

Introduction to the Expected Learning Outcomes of the BLA and MLA Programs at the University of Oregon

The faculty of the department of landscape architecture at the U. of O. aspire to provide robust professional degree programs. We aim to enable graduating students to pursue successful and effective careers and become leaders in solving problems by planning, creating, and managing landscapes around the world.

The following pages describe our teaching goals. They target a lot of understandings and skills we aspire to have our BLA and MLA students gain to various degrees. They form an educational basis for students' growth in professional careers that emphasize skills favored by students' interests and talents. The lists include more goals than students' short time with us and a finite number of classes will fully realize, but many goals help foster a well-rounded, adaptive, and evolving curriculum.

Learning outcomes emphasized and teaching methods are creatively adjusted with each class offering. The goals serve as touchstones to guide the faculty's evolving engagement and respectful collaboration with a diversity of students. Students can help this inclusive and comprehensive process by referencing the learning outcome lists to provide constructive feedback and thoughtful course evaluations.

Students can best read all the lists below early in their time pursuing BLA or MLA studies at U.O., or as they apply for admission. The expected learning outcomes provide a way to understand the full scope and diversity of landscape architecture and its professional capacities. Each landscape architect, or teacher in the field, develops their own specializations that emphasize mastery of selected learning outcomes.

Expected Learning Outcomes of the BLA and MLA Programs at the University of Oregon

General Learning Outcomes

- To convey the full meaning of the idea and discipline of landscape architecture, and its commitment to critical social analysis, environmental stewardship, community making, and the design of responsible, supportive, sustainable, socially equitable and life-enhancing places.
- To have faculty provide leadership, expertise, and clear and constructive direction to students, while encouraging and assisting them to take responsibility for their educational goals and skill development.
- To provide a creative environment, one of openness to exploration, discovery, and teamwork, that is conducive to both personal and cooperative growth in skill, professionalism, and knowledge; and we place a priority on enabling students to contribute in a substantial way to each other's education.
- To encourage work of the highest quality students can achieve, and to provide frequent opportunities for discussion and constructive critical review with professionals, faculty, clients, and other students.
- To provide a foundation of understanding of the basic skills and technical content of professional practice upon which students may enter and grow in the profession.
- To familiarize students with the complexity and analytical/normative challenges of making built and un-built environments more ecologically, equitably, socially, and functionally sustainable.
- to instill ideas and principles of ethical community service and social responsibility, generously understood across peoples, space and time, as a core purpose of the profession.
- To foster scholarship in the field that engages theory and builds effective and prescriptive bridges between research and professional practice.
- To respect differing values, cultures, worldviews, backgrounds, identities, and opinions and to acknowledge differing abilities, learning styles, points of view, and educational philosophies.
- To encourage active discussion and evolution of values and ethics fundamental to landscape education and practice in rapidly changing climate, social and cultural contexts.
- To provide a curricular structure which has demanding expectations but is also flexible enough to accommodate a broad range of interests, talents, career goals, and previous preparations for study.
- To maintain a departmental environment that promotes ready communication, good relationships between students and faculty and effective educational settings.
- To support and encourage faculty development through growing accomplishments in teaching, research, and creative enterprises.
- To help students prepare for the practice of landscape architecture beyond entry-level work, to prepare them for entry into a wide-ranging and multi-faceted profession, and especially for continuous professional growth, responsibility, and leadership.
- To provide programs which balance professional and general education in recognition of the need for well-educated, thoughtful, and responsible-- not just trained-- practitioners of landscape architecture, ready to rapidly gain skill, mature judgment, collaborations, lifelong learning, and leadership.
- To enable students to develop ever-adaptive competence in the use of a variety of digital tools so that they can always learn, employ, and integrate these with facility in appropriate ways.
- To provide a broad introduction to the field of landscape architecture, with the expectation of added focus and achievement in the BLA comprehensive project or MLA master's project.
- To expand each student's appreciation for the breadth of the field and the wide range of opportunities for contemporary practice, or to work in other professions related to landscape architecture.
- To provide significant opportunities for collaboration with related environmental planning and design fields, as well as academic programs across campus, as preparation for professional work.
- For MLA students, to instill recognition of the multifaceted character of research as a fundamental aspect of the profession and the many ways it can inform and enhance landscape decisions.
- For MLA students, to gain facility in reading, critically analyzing, and applying research methods from the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, design experimentation, and the arts.
- For some MLA students, to prepare for careers in research, teaching, applied ecology, or social science.

