



Good evening (or good morning, depending where you are)! Welcome to our webchat. We are ready for your questions

We have students from Architecture and City Planning along with admissions staff.

Q: I am applying for admission to the MCP program for Fall 2016. I was just wondering if anyone knows how the admissions committee tends to prioritize different components of the application in comparison to one another. For example, are GPA and GRE scores weighted more heavily than letter of recs/personal statements?

A: I would say that yes GPA and GRE weigh more heavily; however, the personal statement is also very important. The letters of recommendation not so much (unless they're bad ones).

Q: I am interested in the Community and Economic Development concentration in particular, how do you like your experience so far? Would you say that the courses you have taken so far take more of a studio hands on approach or theoretical/policy based approach?

A: the first semester is about exposing the community development cohort to the field so it is more theoretical/policy based. That being said, we do have many field visits to supplement our readings. Overall, I think it's a great learning experience!

Q: Hi everyone. I had a question about the portfolio size. I see that the recommended sizes are either 10"x 12" or 10" x 24" but I was wondering if it was okay to deviate from those sizes

A: You can deviate by a few inches and make it smaller, but not larger. Also you need to make sure it's under the 25MB size.

Q: For many of your projects, do you work closely with members of the community/policy makers to help enforce different plans? Are internships required as part of the MCP program?

A: Internships are required as part of MCP. For the Community and Economic Development concentration, there is a required practicum in the second year that is more field based.

Q: I'm applying for M.Arch. I want to know how many students usually admitted at the start of the year, and what is the size of the class? Especially the studio one.

A: We like to have an entering class of about 70; however, for the last two years, we have over-yielded

and have larger classes. We definitely are aiming for 70 next fall. The architecture studios are typically between 11-13 students per studio professor

Q: I also have the same question in regards to MCP?

A: the department is looking to admit around 60. Studio sizes are typically 9-10

Q: Also, I may have missed this on the application but are we required to send all of our GRE scores or just the most recent test? I heard some grad programs have access to all our scores regardless if we send them through ETS or not.

A: We would like you to submit all the GRE scores. We then pick the highest score in each category to use during the evaluation.

Q: Are there many international students? Let's say, how many are there in one studio class? I'm an international applicant.

A: The class is a good mix of international students, I would say around half depending on the year, could be more or less.

Q: Do you have a maximum amount of international students?

A: No, we don't have a maximum or a minimum.

Q: Will a transcript of this chat be posted soon after it ends? I accidentally closed out of the browser and the previous parts of the chat are now gone.

A: Yes, there will be one up on our website within the next two days of the full transcript. You can also view the transcripts of our previous chats.

Q: For the MCP program, does the school provide help in placing you in internships related to your interests? Are internships usually paid?

A: The school does not place you in internships, but will provide you with a great list of the internships and contacts students have had in the past. There has never been a student that has had trouble finding one and they are usually almost always paid

Q: How strict it is to upload a 500 words long essay? What happen if e.g. I send a 520 words long essay?

A: we won't discount your essay but we can't guarantee that the entire essay will be read if it's longer than 500 words.

Q: How much emphasis is placed on the GRE scores?

A: The GRE and GPA weigh pretty heavily, but the personal statement is also very important.

Q: For the MCP program, Is there a lot of flexibility in the courses taken outside of planning? For example, if I were also interested in historic preservation, would I be able to take those courses?

A: You will have a fixed set of courses for the first semester depending on your concentration. From the second semester onward, you can pick any courses of your choice (as long as they are grad level) for your electives.

Q: Is there a website where we can find the statistics for previously admitted students?

A: We don't really have that on the website. Are you looking for a sort of "class profile?"

Q: One of my potential recommenders is a previous supervisor (for four years). Unfortunately it is the company's policy that professional recommendations cannot be given, only personal. Would it be an issue if a previous supervisor can only give personal recommendations? My other recommenders are academic connections.

A: I think this should be fine. You're saying that he's not your current supervisor, but was before, right?

Q: She is not anymore. I don't know the exact limitations on what she can and cannot recommend but didn't know if a "professional" recommendation was required, or if a personal from a previous supervisor would suffice.

A: Yes, a personal recommendation from a previous supervisor would be fine.

Q: I have identified a couple of professors whit whom I would like to work in the case of being admitted, Would it be any problem if I ask a couple of them to take a look to my essay before uploading it? To hear valuable inputs?

A: You are welcome to contact the professors if you have questions, but we would not recommend you send them you essay.

Q: About portfolio, Is it alright to have some or all the part of the design portfolio to be redone/reworked, though I will mention it on the project brief? Because I feel that the original work does not represent the visual quality and design maturity that I have right now.

