

# **ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES**

## **For Professional Programs In Landscape Architecture**



**Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board**

**American Society of Landscape Architects  
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Washington, D.C. 20001-3736**

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## Preface

The Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) accredits professional programs in landscape architecture. To do that, the Board creates and applies Accreditation *Standards* and Accreditation *Procedures* which LAAB develops with input from the community of interest. The Standards are qualitative statements of the essential conditions which a professional program in landscape architecture must meet to achieve accreditation. The Procedures identify the mission, goals, and values of LAAB, define the accreditation process and establish the basis for decision-making and action undertaken by the LAAB. LAAB regularly reviews and assesses the Standards and Procedures, at a minimum of every five years through a process articulated in the Accreditation Procedures.

This document contains the Accreditation Procedures.

## PREAMBLE

### Mission

The mission of LAAB is to evaluate, advocate for, and advance the quality of education in professional programs leading to a degree in landscape architecture.

### Identity

LAAB is the accrediting organization for professional landscape architecture degree programs. As such, LAAB develops standards to evaluate professional landscape architecture degree programs objectively and judges whether a school's professional landscape architecture degree program is in compliance with its accreditation standards.

LAAB is composed of landscape architecture practitioners and academicians, representatives from landscape architecture collateral organizations, and representatives of the public. The collateral organizations are the:

- American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)
- Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB)
- Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA)

### Values

To achieve its mission, LAAB seeks to

- hold itself to high ethical standards,
- uphold the standards it establishes in a non-punitive manner,
- promote and support diversity in its many forms,
- promote self-examination and self-analysis of programs and curriculum,
- achieve educational excellence as a predicate to professional excellence, and
- encourage education that prepares students to succeed in a changing world.

## Introduction to Accreditation

Accreditation is a nongovernmental, voluntary system of self-regulation and self-evaluation.

Accreditation can be sought at both institutional and specialized levels. Institutional accreditation is concerned with an institution as a whole, specialized accreditation with a specific degree program. The institution or program conducts a self-study to evaluate how well it is meeting its educational objectives. The accrediting agency then provides an independent assessment of that evaluation.

LAAB is a specialized accrediting agency for educational programs leading to professional degrees at the bachelor's or master's level. In addition to assessing how well a program meets its own specific and institutional educational mission and objectives, LAAB evaluates each program against standards that

define the essential educational components leading to entry-level professional competence. These standards are developed with input from the community of interest and are regularly reviewed and assessed.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation's (CHEA) recognition of accrediting organizations has three basic purposes:

**To advance academic quality**, accrediting organizations must have standards that

- advance academic quality in higher education;
- emphasize student achievement;
- emphasize high expectations of teaching and learning, research, and service; and
- are developed within the framework of the institutional mission.

**To demonstrate accountability**, accrediting organizations must ensure accountability through

- consistent, clear, and coherent communication to the public and to the higher-education community; and
- involvement of the public in accreditation decision making.

**To encourage purposeful change and needed improvement**, accrediting organizations must

- anticipate and address needed change,
- stress student achievement, and
- ensure long-range institutional viability.

LAAB has received CHEA recognition and must conform to CHEA standards.

## **Academic Quality**

Each LAAB-accredited program must maintain and monitor—and strive to advance—academic quality within its curriculum and its institution. “Academic quality” at its most basic means that a program satisfies—meets or exceeds—student and professional expectations. However, the program must reflect the institutional mission, thus providing diversity amongst programs and fostering innovation in practice, research, and service. The program must have specific processes to determine if its quality standards are being met; evaluation must be ongoing and forward-thinking. Academic quality is indicated not only by student achievement but also by high standards of teaching, research, and service. The goals and results of these activities should reflect both the institutional mission and that of the profession of landscape architecture.

## **Scope and Authority**

LAAB is recognized by CHEA as the official accrediting body for professional programs in landscape architecture. LAAB is a member of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA). CHEA reviews LAAB accreditation standards and procedures to ensure that they meet its standards.

The official scope of LAAB accreditation is "professional programs at the bachelor's or master's level." Other programs, such as pre-professional and advanced professional programs, lie outside LAAB's scope. LAAB reviews eligible programs in the United States and its territories.

LAAB is established in the ASLA bylaws:

### **Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board**

*916. There shall be a Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB). The board shall consist of twelve (12) members, including one (1) appointed by the Society who shall also serve as a member of the Committee on Education, one (1) appointed by the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA), and one (1) appointed by the Council of Landscape*

*Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB). The remaining members shall be appointed according to procedures established by LAAB. The board shall be an autonomous working group with responsibility to act in matters concerning accreditation of professional landscape architecture degree programs. Fees collected by LAAB shall cover the direct costs of accreditation visits and board meetings. The Society shall provide staff support and overhead for LAAB in an amount to be determined in the annual budget of the Society as established by the Board of Trustees.*

ASLA has established an administrative policy regarding LAAB:

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy shall be to affirm the American Society of Landscape Architects' (ASLA) commitment to and define its in-kind support for the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) as an autonomous working group with responsibility to act in matters concerning accreditation of professional landscape architecture degree programs.

### **Commitment**

ASLA has supported accreditation since the 1920s and will continue its commitment to the viability of LAAB for as long as such support is considered beneficial to the advancement of the profession of landscape architecture.

Decision-making authority in all matters concerning accreditation shall rest solely with LAAB. This authority shall include determination of accreditation policies and procedures, establishment of accreditation fees, and allocation of those funds to achieve its mission. ASLA will exert no influence over such decisions beyond that expressed by its one vote on the accreditation board.

In the best interests of its long-term health and stability, ASLA will expect LAAB's decisions to be fiscally responsible and generally follow ASLA management guidelines. ASLA will provide LAAB with a minimum of three (3) years notice of any reduction in the amount of support provided.

