

THE MASTER'S PROJECT

1. MASTER'S PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Master's Project (LA 699) or Thesis (LA 503)¹ is a project of high academic standard presenting independent work that contributes to the body of knowledge in Landscape Architecture. The topic may be selected from a wide range of theoretical and practical design issues. It may be an original investigation, an original interpretation of existing scholarship, or an application of innovative strategies for the solution of a specific design challenge. Most importantly, the project should demonstrate a creative engagement in understanding landscapes and landscape change and effectively communicating one's ideas.

All projects must have a written component that includes:

1. A problem statement that casts the project in broader, more generalized terms
2. A thorough literature review, or re-cap of the state of the knowledge, as it pertains to the project
3. Goals and objectives for the project
4. A defensible methodology for applying theory or process, or for testing an hypothesis
5. The core project
6. Findings and conclusions that offer new insights or knowledge that is prescriptive or applicable in some transferable way to a broader audience.

Students wishing to complete the M.L.A. program in three years (two years for the post Professional M.L.A.) should conceive of projects that can be completed in three terms specifically dedicated to the project through LA 601 Mentored Research, offered each Fall, and the Winter and Spring LA 699 Master's Project Clinics. Prior to LA 601, students complete the LA 620 Research I and LA 621 Research II sequence in which they learn about the culture and methods of landscape architectural research, and use different approaches and techniques to explore their own emerging research interests. Students are encouraged to seek guidance at any time in this process from individual faculty about how to develop a proposal to work with that faculty member, subject to their interest, expertise and availability.

Typical Project Types:

The following list of project types are by the "Areas of Concentration." These areas reflect the strengths of the faculty, but should not limit the topic areas for student projects. Furthermore, as the names of these clusters of faculty interest imply, student's projects sometimes combine aspects of two areas of concentration, for instance, addressing ecological design theory and practice, or landscape planning history. A key attribute of all projects is that they must include a thorough discussion of the questions pursued, their importance to the field of landscape architecture, and ways this inquiry may provide an original contribution.

¹ Hereafter referred to as the master's project except when distinctions are needed. The expectations set forth herein apply to *all* students seeking the MLA, including those pursuing joint graduate degrees.
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Design Theory:

Landscape architecture requires an understanding of places and their evolutionary possibilities, thinking clearly with sensitivity to peoples' needs and values. This concentration is intensive in explanations and explorations of design process, ideas, content, and criticism. A project focused on design theory will examine the history and execution of a particular theory, situate that theory within a larger professional and cultural context, and often conclude with a critical proposal of an updated or new theory, and/or applications thereof.

The project may also incorporate design-led research, where design is used to: test or adapt emerging design theories or processes; combine two or more theories or processes and thereby create a new one; or apply a theory or process to a new circumstance or geographical region. The products of design-led master's projects are often proposed design principles, theories, or design processes for the project type. These may be regionally or nationally applicable. It is expected that the final document of such an inquiry include images and text communicating the design, as well as a narrative description of the project. As in all other master's projects, this description must include a thorough discussion of the questions pursued, their importance to the field of landscape architecture, and ways this inquiry may add new knowledge to the field.

Critical History, Theory, and Practice:

The Critical History, Theory, and Practice concentration focuses on humanist, design, and art-based approaches to understanding landscape architecture. As a uniquely dynamic form of cultural expression, landscape architecture is best appreciated amidst multiple temporal, cultural, and spatial contexts informing theory and practice—whether in the past, present, or future. History, theory, and practice are conceptualized as mutually reinforcing research realms that clarify prior traditions and inform future visions of landscape architecture. As such, research and teaching in this area are both reflective and projective, analytical and synthetic, situated and propositional.

The department's strength in this realm is represented in research and professional practices spanning North American, South American, Asian, and European contexts from the 18th century to the present. The cluster of departmental faculty whose research and teaching center in this area overlap with like-minded faculty in the departments of Architecture, Art, Historic Preservation, and History of Art and Architecture, as well as with faculty throughout the University of Oregon.

Landscape Planning:

Analyzing large landscapes and directing their management and land use patterns to meet social and environmental ends requires understanding of land tenure, use traditions and institutions, and knowledge of the facts and values inherent in regional natural resources and human activities. For this analysis, computer geographic information systems are commonly used to synthesize information and generate landscape plans.

