MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Master of Landscape Architecture + Urbanism (MLA) program is a LAAB accredited professional degree program. There are two professional degree program tracks: +3 MLA (typically requiring three years of residency) and the +2 MLA – Advanced Standing (typically requiring two years of residency).

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

+3 track: Individuals who have completed a four-year Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree, or its equivalent, are eligible for admission to the program. Preference for admission is given to those who have completed a balanced undergraduate education that includes study in the arts, sciences and humanities. Academic or other work in the natural sciences (such as biology, ecology, environmental science) and the visual arts (such as drawing, sculpture, graphics and/or basic design) is strongly encouraged. Completed courses in the humanities, history of art, landscape architecture and architecture are also encouraged, although not required. Elective units in the curriculum may be applied to graduate certificates or dual degrees.

+2 track: Advanced Standing: Applicants who have completed an undergraduate LAAB (Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board), or equivalent degree in landscape architecture, or have completed a minimum of two semesters of a LAAB accredited graduate landscape architecture degree, may be granted advanced placement of two semesters, subject to the review of the admission committee. Applicants accepted into this program must demonstrate advanced competency in site design and construction technology. Applicants granted advanced placement may be permitted to waive certain required courses in the MLA program curriculum by demonstrating completion of equivalent courses in accredited institutions. The MLA program director and faculty in specific curriculum areas will determine the studio and other course requirements for each MLA student admitted with advanced placement. Elective units in the curriculum may be applied to graduate certificates or dual degrees.

+2: Advanced Standing with a B.ARCH track

Applicants with a four or five year accredited Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch) degree are eligible to receive advanced standing in the Master of Landscape Architecture program. The curriculum in this track includes the required courses in design, ecology, plants, media, history and construction that provide a theoretical basis of landscape architecture and a natural systems perspective. No electives units are included in the curriculum.

Dual Degrees

Applicants for the Master of Landscape Architecture/ Master of Urban Planning must apply to both the Master of Landscape Architecture program in the USC School of Architecture and the Master of Urban Planning program in the USC Price School of Public Policy. Acceptance in one degree program does not guarantee admission to the other. Students in the +3 degree track may apply to the MUP program during their first semester. Students accepted with Advanced Standing must be accepted to the USC Price Master of Urban Planning program prior to matriculation for the MLA degree.

Applicants for the Master of Landscape Architecture / Master of Heritage Conservation degree must apply to both degree programs and be accepted prior to matriculation. The standard degree requires 7 semesters of courses in both disciplines. Advanced Standing requires 5 semesters. Students complete a final thesis in Heritage Conservation in lieu of the MLA final design research seminar and studio.

NOTE: Acceptance into the Advanced Standing MLA or B.Arch MLA track is at the discretion of the Admissions Committee and the MLA+U Program Director.
MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
APPLICATION INFORMATION

APPLICATION INFORMATION

APPLICATION FEE

The USC CAS Graduate Application fee is $90 plus a SlideRoom fee of $20. Fee Waiver eligibility for the USC CAS application is determined by the USC Office of Graduate Admission. The School of Architecture does not provide fee waivers for the SlideRoom application.

YOUR USC ID NUMBER

You will receive your 10-digit USC ID via email within two to three business days after submitting your online application. Please keep this ID on record and make sure to include it in all your communication with USC. You will also need to include it when mailing any documents to the university.

It is important to note that your 10-digit USC ID is different from the USC CAS ID you will receive when you begin your application. The CAS ID is required for only technical support during the application process and is not issued by the university.

NEED HELP? For application help videos, visit the USC Graduate Admission website here.

CREATE YOUR USC GRADUATE ONLINE APPLICATION (USC CAS)

The USC Graduate Application consists of four sections: Personal Information, Academic History, Supporting Information, and Program Materials. Start your USC CAS application here.

Once you have created your account and logged in, add your graduate program/s of interest under the “Add Program” tab.
MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

1. Personal Information

Please complete this basic biographical information section.

2. Academic History

Transcripts: Upload a copy of your official, university-issued transcript(s) on official letterhead. Unofficial transcripts from university student portals are not acceptable. Click here for official transcript guidelines which includes details about international transcripts.

GRE Scores: The GRE is not required for Fall 2025 applicants. Scores submitted will not be reviewed.

TOEFL/IELTS Scores: See page 4 of this document for additional information.

3. Supporting Information

There is no need to enter any information in the Experiences, Achievements, Conferences Attended, or Memberships sections unless that information is NOT included in your resume/CV. You can simply click on the “I am not adding...” in each section.

Documents: Please upload your most current resume/curriculum vitae (CV). It should describe your education, extra-curricular collegiate and community activities, honors, awards, publications, internships, research experience, employment, professional organizations, hobbies, travel, and any other relevant information you would like to include.

4. Program Materials (3 submissions required)

Statement of Intent: We are interested in understanding who you are, what makes you a good fit for USC, and what you plan to do with your opportunities at USC and afterward. Please discuss your life experiences, academic interests, professional goals, and specific reasons for pursuing graduate studies in architecture at the USC School of Architecture. Highlight your personal design philosophy and elaborate on the faculty, courses, research topics, and opportunities at USC that you are particularly interested in. There are no minimum or maximum length requirements.

