

School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP)
University of British Columbia
COURSE OUTLINE

Course Number	PLAN 549C
Course Credit(s)	12.0
Course Title	Masters Thesis
Term	Ongoing Course

Short Course Description

Research and preparation of a thesis on a topic in public policy or professional practice.

Course Format

The scope of the work should be limited to allow the student to complete the thesis and graduate by the end of the second academic year. Continuation after that date is subject to evidence of substantial progress and approval of the student's Research Committee.

Each faculty member runs a thesis/project advising group for second year students whom they are supervising. Students are expected to participate in the sessions offered by the supervisor of their project or thesis. This makes the supervisory process more productive for students and faculty. It tends to cluster students and faculty around common topics and themes. A significant benefit of the group sessions is the opportunity thus created for students to support each other in developing and completing their research. Separate credit is not given for these group sessions, they are considered to be part of the 12 credits for the thesis and 6 credits for the project.

The group sessions are designed to lead students through the development and implementation of a proposal for their project or thesis and, if necessary, make a choice between the two options. Key components are discussed in relation to the student's areas of interest including problem statements, goals, objectives, research questions, conceptual and analytical frameworks, methods, case studies, and write-ups of results, conclusions and recommendations. Advice is provided on strategies for selecting manageable topics, conducting literature reviews, choosing case studies, undertaking field work and interviews, drafting text, and presenting the final results. Previous projects and theses are reviewed.

The specific meeting time and place is agreed to by each faculty member with their group of students in light of their schedules.

The advising group approach means that students must have identified the faculty member whom they wish to supervise their project or thesis by the beginning of their second year. If during the course of the term it should become evident that another supervisor would be more appropriate, a change can be made if both parties are agreeable but it is obviously preferable that this potential disruption not occur. In considering potential supervisors, students should discuss with them not only the topics in which they are interested but also the specific approach they take to supervising and how this influences the design of their group advising sessions.

Thesis Supervisor Selection - FORM

Thesis Regulations

The Master's thesis and thesis defense are integral parts of the Master's program. The Faculty of Graduate Studies has produced two important reference documents that are intended to assist students through their Master's programs. They include Guidelines for the Various Parties Involved in Graduate

Student Thesis Research; and Instructions for the Preparation of Graduate Theses. Up-to-date copies of (1) and (2) above are available from the Faculty of Graduate Studies reception desk. The Graduate Studies web site has information at: <http://www.grad.ubc.ca>

Research Committee

Each student is required to have a Research Committee comprised of not less than two persons, one of whom shall be a faculty member in the School. The Chairperson of the Research Committee is the student's Research Supervisor and one other member is the Research Committee Member. Research Committee Members, who may include a practicing professional, provide advice and guidance to the student. Each student is required to have a Research Supervisor selected and approved by the end of September of their first year in the program. This procedure is formalized by completing a Research Supervisor Selection form.

The student determines his or her own committee in consultation with faculty, subject only to a reasonable distribution of faculty to research committees. Both the Research Supervisor and Research Committee Member(s) must indicate their agreement to oversee the thesis by signing the student's thesis proposal. This document (one page is adequate) must be placed in the student's file before he or she begins detailed research on his or her thesis. Students are responsible for submitting their completed Thesis Supervisor Selection FORM and thesis proposal to the SCARP office by the September deadline.

Submission Of Complete Thesis Draft

The student is required to submit a complete final draft of his or her entire thesis to their Research Supervisor and Research Committee Members by an agreed date no later than five weeks prior to the anticipated defense. It is the student's responsibility to keep his or her Research Committee informed of changes in the expected completion date. The draft of the entire thesis includes: abstract (about 300 words); table of contents; list of figures and tables; text; list of references; and appendices. Students should keep in mind that their thesis defenses may not be scheduled sooner than three weeks following the date in which the Research Supervisor and Research Committee Member confirm that the thesis is ready to be defended.

Scheduling the Defense

Master's Thesis Defense Booking - FORM

- 1) A minimum of five weeks prior to the proposed date of the defense the student is required to deliver the final draft of his or her thesis to both the Research Supervisor and the Research Committee Member(s). Defenses can be scheduled whenever the committee is available, except during the First-year orientation in September. Refer to the "Important Dates and Deadlines" section of this Handbook for graduation deadlines.
- 2) A minimum of three weeks prior to the proposed defense date:
 - a) The Research Supervisor and the Research Committee Member(s) select the External Examiner and determine whether that person is willing to serve on the Thesis Examining Committee. It is the Research Supervisor's full responsibility to ensure that the External Examiner is given ample time to prepare for the defense. The student is not to have any contact with the External Examiner.
 - b) The student must submit one copy of the thesis to the Master's Secretary for transmittal to the External Examiner. The student distributes copies of the complete thesis to the Research Supervisor and the Research Committee Member(s) of the Examining Committee.
 - c) The student, in consultation with the Research Committee, schedules the defense including

date and time and confirms that all Research Committee members are available.

d) The student completes a Booking Master's Thesis Defense form (available on the SCARP web site), including the Research Supervisor's and Research Committee Member's signatures, and submits the form to the Master's Secretary, along with a copy of the thesis abstract and a request for A/V equipment, if required.

e) Only in extraordinary circumstances will an exception be made to the minimum time requirements for scheduling a thesis defense. In such circumstances it is the responsibility of the student to provide a written request for the exception using the Booking Master's Thesis form. An exception will only be authorized when it is acceptable to all members of the Thesis Examining Committee and is confirmed by the signature of the Research Supervisor. The student must also sign the "exception" portion of the form.

