Q: I am in the process of applying for scholarships in India and will only hear from them a few months later - Is it possible for the enrollment date to be pushed further upon request?

A: You would have to reach out to your department directly to inquire about a request like this.

Q: I'm curious about research opportunities in the MLA program. Can students pursue a research based thesis as their capstone instead of traditional design studios? If not, are there other research opportunities that students can pursue while enrolled?

A: There's no "thesis" per say, you can choose your last year or 700 level studio, which are presented at the beginning of the semester, so you can choose one which is aligned with your interests. You can also do an independent studio where you choose the site and the parameters of your studio exploration. Other than that you can also apply for a research position with a professor either to help with publications or other professors' interests outside of the classroom.

Q: I’d like to know about the employment rate of graduated students of MSD-AAD last year.

A: We don’t have statistics for that, but you should contact Professor Ali Rahim (alir@design.upenn.edu) He would likely have anecdotal information for you.

Q: Do you have an idea of how many RA or TA positions will be available for MCP students next year? Or the percentage of first-year students that are able to attain those position?

A: There is a good number and quite a few first year students get at least one. You should follow up with Prof. Tom Daniels (thomasld@design.upenn.edu)

Q: Are there any summer studios MSD students can take other than the Maya Crash course starting in August?

A: No, just the Digi blast course at the end of the summer. I would imagine that MSD students could take one of the summer programs abroad, but you would have to do it after your first fall and spring semesters, before your final semester.

Q: Evan How common is it to land a RA or TA in the HP department? What is the average pay per hour for these positions?

A: It is pretty common. Every year there is an email that goes around about available research positions. You select ones that are of interest and apply to them. You then hear back by the end of the year. I was awarded a research assistantship my first year and it was continued for my second year. I am aware of
many of my colleagues have also been awarded research positions. It really depends on what Professors are doing from semester to semester. Regarding TAs, I don’t have much experience. However, I do have a few friends of my TA-ing for HSPV classes and enjoy it quite a bit. Compiling documents from the library and datasets, etc. Regarding pay, I think there is some gradient depending on the position. I am compensated I think 10$/hr, which is the minimum--that is for the research positions. I think the TA is similar.

Q: I am deciding between Penn and Harvard for Urban Planning. Could you speak to the differences between the programs and highlight what is distinctive about Penn's MCP program?

A: I can speak to why I chose Penn, but I did not consider Harvard. One of the things I found distinctive about Penn is the curriculum that includes multiple studio-type experiences. Also, Philadelphia is a fantastic city to be in at the moment, with a burgeoning planning culture. There are a number of planning initiatives going on here, whether its green infrastructure or comprehensive planning or urban design that students can engage in while they are here. I did not personally apply to Harvard myself, but to answer your question, personally, I see Penn as much more forward thinking school where digitalization is not only being taught but also taken full advantage of to the fullest. I get the impression that Harvard is a traditional design school, where at Penn you really dig into digital representation, both in 2D, 3D and video making which expands your design possibilities by a tenfold. Ultimately, it depends on what type of education you desire, both are obviously great schools, one's just more Avant garde than the other. (All my opinion).

Q: How can students get involved in Penn's Landscape Architecture publications? Is it a class that students take, or do they get involved outside of class time? Is it competitive or difficult to find time in the typical MLA schedule to work on these publications?

A: For the MLA program there are various publications that are organized by faculty. There is an online journal called Scenario Journal, which is run by several professors while there is also a published journal called LA+ which comes out twice a year and is organized by Richard Weller, the MLA program chair and uses all student editors as well as guest publishers. The Scenario Journal is an extracurricular and I’m not sure if it counts as a research position and is paid, that you would have to work out with the faculty. For LA+, it is taken as a class credit and in terms of how competitive it, about 2-3 people per cohort are involved because it involves a good amount of time and there are pin ups and meetings for it. Links fyi: https://www.design.upenn.edu/landscape-architecture/research/scenario-journal

http://laplusjournal.com/

Q: Is the MLA (second professional degree) program achievable in two years? Do many students graduate?

A: Yes the second professional MLA program is two years long and almost everyone graduates!

Q: You mentioned multiple studio-type experiences. Are you able to please elaborate on that?
A: In your first year, you and 5-6 classmates will create a plan for a neighborhood or small city. In recent years, these workshops have focused on neighborhoods in Philadelphia and Queens. In your second year, you can choose a group studio focused on a specific topic or an individual thesis project. For the studio projects, you and your teammates will work directly with client agencies. Recent client agencies have included the Regional Plan Association (New York) and the city of Philadelphia. Many of these studios involve travel and projects in international locations, such as Beijing, Bogota, and London.