Landscape Technologies Learning Outcomes

- Develop aesthetic sensitivity to terracing and other site grading methods.
- Understand the relationship between design, built form, human use, hydrology, and ecological health.
- Master the graphic techniques that are used to communicate site development proposals.
- Understand universal design, ADA, and professional responsibilities – both ethical and legal – to support the use of places by the broadest and most inclusive spectrum of the population as is feasible.
- Understand responsible, feasible, and effective storm-water management and the aesthetic possibilities of creatively designed storm-water systems.
- Understand site-specific relationships between construction materials, methods, practices, and the soils and drainage patterns of specific sites.
- Develop both rational & intuitive understandings of wood, stone, brick, concrete, concrete masonry, joinery, and other evolving landscape materials that aspire toward sustainability.
- Develop a basic understanding of these materials to draft designs and details of landscape elements that are crafted, joined, and specified for reasonable construction.
- Learn to correct and revise construction details and see them as a contractor would.
- Learn to use computer aided design software to produce construction documents.
- Develop a complete understanding of how to organize, inter-relate and consistently specify and detail the assembly of a comprehensive set of construction drawings to nearly entry-level professional completeness, accuracy, with high quality drafting of line weights and symbols.

Professional Practice

- Understand the ethical, legal, financial, and administrative context of landscape architectural practice.
- Understand the responsibilities of professional landscape architects in private, public & other practices.
- Understand professional ethics and the code of conduct, licensure, and the legal codes and ordinances.
- Understand contracts and contractual responsibilities.
- Understand office organization.
- Understand project management.
- Understand different forms of landscape architectural practice and the tradeoffs among them.
- Introduce the process of marketing and project acquisition.
- Understand the process of gaining and regaining employment in the profession.

Plants

- Grow an understanding of basic principles of planting design in relation to how plants structure spaces, change over time, and stylistic traditions and concepts of garden, park, and landscape design.
- Learn to identify plant species, their cultivation, and aesthetic characteristics for planting design.
- Become familiar with locally native ecosystems and basic techniques of landscape restoration.
- Learn to make planting plans with plant pallets for seasonality and appropriate plant selection.
- Develop growing competence in producing planting plans in both illustrative and contract style.
- Know much about soil preparation, plant cultivation, plant maintenance, and the nursery industry.
- Gain ability to identify trees and shrubs, both deciduous and coniferous, native to the southern Willamette Valley and their habitat ranges, ecotypes, soil/water requirements, and visual characteristics.
- Gain ability to recognize, and articulate in the field, basic ecological processes that affect plant growth, succession, and plant communities.
- Learn to identify many naturalizing and invasive plants and some understanding of options for their control or removal.
- Gain ability to identify many ornamental deciduous and coniferous trees and shrubs commonly used in the design field, and know their attributes for successful location, cultivation, maintenance, and visual characteristics through the seasons.

- Gain understanding of the basic principles of planting design in relation to how plants structure spaces, change over time and express stylistic traditions and concepts of garden and landscape design.
- Articulate basic concepts of urban forestry and sustainable design.
- Gain some ability to recognize when plants are thriving or not and why.
- Learn to map a wooded area using sound scaling, line weights and drafting conventions.
- Practice drawing illustrative planting plans.
- Practice specifying plant palettes.
- Practice drafting planting plans as contract documents.

