

URBAN 547: PROFESSIONAL PROJECT GUIDELINES

What is a Professional Project?

The professional project is a demonstration of your ability to do independent work at a professional level. The project is to be primarily client-oriented, dealing with a particular issue or set of issues, within a specific context. The client, for example, may be an agency or business within the realm of urban planning, a neighborhood group or non-profit organization, sector of a city, county or other jurisdiction, or be site-specific. The project should bring something new to the situation, demonstrating your ability to synthesize from a broad planning/design context and apply to a specific one.

The project must discuss how the work relates to the larger context of professional urban planning/design in terms of the issues addressed and/or the methods used. This is a fundamental distinction between this professional project, done for 9 academic credits, and a project that may be assigned in a planning/design office. To illustrate the relationship to the larger context, literature reviews, case studies, interviews, critical analyses, and/or references to relevant situations in the professional field may be used.

A professional project, by definition, involves the application of specific planning/design methods and approaches. The project should include an explicit discussion of the approach taken and/or methods employed including alternatives and reasons for approaching the project as selected. In addition, the project should include a summary evaluation including strengths, weaknesses, achievements and lessons learned.

Preparatory Work

Initial Topic Development

In summer quarter prior to the final year in the MUP program, students are advised to explore their topic of interest. Students should start reviewing the literature associated with the topic(s). Also, students may start to refine the topics to a series of questions.

URBAN 512 Research Seminar

Students are required to enroll in URBAN 512 Research Seminar. URBAN 512 is designed for MUP students, and guides students through the research process through a series of assignments. Students must be enrolled in or have completed URBAN 512 Research Methods prior to enrolling in URBAN 547 Professional Project.

URBAN 598 Research Design for Urban Science may be taken as a substitute for URBAN 512 Research Seminar, although it is designed for PhD students. This course is acceptable for MUP students who have previous research experience, will pursue future doctoral study, or who are pursuing the Environmental Planning specialization (for which the course is a foundational requirement). If you are considering enrolling in URBAN 598 Research Design for Urban Science, talk to your faculty advisor or Prof. Branden Born (instructor of 512) about the appropriate class for you.

Collaborative Professional Project

If the professional project is conducted as a collaborative one, involving other students and/or professionals, the contributions and work of each person must be clearly identifiable within the project. Students pursuing a collaborative professional project with another student should refer to Attachment H.

Registering for Professional Project Credits

Overview

Students must register for and complete a minimum of 9 professional project credits in order to graduate from the MUP program. Students may register for more than 9 credits if needed, but only 9 will count towards the degree. Any excess professional project credits will not count towards elective credit totals. Students typically enroll in professional project credit

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
Department of Urban Design and Planning

in winter and spring quarter of their final year in the MUP program. The 9 credits are usually divided between quarters. For example, a student may register for 4 professional project credits in Winter quarter, and 5 professional project credits in Spring quarter, for a total of 9 credits. The general rule of thumb is that students should enroll in credits commensurate to the amount of work they put in to the project. This can be roughly determined by considering the hours of work that one would do for another graduate-level course of the same credits. Students must be registered for a minimum of 2 credits during the quarter in which they graduate.

Students should be aware that enrollment in professional projects is not the same as enrolling in a class; it is independent work that the student executes on an agreed-upon schedule with the consultation of the supervisory committee.

Establishing the Supervisory Committee

Each student must assemble a supervisory committee to oversee their work. The Supervisory Committee must consist of at least two graduate faculty members. It is also recommended that a representative of the project's client(s) be on the committee. It may contain other members as well; the majority of the members must be on the Graduate Faculty of the University of Washington. Please see Attachment A regarding the policy, and Attachment B regarding which faculty are eligible to participate, and the UW Graduate Faculty page to confirm their status: <https://grad.uw.edu/programs/find-graduate-faculty/>

Students should start to think about their committee in summer and autumn quarter of their final year. The student, rather than the Department Chair/faculty/staff, is responsible for assembling their supervisory committee, although the Department Chair/faculty/staff can advise on it.

