



Community and Regional Planning Professional Project (Optional)

Community and Regional Planning (CRP) Master’s students may complete a professional project that leads to a written deliverable (professional paper) and passes a formal oral defense. Students who intend to graduate in June will give a poster or visual presentation of their project at the Department Awards Ceremony typically scheduled at the end of Spring term.

Successful completion of the professional project should demonstrate a student’s competence in the following areas:

- Applying theories, principles, and skills acquired in coursework and other learning experiences in a practical situation;
- Conducting applied, evidence-based research to address planning-relevant issues;
- Presenting project outcomes in the forms of a professional report, oral presentation, and poster presentation.

Thesis

Students have the option to complete a Master’s thesis in lieu of a professional paper. Compared with the professional paper, a thesis involves answering more fundamental (or basic) research questions and creating more generalizable knowledge, and hence typically a more robust research process and a heavier workload. To complete a thesis a student needs to receive permission from an advisor and the Program Director, and must follow all Graduate School deadlines and Library format guidelines. While many concurrent students complete theses as part of their 2nd degree, it is uncommon for MCRP students to complete formal theses.

SUPPORTING COURSES

Courses and resources are made available to help students understand the research process and gain research skills.

All CRP students must take the following course:

PPPM 610: Research Skills (Winter, Year One)

This course is designed to expose students to various research skills and methods including interviews, focus groups, content analysis, surveys, and descriptive analysis. Students will practice using skills and apply what they’ve

learned to CPW projects. Students later apply these skills to their own professional projects.

Students can register for credits of PPPM 609 to write professional project proposals and work on research design directly with their committee chair. Students should consider registering for PPPM 609 credits in fall, winter, and spring of their 2nd year. Working in collaboration with committee chairs, students will learn the following:

- Establish a foundation for understanding the various frameworks of applied social science research and their role in planning. Students will apply research methods, tools, and techniques learned in Research Skills to begin to examine their own research topics. Explore research topics, literature reviews, and introduce different analytical frameworks.
- Define or refine research questions and develop a feasible research plan. Present their research ideas and receive constructive critique and feedback from faculty and fellow students. Craft a research proposal including literature review, research questions, methods, and expected findings.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Students should work with a faculty member to develop a project, because this “overload” work by faculty is only suitable when it aligns with their research interests.

The following outline serves as a suggested process through which you can develop your professional project.

1. Choose a Topic

The best way to choose a topic is to discuss potential topics with faculty. Many faculty members are actively engaged in research and can help you with ideas or even funding.

In considering a topic, many ideas face consistent issues:

- It’s not researchable
- There is no information to examine the issue
- It’s too complex
- It’s too large of a topic

Faculty can help students narrow and refine focus of a topic or give students other ideas for a different direction or topic.

2. Develop a Researchable Question

Identifying a researchable question is an exploratory process that takes time. Students can develop research questions by:

- Getting to know your professors' areas of expertise and discussing potential research. Faculty may have data and possible research projects for you.
- Read peer reviewed literature and/or professional magazines in your area. Use scholar.google.com or library databases related to area (e.g., Medline, ArticleFirst, etc.).
- Brainstorm with students and/or faculty.

Choose a question:

- That is feasible within your time frame or budget
- That is narrow and doable, even if it does not encompass all aspects of what you are interested in
- That you can answer with the quantitative and qualitative skills you have learned.

3. Review Literature and Finalize Question

Reviewing the literature and finalizing your research question is an iterative process. As you read more, you will learn about your area. You may also get ideas about *how* to research a topic from other studies. During this process you should identify:

- The research that has already been conducted in the field and its findings;
- Research gaps, which are often detailed in the introduction and discussion sections
- The methods other researchers have used
- The datasets that authors use.

You can systematically identify the research question, data, research design, findings and further questions for study using a literature grid that can be downloaded on the PPPM web site at

<https://blogs.uoregon.edu/pppm/resources/thesis-and-exit-project-resources/>

4. Secure a Faculty Chair

All students must have a faculty chair who will work closely with you throughout your project:

- Chairs must have an appointment in PPPM as tenure-track or participating faculty.
- If you choose the thesis option, the chair cannot have rank of instructor.