### **In-Kind Support**

ASLA will provide staffing support and overhead for the administration of LAAB's affairs. Such support will include: program management, accounting, meeting planning, and library/information resources. In addition, LAAB members and volunteers will be covered by applicable ASLA insurance policies appropriate to the mission and operations of LAAB.

*ASLA Administrative Policy, 2005; R2016*

### **Community of Interest**

Before adopting or revising any accreditation standard, LAAB seeks input from the "community of interest" which is defined as:

Administrators of accredited Landscape Architecture programs  
ASLA Board of Trustees

CELA  
ASLA National Student Representative  
ASLA Student Chapters  
CLARB/State Board Members  
Accrediting agencies  
ASLA members  
Roster of Visiting Evaluators (ROVE) members  
Canadian Society of Landscape Architects  
General public

The community of interest will have a minimum of 30 days to comment on any proposed revisions. Landscape architecture accreditation standards and procedures are reviewed by the LAAB every five years.

## Membership

LAAB is responsible for judging whether a program is in compliance with its accreditation standards. The 12-member board consists of representatives from ASLA, CELA, and CLARB, three landscape architecture educators, three landscape architecture practitioners, and three representatives of the public, all appointed for three-year terms.

Appointments are arranged so the terms of no more than one educator, one practitioner, and one public member expire in the same year. LAAB members are limited to two consecutive terms of appointment without a break in service. New LAAB members are selected by a vote of current members, with consideration given to diversity, inclusion, professional experiences, and regional representation. Educators and practitioners must have served on three accreditation visits before being appointed to LAAB. The three public members are selected from nominations received at large and cannot be affiliated with a landscape architecture program. Replacement members to fill unexpired terms are appointed in the same manner as original appointees.

## Definitions, Interpretation, and Application

**Accreditation:** Accreditation is a voluntary process of peer review designed to evaluate programs on the basis of their own stated objectives and the accreditation standards that follow.

**Accreditation Procedures:** Accreditation Procedures define the accreditation process and establish the basis for decision-making and action undertaken by the Board.

**Administrative Probationary Accreditation Status:** Administrative Probationary Accreditation Status is assigned when an institution or professional program does not meet its administrative obligations. LAAB assigns this status if the institution or professional program fails to comply with one or more of the following requirements:

- paying annual fees within 90 days of the invoice date,
- paying a late fee by the due date,
- submitting reports or other required information within 45 days of the due date, or
- agreeing to a reasonable onsite evaluation visit date at or near the time established by LAAB staff.

Administrative Probationary Accreditation is an accreditation category not subject to appeal. The professional program is recognized and listed as accredited with this designation until the requirement(s) that was not met has been fully satisfied. Failure to completely remedy the situation by the date specified in the probationary letter may result in revocation of accreditation.

**Assessment:** Assessment is the process by which a professional program or institution’s level of compliance with or achievement of the criteria relevant to its accreditation is evaluated.

**Candidacy Status:** Candidacy Status is an accreditation classification granted to a professional program that is in the planning or early stages of development, or in an intermediate stage of program implementation.

**Compliance:** Compliance with a standard is achieved when LAAB concludes, after review of relevant indicators or other evidence, that the standard is met or met with recommendation, as defined below. To achieve LAAB accreditation, a professional program must demonstrate to LAAB—through the Self-Evaluation Report, site visit, and technical accuracy review of the Visiting Team’s Report—that it complies with all standards.

**Considerations for Improvement:** Considerations for Improvement are informal counsel offered to a professional program as a part of the Visiting Team’s Report but not included in the final action letter from LAAB to the professional program. These may be areas where the professional program can build on a strength or address an area of concern that does not directly affect accreditation at the time of the LAAB review.

**Criteria:** Each LAAB standard has one or more criteria statements that define the components needed to satisfy the standard. Failure to satisfy a criterion does not automatically lead to the assessment of a standard as not met. To be accredited, a professional program must demonstrate progress toward meeting the criteria. In this document, criteria are identified by letters (for example: **A. Program Mission**).

**Diversity:** Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, we embrace a broader definition of diversity that also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. Our definition also includes diversity of thought, ideas, perspectives, and values. We also recognize that some individuals affiliate with multiple identities.

**Equity:** Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people. At the same time, equity also demands that we identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Equity asks us to create greater justice and fairness in not only an institution’s procedures and processes, but also in an institution’s outcomes, including the distribution of its resources. Addressing equity issues effectively will require all of us to gain an ongoing understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities.

**Faculty Full-Time Equivalence (FTE):** The FTE is a figure representing the aggregated time committed by full- and part-time faculty members to teaching in a department or professional program, including faculty who have their duties or teaching assignments split between an undergraduate and a graduate program and faculty who have their assignments split between disciplines. For purposes of calculation, a faculty member with a part-time appointment of 50 percent (and, presumably, a teaching/scholarship/service assignment roughly equivalent to half that of a full-time faculty member) would be assigned a 0.5 FTE. A full-time faculty member with duties in only one department would be assigned an FTE of 1.0 for that department.

**Final Action Letter:** A final action letter is an official communication from LAAB to a professional program reporting its accreditation status and any recommendations affecting accreditation.

**Inclusion:** Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, valued, and supported to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. It is important to note that while an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group is not always inclusive. Increasingly, recognition of unconscious or implicit bias helps organizations to be deliberate about addressing issues of inclusivity.

**Initial Accreditation:** The first period of accreditation for a professional program leading to a degree in landscape architecture is initial accreditation. LAAB initial accreditation applies to degrees awarded up to two years prior to initial accreditation by LAAB.

**Intent:** A statement of intent explains the purpose of a standard.

**Interim Report:** An interim report is required for any program that is given one or more Recommendations Affecting Accreditation.

