



The University of Georgia

University Council
Athens, Georgia 30602

January 11, 2012

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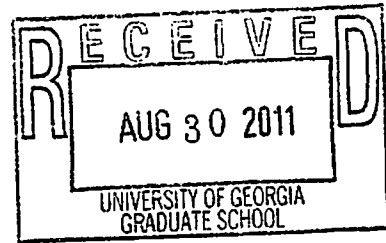
Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal for a Master of Environmental Planning and Design (M.E.P.D. Non-Thesis) will be an agenda item for the January 18, 2012, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

David E. Shipley, Chair
University Curriculum Committee

cc: Provost Jere W. Morehead
Dr. Laura D. Jolly



MEMO

DATE: June 14, 2011

TO: Maureen Grasso
Dean, Graduate School

FROM: Daniel Nadenicek
Dean, College of Environment & Design

RE: Master of Environmental Planning and Design – Practicum

Background

The professional Master Degree in Environmental Planning and Design (MEPD) was developed by Dr. John Crowley in 2003 while he was dean and detailed by a number of the planning related faculty of the College of Environment & Design (CED). The program and its attendant graduate courses passed through the UGA and Regents approval process after he had left the dean's office and was off campus on a planning grant. Dr. Crowley returned in 2009 to serve as the new program coordinator after the program was approved.

The MEPD is a professional degree that will seek national accreditation from the American Planning Association (APA) Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) after the program has graduated at least 25 students. Accreditation allows graduating students to qualify for licensing exams following a short term in practice. The program is expected to graduate its 25th student at the close of the spring 2012 semester.

Accredited programs, of which there are 85, across the country utilize various combinations of three "exit requirements."

1. Master's thesis
2. Practicum (the development of a professional planning document done under the supervision of both academics and practitioners)
3. Comprehensive exams (usually done following the completion of an additional 9 hours of coursework)

The MEPD program in the CED at The University of Georgia was designed to allow the student to either petition to the faculty to complete a thesis or otherwise develop an acceptable proposal to pursue a practicum.

The thesis was developed utilizing the same criteria required by the UGA Graduate School. The approved course number (PLAN 7300) is the same as that utilized by students completing the thesis which is the exit requirement for Landscape Architecture or Historic Preservation in the CED. Two students in the first MEPD graduating class this spring wrote a thesis.

The primary fulfillment of the “exit requirement” for the MEPD professional program is envisioned to be the practicum whose requirements are attached. The practicum is an approved 9 hour course listed by the University as PLAN 7200.

After the first group of MEPD students began to prepare for either the thesis or practicum it was determined that the methods for handling the practicum requirements were unclear and apparently not approved. This led to the Graduate School’s handling of the practicum as a thesis requiring the former’s reformatting to the latter. The nature of professional plan documents makes it difficult to put in a thesis format even though research is involved in both. The plan that results from the research, analysis, and client input requires a number of different formats depending on the type of planning project.

It remains important that students who are approved for writing a thesis be treated in the same manner as all others who write a thesis in any program throughout the University. These students may be going on toward an advanced academic degree in another college or institution.

Request for Approval

1. MEPD students approved for writing a thesis are required to meet all UGA Graduate School Standards applicable. In effect, they would meet the same standards as graduate students in the Landscape Architecture and Historic Preservation programs in the College of Environment & Design. In turn, the completed thesis will be archived in the same places and in the same manner.
2. MEPD students approved for developing a professional plan document (practicum) will meet the requirements set by the College, and approved (as requested here) by the Graduate School. This request for approval is threefold:
 - A. Approval (or confirmation of a previous approval) for the practicum as one of two alternative methods for meeting the exit requirement for a Master of Environmental Planning and Design.
 - B. Approval of the attached description of the requirements for a practicum. The Graduate School will not be responsible for reviewing a practicum’s format and will not be required to archive the document.
 - C. As in the case of a thesis the faculty will hold a “defense of the work” with the same review options (approval as is, approval with changes, or not approved) utilizing the same approval forms and signature pages. In the same manner as the thesis, the faculty will notify the Graduate Coordinator of their recommendation and then the Graduate Coordinator will recommend approval of a student’s completion of graduate requirements to the Graduate School.

