *Construction Competence*

- 11:550:341 Construction II -Materials/Engineering, 4 cr.
- 11:550:441 Construction III -Implementation/Practice, 4 cr.
- 11:550:435 Professional Practice, 1 cr

#### *Plants/Ecology Competence*

- 11:550:233 Landscape Plants, 3 cr.
- 16:550:548 Landscape Plants II—ID & Design, 2 cr.

### *History/Theory Competence*

- 16:550:552 Landscape History II—1850-Present, 3. Cr.
- 16:550:553 Theories of Landscape Architecture, 3 cr.
- 16:550:582 Research Methods, 2 cr.
- 16:550:572 Colloquium Landscape Architecture, 3cr.
- 16:550:701 Thesis Research fall semester, 3 cr.
- 16:550:702 Thesis Research spring semester, 3 cr.
- Coursework focused on individual scholarly interest Electives, 9cr.

Required Graduate Courses 49 cr. Required Undergrad Courses 15 cr. Electives 9 cr.

Total number of credits – (typical of M.L.A. 1 programs) 73 cr.

### **Design research focus MLA 2**

The 30-credit program is tailored for professionals interested in developing skills and knowledge on a specific topic or exploring advancements in the practice of Landscape Architecture.

The MLA 2 takes advantage of Rutgers' vast academic resources; however, each student is required to develop an interdisciplinary course of study that must be approved by the program director.

Required Courses:

- Research Methods 2 credits
- Thesis Research 6 credits
- Colloquium 3 credits
- Expertise Courses: 19 credits in graduate level courses

## **Academic Progress**

In order to graduate, each student must have a minimum 3.2 GPA and no more than 1 C or C+ (This includes the required electives and undergraduate classes). Any additional C or C+ grade necessitates retaking the class. The calculated GPA will include any undergraduate courses taken as a graduate student at Rutgers. Students failing to satisfy this requirement would be unable to graduate until they improve their grades sufficiently to comply. Students with extenuating circumstances (e.g., extended chronic illness) would require a vote of the graduate committee to override this requirement.

If, over any one semester, a student earns below a semester 2.8 GPA or earns a C or C+ in a required class, they will automatically be placed on probationary status.

At the end of the probationary semester, the student must have earned at least a 3.2 GPA and have no incomplete grades or grades less than a B during the semester. If a student fails to satisfy this requirement they will be eligible for dismissal from the program at the discretion of the program director.

While on probation, the student will meet with the graduate director every other week. The graduate director will make further determinations about reducing course load, meetings with individual instructors, and alternative courses to pursue.

For the purposes of this policy incomplete grades will be treated as equivalent to F grades.

This policy is similar to the Grad School standards: Only one C can count toward the 30 credits required for graduation.

## **Original Scholarly Work MLA1 and MLA2**

For both degrees offered, the professional MLA 1 and the post professional MLA2, students are required to conduct original scholarly work resulting in a rigorous master's thesis which can have a focus on creative design or scholarly research. This original scholarly work can also be performed as an individual contribution within the context of a capstone studio.

## **Rigorous Design in Landscape Architecture**

Provides evidence of the iterative design process illustrating the deeper understanding of site-specific problems as well as larger questions of the field. It is a thorough exploration of form and space as a response to site inventory and analysis while applying technical skills acquired and expressing the student's own creative voice. The steady production of sketches, diagrams and models is part of a consistent work ethic allowing the student to create knowledge through design that advances the state of the art in landscape Architecture.

## **Rigorous Research in Landscape Architecture**

Brings design into the research, starts to investigate the visual and spatial implementations using graphic expression. It is theoretically informed and empirically grounded, drawing on knowledge of pertinent literature, while developing a focus leading to appropriate research questions.

Daily writing is one important aspect of a consistent work ethic which will help the student to advance knowledge in the field.

