

CAPSTONE PAPER
PLAN B

Guidelines for the
Written Document & Oral Defense

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PLAN B

The University of Hawaii permits graduate programs some flexibility in specifying requirements for graduate degrees. The Urban and Regional Planning Department currently exercises the thesis option (Plan A) and the non-thesis option (Plan B), which is the Capstone Paper and its Oral Defense (hereby “Capstone”).

INTRODUCTION

The Capstone (Plan B) is differentiated from a M.A. thesis (Plan A) in two primary ways. The Capstone paper is shorter in length; expected to be 30 to 50 pages (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, excluding references). Second, the Capstone does not require primary data or data analysis (though it could, depending on the topic). The Capstone is intended to demonstrate competence in a sub-field of planning, including familiarity with the sub-field’s seminal literature.

The Plan B option, pursued by most MURP degree candidates and particularly those who wish to go into professional practice, permits students to take more formal coursework than is usually taken by a Plan A student. Students in the Plan B option must enroll for at least one credit in the semester in which he/she graduates.

Plan B requires the student to specify a “Capstone” of his/her own choosing. The Department does not prescribe a list of appropriate topics. Rather, each student is invited to formulate his or her own Capstone topic. However, the specific topic must fall within faculty specialization to receive adequate and appropriate advising. This is determined within the advising relationship.

Examples of general Capstone topics include: environmental planning, land-use planning and development, community participation in planning, community-based planning, agricultural and food systems planning, social policy and historic preservation.

STAGE ONE: WORK WITH ADVISOR TO SELECT TOPIC AND FORM COMMITTEE

Working with his/her primary academic advisor (Chair), the student pursuing Plan B must identify his/her Capstone and form a committee by the beginning of the third semester of graduate work. Students should be working with their advisor closely (from the first semester) and, by the second semester, articulate their general field of planning and choose courses appropriately, with the guidance of the advisor. The Capstone may be changed and with it the committee, although substantial changes in focus may require re-starting the process. Either changing advisors and/or committee members requires notifying all parties in person or by email in a timely manner.

Students must select a topic in which their coursework helps to inform its body of knowledge (i.e. students may not choose a topic in which he/she has received no

classroom knowledge, skills or training). A minimum of three supporting courses is suggested.

The Capstone Committee will have a minimum of three members. It must consist of at least two DURP faculty. The third member of the committee may be a DURP faculty, affiliate and other University faculty, or other appropriate expert in the topic (with approval of the faculty advisor and the Graduate Chair).

STAGE TWO: DEVELOP PROPOSAL FOR CAPSTONE AND SECURE APPROVAL

The student will write a brief 3 to 4 page proposal of his/her Capstone topic. The proposal should include the following items:

- Problem or planning issue addressed within the defined Capstone
- Why it is important
- Key Research Question(s)
- An outline of the paper, including research approach and methodology
- A sample bibliography
- A timetable of deadlines to follow to complete the paper and oral examination.

The research question should be clearly stated at the beginning of the proposal. For example, “What kind of child care support system would best serve the families to be sheltered at the State’s proposed villages for the homeless?” or “What interventions are necessary in the way the State services the Hawaii agricultural industry?” or “How can we best protect and conserve agricultural lands in Hawaii?” or “What are the effects of the 40-60 housing development rules and recommendations for improvement?” or “How might the GIS system be used in land use decision making?” The Capstone paper does what is necessary to answer the question rigorously and critically.

The proposal must be approved (by signature on the relevant departmental form) by the Capstone Committee through a proposal meeting. All students must meet with their entire committee at least once prior to the final oral examination. This constitutes a proposal meeting and should occur early in the process (i.e. after the topic has been selected and committee formed and prior to extensive research and writing). If the entire committee cannot meet face-to-face, video-conference and phone-conference is acceptable.

STAGE THREE: WRITE CAPSTONE

The purpose of the Capstone is to demonstrate a depth of knowledge and competence in an area of planning sufficient to enable the student to directly enter into professional practice and/or advance to higher levels of education in planning or related field.

