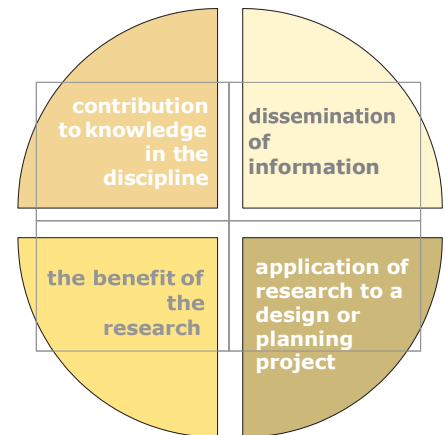University *of* Idaho

## Master's Project Overview

The Landscape Architecture Master's Project is an original academic research and design project report presenting independent work on a topic in Landscape Architecture. The Masters Project is intended to contribute to the body of knowledge in landscape architecture. The 'body of knowledge' expected of landscape architects is the core knowledge that helps define our profession (LAAB, LABOK). This topic may be selected from a wide range of theoretical and practical design issues. The project is prepared with the following goals:
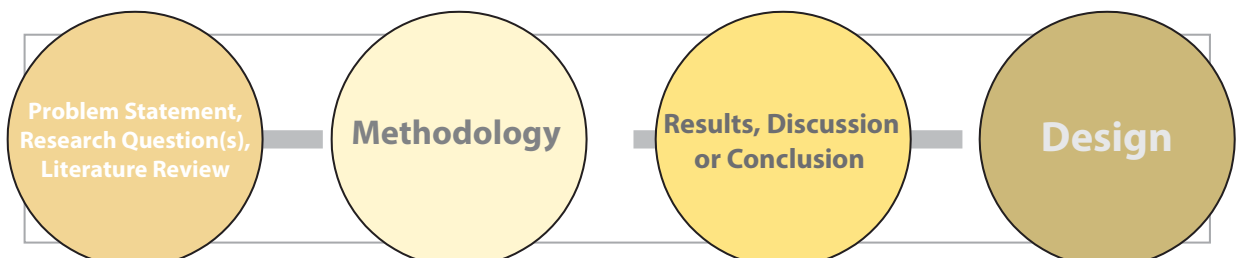
a) contribution to knowledge in the discipline;
b) dissemination of information to a professional or academic audience;
c) the benefit of the research; and
d) application of research to a design or planning project.

| contribution to knowledge in the discipline | dissemination of information |
| --- | --- |
| the benefit of the research | application of research to a design or planning project |

Projects can be organized as an original investigation, an interpretation of existing research/project, or design solutions for a specific issue or design challenge. The project should effectively present original ideas while demonstrating a command of Landscape Architecture and an understanding of landscape change.

The **Master's Project Document** will include the following written components with the Major Professor's approval for specified order and content:

a) A well-defined **PROBLEM STATEMENT** and **RESEARCH QUESTION**(s)
b) A suitable and defensible **METHODOLOGY** to address research question(s), goals, and objectives must be included. Methods can include but are not limited to the following methods suggested in *Landscape Architecture Research: Inquiry, Strategy, Design;* Deming and Swaffield; Wiley Press, 2011.
    i. Descriptive Strategies - i.e. Observation, Descriptive Case Studies
    ii. Modeling and Correlational Stategies - i.e. Analytical Models, Predictive Modeling
    iii. Experimental Strategies - i.e. Field Experiments
    iv. Classification Schemes - i.e. Collection, Typology
    v. Interpretive Strategies - i.e. Discourse Analysis
    vi. Evaluation and Diagnosis - i.e. Design Evaluation, Landscape Assessment
    vii. Engaged Action Research - i.e. Participatory Action Research (PAR)
    viii. Projective Design - i.e. Design as Research, Design Reflections
    ix. Logical Systems - i.e. Synthetic Logic, Expanded Field Analysis
c) A **LITERATURE REVIEW** relevant to the project
d) The project **DESIGN**- application of method/evaluation resulting in a design or plan
e) **RESULTS** - results of method application
f) **DISCUSSION** or **CONCLUSION** component which exhibits a transferable and transparent capabilities to a professional or academic audience including interpretation of results, limitations and a need for further reseach

Problem Statement, Research Question(s), Literature Review → Methodology → Results, Discussion or Conclusion → Design

*\*\*Order of Master's Project Document items are subject to change depending on approval of Major Professor*

## Master's Project Committee

A Major Professor must be established for the duration of the student's master's project. The Major Professor acts as chair of the student's master's project committee, and is the student's primary advisor.  The Major Professor must be a full-time member of the Landscape Architecture Program faculty. Students may make suggestions for particular faculty members based on area of expertise, however the Major Professor will be assigned for each MLA student. The Major Professor responsibilities include academic guidance and assisting completion of master's project. This is the primary contact for the MLA graduate student.

The Master's Project Committee consists of the student's Major Professor along with one to two Committee Members, who can be faculty within or outside of the Landscape Architecture Program. Nominees for faculty outside of the department must be approved by the Major Professor. Committee members provide advice and support based on expertise.  The student is expected to coordinate a schedule of committee meetings with their Major Professor at the start of their project work.  This schedule can be modified as needed, but should be communicated clearly by the student to the full committee.

