

# RESEARCH FOR MASTER'S THESIS

## URP 6971 RESEARCH FOR MASTER'S THESIS

**CREDITS:** Variable (1-15) - 6 credits are required; credits taken above the required 6 credits will not count toward the degree

**INSTRUCTOR:** Chair of the student's thesis committee.

**REQUIRED TEXT:** Typically, there are no required readings for this course.

**MEETING TIMES AND LOCATION:** To be arranged between faculty member and student.

**PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:** This course is the capstone for the student's degree in urban and regional planning.

**PURPOSE OF COURSE:** The thesis allows the student to conduct research in an area that has a solid foundation in the student's knowledge of planning and skills learned through the program. The satisfactory completion of six credits of URP 6971 is a condition of the requirement of the on-campus degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning.

**COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Through this course, students will be able to demonstrate understanding of planning knowledge, professional skills, ethics, critical thinking skills, and effective communication and professionalism, and research methods, through the following:

- **Develop Research Skills:** Writing a master's thesis provides students with an opportunity to develop and demonstrate their research skills. This includes conducting literature reviews, designing studies, collecting and analyzing data, and drawing conclusions.
- **Contribute to Planning Knowledge:** The master's thesis involves original research beginning with a significant review of existing literature in urban and regional planning. Through their thesis work, students create new insights, theories, or interpretations to the body of urban and regional planning knowledge.
- **Demonstrate Mastery:** Completing the master's thesis is a requirement for earning the Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree. It serves as evidence that the student has achieved a mastery in urban and regional planning and is capable of independently conducting scholarly research.

- **Professional Development:** Writing the master's thesis requires students to develop skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, writing, and communication—all of which are valuable skills in the planning profession.

**HOW THIS COURSE RELATES TO THE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING AND THE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THE PLANNING ACCREDITATION BOARD:** As the capstone course for the MURP program, *Research for Master's Thesis* allows students to demonstrate their planning knowledge and skills and as such relates to all three departmental student-learning outcomes and two programmatic student learning outcomes. These are:

<b>PAB Student Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Through the thesis, students will...</b>
Demonstrate research and critical thinking skills reflecting comprehension and use of relevant ideas and information in the planning field	Develop the ability to think critically, analytically, and logically. The results of research, analysis, synthesis are defensible and logical, and significantly inform the final product.
Analyze and combine qualitative and quantitative information from multiple sources to support decision-making	Construct methodologies, results of the research findings, and conclusions appropriate to research focus.
<b>MURP Student Learning Outcomes</b>	
Apply knowledge of human settlement, historical and contemporary practice, organizational/institutional structures, and policy and processes relevant to urban and regional planning concepts and theories	Evaluate the issues and the general body of knowledge of the profession of urban and regional planning. The literature review, including application of relevant precedent and theory, should inform the final product.
Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethics and responsibility and engagement with social justice issues	Demonstrate understanding of ethics in the field. The methodology and

	recommendations are reflective of and incorporate planning ethics.
Apply professional visual, oral, and written communication skills	Apply professional skills in the areas of visual, oral and written communications.

**MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES FEE:** None

**COURSE EVALUATIONS:** Due to the nature of this course being independent work, there will be no course evaluations.

**UF POLICIES**

**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.disability.ufl.edu](http://www.disability.ufl.edu)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:** As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: *"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code."* You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community. On all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."*

Violations of the Honor Code, including plagiarism and cheating, at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information, please read the [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code](#).