Landscape Design Media

- Develop productive, flexible, visual thinking to communicate it to others.
- Explore a wide range of digital and analog media and the associated techniques and possibilities.
- Enable thoughtful, effective use of media types as appropriate for a range of design challenges, processes, and conceptual ideation.
- Learn to draw as a tool to develop, test and refine ideas.
- Learn to emphasize media skills to articulate and express ideas vigorously and effectively.
- Develop basic drafting, rendering, layout, and presentation skills.
- Understand media options for communicating environmental planning, design awareness, creative thinking, aesthetic expression, and technical clarity.
- Enhance personal creativity and self-actualization through visual thinking and graphic communication.
- Build professional competence and skill in a wide range of media.
- Become broadly visually literate and graphically imaginative.
- Relate landscape media and landscape representation to rapidly changing graphic technologies and information-oriented culture.
- Learn to use 3D simulation and presentation software.
- Learn to use geographic information systems to generate graphical elements.
- Master Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign software.
- Learn to link data bases to simulation, 3D, and graphic software.
- Learn to use computer aided design software to generate elements for graphical products.

History, Theory, and Literature

- Learn how places have histories, which embody intricate, complex interactions of human cultures, economic activity and ideas with natural forces and processes.
- Learn how history is one of the foundations for constructing designs and design theories.
- Become aware of how landscape history and the evolution of landscape theory pervade approaches to landscape design and planning.
- Learn to apply historical study as offering a vocabulary for precedent, insight, and inspiration.
- Learn to make connections between design and planning work affecting essential professional research, writing, and critical thinking.
- Learn how landscape history occupies an arena of professional practice in landscape preservation.
- Learn how the concept of landscape bridges to other disciplines: architecture, art history, geography, history, literature, etc.
- Possess a knowledge of the history of landscape architecture that fosters strong design sensibilities.
- Understand how ideas about the forms of landscapes have evolved and adapted to changes in culture and social problems over hundreds of years.
- Learn how history and theory relate to a broad array of actual landscape examples through time.
- Understand historic and contemporary theories of landscape design.
- Explore how design theory can foster better design thinking, criticism, and research.
- Demonstrate the ability to understand and solve problems in ways that respect and are sensitive to a diversity of human cultures, values, abilities, and lifestyles.

- Exhibit sensitivity to theories of landscape representation regarding how different techniques and compositions of design and design-concept communication tend to succeed and/or fail in stimulating more sophisticated appreciation of designed or evolved landscapes.
- Possess basic familiarity with the content and proficiencies of other disciplines and arts that often share projects with landscape architects.

3.11. Landscape Analysis and Planning

- Gain broad familiarity with a robust range of topics and methods for understanding the ecological, natural-scientific, social-philosophical, economic, legal, political, and technical foundations for analyzing how landscapes function and evolve.
- Build computer skills in mapping and analyzing landscapes toward planning decisions.
- Gain the ability to analyze landscapes at a range of scales regarding their functions and interactions related to geology, geomorphology, soils, hydrology, microclimates, and ecosystems
- Gain the ability to analyze landscapes at a range of scales, by reference to air photo interpretation, land tenure and surveying systems, land use policy and regulation, and scenic values.
- Possess knowledge of ecology as it relates to landscape restoration, plant community functions, ecosystem management, landscape planning, urban ecosystems, planting design, and human uses.
- Possess knowledge of ecology as it relates to interactions among hydrology, plant assemblages, soils, and human responses to natural and human ecological disturbances.
- Possess basic skill in the use of GIS to build spatial maps, databases, and dynamic simulation models to analyze landscapes across multiple attributes and values; and produce maps and tables for the presentation of findings and plans.
- Possess knowledge of land use planning as it relates to the constitutional police power, comprehensive planning, property rights, zoning, public participation, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and permitting rules and processes.
- Gain ability to read topographic maps at many scales and manipulate topography and drainage systems in relation to landscape surface types, structures, hydrologic systems, soils, plants, and human uses.
- Gain knowledge about the forms of urban infrastructure that site designs and larger-scale landscape plans must be integrated with to successfully function, and how these integrate effect energy consumption, water quality, fluvial health, biodiversity, and other important environmental qualities.
- Pursue skills and leadership capacity for addressing emerging, multi-scalar challenges such as population growth, urbanization, climate change mitigation and adaptation, provision of ecosystem services, and biodiversity conservation.
- Gain experience constructing and applying formal models of evaluation to alternative landscape plans.
- Possess some basic, practical skills in field mapping, observational data collection, stakeholder interviews, plan writing, and cartography.

