



To

The Visa Officer

High Commission of Australia

Sub: Application requesting an Australian study permit

Dear Sir/Madam,

I, Mehek Sharma, hereby express my sincere thanks to you for the perusal of my application. I would like to introduce myself as an Architecture enthusiast, looking forward to broadening my learning horizons by the way of a higher education program in Australia. I have opted for a two-year Master of City Planning program from the University of New South Wales. I received my Letter of Offer on 20/05/2021 and I paid the fee on 15/07/2021. By the way of this application, I seek to demonstrate my previous academic and professional background, my reasons to visit Australia, and my plans for the future. Please allow me to walk you through my profile.

Previous academic and professional background

On an academic front, I have been presented with ample opportunities that have shaped my career and made me realize my potential. I completed my matriculation in the year 2011, securing 82 percent as the aggregate. I then opted for the science stream and completed my intermediate studies with 78.6 percent as the overall score. My inclination towards the planning, designing, and construction of structures had me opting for a bachelor's program in Architecture at SRMGPC University. During the course of the program, I attained a fundamental knowledge of the concepts such as visual arts, computer applications, building and construction, architecture design, building management, urban design, and settlement planning.

After completing the program with a CGPA of 8.2, I entered the professional milieu of Architecture BRIO in the capacity of a Junior Architect. I worked at the firm for 15 months, during the course of which, I worked on preparing designs, construction documents, building plans, and also assisted with architectural projects. As I worked there, I realized the need to attain advanced learning to be able to grow on a corporate front. Owing to the same, I opted for a Master of Architecture program from BBD University. During the course of the program, I attended various sustainable workshops which included training programs conducted by the Green Building Council and I was also presented with a certificate for the same.

Another exciting opportunity came in the form of an internship experience at the Sanjay Puri Architects, Mumbai in the year 2018. This experience equipped me with a broader understanding of the field of architecture and also prepared me for the professional world. After wrapping up my master's degree with a CGPA of 8.3 in the year 2019, I rejoined Architecture BRIO as a Site Architect. After working at the company for x months, I found my interest to shift towards academia, and I decided to impart my knowledge to architecture enthusiasts. I am working as an Assistant Professor at the Academy of Architecture. Having worked as a professor for more than a year and a half, I have taught students the fundamentals of architecture. I now realize that instead of academia, my



knowledge and skills are more suited to the realm of city planning, and I want to direct my knowledge to the betterment of cities and ensure sustainability in those. What I need is a program that focuses on my area of interest in particular and equips me with every bit of foundational understanding that I need to be eligible for better roles at various government institutions, private sector consultancies, or property development organizations. Thus, at this point in my career, I feel the need to upgrade my existing knowledge and skills by the way of a formal degree in City Planning.

Why a Master of City Planning Program?

If I go ponder over my intention to pursue higher education, I would say that it budded during the course of my master's program, when I opted for a thesis on South Indian Existing Proposal. As I worked on the thesis, I realized how my learning can be directed towards ensuring a better future for cities. As I researched more about urban planning, I found comprehensive programs that were offering insights into the areas of urban and regional planning. I want to contribute towards the development of sustainable cities and help carve a better future. To be able to do that, I need to attain a comprehensive understanding of the areas of town planning, housing, environmental management, and urban design. Therefore, to give form to my learning expectations, I find the two-year Master of City Planning Program to be an ideal stride. Through this program, I will have the chance to develop the necessary analytical and critical-thinking skills to report multi-scalar trials, and instill in me the foundational knowledge to evolve integrative plans to create a suitable environment.

Why University of New South Wales

University of New South Wales takes pride in transforming students into learned professionals, by offering exceptional standards of learning, ample practical exposure, and a plethora of growth opportunities. Founded in 1949, UNSW is known for producing employable graduates, is a leader in innovation, and is ranked 43rd in the QS world university rankings. The University holds its ground for housing state-of-the-art research facilities, and a community of 59000 students and 7000 research enthusiasts.

The campuses of UNSW are among the highlights of Sydney, one of the top 10 student cities around the world. The main campus of UNSW is Kensington, in close proximity to two of the world's top beaches, Coogee and Bondi. Spread across an area of 38 hectares, the campus is like a mini-city, encompassing restaurants, a gymnasium, pool, sporting teams, and medical facilities. Moreover, for me to make the most of university life, I can tap various facilities such as health services, legal advice, sports and fitness, shops and food outlets, and the Nucleus student hub.

Being a part of a diverse cohort, exploring the intricacies of my chosen field, and learning under the mentorship of an experienced faculty, I am certain that my experience at UNSW will prove worthwhile.

Course Structure

This professionally accredited postgraduate degree offers exactly the kind of learning I need to embark on a successful career in urban and regional planning. The program consists of 96 credits, encompassing course modules such as Urban Society, City Economics and Development, Environment and Sustainability, Urban Management, Development Assessment, City Building –



Infrastructure and Transport, and History. While the curriculum will equip me with an extensive understanding of City Planning, the practical exposure in the form of a research project will give me the necessary expertise in my area of interest.

