



## LAAB COVID-19 Response and Updates

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**May 18, 2020**

The [Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board \(LAAB\)](#) has been continually monitoring the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications on landscape architecture program accreditation.

As a result of research and information provided through our memberships in the [Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors \(ASPA\)](#) and the [Council for Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA\)](#), LAAB understands how the accreditation and higher education communities have been impacted and are responding to this crisis. We know you're starting to plan for what the 2020–2021 academic year is going to look like, whether students will be on campus or not, and the contingency planning for all of these scenarios.

The Board recently met to discuss operational adjustments due to COVID-19 regarding accreditation visits for Fall 2020, Spring 2021, and Fall 2021. Given the burden placed on programs closing out this disrupted semester in addition to planning for virtual summer activities and the Fall Semester, LAAB has decided to postpone all accreditation visits scheduled during these semesters by one year (see revised schedule below).

| Original Visit Date | Revised Visit Date |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Fall 2020           | Fall 2021          |
| Spring 2021         | Spring 2022        |
| Fall 2021           | Fall 2022          |

This postponement of accreditation visits is being consistently applied to all programs scheduled for review within this timeframe. There will be no penalty on the program's accreditation status. Additionally, while [LAAB Accreditation Procedures](#) (page 16) state "the grant of accreditation will begin from the originally scheduled review date regardless of any rescheduling of the program's site visit," LAAB is waiving this policy. The grant of accreditation will begin from the revised review date established as a result of the postponements. All [LAAB Accreditation Standards](#) are still expected to be maintained throughout these procedural adjustments.

LAAB is also exploring policies and procedures for conducting virtual accreditation visits. Again, the accreditation community, through ASPA, has shared best practices and guidelines regarding virtual accreditation visits, which LAAB plans to use as a base. Additionally, LAAB plans to provide ROVE training for virtual accreditation visits and to conduct a mock virtual accreditation visit with a recently accredited program prior to conducting any official virtual visits. We will keep programs informed as we define these policies and procedures.

If there are any issues, please feel free to discuss those with Kristopher Pritchard. Any alterations to the adjusted schedule must also take into consideration the capacity for LAAB staff and ROVE volunteers to conduct a manageable number of accreditation visits during each semester. LAAB staff is still available during regular office hours to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Please contact Kristopher Pritchard at 202-216-2359 or [kpritchard@asla.org](mailto:kpritchard@asla.org).

**March 23, 2020**

The Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) is closely monitoring the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential implications on landscape architecture program accreditation. LAAB recognizes that these are unprecedented times that require flexibility to allow programs to deliver their educational content as best they can – without jeopardizing their accreditation. LAAB understands institutions and their programs are taking actions to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their students, faculty, and staff.

We understand that most institutions are requiring students and faculty to leave campus and courses be taught remotely for the remainder of the semester. Additionally, we understand some institutions are allowing course grading to be changed to Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. Programs should follow their institution's directives and make decisions that are best for them. Any alternate program delivery methods enacted for this emergency circumstance will not require substantive change approvals or negatively impact accreditation. LAAB encourages programs to clearly communicate all of these changes to students and fairly and consistently apply any new grading criteria to all students. It is worth noting that in 2018, LAAB reviewed and revised its current standards specifically regarding online delivery methods and concluded that all standards need to be met regardless of the delivery method.

LAAB leadership is continuing to meet regularly with staff and make determinations of any adjustments to operations. The following adjustments have already been made or are being considered at this time:

- To keep our programs and ROVE members safe, the LAAB is postponing the remaining **Spring 2020 accreditation visits** until the fall, contingent on the developments in the COVID-19 situation, with no impact to program accreditation. We will continue to communicate with programs any adjustments made to postponed visits.
- **Fall 2020 accreditation visits** will remain scheduled as is. As we approach the SER due date, staff will work with program chairs to determine if an alternate due date or rescheduling is necessary.
- The **LAAB 2020 Annual Report** due date of August 1 will remain scheduled as is, contingent on the developments in the COVID-19 situation. We will continue to communicate with programs any adjustments that may need to be made regarding the due date.
- The **LAAB Accreditation Standards revision** process will remain on schedule. A second comment period is scheduled for April 15 through May 31. The Board anticipates reviewing and approving the final revisions at its Summer 2020 Board Meeting. The revised standards are expected to be published January 2021.

While programs are not required to receive substantive change approvals for alternate delivery methods at this time, we are asking programs to track changes and adjustments being made to be submitted as part of the 2020 Annual Report. LAAB would like to collect this information and any best practices that come from these transitions to online delivery in order to better understand and create guidelines for future reference. Additionally, while these temporary adjustments are acceptable for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year, LAAB will re-evaluate this process in the upcoming months in order to inform programs of any required reporting or substantive change approvals.

LAAB staff is still available during regular office hours to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Please contact Kristopher Pritchard at 202-216-2359 or [kpritchard@asla.org](mailto:kpritchard@asla.org).