

INDIVIDUALIZED SPECIALIZATION, MUP Program

Students in the MUP program have the option to pursue an individualized specialization. Students may propose an individualized specialization if their area of interest is not adequately addressed in one of the five MUP program specializations already offered. Individualized specializations should fall within the scope of generally recognized planning-related specializations in the field AND have faculty representation in the Department of Urban Design and Planning. This is to ensure that the student has adequate faculty advising in the area of their proposed specialization. Typically, MUP students declare their specialization in winter quarter of their first year. Students with an individualized specialization are encouraged to follow this same timeline.

Review Process

Students, in consultation with their faculty advisor, may propose an individualized specialization using the Individualized Specialization Form, located on the MUP program website. The proposal shall include an emphasis on faculty consultation and a written rationale. Both are intended to help students critically think through their plan to ensure the coursework and faculty support needed to achieve their goals exists. Once students obtain their faculty advisor's signature on the form, they submit it to the Graduate Program Advisor, who will facilitate review by the MUP Program Director or Department Chair. Students should anticipate at least two weeks for the review, and be prepared to meet with the MUP Program Director or Department Chair to discuss their proposal and to make adjustments to it if needed. Students should not assume an outcome until they hear the results of the review.

Faculty Consultation

Students first consult with their assigned MUP faculty advisor regarding their individualized specialization plan (MUP students are assigned a faculty advisor in their first academic quarter). If deemed appropriate, students may shift to another MUP faculty advisor whose interests more closely align with their individualized specialization interest, so long as that faculty member is willing to take them on as an additional advisee. The MUP faculty advisor could make referrals to faculty in other Departments at the UW for supplemental advising if needed. Students shall provide a summary of the consultation with their MUP faculty advisor(s) in their proposal attached to the Individualized Specialization Form.

Curriculum

Students shall provide a narrative (approx. two pages) addressing what they want to learn in their individualized specialization and how the topic relates to planning. Students shall also include a course plan, with an annotated description of the courses they wish to take, in what sequence (list quarters), and how the courses will prepare the student for a master's degree in urban planning.

The curriculum for the individualized specialization will vary per student, but it shall include at least five courses. Three foundational and two elective courses are recommended, to be identified in the student's proposal. Foundational courses should introduce or cover essential theory or methodologies within the field the student is pursuing. Elective courses should provide more specialized knowledge within the field.

At least one of the courses should be offered in the Department of Urban Design and Planning (have a URBDP course prefix). In general, courses should be at the graduate level (500 and above). If an undergraduate course is proposed, students should describe how it will fulfill their specialization requirement and their MUP degree overall. Please note that 300-level courses and lower cannot count towards a graduate degree. Students should be advised that classes they select for their individualized specialization, either within or outside of the Department, may be canceled or fill to capacity before they can enroll, and should thus propose back-up options in their plan.

Thesis or professional project

The student's thesis or professional project shall be related to their individualized area of specialization. In the Individualized Specialization Form, students shall identify the faculty who could serve on their thesis or professional project supervisory committee as chair and member. Identifying who could serve on the supervisory committee at this stage is not binding; it is intended to help students identify if faculty advising exists. Students later formalize their supervisory committee via the Student/Faculty Agreement Form for Thesis or Professional Project (located on the MUP website) once they are enrolled in or have completed URBDP 512 Research Methods, in their second year of study. Students are directed to review the MUP Thesis and Professional Project Guidelines, on the MUP website, for policies regarding supervisory committee member requirements as well as a list of faculty eligible to serve.