A: I believe your portfolio should represent the highest quality work that you're capable of producing so reworking graphics/design is completely fine

Q: You also previously stated that the letters of recs do not have a big effect, but could positive letters

overlook or compensate for lower gpa/gre scores?

A: To be honest, almost all letters are good letters! So they don't tend to tip the scale when it comes to the admissions review. For class profile, we don't have such a thing on our website but if you have specific questions such as average GRE score, you can email us at admissions@design.upenn.edu.

Q: What kind of qualities of the candidates are you looking for when viewing the online application?

A: The MLA program looks at candidates holistically, your background is important because our cohorts usually have really diverse backgrounds. For the 3 year program it's assumed you have not had formal design experience before so being able to take your area of expertise and apply it to what you learn in class is key. My cohort has people who previously studying engineering, fine arts, literature, history, and climatology, but how they bring their previous experiences is what is important.

A: The Admissions Committee is also looking at your personal statement to see what your interests are and how familiar you are to the field of Landscape Architecture.

Q: Do students in MCP and PennDesign as a whole usually end up finding a job in their profession within the Pennsylvania area?

A: That is a question that is never consistent. I would say for the most part, yes, but it changes every year

Q: If considering a possible dual degree/certificate along with the MCP, is it required to apply to both up front, or is it possible to add on to the MCP once the program has started and deciding on electives etc?

A: You do not have to apply for both up front, but it is recommended that you do so you have more flexibility in the program. If you do not, there is a deadline each year of when to apply for it.

Q: How possible/common is it to take courses within the School of Design (in fine art, for example) that may not be strictly within the curriculum for the MArch?

A: In your first year your courses will be primarily core within the department and in your second and third year you.

Q: Do you find that you have space in your schedule to allow for that (taking courses within PennDesign's other programs) ?

A: I know a lot of students that are taking electives catering towards gaining a certificate. There are a lot of architecture electives offered but I would say about half the class takes electives in other programs. The only challenging part is making sure they fit in your schedule

Q: Would it be possible to take courses on other Penn schools? Wharton...

A: Yes you can.

Q: What would you say has been the most challenging part of being a student in PennDesign? The most rewarding?

A: The most rewarding is being able to really tune the program(s) to your goals, especially given the number of electives, independent study, and graduate research opportunities available.

A: As an MCP student you will have a lot of reading for class that is challenging to manage with your assignments. The most rewarding part is gaining exposure to the local community (especially in CED) and really getting to know Philadelphia.

A: The most challenging is that the degree programs here are really self-driven, so you have to have a goals in mind in order to get the most out of your time here.

Q: Are students assigned advisors to their concentrations?

A: Yes there is an advisor per concentration. You can find this information on the website

Q: For the portfolio style, does the admission office prefer very few text description or the detailed text description?

A: I would say keep the text fairly simple. The images are the most important, but if you want to explain them, that's fine too.

Q: Based on the courses you have taken so far, did you find yourself needing to learn new computer software on your own? (Such as GIS, SketchUp, R., etc.)

A: You will have to take introduction to GIS as a course if you haven't worked on the software before. You will use R in your coursework and the professors will guide you through it.

Q: What are your favorite classes in Penn design?

A: The MLA program is great because it really tries to cover all the aspects of the field, from more ecological and science based, to representational, but my favorite class has been digital media. Learning Rhino and grasshopper programs to do parametric modeling has been super informative but also set me apart in the application process for summer internships

Q: Ms. Weston and other current students, for you, what is the best about Penn?

A: Outside of academics, I love the location. Philly is an awesome city and being so close to New York and DC is super beneficial for developing a professional network.

A: Penn is amazing because it is incredibly multi-disciplinary

A: I'm actually on the admissions staff! But I'd say the best thing about PennDesign is the student body. They are really friendly, collaborative, and SMART!

Q: Do all MCP students get the chance to study abroad?

A: you can choose an international studio in the second year.

Q: How would you describe the overall PennDesign environment? Are all students open and willing to share ideas or is it more of an independent approach where each person is on their own

A: it varies based on the course. There will be some small-group projects in your first semester but the workshop in the second semester is when you will really work collaboratively.

A: The PennDesign environment is very open. There are pins up open to the public to get a sense of what other groups are doing, there are also end of the year books that showcase the work that the classes have worked on.

Q: Hi. Can you tell me how may international students be exempt from submitting TOEFL scores? I took the iBT 3 years ago (now expired) with a score of 109/120. Since then I have studied for 2 years in an American college and I am also double minoring in English and History of Art which entails an extensive amount of academic reading and writing. So I am hoping I do not need to take the test again.

