THESIS GUIDE
URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA
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PLAN A: THESIS
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I. OBJECTIVES

The thesis is the key part of the Master of Urban and Regional Planning for all PLAN A students. It is an individual research study. There are four main objectives:

1. to select one specific topic for a concentrated study;
2. to study independently and to sharpen competence in organizing and executing an extended research study;
3. to develop ability in synthesizing diverse information, formulating independent critical view and original assessment of a body of knowledge;
4. to develop a scholarly specialization.

A thesis should provide a purposeful, reasoned, and structured argument.

II. PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENT

1. A student considering PLAN A: THESIS option should make the decision and preparation by the middle of the second semester of study. Selection of and approval for Thesis Topic (see Section IV.A.), Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee (see Section VI.) should be obtained a month before the end of the second semester.
2. A student who selects the PLAN A: THESIS option, is required to registered for 6 credits of PLAN 700 Thesis. The Thesis course should be taken in the last two semesters of the study program.
3. Before registering for PLAN 700 Thesis, the student must obtain the approval from the Graduate Chair for the Master's Plan A, Student Progress Form I: Advancement to Candidacy, and Master's Plan A, Student Progress Form II: Advancement to Thesis Stage, (see Section IV.A). The Master's Plan A Forms are available from the Urban & Regional Planning Office or the Academic Advisor.
4. After registration for PLAN 700, the student must develop and submit a Thesis Proposal (see Section V.D.) and organize a review meeting with the Thesis Committee for advice and suggestions. The review meeting should take place early in the first semester of PLAN 700.
5. There is no formal meeting session with the Thesis Advisor. Each student is expected to
work independently but with close supervision from the Thesis Advisor. Regular
meetings should be organized with the Thesis advisor throughout the Thesis.
6. The completed thesis must be submitted to the Thesis Committee for a Thesis
Examination (see Section VII.), and revised afterward according to the examiners' requirement. After the revised thesis is approved, complete the Master's Plan A, Student Progress Form III: Final Examination and Approval of Thesis.

III. THESIS CREDITS

1. Students who select PLAN A: THESIS are required to register for PLAN 700 THESIS
for 6 credits in the third and fourth semester.
2. Students may register for PLAN 700 THESIS between 1 to 6 credits per semester.
   Normally, students register for PLAN 700 THESIS in the last two semesters before
   graduation, at 3 credits each semester.
3. There are various ways of arranging Thesis over several semesters, and the student
   should consult the Academic Advisor for scheduling. The student may use a PLAN 699
course and credit it toward PLAN 700, if it is approved by the Academic Advisor. A CR
   grade must be obtained for the PLAN 699, before it can be credited toward PLAN 700.
4. If the thesis is not completed in two semesters, the student must register for PLAN 700
   THESIS continuously until graduation (unless a leave of absence is approved), usually
   for 1 credit each additional semester. In any event, students must register at least 1 credit
   for PLAN 700 THESIS in the final semester before graduation.
5. There is no maximum credit limit for PLAN 700 THESIS. Thesis credits earned beyond
   6 credits, however, will not be counted towards the MA degree.

IV. PROCESS

IV.A. BEFORE REGISTRATION FOR PLAN 700

All the following steps should be completed at least 5 weeks before the end of the 2nd semester.

1. The decision on taking the PLAN A: THESIS option should be made before the end of
   the 1st semester in a four-semester study program. Prepare and complete the Master's
   Plan A, Student Progress Form I: Advancement to Candidacy and obtain signature from
   Chair of Urban & Regional Planning.
2. After selecting PLAN A: THESIS option, students should, in consultation with the
   Academic Advisor, proceed to:
   a. finalize the Thesis Topic,
   b. confirm the Thesis Advisor,
   c. select and confirm the Thesis Committee Members.
3. Prepare and complete the Master's Plan A, Student Progress Form II: Advancement to
   Thesis Stage, and,
   a. obtain signatures from Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee Members,
   b. obtain signature from Chair of Urban & Regional Planning.
4. Submit the completed forms, a set each, to the Student Academic Services (Moore 407) and to the Graduate Records Office (Spalding 352). The deadline for submission of Form I & II is a week before the registration period for the 3rd semester (approximately 5 weeks before the end of the 2nd semester).