Registration

To register for professional project credits, students must first complete the URBAN 547 Student/Faculty Agreement Form located here: <https://urbdp.be.uw.edu/programs/mup-graduate-degree/forms/>

The student obtains the signatures of the committee chair and member(s) on this form, and then submits it to the Graduate Program Advisor by the **3rd day of the quarter** in which they plan to register to allow time to process the request before the free add/drop week ends. (Students can register for professional project credits beyond the first week of the quarter, but late fees will apply. Please refer to the UW Academic Calendar for further details.) The Department Chair or MUP Graduate Program Coordinator/MUP Program Director will then review and sign the form. Once signed, the Graduate Program Advisor will provide the add code to the student who will then register for URBAN 547 professional project credits. Staff do not enroll students in the credits.

Students need only submit the Professional Project Agreement Form once. They do not need to keep submitting it for subsequent quarters. The only exception is if the student changes their committee members. If any committee member is added/dropped to the committee, then the student must submit a new Professional Project Agreement Form signed by all committee members.

Students will be issued an add code specific to their committee chair, and may continue to use same the add code to register for Professional Project credits in future quarters without having to resubmit the form. The only exception to this is if the student changes their committee chair. If so, a new add code specific to the new committee chair will be issued once the student submits the Professional Project Agreement Form again signed by all committee members.

Students are responsible for enrolling in 547 credits each intended quarter with the add code provided. Enrollment is not automatic, and staff do not enroll students in the credits.

If a student enrolls in more than 9 credits for their thesis or professional project, only 9 will apply to the degree requirements. Excess thesis or professional project credits will not apply to the degree and cannot fulfill elective credit requirements for the degree.

If a MUP student wants to change their professional project to a thesis, please be aware that previous credits cannot be retroactively changed. Please speak to the GPA for options.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities are general guidelines. They are also not exhaustive, as other criteria may apply.

Committee Chair

The committee chair takes on the lead advising role within the committee. In general, they are responsible for reviewing agreed upon drafts and taking on the bulk of advising. Together, the committee members and student should lay out a schedule that determines how many drafts will be produced, when they will be due, and when comments will be returned.

Committee Member(s)

Committee members generally serve in a supportive role. They may review drafts but may also defer to the committee chair for the bulk of advising regarding the drafts. They may advise on specific content or methods related to the project. They read a final draft of the work.

Client(s)

The client's role is to establish the scope of work within the project. They are expected to remain in communication with the student during the duration of the student's project. They are encouraged to give feedback to students about the project, but final say rests with the committee chair and the committee member.

Student

Students are expected to work proactively on their project and manage their own workload and productivity. Students are expected to lead in communicating with their committee. This may include proactively contacting faculty to schedule meetings, following up with faculty about draft reviews, sending reminders for meetings, and so forth.

Students are expected to stick to their agreed upon schedule. They are also responsible for scheduling the defense and coordinating signatures on their final paperwork, and submitting their final paperwork by the deadlines.

Professional Project Schedule

It is highly recommended that students follow a schedule as they work on their professional project. A schedule provides structure and helps students stay on target for timely completion. It also establishes expectations for both the student and the supervisory committee, although it is the responsibility of the student to keep to the schedule. The following is provided as a guideline, although each student's experience may differ.

Summer Quarter (prior to the last year in the MUP program)

- Explore topic of interest. Develop a reading list.
- Consider the faculty who can serve on the supervisory committee. See Attachments A and B regarding who can serve.

Autumn Quarter

- Enroll in URBAN 512 Research Seminar (or URBAN 598 Research Design for Urban Science as a substitute)
- Present a preliminary proposal of your professional project to the proposed committee chair for review:
 - Tentative title
 - Intent of purpose of the work
 - Scope of the work
 - An indication of the available literature or other resources to be used (including faculty)
 - The methodology or approach to be taken
 - An outline of tasks to be accomplished
 - A schedule of milestones and committee meetings to be completed within one or two quarters
- Confirm both the Chair and Member on the supervisory committee
- Submit Professional Project Agreement Form

Winter Quarter

- Register for Professional Project credits
- Develop a timeline with the committee chair at the beginning of winter quarter.
- Complete the first 3 chapters by the end of winter quarter (if they are not completed, the likelihood of graduating in spring quarter may decrease)

Spring Quarter

- Register for Professional Project credits
- Schedule your defense to occur later in the quarter
- Prepare a powerpoint presentation or poster
- See Attachment D: Checklist for Final Quarter

Summer Quarter

If the professional project is not completed by spring quarter, then the student will need to enroll in a future quarter. Students should consult with their committee members about the possibility of enrolling in summer or autumn quarter to complete the work. Many faculty are not available in the summer, so enrollment in autumn quarter is more typical. International students must consult with International Student Services to determine their eligibility for extending their time to earn the degree.

