

Department of City Planning  
Faculty of Architecture  
University of Manitoba

**DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES FOR  
CONDUCTING  
A THESIS**

(September 2018)

# Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. DEFINITION OF A THESIS .....	1
3. STAGES OF WORK .....	2
4. THESIS PROPOSAL & GENERAL FORMAT FOR THESIS .....	3
5. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES .....	5
6. THESIS ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES.....	5
7. HEAD OF DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES.....	5
8. COMPOSITION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE .....	6
9. PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT'S FINAL ORAL PRESENTATION .....	7
10. CYCLE OF SUBMISSION, PRESENTATION & GRADUATION DATES.....	8
APPENDIX.....	10

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The final step in completing requirements for a Master's degree in City Planning at the University of Manitoba is to undertake a capstone project or a thesis. While most students will choose the capstone option, the thesis option offers an opportunity for those students who wish to develop their research skills and to contribute to the planning scholarship and knowledge.

The thesis is an independent piece of work on an approved topic. The purpose of the thesis is for students to demonstrate that they have mastery of the subject and are fully conversant with relevant literature. The thesis culminates in a public presentation timed to coincide with the regular schedule of dates for graduation.

The *Department Guidelines for Conducting a Thesis* are intended to help students to understand the background and general requirements for undertaking this part of the MCP program. These guidelines are supplementary to:

- the current [Thesis and Practicum Regulations](#) in the Regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Department of City Planning (both in the same document: City Planning Supplemental Regulations),
- the Faculty of Graduate Studies' [Academic Guide](#), and
- the [Thesis and Practicum Guidelines and Info](#).

It is essential that students familiarize themselves with these documents. It is also recommended that students review examples of theses archived in the Architecture and Fine Arts Library.

The maximum time allowed for the completion of all course work and thesis requirements for the Master's degree is four years. Under certain circumstances, an extension of up to two years beyond the four-year limit **may** be granted by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Please note that the Faculty of Graduate Studies will not consider having accepted full-time work before completing an MDP to be sufficient grounds for an extension.

## 2. DEFINITION OF A THESIS

A thesis is a formal, comprehensive, written dissertation describing original and independent research on a chosen subject. This original work may include:

- investigation aimed at the discovery and/or interpretation of facts
- challenge and/or possible revision of accepted theories or laws
- ordering and synthesizing of existing findings to support a conclusion that could open up new research directions.

In short, the thesis might be described as the generation of new knowledge.

A high standard of excellence applies to the thesis in terms of workload, theoretical clarity and analytical rigour. It requires a theoretical framework, clear objectives and questions driving the literature review, empirical work and analysis.

### 3. STAGES OF WORK

Students are expected to consult on a regular basis with their advisor and committee members, and to meet at least annually with the full committee. The following suggested schedule of at least four thesis meetings, three with the full committee (together with the necessary approvals to proceed after the satisfactory completion of each stage) will ensure monitoring of each student's progress and productive development of the topic:

1. **Preliminary Research Statement**—submitted to advisor by November 1 of Year 1 to assess the initial research proposal. This document should not exceed four pages and should include:
  - a working title;
  - a brief discussion of the topic and its importance to planning;
  - the key research questions that will be addressed;
  - a bibliography of potential literature sources; and
  - a list of possible advisory committee members.
2. **Thesis Proposal**—meeting with full committee to assess and approve the full research proposal (see Section 4).
3. **Intermediate Stages**—meeting(s) with advisor and/or full committee to evaluate the first complete draft document; and for the advisor and advisory committee to assess the final draft written document and all supporting visual material, for proceeding to a final oral presentation.
4. **Oral Presentation**—meeting with advisor and full committee. Open to all students and staff in the department as well as special guests. Students make a 20-minute presentation and discuss their work with the members of the advisory committee.

Satisfactory completion of each stage will be judged by the advisory committee on the basis of whether the student demonstrates:

- mastery of the subject
- critical thinking
- competence in independent work
- ability to present ideas in written, visual and oral forms

In order to be eligible to make public presentations of any stage of their work, students must ensure they complete each stage of work in accordance with the cycle of dates given in Section 10 and the Appendix (below).