5. Develop a Research Plan or Proposal

Once you have discussed the project and methodology with your chair you need to write a more detailed 7-10 page proposal covering the following:

- **Introduction:** Set the stage. Provide an overview of the topic, state the rationale for the project. Why is this work needed and important?

- **Previous work:** Synthesize the existing academic and practitioner literature on the topic. Identify the gaps in the field of study.
- **Research Questions:** Clearly state your research questions and objectives.
- **Methodology:** Describe how you intend to conduct your research, including data, variables (or data collection categories) and a plan for analysis.
- **Preliminary and/or expected findings:** What do you expect to find? How will it impact practice or policy? Provide testing of methods to show that the methods will work.
- **Timeline:** outline a timeline for completion of major steps.

Your research questions and literature review should guide the development of your research methodology. Very often your methodology is revised and adjusted in light of the refinement of your RQs and the limitations or opportunities in acquiring data. It often takes several iterations before you can finalize your methodology. A complete description and explanation of your methodology serves as a road map or instruction to guide a research process.

6. Finalize Research Proposal and Committee

You need to obtain your committee's approval regarding the soundness of your research plan and your readiness to carry out the proposed research. Students can register for PPPM 609 credits to complete their proposal. The proposal assessment form can be found at <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/pppm/resources/thesis-and-exit-project-resources/>. After your chair has accepted your research plan or proposal, you should find one additional committee member and finalize your committee.

7. Human Subjects (IRB) Approval (if relevant)

If you plan on collecting data from human subjects (interviews, focus groups, surveys), you will need to complete a proposal for conducting research on [human subjects](#). IRB approval is usually required for projects involving interviews, surveys and focus groups. Note that the IRB process can take several weeks, so it is important to start this process early so you do not experience delays in gathering information from interviews, surveys and focus groups. With committee chair approval, some students find it useful to submit their IRB application during the Summer or Fall Term if their methodology is fairly well-developed or their methodology is expected to be complex or time-intensive.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Completing the professional project requires students to deliver a high quality professional paper, orally present and defend their research to their committee and the larger PPPM community, and present a poster presentation of their research at the PPPM awards ceremony. The following is guidance on how to successfully complete the three parts of project requirements.

Professional Paper

A good professional paper should be brief, clear, and concise. It should present sufficient information to demonstrate a solid work in the following areas:

- Synthesis of current state of knowledge with regard to issues or problems central to your research;
- Your contribution to the state of knowledge by analyzing secondary or original data;
- Insights and policy implications generated from case studies and data analyses.

The professional paper can come in a variety of formats. You should work with your committee chair to adopt a style or format that is suitable for presenting the results of your project. Although formats can vary, a professional paper typically includes the following elements -Executive Summary, Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations, Bibliography, and Appendix (when applicable). Examples of professional papers in different formats can be found on Scholar's bank at: <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/17> . Professional projects in previous years have ranged from 30-40 pages in length, not including appendices.

For formatting requirement of Theses, please refer to the Style and Policy Manual for Theses and Dissertations available online at the Graduate School web site.

Oral Presentation and Defense

Oral defenses should be scheduled during Week 7 of Spring Term. You can schedule a time and location by working with PPPM administrative staff.

Defenses will be scheduled for 45 minutes. For your defense you should prepare a 15-20 minute Powerpoint presentation. It should mirror the organization of your paper. It is recommended that you divide your presentation in following way:

- Background, rationale and literature (25%)
- Research question and methods (25%)
- Results, implications and conclusions (50%)

Tips for preparing for and delivering an effective defense presentation can be found at

<https://blogs.uoregon.edu/pppm/resources/thesis-and-exit-project-resources/>.

After your presentation your committee will ask you questions about your research followed by audience questions. Everyone may be asked to leave the room so that the committee can discuss the project. You will be invited back into the room to discuss the committee's decision. One of three decisions results from the student's oral presentation and the committee's review of the professional paper:

- a. The committee accepts the paper
- b. The committee requests that you revise certain parts of the paper. This is a common outcome.
- c. The committee rejects the paper. This seldom occurs if you work closely with your committee.