Developing and writing the Capstone involves three main tasks:

- 1) Demarcate the Capstone by identifying the area's major concerns and historical evolution. Focus on one of the concerns and address it in depth.
- 2) Critically analyze a specific set of planning issues related to the concern identified in #1 by drawing upon theories, concepts, and methods of analysis.
- 3) Present recommendations for further action and/or analysis.

The mode of presentation of these three components of the Capstone will vary according to the specific focus and intended contribution of each paper. There is intentional flexibility in the presentation of the Capstone paper.

For example, papers can be 1) client oriented (solving a problem or research question for a real-world client); 2) topic oriented (classic research paper, investigating a topic through relevant literature and cases); or 3) case oriented (involving a detailed description of a specific case that makes connections to broader literature). They may also involve the preparation of a development plan to, for example, preserve areas of cultural or historical significance. Others may focus on monitoring and evaluation techniques with reference to an existing plan, such as the Hawaii State Plan, or a planning process, such as the planning and implementation of a land use or regional development program.

Regardless of the specific intentions of the Capstone, students will be expected to show competence in bringing theories and concepts from the larger planning literature to bear on the topic in question.

It is important that the student work closely with his/her Committee Chair (where the Chair is often the primary academic advisor, unless changed to better fit the topic of interest). The Chair will take major responsibility in reviewing drafts and helping the student develop the paper. Whether the Committee would also like to review all or some drafts is person-specific and must be determined at the proposal meeting.

It is expected that when drafts are turned in that they represent the students' best thought and writing style to date so that the mentoring and learning process can be fully accomplished.

At an appropriate point in this process, a date for the oral examination should be scheduled with the entire Committee. The student must work within departmental deadlines for both the oral presentation and submission of the final Capstone paper.

STAGE FOUR: SUBMIT FINAL (DRAFT) PAPER TO CHAIR AND COMMITTEE

After receiving approval from the Chair, the student should send the final document to the entire Committee for review prior to the oral examination. The final document must

be given to the Chair with adequate time for review (a week minimum) to give comment and determine whether it meets the guidance and expectations for completion. If the Committee has seen prior drafts and thus there is confidence in the ability to finish in a timely manner, the final document must be sent out for review a minimum of a week prior to the oral examination. If the Committee has not yet seen prior drafts, this must occur within reasonable time (with guidance from the Chair) to assess whether the oral examination and completion are warranted. Failure to give adequate time for Chair and Committee review may result in pushing back the semester of graduation.

The final document is still viewed as a “draft” because the student may be asked to make further revisions after the oral examination.

STAGE FIVE: ANNOUNCEMENT OF ORAL EXAMINATION

Working with the Department administrative assistant, the student must schedule a room, send an email and post a flyer announcing the topic, date, time and location of the oral presentation. The flyer should also include the names of the committee members. This must be done one week before the date of the examination.

STAGE SIX: ORAL EXAMINATION

The oral examination consists of a 15-25 minute oral presentation followed by questions and comments from the Committee and then from the public audience. The Chair will facilitate the meeting.

The oral presentation should utilize visual tools, such as a Powerpoint. The visual tools should enhance the presentation and not just serve as a speaking prompter (i.e. cluttered slides with too many words should be avoided). The student should speak audibly and clearly in a polished and professional manner. Please see the Capstone Paper Assessment Form for further guidance on the expectations of a good oral presentation (and written document).

A student may pass with distinction, pass, pass with qualifications, or fail the final examination. Students who pass with qualifications must address the Committee’s concerns in a timely manner (meeting departmental deadlines) in regards to revising the written document. Students who fail the oral examination may retake it one time only.

Faculty members are mostly 9-month appointments and thus the oral examination must occur during the academic calendar year. Exceptions are made only in special and urgent circumstances and students should thus plan graduation accordingly.

STAGE SEVEN: MAKE CORRECTIONS TO WRITTEN DOCUMENT BASED ON FEEDBACK FROM ORAL EXAMINATION

Typically, corrections in the Capstone paper are needed based on the committee's feedback. Therefore, students should schedule the oral examination date far enough ahead of the Capstone due date to allow time for revisions. If substantial revisions are needed and the student cannot meet the deadline, graduation will be postponed.