**Long-Range Plan:** A long-range plan is the output of a process that examines the mission, goals, objectives, and aspirations of a professional program over a minimum of three years. A strategic plan may be a long-range plan provided it meets the terms of this definition.

**Professional Program:** A professional program in landscape architecture encompasses the body of knowledge common to the profession and promotes acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary to enter professional practice. Such a professional program has an academic offering based on a mission that articulates its purpose and goals and comprises the coursework and other learning experiences leading to a degree. It also has an administration, faculty, staff, facilities, and services that support, sponsor, and provide its mission and learning experiences and complies with these Standards. At the bachelor's level, a professional program is typically conducted in a context enriched by the liberal arts along with the natural and social sciences. At the master's level, a professional program also includes instruction in and application of research and scholarly methods.

**Program Administrator:** A program administrator is responsible for the operation of the professional program in compliance with the Standards.

**Recommendations Affecting Accreditation:** Recommendations Affecting Accreditation (Recommendations) are issues of serious concern that directly affect the quality of a professional program. Recommendations are issued when a visiting team assesses a standard as "Standard Met with Recommendation" or "Standard Not Met." Recommendations are derived from the identified areas of weakness in meeting a standard as described in the rationale sections of a visiting team's report. The professional program is required to submit an Interim Report for each Recommendation issued during an initial accreditation or accreditation renewal. Recommendations identify issues; they do not prescribe solutions.

**Self-Evaluation Report (SER):** A SER is a document prepared by a professional program that describes its expectations, operations, and resources; assesses its progress toward meeting its mission, goals, and objectives; and measures its performance against the criteria for accreditation.

**Shall:** In official LAAB standards and criteria, "shall" indicates mandatory actions for a professional program or institution.

**Standards:** Standards are qualitative statements of the essential conditions an accredited professional program must meet to achieve accreditation.

***Standard Met:*** A “Standard Met” designation indicates that overall program performance in the relevant area meets LAAB minimum standards. LAAB may judge a standard as met even though one or more indicators within the standard are not minimally met.

***Standard Met with Recommendation:*** A “Standard Met with Recommendation” designation indicates that deficiencies exist in an area that bears directly on accreditation. The problem or problems have observable effects on the overall quality of the professional program.

***Standard Not Met:*** A “Standard Not Met” designation means that a cited deficiency is so severe that the overall quality of a professional program is compromised and its ability to deliver adequate landscape architecture education is impaired.

***Track:*** A Track is an organized curricular or course of study path through a professional program leading to a degree.

# ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

## Candidacy Status

To assist non-accredited programs, LAAB has created a Candidacy status to help programs prepare for the accreditation process. Candidacy is an accreditation classification that may be granted to a program in the planning or early stages of development or in an intermediate stage of program implementation. This accreditation status is required prior to applying for initial accreditation, and this classification provides evidence to the educational institution, licensing bodies, and the public that at the time of evaluation, the developing education program is working toward and appears capable of meeting the standards set forth in the requirements for an accredited educational program in landscape architecture. All new programs need to obtain candidacy status prior to applying for initial accreditation even if the program belongs to an institution that already has an LAAB-accredited program.

The purpose of the candidacy period is to allow a professional program working toward becoming accredited to establish a stable, constructive, ongoing, and helpful partnership with LAAB. A program designated as a candidate has voluntarily committed to work toward LAAB accreditation. Candidacy status signifies that the program is demonstrating reasonable progress toward the attainment of accreditation. However, Candidacy status does not indicate accredited status nor does it guarantee eventual accreditation.

To achieve Candidacy status a program must meet the minimum requirements for achieving and maintaining accredited status except for the faculty FTE requirements. However, before a program can apply for initial accreditation, the minimum faculty requirements for its type of degree program listed in the LAAB accreditation standards must be met.

After achieving Candidacy status, a program must apply for initial accreditation within one year of its first graduating class. If initial accreditation is not granted, the program can retain its Candidacy status for one additional year.

To achieve Candidacy status, a program must submit a SER and undergo a program review. A program review is an abbreviated evaluation during which one member of LAAB or one of its visiting evaluators reviews the program's SER and conducts a two- or three-day visit to the program. LAAB then reviews the report and determines whether the program should be granted Candidacy status. In addition, LAAB makes recommendations of ways the program can continue to advance toward meeting the accreditation standards. The program is responsible for the expenses of the program-review visitor.

LAAB members vote on whether to grant a program Candidacy status at the next scheduled LAAB meeting, after reviewing the program's SER and the program review report. If LAAB decides not to grant Candidacy status, this decision is not subject to appeal. The program is informed in writing of LAAB's decision.

After achieving Candidacy status, a program is required to submit a progress report to LAAB annually.

A program that has achieved Candidacy status must pay an annual sustaining fee. (A fee schedule can be obtained from the LAAB office.)

## Initial Accreditation

A program with Candidacy status can apply for initial accreditation once it 1) meets the Minimum Requirements for Achieving and Maintaining Accredited Status as outlined in the Accreditation Standards, and 2) has had at least one graduating class. Accreditation applies to degrees awarded up to two years prior to initial accreditation by LAAB.

A program should notify LAAB of its intention to apply for initial accreditation at least four months before a requested accreditation visit. A program must have had one graduating class and meet accreditation requirements 1 through 11 (see Minimum Requirements for Achieving and Maintaining Accredited Status) before a visit can be scheduled. The accreditation process is the same whether a program is applying for initial accreditation or accreditation renewal.

