Q: Can I take courses outside of PennPlanning or even PennDesign to fulfill some or all of my elective requirements?

A: You would be able to take any level 500 or above course that UPenn has available. However, it’s likely that you will have to contact the Registrar of each school that you want to attend for permission.

Q: My undergraduate degree is a B.E. in architecture, and I am going to join the PPD program. I am wondering is it still possible for me to register as a licensed architect in the USA?

A: It is possible, but you will need to have your undergraduate degree assessed by the NAAB. There is more information on the Admissions website. Go to "how to apply", "international applicants".

Q: How many students would you say roughly from city planning end up working outside of the United States or plan to?

A: We would recommend contacting the city planning department at cityplan@design.upenn.edu for information about their alumni. They have put together a comprehensive list of institution employing their alumni.

Q: From the transcript of the last webchat, I saw the official budget for annual living expenses is around $20,000. I wonder how much will it cost for attending studio courses, generally (e.g. for supplies, model materials, printing, etc.)?

A: Studio costs are not really calculated into that. Your rent will be anywhere from $500/$1200 a month, then food...

Q: Can anyone comment on the relationship between the planning and landscape architecture from students who have done both?

A: Although I'm a landscape student, this semester, I'm taking almost all city planning courses. There's a lot of cross-over between the two disciplines once you get past the first 3 semesters in landscape architecture.

Q: I am now in a MArch program at another school, and I wonder if I have already some required courses, is it possible for me to waive these courses?

A: It is possible to waive out of some of the required courses (like Technology) and replace them with electives. This is especially useful for students pursuing a certificate.

Q: So I still have to take electives to fulfill the credits? And are these electives limited in the School of Architecture?
A: Yes, you would still need to take electives. Some of the electives must be in architecture but some electives can be in other departments and even other schools at the University like Wharton or Arts & Sciences.

Q: What are the common urban related electives for MUSA students? And how many non-GIS electives are there for most students

A: Unfortunately we don't have any MUSA students here. I would advise you to contact Prof Amy Hillier at ahillier@design.upenn.edu.

Q: Would you say Penn’s landscape architecture program has a more urban focus? I've noticed several of the faculty have planning backgrounds. This is as opposed to attending a landscape school at a more rural location.

A: Absolutely. The program moves from trail/experience, to park/program, then urban brownfield, then global urban...then option studios which range from public art-y options to high tech to research.

Q: Is it possible for students to apply for second degree after being enrolled? Would the application procedure be any different than normal application?

A: Yes, you would be welcome to apply for another degree while you are attending Penn, and we do our best to make the application process as simple as possible. We can reuse your transcripts, test scores, and up to 2 letters of recommendation for your new application. When you apply, just select that those materials will be received "off-line," meaning they will not be included in your application. Afterward, you are welcome to contact us to request that we reuse those materials.

Q: Since more than three current MLA students told me that I need to budget about $30,000 for living and other expenses...I am confused about what they did, since they claimed that they completely needed that much money.

A: I imagine how much you spend on food/drink/entertainment plus how much you spend on your computer could all affect this. Studio supply costs are generally not that bad, maybe $500 tops, and printing does not go over $2000 a semester (if you print boards every week).

Q: So you mean that a possible cost for studio per semester will be around 2500 at most?

A: I'm not sure you should hold me to that number. I know some students like to buy books for class (and we all know how expensive design books are) but I don't think people spend $5,000 on studio supplies each semester.

Q: So printing is not free?

A: You get $50 of free printing and then you have to pay for everything above that.
Q: I was offered the option to choose MUSA as an additional degree in the application process. However, I have only been admitted to M.Arch. Can I apply to MUSA program as an MArch student? What background/quality do you look for in a MUSA applicant?

A: Yes, you can apply to MUSA again during your first year in the M. Arch program. They aren't a dual degree program though, so you would have to pursue one program after the other. You may want to contact the director of the program, Amy Hillier at ahillier@design.upenn.edu to ask about what the Admissions Committee looks for in MUSA applicants.