#### **4. THESIS PROPOSAL & GENERAL FORMAT FOR THESIS**

The preparation, presentation and formal approval of a well-developed proposal is a critical step in the production of the thesis. The proposal must be clearly focused and succinct. It must be approved by the student's advisor, and where/when possible by other members of the advisory committee prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

**If students have not completed a full proposal by the beginning of their second year, they are required to take the Capstone class instead of completing a thesis.**

Students must also take responsibility for undertaking the ethics approval process for research with human subjects. Such approval must be granted before students begin their fieldwork. The *Ethics Protocol Submission Form*, guidelines for submission, deadlines, etc. are available through the [Office of Research Services](#).

The thesis proposal generally includes:

- *Title Page*, including title of project, your name, names of at least three (proposed or potential) supervisory committee members (including supervisor, internal reader, external reader)
- *Table of Contents* for the proposal
- *Abstract* summarizing the scope of the project being proposed
- *Statement of Purpose* identifying the goals and objectives of the study and the research problem and questions to be addressed
- *Background* to the thesis topic. This should cover principal issues to be addressed: historical context; potential and ramifications or impact on society, and/or on the natural and human-made environment. The background must define assumptions and limitations that will proscribe the work
- *Theoretical Framework and Literature Review* including identification of the most relevant proposed sources of information and preliminary list of references
- *Research Methods and Analysis*, an outline of how the student proposes to carry out the research and what analytical methods are to be employed
- *Significance of the Proposed Research* to the scholarly literature, planning profession, and/or the larger community
- *Schedule* of dates for completion of the work, including critical meeting dates and proposed presentation date according to the cycle of presentation/graduation dates given below
- *Proposed Table of Contents* for the thesis including:
  - Appendices
  - List of references—list references according to subject area, including a section on research methods

N.B. The length of the proposal will generally be approximately 20 to 25 pages double-spaced, excluding references and appendices (or a maximum of 30 pages with references and appendices).

## General Components of a Thesis

Each thesis takes a different form depending upon the students' areas of research. The specific structure of each will be developed by individual students in consultation with their advisor and advisory committee. Students are encouraged to look at examples of past theses, available in the Architecture and Fine Arts Library, to see the range of possibilities. The following outlines one possible structure of the final document:

- 1 Acknowledgments (including acknowledgment of sources of funding)
- 2 Abstract/Summary
- 3 Introduction
  - a Preamble
  - b Problem Statement
  - c Purpose of the Thesis
  - d Scope of the Thesis
  - e Research Methods
  - f Importance of Study
  - g Assumptions
  - h Limitations
  - i Theoretical Approaches
  - j Historical Background
  - k Outline of Chapters
- 4 Literature Review
- 5 Theoretical Framework
- 6 Context
- 7 Analysis
- 8 Synthesis: Implications for Planning Practice and Theory
- 9 Conclusions, Recommendations and Directions for Further Study
- 10 References Cited
- 11 Appendices
- 12 Bibliography—references must have been cited in the main body of the text, and should be listed alphabetically by last name of author according to standard and consistent citation practices. The bibliography includes other material used in the research, but not specifically referenced/cited.

A [\*Master's Thesis/Practicum Proposal\*](#) form and a [\*Master's Thesis/Practicum Title and Appointment of Examiners\*](#) form should be completed, and signed by the student's thesis advisor at the same time as the full proposal has been approved by the department head, or completed at least four months before the student proceeds towards the oral presentation of the thesis or practicum.

## **5. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Students are required to:

- submit written or graphic material to the members of their advisory committee at least two weeks prior to any meeting or review, at each stage of the research process;
- schedule and coordinate all committee meetings;
- make arrangements for any required audio/visual equipment; confirm the time and place of all meetings with all committee members and make all necessary room bookings;
- summarize in written form at the end of each formal meeting the committee's comments and any recommendations they might make. This summation should be completed and circulated to all committee members within one week after the meeting date. Students may consider using a tape recorder to record comments or having a fellow graduate student act as a 'recorder';
- secure their own funding and necessary support for any thesis topic. Department staff will assist students in this endeavour, but the primary responsibility remains with the student;
- ensure that their schedule for completion of the final stages of work matches the cycle of dates given in Section 8 (below).

