



ASLA Encourages all Licensed Landscape Architects to use PLA

ASLA encourages all licensed landscape architects to use the *post nominal* letters “PLA” after their names. As an abbreviation of the title “professional landscape architect,” it will better enable potential clients and the general public to identify licensed practitioners. It will also provide consistent recognition for the landscape architecture profession.

Why PLA? To truly establish a designation that can be used universally, it is necessary to avoid words that have specific legal meanings, like the terms registration and licensure. While these terms are often used interchangeably, in reality each has a distinct meaning in the realm of professional regulation. Like the PE designation for engineering, PLA can be used in any jurisdiction where a landscape architect is duly licensed. Most importantly, the use of PLA can raise the profile of landscape architecture by creating a universally recognized symbol for licensed landscape architects.

The use of PLA by landscape architects is intended as a customary designation, just as similar abbreviations are used today. No legislative changes or rule development for state licensing is necessary, given that it falls under current title restriction provisions that restrict the use of any title (or abbreviation) that indicates the individual is a landscape architect. At the present time, no state law or regulation assigns specific *post nominal* letters that licensed landscape architects must use.

Frequently Asked Questions: Universal Designation

Why did ASLA adopt this policy?

There is currently no uniform way for a licensed landscape architect to indicate that he/she is licensed. Many use PLA, RLA, LLA, or LA to signify licensure. The lack of a consistent *post nominal* abbreviation makes it more difficult for potential clients and the general public to identify a licensed practitioner.

Why did the ASLA choose PLA?

State laws and regulations use different terms to denote professional regulation of landscape architects, with many using licensure, others using registration, and several using both. These terms were originally intended to signify different levels of regulation; however, common usage has blurred these definitions for the design professions so that licensure and registration are often used interchangeably. The ASLA Licensure Committee chose PLA for two reasons. First, PLA does not conflict with the existing legal terminology (licensure and registration), thereby allowing for universal usage. States that use registration or licensure may not be comfortable with its licensees using the other term, making PLA a neutral designation that can apply to both terms. Second, PLA is consistent with existing *post nominal* abbreviations for related disciplines, such as engineering (PE) and land surveying (PLS).

How would the use of PLA affect existing licensure laws and regulations?

State laws are written to ensure that only qualified individuals hold themselves out as landscape architects. Laws typically reserve “landscape architect” and “landscape architecture” for licensees and sometimes include restrictions on other titles, such as “registered landscape architect” or “licensed landscape architect.” Further, the title

AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF
LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTS
636 EYE STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC
20001-3736

www.asla.org
1.888.999.ASLA
T 202.898.2444
F 202.898.1185



AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF
LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTS
636 EYE STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC
20001-3736

www.asla.org
1.888.999.ASLA
T 202.898.2444
F 202.898.1185

protection provisions prohibit any unlicensed individual from in any way holding himself or herself out to practice landscape architecture, which includes abbreviations and other derivations of the term landscape architect. At the present time, no state law or regulation assigns specific *post nominal* letters that licensed landscape architects must use. States may be interested in changing rules to specify that the use of PLA (professional landscape architect) is restricted, but it is not necessary because existing language covers use of all iterations of “landscape architect.”

My state uses RLA on its stamp. Can I use PLA?

Yes. The *post nominal* abbreviation PLA is intended as a customary designation to identify oneself as a landscape architect with a valid license/registration. As long as the individual has a valid license in the state, that licensee can use PLA after his/her name to signify licensure. The state could choose to change its rules and stamp design to be consistent with PLA, but it is not necessary and ASLA does not intend to advocate for such changes. Further, a landscape architect should always follow the state specifications for the official stamp.

What is the responsibility of the licensee?

As the PLA designation is intended to signify licensure, it is the responsibility of the licensee who uses PLA to remain in compliance with their respective licensure requirements and only to use the designation in jurisdictions where the licensee has a valid license.

What is the responsibility of the licensing board?

Because the use of PLA would signify licensure, the existing title restriction provisions will provide the authority for state licensing boards to take enforcement action in the same way that they can currently enforce the use of the title landscape architect by those who are not licensed. In keeping with existing title restriction provisions, state licensure boards alone have the authority to ensure that only individuals with a valid license hold themselves out as landscape architects, including the use of PLA.

How does this policy affect the ASLA designation?

The ASLA designation will continue to denote that the individual has met the qualifications of membership in the Society and whose membership is in good standing. PLA does not replace ASLA as a designation, but establishes a supplementary designation that is recognized by all to signify licensure (Example: Jane J. Smith, ASLA, PLA).

I am not a member of ASLA. Can I use PLA?

Yes. ASLA intends for the PLA designation to be open to all licensed landscape architects. Otherwise, it could not truly become a universally recognized designation for clients and the general public to identify licensed landscape architects.

[Link to Full text](#) of the ASLA Policy *Professional Licensure: Universal Designation*
Questions? Contact ASLA Government Affairs Director Julia Lent at jlent@asla.org.