A: You would still be required to take the TOEFL. It is possible that during the admissions process, the faculty might exempt you from the TOEFL after an interview, but that's not guaranteed.

Q: Are there any math requirements for any of the courses you have taken? Also how many courses do students usually take in the set list of courses for CED that you mentioned previously

A: there are no math requirements. CED is a four course concentration, three of which are mandatory. You will have an option for your last CED elective. You can find the list of mandatory and elective courses for CED on the PennDesign website.

Q: For MLA Programs, is there any focus on Renewable Energy/Solar design within studio classes or would that be an option with independent or group projects?

A: Most studio projects only set requirements on site, and the projects you choose to investigate are really up to you! That's the great part, when you and your critic meet each studio meeting you will discuss your interests, and if you find a way to tie in renewable energy and/or solar energy to your projects. There are also elective classes that change each year and there may be some that delve into renewable energy. They change from year to year

Q: Is there a way to confirm if our transcripts were received by PennDesign?

A: Yes; once your application is submitted, we will upload your received transcripts to your application and you can confirm this in the ApplyWeb portal on your "Check List". The key is that we can only see your application to upload the transcripts after you hit submit.

Q: Are there any prerequisite of digital representation skills if I am applying to the mla2 program?

A: For the MLA2 program, the requirements are a professional degree in either architecture or landscape, BArch or BLA. There are no specific class requirements. I know of some students who do have said degrees and still choose to apply to the MLA3 program to have the extra year

Q: What is the professor to student interaction like? Are professors very hands on or do they just assign work and expect you to do it on your own- no questions asked?

A: of course professors all vary. But my experience has been that every instructor is hands on and willing for engagement with you in and outside the classroom.

Q: Why do you ask international applicants to send a WES evaluation for application?

A: There are many reasons we require WES evaluations. It helps us to eliminate fraud, helps us compare transcripts from outside of the United States, converts GPAs along with other reasons.

Q: As an applicant with a non-architecture background, who majored in painting in undergrad, how important is it to have 3D work in my portfolio?

A: If you have 3D work you should put it in. If you only have 2D, you would likely be required to take our Summer Preparatory Studio. Unless you have taken a few design studios such as Harvard's Career Discovery program.

A: If you only have 2D work just be aware that they will be looking at the quality of your work as well as the composition of your portfolio. There are a lot of students without design/architecture backgrounds that are in the 3 year program

Q: Where do most grad students in the PennDesign school live? Are there on campus options for grad students or are most able to find housing near campus?

A: Most grad students live off-campus in West Philadelphia or Center City. You can live on campus as well in Sansom East/West but it is fairly easy to find off-campus housing.

A: I found a great place in old city, which is a little bit of a commute, but not more than 20min. It depends how close to campus you'd like to be. There are many options. And I believe there is a website that you can search available places for Penn students.

Q: What are the admissions statistics for the MArch program? How big is each year?

A: Admissions aims for about 70 students each year for the MArch class

Q: Are there a lot of students who are accepted straight from undergrad or does most of the class have previous work experience?

A: it's really a mix! I would say though that the majority have taken a few years off before starting grad school.

Q: Are there reports online about student careers post-graduating? Do most graduates enter professional fields?

A: Penn's Career Services posts the last 7 years of career plans surveys on their website: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/reports.php#grad> ; of course, the data is only representative of those alumni that chose to fill out the survey.

Q: Is it absolutely impossible that our applications be considered without official transcripts? Because overseas transcripts might take quite a while to reach PennDesign.

A: Your unofficial transcripts can be reviewed, but the review committee will like to see official transcripts because they are required documents. Also, please remember you must submit a WES evaluation for all transcripts from outside of the United States.

Q: Do you have any tips for people applying for the master in city planning with no previous work experience in urban planning?

A: There are students who come in without prior work experience in urban planning. As long as you show an interest in the field in your statement of purpose, I think you stand a fair chance.

Q: I will be moving with a spouse from out of state. Is it common for MCP students to be married

when entering the program and is there any support for students moving with a spouse, e.g. social groups for married students, housing options, etc?

A: There are several students that are married in the program. Penn family center does have support for families.

Q: What is the difference between mla2 and mla3?

A: The MLA2 program is for those with a BArch or BLA degree already. Their program is 2 years and when entering you combine with the cohort of the MLA3 students from the previous year as they enter their second year. The MLA3 program is designed for those without a professional degree in architecture or landscape architecture and is 3 years long

Q: Are there graduate teaching assistant positions available, and if so how competitive is it to get one of those positions?

