

**ASSESSMENT PLAN for STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES***received*

A. College: College of Architecture, Planning and Design  
 Department Landscape Architecture/Regional and  
 Community Planning  
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**B. Contact Persons for the Assessment Plans**

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**C. Degree Program****Master of Landscape Architecture****D. Assessment of Student Learning Three Year Plan**

In the Department of Landscape Architecture/Regional and Community Planning Student Learning Outcome Assessment occurs in a variety of ways for both the Landscape Architecture Programs and the Regional and Community Planning Program. All three programs have external and internal methods for assessment of student learning outcomes.

One of the most important external assessments of the MLA Program is responding to national accreditation processes. The Kansas State University Master of Landscape Architecture Program is a nationally accredited program. The program was first accredited by the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) in 1980 and has been reviewed every five years, maintaining its accreditation to the present day. LAAB is a specialized accrediting agency that accredits educational programs leading to a first professional degree at the bachelor's or master's level. Therefore, in addition to assessing how well a program meets its own specific and institutional educational mission and objectives, accreditation evaluates all programs against standards that ensure the essential educational components leading to entry level professional competence. These standards are developed by the community of interest consensus and are regularly reviewed and assessed. (LAAB has received Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) recognition and must conform to CHEA standards.)

Programs must respond to the interests of three constituencies that make up LAAB: educators, the practicing profession and the public. The Board is made up of three educators, three practitioners, three public members, and one representative each from the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture, American Society of Landscape Architects and the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards. To maintain accreditation, MLA Programs must continuously comply with accreditation standards.

These standards are:

1. The program shall have a clearly defined mission supported by educational objectives appropriate to the profession of landscape architecture and shall demonstrate progress toward their attainment.
2. The program shall have the authority and resources to achieve its educational objectives. *Objective: The program strives for diversity in recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students.*
3. The first-professional degree curriculum must include the core knowledge skills and applications of landscape architecture: Landscape architecture history, philosophy, theory, values, ethics, practice, planning, design, implementation, management.

Master's Level

Expanded Knowledge: Program demonstrates that it provides opportunities for students to develop and pursue areas that provide expanded knowledge related to the profession.

Research/Scholarly Methods: Program provides introduction to research and/or scholarly methods and their relation to the profession of landscape architecture, which are then integrated into coursework.

4. The qualifications, academic position and professional activities of faculty and instructional personnel shall promote and enhance the academic mission and objectives of the program.
5. *Program shall demonstrate that students are being adequately prepared to pursue a career in landscape architecture.*
6. Program shall provide evidence of alumni's professional accomplishments and their involvement in advancing the program.
7. Program shall provide evidence of interaction with practitioners from landscape architecture and other disciplines.
8. Program shall promote positive relationships with the university and the community.
9. Faculty, students and staff shall have access to facilities, equipment, library and other information systems necessary for conducting professional studies.

**Student Learning Outcomes related to Standard 5 include:**

Students will demonstrate their achievement of the program's learning objectives, including critical and creative thinking and their ability to understand, apply and communicate the subject matter of the professional curriculum as evidenced through:

Problem identification  
Project definition  
Information collection/ research  
Analysis  
Synthesis/ conceptualization  
Evaluation of alternatives  
Implementation

**Guideline:** *Student work is evaluated by criteria related to program objectives, and the information gained from such evaluation is used to enhance curriculum, instruction and other program aspects as relevant.* Standards and Student Learning Outcomes were taken from LAAB's Accreditation Standards and Procedures, January 2003.

The accreditation process requires that a number of activities take place.

- The department is responsible for the development of a Self-Evaluation Report in which faculty, staff and students must contribute.
- A sampling of student work and course syllabi, problem statements and course objectives must be displayed and presented for the accreditation team's review.
- The accreditation team, consisting of a landscape architecture educator, landscape architecture practitioner, and an academic administrator, visit the program requesting accreditation. They spend three days meeting with the program's assigned faculty, its students and staff. They review student work, course syllabi and objectives. Their findings, as to the program's meeting of LAAB's standards, are made known to LAAB which then makes a decision as to accreditation.

These activities can be described as Indirect Measures of Student Learning Assessment.

Other Indirect Measures of Student Learning Assessment include:

- annual Department Head's review of accreditation status and progress
- faculty consultation with employers who participate in professional internship activities, College-sponsored employment fairs, and College-sponsored mock interview activities
- surveys of graduates conducted by the Office of Career Development
- surveys of alumni conducted annually by the department
- an on-campus program review with the Alumni Advisory Council
- participation in national student competitions
- student advisory board

Direct Measures of Student Learning Assessment include:

- course evaluations by students
- juried review of student projects, both by faculty and outside critics
- general faculty course reviews at the end of semesters
- annual performance and achievement review and planning the next year's activities between the department head and each individual faculty member
- periodic reviews of Departmental objectives and performance mandated by KSU central administration and the Board of Regents
- periodic faculty review of student and program performance
- discussions with students and the MLA Graduate Coordinator on a regular basis

## **Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

During the Fall Semester of 2001 and '02 there were a number of activities that took place that identified an educational issue that needed to be investigated. The activities included:

- surveys of alumni conducted annually by the department;
- discussions with the Department's Professional Advisory Council;
- the results of student project reviews by faculty and visiting critics;
- discussions with MLA faculty concerning the progress of the MLA students; and
- discussions by the Graduate Coordinator and MLA students.