A landscape planning master's project may respond to a local or regional planning issue, often using a specific geographic area as a case study. Planning projects often apply or test emerging regional or national theories or methodologies by adapting them to the landscape and culture of the study area. The case study may result in a land use or management plan. Examples include

river management, wetlands preservation, public forest plans, urban growth management, scenic resource management and regional ecological enhancement. The products of these master's projects are often adaptations of the theories and methods to suit the region and culture. In some cases it may be appropriate to reflect on "lessons learned" that may be applicable at the national scale.

Productive Landscapes:

The Productive Landscapes concentration studies the productive landscape, including farms, forests, power and waste infrastructures, as a central inquiry within the discipline of landscape architecture. Historically, landscape architects synthesized environmental conservation, productive landscapes, and aesthetic theory in their work. In the latter half of the twentieth century, design of the productive landscape largely shifted to other professions and industries, separating working landscapes from ecological or aesthetic landscapes; projects in the Productive Landscapes concentration seek to explore and bridge this rift. Faculty working in this area use the agricultural Willamette Valley and the extractive landscapes of the Pacific Northwest as a laboratory, leveraging the department's Urban Farm and Fuller Center for Productive Landscapes as intellectual homes for experimentation and collaboration. This area also offers the potential to connect research to campus and regional partners such as the University of Oregon's Food Studies Program or HJ Andrews Experimental Research Forest.

Landscape Ecology:

This rapidly evolving discipline focuses on how landscape pattern, process and change interact to create land mosaics that maintain the rich diversity of life and the foundations for human well being. Understanding key links between spatial and temporal patterns, and flows of organisms, materials, energy and information across a range of spatial scales and cultural contexts is the basis for maintaining or restoring landscapes that embody ecological integrity and cultural vitality. The scale of inquiry and application can range from small sites to large landscapes, and the context from urban to rural to wildland.

A landscape ecology project typically investigates a landscape design, planning or management issue from the perspective of emerging ecological understandings. It may follow accepted methodologies using original or currently available data to examine past and present environmental and cultural conditions in relation to landscape change and/or ecological health. Alternatively, it may focus on how ecological understanding can be incorporated within design processes or influence design theory. In almost all cases, it leads toward recommendations for improving ecological function while supporting appropriate human uses.

Ecology, Infrastructure and Social Justice:

This cluster focuses on the interdisciplinary application of research methodologies from environmental science, planning, engineering, public health and policy to address complex issues around food, energy and water. This cluster is primarily focused on evidence-based design solutions in urban and rural settings both in United States and internationally, with a special emphasis on vulnerable populations in low-income settings where poverty, climate change and social injustices are likely to have a magnified impact. Projects within this cluster are highly collaborative, students engage with governments, nonprofit organizations, professionals and

other educators to research real world problems. This area offers the potential to connect research to regional and international partners in Asia, South America, and Africa.

Urban Design:

Urban Design has re-emerged in the last decade as a critical field in shaping the built environment and it plays a crucial role in questions of sustainability. This field stretches across disciplines and combines skills from Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Planning, and Finance. With increasing interest from students and the increased opportunity and need for urban design skills, this concentration will help structure research as well as students' studies across disciplines.

Designing cities, and designing in cities, requires an understanding of the interaction between natural and cultural processes. This concentration focuses on the processes of city forming, and develops skills to analyze and design urban form as the expression of cultural and civic values, at a specific time, in a specific location. In such studies, ecological processes, climate, and regional building typology inform the design of blocks, neighborhoods, cities and streetscapes that function economically, culturally and ecologically.

Master's Project Committee

The Department requires that a master's project Committee Chair be established for the duration of the student's master's project. The Committee Chair *must* be a core member of the Landscape Architecture faculty, and is, with rare exceptions, the Master's Project Advisor (MPA) appointed to the student by the Department faculty at the beginning of LA 621, based on goodness of fit between the student's stated Master's project topic in their LA 620 Prospectus, and the area of expertise of the faculty member appointed. The second committee member will be the instructor of the Master's Project Clinic (LA 699).