Q: How often do MLA students travel?

A: In the first semester, there is a local field trip every week for ecology class. In the second semester, most of the trips come from construction/grading class. The rest of the studios all have one major trip to the site location...so urban brownfields will probably be in Philly somewhere, and global super studio will be international, and the options are open..

Q: How can I get information about courses in other schools other than PennDesign if I want to take their electives?

A: You could go to the University Registrar site and go to the course roster. Also, when you arrive, you could talk to your advisor about possible courses, taking into account your interests.

Q: What kind of job opportunities are available for preservation students? Do students work part time from semester 1? Also, what kind of jobs may I be able to take up so that I may fund my living expense?

A: Unfortunately, we do not have a HSPV student here. However, I have heard from some historic preservation students that it's common they hold part time jobs during the program, up to about 15-20 hours a week. There are also research assistant positions available in the department. I recommend contacting one of our historic preservation students, Grey or Rachel, on our Meet a Student page: www.design.upenn.edu/admissions/meet-student

Q: As an March new student, when do I register for classes?

A: Typically you will begin course registration in June after you've enrolled, though be sure to be in contact with our Registrar, Andrea Porter, for more details. You are welcome to email her at anporter@design.upenn.edu.

Q: Do MLA students usually have architecture backgrounds or city planning?

A: MLA students have a variety of backgrounds, from fine arts to biology to architecture.

Q: What's expected of students during breaks?

A: That depends first of all which break, during the fall break students mostly stay at Penn to work on studio, during winter break most of the students travel, and during spring break it depends. When
you’re in a traveling studio, your travel might be planned during spring break, but if not you could take time off depending on your studio work load.

Q: Are students assigned an advisor and what is the student/advisor relationship like?

A: Currently, Richard Weller, the chair, is acting as an advisor. I think he is fantastic!! He tries really hard to help ALL the students, not just his favorites and is very free about opening up his personal library and finding contacts, ideas, etc.

Q: Can you guys share what a day to day will look like for a typical MArch Student? When are classes? When are studios? Will there be time to go to the gym, run, etc. before or after or during the day?

A: A typical day would be like: a seminar in the morning from 9-12, then you would have time to lunch/work before your studio meeting at 1:00 pm which will end at 6 pm. Then of course you could take time off, but you also would need time to work on your other seminar or prepare for a lecture and off course work for your next studio meeting two days later! There is certainly time for going to the gym in the beginning of the semester, but towards the end it becomes pretty busy!

Q: Do you think it is possible to cook everyday (or maybe once a day) or just dine out in studio every meal?

A: Depending on the workload you have during different times of the semester, you may not have time to cook every day, but you always have the freezer! End of the semester gets pretty tough sometimes.

Q: If the studio is very intensive, how do you guys keep fit?

A: The first year, we hike at least once a week, some people manage to go to the gym once in a while, some of the guys play soccer, and I just walk 2 miles to school every day.

Q: I have sent my proof of taking the Physics prerequisite a week ago. I was told that I can get my result of whether my proof will waive me from the physics prerequisite in 2 days, however I have not received any feedback. May I know when can I get the result and start my I-20 application?

A: The architecture faculty are actually in the process of determining if a suite of structures/building technology/environmental controls courses could fulfill the physics prerequisite. Once we hear back, we will be sure to get in touch with you. If they count these courses, they might be re-reviewing all students with a physics prerequisite. We apologize for the delay. As for your I-20, as soon as your prereqs are cleared up, you will receive an e-mail from ISSS the same day with instructions on how to obtain your I-20.

Q: How many students are admitted for preservation? Like what is the head count in a typical studio?

A: We have an entering class anywhere from 25 to 30 students each fall.
Q: It is known that PennDesign’s MArch Program focuses on digital and non-linear design. But I am not interested in digital, will you provide courses and resources of diversity background and will your concentrating on digital lower the traditional course you offered?