These deliberations and information revealed that the MLA students were not receiving sufficient design instruction. The present MLA curriculum specifies three design studios to satisfy what the faculty originally felt would adequately prepare students to pursue a career in landscape architecture. The MLA faculty, in discussion with MLA students, all agreed it would be desirable to add an Advanced Design Studio to enhance MLA students' knowledge, skills and applications of design theory and processes in the MLA curriculum. An Advanced Design Studio was initiated during the Fall Semester 2003. It is again being taught during the Fall Semester 2004.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

#### **Goal**

**Students will better understand and implement landscape design theory and processes.**

#### **A. Student Learning Outcome 1**

Students will better understand and apply design history, theory and problem solving methods in their design processes.

#### **B. Student Learning Outcome 2**

Students will be able to effectively communicate their work in graphic, written, and oral formats – design process as well as products.

#### **C. Student Learning Outcome 3**

Students will apply effective use of research methods to further their understanding of issues pertinent to the profession of landscape architecture

#### **D. Student Learning Outcome 4**

Students will demonstrate professional work skills through leadership and teamwork.

#### **E. Student Learning Outcome 5**

Students will be exposed to multi-cultural issues related to landscape architecture design processes.

### Relationship to KSU Student Learning Outcomes for Graduate Programs

Program SLOs	Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes and Professional Conduct
A. Students will better understand and apply design history, theory and problem solving methods in their design processes.	X	X	X
B. Students will be able to effectively communicate their work in graphic, written, and oral formats.	X	X	X
C. Students will apply effective use of research methods to further their understanding of issues pertinent to the profession of landscape architecture	X	X	X
D. Students will demonstrate professional work skills through leadership and teamwork.		X	X
E. Students will be exposed to multi-cultural issues related to landscape architecture design processes.	X	X	X

### How will the learning outcomes be assessed?

Evaluation of an Advanced Design Project is based upon student learning objectives and the degree of successfulness with which the student resolves design issues related to the project. The problem statement issued to students contains both student learning objectives and project program and site information. Each project is evaluated based upon the following scale:

Letter Grade	Overall Performance	Fulfillment of Learning Objectives	Quality of Work
A	Excellent Work	All objectives thoroughly addressed with only one or two minor errors	Superb
B	Very Good and Highly Competent Work	All objectives addressed. At most one major problem or a few minor ones	Good
C	Acceptable Work	All objectives addressed. One or two major unresolved problems and/or minor ones	Average/Inconsistent
* D/E	Failing Unacceptable Work	Many or all objectives not addressed. Several major problems	Unacceptable

\*Any student in the MLA Program who receives a final grade of "D" or lower in any LAR course must repeat that course.

Work resulting from the Advanced Design Studio and the presentation of that work by the students will be reviewed by the MLA faculty, practicing professionals, and members of the Landscape Architecture Advisory Council. It is important to note that MLA students will also be asked to participate in the assessment.

**When will the outcomes be assessed?**

The outcomes will be assessed by the MLA faculty and its students at the culmination of the Fall Semester 2004. The Landscape Architecture Advisory Council, during its annual program assessment visit to Kansas State, will make its assessment Fall Semester of 2005. Visiting professionals, who will be critics for the Advanced Design Studio, will be asked to make an assessment of student work at the conclusion of their participation in project reviews.

**When will the results of the assessment be discussed?**

At the end of the Fall Semester 2006, the Advanced Design Studio will have been offered for a three-year period. All of the input that has been gathered will be assessed by the MLA faculty. In addition, a survey will be conducted of those students that will have graduated and entered work force. (Note: Assessment is an ongoing process conducted by the MLA faculty at the end of each academic year. Concerns that may be identified with the Advanced Design Studio will be discussed by the faculty and an adjustment made to the syllabus prior to the next time the studio is taught.)

**What is the unit's plan or process for using assessment results to improve learning?**

If the assessment is positive in meeting the stated goal and student learning outcomes, we will continue to offer and monitor the course. However, if the assessment is negative, the faculty will review its options as to how they can more successfully influence a student's understanding and use of landscape architecture design theory and processes.

Note that this example pertains to the design studio sequence, where all program course content is applied and integrated. Similar activities and faculty responses (to improve the curriculum) occur in the design implementation, seminar/research, and natural systems/land management sequences of courses.