

Landscape Architecture: elements and areas of practice

An educational framework

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The Landscape Institute
Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street, London, WC1N 2JU

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Foreword from Irene Shaw FLI, Chair of the Landscape Institute's Education and Membership Committee

The oversight and regulation of professional education and training is one of the key functions of any professional body. In particular, it is essential that professional education prepares individuals for the realities and complexities of professional life.

Landscape architecture: Elements and areas of practice has been developed by the Landscape Institute's Education and Membership Committee with input from experts across the profession and following wide consultation.

The aim is to provide a reference point for education in the profession, ensuring that the LI's educational systems are fit for purpose, and prepare individuals for their first steps in building a successful career.

The document describes in general terms what is involved in the day to day chartered practice of landscape architecture and the main broad areas of practice in the profession. The focus is on the main activities which might be undertaken by individuals in the early to middle stages in their career. The aim of the document is to be descriptive, not prescriptive – while the activities listed will be common to many, as in any profession the emphasis of work will differ from practitioner to practitioner.

The *Elements and areas of practice* will underpin and inform the LI's work in a wide range of educational activities, including promoting careers in the profession, accrediting higher education programmes, and determining the requirements for achieving chartered status

Both the nature of the expertise encompassed by the profession, and the kinds of activity in which Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute are involved will change over time. This document will be reviewed on a periodic basis, to ensure that it continues to provide an effective reference point for the profession.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of Education and Membership Committee, the many members who have contributed to the development of this document, either by reviewing successive drafts or taking part in the consultation.



Irene Shaw FLI
Chair, Education and Membership Committee
January 2012

Introduction

The chartered profession of landscape architecture

Landscape architecture is defined in the Landscape Institute's (LI) Charter as embracing "all aspects of the science, planning, design, implementation and management of landscapes and their environment in urban and rural areas." It includes assessing, conserving, developing, creating and managing landscapes of all types and scales with the aim of ensuring that they are sustainable, aesthetically pleasing, functional, ecologically healthy and, where relevant, able to accommodate the built environment.

Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute (CMLIs) undertake a wide range of functions to achieve the above aims, depending on their specific expertise and the context of their work. They draw on their understanding of the arts and sciences relating to the landscape and apply knowledge and principles from ecology, horticulture, design, planning, construction and management. They use intellectual skills, analysis and synthesis to assess and evaluate the landscape and its character, address landscape problems, and take forward projects and achieve solutions that maintain the interests of the landscape and its users.

About this document

This document is intended to inform the LI's educational processes by describing in general terms what is involved in the day to day chartered practice of landscape architecture and the main broad areas of practice in the profession. It is organised into two complementary statements:

- Section A, *Elements of practice*, describes the main areas of activity involved in the practice of landscape architecture, from assessment through to implementation.
- Section B, *Areas of practice*, describes the different types of landscape knowledge and expertise which might be applied to these activities by chartered members working in different contexts, and/or with different backgrounds.

Throughout the document, the term landscape encompasses both the built and natural environment.

Section A

Elements of practice

Element 1: Professional judgement, ethics and values

Introduction to this Element

Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute work in complex situations where they have to resolve different interests to achieve the best outcome for their clients and for the built and natural environment. This involves applying a high standard of judgement and ethical principles to their work, and upholding the standards and values of the profession. This Element applies across the five other Elements of landscape practice.

The Element

Chartered members:

- 1a. **Understand the ethical dimensions to their actions and their responsibilities as chartered professionals to wider society, handling ethical dilemmas in a manner which respects the interests of their clients, the landscape and all those to whom the landscape matters**
- 1b. **Act in accordance with the LI's Code of Conduct and Charter and other standards and codes of practice relevant to their area of practice, acting responsibly and professionally in all their dealings**
- 1c. **Understand the wider contexts in which landscape decisions are made**
This includes the environmental, social, political, cultural, spiritual and economic contexts of their work, and the possible impact or implications of changes and proposals, including decisions to take no action. It also includes
 - acting responsibly in planning, design, management and policy decisions affecting the health of natural systems
 - identifying and engaging stakeholders in helping to make decisions that affect their lives and future
 - ensuring that stakeholders have access to relevant information in an understandable form
- 1d. **Take responsibility for protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment within their influence**
This includes
 - striving to enhance, maintain, conserve or re-establish the integrity and diversity of biological systems and their functions
 - creating sustainable places for people to live and work
 - using indigenous and compatible materials and plants in the creation of habitat for indigenous flora and fauna
- 1e. **Develop and specify products, materials, technologies and techniques that conserve resources and create sustainable landscapes**
- 1f. **Recognise the limits of their own understanding and abilities, and practise within them**

1g. **Act as ambassadors for the profession, educating and promoting understanding of the value and role of landscape architecture**