## Master's Project Preparation

Students are encouraged to explore possible topics with faculty early-on in the process. Topics of interest may come from previous courses within or outside of the program which are relevant to the field of Landscape Architecture. LARC 555, Master's Project Preparation is geared towards identifying a specific project and developing a proposal. Students are asked to prepare a research report to support their Master's Project, utilizing literature review, and case study research methods.

|  | **Thesis** | **Project** |
|---|---|---|
| **Research** | Based on original research | Based on original research |
| **Knowledge** | Provides new knowledge to the field | Provides new knowledge to the field |
| **Content** | Based on a selected research method and includes data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the results | An applied project that is solution-oriented or reviews a best design or planning practice for a client. Utilizes a research approach, includes data collection, analysis and recommendations |
| **Learning Outcomes** | Capacity to develop/answer research questions<br><br>Demonstration of research skills in collection of primary data or an original use of existing data<br><br>Understanding of the major theoretical debates in the field | Critical examination of design or planning problem/issue<br><br>Demonstration of research skills using primary and existing data sources<br><br>Understanding of the setting/context of issue within the boarder field of landscape architecture |
| **Literature Review** | Demonstrate understanding of theoretical issues. | Analyzes themes in the literature and professional practice relevant to the project. |
| **Methodology** | Thorough discussion of methodology and approach sufficient to justify choice. | Discussion of the methods and/or process for project solution |
| **Research/Analysis** | Thorough and original uses of data. | Demonstrates thorough understanding of issue to support the project's key findings. |
| **Use/Contribution** | Builds on documented best practices and theories.<br><br>Contributes knowledge to the profession and scholarly community | Relevant use for client.<br><br>Makes recommendations on best practices or proposes solutions.<br><br>Integrates planning knowledge and skills in practical application |
| **Deadlines/ Formatting** | Set by the College of Graduate Studies | Determined by the Landscape Architecture major professor, clients |
| **Completion & Submission** | Oral defense, three copies for the Graduate School, one bound copy for the program, electronic copy of the final presentation to post on the Landscape Architecture website and E Size Poster for display as described above | Oral defense, one hard copy of project narrative, digital copy of project narrative and design project, one E Size poster for display as described above. |

## Master's Project Proposal

By the end of the student's first year in the MLA program, students are expected to submit a proposal to their Major Professor and Committee Members for approval. [Note: Students on the 5½ year seamless BSLA-MLA track should submit their proposal no later than the fourth week of the spring semester in their first year in the program.] The proposal is intended to explain the research topic, research question, method and schedule. The order of the outline can change depending on the student's project. A suggested outline for the project is as follows:

1. **Cover Page** - Title, author, proposed Committee (Chair and members), and date of proposal
2. **Project Scope and definition** - Research topic and question; goals and objectives
3. **Project Significance -** Relevant topics in Landscape Architecture research, relevant literature, precedents, and gaps in knowledge (Literature Review must be included in this section)
4. **Table of Contents** - Outline of project (tentative), relevant diagrams & figures
5. **Methods** - Description of proposed Methods used to collect and evaluate information
6. **Schedule of Work** - Schedule or plan for completion of project
7. **Works Cited** - Citations (APA citation style) of relevant topics used in Literature Review, precedents, or methods

## Master's Project Document and Presentation

Students must submit and present two deliverables to successfully complete the requirements for their Master's Project.  The first is a Master's Project document that presents in detail the work accomplished for their project.  The second is an approximately 30 minute presentation to a public audience that includes their full committee as well as guests, peers and others that may be interested in their work. The final document must include the following items:

1. **Cover Page** - Title, author, date
2. **Approval Page** - List of Committee members and a signature line for each (optional)
3. **Abstract** - 150 - 400 word description of problem, methods, and results
4. **Acknowledgements** or Dedication Page (optional)
5. **Table of Contents**
6. **List of Tables**, Figures, Images, Acronyms, Definitions, etc.
7. **Text and images** organized per chapter
8. **Appendices**
9. **Literature Cited** or Bibliography, including citations for images, tables, etc.

The Final Master's Project document must be submitted in hardcopy and digital form (PDF) to the Major Professor and all committee members by 5 PM Friday of Finals Week to successfully complete the program. Students should must provide one hardcopy of the report to the Major Professor, and it is recommended that they ask the Committee Members if they would prefer a digital or hardcopy of the report.

Students must also present their Master's project within a public forum consisting of the Master's Project Committee Chair, Committee Members, and invited guests. Typically this presentation will be given during Review Week of the semester in which they are graduating. The presentation must consist of an **Introduction** to the project, **Methods** used during the project, **Results** of utilizing the method, and a **Conclusion/Discussion** component. Each student will be given approximately 30 minutes to present their work, followed by a 20 minute question and comment session from the committee, invited reviewers, and peers.  The committee may additionally request to question the student in private following the public presentation.