## **6. THESIS ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The thesis advisor will be responsible for:

- formally writing to invite and thank external committee members of the thesis advisory committee;
- formalizing advisory committee membership;
- completing the Faculty of Graduate Studies thesis progress reports (PRs);
- serving as the student's program advisor for course selection and academic program re-registration purposes.

## **7. HEAD OF DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

The head of the department must:

- ensure fairness and equivalency in the assessment of all thesis final approvals;
- seek to maintain or improve the standard of work that the department expects from every student;
- inform the Faculty of Graduate Studies once all requirements for graduation have been met;
- maintain a roster of active thesis students and advisors.

## **8. COMPOSITION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Students are assigned a faculty advisor upon entry to the program in City Planning. Often, students remain with the same advisor through the whole program, who will become their thesis advisor. However, it is important to ensure that the interests and experience of the advisor and the advisory committee members are appropriate for the proposed thesis topic. It is possible for students to change advisors as their thesis topic develops.

The thesis advisor will guide the development of the proposal and administer the thesis process to completion. Students must remember, however, that they are entirely responsible for organizing their work in accordance with the stages and cycles set out above.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies refers to the advisory committee as an examining committee and the members of the advisory committee as examiners. In addition to the thesis advisor, the advisory committee will include at least two other members. These are often referred to as ‘internal’ and ‘external’ members, but the requirements of Graduate Studies are slightly more nuanced.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies requires that the committee consist of a minimum of three members. At least two must be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. One member of the committee must hold a primary appointment from within the major department of the student and one must be external to the department. All examiners must be deemed qualified by the department head and willing to serve. All members of the advisory committee must be approved by the department head. Committee members agree to act in the role of advisor or mentor and to participate in the pertinent decisions and approvals at each stage of the student's thesis work.

The key requirements are as follows:

- 1) a master's advisory/examining committee must consist of three persons;
- 2) two of the three must be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies (leaving the majority of academic decision making in academic hands);
- 3) one member must be external to the department;
- 4) all members must be deemed qualified and willing to serve in the role of advisor or mentor, and to participate in the pertinent decisions and approvals at each stage of the student's thesis work.

In a professional program like City Planning it is common practice for the one ‘external’ member to not only be from outside the department, but also from outside the university—often a practicing professional. In these cases, that committee member must:

- have a Master’s degree;
- be well established in their field;
- be able to evaluate whether or not the student’s work is acceptable for the degree in question;



- be at arm's length from the department (i.e. has had no collaboration with the student or advisor, nor any affiliation with the department (either as staff or student), within the last five years.

In the **exceptional** circumstance where an advisor/department head feels an external should be considered who does not hold a Master's degree, the department will seek approval of the appointment from Graduate Studies by illustrating the value of the person's qualifications. There are no guarantees in this process though, and students proposing external committee members without Master's degrees should initiate the approval process at the earliest possible time.

All full-time faculty members and adjunct professors of the Department of City Planning are available to serve as thesis advisors or on advisory committees as internal members of the committee/examiners. All other full time and part-time faculty in other departments of the Faculty of Architecture and the Faculty of Graduate Studies are eligible to serve as external members of the committee/examiners on advisory committees.

## **9. PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT'S FINAL ORAL PRESENTATION**

When the student and thesis advisor consider the thesis to have attained a satisfactory level of accomplishment, copies of the final draft document should be submitted to other members of the advisory committee. The members of the committee will examine the draft document within a reasonable period of time and make recommendations to the student concerning subject matter and presentation.

The committee's comments will be considered by the student and thesis advisor; a final document will be prepared, and copies circulated to the rest of the committee members for review and comment.