This includes

- promoting awareness of the profession
- promoting better understanding of the principles and purposes of natural, biological and physical systems affecting or relating to the landscape
- encouraging environmentally positive, financially sound and sustainable solutions for land use, development and management
- encouraging decisions, attitudes and values that support public health and welfare, environmental respect, and landscape and urban regeneration
- promoting knowledge and understanding of materials and technology to enhance the appreciation of and resolution of practical landscape issues and problems

1h. **Recognise the expertise of fellow professionals in other disciplines**

This includes supporting or drawing on or directing their work in a way that respects and makes effective use of their expertise

Element 2: Organisation and management

Introduction to this Element

This Element concerns the management of professional practice and the application of appropriate standards to their activities. Depending on a chartered member's responsibilities and working context, it can apply to personal practice or to leading a team, department or practice.

The Element

Chartered members:

- 2a. **Follow the Code of Conduct in relation to financial and business practice**
- 2b. **Observe all relevant legal requirements and obligations**

This may include

 - employment and contract law
 - international agreements
 - environmental legislation
- 2c. **Observe all Health and Safety requirements and guidelines**

This includes

 - understanding the duties of all parties under the Construction, Design and Management (CDM) regulations and acting in accordance with the regulations
 - ensuring that their own work practices and those in their wider area of responsibility minimise risk to self and others
- 2d. **Represent and promote services offered by the department, practice or agency**

This may include

 - giving professional presentations to clients and others on the expertise and services offered, the scope and purpose of their own and their organisation's role
 - demonstrating compliance with standards which may be required as part of the procurement process
- 2e. **Prepare fee proposals to set out scope of work and contractual arrangements between parties**

This includes agreeing the extent of works to be carried out under a fee proposal, options for additional work and stages of payment. Proposals should be based where appropriate on standard methods of charging fees, or amended to suit the work to be undertaken.
- 2f. **Ensure that adequate, accessible and secure records are maintained**

This may include

 - contract documentation
 - letters of appointment
 - registers of issued drawings
 - statutory records

2g. **Recommend appropriate sources of further information or technical input where these lie outside their remit or area of expertise**

2h. **Adhere to good management practice**

This includes

- effective management of time, finances and resources
- maintaining good working relationships and document control
- effective and open communication

Element 3: Assessment

Introduction to this Element

This Element focuses on establishing the requirements of the project and the client brief, and assessing the condition, value and context of the existing landscape. The specific assessment methodologies that are appropriate will depend on the site and context, the focus of the individual's work, and the brief.

The Element

Chartered members:

3a. Identify client requirements

This includes

- establishing immediate and future goals, priorities and budgets
- identifying relevant factors and requirements which might have an impact on the project, including any constraints and risks
- considering any consents, planning permissions etc which the client should be made aware of at the early stages of a commission
- identifying any requests or requirements which might not be realistic or appropriate and discussing and agreeing valid alternatives
- summarising and checking accurate understanding of the client's requirements

3b. Identify user requirements and expectations

This includes

- establishing who the users or beneficiaries of the project will be and their expectations and requirements
- challenging expectations which may not be appropriate or realistic and discussing alternatives
- summarising and checking that they have accurately understood the stakeholder's requirements

3c. Assess the significance and context of the landscape

This includes

- establishing legislative and planning policy framework pertinent to the site
- understanding local perceptions of the landscape
- identifying personal, cultural, historic, spiritual, symbolic, financial or communal values associated with the existing landscape

3d. Assess the existing landscape and define the impact of proposed change

This includes

- establishing the physical quality, condition and function of the landscape and its features and assets
- evaluating and defining the character and visual influence of the site and that of the wider landscape in which it sits
- understanding the sensitivity of the site and the surrounding environment
- understanding the ecological value and sensitivity of the site and the surrounding landscape

- evaluating the ability of the landscape to accommodate change

3e. **Record and report the findings of the assessment**
Using the most appropriate method to the task in hand

Element 4: Options and strategies

Introduction to this Element

This Element concerns the development of detailed proposals or advice based on considering, reviewing and refining options that achieve the most appropriate outcomes. It builds on the assessment process described in Element 3.

The Element

Chartered members:

4a. **Review options, opportunities and constraints involved in managing and/or making changes to the landscape**

This includes

- taking into account relevant legal requirements and the planning process
- identifying the risks, resources and benefits associated with different options and the implications these may have for
 - meeting the client's objectives
 - the potential for the landscape to succeed
- evaluating the effects of taking no further action

4b. **Chose effective strategies and solutions to resolve existing and potential conflicts and interests to meet the client brief**

4c. **Communicate proposals or advice, and seek client and stakeholder agreement for them**

This includes

- presenting proposed solutions or advice as appropriate to the nature of the project
- advising on strategies, good practice, standards and relevant legal requirements and practical considerations
- selecting communications media and methods appropriate to the nature of the proposal and the audience
- anticipating client questions and concerns
- identifying choices and decisions to be made and providing advice

Element 5: Implementation

Introduction to this Element

This Element focuses on taking forward a project or activity. Depending on the focus of the landscape architect's work, this could be the implementation of a proposal or design or of a plan for the long-term management or maintenance of a site.