3) Generally the thesis will be passed, either with or without minor revisions. However, if extensive revisions are required the Examining Committee may require a re-examination. In cases where the thesis is considered seriously deficient or the student is unable to present an adequate oral defense, a second oral examination is required. The Thesis Examining Committee determines the parameters for grading the thesis and assessing the final grade. The Research Supervisor submits to the Master's secretary the thesis grade that will become part of the student's permanent record.

Submission Of The Thesis

The student should allow a minimum of one week following his or her thesis defense for final editing of his or her thesis. The thesis must be submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS) by established deadlines for graduation. For specific dates please refer to [FoGS Dates and Deadlines page](#). FoGS is the final arbiter for determining whether a thesis meets the University's formatting requirements. If a thesis is not presented in the form required, FoGS has the right to reject it until further revisions are made. A final thesis must be accepted by FoGS before a degree will be conferred. UBC students are encouraged to submit their theses electronically. To submit a thesis electronically you must first complete all submission requirements, and have it approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. After it has been approved for submission you may submit your thesis electronically to the Library through the cIRcle system. All thesis requirements are described on the [Faculty of Graduate Studies website](#).

A minimum of one copy of the final thesis is required: one copy is for FoGS. Research Committee Members may also request copies of the student's thesis. It is the student's responsibility to check and provide copies for Research Committee Members as required. *Thesis submission dates to FoGS are subject to change. It is the student's responsibility to check with FoGS for correct deadlines.

Course Overview, Content and Objectives

A student may complete his or her master's program by undertaking either an academically oriented thesis of 12 credits (549C) or a professionally oriented project of 6 credits (547C) together with 6 credits of additional coursework. Students are required to make a choice by the end of September (which is the beginning of a student's second academic year) of the Master's program. But it is highly recommended that the student complete this before the suggested time.

Registration in PLAN 549C or 547C is mandatory in both Summer and Winter Sessions beginning in the summer of the first year and continuing until completion of the thesis or project.

Distinction Between Master's Project (Plan 547C) and Master's Thesis (Plan 549C)

	Project	Thesis
Number of Credits	6	12
Number of other 3 credit	18	16

courses needed for Master's Degree		
Length	Shorter (usually 30-50 pages 1.5 line spacing)	Longer (usually 80-100 pages)
Concepts	Less reliance on or building from existing conceptual literature	More reliance on or building from existing/conceptual literature
Orientation	More professional orientation with an assumed or real client	More academic orientation
Motivation	Requires a clear problem statement or terms of reference	Requires a clear problem statement, cast as a research question
Supervision	Supervisor and second reader (often professional client)	Supervisor, secondary supervisor and examiner for defense
Literature review and research design	Concise but adequate for the problem	Thorough and adequate for the research question
Methods	Appropriate to the problem statement	Appropriate to the research question
Information Sources	Primary or secondary information sources	Primary or secondary information sources
Format	Clear, professional writing, fully referenced	Clear, scholarly writing, fully referenced
Presentation	Symposium presentation required	Thesis defense required

Learning Outcomes

The thesis has two objectives:

1. to satisfy the student's curiosity and advance his or her knowledge about some aspect of the planning field; and
2. to help the student learn how to think through and investigate a planning related problem of his or her own choice and to communicate his or her findings convincingly.

The major elements of a standard written planning thesis are:

1. the definition of a planning-related problem in its context;
2. the identification of specific research objective(s), research questions, or design issues to be addressed in the thesis;
3. the identification and collection of the data or information required to understand the problem and address the thesis objectives (questions);
4. the analysis of the data or information in order to draw authoritative conclusions;
5. a discussion of the theoretical and public policy implications of the work; and
6. recommendations and ideas for further research.

Evaluation Criteria and Grading

Students should begin to think about possible thesis subjects on entering the School, but most will not wish to close their options until the end of September of the first year of study.

Students are advised to examine theses previously completed by Planning students to obtain a better idea of what is expected (available in the Fine Arts Library). The theses will show that a very wide range of subjects and approaches are acceptable.

The length of the thesis is not fixed. In some cases it may be possible to communicate an excellent thesis in as few as 50 pages. Most theses should be in the 80-100 page range. Wherever appropriate, illustrations should be used to facilitate communication, and lengthy data sets, if any, should be presented in an Appendix. An urban design oriented thesis may have more illustrations than text and the illustrations may be submitted on large sheets if they can be duplicated.

Theses may also include video or other media presentations, but must be structured to meet high standards of professional or academic rigour as well as basic Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS) requirements.

Supplemental Materials

UBC has numerous research, pedagogical and health resources available to students. These include The Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT), the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, the Writing Centre, Student Health Services and Student Counselling Services. Please make use of these resources or contact the instructor if you have any questions. Students new to UBC are especially encouraged to become familiar with the broad spectrum of resources that UBC provides.

Special Needs

Please inform the course instructor as soon as possible if you have special needs and require accommodation of any kind. Please visit <http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/> for more information on campus resources.

Academic Integrity

1 Assistance with the creation of a course syllabus is available through the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, www.ctlt.ubc.ca Resources related to the development of assessable learning outcomes can be accessed through <http://ctlt.ubc.ca/resources/webliography/course-designdevelopment/> The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences.

A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found in the Academic Calendar at

<http://calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,0>.

