



Welcome to our chat!

Q: Can you please talk a little about career services offerings for City Planning Masters? Particularly for students who do not have a background in the industry?

A: Career services at Penn has some really good resources for city planning students - they maintain a database of PennPlanning (and non-design) alumni that you can reach out to as well as employers who have hired PennPlanning graduates. Once you go through the program, everyone will have pretty much the same background and materials so I don't think it matters as much that you may not have a background in planning.

Q: Is it possible to work besides study? Like a mini job in office 1 or 2 days weekly?

A: It is possible to have a part time job during your semester. I have held work studies jobs on campus. If you're looking for work outside of campus though, students usually do that if they have a light load in classes or are part-time students. Any more and it may become a conflict with work.

Q: Could you describe the type of researches that you are doing at the MSD now? I mean the topics you are interested in.

A: We actually don't have any students from MSD here tonight. From what I understand, you can pretty much pursue whatever interests you might have. You could also email one of our MSD students, Daniel Cely, at anda@design.upenn.edu

Q: May I change my concentration or have classes of other concentrations after I come here?

A: Yes you can! There are some students in my cohort who have changed their concentration after the first year and also some who take classes in other concentrations that they find interesting.

Q: I was wondering how TA opportunities work - how common is it for graduate city planning students to get TA positions, is it possible in the first semester, and what are they like in terms of compensation?

A: There are definitely teaching assistantships available to 1st year MCP students. Contact Prof. Landis for more information and about compensation: jan@design.upenn.edu

Q: Is there then also TA opportunity for 1st year MLA students?

A: No, the MLA program only gives TAs to students in their second or third year. This is so that they can get to know the students and their skills.

Q: What is the living cost like in the school area? -Room or Dorm + Other living cost... per month or per year

A: Cost of living varies based on where you live in the city but there is a huge range in Philly compared to many other east coast cities. Typically the dorms are more expensive than houses/apartments in the city. Monthly rent can range anywhere from 500-1200

Q: Can I study other subjects outside the MEBD curriculum but inside other master's curriculum?

A: Yes, you will have the opportunity to take elective courses in other programs.

Q: How can I use the sport facilities at UPenn? Do I have to join a sports team?

A: You actually don't have to join any sports to use facilities like the soccer fields, tennis courts and squash courts. You just have to become a member of the tennis center, which is free! Plus you're going to get access to both gyms where we have a swimming pool, basketball courts, climbing wall and more!

Q: How often do students use the fabrication laboratory for studio work?

A: In architecture, you use it quite a bit! A lot of the digital fabrication tools are located in the fablab, including laser cutters, CNC machines, and 3D printers. There are also a lot of 'manual' tools, such as band saws, and quite a few other tools available to use.

Q: Do the summer preparatory courses for Architecture or Landscape Architecture review how to use fabrication machinery as well as computer design programs?

A: For architecture, yes. When I was enrolled in the DigiBlast summer preparatory program (the two week preparatory course for those with a background in architecture) we were introduced to using the CNC milling machine, and also taught how to prepare files for 3D printing. A lot of the software is also introduced in the first few weeks of school, such as how to use a 3D printer, and how to prepare files for 3D printing and CNC milling

For MLA students, we did not learn how to use the digital fabrication lab during the summer session. However, there is a safety course that students are required to participate in order to use the lab for the semester. For MLA II, you spend a week learning how to use ArcGIS and grasshopper (in rhino), but I do not believe that introduction is made for MLA I students.

Q: Are students in charge of the shop, as federal work study positions, or are there shop workers available to assist new students?

A: There are work study positions to operate the laser cutters but the shop itself is run by professionals who are there to help students use the equipment

Q: During an open house, my tour guide said that it is a good idea to invest in your own 3D printer. Is this necessary in your first year for MArch or are there enough 3D printers for students?

A: There are plenty of 3D printers for the students to use, provided by the school. There are actually 9 Makerbots allocated to each year. There are also additional printers in the fabrication lab, which are used for higher quality prints. There are plenty of 3D printing resources available. You definitely do not need to purchase your own.

Q: MCP students, can you explain a little about what a typical class schedule looks like? Like how often a week do you have classes, for how long, and are classes typically clustered together or scattered throughout the day.

A: In your semester you will most likely have classes every day in the morning (~9 am). From the second semester, there is more freedom to pick your classes and you can pretty much design it the way you want. Most core planning classes take place in the morning and are 2 - 3 hours long with a break in between.

Q: During Digiblast for MEBD students, which software do we learn to use?

A: we learned to use Rhino, Plugins for rhino (grasshopper & python), and we also learned how to use several "Post Production" tools, such as rendering (in vray), Photoshop, and illustrator

Q: Is the fabrication laboratory free to students then? Do you pay for materials? Or is the overall cost bundled into tuition?

A: The use of the lab is free. But you pay for and bring your own materials. So if you use the CNC, for example, you pay for the foam and bring it in or have it shipped to the building. The only exception is the powder prints, which the materials are supplied by the school and you pay for just the material.

Q: Does the MSD course offer design-oriented course or a technique/skill oriented one?

A: there is studio each semester of the MSD program. You can then take electives in your area of interest. As far as technique/skill, I think it depends which studio you take. But check with our MSD student, Daniel Cely, he can confirm: andda@design.upenn.edu

Q: Would you say that it is typical for most students in the program to have a job during the school year? And if so, what would you consider a typical amount of work hours?