This master's program is special as it will instill in me the decision-making ability to make sound decisions with respect to creating a beautiful future for cities that are an amalgamation of sustainability, equality, health, and inspiration. The interdisciplinary nature of the program will allow me to connect with professionals in the built environment, and a diverse community of like-minded individuals. It will help diversify my knowledge and will pave the way for me to integrate my creative flair into shaping the future.

All in all, through this program, I will have developed a strong analytical mindset, a robust technical skill bracket, and sound critical thinking skills to be able to transform my conceptual knowledge out in the real world. I am certain that as I delve into the complexities of this program, all my past learning experiences, such as my bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture, coupled with my work exposure will come in handy.

Why not India

There were multiple factors that had me opting for education abroad instead of choosing India. Having already pursued schooling, undergraduate and graduate studies from India, I am familiar with the teaching standards offered in my country. Indian education offers learning that is more theoretical in nature and having already attained a background knowledge of architecture, I feel that merely theoretical learning won't help me succeed as a professional.

Moreover, while some colleges offer master's courses in urban and regional planning, none of those focus on the prevailing urban planning issues, and also do not offer many career opportunities to pursue. While Australian education provides students the platform to address urban challenges through a myriad of innovative measures and technical capabilities, the case isn't the same in India. Though I already possess a master's program in Architecture, it is not enough for me to embark on a flourishing career in city planning. I want to work on assessing various issues pertaining to issues in the urban landscape and understand different perspectives. As far as the top Indian Universities are considered, such as CEPT University, IIT Varanasi, BIT Mesra; entry to these institutes requires a minimum of 50 percent score in the GATE examination. Also, the programs housed by these institutes focus more on Urban Management rather than Urban Planning. Therefore, all these factors have cemented my decision to pursue higher studies in Australia.

Why Not other countries?

While looking for programs that would help set the course of my future endeavors, I came across many universities that offered master's programs in Urban Planning. However, while comparing these universities on the basis of the curriculum, flexibility in learning, student base, fee structure, and exposure; I found Australia to be ticking all boxes for me.

As I researched the best universities to pursue higher education, there were four universities across the globe that attracted me in particular.



1. Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The program offered here is a two-year course, aiming to equip the students with extensive knowledge of traditional and emerging planning roles. The program also offers a choice to opt for a specialization in areas such as city design, economic development, environmental planning, and housing. With an international student base of 3387 spread across a 168-acre campus, this institution offers an exciting environment to be a part of. The course offered here has 90 graduate subjects, out of which the students can opt for 14 subjects and tailor their curriculum. Independent activities, workshops, and thesis are other exciting bits pertaining to this course that ensure the overall development of the students. The annual fee is \$53,450.

2. Delft University of Technology

Nestled in the beautiful land of the Netherlands, this university offers a blend of Architecture, Urbanism, and Building Sciences through an expansive curriculum. The total base of international students stands at 4633, with the male to female ratio being 1:0.41. The University equips students with the know-how of creating integrated solutions to enhance the built environment. The program has English as the medium of instruction and the annual fee for the same stands at \$18,750.

3. University College London

This public university situated in London offers a program in Urban Design and Urban Planning, which is a two-year study course. The main focus of the program is creative planning and its relationship with urban planning. It has a comprehensive curriculum that imparts training in processing urban design and places a strong emphasis on research. The international students constitute 53 percent of the total student base in UCL, across its two campuses. The annual fee for this program is \$12,900.

4. Swiss Federal Institute of Technology

The program offered by this university is Master of Advanced Studies in Urban and Regional Design, which is a one-year course. The program deals with human-centered design and focuses on revaluing urban and regional design, with a curriculum that amalgamates theory and practice. It also draws insights from other areas such as politics, scientific disciplines, social movements, and human movements. Around 39 percent of the students at this institution are international and the male to female ratio is 1:0.47. The annual fee charged for this program is \$16,023.

While the fee structure of MIT didn't fit my study budget, the program structure of ETH Zurich was of a shorter duration. The courses offered by the other two universities were not as extensive as per my learning expectations as the one offered by UNSW. Therefore, I chose UNSW above all the aforementioned universities.

Why Australia

Australia had a lot to offer that fit perfectly with my career goals. In addition to being a top tourist destination, Australia is also regarded to be among the top destinations globally, offering degrees that are highly regarded in all parts of the world. The country has gained recognition over the years with respect to adopting new technologies, providing job opportunities, and creating a name in the list of top education providers. As an international student, I look forward to experiencing diversity,



warmth, comfort, and an experience of a lifetime, for which, Australia has not lagged behind. The ESOS (Education Services for Overseas Students) Act is the firm course that Australia offers to ensure quality learning and other growth opportunities to international students. With so much to explore and look forward to, I have chosen Australia to be the destination to give flight to my aspirations.