STAGE EIGHT: SUBMIT FINAL PAPER BY GRADUATE DIVISION DEADLINE FOR PLAN B PAPERS

The final paper is submitted to the Chair of the Committee who is responsible for making sure all forms are completed and filed with the Graduate Division by the due date (though the student is responsible for meeting and managing all deadlines). The Graduate Division sets the deadline date for when the final paper must be submitted to the Department. These dates are found in the front of the General and Graduate Information Catalog.

It is expected that the student will present a final paper that is adequately edited and consistently formatted. For consistency in length, the final paper should be 30-50 pages (otherwise by exception only and with approval from the Chair) excluding references, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. The Capstone is a reflection of the level of professional presentation of which the student is capable and will be judged by future readers accordingly, including prospective employers. Students should follow an accepted style for formatting and citations such as the Chicago Manual of Style or APA. In general, parenthetical citation should be used. Style manuals are available in the Document Center for consultation.

The student is required to submit three copies of their final Capstone paper: one hard copy and two electronic copies on cd's. The cd's must include a copy of the student's PowerPoint presentation prepared for the oral examination. The copies are used during accreditation reviews and for the benefit of other students.

In Summary

The following table provides a summary of the major milestones involved in the Capstone process as well as the approval needed to move forward.

Prior Approval/Actions	Milestone and Suggested Timeline	Output
Discuss with Advisor general field of planning	Select Distribution and Elective Courses Appropriately	
Work with advisor on proposal and get approval prior to sending proposal to other committee members	Develop proposal and form committee Semester 2/3	Proposal for Committee review and comment
Schedule a Committee meeting	Receive committee approval and feedback in proposal meeting Semester 3/4	Finalized proposal and Committee signatures
Advisor approval of final draft	Submit complete draft of paper to Committee Semester 4/5	Committee Review (with necessary time before oral defense)
Public announcement of oral defense	Oral defense Semester 4/5	Determination of pass/fail and feedback; committee signatures
Revise document based on feedback from oral defense	Final submission to advisor and department Semester 4/5 – last step prior to graduation	Advisor and Graduate Chair signatures

Sample Capstone Paper Formats

Policy Analysis and Planning Paper Generic Outline

A Capstone may analyze existing policy based on numerous planning criteria. Below is a very general outline of what may be included in such a paper.

1. Statement of purpose:
 - a. identifies the problem(s) being addressed in the paper and how the paper addresses the problem (e.g., new understanding of the problem, alternative policy recommendations);
 - b. places the problem within a sub-field (e.g. regional planning) — including how the problem is structured and approached within the sub-field;
 - c. summarizes the approach and/or method(s) to be used to assess the problem;
 - d. explains how the paper is organized;
 - e. states the main conclusion of research.
2. Review of Theory and Practice
 - a. presents a brief synthesis (not author-by-author abstracts) of theory that is being brought to bear on the problem (i.e. the literature review must be presented thematically, and directed toward establishing a framework for the analysis done in Chapter 3);
 - b. briefly reviews experiences in planning approaches ('policies' and implementation) taken to address the problem (within sub-field);
 - c. summarizes point of view on theory and practice;
 - d. states how the main points in Chapter 2 will guide Chapter 3.
3. Case Study (optional – Capstone's do NOT have to include a case study)
 - a. uses secondary (or primary) data to detail the nature of problem in a particular setting (not necessarily national or sub-national);
 - b. evaluates existing policies related to the problem (draws directly from the framework established in Chapter 2);

- c. draws upon best practices developed in Chapter 2 to draw 'lessons learned' from the case
- 4. Synthesis/Conclusions (combines work of Chapter 2 and 3)
 - a. reviews alternative policies and compares to the existing one(s)
 - b. presents a recommended approach
 - c. (optional) develops a research agenda