Planning and Design Studios

- Grow an ability to understand, actively construct and communicate prescriptive understandings of environmental planning and design problems.
- Grow an ability, skill, and confidence in dealing with complexity, integration of polyvalent considerations, and formulating comprehensively effective design and planning proposals.
- Grow ability to take responsibility for designing, project management, and effective collaboration.
- Grow landscape sensibilities that derive from visual literacy, personal experience, knowledge, and ethics to promulgate good, just, beautiful, and sustainable new and adapted places.
- Grow an ability to play a leading professional role in human communities and the co-evolution of landscapes across functions, human systems, and ecosystems.
- Grow a capacity to effectively communicate ideas and forms via written, oral, and graphic forms.

- Grow an ability to integrate site analysis, ideation, artistic representation, spatial composition, drafting, scaling, sketching, section drawing, axonometric drawing, lettering, in a creative design process.
- Grow an ability to apply perspective drawing and digital media to gain higher levels of integration and comprehensiveness in making design decisions.
- Build a common design language and shared skills in visual thinking.
- Build an ability to integrate media, plant materials knowledge, site engineering, and theoretical ideas.
- Build an ability to engage complex problems to become fluent in the language of landscape architecture and the making of places.
- Build an ability to identify and describe prescriptive relationships between landform, planting, drainage, construction, and people's needs to carefully articulate design proposals of increasing skill and sophistication, especially at site scales.
- Engage spatial dynamics, community needs, historical values, ecological systems, and urban design.
- Build an ability toward full documentation and detailing of site-scale designs for construction.
- Build an ability to articulate and write design arguments and communicate these to public clients, experts, and contractors.
- Build an ability to resolve projects that are larger, more complex, and encountering cultural complexity in both urban and rural settings.
- Build an ability to plan and design across several scales and resolutions.
- Build an ability to take full personal and professional responsibility for their studio work.
- Build an ability to think about, value and effectively use their past environmental experience and present sensibilities as design sources.
- Gain ability to explore different design development processes and relate these to design strategies, theories, and stances.
- Engage a range of landscape design problems mixing different issues, scales, media, and methods, in a series of distinct but interrelated studio class projects.
- Build an appreciation for craft, a striving for the highest quality work, and an understanding that studio proposals are expected to be the very best the student can do at their level of development.
- Gain ability to processes design criticism and develop evolutionary design recycling processes.
- Learn to question "the problem", look beyond its borders, and integrate information from other courses.
- Learn to produce final design posters and documents that stand alone in communicating all the most important attributes of the design.
- Learn to produce final design posters and documents with components that are extensively labeled and/or explained with words, short sentences, or paragraphs to stand alone in explaining your work.
- Learn to communicate with graphics and writing that communicate at a range of scales, site analysis, problem definition, goals, and landscape functions.
- Learn to produce posters and presentations that are complete, graphically unified, well-crafted, easy to read and understand, and prominently well titled and attributed.

Research Methods (MLA Students)

- Learn to read, classify, interpret, and critically analyze research reports and articles as they relate in diverse ways to types of landscape design and planning problems and social decision processes.
- Learn to produce design informative research as a professional activity and apply it to a design problem, class of problems, systems problem, theoretical issues, planning analysis, or design experiments.
- Build an ability to formulate research questions and identify valid and reliable methods to convert design goals into functional and formal design objectives that guide landscape design decision making.
- Build an ability to identify defensible research methods and processes to enhance the critical application of landscape theory to one's own design sensibilities, processes, and ethics toward career goals.
- Learn to communicate one's own and others' research explorations and findings to clients, stakeholders, and the public in ways that communicate rich understandings and creative, prescriptive interpretations.
- Gain sensibilities about when landscape problematizing demands research versus design as research.