Professionals Council Capstone Event

In the spring quarter of the academic year in which a student completes their MUP program, the Professionals Council sponsors a capstone event to recognize the professional project and thesis work done. **All students who plan to graduate in spring or summer quarters are expected to present their capstone work during this event.** All students, faculty, and Professionals Council members are invited to attend. Details (date, time, place, presentation template, etc) are provided early in spring quarter from Department staff. Students should plan to make a powerpoint presentation or a poster of their work. These can later be used during the defense.

Required Paperwork

There are two main required forms:

- **Committee Signature Form for the Master's Degree**

This form is required by the Department. Students obtain the Committee Signature Form by submitting a Master's Degree Request with the Graduate School: <https://grad.uw.edu/for-students-and-post-docs/mygrad-program/>. The MUP Academic Advisor will then be able to access the Committee Signature Form and email a copy of it to the student. Students must obtain signatures from all of their committee members on this form to confirm that their thesis is finished. Students then submit the Committee Signature Form to the MUP Academic Advisor no later than the last day of the quarter in which they graduate.

- **Signature Page**

This form is a required component of the Professional Project. Students create their own signature page using the template in Attachment E of these guidelines. Students must obtain signatures from ALL of their committee members on this signature page. Students must include the signature page in their final professional project.

Oral Examination – aka “the Defense”

A final oral examination by the supervisory committee is required. The nature and format of this exam is determined by the chairperson of the committee. The oral examination will primarily concentrate upon the professional project topic, although the committee's discussion with the student may range more widely in endeavoring to establish the student's general competence.

The defense is, on average, one hour long. It is recommended that students hold their defense two weeks prior to the last day of the quarter. The Gould 410 conference room is available for students to use. The defense may be held virtually or in person, depending on the committee's preference and availability. ALL members of the committee must be present in some form during the defense. It is the student's responsibility to schedule the defense and coordinate the schedules of their committee members. Students are advised to confirm their defense date with their committee months ahead of time to avoid scheduling challenges.

Be prepared to explain: (a) What you did, (b) Why you did it, (c) How you did it, (d) What you found, and (e) What the results mean. The defense may include visuals in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, poster, etc. Typically, they should include (a) An overview or outline of your presentation, (b) Introduction (including research question, rationale and hypothesis, if any, and definition of key constructs), (c) Method (including design, methodology, etc.), (d) Results (including tables or figures summarizing your findings) and (e) Discussion (including reasons for new or unexpected findings, contributions and limitations, and practical implications).

It is expected that the student, chairperson, and all members of the committee be present at the defense. The client must attend the defense if he/she is a formal member of the committee (i.e. their name and signature is included on your URBAN 547 Student Agreement Form for Professional Project); attendance is optional if the client is not a formal member of the committee. You may invite others to the defense in circumstances that warrant it. Please check with your committee chair for their preference.

Please bring the following to your defense:

- Copy of your final professional project
- Committee Signature Form
- Signature page (Attachment E)

The Committee Signature Form and signature page may be signed at the defense if your committee agrees that you have successfully completed the project, or signed afterwards if you need to incorporate edits into your final draft. Be careful to coordinate signatures with your committee members' respective schedules, as all signatures are required and no committee member may sign off on a professional project without having read it in its final form.

Please see the "Checklist for Defense" – Attachment C

Format and Submission of the Professional Project

MUP students must upload their professional project as one digital file by 11:59pm on the last day of the quarter in a shared drive, for which the Graduate Program Advisor will provide the link.