IV.B. AFTER REGISTRATION FOR PLAN 700

1. One copy of the draft thesis outline should be delivered to each Thesis Committee member at least one week before the preliminary Thesis Committee meeting to review the proposal. The review meeting should be in the first half of the first semester of PLAN 700.
2. Research, writing, review and discussion with Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee, and submission of finished thesis to the Thesis Committee should take place in the 4th semesters.
3. One copy of the finished thesis should be delivered to each Thesis Committee member at least one week before the Thesis Examination.
4. Thesis Examination should be scheduled at least TWO WEEKS before the relevant University's deadline, specified in the University Catalog. Complete the student portion of the Master's Plan A, Student Progress Form III: Final Examination and Approval of Thesis for the Thesis Committee Chairperson.
5. If a revision is requested by the Thesis Committee. The revision should be submitted to and approved by the designated examiner(s) on dates specified at the Thesis Examination. After the examination and satisfactorily completion of the revision required by the examiners, complete Master's Plan A, Student Progress Form III: Final Examination and Approval of Thesis. The deadline for submission of this form is usually one month before the end of the last semester. Submit the completed form, a copy each, to the Student Academic Services (Moore 407) and the Graduate Records Office (Spalding 352). Students are responsible to keep the official deadlines, such as completion of the defense, submission of final manuscript to Graduate Division. These dates are published in the General and Graduate Information Catalog.

V. THESIS GUIDE

V.A. THESIS TOPIC

1. A thesis must be related to the student's study program and curriculum. The thesis topic should have academic interest and merit to Urban & Regional Planning, theoretical and/or empirical in nature.
2. A thesis topic should be within a specific field of inquiry within planning, such as environmental, infrastructure, regional, social policy and/or community planning. A thesis should have unity and definition. The topic should be as narrowly defined as possible.
3. A thesis topic should lead into a research project involving investigation, analysis, and synthesis with original conclusions.
4. A thesis topic should be within the limits of the student's knowledge, ability and time. Selection of topic is contingent on securing a Thesis Advisor (see Section V. D.) with appropriate specialization.

V.B. THESIS STANDARD

1. A thesis should include the following elements:
   a. an investigation of a body of theories and/or empirical information within a field of knowledge (the investigation can range from library research to field survey for original information);
   b. a statement and explanation of the selected topic, the rationale and parameter of the research theme;
   c. the position of the thesis topic within the relevant field of knowledge, and the potential contribution;
   d. a methodological approach and a set of key research questions;
   e. an examination and analysis of theoretical debate and/or information findings, an argument to prove, disprove or support a hypothesis or an established assumption, or to postulate a new proposition;
   f. a summary and conclusion to synthesize findings, and form independent and original conclusions,
2. The student should attempt an economic style of writing. A substantive, tightly written thesis should be between 60-80 pages in length (excluding bibliography, appendices, etc.). The thesis should have some original scholarly contributions, and be of publishable quality in parts or whole.
3. Students may consult manuals on thesis writing. Amongst the many available guides, two of the standard references are as follows:
   
   
   
V.C. GENERIC STRUCTURE AND CONTENT FOR THE THESIS

This is a generalized structure to demonstrate the student's understanding of relevant principles and issues, and utilize different disciplinary knowledge in analyzing a well-defined topic. The content of the thesis should address to the elements specified in IV.B.1. A generic structure of a thesis may include the following items and inquiry tasks:

1. Research Statement
   a. define problem/issue, theme and focus of research
   b. define scope and parameter of research
   c. explain why the research question are selected (main points of the research)
   d. describe how the paper is organized
   e. state the main intended conclusions
2. Theoretical Review and Analytical Framework
   a. present a brief synthesis of theories/literature relevant to the research
   b. based on the synthesis, establish a framework for the analysis
   c. summarize the relationship between the theory/literature and empirical study

3. Empirical Study
   a. select a case or cases related to the problem/issue in a particular setting (time, place, context, etc.)
   b. provide a narrative of the case(s)
   c. emphasize the main events/points of the case(s)
   d. evaluate the case(s) related to the theoretic synthesis (2.a.)

4. Synthesis/Conclusions
   a. summarize the main points of the research stated in 1 .c.
   b. present the key findings, new understanding and/or interpretation of the problem/issue
   c. (optional) develop new research agenda/questions