The Element

Chartered members:

5a. **Agree detailed project plan with client**

This includes

- finalising the work to be taken forward
- preparing technical documents, illustrations and plans to realise the project
- ensuring that all necessary statutory consents and permissions are in place before commencement of works on site

5b. **Identify strategies to engage stakeholders**

This includes

- choosing appropriate methods and styles of communication to explain and galvanise support for the action being taken
- acting as an arbiter to resolve conflicts where there are multiple parties with different interests in a place

5c. **Manage or provide input into the tendering processes for contractors on behalf of the client**

This may include

- identifying materials and products, appropriate techniques, and workforce
- preparing documentation to enable a tender process to be undertaken
- liaising with clients to ensure that documents are in accordance with client's requirements and budget
- identifying and liaising with tenderers during the tender period and ensuring fair tendering methods are employed
- analysing returned tenders, and making recommendations to the client

5d. **Agree a programme of work with contractors**

Agreeing with the client and contractors/other workforce a detailed schedule of works which is accurate and realistic including contingency plans

5e. **Agree contractual arrangements for work with contractors**

This includes

- agreeing the basis on which the project will be taken forward
- selecting appropriate forms of contract
- seeking legal advice and guidance on implications where required

- ensuring that all is in accordance with client procurement rules and current Health and Safety legislation, in particular CDM regulations

5f. **Monitor and control projects**

This includes

- contract administration including issue of instructions and certificates
- effective monitoring the project against the agreed programme and quality standards
- reporting to clients on progress, and identifying and advising on decisions which need to be made

5g. **Manage project completion and handover**

This includes

- defining and ensuring provision of information and guidance required by those managing and maintaining the site
- identifying and arranging for the satisfactory completion of any outstanding work
- arranging, recording and agreeing a handover inspection involving all relevant stakeholders

5h. **Review and evaluate projects and working practices**

This may include

- seeking feedback from stakeholders, clients and contractors
- using key performance and other indicators to identify areas for potential improvement in future projects

Element 6: Continuing professional development (CPD)

Introduction to this Element

This Element concerns the maintenance and extension of personal professional knowledge and capability through ongoing development and contribution to the profession. This includes keeping up to date on current developments, emerging principles, techniques and philosophies, adopting a reflective approach to their professional practice, and supporting the development of others.

The Element

Chartered members:

6a. Keep themselves informed of changes affecting the profession and broader developments relevant to their work

This may include

- networking with fellow professionals and others
- attending events and seminars
- conducting internet research
- visiting sites
- reading relevant publications

6b. Ensure their practice, knowledge, skills and techniques are up-to-date

This includes

- producing a plan for personal professional development
- identifying personal strengths, abilities and areas for development
- identifying learning opportunities to meet current needs and expected future professional requirements

6c. Reflect on and learn from their practice

This includes

- reviewing and reflecting on professional activities and experiences
- generating ideas and exploring possibilities to address problems and issues
- seeking opportunities for discussing ideas and experiences with fellow practitioners

6d. Contribute to the development of the profession

This may include

- disseminating skills, knowledge and understanding through informal or formal means
- providing training, guidance and instruction
- acting as a mentor to others where necessary, including as a Mentor on the Pathway to Chartership

Areas of practice

Landscape design

Landscape design is the holistic process of shaping the natural and built environment to create desirable places for people to live, work and play and environments for plants and animals to thrive.

When working in the context of landscape design, Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute use their spatial design expertise to develop creative solutions to practical and aesthetic challenges relating to the landscape. Using man-made and natural materials, they design and implement solutions that reflect the identity and qualities of place while meeting the current and future needs of stakeholders in a sustainable and aesthetically coherent way.

Typical activities include:

- producing feasibility studies and site and context appraisals
- preparing written advice and recommendations
- coordinating and conducting community engagement and consultation with users/owners/managers other stakeholders
- developing design solutions and proposals
- preparing drawings and 3D visualisations to illustrate plans and proposals
- preparing detailed designs and working drawings to support tender documentation and site implementation
- participation in the tendering process, contract administration and site inspections.
- specifying plants, construction materials and other elements such as street furniture
- specifying for construction of hard landscapes and the implementation of planting proposals
- managing projects and contracts
- providing advice on policy and strategy
- resource and budget assessment and planning including the preparation of cost estimates
- contributing to public inquiries and acting as an expert witness

Landscape management

Landscape management is the care of land to ensure that landscapes can fulfil needs and aspirations in an effective and sustainable manner for present and future communities of users.