The Master's Project Committee Chair is responsible for providing academic guidance, for assisting the student in the satisfactory completion of the master's project and for recommending to the Department Head regarding the student's satisfactory completion of the overall project. The Committee Chair is the primary contact for and troubleshooter on behalf of the student. The Chair is joined by the instructors of the Master's Project Clinics to form a Committee. This Committee is officially formed when the Committee Chair approves the student's Master's Project Proposal by Week 6 of Fall of the student's final year. The Master's Project itself is complete upon recommendation by the Committee Chair, with advice and counsel of the Master's Project Clinic instructors, and final acceptance by the Department Head. This finalization happens *only* in Spring term.

2. PREPARING TO DO THE MASTER'S PROJECT: THE RESEARCH SEQUENCE

It is challenging for students who are still in the midst of developing foundational knowledge of landscape architecture to select a research area, formulate a researchable question and develop a strategy to investigate it. However, students who begin to consider possibilities and preliminary ideas early in their studies are likely to commit to a topic earlier and to have more time to achieve a satisfying project.

There are five required courses designed to help students define a suitable master's project: LA 620 Culture and Context of Landscape Architectural Research I, LA 621 Methods of Landscape Architectural Research II, LA 601 Research and two terms of LA 699 Master's Project Clinic.

Students are encouraged to discuss possible topics with faculty at the earliest opportunity. Students may also take independent studies and reading courses with faculty while formulating the project.

3. THE MASTER'S PROJECT PROSPECTUS

To ensure that students are progressing at a rate that allows them to complete their master's degree within the student's program timeline, a *draft Master's Project Prospectus* is required as the final project of LA 620 Landscape Research I. This draft prospectus must contain:

1. A clear and focused description of your topic of interest
2. A preliminary statement of the problem your project will address and the researchable question(s) it will answer in doing so
3. An annotated summary bibliography of relevant work by others and its relation to your problem statement
4. A brief description of the mode of inquiry you expect to use and a process diagram of your (expected) or someone else's application of this mode
5. A bulleted list of what you expect to produce from carrying out the work diagrammed in item 4 above
6. The term you plan to graduate, your proposed area of concentration, and a list of potential committee chairs.

The faculty use the Masters Project Prospectus to pair each student with a Master's Project Advisor (MPA) at the end of LA 620. **The MPA will typically become your Master's Project Committee Chair**, as described in greater detail below. Students then work with their MPA while enrolled in LA 621 Landscape Research II (Methods) to refine their project intentions. The final project of LA 621 is the student's *final Master's Project Prospectus*.

4. THE MASTER'S PROJECT PROPOSAL

Students may prepare and submit a Master's Project Proposal at any time during their studies. However, the typical sequence is that, upon submission of the Master's Project Prospectus at the end of LA 620, the department will assign a master's project advisor (MPA) to the student. The student then works in consultation with their MPA while enrolled in LA 621. With an intervening summer, students then begin work one-on-one with their MPA/Committee Chair in Fall of the student's final year on their Master's Project Proposal, while registered for 2 credits of LA 601 Research. **The student must email this Master's Project Proposal to their MPA/Chair *no later than Week 5 of Fall term* of the student's final year. The Chair must then email the student, notifying the Winter Clinic instructor no later than week 6 of Fall term unambiguously saying Yes or No, regarding the student's readiness for admission to**

LA 699 Winter Clinic. This Master's Project proposal will be an evolving document; sometimes it will serve as a stepping stone, other times more of a road map, but, without exception, *an approved proposal is a prerequisite for registering in the Master's Project Clinic (LA 699) or Thesis (LA 503) in Winter term of the student's final year.* **Failing approval of the proposal by the Chair means the student must wait a full calendar year to graduate.**

The proposal is a statement that explains the research area, thesis, objectives, methods and schedule to be followed during the project. **A typical outline for a Master's Project Proposal:**

1. **Cover page:** title of project, author, proposed Committee Chair, and date of proposal.
2. **Project scope and definition:**
 - What is the problem or question you will explore?
 - What are the objectives of the project?
3. **Significance of the project:**
 - What areas of knowledge or issues of Landscape Architecture will this project address? Discuss and cite relevant literature, existing related information, precedents necessary to set the context of the project and identify where the gap of concept, method and/or application exists.
4. **Table of Contents:**