V.D. THESIS PROPOSAL

1. The Thesis Proposal is not just a general idea of a research project. It is a work plan demonstrating the theme, the student's knowledge, the research frame and the research process, and it serves as a basis for discussion and research development. The proposal should include at least the following eight items:
   a. Topic: State the specific topic that has been selected for study. Selection of topic is contingent on securing a Thesis Advisor with appropriate specialization.
   b. Purpose and Scope: Prepare a brief paragraph describing the significance of the topic, its relationship to the body of existing knowledge, and present the reasons for topic selection.
   c. Theme and Questions: State the main theme of the thesis, the hypothesis for debate, and the boundary of the study. Select the theoretically informed issues to guide investigation. Explain the theoretical perspective or assumption adopted for analysis. Describe the key issues to be discussed. List a set of questions to be investigated in the research.
   d. Method: Discuss how the research questions are explored and answered. Outline the general approach and techniques to be used (such as interviews, survey, computer programming, literature review, etc.).
   e. Reference and Sources: Compile an initial list of bibliography (usually a combination of books, journal articles, working papers etc.), other sources of information - including agencies or people to be interviewed.
   f. Tentative Major Division Headings: List the tentative division headings as now envisioned. Show the line of thought, direction, organization, structure, and focus of the thesis.
   g. Schedule and Timetable: Work out a time table. Estimate and indicate the periods for preparation, chapter writing, first draft completion, Thesis Advisor's review and date of final submission.
   h. Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee: List the members and their departments
2. After a discussion with the Thesis Advisor, a draft thesis proposal is required of all PLAN A students for PLAN 700 and is to be submitted to the Thesis Instructor (instructor of PLAN 700). After reviewed by the Thesis Instructor, the draft thesis proposal is to be then submitted to the Thesis Committee for discussion and approval. Be sure to keep a copy of the submitted proposal.
3. The student is responsible to organize and schedule a review meeting with the Thesis Committee to review the draft thesis proposal.

VI. THESIS ADVISOR AND THESIS COMMITTEE

VI.A. THESIS ADVISOR

1. The student should select a Thesis Advisor who should be a specialist in the thesis topic, and should obtain the Thesis Advisor's agreement to serve as early as possible. The Thesis Advisor works with the student on the thesis research, and serves as the Chairperson for the Thesis Committee.
2. The Thesis Advisor should be selected from the Urban and Regional Planning senior faculty (Associate or Full Professor), who should be an Urban & Regional Planning Graduate Faculty. If the Thesis Advisor is outside of the Urban & Regional Planning Graduate Faculty list, or a junior faculty, the student must obtain permission from the Graduate Division through the Office of Student Academic Services.
3. The Thesis Advisor will aid the student in the thesis work - in the definition and scope of topic, selection of literature and method, and supervise work progress. The student should take initiative to work with the Thesis Advisor in the preparation of the thesis research.
4. Regular meetings (once every two weeks) should be arranged by the student with the Thesis Advisor to plan and review work in progress throughout the research.
5. Thesis Advisor should be given ample time to review drafts (at least a week).

VI.B. THESIS COMMITTEE

1. The Thesis Committee will assess and approve the thesis outline at the initial phase of the research and examine the thesis when it is completed and submitted for examination.
2. The student should, with consultation with the Thesis Advisor, select two other Thesis Committee members from the Graduate Faculty. The Thesis Committee members should have, at least, two members from Urban & Regional Planning Graduate Faculty. The student must obtain permission from the Graduate Division through the Office of Student Academic Services, if a Thesis Committee member is outside of the Urban & Regional Planning Graduate Faculty.
3. The Thesis Committee consists of at least three members:
   a. Thesis Adviser (Chairperson)
   b. Two other members from the Urban & Regional Planning Graduate Faculty
4. The student is responsible to contact all members to ascertain their availability and agreement to serve prior to submitting their names.
VII. THESIS EXAMINATION

1. A complete thesis, to be prepared in accordance with the Instructions for the Preparation Theses and Dissertations' must be submitted and presented to the Thesis Committee for review and examination.
2. The student must submit and deliver one copy of the thesis to each Thesis Committee member at least a week before the Thesis Committee meeting.
3. The student is responsible to organize and schedule a meeting with the Thesis Committee for the thesis examination and must prepare a Master's Plan A, Student Progress Form III. Final Examination and Approval of Thesis for the Thesis Committee Chairperson.
4. The Thesis Committee meeting should be scheduled at least two weeks before the Master's Plan A Form III deadline set by the Graduate Division.
5. Students should avoid scheduling Thesis Examination in the last week of instruction, examination week and the week afterward, or the Summer Vacation, during which faculty are officially free from university duties.
6. At the Thesis Committee meeting for thesis examination, each student will present a 10 to 15 minute oral summary of the thesis (audio-visual techniques may be used if wanted) covering the following points:
   a. Purpose of thesis (e.g. Why do you select the topic? How does the thesis contribute to what specific field of knowledge?)
   b. Method used, sources, techniques (e.g. How do the specific research methods affect the results?)
   c. Major conclusions and independent/original contribution (e.g. What are the research questions? How are the research hypothesis and questions answered? Is there any new discovery or unexpected results?)

The Thesis Committee members will question and comment on the thesis. After discussion with the student, the Thesis Committee will inform the student of the amendment and revision required, and set the submission date for the revised thesis. The student is required to incorporate the revisions in the thesis and re-submit it to the designated examiner(s) before the specified date. After the satisfactory completion of the revised thesis, complete and submit the Master's Plan A, Student Progress Form III. Final Examination and Approval of Thesis, as specified in IV.B.5.