## **Master Final Project Requirements**

The faculty feels strongly that graduate students should be given utmost flexibility to conduct their individual scholarly endeavors while ensuring academic rigor. Therefore, students can select between two alternatives:

- Option 1 is an **individual thesis**. The topic will be developed in the class 16:550:582 Research Methods. The outcome of that class is a research proposal which is already applying the formatting requirements of the graduate school. It is the responsibility of the student to select a committee of three faculty, two of them must be members of the Landscape Architecture Graduate Faculty, the third can be chosen freely according to the topic. The thesis follows the RU thesis guidelines and submission dates. Students will register for 550:701 (fall, 3cr.) and 550:702 (spring, 3cr.) Research in Landscape Architecture. Or 550:702 in the spring, 6 cr.
- Option 2 is a **graduate project**. All final graduate projects require a written paper component that states the process and outcomes of the research. Students will register for 550:600 (fall, 3cr.) and 550:600 (spring, 3cr.) Independent Study.

## **Registration Information**

To maintain full-time status, students must register for 9+ credits. Students may register for up to 16 credits. Students who were granted a Teaching Assistantship have to register for 6 E credits (16:550:877). Although those credits count toward the 16-credit limit, TAs may obtain a credit limit override.

Please note that some classes may fill up quickly, however, graduate students have the benefit of registering earlier than undergraduates. Speaking with your advisor and identifying required and elective classes before the registration period starts will help you to take full advantage of that benefit.

If you are taking a 300-400 level course for graduate credit, be sure to use the G prefix.

Matriculation Continued requires a Special Permission number and is only to be used in-cases where after completing the two thesis classes 701 and 702 the thesis project needs to be extended. You can register for Matriculation Continued for a maximum of two semesters.

You must remain registered every fall and spring semester to maintain an active student status. Application for readmission is possible.

### **Incomplete Grades**

Incomplete grades are only given when special circumstances hinder the student from completing the course work on time. To receive credit, the course work must be completed within one year (i.e., an incomplete in the fall semester must be completed by the end of the next fall semester). This is a policy of the Graduate School of New Brunswick.

### **Change in Address, Phone or E-mail**

The Program Administrator should always have your most current contact information, both on and off campus.

### **Studio Culture**

Studios provide a very effective but also very intense learning environment and all of us need to feel encouraged to support a studio culture that provides space for every individual to unfold his or her creativity.

### **Common Lecture**

Every semester the department sponsors a series of speakers from the University and externally to present their work. The Common Lecture Series is an ideal way to learn about the diversity of Landscape Architecture and related fields, aid in the professional development of students, network with other designers, and enhance the program as an intellectual community. All students registered for studio are required to attend, all other students are strongly encouraged to attend.

### **Parking at Rutgers**

[Rutgers Parking & Transportation Services](#) (DOTS) administers campus parking. Early August DOTS will send an invitation to buy campus parking. Students are not authorized to park at Blake Hall, except for registered Teaching Assistants (TA). See the program administrator for more information.

# Master's Thesis Workflow Chart

**SPRING**

**SUMMER**

**FALL**

**SPRING**

## Research Methods

Develop research proposal

Identify + communicate with thesis advisor

Presentation to faculty

Committee selection

IRB approval (as needed)

Independent research (literature review, interviews, etc.)

Revise research question(s) as appropriate

Present summer research outcomes at Common Lecture

Develop thesis format

Research, analyze data, **WRITE/DESIGN**

Meet regularly with thesis advisor

Early February:  
Draft thesis to committee\*

Late February:  
Revised draft with clear changes to committee\*

Early March:  
Presentation of Research Project

Early – Mid-March:  
Incorporate final comments & send to committee\*

Prepare final document for review per Graduate School guidelines\*\*

April 1:  
Diploma application with committee signatures

April 15:  
Degree application & Thesis submission

**May graduation**

\*Allow committee members a minimum of two weeks for reading.

\*\*Abstract, acknowledgements, table of contents, list of illustrations, bibliography, etc.

***If April submission date cannot be met, the next thesis submission + graduation date is October 1***