A Plan Evaluation Generic Outline

A Student pursuing this option might undertake a critical examination of a particular plan, related set of plans or planning process. This should demonstrate the student's knowledge of planning principles and concepts. The evaluation must be based on a detailed understanding of the problem (or goal) the plan addresses, the context of the plan and the resources and constraints faced by the planners. The purpose of the evaluation is to develop a greater awareness of planning processes and methods. The evaluation paper should include:

1. Introduction
 - a. the problem as defined in the plan
 - b. state causal assumptions upon which the plan and the proposed intervention are based
 - c. provide alternative conceptions of the problem
2. The Plan
 - a. identify the alternatives considered and the process by which they were identified (as well as alternatives ignored)
 - b. identify the criteria used to evaluate alternatives (and criteria ignored)
 - c. identify analytic processes to be used
 - d. identify participation activities
 - e. identify implementation activities required by the plan
 - f. explain the theory or logic of the plan or program
3. The Evaluation
 - a. identify the criteria for evaluating the plan and its sub-components
 - b. evaluate the plan and its sub-components including problem definition, alternatives considered, ex ante evaluation processes, participation, etc.
 - c. evaluate implementation activities and constraints
4. Conclusions
 - a. define lessons with regard to plan-making in general and this plan in particular
 - b. suggest improvements in the implementation of the plan
 - c. define areas where further inquiry is needed

A Plan-Making Capstone Generic Outline

A student pursuing this type of Capstone prepares a plan addressing a current urban and/or regional planning problem. The plan should demonstrate the student's knowledge of planning principles and provide an opportunity to utilize different skills in solving a well-defined problem or improving a complex situation. An outline of the paper may include the following items and inquiry tasks:

1. Plan Development
 - a. Develop Problem Statement
 1. define problem
 2. provide synthesis of relevant theories and approaches to problem solving
 3. identify client/audience for plan
 - b. State Goals
 1. define available alternative goals
 2. evaluate alternative goals
 3. develop and explain rationale for choice
 - c. State Plan Objectives
 1. define alternative objectives relative to goals
 2. develop and explain criteria for selecting and judging alternative objectives
 3. make choice and tell why
 - d. State Implementation Plan
 1. define who is involved and how they are involved
 2. define how goals and objectives will be accomplished and by whom
 3. define costs involved
 4. propose schedule of implementation
 - e. Develop Evaluation design
 1. develop evaluation questions
 2. develop evaluation indicators
 3. develop evaluation procedures and instruments (briefly discuss)
 - f. Assessment of strengths, weakness and anticipated impacts of the proposed plan
 1. indicate likely chances of success in achieving intended goals and objectives
 2. assess various differentiated impacts on public and environment
 3. indicate cost effectiveness
 4. appraise limitations to plan

5. anticipate new problems likely to emerge as consequence of successful implementation

2. Reflections on the Plan-Making Experience

- a. Explain lessons learned with regard to plan making in general and this plan-making experience in particular
- b. Indicate whether the planning process and plan can be transferred to similar contexts elsewhere
- c. Define further areas of inquiry that are needed.

Note: The student's approach to plan development indicates whether he/she should use the language (and corresponding methods) of "situation improvement" or "problem solving" throughout the paper.

Section 1 may include a variety of media to present the plan such as sketches, site plans, models, maps, video, slides, and written statements.

CURRICULUM PLANNING SHEET
Urban and Regional Planning

Requirements	Course Requirements	Semester	Grade	Notes
A. Prerequisite	Descriptive/Inferential Statistics			
B. Core Courses Plan 600 Plan 601 Plan 603 *Plan 605	Planning Theory Planning Methods Economics Analysis for Urban and Regional Planning Planning Models			
C. Distribution Course (2 of 4) Plan 610 Plan 620 Plan 630 Plan 640	Social Policy Planning Environmental Planning Regional Development Land Use Planning			
D. Planning Practicum (1 6-credit sequence) Plan 751 Plan 754	Planning Practicum Urban Design & Planning Studio			

*For students interested in land use and environmental planning.

Three courses informing the sub-field of planning:

1) PLAN _____

2) PLAN _____

3) PLAN _____