Three (3) Letters of Recommendation (via SlideRoom): Applicants are required to submit three (3) letters of recommendation from academic or professional references. Applicants who have been out of school for several years may request letters from employers or mentors who can objectively evaluate their professional abilities and academic potential.

Portfolio Materials: The School of Architecture uses SlideRoom to collect and review your portfolio materials. Access SlideRoom from the link provided in your USC CAS application and create a SlideRoom account. Do not create a SlideRoom account before starting the USC CAS application. The USC CAS Application cannot be submitted until the SlideRoom portfolio materials are submitted FIRST.
MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

**ADMISSION WITH NO PREVIOUS PROFESSIONAL DEGREE: +3 Track**
The portfolio submission is the method by which applicants convey their creative interests and experience. Applicants are encouraged to submit examples of academic, professional or other visual and creative arts including freehand drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic design, animation, furniture, product design, mixed media, ceramics, textiles, etc. The portfolio will help us understand your visual and spatial thinking skills, aptitude for design, and a capacity to think and design in three dimensions.

**ADMISSION WITH ADVANCED STANDING: +2 Track**
The portfolio will be used to evaluate the applicant’s demonstration of previous academic and professional work that includes visual communication, representation methods, site design and construction technology to determine if advanced standing is appropriate. It should include drawings, models, images of constructed projects, and other media from past design studio courses, professional work, and other artistic/creative activity. The portfolio must include at least one individual academic project with the name of the institution, course and the instructor provided.

**Format:** The portfolio submission should consist of a minimum of 10 and up to 25 digital files uploaded to SlideRoom. Images (up to 5MB each), Video (up to 250MB each) and Models (Sketchfab). You may also link to media from YouTube and Vimeo. It is recommended to submit large format images formatted on a single page with labels or a description of the intention of the work and the materials, software, and methods used to create the work. Applicants should assume that their portfolio will be viewed on a standard size laptop screen.

The context (academic, professional, personal, etc.) and date of completion of each project must be clearly identified along with a short design statement articulating the design intentions of the project. Any work completed as part of a group project must be properly credited, clearly identifying your role. Please do not include deliverables that you did not produce.

**Video Supplement:** Please produce a video that is 30 to 60 (maximum) seconds in length where you verbally present ONE of the following:
- Your favorite project from your portfolio and why you selected it.
- Your favorite designed landscape and why you selected it.
- Your specific interest in the field of landscape architecture and what you see as its potential value in the future of the built environment and communities.

Try to be as informative and concise as possible when speaking about your choice. Face and speak directly to the camera and do not read your presentation. Remember to be yourself; we are looking for students who are passionate about design and have a keen curiosity about landscape architecture and design. The video can be as informal or polished as you like. We are not judging the video on its production quality, rather, this is an opportunity to demonstrate your creative intelligence, thoughtfulness, and ability to communicate ideas clearly. Please do try to have good quality lighting and minimal background noise.
MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS ONLY

In addition to the above requirements, international applicants must also fulfill the following:

**ENGLISH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENT**
International applicants must demonstrate adequate English-language proficiency by submitting either TOEFL or IELTS scores by the application deadline. English-proficiency scores must be dated within 2 years (24 months) of the date you submit your graduate application. For example, a prospective student applying to fall 2025 who submits their USC application in January 2025 will need to have taken the test no earlier than January 2023.

The School of Architecture is interested in reviewing scores above the university’s minimum requirements. The following scores are the department’s minimum requirements.

**TOEFL: 95 OR ABOVE, WITH 20 OR ABOVE IN EACH SECTION**
TOEFL scores must be submitted electronically from ETS to USC to be considered official. Photocopies or paper copies of scores from the testing service are not acceptable. USC Institution code: 4852 (no department code is required). Information may be obtained from TOEFL, Educational Testing Service: [https://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/about](https://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/about).

**IELTS: 6.5 OR ABOVE, WITH 6 OR ABOVE ON EACH BAND**
IELTS scores must be submitted electronically from the testing service to USC to be considered official. Photocopies or paper copies of scores from the testing service are not acceptable. Select “University of Southern California” from the list of available institutions when you register to take the IELTS test. Alternatively, provide this information to your testing center after you have taken the test. Contact information for the USC department to which you are applying is not required. Information may be obtained from IELTS: [https://www.ielts.org](https://www.ielts.org).

**IMPORTANT: To avoid a delay in the review of your application, plan to take your test well in advance of the application deadline.**

In addition to the electronic submission of official scores, upload a copy of either your TOEFL or IELTS score report to ACADEMIC HISTORY section of your USC CAS application.

International applicants are exempt from submitting English-proficiency scores under certain circumstances. Review [here](https://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/about).

**FINANCIAL DOCUMENT(S) AND PASSPORT COPIES**
Per U.S. immigration regulations, all international students intending to study on F-1 or J-1 visa status are required to demonstrate proof of their ability to pay for their education and living expenses in the United States. Review details [here](https://www.ielts.org).

Before an I-20 or DS-2019 can be issued, USC requires a financial statement demonstrating proof of funding. It is not necessary to submit proof of financial support or passport copies at the time of application as admission consideration to the School of Architecture is based on merit rather than financial resources. Documents can be submitted after an admission decision has been reached and you have committed to attend USC. However, submitting materials (USC CAS, Program Documents) early may help prevent potential delays in I-20/DS-2019 processing.