The student is responsible for making arrangements for a time and place for the final oral presentation, using the [Presentation Booking Form](#). The student will deposit a copy of the document with the department head at least one week prior to the oral.

The thesis advisor will act as chair of the student's oral presentation. The advisor will have a vote on the acceptability of the thesis. The oral presentation will normally be about one hour to an hour and a half. The presentation takes the following format:

- the student will be introduced by the advisor;
- the student will give a 15-25 minute account of their work;
- questions will then be asked by members of the advisory committee in rotation beginning with the external member/examiner, internal member/examiner, followed by the advisor. When the committee has completed its rounds of questioning, guests will be invited to ask questions. At the conclusion of the questioning by the committee and guests, the student and guests will be asked to withdraw (or the committee will withdraw);

- the committee will then deliberate on whether or not the work has been successfully completed. The decision concerning the approval of the work must be unanimous;
- the student will be recalled and advised of the outcome.

The final thesis shall be assessed by the advisory committee according to the following scheme:

- i) acceptable as is;
- ii) acceptable with minor revisions;
- iii) acceptable with major revisions (e.g., revision of content);
- iv) unacceptable.

The committee may require corrections, and minor changes in format or presentation, but no major changes in the manuscript, in order for the student to be recommended for graduation.

The thesis may be rejected if the oral presentation reveals plagiarism, is poorly defended, or exposes a major weakness. In such a case, the student will have a second chance.

The student will be responsible for the required corrections/or revisions, as well as the final submission of copies to the committee and the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Once final corrections have been approved, the thesis advisor will have the advisory committee sign the *Thesis/Practicum Approval Form*. Once the document has been approved the student is responsible for:

- submitting an electronic version of their thesis to MSpace. The steps for this can be found on the [library's website](#).
- 1 copy (hard bound) delivered to the graduate student advisor (Dept. Copy)
- fulfilling all other requirements of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, as described on the [Thesis: Submission Checklist](#).

For updated information on submission requirements for Graduate Studies, students should review the [Graduate Thesis Guidelines and Information](#).

## **10. CYCLE OF SUBMISSION, PRESENTATION & GRADUATION DATES**

This cycle is based on the principle of required lengths of time for:

- distribution of thesis to committee members
- committee members to read, comment and meet with student
- student to respond to comments
- public presentation of work
- revisions prior to submission of final material to Department of City Planning and to Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Most students will aim for an October graduation (24 months). Some may achieve a May graduation with an accelerated program (20 months). The third option is to graduate in February. See Appendix for sample 24 and 20 month timelines.

*October graduation*—submission of final draft to advisory committee for review and approval in late June; final presentation in mid-July to mid-August; submission of recommendation for graduation to be submitted for final approval to Faculty of Graduate Studies by a deadline near the end of August. (Note: Students should make sure to coordinate their submissions with faculty members' summer research and travel schedules).

*February graduation*—submission of final draft to advisory committee for review and approval in late October; public presentation in late November-early December; submission of recommendation for final approval to Faculty of Graduate Studies by the deadline near the beginning of January.

*May graduation*—submission of final draft to advisory committee for review and approval in mid-February; public presentation in mid-March; submission of recommendation for final approval to Faculty of Graduate Studies by the April deadline.

Precise dates will vary according to the University Calendar and to convenient days for staging presentations. They should, however, be determined as far in advance as practicable.