For the written portion of the project, prepare a tentative Table of Contents. Where projects include significant components outside the written summary, it may be helpful to use diagrams to demonstrate relationships.
5. **The methodology:** Describe the methods that will be used to collect and evaluate information (where appropriate). In design-oriented projects propose a design process. Be clear about the standard procedures or approaches you will be using as a basis for your methodology.
6. **Plan of work:** Include a preliminary schedule of work and estimated time for each major task or phase. *The deadline for submission of a final draft of your Master's Project document is two weeks before the presentation date (i.e. Table Date). Master's projects are only presented at the beginning of Review Week during Spring term.*
7. **References:**

Include a list of key theoretical writings, theses and projects that are relevant to the project you plan to do. This does not need to be exhaustive, but it should include those materials that will provide primary references for the project.

5. APPROVAL OF MASTER'S PROJECT PROPOSAL PRIOR TO WINTER CLINIC

1. After your MPA is assigned and during Spring when you are enrolled in LA 621, and then again in Fall when you are enrolled for two credits of LA 601, work one-on-one with your Committee Chair to finalize your Master's Project Proposal. **With very rare exceptions, the MPA will be the Master's Committee Chair.** Have him/her read the proposal for content, respond to Chair comments, revise proposal, and have him/her review proposal again.

2. By Week 5 of Fall of your final year, your Chair sends an email to you to indicate their approval that the Proposal is complete and the student is ready to be admitted to LA 699 Winter Clinic, or specify proposal changes required for Chair approval.
 3. Once the proposal is complete and approved by your Master's Project Chair, ensure that the Chair's email approval of your proposal has been received by the Winter Clinic Instructor no later than Week 6 of Fall term of your final year. Receive a Pass grade in LA 601 during Fall term. **Note: Chair may specify proposal requirements beyond those listed in this document to Pass LA 601 in Fall term of your final year.**
- * **You must receive from your Committee Chair an email stating they approve your Proposal and forward that email to the LA 699 Winter Clinic Instructor no later than Week 6 of Fall term of your final year and receive a Pass in LA 601 to commence LA 699 Winter Clinic.**

6. MASTER'S PROJECT CLINIC

All students entering the Master's Clinic (LA 699) must have successfully completed their two LA 601 credits with their Chair as Instructor of Record in Fall quarter of their final year and be actively working with that Chair who has approved their Master's Project Proposal.

Completion of the Master's Project occurs within the confines of the Master's Project Clinics in Winter and Spring terms following successful completion of two credits of LA 601 in the Fall. The clinic functions similarly to a design office where landscape architects work independently on projects, under supervision of more experienced colleagues, while sharing common interests and mutual challenges. The clinic format allows students to continue working independently within a structure that keeps their project on track in the overall timeframe by setting interim deadlines for project components. Because the student is part of a larger group, it is possible to learn from colleagues interested in similar work, or working on closely related topics.

The department sees multiple benefits of completing the Master's project in a clinic setting:

- A set timeframe during which research will be completed
- The ability to share one's knowledge with others, thus continuing to learn
- A collaborative setting similar to a landscape design studio
- Guidance of two faculty (committee chair plus clinic instructors)
- Incremental steps, with interim deadlines, toward completion of the Master's project or thesis.

Although occurring during two academic terms, the Clinic functions as a continuous process in which the student moves forward with the work specified in their approved Master's project proposal. Over the course of the two terms students will implement their mode of inquiry, synthesize their results, reflect on and discuss their work. Formal and informal presentations are required in Winter and Spring Clinics as specified in the syllabus and schedule for each class. The research process, findings and significance of the project are presented in a written document and a public presentation at the end of Spring term.

The student will continue to work with their Committee Chair as the primary advisor for their project throughout the Clinic process. During the Winter and Spring Clinics, the respective

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clinic instructor will serve as the second committee member to help guide the student through the process. During each quarter, the student and both committee members will periodically meet together to review progress and set mutually agreed upon objectives for next steps. The schedule for meetings will be set at the beginning of each quarter.