## **Self-Evaluation Report**

All programs applying for accreditation prepare a SER following the required LAAB format. The SER describes the program's mission and objectives, its self-assessment, and its future plans; provides a detailed response to the recommendations of the previous visiting team; and details the program's compliance with each accreditation standard. It is important that faculty, administrators, and students participate in preparing the report; the SER must include a statement explaining the participation of each group.

Because accreditation is a voluntary process, LAAB cannot conduct a review without an invitation or written notice of approval from the chief executive officer of a candidate program's parent institution. This invitation and notice of preferred dates for the LAAB accreditation visit must be submitted at least four months prior to the proposed visit.

LAAB staff notifies each program of the accreditation schedule and LAAB deadlines. By August 1 (for fall reviews) or December 15 (for spring reviews), the program must submit one copy of the SER, in electronic format, to LAAB staff and one copy of the SER with the proposed visit schedule to each member of its visiting team.

If the documents are not submitted by this deadline, the program may be notified that the visit must be postponed. In the case of a currently accredited program, this may result in the suspension or expiration of accreditation.

The program is responsible for all costs incurred plus an administrative fee. (A fee schedule can be obtained from the LAAB office.)

## **Roster of Visiting Evaluators**

LAAB maintains the Roster of Visiting Evaluators (ROVE). Visiting team members are selected from this roster. There are three categories of evaluators:

**landscape architecture educators** who hold a professional degree in landscape architecture, teach in an accredited program, and hold the minimum academic rank of tenured associate professor;

**academic administrators** (current or former) who hold the minimum rank of assistant or associate dean, or equivalent, including non-landscape-architects, and who hold terminal degrees in their respective fields; and

**landscape architecture practitioners** who have a professional degree in landscape architecture and at least five full years of practice experience.

Exceptions to these criteria must be approved by the LAAB chair.

To ensure wide representation of the community of interest, each accredited program is invited to nominate one landscape architecture educator and one academic administrator. Similarly, each ASLA

chapter is encouraged to nominate a practitioner to ROVE. LAAB also seeks nominations from other sources, such as individuals and organizations (such as CELA and CLARB). LAAB reviews nominations for ROVE and makes appointments to the roster. Appointments are for five years and are renewable. Information on file for all ROVE members includes current location, school affiliations, and previous visits, as well as a résumé.

### **Visiting Team Selection**

The visiting team for an accreditation visit consists of one landscape architecture educator, one practitioner, and one academic administrator. The LAAB chair selects a proposed visiting team from ROVE and designates one member as team chair.

Teams are selected to avoid potential conflicts of interest. For example, a previous affiliation with the program under review, or an affiliation with a program in the same geographic region competing for enrollments or funding renders an evaluator ineligible. All ROVE members participating in a review of a course of study leading to a professional MLA degree must hold advanced degrees.

The program is advised of the proposed team, including each proposed team member's present position, experience, and areas of expertise. The program has the right to challenge one team member for cause. A challenge can be made if the nominee comes from the same geographic region and is affiliated with a competing institution, if the nominee had a previous affiliation with the institution, or if the institution can demonstrate that the nominee is not competent to evaluate the program. However, the final decision on team assignments rests with the LAAB chair.

When the visiting team's composition and the date of the visit are finalized, the team and the program are formally notified by LAAB. Any subsequent change in team makeup because of scheduling conflicts or emergencies is made in consultation with the program.

Where special conditions warrant, such as providing team-member training or assisting with site-evaluation procedures and matters of due process, a four-person team may be assembled, with the fourth member designated as an observer. At the discretion of the LAAB chair, one of the following may accompany the visiting team: a LAAB member, ASLA's Director of Education and Accreditation, a landscape architecture educator who has a specialist background relevant to the program under review, an educator from a related design profession, or a ROVE member participating for training purposes.

### **Observer Responsibilities**

An observer may participate in discussions as invited by the visiting team chair. For example, an educator assigned as an observer training to become a visiting team member may be asked to participate in reviews of student work and may ask questions at interviews that the educator member of the team would typically ask. However, the goal of the observer is to prepare to be a future team member.

### **Cooperation with Other Accrediting Agencies and State Agencies**

LAAB seeks to reduce the burden of accreditation on landscape architecture programs by participating with other accrediting bodies if the program under review so requests. The schedule and arrangements must ensure that all aspects of the LAAB review can be accomplished.

### **Pre-Visit Responsibilities: Visiting Team**

The team chair is responsible for making assignments and assembling the visiting team's report. Team members receive the Accreditation Standards and Procedures and the LAAB Visiting Team Guidelines,

and are expected to become thoroughly familiar with these documents before the accreditation visit. Each visiting team member must carefully review the SER of the program applying for accreditation and carry out assignments as the team chair directs.

### **Pre-Visit Responsibilities: Program**

LAAB staff schedules the dates of the accreditation visit after conferring with the team and the program's parent institution. The program is responsible for making all lodging arrangements for the visiting team. Hotel accommodations must be comfortable and reasonably priced; where possible, the program should select on-campus facilities such as those for visiting faculty or guest lecturers. (LAAB is responsible for the travel, lodging, and meal expenses of the visiting team.) Institutions with more than one campus are responsible for the transportation costs between the campuses, including additional airfare (e.g., additional costs for flying into one airport and out of another) if applicable.

By August 1 (for fall reviews) or December 15 (for spring reviews), the program prepares the visit schedule and forwards it to the team members and LAAB staff, along with the SER.

### **Sample Visit Schedule**

The following is a sample schedule of activities for a visiting team of the LAAB. This example allows time for all necessary meetings and inspections as well as for report preparation.

#### **Day 1 (Sunday)**

- 12:00 noon Team arrival and check-in.
- 2:00 p.m. Review of student work and facilities.
- 6:00 p.m. Meeting with administrator of the landscape architecture program to finalize schedule and to discuss the program in general.
- 8:00 p.m. Executive session: confirm team member assignments and plan how the team will conduct various interviews and meetings during the visit.