Q: Am I correct in assuming that an RA position would also imply a waiver of tuition fee?

A: No you would generally get paid a stipend of between $1500 and $2000 per semester.

Q: What kind of student projects get proposed at Penn Praxis? Are those real-time projects or project ideas by students?

A: Penn Praxis is a course you take during your summer semester. Last year there were 3 courses available, each with a specific focus. There was a conservation praxis, which took place in Jackson hole, Wyoming (which is the one I took) where we did conditions assessments of existing log cabins on the oldest extant dude ranch in America. Then we actually restored two of the cabins, dressed logs, dug foundations, straightening log walls, the whole works. It was fantastic. The other 2 courses dealt in preservation planning, where the group traveled to Serbia I believe. The last dealt in documentation and traveled to Chicago for the vernacular conference and worked in Philadelphia.

Q: Will there be robot arms this semester?

A: The plan is to install them this summer so that they will be here in the fall. But I'm not promising anything!

Q: I take it that Penn gives a lot of importance to digital representation. Would you say that digital representation or modelling also influences the design process significantly?

A: So, we have 2 digital classes (in the 2-year MLA) and 4 digital classes (in the 3 year MLA) that are mandatory as part of your core classes, so it is being taught and it is a significant portion of the curriculum. But, to balance that, in my studio right now (last semester) my professor is very concerned about being able to express your ideas in a manual manner, and then integrate computer and hand drawings, which helps enhance the drawings (and design) greatly. I believe it's all about balance in design, so the good thing is that you are taught how to do the digital representation in a class that's not studio, and then you can apply what you learn to your studio projects. I would say both manual and digital representation significantly influence the design process, but if you don't know how Grasshopper works, then there's no way to use it.

Q: This is for any of the students: how hard is it to find housing in Philly? Is it expensive? Are multiple roommates typical?

A: I did not have a tough time finding housing. A Facebook group is set up for all PennDesign admitted students and I found my present roommates through that group. In addition to the Facebook group,
UPenn also has an online room-mate and housing search that is pretty good. I have some friends who live with room-mates and pay around $400 a month and also some who pay upwards of $800 so it really depends on you. I would say there is a fair mix of students living in studios and with room-mates but it is cheaper to live with room-mates.

Q: Do students have an advisor that helps them create good synergies among the courses they choose?

A: There are no specific advisors, technically, Richard Weller, the chair is the advisor for all the MLA students. He has a very good open door policy and will go out of his way to meet with students and talk about academic courses as well as future career paths and summer jobs. But I would also say that any of the professors are also willing to take time out and help you decide some elective courses that would align with your interests.

Q: Is it difficult to enroll in elective courses in different concentrations for MCP students?

A: No, it is not difficult.

Q: You mentioned that first year studios are made up of groups of 5-6 students, how big are other courses typically?

A: The courses in your concentrations are 10-15 people. The core courses are either one section (with all first-year students in the MCP program) or two sections (with 1/2 the students).

Q: How many students are usually enrolled in the MLA program?

A: We generally have between 15 and 25 students entering each MLA program (first and second professional degrees). Altogether, about 90 students in MLA

Q: Are there opportunities for exchange programs or summer internships abroad?

A: There are travel studios which travel for a week to their site which usually are only in your 700 year. However there are 3 summer studios abroad which count as a credit and are offered through the architecture program but LA students go as well. I actually took part in the Colombia summer studio, and there are others offered in Greece and Paris as well and usually last a month.

Q: Would you say that the skills you learn through the course and the design studios help you understand and adapt to different environments world over?

A: Yeah, I would say so. In the course of my two years here, the first couple of studios were in the US (Pennsylvania and Chicago, IL) and the second year they were in Mexico and Ecuador. Other options were Spain, Morocco, San Antonio (TX), China, among others, so, the studios (as well as the studio professors) are everywhere around the world and you learn about different environments, plants, and cultures in order to successfully design in each place.

Q: I'm from India and I was wondering if the course would be able to help me deal with the conditions and complexities here if I choose to practice here someday.
A: For sure, Anu and Dillip historically have backgrounds in the LA application to India and feel free to look at their work: https://www.design.upenn.edu/landscape-architecture/people/anuradha-mathur