Your committee will often sign off on this form and leave the supervision of the final revisions to the committee chair. This form can be found at <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/pppm/resources/thesis-and-exit-project-resources/>.

By the last day of Exam Week (Week 11) in Spring Term, you must submit a final PDF of your project and the Final Professional Project Defense Assessment Form to School of PPPM staff.

Poster Presentation

For students graduating in June, you are required to create a poster for display at the PPPM Department Annual Awards Ceremony scheduled at the end of Spring term. The posters will be displayed at the reception, where you will have a chance to discuss your work with peers, alumni, and faculty and community members.

For more information about poster presentation format, how to create an effective poster and poster presentation timing, please see

<https://blogs.uoregon.edu/pppm/resources/thesis-and-exit-project-resources/>.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Recommended Timeline

Spring Term Year 1

- Meet with faculty to identify a topic
- Begin reading about your topic

Summer After Year 1

- Continue exploration of project topic and methodology through summer experiences
- Continue literature review in your subject area
- Data collection (if applicable)

Fall Term Year 2

- Develop/finalize project proposal
- Obtain your committee's evaluation/approval of your project proposal
- Recommendation: enroll in 2 credits of Terminal Project (PPPM 609) by filling [out this form](#) with your advisor's signature and submitting it to School of PPPM staff.
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Winter Term Year 2

- Enroll in Terminal Project (PPPM 609) by filling [out this form](#) with your advisor's signature and submitting it to School of PPPM staff.
- Check in with chair regularly

Spring Term Year 2

- Enroll in Terminal Project (PPPM 609) by filling [out this form](#) with your advisor's signature and submitting it to School of PPPM staff.
- Prepare drafts for feedback
- Submit 90% draft to chair by week 6
- Defend (oral defense) in Week 7
- Create poster for PPPM awards ceremony
- Submit professional paper in by the last day of Finals Week
- Graduate

Managing Your Professional Project

- You should deliver and schedule reviews of your work on a regular basis with your committee chair.
- You are responsible for deadlines and for keeping the committee informed.
- Each committee member should be queried about how they prefer to work with the student.
- A finished product usually requires several drafts reviews and revisions.
- The mechanics of preparing and submitting a final draft usually can take two to three weeks.
- You should not expect a committee to review and comment on a chapter in less than ten days unless you make special arrangements.
- The draft version of your paper that works for your oral defense should be sent to your committee for review at least a week prior to your defense.

CHECKLIST

- ❑ Committee (2 members)
 - Chair: regular or participating PPPM faculty or instructor (by beginning of Fall Term)
 - Second committee member (by end of Winter Term, Second Year) – may include PPPM faculty or faculty from other departments on campus
- ❑ Course work
 - Complete Research Skills
 - You may count up to 6 credits in Professional Project (PPPM 609) towards the 72 credits required for the degree.
 - The Graduate School requires you to enroll in a minimum of 3 graduate credit hours in the term you graduate.
- ❑ Obtain committee chair assessment of your project proposal by the end of Fall term, second year. (Form available here: <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/pppm/resources/thesis-and-exit-project-resources/>)
- ❑ File for your degree at the start of the term in which you plan to graduate at the following website: <http://gradschool.uoregon.edu/node/152>.
- ❑ Obtain committee assessment of your project defense after your oral defense.
- ❑ Final professional paper document
 - Create a copy of your final, approved professional paper in PDF format and submit it by the last day of Week 11. This copy may be available through UO Scholars Bank. Check with your committee to see if they would like hard copies.
- ❑ **Concurrent degree students:** if your concurrent degree requires a thesis or terminal project you may apply to complete one project that will fulfill the requirements of both programs. You need to complete a Concurrent Degree form from the Graduate School and obtain approvals from the directors of both programs before proceeding.

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Questions? Contact MCRP Program Director Rebecca Lewis: rlewis9@uoregon.edu