#### **Day 2 (Monday)**

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast with program administrator.
- 9:00 a.m. Meeting with chief executive officer of the institution.
- 9:30 a.m. Meeting with immediate supervisor of the program administrator.
- 10:00 a.m. Familiarization tour of the landscape architectural facilities. (Tour should be brief and may be scheduled for Sunday or Monday, depending on team's arrival schedule).
- 10:30 a.m. Presentation of curriculum by faculty to visiting team. (This presentation demonstrates how the program accomplishes its mission through the curriculum and includes a review of student work from each class and sequence.)

- 12:00 noon Lunch with recent graduates and practitioners, at the discretion of the team and the school. (This meeting is an opportunity to evaluate graduates' satisfaction with the educational process and the degree to which the program prepared them to perform entry-level functions.)
- 1:30 p.m. Interviews with students and faculty. (It is recommended that student interviews take place before faculty interviews. Student interviews are usually conducted with students grouped by year. Faculty interviews are usually a series of individual interviews at half-hour intervals, to discuss impressions of the program—strengths, weaknesses, faculty input, and faculty development. Group faculty interviews may be conducted if they are acceptable to the faculty and the team.)
- 3:00 p.m. Break.
- 3:15 p.m. Interviews with students and faculty (continued).
- 5:00 p.m. Break for the day.
- 7:00 p.m. Team dinner and executive session to review findings.

**Day 3 (Tuesday)**

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast with program administrator.
- 9:00 a.m. Interviews with students and faculty (continued).
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch with other department heads.
- 1:30 p.m. Interviews with students and faculty (if necessary); inspection of library and other supporting facilities, such as computing center, special services, etc.
- 3:00 p.m. Team executive session: preparation of report.

**Day 4 (Wednesday)**

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast with program administrator to advise of team findings.
- 9:00 a.m. Review of team findings with chief executive officer of the institution.
- 9:45 a.m. Discussions of team findings with immediate supervisor of program administrator.
- 10:30 a.m. Report of team findings to landscape architecture faculty (may be combined with report to students at team's discretion).
- 11:15 a.m. Report of team findings to students (may be combined with report to faculty at team's discretion).
- 12:00 noon Lunch, followed by departure from campus.

## **Special Schedule Considerations**

Team members may conduct interviews by telephone or video conferencing with people who are unable to meet with them on campus, such as alumni, practitioners, or faculty on leave. The chief executive officer of the campus should be interviewed both at the beginning and at the end of the team's visit. Early inspection of space and facilities and an examination of work produced by students in the program are vital. No evening events (other than executive sessions) should be scheduled; the team needs this time to work on its report and prepare for the next day.

The team members meet in executive session to prepare a complete report in draft form and to decide on an advisory recommendation to LAAB on the program's accreditation status. The content of this report, except the advisory recommendation, is discussed with the chief executive of the institution, as well as the program administrator, faculty, and students, particularly in regard to strengths and weaknesses of the program, recommendations affecting accreditation, and considerations for program improvement.

Visits may be conducted remotely/virtually with Board approval. LAAB will provide additional instructions at such time.

## **Visiting Team Report**

The Visiting Team Guidelines, which the team members receive along with the Accreditation Standards and Procedures before the visit, include a format for the team's report, which is designed to ensure a response to all the LAAB requirements and accreditation standards. The team chair makes writing assignments as necessary and is responsible for compiling the report.

Within 10 days of the last day of the visit, the visiting team's chair finishes compiling the report and sends copies to the other team members and LAAB staff for review. The report may be edited for grammar, spelling, and style. The team members send their comments to LAAB staff. Any substantive changes or additions must be referred to the team chair and may result in distribution of the report to the team to review a second time.

## **Institutional Response**

Within 30 days of the last day of the visit, LAAB staff sends copies to the chief executive officer and the program administrator of the institution for their comments and review of its technical accuracy.

Within 15 days following receipt of the team report, the institution must submit its institutional response (substantive comments and corrections) to LAAB staff. The program shall respond to any standard that is assessed as "Standard Met with Recommendation" or "Standard Not Met." This response should include any documentation the program administrator deems pertinent.

The team report and institutional response are sent to the LAAB members at least three weeks before the next scheduled LAAB meeting. (LAAB meetings typically take place in February and July.)

## **Vacating of Application for Accreditation**

Any time before action by LAAB, an institution may vacate its application for accreditation without penalty by notifying in writing both the LAAB chair and LAAB staff. LAAB will not refund fees, and the program will be assessed for expenses incurred by LAAB.

## **LAAB Review and Decision**

The accreditation review decision will take place at the next scheduled LAAB meeting. LAAB may consult with a member of the visiting team (usually the chair) and/or the program administrator in order

to clarify items in the team report or institutional response. LAAB's decision will be based on the program's SER and annual reports, the visiting team's report, and the institution's response.

Any adverse accreditation decision—either accreditation denial or withdrawal of accreditation—will be substantiated with specific reasons, and program administrators will be notified of their right to appeal any such decision. (See Appeal Process, below.) A program that has not been granted accredited status, or a program from which accreditation has been withdrawn, may reapply for accreditation when its administrators believe the program meets current requirements.

## **LAAB Actions**

Accreditation is granted for a period of one to six years. LAAB may vary the term within this range at its discretion; reasons for such variance are supplied to the program. The official action letter to the institution indicates the date on which accreditation will expire. A program may apply for an accreditation review at any time before its term expires but may not defer a visit to extend its term.

The annually published list of accredited programs includes the accredited status of each program along with its next scheduled accreditation review.