## APPENDIX

### TWO SAMPLE COMPLETION SCHEDULES (24 MONTHS—OCTOBER GRADUATION AND 19 MONTHS—MAY GRADUATION)

**Ideal timeline: 24-months in program (mandatory steps are in bold)**

DATES	TASK	ADDITIONAL NOTES
YEAR 1		
September	Begin program; introductory meeting with advisor to discuss departmental expectations and your potential research interests. Should also seek advice on option/elective courses.	If you did not submit a research proposal with your admission package (or you no longer want to pursue to that topic), you should spend some time looking through the major planning journals and past theses, and conferring with your advisor. <i>What topics or broad area of practice (e.g. urban design, transportation, social planning) catch your interest? Will that topic be able to hold your interest for the next two years?</i>
October - December	Begin literature review.	Meet with your advisor to discuss the development of your literature review. Use Planning Theory course and options/electives to refine your research interests/topic and to familiarize yourself with relevant literature.
January - April	Identify research methods; begin writing proposal.	Meet with your advisor to discuss possible research methods. Use Planning Research Methods course to familiarize yourself with the methods most applicable to your topic. Finalize your topic & begin work on your research proposal.
April - May	<b>Meet with advisor to complete Faculty of Graduate Studies Progress Report</b>	If you have already selected committee members, they will also need to be involved in this meeting.
May - August	Continue work on proposal	Work with advisor to identify potential committee members. Students who intend to graduate within 24 months of entering the program must find time to work on their proposals alongside their summer internship.
Mid August	<b>Submit complete draft of research proposal to advisor</b> [Followed by revisions]	

YEAR 2		
By early September	Finalize internal and external committee members	This will often be completed earlier.
Mid September	Submit proposal to entire advisory committee	
Mid October	<b>Full committee meeting to consider proposal</b> [Followed by revisions]	Once your proposal is officially approved, you will need to submit a signed <i>Master's Thesis/Practicum Proposal</i> form and a <i>Master's Thesis/Practicum and Appointment of Examiners</i> form. If your proposal is not completed by mid-October, you will be required to complete a second progress report with your advisor.
Early to Mid November	If applicable, submit application to Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) and wait for approval	It is highly recommended that you try to get your ethics application in <i>before</i> the end-of-term crunch time. Usually take 4 weeks to get back to you and will quite often require revisions.
November - February	Execute research (collect AND analyze your data); begin the writing process	Multi-tasking is essential, if you want to stay on track during this stage. For example, you must identify tasks that you can be working on while you wait for potential interviewees to get back to you. Most students will also use this time to work on chapters that are not dependent on the collection and analysis of your original research data (e.g. the literature review chapter).
March - April	WRITE!	You should have discussion with your advisor about whether they are willing/prefer to review individual chapters or full drafts.
Mid April	<b>Progress report on thesis</b>	Students who are on track to graduate in October do not need to complete a Faculty of Graduate Studies Progress report. Your advisor may still request one.
Early May	Submit full first draft to advisor [Followed by revisions]	This step is not a formal requirement, but is highly recommended. Your advisor will likely be able to identify major gaps in your thesis, making it much easier (and potentially faster) for your other committee members to review. You must also allow sufficient time for your advisor to review your document.

Early June	First draft to advisory committee [Followed by revisions]	This step is not a formal requirement, but is highly recommended. Your final presentation tends to be more enjoyable and may generate fewer revisions if your committee members have already had a chance to comment on your thesis. Depending on their availability, your committee members may wish to have a full committee meeting to review your document.
Mid June to early July	<b>Submit exam copies to committee</b> [Once approved, student must set date for final presentation and notify graduate student advisor; send approved exam copy to department head at least 1 week prior]	Most committee members will require at least 2-3 weeks to review a thesis; you should be talking to all your committee members about their requirements (and their summer vacation schedule) sooner rather than later. Faculty of Graduate Studies recommends submitting the exam copy by mid-June, so early July really is the latest possible date.
Late July to mid August	<b>Final oral presentation</b> [Followed by revisions]	Very conservatively, allow at least two weeks to complete your required revisions (it is very rare to not have any revisions); more substantial and time-consuming revisions may delay your graduate date. <u>Remember</u> : you also need to build in time for your advisor/committee members to review and sign-off on your revisions. If your committee has not been able to provide input on earlier drafts, there is a greater chance of more substantial and time-consuming revisions.
End of August	<b>Final copies to Department and Faculty of Graduate Studies</b>	Consult the Faculty of Graduate Studies' website for the exact date. If you miss this date, you will have to wait until the next graduation date to officially graduate. There may also be fee implications depending on when your final thesis is received and approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
October	<b>GRADUATION!</b>	