A: I think it's typical for most students in the program to have a job from the second semester onwards. In the first year, most students prefer to work on campus and in the second year, students work outside as well. I would say that most students work between 10 - 15 hours a week.

Q: Is Career Services dedicated for PennDesign, or is it the same office as the undergrad population? Similar to Shannon E's question, do students typically spend a lot of time outside normal hours (nights, weekends) working together on studio and other projects?

A: A portion of career services is dedicated to PennDesign. The typical time spent outside class for classwork is 3 hours for a 1 credit course. Studio is 3 credits so you usually spend a significant portion of your overall time working on studio. A portion of that (probably 1/2) is spent doing group work. Also we just hired a new Career Services person here in the school to supplement the services that we get from the University.

Q: Where can I search for dorms or apartment options?

A: I would suggest checking out our graduate housing page:http://www.upenn.edu/provost/graduate_admissions/moving/housing/ also, Joan will be adding all of our new students to a Facebook group that is dedicated to things like housing for incoming students

Q: Do students usually prepare their own desktop pcs/laptops or do they utilize the school facility? Should I prepare a pc of my own for the course?

A: Most students bring their own computers - whether a laptop or desktop. It depends on your own personal preference. We do have computer labs with software that are available in Meyerson, but classes are held in some rooms for extended periods of time, which means they're not always available. Personally, I recommend a desktop for the power (for rendering) and to be in studio with other students. But a laptop can be helpful if you like to work at home or spaces other than your desk.

Q: Do students intern during the school year?

A: I am familiar with a few students that have in the architecture program. They worked part time for an office because their schedule allowed for them to be free maybe 1 or 2 days a week however, these are 2nd year students. I don't believe you will have weekdays without a class during your first year.

Q: I heard for M. Arch 1 students, there are group projects in first semester and third semester. Do you get to choose your own teammates? Would you share your experience about working on a project with someone else (especially in the first semester when you don't even know your studio mates)? How do you coordinate with things like you want to finish project early but your teammates like to wait till last minute?

A: You do work in a group in your first year. These groups are typically 4 students. In your first year you do not get to choose a preference for which studio you're placed in and your group work is done with students in your studio, so you don't really pick that team. In your second year you work in teams of 2. This year you get to place preferences for studio, most students get one of their top choices and you choose your teammate from your studio following that sorting. Working in groups in studio is just like any other group work, will take communication and compromise.

Q: How common are research positions? Either independent or assisting a current professor with research?

A: There are positions available. Most of them are outside of the department of Architecture that I know of. I actually currently am in a research position with Stefan Al, who is an architect, but teaches in the department of urban planning.

I know of only one student who has held a research position for a professor in landscape - and it's because they created a relationship with that professor and requested to work with them. It's not impossible to find a way to work with a professor if you approach them and ask.

Q: Are there any resources available that provides information regarding classes and their typical time slots?

A: Here is a link to MCP's courses:<http://www.design.upenn.edu/city-regional-planning/graduate/courses>. However, there is not information on their typical time slots

Q: It seems that you really consider a lot for students. One more question about the career stuff. I heard that finding a job that can provide visa will be more and more difficult ... Is it true? Any solution?

A: It is difficult to find a job as an international student but it is not impossible and the university provides great resources for looking for jobs

Q: How integrated would you say Penn is with the surrounding community? Integrated studios? Student organizations that incorporate design and community?

A: The studios are not as connected to the communities, but there are programs and clubs that you can participate with like PennPraxis and social impact programs.

Q: I was wondering if it is possible to submit a more substantial portfolio for consideration for MArch 2, as my portfolio submitted for MArch 1 was much edited. Thanks!

A: we don't have an MAR 2 program. Are you talking about the MSD (post-professional degree program)? Or are you talking about advanced standing? If the latter, this is determined during the admissions review process and is based on your portfolio and skills.

Q: Is there a way to waive some classes which are repeated with my undergraduate courses?

A: it is possible to waive courses if you speak to your professors and give them samples of your previous work. For instance, I was able to waive construction detailing because I had several construction document packages that I worked on in undergrad and professionally. But know that these decisions are made by the professors the first week of class on a personal basis.

Q: is there anything that you wish you had known about Penn that you know now that you are a student that you wish you had known during the decision process

A: There really isn't anything I've been surprised by, just make sure you do as much research as possible on the programs you're choosing between and don't be afraid to ask more questions. You can always reach out to your department directly.

Q: how much does the department put emphasis on transportation planning? Any related institutes or affiliated research centers that focus on transportation?

A: one of the concentrations of the planning department is transportation so it has an affiliated set of faculty and defined course curriculum. I am not sure about associated research centers but you can reach out to the department to find out!

Q: I also noticed that Penn markets its parametric design aesthetic in Pressing Matters a lot. Will there be more classes focused on the technicalities of building details such as building systems too? Thanks

A: parametric design is definitely still apart of the curriculum, as it is also a huge part of the profession. However, it is not as prevalent as an overarching design methodology. There are still a few electives and studios that have an emphasis on these topics, but there are many other options of courses that do not address parametric design, aesthetically or technically. To answer the second part of your question, there are classes in your first two years that are a part of the curriculum that teach you many of the fundamentals of architecture (construction, structures, environmental systems). In your fourth semester (602), you also meet with consultants to discuss your studio project and how it may be feasibly constructed. I am actually currently working on detail drawings for a facade.

Thanks for joining us! If you have more questions, please contact us at admissions@design.upenn.edu