To keep each student moving forward in the process, the following schedule establishes a timeline and set of expectations:

Winter term clinic (with the guidance of Committee Chair and Winter Clinic Instructor):

Data collection/ generation of documents, drawings, graphics for analysis:

The bulk of data collection or the generation of products that will be used for analysis should be completed by the end of Winter term.

Written documents and poster:

1. A baseline statement that casts the project in terms of its motives and responses
2. A poster summarizing and forecasting the entire project process including key questions, motivations, mode of inquiry, anticipated results and possible conclusions
3. A first draft Introductory chapter with literature review and background for the project
4. A first draft Methods chapter.

Spring term clinic (with the guidance of Committee Chair and Spring Clinic Instructor):

Early Spring quarter:

5. Preliminary analysis and synthesis with draft results
6. Second draft of Introductory and Methods chapters

Mid Spring quarter:

7. Second draft of analysis/ synthesis and results
8. Preliminary figures
9. Detailed table of contents with list of required pieces to complete the document
10. Initial document layout, decisions about process for producing the printed document

Late Spring quarter:

11. Finalize document for Table Day
12. Prepare for oral presentation

Following Oral Presentations:

Following oral presentations, each student finalizes their document and incorporates edits required by their Chair, including edits stemming from the department's review of the Table Day document and oral presentation. The student then submits the required copies of the final document.

7. REGISTRATION AND GRADES

Students must be enrolled in a minimum of 8 (eight) credits of LA 699 (Master's Project Clinic) for both the Winter and Spring terms (16 total LA 699 credits) to successfully complete the Master's project. The Master's project is considered a work in progress and is not complete until all of the requirements have been met at the end of Spring quarter. Therefore, at the end of Winter quarter, the grade for LA 699 is an *Incomplete*. When the project is complete and a grade for the entire project has been assigned at the end of Spring quarter, the Winter quarter *Incomplete* is changed to the grade for the project. Clinic attendance is mandatory, and participation in all class activities will be a part of the evaluation leading to the recommendation to approve the Master's project or thesis.

At the end of Winter Clinic, each student will receive a recommendation as to whether he/she is ready to successfully complete their project by the end of Spring term. The determination of readiness to complete the project will be made primarily by the Committee Chair, with, when requested by the Chair, advice and counsel from Clinic instructors.

In a case where a student is unprepared to enroll in the Winter or Spring clinic, they will be required to wait until the following year to complete their Master's project.

8. COMPLETING THE MASTER'S PROJECT: PRESENTATION AND KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

To receive a satisfactory final grade in the Master's Project Clinic and successfully complete the Master's Project component of the MLA degree, each student must meet the following requirements by the end of Spring quarter:

1. ***Students must submit a draft copy*** of their project/design compendium for departmental review ***by the Table Date and in a location determined by the department***. This date is typically two calendar weeks prior to the presentation date (end of week 8 of the Spring Clinic). **Note that a complete draft of the Master's Project document is to be completed no later than two calendar weeks prior to your presentation. This 'table date' draft must include items a, c, e, f, g and i listed below. Failure to successfully meet this deadline will jeopardize the student's ability to graduate during the term they present their project.**

The final version of the document will include:

- a. **Cover page:** Title, author, date and statement, "Submitted in partial fulfillment for the Master of Landscape Architecture, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Oregon."
- b. **Approval page:** list committee members and include a place for the chair and (optional) other committee members to sign the document.
- c. **Abstract** of 150-350 words that includes a statement of the problem, describes methods or procedures and summarizes results.
- d. Acknowledgements and/or Dedication (optional)
- e. **Table of Contents** (See *Style and Policy Manual for Theses and Dissertations*)

- f. **Lists of tables**, figures, etc.
- g. **Text and images** as required by the committee for all chapters
- h. **Appendices** (optional)
- i. **Literature Cited or Bibliography**

2. Students must present their final Master's Project in a public forum that includes their Committee Chair, faculty and students in the Department during Review Week at the end of Spring Term (the date varies with the number of presentations).