A: You’re right that PennDesign is known for its digital and no-linear approach, but it definitely offers more traditional focused studios! For example, this semester there are studios taught by Kieran Timberlake and Laurie Olin which have a more traditional approach.

Q: PennDesign is also being criticized by many students that it made students learn too much on software, and not emphasize on design itself. Would you or someone else tell me that whether we have the freedom to choose to attend other courses instead of software courses?

A: PennDesign does not offer software courses. All the courses teach a way of thinking/approaching architectural design, they do not teach software. It is true that for certain courses you would need to use certain software packages, because of the chosen approach, think for instance about a non-linear design approach which you cannot really realize by working only in a 2D CAD program. If you want to have a more traditional approach, there are also courses offered like the Modern House course by Annette Fierro which employ more traditional design tools. Only in the beginning of your program there will be a prep-course which will you teach software programs. But this is a prep-course and not a course for credit.

Q: So the software to study depends on the studio you choose? Or are these studies based on software in the first year and compulsory?

A: It totally depends on the studio.

Q: A MUSA question: How many students are in the MUSA program and what is the average class size?

A: The MUSA program is pretty small, about 15 students each year.

Q: What are the usual hours per day for MEBD program?

A: Typically for the MEBD Program we end up taking five courses for the semester, so depending on what electives you choose, you may end up spending 3-6 hours in classes, and a few hours studying in our studio. As the semester progresses, we end up spending more time in the studio working on group projects and research for our summer studio. You can manage your time based on how many hours you want to spend on campus according to your workload pretty easily.

Q: I was also thinking of taking about 5 courses per semester. Do we have a lot of site visits or trips?

A: The MEBD group took one studio trip in the Fall Semester as part of our research, and we will be taking another trip in the summer during the studio. We also have other local trips for research, and some of your elective classes will also take you on local trips.
Q: I've seen statistics that MCP students can take longer to find desired employment after graduating, can any students tell me what sort of contingencies they are considering that might affect where they work in the future?

A: I wish we had a city planning student with us! For the most accurate information, I recommend contacting the city planning department at cityplan@design.upenn.edu. They keep in touch with their alumni and have a great list of institutions employing their alumni. You could also contact any one of our City Planning students on our Meet a Student page: www.design.upenn.edu/admissions/meet-student

Q: How many students are in the MLA2 program? What's the ratio of professor and students in studio work.

A: There are about 15-20 students in the MLA2 program, and the ratio of students to professors is roughly 10-15 to 1.

Q: If I complete my physics pre-requisite in July, will I still be able to register for classes in June?

A: Yes, prerequisite courses just need to be fulfilled before you matriculate in the fall.

Q: For the EESA evaluation, do I need assistance from PennDesign, or can I do it all by myself?

A: You can check with the Department but I think you do this on your own. You should follow up with NAAB to see if there is a way that we can help.

Q: Do you know when and how to apply for TA or RA positions? Although from the intense life you described, I think it may be so difficult to manage those additional work hours.

A: TA positions can generally be applied for once you matriculate in the fall (the department will have a better idea of what positions are available once they have their entering class). Research Assistant positions are similar and will go through the department as well.

Q: Who should I contact about TA positions, the Chairman or some specific faculty member? Also, how do they evaluate a student be qualified to this job? Is it still based on their materials or other performance?

A: Typically it will go through the coordinator of your department first, Diane Pringle being the coordinator for MLA. Her email address is dianep@design.upenn.edu. Additionally you would be welcome to contact the chair, Richard Weller, as well, at rjweller@design.upenn.edu. Unfortunately I can't attest to what they look for in their TA or RA students, though I do know that they take a lot into account during your first year as they figure out who you are as a student, what your work ethic is like, etc.

Q: Are there any TAships or RAships available for 1st year MArch students?

