



## **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 ([ASLA Public Policy](#)). Using an abbreviation of the title “Professional Landscape Architect,” enables clients and the general public to identify licensed practitioners. It also provides consistent recognition for the landscape architecture profession.

Why PLA? 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. Additionally, the ASLA Board of Trustees adopted the term “PLA” as it avoided 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, which can vary from state to state.

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 regulate the use of any title (or abbreviation) that indicates an 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: Post-Nominal Letters**

#### ***Why did ASLA adopt a public policy related to post-nominal letters?***

The use of post-nominal letters is a standard practice in many professions to indicate professional recognition and achievement of licensure. Using the post-nominal letters, PLA indicates to clients, employers, and colleagues that the individual has met the professional standards required to be licensed and possesses a valid active state license, while also helping to provide consistent recognition and public awareness for the landscape architecture profession nationwide. Unfortunately, usage of the various abbreviations of RLA, LLA, or LA makes it more difficult for potential clients and the general public to identify a licensed practitioner. However, usage of PLA supports the Society’s objective for a universally recognized symbol for Professional Landscape Architects.



### ***Why did ASLA choose PLA?***

State laws and regulations use different terms to denote governmental 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. In 2011 the ASLA Licensure Committee chose, and the Board of Trustees adopted, PLA for two reasons:

1. 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.
2. PLA is consistent with existing *post-nominal letters* for related disciplines, such as engineering (PE) and land surveying (PLS).

### ***How does 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 “licensed landscape architect” or “registered landscape architect.” Further, the title 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 the usage of specific *post-nominal letters* for Professional Landscape Architects. State licensing boards could endorse the usage of the PLA designation through regulation or policy, however existing laws and regulations cover the use of all iterations of “landscape architect.”

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

Yes. The use of PLA is intended as a customary designation to identify oneself as a landscape architect with a valid license. As long as the individual has a valid license in the state, that licensee can use PLA after their 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. A landscape architect should always follow the state specifications for the official stamp.

### ***What is the responsibility of the licensee?***

As the PLA designation signifies licensure, it is the responsibility of the licensee who uses PLA to remain in compliance with their respective licensure requirements.



***What is the responsibility of the licensing board?***

Because the use of PLA signifies licensure, the state title restriction provisions provide 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?***

Example: Jane J. Smith, ASLA, PLA

The ASLA designation will continue to denote that an 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 customarily recognized post-nominal letter designation signifying licensure. ASLA’s recommended formatting for ASLA and PLA is provided in the example above.

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

Yes. ASLA encourages all licensed landscape architects to use the PLA designation. Otherwise, it could not truly become a customarily recognized designation for clients and the general public to identify Professional Landscape Architects.

[Full text](#) of the ASLA Public Policy *Professional Licensure: Post-Nominal Letters*

Questions? Contact ASLA Government Affairs at [GovernmentAffairs@asla.org](mailto:GovernmentAffairs@asla.org)