**Accelerated timeline: 20 months in program (mandatory steps are in bold)**

DATES	TASK	ADDITIONAL NOTES
YEAR 1		
September	Begin program; introductory meeting with advisor to discuss departmental expectations and your potential research interests. Should also seek advice on option/elective courses.	If you did not submit a research proposal with your admission package (or you no longer want to pursue to that topic), you should spend some time looking through the major planning journals and past theses, and conferring with your advisor. <i>What topics or broad area of practice (e.g. urban design, transportation, social planning) catch your interest? Will that topic be able to hold your interest for the next two years?</i>
October - November	Develop literature review	Meet with your advisor to discuss the development of your literature review. Use Planning Theory course and options/electives to refine your research interests/topic and to familiarize yourself with relevant literature.
December - January	Identify research methods; begin writing proposal.	Read ahead on the research methods most applicable to your topic; work with advisor to identify potential committee members and to discuss possible research methods.
Mid February	Submit complete draft of research proposal to advisor [Followed by revisions]	
By early March	Finalize internal and external committee members	This will often be completed earlier.
Mid March	Submit proposal to entire advisory committee	
April - May	<b>Meet with entire committee to complete Faculty of Graduate Studies progress report</b>	
Mid April	<b>Full committee meeting to consider proposal</b> [Followed by revisions]	Once your proposal is officially approved, you will need to submit a signed <i>Master's Thesis/Practicum Proposal</i> form and a <i>Master's Thesis/Practicum and Appointment of Examiners</i> form.

Early to Mid May	If applicable, submit application to Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) and wait for approval	Usually take 4 weeks to get back to you and will quite often require revisions. Students who intend to graduate within 20 months of entering the program will likely need to complete <u>most</u> of their internship while they wait to hear back from Ethics, so that a significant portion of the summer can be devoted to the thesis.
June - August	Execute research (collect AND analyze your data); begin the writing process	Multi-tasking is essential, if you want to stay on track during this stage. For example, you must identify tasks that you can be working on while you wait for potential interviewees to get back to you. Most students will also use this time to work on chapters that are not dependent on the collection and analysis of your original research data (e.g. the literature review chapter).
YEAR 2		
September - October	WRITE!	You should have discussion with your advisor about whether they are willing/prefer to review individual chapters or full drafts.
Early November	Submit full first draft to advisor [Followed by revisions]	This step is not a formal requirement, but is highly recommended. Your advisor will likely be able to identify major gaps in your thesis, making it much easier (and potentially faster) for your other committee members to review. You must also allow sufficient time for your advisor to review your document.
Early December	First draft to advisory committee [Followed by revisions]	This step is not a formal requirement, but is highly recommended. Your final presentation tends to be more enjoyable and may generate fewer revisions if your committee members have already had a chance to comment on your thesis. Depending on their availability, your committee members may wish to have a full committee meeting to review your document.
Mid January to early February	<b>Submit exam copies to committee</b> [Once approved, student must set date for final presentation and notify graduate student advisor; send approved exam copy to department head at least 1 week prior]	Most committee members will require 2-3 weeks to review a thesis; you should be talking to all your committee members about their requirements sooner rather than later. Faculty of Graduate Studies recommends submitting the exam copy by mid-January, so early February really is the latest possible date.



Late February to mid March	<b>Final oral presentation</b> [Followed by revisions]	Very conservatively, allow at least two weeks to complete your required revisions (it is very rare to not have any revisions); more substantial and time-consuming revisions may delay your graduation date. <u>Remember</u> : you also need to build in time for your advisor/committee members to review and sign-off on your revisions. If your committee has not been able to provide input on earlier drafts, there is a greater chance of more substantial and time-consuming revisions.
End of March	<b>Final copies to Department and Faculty of Graduate Studies</b>	You need to consult the Faculty of Graduate Studies' website for the exact date. If you miss this date, you will have to wait until the next graduation date to officially graduate. There may also be fee implications depending on when your final thesis is received and approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
May	<b>GRADUATION!</b>	