GUIDELINES for PROFESSIONAL REPORTS

INTRODUCTION

This document sets forth guidelines for completing a Professional Report (PR), one of four options for satisfying the capstone requirement of the Master of Urban and Regional Planning. A comparison of the options may be found on the department’s “which capstone?” web page: http://ppd.soceco.uci.edu/pages/which-capstone.

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL REPORT?

A Professional Report (PR) is a professional-quality deliverable produced by a student on behalf of, and in collaboration with, a real world client. It is an analytic document that provides decision support for a real world client facing an actual planning problem. PRs are motivated by specific problems rather than by the general advancement of knowledge. On the learning side, PRs promote integration of previously separate skills and the transition from “student” to “professional” work habits.

How do students identify PR clients and topics?

Students may start either from the department’s list of prospective clients, compiled and distributed around mid-summer, or by independently soliciting their own clients and projects. In either case the first successful contact is only the beginning of a longer negotiation process.

Clients originate in three sectors. The majority comprise practicing professionals in planning or allied endeavors. A somewhat smaller share comprises community stakeholders, for example, representatives of non-profit organizations. Finally, up to a handful comprise campus faculty members serving through their alternate professional or community roles.

Clients must be approved by the department at the start of the PR process. This is accomplished through submission of a student-committee agreement (“Form 1”).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The PR process is student driven. Students must be sufficiently self-directed to act not only as their own agents but as intermediaries among the members of their supervising committee, who comprise:

1. A client (technical advisor and practice role model).
2. A PR faculty advisor (principal academic oversight).
3. The PR class instructor (problem solving & communication skills).
The student's responsibility first, is to secure a client and negotiate a deliverable. The student is responsible for maintaining regular communication with the committee. The student solicits and synthesizes the committee's feedback. The student provides friendly reminders of impending deadlines and ultimately, is responsible for meeting those deadlines.

The client's responsibility is to encourage professional growth through advice and feedback on a real world deliverable. In this respect, the client is the principal source of technical or situation-specific advice on the PR planning task. There is no expectation of financial support.

The instructor's responsibility encompasses year-long administration of the PR process and the teaching of 292A, which constitutes the principal resource for improving problem solving and communication skills. The PR instructor has exclusive authority for 292A grades. His level of formal involvement is high at the beginning of the PR cycle, but dwindles completely after 292A.

The faculty advisor's is responsible for primary academic oversight of individual PRs. Advisors supervise the work of their assigned students in 292B\(^1\), and hold exclusive authority both for 2929B grades and for final determination of satisfactory PR performance. Individual PR advisors will be assigned by the department based on a balance of student and faculty requests, overlaps in areas of interest, and faculty work load.

**HOW the PR WORKS with EMPLOYMENT and OTHER COURSES or PROGRAMS**

**292A-B.** The 292 sequence is required of all students who plan to complete a PR. 292A is a lecture-seminar led by a common instructor during fall quarter, whereas 292B\(^1\) is an independent study course that is supervised and graded by the student’s individual PR faculty advisor.

**PR credit: two-quarter limit.** Whereas students may (and should) use regular electives to complement their PR training, *no additional credit beyond 292A-B (or their equivalent) may be earned for PR work.*

**Professional Employment.** *Students may not earn PR credit for work that is required as a condition of current paid employment.*

**Study Abroad: NEURUS and EAP.**

▶ While away, *students who study abroad assume sole responsibility for regular communication with their committee members.* Students are individually responsible for general assignments and compliance with any deadlines. No individual notices or reminders will be sent from Irvine.

NEURUS students may take advantage of extended deadlines designed specifically for the program (see deadlines later in this document). These deadline extensions by themselves are rarely sufficient to compensate for the extra work of simultaneous travel and PR progress. To create a more realistic buffer for their time away, NEURUS students should carry out as much of their PR work as possible during the summer preceding their trips.

\(^1\)292B as course number for the second half of the PR sequence is under review. Pending approval, students should enroll in 299 with their PR faculty advisors.
Education Abroad Program (EAP) students complete all PR requirements on the same schedule as their Irvine peers while participating in 292A electronically. Upon return, students typically register for independent study (298) with the 292A instructor to receive credit for completing 292A. Please consult with the PR instructor as soon as your placement site is confirmed.

► **Human Subjects Protection**: students who plan to conduct “human subjects” research while abroad (surveys or interviews, for example) may require review and approval from UCI’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB process is discussed as part of 292A. Students planning to study abroad may familiarize themselves with the relevant rules on the IRB web page [http://www.research.uci.edu/ora/hrpp/faq.htm](http://www.research.uci.edu/ora/hrpp/faq.htm). It takes up to two months to secure IRB permissions, so early application is imperative.

**PPD Doctoral Students Earning the MURP**. Ph.D. students who are also pursuing the MURP will generally have a research orientation that is best suited to the thesis capstone option. Such students should undertake a PR only with concurrence of their faculty advisors and the MURP program director.

**PR FORMAT**

The final report should comprise approximately 50 pages of text (12 point standard font, double spacing, 1” margins, header with pagination), including inset tables or figures, but excluding appendices. All reports should contain the following:

1. Title page (see sample below)
2. Table of Contents
3. List of Tables and Figures
4. Executive Summary
5. Problem Statement, Significance, and Objectives
6. Background
7. Main body of report (with appropriate subsections)
8. Planning Recommendations
9. References
10. Appendices (as needed)

The professional report is a *planning communication*, designed to support professional decision-making. Its quality, form, and organization should reflect professional conventions and standards in the practice community.