The country houses six of the top 100 universities across the globe, with the University of New South Wales being among them. Not only that, Australian Universities care about their students and even moved their courses to the online format for the students to learn remotely. The higher education system of Australia is nothing short of outstanding, with 1100 institutions offering a total of 22000 courses. International student life is an important factor that I was considering while finalizing my educational destination, and I found out that the international student satisfaction rate is 90 percent, and the Australian government also offers scholarships to international students. The fact that nearly 2.5 million international alumni are making an impact on a global scale is a testimony of the quality of education provided by Australia.

Why not other universities in Australia?

After researching comprehensively about courses available within the Australian territory, I came across programs offered by the following universities:

1. Monash University

This university offers a two-year program in Master of Urban Planning and Design, consisting of 96 credits. With four project studio units, two applied practice units, four standalone complementary depth units, and two open elective units, this program prepares students to evolve into competent planners. The annual fee for this university is AUD 43,100.

2. Swinburne University of Technology

The Master of Urban Design program is a two-year extensive course comprising nine core units and three elective units. The course structure focuses on designing healthy cities by instilling students with the requisite understanding of urban informatics and modeling, urban economics, theories of buildings and cities, strategic and statutory planning, and planning law. The annual tuition fee for this University is AUD 36,000.

3. University of Melbourne

The two-year Master of Urban Design program is among the top courses offered by this illustrious university, with a course structure that requires the completion of 200 credit points. Covering urban planning issues, urban history, urban design practice, and urban design research, this course comprises both core subjects and electives. The tuition fee for this university is AUD 37,792 per annum.

Future plans

After completing graduate studies in City Planning, I intend to apply all the acquired learning towards my role at a reputed firm. Pursuing higher education in my preferred field will open me to a host of job prospects such and better pay packages at some of the top firms across the globe. With an



Australian City Planning degree in hand, I can work in the capacity of a Strategic Planner, Urban Planner, Town Planner, and Environmental Planning Officer. The top firms that I seek to target are Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd, Wollondilly Shire Council, Redpath Partners Pty Ltd, Randwick City Council, ASPECT Studios, HUNTHEM, and ARCHITECTUS. Working at either of these firms will guarantee me a yearly pay package between AUD 100,000 and AUD 120,000, which will help me grow and excel as a professional and build a stable future for myself. My ultimate goal is to channel my knowledge and skills towards planning urban settlements and developing solutions to resolve the social, environmental, and economic challenges prevailing in the urban space. I want to delve deep into the existing urban issues and implement my critical thinking skills towards reporting multi-scalar trials and formulating integrative plans to give rise to suitable environmental and economic consequences.

Ties to home country

As much as I want to visit Australia, I have no plans to settle in the country as I have strong family ties in my homeland, India. I am a resident of Delhi and I am a part of a loving family that consists of my parents, 1 elder sister and 1 younger brother. I got recently married to Vineet Sharma, who is a Project Manager at TCS, Delhi. My father, Vivek Sharma is a retired IPS. My mother, Vidhi Sharma is a homemaker. My elder sister is a government teacher and my younger brother is pursuing B.Tech with CS stream.

With my family residing in India, I cannot leave them and settle in Australia. Since I am married now, I share a great bond with my loving husband and would love to be with him post-completing higher studies. We tied the knot in May 2020 and faced a great deal of struggle to convince our families. He has extended his heartfelt support in the favor of my decision and it is his constant encouragement that has given me the strength to follow my dreams. We respect each other's goals and hence, after completing my higher studies, I will come back to my husband and settle with him permanently in India, my homeland. My family has been my constant source of encouragement throughout my journey and I cannot thank them enough. While staying away from them for a long time will be challenging, I am ardent to make this experience worth the effort. Thus, after completing the program and attaining sufficient industry experience, I will be returning to India.

Details of finances

My father has generously agreed to sponsor my educational as well as living expenses in Australia and has more than sufficient funds to ensure a smooth experience for me. The annual living expenses amount to AUD 64,121, which includes annual tuition fee (AUD 38,880), annual living expenses (AUD 21,041), OSHC (AUD 1,000), and travel fare (AUD 3,200). He has funds for both years, in the form of bank account deposits, immovable assets, and movable assets. We have INR 45,00,000 as the balance in the Kotak Mahindra Bank in my name, INR 5,25,956 in the ICICI Bank in the name of my father, and INR 13,49,870 in Indian Bank in my mother's name. Moreover, we have a property amounting to INR 27,75,00,000 registered in my father's name, gold ornaments worth INR 57,00,000, and pension income amounting to INR 12,58,300. The proof of finances has been attached alongside this application for your kind perusal.

Visa conditions



I hereby state that I am fully aware of the Australian visa conditions and I assure you that:

- I will not work more than 40 hours per fortnight during the time my course is in session.
- I will remain enrolled in my registered program and will maintain satisfactory attendance throughout the course of the same.
- I will maintain my OSHC.
- I will maintain sufficient financial capacity during my visit.
- Upon reaching Australia, I will inform my education provider of my address within 7 days after reaching Australia and will update if there is a change in the same.

I sincerely hope that my application meets the eligibility criteria and I request you to kindly consider my application as that of a bona fide student and allow me to study in Australia.

Sincerely,

Mehek Sharma

SOP PRO Sample