LAAB publishes actions of accreditation, provisional accreditation, suspension of accreditation, accreditation denial, and withdrawal of accreditation in *LAND Online*.

LAAB can take the following actions:

### ***Accreditation***

Accreditation is granted when a program meets all standards or has one or more standards met with recommendation, and continued overall program quality and conformance to standards are judged likely to be maintained. Accreditation may be granted for up to six years.

A program receiving accreditation will be required to submit an interim report for each recommendation and may be required to submit a special progress report at the discretion of LAAB.

### ***Provisional Accreditation***

Provisional accreditation is granted when a program has one or more standards met with recommendation and the cited deficiencies are such that continued overall program quality or conformation to standards is uncertain. Provisional accreditation may be granted for up to two years and may not be granted more than twice without an intervening period of accreditation. Provisional status is not deemed to be an adverse action and is not subject to appeal.

### ***Initial Accreditation***

Initial accreditation is granted on a first review when a program has obtained Candidacy status, meets all standards at least minimally, and the program's continued development and conformation to the accreditation standards is deemed likely. Initial accreditation may be granted for up to six years.

A program receiving initial accreditation must submit a special progress report after two or three years (as determined by LAAB). LAAB will review the progress report to determine if an accreditation review should be conducted immediately or as originally scheduled when initial accreditation was granted.

### ***Suspension of Accreditation***

Suspension of accreditation results if a program fails to maintain good standing for administrative reasons. This determination is not subject to appeal.

### ***Accreditation Denial***

Accreditation denial results when a program fails to meet one or more standards. This determination is subject to appeal.

### ***Withdrawal of Accreditation***

Withdrawal of accreditation results if a program fails to comply with accreditation standards. This determination is subject to appeal.

## **Notification of LAAB Action**

A program's parent institution is officially notified of LAAB's action with a letter. Copies of the letter are sent to the program administrator and visiting team.

LAAB retains a copy of a program's most-recent SER.

## **Confidentiality**

LAAB treats all material generated by a program and by LAAB for its accreditation review as confidential. However, LAAB encourages the widest dissemination of all accreditation materials within the institution. Both the team report and the SER are considered to be the property of the institution. LAAB reserves the right to release a complete team report should the institution release a portion of the report that might, in the judgment of LAAB, present a biased or distorted view of the site evaluation's findings.

## **Reference to Accredited Status**

A program's accreditation status must be clearly conveyed in all program and institutional literature, including online disclosure. In particular, if a program offers more than one course of study leading to the same degree (e.g., first-professional and post-professional MLAs), program literature must identify which course(s) of study is (are) accredited.

## **Delaying a Scheduled Accreditation Visit**

From time to time, a program may want to delay a scheduled accreditation visit because of unexpected circumstances. LAAB will grant a site visit delay for up to one academic year if the following conditions are met:

- The program received a six-year term of accreditation at its last review,
- the program is in compliance with minimum requirements for achieving and maintaining accredited status, and
- the program has submitted all fees and required reports.

For a program to be granted a delay, the program's school dean or higher-ranking administrator must submit a request in writing, and the program must pay a visit-delay fee. (A fee schedule can be obtained from the LAAB office.) If the request for delay is received after selection of the visiting team has begun, the program must pay a fee plus any visit related expenses that have been incurred (e.g., non-refundable airline tickets).

If an institution is scheduled to have two programs reviewed at the same time, only one delay fee is charged (if both programs meet above conditions). Regular annual fees still apply.

## **Rescheduling Visit**

When a program has been granted a delay and its visit is to be rescheduled, it must cede priority for visit dates to programs hosting visits in their regular cycles.

A delayed visit cannot be postponed a second time for any reason. If the rescheduled review does not take place, the program's accreditation will lapse. If a program then chooses to reapply for accreditation, it will go through the initial accreditation process.

## **Term of Accreditation**

When LAAB takes action, the grant of accreditation will begin from the originally scheduled review date regardless of any rescheduling of the program's site visit.

## **Annual Report**

Each accredited program submits an annual report to allow LAAB to monitor the program's continuing compliance with accreditation requirements. Annual reports are due August 1, and late reporting will incur a late fee. (A fee schedule can be obtained from the LAAB office.) The report must include notice of:

- changes in curriculum, personnel, administration, fiscal support, and physical facilities that have occurred since the last report;
- current enrollment;
- number of graduates expected for the current academic year; and
- employment or enrollment in graduate school for the previous year's graduates.

LAAB may choose to alert the program administrator as well as the institution's chief executive officer of its concern regarding potential effects of reported changes.

## **Interim Report**

At the time of initial accreditation or accreditation renewal, programs that are given recommendations will be responsible for submitting an annual Interim Report on the status of their progress toward addressing the recommendations.

- An Interim Report on recommendations shall be submitted for each recommendation that a program receives.
- Programs will be given up to two years to resolve their recommendations. Interim Reports describing their efforts to resolve the recommendations shall be submitted to LAAB staff within two years of the receipt of their Action Letter.
- Upon receipt of the two-year Interim Report, LAAB will accept that the recommendations have been addressed or, if not, the program will be given two more years to resolve the issues. A second Interim Report will be due to LAAB on or before four years from the receipt of the Action Letter. If the recommendations are not successfully resolved or if, in the case of longer-term issues, substantial and verifiable progress has not been made at that time (after four years from the Action Letter) then the program may be moved to provisional status, it may be suspended, or in some cases the program's accreditation may be revoked.
- If LAAB accepts that the recommendations have been successfully resolved the program shall receive a letter from the LAAB Chair or LAAB staff releasing them from their interim reporting responsibility. Programs receiving such a letter will no longer be required to provide status updates. If LAAB determines that the program has made substantial verifiable progress, but that

the recommendations are not completely resolved, the program must report on resolution of the recommendations in its next SER.