A: The Architecture department usually doesn't allow 1st year students to TA. However, you could apply for a TA position for your second and third year.
Q: I want to focus on the urban design concentration. Can I take the design studio in my first year? How many studios will the curriculum allow me to take overall in 2 years and what are those options? (I have a Bachelors degree of urban planning and shared the same classes with architecture students in the first 3 years during undergrad)

A: I believe you HAVE to take an urban design studio in your first year. I know you have to take two for sure, but I'm not sure if you are barred from taking more. You should check with the department.

Q: I’m very interested in pursuing a certificate in urban design, is it possible to take the classes in any year of study? Also, are there requirements in order to pursue it?

A: If you are in the MArch 3 year program, you won't have a lot of flexibility your first year unless you already hold a degree in architecture. In that case, you would likely be able to waive out of some of the required technology courses and replace them with electives to go toward your Urban Design certificate. Otherwise, you wouldn't be able to take those courses until your second and third years. There are definitely requirements to pursue it, the first being that you must apply and be admitted to the certificate program.

Q: Is it impossible to get an urban design concentration after being in the city planning program for a year?

A: Yes, many students do not choose a concentration for their first year. You are able to wait and pick a concentration after your first, even second semester.

Q: How many students are in an MCP cohort?

A: I would say about 120ish are in the program. We aim to admit a class of about 65 each year.

Q: As an MCP student, does any MLA student have any suggestions on how to prepare yourself to apply for the MLA program from within PennDesign? What courses should I consider taking advantage of while in PennDesign?

A: Quite a few friends of mine have applied for the MLA program from within PennDesign. The duals always tend to be successful in both departments, but quite often, it will take much longer to graduate. I would make sure to learn basic software and take an urban design studio…but to be honest, you don't actually need to know anything because they teach you everything in the first year of landscape.

Q: What’s the difference between applying for another degree while attending MCP and applying for the dual degree programs before enrollment?

A: There isn't too much of a difference. If you apply for, and are accepted into 2 programs at once, the only difference would be that you would get to choose which to pursue first.

Q: How many students are there in the entering class of MEBD 15?

A: For 2015, the MEBD group may vary between 10-15 students.
Q: For the MLA program, what software should I try to teach myself before matriculating in the fall?

A: It would help to learn Adobe illustrator, photoshop, InDesign, and Rhino...but you don't need to. You will be taught all that during the first year.

Q: How many courses are we allowed to waive out if we already have a Bachelor's degree in Architecture and are enrolled in the 3 year MArch program?

A: For details about the number of courses you can waive out of your first year, we recommend contacting the architecture department directly at arch@design.upenn.edu.

Q: I am interested in the courses at Wharton. Are there any places for me to get more information about those options?

A: You are welcome to take courses at Wharton BUT it is very difficult because they have a different system to register for classes. You can find out more by emailing our Registrar at registrar@design.upenn.edu.

Q: Is it easy for international students to find a job in planning?

A: It depends on what type of job in planning. Transportation planning is easier than community and economic development. Also, urban design can be easier, if you are willing to be international and have an architectural background.

Q: Is there anything that I should read up before I start the semester? Like I have been reading through American History since I’m an international student and not familiar with it. Would you be able to advise or should I talk to a student for that?

A: Randy Mason actually listed a number of things for new students to check out before the start of the program on the Admitted Students Website. Take a look at his second paragraph here: www.design.upenn.edu/historic-preservation/historic-preservation-students.

Q: I read above that it can cost about $500-$1200 for living expenses/rent. What are the differences in off-campus and on-campus living arrangements?

A: Most graduate students live off campus as it is cheaper, but living on-campus can be more convenient as it is closer to the School of Design. I live off-campus and still walk to school, and I can say on an average it can cost you somewhere between 400-900$ depending on if your sharing and how far you live from campus.

Q: Is it necessary to learn scripting for the M.Arch program?