**How is the PR evaluated?**

The 292A instructor has exclusive responsibility for grading during fall quarter. Beyond fall quarter, individual PR faculty advisors have exclusive grading responsibility. In determining whether the final submittal satisfies degree requirements, the advisor shall consider the client’s feedback about the student’s performance. Nonetheless, the advisor has final authority.
Are deadline extensions for the PR permitted?

The Professional Report simulates a professional planning experience. Meeting deadlines is a key aspect of professional practice. Students must manage their time to meet these commitments. *Except in cases of personal emergency, deadline extensions will not be granted.*

**PR DEADLINES**

**Sept.30, 2011** Informal statement of prospective client and topic, plus five PR advisor preferences (for PR faculty advisor matching process).

**Oct.7, 2011** “Committee Agreement” (Form 1) confirming client, with more a substantial (300-word) statement of problem.

**Oct.28, 2011** “Plan of Action” (Form 2), a sentence outline specifying the components of the deliverable, including procedures and sources for information gathering and analysis.

**Dec.2, 2011** First half of PR (to be evaluated for 50% of grade in PPD 292A). Preliminary submissions and exercises scheduled throughout the fall quarter will contribute to the balance of grading.

**Feb.24, 2012** Full draft of the PR is due to the PR faculty advisor and client.

**Mar.16, 2012** PR committee must return written comments to the student on the draft.

**April 13, 2012** Submit penultimate (next-to-last) PR version to the advisor and client for final approval of any changes made in response to their March 16th or subsequent comments. *Many PRs will require multiple iterations of draft-comment-response during the period running up to May 7.*

**Spring Quarter** Students’ PRs are showcased in a department celebration inviting faculty, clients, students, guests, and the community (around Week 7). Each student delivers a 10-minute oral presentation before these audiences.

**May 7, 2012** Submit to the Graduate Coordinator:  
(1) “Committee’s Final Approval” (Form 3) with signatures.  
(2) Please refer to Form 3 for submittal requirements.

*PRs not approved by May 7 will usually delay conferral of the MURP degree.*

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2 For fall quarter, NEURUS students add one month to the normal deadline. So the NEURUS full draft deadline is March 23, 2012, for example. Over the following weeks, the NEURUS deadlines converge with the normal deadlines. The NEURUS deadline for the final PR is May 14, only one week after the non-NEURUS deadline.
[Sample Title Page (should embody professional aesthetics)]

[Graphic should be representative of the report contents]

20-Year Housing Forecast
For the Central Region of Orange County, California

Demeter D. Anteater

Professional Report
Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning
Department of Planning, Policy, and Design
University of California, Irvine

CLIENT: [Type client's name, title, name of organization, organization contact information]
PR FACULTY ADVISOR: [Type faculty member's name]
DATE: [Quarter and year of submission]
Committee Agreement Form (Form 1)
AGREEMENT to SERVE as a PROFESSIONAL REPORT CLIENT or FACULTY ADVISOR

Student’s name: ___________________________ E-mail: ________________

We agree to serve as committee members for the above named student who is completing a Professional Report (PR) in partial fulfillment of the capstone requirement in UCI’s Master of Urban and Regional Planning program.

■ CLIENT: I am satisfied that the proposed work is at an appropriate PR starting point. I have read the Professional Report guidelines and understand the client’s responsibilities as therein described.

Client Signature: ___________________________ Date: ________________
Print Name: ___________________________
Title: ___________________________
Organizational affiliation: ___________________________________________________________________
Address: ___________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________ Email: ___________________________

■ FACULTY ADVISOR (must hold PPD faculty appointment)

PR Faculty Advisor Signature: ___________________________ Date: ________________

■ STUDENT: I thank and accept the committee and understand that it is primarily my own responsibility to maintain regular communication with its members.

Student Signature: ___________________________

Submit this form to Janet Gallagher, Graduate Coordinator
Submission Deadline: October 7, 2011
Plan of Action (Form 2)
PROFESSIONAL REPORT PROJECT OUTLINE

Student’s name: _____________________________________________________________

In a 4-5 page attachment (double-spaced, plus references), provide a “sentence outline” of the proposed professional report problem and analysis. The outline should include:

- Introduction
  - a clear statement of the problem
  - discussion of its significance
  - specific objectives

- Background (guide to the landscape of previous efforts)

- Specific method for acquiring and analyzing information. (In an appendix, fully cite prospective sources.)

- Weekly time line for report activities. Be specific. Include pre-scheduled consultations with supervising committee members.

Submission Deadline: October 28, 2011

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3Sentence outlines are particularly useful for roughing out oral presentations. In spring quarter, you will be delivering a 10-minute oral PR presentation, most likely from a revised version of this outline. Refreshers on sentence outlining are legion. First try: Online Writing Lab (“the OWL”) at Purdue University: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/544/03/
Committee’s Final Approval (Form 3)
SUPervising Committee’s Approval
Of Final Professional Report

Student's name:_____________________________________________________________

- CLIENT: The faculty advisor has solicited my evaluation of the student’s Professional Report. I have received a copy of the final report.
  Client Signature: _____________________________________________  Date:___________

- FACULTY ADVISOR: I approve this final report as acceptable for completion of the Professional Report capstone requirement.
  Faculty Advisor Signature: ________________________________  Date:____________

SUBMITTAL GUIDELINE. Collect signatures from your committee and transmit this completed form to Janet Gallagher, Graduate Coordinator, by May 7, 2012. Also:

Submit to department (Janet):
- One bound print copy;
- One all-inclusive file in .PDF format, both on (1) an optical medium (CD or DVD) and (2) submitted on line to the designated electronic drop box.
- Media must be clearly labeled, and electronic file names must embed the author’s name.

Submit to committee members:
- print or electronic copy (as the members request).