**THESIS RESOURCES**

**APA FORMATTING AND STYLE GUIDE (7<sup>th</sup> Edition):** Urban and Regional Planning uses APA

Formatting and Style. For resources on APA Formatting and Style, please visit:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html)

**GRADUATE SCHOOL FORMATTING GUIDELINES:** When the thesis or dissertation is ready to be put in final form for submission to the Graduate School, the student should review the Format Requirements of the Graduate School Editorial Office <https://grad.ufl.edu/academics/editorial/etd-specs/>

**TEMPLATE SUPPORT:** For help formatting the thesis document in order to meet the minimum submission requirements of the Editorial Office, students should work with the UFIT Help Desk's Thesis and Dissertation Support Center <https://it.ufl.edu/helpdesk/graduate-resources/>

- The Support Center offers students assistance with troubleshooting their documents free of charge. They also provide more extensive formatting and pdf-conversion services for reasonable fees to the student. It is highly recommended that all students writing theses and dissertations use their services, in order to alleviate some of the stress felt during the approval process.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS RESOURCES

Resources available on-campus for students include the following:

- *U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [umatter.ufl.edu/](http://umatter.ufl.edu/) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center:* Visit [counseling.ufl.edu/](http://counseling.ufl.edu/) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit [shcc.ufl.edu/](http://shcc.ufl.edu/).
- *University Police Department:* Visit [police.ufl.edu/](http://police.ufl.edu/) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center](http://ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center).

## GRADING

**GRADING SCALE:** The grading scheme for this course is S/U.

Information on current UF grading policies may be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/#gradingpolicies>

## COURSE GUIDELINES

### THESIS COMMITTEE FORMATION

- For a thesis, the student must select a supervisory committee. The supervisory committee must consist of at least two faculty members with Graduate Research Faculty standing. The Committee Chair must be a regular member of the Urban and Regional Planning (URP) faculty. The Committee Co-Chair may be a regular member of URP faculty, or faculty in another department with affiliate status in URP. The student's thesis committee reviews the thesis, which must meet the committee's standards for quality and scope. A thesis committee form must be completed and submitted to the URP Academic Assistant to finalize committee formation and selection.
- Additional Committee Members
  - Occasionally, the supervisory committee must include additional committee members. The student may request that an individual with special qualifications/expertise be a third member of the committee. Also, students pursuing an outside minor, concentration, or concurrent degree may need to have a faculty member representing that work on the committee as well.
- In the semester prior to thesis commencement, it is the student's responsibility to prepare a preliminary thesis proposal (usually in conjunction with URP 6203, Planning Research Design) and identify a Committee Chair. The student must have a confirmed Committee Chair prior to registration for the first semester of thesis credits. The Committee Chair will then assist the student with identifying a Committee Co-Chair and any additional committee members.

### FIRST SEMESTER WORK PRODUCTS

- The first semester thesis work product should be closely coordinated with the Committee Chair. To receive an “S” grade, the student must, at a minimum, complete drafts of the first three thesis chapters (Introduction, Literature Review, and Methodology).
- If the student will be interacting with Human Subjects as part of their thesis, it is also expected that the student will apply for and receive IRB approval and commence said interactions/data collection in the first semester.

### **SCHEDULING THE DEFENSE**

- The student will work closely with their Committee on the production of a Defense Draft and scheduling a thesis defense. The Defense Draft includes a literature review to delineate a problem or gap in knowledge, statement of objectives, formulation of research question, explanation of methods, collection and analysis of data, report of results, discussion of conclusions, and an abstract. The Defense Draft is also in the thesis template format prescribed by the Graduate School’s Editorial Office.
  - In coordination with the Committee Chair, a preliminary thesis defense date may be scheduled for a date within the defense window published by the Department.
  - The student will submit the Defense Draft to the Committee two weeks prior to the preliminary thesis defense date. Failure to submit a Defense Draft by the deadline may result in the cancellation of the preliminary defense date.

### **SUMMER SEMESTER THESIS POLICY**

- It is expected that students will complete their thesis in a Fall or Spring semester. However, occasionally, the need arises for a Summer graduation. In the event of a Summer graduation, the following process will be followed for thesis defenses.
- With the permission of the Committee, a student needing to graduate in a Summer semester must successfully defend their thesis in April. All revisions to the thesis must be completed by May 15th.
- Upon the completion of all thesis work and revisions, as determined by the Committee Chair, the student will then register for at least 2 credits of URP6971 (or 3 credits if needed to reach 6 total credits). The student will also proceed with applying for Summer graduation and the Graduate School’s thesis submittal process.