

MCP Admission Requirements Guidance: The key MCP admission **requirement** is a well-written statement of general interest. This is required of all applicants, whatever the admission date. Applicants also have the **option** (recommended, but not required at this time) of providing a separate statement of research interest; this is especially important for those applying to begin their program in January. Guidance on each form of statement is offered below.

In addition, ours is one of many graduate planning programs in Canada and the US. Each program has its strengths and emphases. We have tried to briefly indicate below our own key characteristics (The MCP Program in Overview), and our more general context (A Planning Program in a Design School), to help you assess if we could be a fit for you. Let us know how and why these matter for you, in your personal statement. We cannot stress enough the importance of this interest statement when considering applications for admission – please do not take this task lightly. We are looking for much more than a basic form letter.

1. The Statement of General Interest: A written statement of approximately 500 words stating the reasons for a choice of study in planning at the University of Manitoba.

The CP Admissions Committee is particularly interested in the written 'statement of interest' requested as part of the application package. It helps us establish if your interests, as an applicant, are 'a fit' with the program's interests and concerns. The statement may reflect the results of your initial pre-application efforts to research our program and faculty members, including targeted exploratory communication with individual faculty members of particular interest to you. Begin this research by visiting: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/architecture/cp/> We are particularly interested in evidence of your efforts to familiarize yourself with one or more of our core faculty members, and their work – in relation to your own interest. Try to indicate who you would be particularly interested in studying with and why.

For those who decide to apply, your personal statement will almost certainly be the most critical element in the Admissions Committee's decision-making process. We seem to be currently experiencing an increasingly large number of applicants each year, while only having about 15 available spaces for offer to successful applicants. So, while the quality of the file overall is certainly of interest to the committee, many decisions hinge on the personal statement. It should explain:

- why you wish to pursue a career in planning at this time,
- why you wish to do so via our program at the University of Manitoba in particular, and
- what you have done to date (research, volunteer or paid work, travel etc.) that may help us better understand why you are following this course of action.

The personal statement usually helps us 'makes sense' of much of the rest of the file – your references, your resume, your educational history. It is also where you can provide us with a sense of your current 'design' for your self: what you critically **perceive** about your past and present; what you creatively **intend** for your immediate and longer-term future; and what you ultimately hope to **make** of your self, as a professional (we prepare you for professional practice) and as a scholar (we endeavour to develop your scholarly persona to enhance life-long learning). The statement can also be interpreted as where you attempt to sum up your current 'plan' for yourself, following your graduate studies.

In summary, in your personal statement (of general interest) we really want to see evidence of careful consideration as to **why you want to study for a planning degree at this time**, and **why with us in particular**. There also has to be an underlying rationale and consistency to: what is in the statement; what your cv/resume says; and what your references say. Finally, we look for signs of an ability to reflect deeply on previous relevant experiences - that have led to the interest in a planning degree with us at this time. Ideally, it will all add up to a sense of an excellent mutual 'fit' between applicant and program - and especially a 'fit' between you and at least two faculty members (including adjuncts) - who could be on your MDP committee - the culminating degree requirement.

2. The (optional, but recommended) Statement of Specific Research Interest or Interests:

Most students come into our program without a well-developed proposal of specific research interests; for them, their research proposal (for their Major Degree Project) generally emerges by the beginning of second year. However, some applicants may select our program because they have specific research interests that they believe they can profitably pursue straight-away through admission to our program. In such cases, a supplementary statement of specific research interests may be advantageous. While optional (but recommended) for September admission applications, a strong statement of specific research interests is essential for those pursuing a January admission.

A supplementary statement of specific research interests will generally be around 1 to 2 pages in length (1.5 spaced), and will outline the intended topic and line of inquiry for the Major Degree Project. Ideally, this will include the main research question(s), and the underlying research problem to be investigated. A potentially useful resource for this component of the application is a 1995 book by Wayne Booth et al, *The Craft of Research*, especially Chapter 3 (From a Topic to Questions) and Chapter 4 (From Questions to a Research Problem) (University of Chicago Guides).

Situate your specific research interest in relation to your statement of general interest in studying with us. Perhaps your specific research interests explain in large part your attraction to pursuing graduate studies with us. Help us answer: **Why do you wish to study with us in particular? What faculty member/s would you like to work with, and why? What experiences – in your background – underpin or influence your research intentions?**

A short listing of references that have informed the evolution of your research interest would also be helpful, to indicate possible theory and precedent contexts.

SPECIAL NOTE for INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS: We very much welcome and value international students in our student body. Our program of instruction is in English. To do well in the program it is essential that you have a very high level of English language proficiency, in writing, reading and speaking. The theory courses in particular have heavy reading demands; all courses demand excellent written work; and the studios especially require well-developed interpersonal skills, including the ability to dialogue effectively with a range of individuals from fellow students to planning professionals to community members. Ideally, you will have exceptional English language proficiency.

The MCP Program in Overview:

Ours is a 'studio-based' program (our studios are usually community outreach/action workshops involving active collaborative learning) where the linking of theory and practice is stressed, in the form of plans, or designs, or processes - especially public processes. We try to span the technical, moral and utopian dimensions that have been used to describe the 'complete' planning practitioner (John Friedmann). Our three-studio sequence currently features, in turn: community capacity-building at the neighbourhood scale; designing ecological sustainability into urban and regional development; and the integration of the urban and the aboriginal as a venue for practicing multi-cultural planning.

We also have a theory/practice stream at the core of our program, beginning with planning theory, including an internship between years 1 and 2, and ending with a professional practice course (that is really a 'professional-self-design' studio). We subscribe to the notion of planning as 'ethical inquiry and action' (Leonie Sandercock), and interweave ethical considerations throughout our program.

In addition to 45 credit-hours of coursework (over four terms, over two years) our degree requires: i) an internship (work experience in a planning setting, usually in the summer between first and second year), and ii) a Major Degree Project - a thesis, practicum or design - as the culminating element, requiring rigorous research (assisted by a customized planning research methods course, and a 'nuts-and-bolts' MDP Prep course).

The technical knowledge domains that are particularly emphasized are: housing and urban revitalization, urban ecology and environmental planning, the economics and finance of urban development (in the public, private and third/community sectors), and planning law in a local government context. There are also more technical electives regularly on offer, such as GIS in Planning, and the Development Process for the Design Professions.

A Planning Program in a Design School:

Ours is a program in City Planning by Community Design. We are a planning program in a design school setting (a Faculty of Architecture). We value design and research as legitimate forms of inquiry. We especially value the interest in 'making' that comes from our design home; in our case the making can sometimes be rendered as placemaking or community-building.

Students with a more theoretical bent usually pursue a thesis for their MDP; those with a more practical bent usually pursue a practicum or a design project. We have the faculty to support both. We are particularly interested in applicants seeking to complete their degree efficiently (within two years, for September entries; within 2.5 years for January entries) and who are committed to organizing their affairs accordingly - which usually means minimizing external work commitments in order to maximize study-time.

The MCP program benefits from an especially good relationship with the Manitoba Professional Planners Institute, which offers a mentorship program, to complement the internship.

References:

John Friedmann, 1987 *Planning in the Public Domain*. Princeton University Press
Leonie Sandercock, 1998 *Towards Cosmopolis*, Wiley

[Guidance Notes by CP faculty: December 18, 2005]