



Community and Regional Planning Professional Project

All Community and Regional Planning (CRP) Master's students must complete a professional project that leads to a written deliverable (professional paper) and passes a formal defense. Students who intend to graduate in June are also required to give a poster presentation of their project at the Department Award 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.

Please note that 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.

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 two courses:

PPPM 620: Research Methods in Planning I (Spring, Year One). The first research methods class is designed to help students get started on their research projects. It will explore research topics, discuss literature reviews, and introduce different research and analytical methods.

During this time, students should begin talking with faculty about ideas and potential topics. Students are expected to develop a research prospectus by the end of this class.

PPPM 621: Research Methods in Planning II (Fall, Year Two). The second research methods class will continue helping students define or refine research questions and develop a feasible research plan. This class will offer students an opportunity to present their research ideas and receive constructive critique and feedback from faculties and fellow students. By the end of PPPM 621, students should have identified faculty to form an advising committee who will take over the supporting role to guide the research process. Students are also expected to receive approval from their advisor regarding their research plan or research proposal.

Waiving PPPM 620/621

PPPM 620: Students who have completed a research methods class and rigorous undergraduate research project (like a thesis) or concurrent students who are taking a research methods class in another program may be eligible to waive the requirement for PPPM 620. To waive PPPM 620, students must submit a course [waiver request form](#) and copy of the syllabus for the substitute research methods course from UO or their undergraduate institution to the instructors of PPPM 620 by the end of Week 10 of Winter Term. If a student receives approval for waiving PPPM 620, students must enroll in a research-related course in the place of PPPM 620. Appropriate examples include PPPM 656: Quantitative Methods and PPPM 507: Qualitative Methods in Diverse Communities: Qualitative Tools for Govt. and Nonprofit Administrators. in addition to graduate-level research methods courses in other departments.

PPPM 621: To waive PPPM 621, a student must have a professional project proposal approved by their faculty advisor **by the end of zero week** before Fall Term begins. In order to receive approval, the student must submit a [proposal evaluation form](#) to be completed and signed by your chair, project proposal and [waiver request form](#) to the instructors of PPPM 621 by **the end of zero**

week. In order to give your chair ample time to review your proposal, we recommend that you submit a completed proposal to your chair by **September 1**, but you should talk directly with your chair about expectations. Note that you do not need to identify your full committee by this date or ask your 2nd reader to review your proposal. If you receive approval to waive out of PPPM 621, you do not need to replace PPPM 621 with another research methods class, but you must take some other 4 credit class (an elective) to ensure that you meet the minimum hours requirement to earn your degree. Waiving PPPM 621 is a waiver of requirement but not a waiver of credit.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

A student can utilize his or her experiences working with external clients to develop a professional project. Students can also turn their collaborative work with communities and professional groups into a professional project. Teaming up with faculty members can be another way.

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 someone in your field of interest, including:

- Faculty
- Community Service Center staff
- Professional planners and alumni of our program
- Community contacts

The CRP program is working to solicit potential topics from alumni and professionals, which we hope to make available to students each year. Many faculty members are actively engaged in research and can help you with ideas or even funding. Many of the most successful projects have happened by collaborating with faculty. It is a student's choice whether to collaborate with faculty or explore their own research topic with help from faculty.

What if I already have a topic? Sometimes students have a specific topic in mind, but often they confront major problems:

- It's not researchable
- There is no information to examine
- 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.
- Talk with your internship supervisors, mentors or professionals about possible research projects that would benefit the agency.
- 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

<http://pppm.uoregon.edu/thesis-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.

Before you seek a chair, write a one-page description of your project that clearly explains: the relevance of your research, the research question, and your proposed methods. Email your description to a potential chair and request an appointment.

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 methodology serves as a road map or instruction to guide a research process.

6. Finalize Research Proposal and Committee

As part of the requirements for PPPM 621 and in the Fall term of second year, you need to obtain your committee's approval regarding the soundness of your research plan and your readiness to carry out the proposed research. The proposal assessment form and examples of good project proposals can be found at <http://pppm.uoregon.edu/thesis-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, 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 award 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 at PPPM website <http://pppm.uoregon.edu/thesis-exit-project-resources>.

Professional projects in previous years have ranged from 30-40 pages in length, not including appendices.

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

Oral Presentation and Defense

To graduate by June, your defense should be scheduled no later than the last day of Week 10 in Spring Term.

In preparing for your defense you should:

- Schedule a date with your committee
- Reserve a room and equipment with Zudegi
- At least one week before your defense, prepare an abstract for Zudegi to send on PPPM listserves.

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 <http://pppm.uoregon.edu/thesis-exit-project-resources>.

After your presentation your committee will ask you questions about your research followed by audience questions. Everyone will 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.

You should bring the Final Professional Project Defense Assessment Form to the defense. 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:

<http://pppm.uoregon.edu/thesis-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 Nick Phillips.

Poster Presentation

For students who intend to graduate 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 <http://pppm.uoregon.edu/poster-presentations>

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Recommended Timeline

Spring Term Year 1

- Enroll in PPPM 620 (4 credits)
- Meet with faculty and professionals
- 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

- Enroll in PPPM 621 (4 credits)
- Develop/finalize project proposal
- Obtain your committee's evaluation/approval of your project proposal (part of PPPM621 requirements)

Winter Term Year 2

- Enroll in Terminal Project (PPPM 609) by filling [out this form](#) with your advisor's signature and submitting it to Zudegi.
- 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 Zudegi
- Prepare drafts for feedback
- Submit draft to chair by week 5 or 6
- Revised draft to committee by week 8
- Create poster for PPPM awards ceremony
- Schedule defense for week 9 or 10. The last day to defend is the last day of Week 10.
- Hand professional paper in by the last day of week 11
- 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 end of Fall Term)
 - Second committee member (by end of Winter Term)
- ❑ Course work
 - Complete PPPM 620 and 621.
 - You may count up to 4 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 assessment of your project proposal by the end of Fall term, second year.
- ❑ 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 email it to your committee and Nick Phillips 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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