The format should be determined by the nature of the project and its client, with the approval of the Supervisory Committee chair. The report should be of professional quality. Graphics and tables should be integrated with text insofar as possible. Black and white or color is acceptable. All questions regarding format should be referred to the chair of your Supervisory Committee before the final preparation and presentation of the professional project.

The following must be included in your Professional Project:

- Signature Page (see Attachment E)
- Quote Slip (see Attachment F)
- Title Page (see Attachment G)
- Body of the professional project
- Accompanying tables, graphs, etc

On or before the last day of the quarter, upload the electronic file of your Professional Project via google form; the Graduate Program Advisor will provide the link each quarter.

Your Professional Project will be available to the public.

Requirements to Graduate

In general, the professional project is complete and the student is eligible to graduate once the student:

- produces a defensible professional project, as defined by their committee
- has completed 9 credits of URBAN 547
- has obtained signatures from their committee members on the Committee Signature Form.
- has uploaded their professional project as one pdf file via the google form by the last day of the quarter
- has completed all requirements for the MUP degree (students can verify this by running a degree audit in MyPlan)

If the requirements are not met by the deadline, then the student must register for a minimum of two credits in the following quarter (except summer quarter). Please discuss with your committee. International students must consult with an adviser in the International Student Services office.

Students completing a Professional Project are not eligible for the Graduate Registration Waiver Fee, otherwise known as the two-week extension. This is for Thesis students only.

Students on leave, or those who have not maintained student status, are not entitled to extensive faculty and staff counsel for their thesis or professional project.

Please also see the “Checklist for Final Quarter” – Attachment D

ATTACHMENT A - SUPERVISORY COMMITTEES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Applicable portions of the Graduate School Policy 4.2 have been excerpted and modified for these guidelines as follows:

- A. A Supervisory Committee is expected to function to give responsible advice, guidance and assistance to a graduate student working for an advanced degree at the University of Washington, and to evaluate the student's performance. For these purposes it is desirable that the Supervisory Committee be established in the quarter preceding the start of the professional project.
- B. Supervisory Committees for graduate students should be appointed in the manner and with the composition set forth below:
 - 1. For theses and professional projects, the supervisory committee shall consist of two to four members. At least two of the committee members must be graduate faculty members; and at least one of the graduate faculty members must be from the Department of Urban Design and Planning. For professional projects, a third member may be from the professional planning community.
 - 2. For students completing the MUP degree only or an informal concurrent degree, the supervisory committee chair must be an Urban Design and Planning graduate faculty member and the other graduate faculty member(s) may be from the Department of Urban Design and Planning or any other UW department(s). Additional members may be graduate or non-graduate faculty members from the Department of Urban Design and Planning or any other UW department.
 - 3. For formal concurrent degree students, the supervisory committee must include at least one graduate faculty member from each department. The committee chair must be a graduate faculty member and may be from either department. Additional members may be graduate or non-graduate faculty members from the Department of Urban Design and Planning or any other UW department. For professional projects, a third member may be from the professional planning community.
 - 4. Prior to enrollment in URBAN 547, the student must propose the Chairperson and Supervisory Committee to the Graduate Program Coordinator for approval. The student shall obtain written consent of the members to serve using the URBAN 547 Student-Faculty Agreement Form.
- C. Names and titles of all Supervisory Committee members should, as a matter of courtesy, appear in the Acknowledgement section (or elsewhere) in the professional project.

ATTACHMENT B - GRADUATE FACULTY ROSTER

Daniel B. Abramson

Marina Alberti

Christine Bae

Rachel Berney

Branden M. Born

Christopher Campbell

Manish Chalana

Qiuzy Cynthia Chen (adjunct, Civil and Environmental
Engineering)

Karen Tzu-Hsin Chen

Gregg Colburn (adjunct, Real Estate)

Andrew Dannenberg (adjunct, Public Health)

Sofia Dermisi

Gregory Keith Harris

Joaquin Herranz, Jr. (adjunct, Public Affairs)

Edward D. McCormack (adjunct, Civil and Environmental
Engineering)

Rick Mohler

Jeffrey K. Ochsner (adjunct, Architecture)

Helen Pineo

Vikramaditya Prakash (adjunct, Architecture)

Mark H. Purcell

Qing Shen (sabbatical Spring 2026)

Dylan Stevenson

Jan M. Whittington (sabbatical Autumn 2025 & Winter
2026)

Kenneth P. Yocom (adjunct, Landscape Architecture)

ATTACHMENT C – CHECKLIST FOR DEFENSE

Use this checklist as you count down towards your defense.¹

One month prior to defense...

