

Landscape Architecture

Undergraduate Study

Landscape Architecture is an environmental design discipline. Landscape architects actively shape the human environment: they map, interpret, imagine, draw, build, conceptualize, synthesize, and project ideas that transform landscapes. The design process involves creative expression that derives from an understanding of the context of site (or landscape) ecosystems, cultural frameworks, functional systems, and social dynamics. Students in our program learn to change the world around them by re-imagining and re-shaping the landscape to enhance its aesthetic and functional dimensions, ecological health, cultural significance, and social relevance. The profession addresses a broad range of landscapes in urban, suburban, rural, and wilderness settings. The scale of landscape architecture projects varies from broad, regional landscape analysis and planning to detailed, individual site-scale designs. The curriculum at Iowa State prepares students for this challenge as they develop their abilities to design and communicate ideas through a sequence of foundational courses and studios. The program seeks to produce graduates who understand the ethical, social, and environmental/ecological dimensions of issues involving changes in the landscape.

Graduates are active in a broad range of careers, such as sustainable site design, land development, park management, environmental advocacy, community planning, urban design, and others. In their professional lives, graduates apply their creative and technical skills in the planned arrangement of natural and constructed elements on the land with a concern for the stewardship and conservation of natural, constructed, and human resources. The resulting environments serve useful, aesthetic, safe, and enjoyable purposes. Graduates are able to communicate effectively with colleagues in the sciences and humanities as well as in the allied professions, and are prepared to work individually and in multidisciplinary teams to address complex problems dealing with the cultural/ecological environment.

The undergraduate curriculum includes one year of the college's Core Design Program followed by a four-year professional program. Admission to the professional program is subject to the approval of a faculty committee at the completion of the Core Design Program. The department also cooperates in the undergraduate minor in Design Studies, Critical Studies in Design, and Digital Media.

Following admission to the professional program, students embark on the traveling studio during the fall semester of their second year. This studio is a full semester's credit of integrated departmental courses and involves extensive travel within and beyond the great Midwest region of North America, to study regional natural systems and the cultural responses to those systems.

To enhance the study of landscape architecture in off-campus settings, the department requires students to choose from among the following three options during the spring and summer of their fourth year: a professional internship, an independent study abroad experience, or National Student Exchange. The department assists students with placement, and additional information is provided through the department and the College of Design's Career Services Office.

Personal laptop/notebook computers and appropriate software are regularly used in classes starting with the second year.

The undergraduate curriculum is fully accredited by the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB) and provides the education which, combined with experience, is necessary for professional license.

Curriculum in Landscape Architecture

The department offers graduate and undergraduate degree programs.

The undergraduate program consists of a five-year curriculum, requiring 149.5 credits, leading to the degree Bachelor of Landscape Architecture. These credits are distributed between a one-year Core Program of 30 credits and a four-year professional program of 119.5 credits.

Admission into the professional program depends upon available resources and is subject to the approval of a faculty committee at the completion of the Core Design Program. Applicants are reviewed on the basis of academic performance, a portfolio of original work, and a written essay.

The BLA from Iowa State University is an LAAB (Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board)-accredited professional degree program. In the United States, most state registration boards require a degree from an accredited professional degree program as a prerequisite for professional licensure. The LAAB is the sole entity recognized by the Council for Higher Education

Accreditation to accredit U.S. first professional degree programs in landscape architecture at the Bachelor's and Master's levels.

The department also offers a graduate program leading to the degrees of Master of Landscape Architecture or Master of Science in Landscape Architecture. For more complete graduate program descriptions, contact the department or go to the Graduate program link on the College of Design web page.

Total Degree Requirement: 149.5 cr.

Only 65 cr. from a two-year institution may apply which may include up to 16 technical cr.; 9 P-NP cr. of free electives; 2.00 minimum GPA.

International Perspective: 3 cr.

U.S. Diversity: 3 cr.

Communications: 10 cr.

(C- or better grade)

ENGL 150	Critical Thinking and Communication	3
ENGL 250	Written, Oral, Visual, and Electronic Composition	3
LIB 160	Information Literacy	1
One of the following:		3
ENGL 302	Business Communication	
ENGL 309	Report and Proposal Writing	
ENGL 314	Technical Communication	

Total Credits 10

Humanities: 9 cr.

9 cr. from Phil, Hist, Music or other humanities course offerings.

