

Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) Thesis Option Requirements and Procedures (updated in April 2018)

Note: For most MURP students, the Professional Report (PR) or the Practicum will be the preferred capstone exit requirements. The PR allows students to develop and hone practice-related skills working individually with an outside client, while the practicum class allows for a similar experience in a group setting.

Recognizing, though, that for some students a research experience will be more appropriate, the UPPP Department allows a small number of research oriented MURP students to write a thesis in lieu of a PR. Typically, students who choose the master's thesis option will be considering Ph.D. study or a research career.

Application Process – How to Get Approval to Pursue the Thesis Option

To be considered for the thesis option, students wishing to pursue the master's thesis option must apply, in writing, to the MURP Graduate Coordinator **by May of their first year**. The application should include the following elements:

- Clear statement of proposed thesis topic
- **Written statement from a UPPP faculty member agreeing to advise the thesis**
- Statement of literature including relevant references
- Explanation of anticipated research approach, design, and methods
- If data will be needed, include an explanation of data sources that will be used, including citations to secondary data sources or a plan to collect original data, as appropriate
- If thesis will be a case study approach or require qualitative data, include an explanation of how the needed case study or qualitative information will be collected
- A statement of the relevant theory/theories, which will be especially important if the thesis will be primarily theoretical research

Applications should be concise and to-the-point, not exceeding seven typewritten, double-spaced pages. The Program Director of the MURP program will consult the student's proposed thesis chair and other faculty members as needed. Applicants for the thesis option will be informed of the department's decision within a month of the application. Students who are approved to pursue the thesis option will follow the plan outlined below (see page 2). Students not approved to pursue the thesis option must complete either the professional report, practicum, or the MURP comprehensive exam.

Thesis Procedures – How to Complete the Thesis Requirements

MURP students approved for the thesis capstone option should enroll in four units of PPD299 with their thesis advisor in each of the Fall and Winter quarters. MURP degree requirements limit the number of PPD299 units that MURP students can take (usually four units of PPD299 is the most allowed), but for the thesis option eight PPD299 units will be required.

A MURP thesis must be completed in accordance with UC Irvine Academic Senate rules for the master's degree thesis, which specify the size and composition of the thesis committee. Following UC Irvine Academic Senate requirements and adapting to the MURP degree timeline, MURP thesis students should:

- **Officially form a thesis committee** of three faculty members through graduate division. This step requires obtaining signatures from the thesis advisor (“chair”) and two additional faculty members. The chair of the thesis committee must hold a primary or joint (without salary) academic senate appointment in the department.
- **Defend a thesis proposal** (approximately 20-30 pages) before the thesis committee of three faculty members, including the thesis chair, in the Fall quarter of their 2nd year in the planning master's program.
- **Complete and defend the thesis.** The student completes the research and writes the thesis under the primary direction of the thesis committee chair. Approval of the thesis by the committee of three faculty members is necessary in order to graduate. The thesis should be approved in time to graduate by the end of the second year of the planning master's program. Remember that your advisor and thesis committee will need to review a draft thesis well in advance of your defense.