

Policies on the Professional Project and Thesis

Urban and Regional Planning

The Urban and Regional Planning Curriculum Committee grants permission to do a professional project (URP 602) or thesis (URP 601) in response to a student-initiated proposal. The expectation is that work will take place over two semesters, typically the fall and winter terms of the second year in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree (MURP).

A professional project and a thesis must be:

Integrative: You must demonstrate an ability to use knowledge and skills developed from across the MURP curriculum, not just from a single course or degree concentration.

Planning-oriented: You must contribute to the theoretical or conceptual foundation of planning, with work that improves the link between planning, policy, or design implementation.

Prepared with clear writing and communication: You must show an ability to communicate effectively through professional-quality written material, to integrate feedback on it, and to effectively present the final product in a public forum.

Students considering a professional project or thesis should understand that this option involves substantial initiative and effort, and normally requires a time commitment beyond that of a Capstone Studio option. If proposing a professional project or thesis, students should enroll in Capstone Studio as a back-up in case the proposal is not approved. Students can register for URP 601 or URP 602 following the approval of the proposal after the normal course registration period ends (e.g., for fall term credits you might register in late October). Students normally enroll for three credit hours for each of the two terms of the second year, for a total of six credit hours. The timing of the credit hours should correspond to the actual project work schedule.

Advisory Committee

An advisory committee provides guidance to the student. For a professional project, the advisory committee consists of one Urban and Regional Planning Program faculty member, serving as chair, and one client or community partner. For a thesis, the advisory committee must be at least two faculty members, one of which must be a regular member of the Urban and Regional Planning faculty, with that URP faculty member serving as chair (or two as co-chairs).

The student must coordinate the work with all advisory committee members. Both the student and the advisory committee should clearly understand their mutual expectations with respect to the amount and timing of work to be done.

Responsibility of the Student

The student is responsible for knowing and meeting all deadlines, submitting the proposal, establishing an advisory committee, and preparing the professional project or thesis. Successful completion of the professional project or thesis is a requirement for graduation for students selecting these options in lieu of the Capstone Studio course.

Mandatory Information Meeting

To be eligible to submit a proposal, a student must attend the information meeting prior to submitting a proposal. The purpose of the meeting is to acquaint students with the requirements and expectations of the professional project and thesis options. This meeting is typically held in the winter term and announced by email.

Writing a Proposal

The Curriculum Committee expects a highly refined, detailed, and carefully prepared proposal. A successful proposal will require a substantial commitment in time and effort. Time invested in writing a successful proposal leads to a more efficient and productive research effort. The proposal consists of responses to a series of questions and supplementary material such as a resume and transcript. Plan to write several drafts over two to three months. Write the proposal by responding to questions on the Word document titled *Professional Project / Thesis Proposal Questionnaire*, available online.

Submitting the Proposal / Due Dates

Proposals can be submitted at two deadlines: April 30 and September 30. Most students will typically submit at the September 30 deadline. The April 30 deadline is for students who have a reasonable expectation to carry out research or fieldwork during the summer months (for instance, holding a summer internship or other employment, or funding for international travel). Students submitting a proposal in April that is not approved cannot submit again in September. Students will submit the proposal by email to Barbara Malnar-Styke (bmalnar@umich.edu).

Submitting Adviser Approval

The faculty member advising the student is responsible for completing the *Confidential Adviser Review Form*, available online. This form must be submitted by the faculty member, independent from the student's proposal, as directed on that form.

Fall Semester Graduation

Students who intend to graduate in the fall semester should take the Capstone Studio course (URP 603). In exceptional circumstances, the Curriculum Committee will consider a proposal for a professional project or thesis from a student who intends to graduate in the fall semester, but only if the proposal is submitted by the April 30 deadline.

Progress Report

Students are required to submit a progress report to the curriculum committee by sending an email to the Katee Cole (kateej@umich.edu) by January 15 (unless directed otherwise) and copy the advisor on the email. This will serve as an indication of the advisor's approval of the progress report. The report should contain: (a) List of major tasks completed; (b) List of major tasks that remain to be completed, with anticipated completion dates; (c) Explanation of any setbacks or changes that have affected the project as it was proposed; (d) Expected completion date.

Submitting the Final Product

The student will work on several draft versions, and will submit a complete draft to the advisory committee no later than three weeks before the last day of classes of the semester during which the

student intends to graduate for grading purposes and for completing the credits. Many advisory committees will want to see a complete draft much earlier than this; be sure you have consulted about deadlines with your committee. The student should expect several revisions of the draft based on advisory committee feedback. Later submission may result in delayed graduation.

Professional Project: The style for professional projects may follow the style of a thesis, a professional plan or report, or may vary with the consent of the advisory committee and in consultation with the client. The student must provide the final product to the client or community partner, in hard copy and PDF form. The client may request additional hard copies. The student should also present a hard copy and PDF to each advisory committee member and provide a hard copy to the advisor to give to the UM library.

Thesis: The thesis must meet academic standards and be of publishable quality. The formatting must conform to the style used by the Rackham Graduate School for doctoral dissertations. It is customary to present a hard copy and PDF to each advisory committee member.

Professional Project and Thesis: After advisory committee approval, create a final document as a pdf. Name the file as: *LastName_ProfessionalProject_yyyymmdd.pdf* (for professional project) or *LastName_Thesis_yyyymmdd.pdf* (for thesis). Submit the pdf as an email attachment to Barbara Malnar-Styke (bmalnar@umich.edu) for URP records.

Public Presentation

As part of the requirements for successful completion of the professional project or thesis, the student will share the work in a public presentation open to URP faculty, students, and clients. The Curriculum Committee will arrange for a single session during the winter term exam week. This final presentation is an opportunity to give visibility and celebrate the work with the larger Taubman College community.

Sample Steps

1. Attend the mandatory information session.
2. Define a proposed project topic and recruit an advisory committee.
3. Draft a proposal following the proposal instructions, make revisions based on advisory committee feedback, and submit by the deadline.
4. Ensure that the faculty adviser submits the Confidential Adviser Review Form by the deadline.
5. The Curriculum Committee approves or denies the proposal. If approved, the student registers for either URP 601 or URP 602 and the project may begin. If denied, the student must fulfill graduation requirements by taking the Capstone Studio course.
6. Submit a progress report.
7. Ongoing consulting and sharing of drafts with advisory committee and, for professional projects, with the client.
8. Submit final product to faculty adviser for grading.
9. Provide a public presentation of work.
10. Distribute final product to URP and others as noted above.