- ☐ Have you clearly stated and defined your central question, hypothesis, or creative challenge, in terms that can be answered or addressed with your available data, analytical/creative methods, and time?
- ☐ Have you explained why your question/hypothesis/challenge is important to you, personally?
- ☐ Have you explained why your question/hypothesis/challenge is important to the world?
- ☐ Have you identified your audience?
- ☐ Have you cited the existing literature and/or practice to summarize what the world already knows about your question/hypothesis/challenge?
- ☐ Have you included your bibliography (list of cited references), and are all references in the bibliography cited in the body of the professional project, or in the sources of figures?
- ☐ Have you identified what information is needed to answer/(dis)prove/address your question/hypothesis/challenge in your particular case?
- ☐ Have you gathered/generated and analyzed that information?
- ☐ Have you included your conclusions, and distinguished between “implications”, “lessons learned” and/or “recommendations”?
- ☐ Does your analysis and presentation of information support your conclusions?
- ☐ Have you presented your information and analysis in a logical sequence?
- ☐ Have you made optimal use of graphics and tables to present your information and analysis?
- ☐ Are graphics (including text and labeling) all at a readable size and printable resolution?

One week prior to defense...

- ☐ Does the thesis title match the substance/message of the professional project?
- ☐ Are all sentences complete, and checked for spelling and grammar?
- ☐ Did you prepare the Signature Page, Quote Slip, and Title Page? (See Attachments F, G and H)
- ☐ Is a bibliography or list of references included?
- ☐ Are all footnotes, endnotes and bibliographic references complete and properly and consistently formatted?
- ☐ Do all references to internet sources include your access date and a permanent URL (e.g. by using <http://www.webcitation.org>, or other permanent internet referencing tool, if necessary)? Research which tool/service seems most stable and use that. Ask the UW library for advice.
- ☐ Do all figures and tables have numbered captions with complete sources, and are they cited in the text? (Tables and Figures have separate numbering sequences; table captions are above the table; figure captions are below the figure.)
- ☐ Is the table of contents, list of figures, and list of tables all included?
- ☐ Are all figures and tables properly located on the page, and near the relevant text?
- ☐ Are font color, size, style and numbering consistent for each type of text (e.g. headings, subheadings, main text, captions, etc.)?
- ☐ Are page breaks in appropriate places in the text, e.g. no orphaned or widowed headings and leading/ending lines of paragraphs?
- ☐ Have you scanned the whole text for spelling and grammatical errors?
- ☐ Have you eliminated passive voice, repetitive statements, vague language and jargon? (E.g. write “use” instead of “utilize” except when you mean “to make useful”; instead of writing “impact” as a verb, write “affect,” “influence,” “degrade,” “reduce,” or whatever more precise word is appropriate; etc.)

¹ This list is not exhaustive; it is merely a partial compilation of considerations commonly needing attention.

ATTACHMENT D

CHECKLIST FOR FINAL QUARTER – Intended for the Graduation Quarter (typically Spring quarter)

Weeks 1-2:

- ☐ Submit a Master's Degree Request with the Graduate School: <https://grad.uw.edu/for-students-and-post-docs/mygrad-program/>. Be sure to indicate that you are doing a "non-thesis" option; do not submit a "thesis title".
- ☐ Schedule reviews of your drafts with your committee for the quarter
- ☐ Submit draft professional project to committee chair

Weeks 3-4:

- ☐ Committee Signature Form emailed to you as a pdf. To receive your Committee Signature Form, you must first submit a Master's Degree Request, linked above
- ☐ Schedule your defense no later than two weeks before the end of the quarter. You can book the 410 Gould conference room for your defense.