Social Sciences: 6 cr.

6 cr. from Anthr, Econ, Pol S, Psych, or Soc.

Mathematics and Science: 12 cr.

One of the following:		3-4
MATH 140	College Algebra	
MATH 145	Applied Trigonometry	
MATH 165	Calculus I (4 crs)	
ENV S 120	Introduction to Renewable Resources	3
Science Elective		6

Additional General Education Course 3 cr.

3 cr. from 300-400 Level Courses

Design Core: 11.5 cr.

DSN S 102	Design Studio I	4
DSN S 115	Design Collaborative Seminar	0.5-1
or DSN S 110	Design Exchange Seminar I	
DSN S 131	Design Representation	4
DSN S 183	Design Cultures	3

Total Credits 11.5-12

Landscape Architecture: 89 cr.

L A 201	Studio: Landscape Interpretation and Representation	6
L A 202	Studio: Site Design I	6
L A 221	Native Plants of the Savanna Ecotone	3
L A 222	Introduced Plants of the Midwest	3
L A 241	Developing Identity as a Landscape Architect	1
L A 272	Cultural Landscape Studies	3
L A 274	The Social and Behavioral Landscape	3
L A 281	Investigating Landscape Form, Process, and Detail	3
L A 282	Landscape Dynamics	3
L A 301	Site Design II	6
L A 302	Ecological Design at the Regional Scale	6
L A 341	Contemporary Landscape Architecture	1
L A 371	History of Modern Landscapes, 1750 to Present	3
L A 373	Gardens and Landscapes from Antiquity to 1750	3
L A 381	Shaping the Land	3
L A 401	Community Design	6
L A 402	Urban Design	6

L A 441	Professional Practice	2
L A 444	Landscape Architecture Independent Educational Enrichment	R
L A 481	Landscape Construction	3
L A 482	Advanced Landscape Construction	3
DSN S 546	Interdisciplinary Design Studio	6
Plus ten credits professional electives		10
Total Credits		89

Electives: 13 cr.

Complete electives sufficient to complete graduation requirements.

See also: A 4-year plan of study grid showing course template by semester.

Graduate Study

The department offers two primary opportunities for professional and post-professional study: the M.L.A. degree, which provides the skills and knowledge for professional practice and the M.S.L.A. degree, which focuses on graduate-level research on the built environment. Minor work is offered to students taking major work in other departments.

The M.L.A. degree is a first professional degree in landscape architecture, for students with undergraduate degrees other than landscape architecture. Students enroll in a six-semester full-time program of coursework, some of which overlaps with the bachelor's degree curriculum. However, graduate-level work is accomplished by a minimum of 30 credits of advanced courses, both required and elective, completed at the 500-level. This coursework also provides a chance to concentrate study in a topical area of practice, through elective courses and/or an optional thesis. Students' concentrations--in areas such as history-theory; design-art; ecological design; or community design, etcetera--are determined by the student in conjunction with his/her major professor and will be designated in a program of study, to be completed by the end of his/her first year. Electives may be selected from within the department and college as well as from other departments across campus.

The M.L.A. program has recently been granted provisional accreditation by LAAB and is undergoing a required 3-year review for initial accreditation. Full accreditation status is expected after 2013. Students who graduate before the program's full accreditation will be considered by LAAB to have graduated from an accredited program.

The M.S.L.A. is an unaccredited, research degree addressing landscape architecture as a scholarly endeavor. The degree is primarily intended as an advanced professional degree targeted at students already possessing an accredited first professional degree (B.L.A., B.Arch, M.Arch, etc.) and wishing to pursue in-depth, independent research. The M.S.L.A. is granted upon completion of 36 credits (at least 30 of which are completed at the 500-level) and the acceptance of a thesis or creative component. Periodically, students without accredited, first professional design degrees wish to complete an unaccredited master's degree in landscape architecture. Such students may, in special cases, be allowed to pursue an M.S.L.A., provided they take an additional 12 credits of coursework, at least 6 of which must be an approved design studio, for a total of 48 hours of coursework.

Students may also enter a special program to earn both the M.L.A. and the master of community and regional planning (M.C.R.P.) degrees. Students interested in the double degree M.L.A./M.C.R.P. program should contact the departments to receive a detailed description of requirements. The department also teaches in the Graduate Certificate Program in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), administered by the Department of Community and Regional Planning.