- If a program is given Provisional Accreditation there is no need to do interim reporting.
- A LAAB member will be assigned as the Principal Reader (PR) to each program that is required to submit an interim report. The PR will review the interim report submission and will either recommend the item be placed on the Interim Reports consent agenda (assuming successful resolution of the recommendations) or recommend placing it on the discussion agenda under Interim Reports.
- An Interim Reporting template, which is located on LAAB's website, has been developed that provides the format and structure for a program to report on recommendation actions.

## **Policy on Substantive Change**

In order to support accredited programs as they make changes between regular accreditation visits, LAAB offers consultative reviews of proposed changes prior to submission of an official request for Substantive Change. An institution is encouraged to report any substantive change in a program to LAAB prior to its implementation; it must be reported in a program's annual report. Primary responsibility for reporting a Substantive Change rests with the program or institution administrator.

A Substantive Change is any change that compromises a program's ability to meet one or more of the standards approved and published by LAAB or that makes a program unable to meet any of the minimum requirements for maintaining accredited status as listed in the Accreditation Standards.

Procedures and forms for reporting a Substantive Change may be obtained from the LAAB website. A response regarding a Substantive Change will be provided by LAAB or LAAB staff within 30 days. The program or institution administrator must respond to LAAB within 30 days to remain in good standing.

## **Special Reports**

From time to time, LAAB may require programs to prepare special reports to describe or explain a certain issue or problem. These issues will be ones that LAAB believes require additional clarification beyond what is included in annual reports and interim reports; deadlines for submitting such reports may differ from the annual report due date.

## **Maintaining Good Standing**

To maintain good standing, a program must continuously meet the minimum requirements for achieving and maintaining accredited status. LAAB must be informed if any of these requirements cannot be met during an accreditation period.

Should a program fail to maintain good standing, accreditation may be suspended or withdrawn.

## **Suspension of Accreditation**

Should a program fail to maintain good standing for administrative reasons (e.g., failure to pay required fees or submit required reports) accreditation may be suspended. Before taking this action, LAAB sends a show-cause letter requesting that the program explain why accreditation should not be suspended.

Because suspension of accreditation occurs only for administrative reasons, it is not subject to appeal. A program whose term of accreditation has been suspended will be so listed on the official list of accredited programs. Suspensions of accreditation are published in *LAND Online*. Students attending a program with

suspended accreditation are considered to be attending an accredited program. A program can be suspended for a maximum of one year (12 months). LAAB will begin procedures to withdraw accreditation to take effect immediately when the maximum period of suspension is reached.

If evidence of remedial action is submitted and judged adequate within the one-year period of suspension, reinstatement of the previous grant of accreditation may be made.

### **Withdrawal of Accreditation**

Should a program fail to comply with accreditation standards, accreditation may be withdrawn. Before withdrawing accreditation, LAAB sends a show-cause letter requesting that the program explain why accreditation should not be withdrawn. LAAB may suggest to the program that an accreditation visit is in order. Withdrawal of accreditation is an adverse action and can be appealed. (See Appeal Process, below.)

If the program's parent institution or another program within the institution is placed on probationary status or has accreditation withdrawn by an accrediting agency, LAAB may send a show-cause letter to the landscape architecture program to determine the program's current condition.

### **Accreditation Fees**

The current LAAB fee schedule can be obtained from the LAAB office.

## **APPEAL PROCESS**

When LAAB takes adverse action on accreditation, it provides specific reasons for that action to the program administrator and the chief executive of the institution. Adverse actions include denial or withdrawal of accreditation.

Recipients of adverse action are advised of their right to appeal. An appeal must be based on one or more of the following issues:

- whether LAAB and/or the visiting team conformed to the procedures described in this document; and/or
- whether LAAB and/or the visiting team correctly assessed the program's compliance with the accreditation standards.

Appeals based on challenges to accreditation standards or procedures will be dismissed. Institutions differing with LAAB on the standards and procedures established in this document are invited to forward comments to LAAB, which regularly reviews the standards.

A written notice of appeal signed by the chief executive officer of the program's parent institution must be submitted within 20 days of notice of LAAB's action letter. The appeal must be sent to LAAB staff, who shall notify the LAAB chair. The program must submit within 60 days of LAAB's action a comprehensive written statement of all the reasons for the appeal. Failure to submit this statement within 60 days of notice of LAAB's action is equivalent to withdrawing the appeal. During the appeal period, the accredited status of the program before the adverse action does not change. The record of the action upon which the appeal is based shall be limited to the material that was presented to LAAB at its scheduled meeting from which the action letter was issued. The program bears the cost of the appeal.

## **Appeal Panel**

The LAAB chair appoints an appeal panel comprising three persons, including its chair. Each person must have knowledge of and experience with the accreditation of educational institutions or programs. One member of the appeal panel may be a former member of LAAB. One member of the panel may be challenged by the institution for cause; if the challenge is successful, the chair of LAAB appoints a replacement. Panel members may serve concurrently on other ASLA committees, councils, or boards, excluding only LAAB.

## **Authority**

The appeal panel, by concurrence of a majority of the members, may either affirm LAAB's decision or recommend to LAAB that it reconsider the decision.

LAAB must review the case if the appeal panel recommends reconsideration. Reasonable scheduling is at LAAB's discretion. In any case remanded to LAAB, the recommendation of the appeal panel does not bind or limit LAAB in any way. The final decision on accreditation rests with LAAB.

The appeal panel may promulgate additional rules for the scheduling and conduct of hearings, provided they are consistent with the procedures specified below. The appeal panel has no jurisdiction or authority over the reasonableness of the accreditation standards and procedures, which is a matter properly in the exclusive jurisdiction of LAAB.