3. Following the presentation, students must complete their documents, receive final committee approval, and submit the required number of final, printed copies and a digital PDF version for faculty/departmental approval. The deadline for submission to the department is noon (12:00 PM) on the Friday of Exam Week during Spring Term. Three components are required by this deadline:

A. Two copies of the printed document; one copy is for the Department and one copy is for the Committee Chair. If the student chooses to use a web-based publisher such as *lulu.com* or *blurb.com*, a copy of the receipt showing that the required number of copies have been ordered and paid for must be submitted to the Spring Clinic instructor by noon on the Friday of Exam Week. This can be a paper receipt or an email confirmation from the publisher that the order has been placed.

B. A digital PDF of the document posted to the course folder specified by the Spring Clinic instructor.

C. Completion of the permission form that allows the PDF version of the document to be made available through the University of Oregon's Scholars' Bank. Details of this will be provided to students in Spring Clinic.

All of these requirements must be complete before grades can be submitted.

Students should arrange to have their documents shipped directly to the department; if you are unable to pick up your own copy(ies) at the office once they arrive, please include with the above materials a self-addressed stamped envelope large enough to handle the number of copies you are getting for yourself. If you have a committee member who is not on campus, please also make arrangements to have their copy shipped to them as well if you are unable to deliver it personally.

9. AVAILABILITY OF COMPLETED PROJECTS

Completed projects are available for Department use and also shared through the University of Oregon's library system.

Printed documents are catalogued and stored for Department use in 251F Lawrence Hall.

Digital PDF:

Beginning in Spring 2016, the digital PDF is available through the University of Oregon's Scholars' Bank. The searchable database is available at:

<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/10476>

YEAR 2 (1st Professional MLA)

YEAR 1 (Post Professional MLA)

| | <i>Fall</i> | <i>Winter</i> | <i>Spring</i> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--|---|
| Course Number/ Credits | | LA 620 (2 credits) | LA 621 (2 credits) |
| Course Name/ Focus | | The Culture and Context of Landscape Architectural Research | Methods of Landscape Architectural Research |
| Primary student activities | | Introduction to research in the field. Develop Master's Project Prospectus. Each student is matched with MPA* at the end of the quarter based on draft prospectus. | Learn an array of research methods. Student works with MPA* during the quarter to refine project intentions and update the Master's Project Prospectus (due at end of the quarter) and to develop a plan for summer progress on the project |
| Required documents/ approvals | | Master's Project Prospectus - First draft due at end of the quarter | Master's Project Prospectus - Final version due at end of the quarter, prep for productive summer, draft proposal |

YEAR 3 (1st Professional MLA)

YEAR 2 (Post Professional MLA)

| | <i>Fall</i> | <i>Winter</i> | <i>Spring</i> |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Course Number/ Credits | LA 601 (2 credits) | LA 699 (8 credits) | LA 699 (8 credits) |
| Course Name/ Focus | Research Credits with MPA*/ Committee Chair | Winter Clinic | Spring Clinic |
| Primary student activities | Works with Committee Chair to develop Master's Project Proposal for approval by Week 5; once approved, begin research. Student and Chair meet at least once every two weeks during the quarter. | 1) Data collection or generation of documents for analysis 2) Writing - first drafts of introductory and methods chapters 3) Think through entire project with poster development | Analysis and synthesis of results. Refining chapter drafts from Winter quarter. Drafting and revising new chapters. Creating a cohesive draft of the entire document for Table Day (Week 8). Preparing for public presentations (Weeks 9/ 10). |
| Required documents/ approvals | Master's Project Proposal sent to Committee Chair no later than end of Week 5 of Fall quarter. Chair may specify add'l proposal requirements. The Chair must then send an email approving or disapproving the proposal to the Winter quarter Clinic instructor by the end of Week 6. | 1) Draft documents - baseline project statement, introductory chapter, methods chapter; 2) Poster presented at midterm of quarter; 3) Methods chapter draft approved by Committee Chair for entry into Spring LA 699. | Table Day Draft of project document and Public Presentation at the end of Spring quarter. Leading up to these are required successive drafts of individual chapters and the entire document as well as rehearsals for the public presentation. Final project document and public presentation must be recommended by Committee Chair to Dept. Head as meeting requirement for MLA. |

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*MPA - Master's Project Advisor