A: It is not necessary to learn scripting for the MArch program. During the Digiblast, prep course for the MArch program, you will learn basic scripting. But if you would need it for a studio project, probably your TA will give smaller workshops for the studio!
Q: Is the school work at PennDesign extremely heavy? Some current MCP students say their average time for sleep is lower than 5 hours a day, is that true?

A: Depends on your class load, but 5 hours a day sounds about right. Arch and Landscape is usually less.

Q: How much do students get paid for TAships or RAships, per hour or per month?

A: On average TAs and RAs are paid $1500-$2000 a semester, though this all depends on the department and how often you are going to be working.

Q: How competitive is a TAship for city planning students?

A: There ARE limited positions, but I think the Department tries to give each student at least one TAship during their time here if they express interest. You should contact Prof. Landis for more info: jlan@design.upenn.edu.

Q: Is it very competitive to get the working opportunity?

A: They can be competitive as there are significantly more students than there are TA and RA positions, but as long as you pursue with the department it should not be too much of an issue as there are a few students who manage to earn even 2 or 3 TAships.

Q: What sort of job possibilities do we have? Do we have the time after our coursework and studio hours? Also, is it possible to take up any extra-curriculars like dance, etc.?

A: Do you mean on-campus jobs? I know most of us do on-campus jobs and some of us also work while studying, so if you manage your time well, you will be able to work on-campus for at least about 12-18 hours. You would have time for extra curriculars as well. Most of us go to the gym where they have courts, yoga, a pool, and I think they also have dance classes. You can check them out on the school gym website.

Q: What about internships? I was thinking of taking internships during summer break. Where do students usually go?

A: Lots of people have internships, but it is very varied, since planning is such a wide field and everyone has a different interest/goal. Some students go international, many stay local (especially if they have pets/family) and quite a few spread out all over the country. Everyone is required to do an internship so you get a lot of variety.

Q: Where can we find the course list of the MArch1 Program? Especially the first year.

A: if you want to know what kind of courses are offered, please contact the architecture office at arch@design.upenn.edu, they can give you this information.

Q: Is it easy to park near PennDesign?
A: There are parking garages around campus; however, most students either ride their bikes in or walk. And we have a great public transportation system - bus and subway. All these options are MUCH cheaper than parking.

Q: I was wondering when accepted students can apply for TA positions and how much of the tuition does a TA position cover and are there any other benefits associated with a TA position?

A: When you can apply for a TA ship depends on which program you're entering. You would receive a stipend of about $1,500-$2,000 each semester you TA. There are many benefits to becoming a TA, but I would say the best would be great work experience and networking.

Q: Is there any MArch student enrolled in the dual degree in MBA or M:IPD in the past five years? If so, how many in average each year? I know it’s difficult, just wanna check the probability.

A: There have been only a handful of MAR/MBA students (maybe one?) in the last five years. There was one MLA/MBA who graduated last year. As you can imagine, Wharton and Architecture have VERY different criteria for admission selection.

Q: About off-campus living issue, as mentioned the working hour could be long staying at school, how's safe it is to walk home alone in the middle of the night?

A: I walk home at 4 am most nights, (I've walked home at all hours by now) and I feel safe because I purposefully chose a safe neighborhood in center city. If you live in West Philly, however, the campus shuttle will take you to your door until 3 AM.

A: There are also bike cops! On few occasions I've been stopped on the way home by a bike cop asking if I wanted an escort to my door.

Q: Wow, how do they survive after that kind of workload... amazing... I heard that typically a MLA student will only have 3-4 hours of sleep per day. Is it true?

A: Yeah...I don't know how we survive...spring semester is usually easier than fall.

Q: How much of UPenn's Tuition is covered by a TA or RA position?

A: The TAships are paid out as a stipend not as tuition remission. So that would go toward your living expenses.

Q: So in order to get help with tuition costs, a student has to receive scholarships from the school? Are there any other options for getting help with tuition?