A: There are TA positions, they are typically awarded according to your financial aid package, but exceptions can be made if an instructor requests you

Q: Hi, what is the funding situation at MFA program in UPenn?

A: We offer need- and merit-based scholarships, as well as teaching assistantships. That being said, the bulk of funding for our graduate students is Federal loan.

Q: How big the studio space in MFA program? Do students have 24/7 access?

A: The MFA students each have their own studio; generally around 12 by 12 feet but can vary by size. And yes, they have 24/7 access.

Q: How do most people finance their MCP education? Is it mostly through loans or are there funding options available through the school/university?

A: Most students finance their degree with a combination of loans, PennDesign merit- and need-based scholarships, savings, and at times, outside scholarships or government funding.

Q: How long is will the double major in Fine Arts and Landscape Arch take? and will it take the same time if we apply to the MLA in our second year?

A: The dual MFA/MLA program generally takes four years. You can start in one program and then apply to the second during your first year here. If you wait until your second year here, the program will probably be longer than four years.

Q: What do you suggest for portfolios of students with no previous design experience? What do admissions expect to see from students like this?

A: Portfolios for the MLA program can be used to show what you bring to the table. The MLA program here at Penn is great because people come from all different backgrounds and have really great diverse experiences. So if you have a unique undergrad course of study or work experience it would be best to showcase your expertise there, but also show how you can bring your own work to the MLA program and relate it to the design field. Basically if you don't have previous landscape work don't worry, because you can show how you will diversify the cohort and can bring more complexity to the group of students

A: For example my background was in engineering so I put in some CAD files and previous projects I had from a project team, but I also included still life drawings and figure drawings from art classes I took. So specificity and diversity is great

Q: What is PennDesign's relationship with the Philadelphia community and are there courses that incorporate experiential learning by collaborating with community groups and organizations?

A: PennDesign has a strong relationship with Philadelphia; many of the faculty are professors in practice, therefore making direct connections between PennDesign and the city.

Q: Is there any full funding opportunity for the MFA or travel grants and residencies for student proposed trip? Thanks a lot!

A: There are several full diversity scholarships that cover tuition but not living expenses. There are a few residency programs that you can apply for, but your best bet would be to contact the Chair of the Department, Joshua Mosley, for better information. I've heard of them but am not that familiar with them. His email address is jmosley@design.upenn.edu.

Q: What is the design area which MArch PennDesign really excels at or what areas/design issues do usually emphasize in the studio? Is it sustainability, parametric or something else?

A: That depends on the studio you choose, particularly in your second and third years. The first year studios focus mainly on designing space, introducing students to different programs etc. In your second and third year you're able to choose a studio professor that focuses on a topic you're interested in. Some emphasize sustainable design, some parametric design, they also vary on which programs they use. Basically, there's a lot of options.

Q: What do you want to see as part of a resume? Are there backgrounds more interesting than others?

A: The faculty review the application, but typically in your resume you want to include school/job/travel and other experiences that you think are relevant

Q: Would you say diversity in your portfolio is somewhat better than skill level at one particular art form/discipline?

A: I think both are important, breadth is key to show you can adapt to learning new things, but your specificity distinguishes you and shows your value to the cohort. That being said if you feel you don't have a diverse enough portfolio don't feel like you need to go and take a figure drawing class. Make your portfolio true to you and it will speak for itself

Q: would GIS work be a relevant thing to include?

A: Yeah that would be great; it is something we learn in media class so if you have the experience it would be great to highlight it!

Q: Are there academic or professional backgrounds that are preferred for the MCP program or is there a variety of backgrounds amongst the accepted students?

A: There are students from a variety of backgrounds in the current first years.

Q: Is there an opportunity for Americorps VISTA volunteers to have their application fee waived? If so, what is the process?

A: Yes. You have to submit your request to the admissions email admissions@design.upenn.edu. After it is approved, you will be given a personal fee waiver code.

Q: Every architecture student has a portfolio, most are outstanding and some are good, 70 students are accepted into Upenn yearly, I would like to ask mainly based on what decision? The main focus, statement of purpose or GRE?

A: The portfolio is the most heavily weighted. 100% the most important part of your application. Then the GRE/GPA

Q: What software currently many students in MArch use?

A: Rhino is a standard across studios, some professors focus more intensely on Maya or Grasshopper but again, these you will be introduced to in your first year, and in your second/third years you can

choose professors that focus on the type of design you're interested in, whether that be in maya or rhino etc.

Q: Is it required to send official transcripts from undergraduate universities as part of the application or are they required only after acceptance/enrollment?

A: It is a requirement for you to send official transcripts for the application.