No adverse action is published until the resolution of any appeal.

## **Hearing of Appeal**

The chair of the appeal panel designates the time and place of the hearing, which takes place no later than 45 days after receipt of the program's comprehensive written statement.

The chair presides at the hearing and rules on all procedural matters. All three members of the panel must be present.

Both the institution and LAAB may submit briefs before the hearing in a manner prescribed by the appeal panel. The panel also reviews the documents that LAAB had at the time it made its original decision: visiting team report, SER, and the institution's technical-accuracy-review comments.

The hearing is as informal as is reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances. A party may appear by or with counsel or other representative. The program or institution may waive personal appearance, in which case the matter will be decided solely on the basis of briefs and written statements. The final decision on accreditation rests with LAAB.

## **Decision of the Appeal Panel**

Every decision must have the concurrence of a majority of the appeal panel's members. Within 30 days after the conclusion of the hearing, the appeal panel issues a written decision stating its reasons and recommendations, if any, to LAAB. The decision indicates the members of the appeal panel concurring. A dissenting opinion may be filed. LAAB furnishes the majority decision and the dissenting opinion, if any, to the institution.

If the appeal panel affirms the LAAB decision, there is no further remedy available within these procedures.

If the appeal panel recommends reconsideration of the decision, the determination thereafter by LAAB shall be final.

### **Expenses of Appeal Hearing and Deposit**

The program bears the following expenses in connection with the appeal:

- travel and subsistence for the appeal panel members and others, such as team chair and LAAB representative; and
- the cost of the hearing room.

A deposit must be made with LAAB at the time of the filing of the notice of appeal, to be applied to the expenses listed above. Before the hearing, LAAB may increase the amount of deposit required to meet a realistic estimate of the expenses involved.

### **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

A complaint is defined as a written statement submitted by a person or persons expressing substantial dissatisfaction with the quality of a program or its review as conducted according to current accreditation standards and procedures. Copies of all correspondence in such cases shall always be sent to these four concerned parties: complainant, program administrator, chief executive officer of the program's parent institution, and LAAB staff. When an institution adheres to due process within its own organization, it is unlikely that LAAB will become involved. Each institution is encouraged to develop effective procedures for responding to faculty or student queries and problems, alleviating dissatisfaction, and averting the need for intervention by any outside agency. Emphasis on cooperative attitudes and prompt action plays a significant role in fair resolution of faculty or student dissatisfaction.

A complaint shall be processed in stages as follows:

**Stage 1:** The aggrieved party shall submit the complaint, with documentary evidence, to the program administrator. The program administrator shall make a thorough investigation of the complaint and within 30 days respond to the aggrieved party.

**Stage 2:** Should the complainant not be satisfied by the action resulting from Stage 1, the written complaint should be filed within 30 days with the chair of LAAB. At its next regular or special meeting, LAAB will consider the complaint, as well as the response of the institution, and then decide on its merits, providing all parties with notice of that decision.

## VISITS TO INSTITUTIONS WITH TWO LAAB ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

LAAB permits institutions with two fully accredited degree programs (a bachelor's degree program and a master's degree program) to have them reviewed for reaccreditation with a combined SER and combined Visiting Team. Participation is voluntary, by request from the program, and subject to approval of LAAB staff. A program should make this request as part of its letter requesting a reaccreditation visit.

An institution with two programs seeking reaccreditation—for example, a bachelor's professional degree and a master's professional degree—may, at its discretion, request that both programs be visited and reviewed at the same time. The request must be approved by LAAB staff as a part of the request for reaccreditation. If the two programs don't have the same accreditation term expiration, the visit will be scheduled to align with the date of the program whose term is to expire first. The institution can request that the visit be conducted at the same time with two teams and two SERs or with a single combined team and a combined SER. This choice must be approved by LAAB staff at the time of the invitation for visit and review.

If the institution chooses to have the programs visited concurrently but independently, the procedures and documents move forward as described elsewhere in this document. If the institution requests that the review be conducted as a single coordinated review of both programs, there are adjustments to the preparation of the SER, the makeup of the visiting team, the visitation schedule, the duration of the visit, the visiting team's report, and advisory recommendations.

In a single coordinated review:

- The SER will be expanded by no more than 50 pages not only to cover assessments shared by the two programs, but also to address the bachelor's program and the master's program specifically for each standard. The sections for Standard 3: Professional Curriculum and Standard 4: Student and Program Outcomes will each be expanded into two sections—Standard 3b: Professional Curriculum/Bachelor's Program and Standard 3m: Professional Curriculum/Master's Program, and Standard 4b: Bachelor's Student and Program Outcomes and Standard 4m: Master's Student and Program Outcomes.
- The makeup of the visiting team will expand to four members, including an administrative member, two educator members, and a practitioner member. As the team chair assigns roles to team members, the chair will ask one educator member to take the lead in assessing the bachelor's program and another to take the lead in assessing the master's program.
- The scheduled visit will be expanded by one day, to allow time for the visiting team to interview an additional set of students and to review an additional set of student work, as well as to expand interviews with administrators, faculty, alumni, and practitioners so that team members can evaluate the differences in expectations and performance between the two programs.
- The visiting team's report and advisory recommendations will expand Standard 3: Professional Curriculum and Standard 4: Student and Program Outcomes into two sections, labeled Standard 3b; Professional Curriculum/Bachelor's Program and Standard 3m: Professional Curriculum/Master's Program, and Standard 4b. Bachelor's Student and Program Outcomes and Standard 4m. Master's Student and Program Outcomes. Team assessments of Recommendations Affecting Accreditation or Considerations for Improvement may be made as related to either or both degree programs. The team will make two separate Advisory Recommendations to the LAAB Board, one for each program.