A: Need and merit-based scholarships are typically available, though our Admissions department only handles the need-based side of things (based on your FAFSA for domestic students or your International Aid Application for international students). Merit awards are determined by the department and are automatically reviewed for based on your application and its supporting materials. If you have not been awarded a merit or need-based award, you are welcome to visit our Outside Scholarships page on the
Financial Aid portion of our website. You can follow the link here: www.design.upenn.edu/financial-aid/outside-scholarships

Q: Is there a page on the website which shows us the type of jobs on-campus, or do we come there and then find out?

A: You can find on-campus jobs on this page for students. But if it’s a library job, it’s easier to go and talk to HR in the library. http://www.sfs.upenn.edu/seo/students.html

A: There are job listings on our Student Employment website: www.sfs.upenn.edu/seo/. They usually post jobs in August. There are two types of jobs: Federal work-study (for those eligible) and student worker positions.

Q: If we choose the travel studio, is there any extra cost we need to pay beside the tuition?

A: Sometimes there can be extra costs for travel. However, there are times when the department has travel funds to offer students. It depends on the trip/class!

Q: Another travel studio question, are these studios during vacations or semesters? Is it possible to join in more than 1? What’s available for next year?

A: Travel studios are offered both in summer and in the fall and spring. It is possible to join more than one travel studio. The fall studios are not known yet but if you really want to know e-mail arch@design.upenn.edu!

Q: I heard that it is hard for a planner to get a job. Can I have the employment statistics of the planning department post-graduation?

A: Unfortunately, we don’t have a city planning student here today! We recommend contacting the city planning department directly at cityplan@design.upenn.edu. They keep a good, comprehensive list of institutions employing their alumni.

Q: Is it necessary to have a car to live Philly?

A: You do not need a car at all in Philly. It’s very easy to walk and the public transport is very good.

Q: Students, what kind of things do you guys do to work around high tuition costs? Are you taking out loans, or are you there on large scholarships?

A: Loans are fairly typical for domestic students as the government does not offer grants for graduate students, and it is possible for international students to take out loans from some banks and private loan companies (with a US co-signer). Always remember to apply for extra outside scholarships and visit scholarship search pages like fastweb.com for more opportunities. At the end of each year many departments also offer scholarships to their current students, so keep in touch with them for more information.

Q: Is there an employment statistic for March post-graduation?
A: We would recommend contacting the architecture department at arch@design.upenn.edu to inquire about statistics. They could also give you some information about their recent alumni. I know the architecture department knows of a few alumni who will talk with new students via e-mail. You could also contact Career Services. Their website is: www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/

Q: When/how can I purchase Adobe CS with a student discount? Is this something I need to do through UPenn?

A: You can purchase Adobe with a student discount once you get your PennCard, which should happen as soon as you get to campus. Most people get it at the students store by swiping their student card, but I'm not sure if that is the only way to get it.

Q: Could you tell me what is the average cost for a year beside the tuition in Philadelphia?

A: There is an approximate breakdown here: www.design.upenn.edu/financial-aid/financial-aid-information.

Q: Is there any oversea study opportunities for March students in the upcoming year? How to apply for them and where are the destinations?

A: The MLA program does not have any study abroad opportunities, but there are travel studios, where you travel to a specific location related to the course during the semester.

Q: I have been admitted by your 1.5 years program. Could I somehow convert my 1.5 years program to the 3 years program?

A: Unfortunately, the Architecture Admissions Committee reviews all of their applicants for both programs, and if they admitted you to the 1.5 year M.Arch program then it means that you are not eligible for the 3 year program, most-likely due to your degree or education background.

Q: Do you feel like there are a lot of opportunities for students to later on be teachers at the school or do research with professors?

A: Most of the professors are Penn alums, and the professors try to keep bringing back recent alumni to teach/crit/research. Penn tends to stick together.

A: I'm not sure how many students get to do this, but I know that students have done research with professors after developing a relationship with them. We also have a number of professors here who are alumni.