Week 5-6:

- ☐ Get comments back from committee chair
- ☐ Incorporate edits into your professional project draft
- ☐ Create a PowerPoint presentation or poster of your work. This will be displayed at the Professionals Council Capstone Event in spring quarter

Weeks 7-9:

- ☐ Submit professional project draft to committee member(s)
- ☐ Get comments back from committee member(s)
- ☐ Incorporate edits from committee member(s) into your draft
- ☐ Submit final professional project to your committee for their review prior to your defense
- ☐ Participate in Capstone Presentation/Poster Event

Week 10:

- ☐ Prepare and print a Signature Page, following the format in Attachment E
- ☐ Prepare and print a Quote Slip, following the format in Attachment F
- ☐ Prepare and print a Title Page, following the format in Attachment G
- ☐ Hold your defense. Bring a copy of the professional project, the Committee Signature Form and signature page.
Sometimes the committee will sign the forms at the defense, or they may delay signing until you incorporate edits. Carefully coordinate getting their signatures so you can submit the paperwork electronically by the deadline.
- ☐ Incorporate edits from defense into final professional project
- ☐ RSVP for the College of Built Environments' Graduation Ceremony, if attending (further details will be emailed by the CBE Dean's Office in Spring quarter). This is the main graduation event for MUP students.

Week 12:

- ☐ Upload your completed **professional project**, signed **signature page**, **quote slip**, and **title page** as one pdf via google form (link provided by Graduate Advisor) by 11:59pm on the last day of the quarter.
- ☐ Return the signed Committee Signature Form to the Graduate Program Advisor by 11:59pm on the last day of the quarter: udp@uw.edu.
- ☐ Vacate your Gould Hall locker, if applicable
- ☐ Provide the Graduate Program Advisor with your preferred email address.

ATTACHMENT E

SAMPLE SIGNATURE PAGE FOR PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

Instructional information is placed in brackets [] to help you format your document. Do not include brackets or instructional information in your document.

University of Washington
Department of Urban Design and Planning

This is to certify that I have examined this copy of a professional project by

[Your name as it appears on your *Title Page*]

and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by the final
examining committee have been made.

Committee Members: [All committee members are required to sign]

[Type and center full name of committee chair beneath signature line]

[Type and center full name of committee member beneath signature line]

[Type and center full name of committee member beneath signature line]

Date: _____

ATTACHMENT F

SAMPLE QUOTE SLIP FOR PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

In presenting this professional project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree at the University of Washington, I agree that the Library shall make its copies freely available for inspection. I further agree that extensive copying of this professional project is allowable only for scholarly purposes, consistent with "fair use" as prescribed in the U.S. Copyright Law. Any other reproduction for any purposes or by any means shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature _____

Date _____

ATTACHMENT G

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE FOR PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

Instructional information is placed in brackets [] to help you format your document. Do not include brackets or instructional information in your document.

[Title of your document]

[Your name as found in official UW records; do not include professional titles]

A professional project
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Urban Planning

University of Washington

[Type in YEAR of graduation—Do NOT include day and month]

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:
Department of Urban Design and Planning

ATTACHMENT H

COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

By special permission of the Supervisory Committee Chair, two or more students may collaborate on certain aspects of their professional project, provided the character of the work is such that each participant is assured sufficient opportunity for individual contribution as well as responsibility to the study as a whole. In this case a concise account of the contributions of each collaborating individual should be included in the preface or acknowledgement section of the project.

Students considering a collaborative effort must petition the Chair of the Department when they submit their URBAN 547 Student-Agreement Form for Professional Project.

Rules Governing the Presentation of Collaborative Professional Projects

1. Permission to present a collaborative professional project must be obtained in advance from the Department Chair. This is accomplished by means of petition.
2. Each student presents one (1) copy of the collaborative professional project for binding.
3. Each copy must show all authors' names on the title page.
4. Each student places a "collaborative professional project statement" in the project, following the title page. Copy of statement is shown below.
5. Each student places a standard "quote slip" (see Attachment G) with their name(s) (signatures) in the copies they present for binding.

SAMPLE - Collaborative Professional Project Statement

This professional project is the result of a collaborative effort of _____

and _____ and _____,

by the authority of the Department of Urban Design and Planning.

All work was done under the direction of Professor _____.