When working in the context of landscape management, Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute assess the characteristics, history and potential of sites and landscapes and understand the needs of their owners, managers and users. They ensure that landscapes can be effectively maintained and managed over time, preparing management plans and strategies, advising on new developments, designs and plans, and providing management based solutions to site issues

Typical activities include:

- conducting and coordinating site assessments
- advising on management and maintenance considerations in respect of new designs and proposals
- preparing and implementing management plans

- preparing site specific restoration schemes and other management based solutions to site issues
- preparing area strategy and policy documents for long term landscape management
- coordinating and conducting community engagement and consultation with users/owners/managers other stakeholders
- resource and budget assessment and planning including the preparation of cost estimates
- managing, coordinating and contributing to detailed assessments and studies including
 - environmental impact assessment
 - landscape and visual impact assessment
 - landscape audits
- advising on compliance with relevant policy, legislation, good practice and relevant standards
- tender preparation and administration, and contract supervision
- preparation of maintenance schedules
- managing projects and contracts
- contributing to public inquiries and acting as an expert witness

Landscape planning

Landscape planning is the development and application of strategies, policies and plans to create successful environments, in both urban and rural settings, for the benefit of current and future generations.

When working in the context of landscape planning, Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute landscape architects operate at all contexts and scales, from the international to the local, and on all types of development, advising on or managing proposals for change which may affect the landscape. They assess and resolve environmental, economic and social opportunities and constraints relevant to areas of landscape interest and take these into account in addressing a landscape's potential and capacity to accommodate change.

Typical activities include:

- preparing and advising on policy and strategy within legal frameworks
- preparing Green Infrastructure plans and implementation strategies
- managing, coordinating and contributing to detailed assessments and studies including,
 - environmental impact assessment
 - landscape and visual impact assessment
 - landscape character surveys, assessment and reports
- master planning for development and regeneration schemes
- coordinating and conducting community engagement and consultation with users/owners/managers other stakeholders
- advising on compliance with relevant policy, legislation, good practice and relevant standards
- managing projects and contracts
- providing advice to development control planning officers
- contributing to public inquiries and acting as an expert witness

Landscape science

Landscape science is the application of environmental and ecological expertise in the assessment, analysis and resolution of practical landscape issues, and in the enhancement of the landscape.

When working in the context of landscape science, Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute focus on research and analysis, planning and strategy in relation to landscape assessment, design of habitats and strategic landscape enhancement. The landscape scientist also provides expert advice on landscape processes, land reclamation and restoration, landscape ecology, habitats and vegetation.

Typical activities include:

- evaluation of significance, effects and proposed amelioration of planning proposals
- detailed assessments and studies including
 - ecological risk assessments
 - Phase 1 habitat surveys and ecological assessment
 - environmental impact assessments
 - screening and scoping studies
 - strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisals
 - arboricultural impact assessments
 - agricultural land capability and soil assessments
 - groundwater assessment, hydrological assessment and flood risk
 - pollution analysis and remediation studies
- conducting landscape and habitat surveys, protected species and other surveys and monitoring
- advising on integrated solutions for ecological mitigation and landscape mitigation
- advising on sustainable landscape reclamation, restoration and sustainable drainage
- preparing management plans
- designing and creating habitats and restoration proposals, including translocation of species and planting
- managing projects and contracts
- providing advice on policy and strategy
- contributing to public inquiries and acting as an expert witness

Urban design

Urban design is the process of shaping the physical setting for life in cities, towns and villages. It involves both the art of 'placemaking' and the science of creating urban form which is fit for purpose.

When working in the context of urban design, Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute apply their expertise to producing design solutions that meet the needs and aspirations of people living in urban environments. They will conduct consultations, carry out urban design studies, appraisals and reviews, develop master plans and design statements, and provide expert advice relating to the planning process. Successful urban design requires a consultative and inclusive approach along with close collaboration with other professionals.

Typical activities include:

- managing the urban design process, including facilitating public and stakeholder engagement, setting briefs for consultants, negotiating and collaborating with other professionals and organising urban design competitions
- conducting urban design studies and appraisals such as morphology studies, policy reviews, urban/townscape character assessments, public space appraisals, sustainability studies and connectivity studies
- preparing urban design policy and guidance such as vision statements, Urban Design codes and guides, development briefs, public realm strategies, local or village design statements
- master planning, including designing the overarching movement/development framework for sites or areas, site specific development layouts, preparation of Design and Access Statements, and preparing delivery documents
- providing urban design advice such as advising on prospective planning applications, advising on the design aspects of development control and strategic planning, and providing expert witness services at Planning Appeals and Development Plan Inquiries
- managing projects
- providing advice on policy and strategy
- acting as an advocate for urban design and place making
- contributing to public inquiries and acting as an expert witness