If there are any questions or additional information required please contact Dr. John F. (Jack) Crowley FAICP, FASLA, MEPD Program Coordinator at jcrowley@uga.edu. I appreciate your consideration of this request and thank you for your assistance in working with our first graduating class. The program was enrolled at full capacity in its second year.

Daniel Nadenicek, Dean
College of Environment & Design
The University of Georgia

Cc John F. Crowley
Graduate Program Coordinator

Scott Weinberg
Associate Dean

Ms. Donna Gabriel
Graduate Program Administrator

**Proposal to add a Non-Thesis Option to the Master of Environmental Planning
and Design (MEPD) Program in the
College of Environment & Design (CED)**

Program Description

The Master of Environmental Planning and Design is a professional graduate degree program designed to meet not only the requirements of the UGA Graduate School but also the extensive accreditation requirements of the American Planning Association (APA). Students graduating from the 58 credit hour curriculum will generally enter the urban planning profession and seek the practicing status of membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) which is attained after completion of an accredited graduate planning program along with a supervised practice in the field and passage of the AICP exam. Accreditation is afforded through the APA's Professional Accreditation Board (PAB) upon meeting association standards and having graduated at least 25 students.

The program, approved by the Graduate School, is designed to meet all of the PAB requirements which recognize a number of "Capstone Options" in addition to the core curriculum. The options include: the option of writing a thesis and a number of Non-Thesis options that include additional coursework and comprehensive exams and applied research and planning projects resulting in a professional plan document that is presented and defended in a manner akin to the thesis and involving both academic and client committee members. There are about 90 accredited programs throughout North America and all of them require one of the above cited options and often a choice between two options. The non-thesis options are often preferred as the exercise further prepares the student for practice.

The University of Georgia's MEPD program is unique in the profession in that it requires the student to engage in three planning and design studios where other programs have only one. The result of meeting the PAB's core requirements and adding studios which the profession is promoting as necessary in a planner's education is that UGA requires 58 credit hours while other programs typically range between 48 and 52 credit hours.

Faculty Vote

The faculty of CED voted unanimously to offer the non-thesis option and its course designation PLAN 7200 (9 credit hours) in October 2010. The Graduate School approved the PLAN 7200 course at its December 21, 2010 meeting but apparently was not asked to approve the non-thesis option for which the PLAN 7200 was designed. This proposal specifically requests the approval for the non-thesis (capstone experience) option.

Justification for the Proposed Non-Thesis Option

The MEPD educates the student to enter the licensed profession of Planning. The non-thesis option allows the student and student's major professor to tailor a significant capstone experience to meet the interests and eventual area of practice. Professionals work in public planning at the local, regional, state and national levels in fields that include city, transportation, economic development, urban infrastructure and sustainable development. They also can work in the private and non-profit areas at the local, national and international levels. The non-thesis option allows a significant study and actual immersion in one of these areas that results in a plan or documentation of that experience and is presented and defended to an approved committee.

This capstone experience is clearly more relevant to the actual practice of planning and better prepares the student for it and its licensing exam.

To continue in the Planning and Design education the students will be encouraged to pursue the thesis option. The PAB requires that the principal faculty in an accredited planning degree program have a Ph.D. in Planning or a related field.

Admissions Procedures for Domestic and International Applicants

Admission standards are the same for both the thesis or non-thesis options. Admissions are open to all qualified graduates of accredited institutions. Admission materials are available through the Graduate Admissions Office and information for prospective students is provided on the CED website.

Students will select the thesis or non-thesis option no later than the beginning of their third semester of study.

Change of Degree Objective

Since the student is allowed to wait until the third semester to select the thesis or non-thesis option there is sufficient time to consult on options with the faculty in the program. It is expected that registration for the first three credit hours of either LAND 7300 (thesis option) or PLAN 7200 (non-thesis option) triggering the beginning of the thesis proposal and research or the non-thesis proposal and its applied research project immersion is completed in the third semester when the decision is made. A change to an alternative option still may be made if necessary with the approval of the Graduate Coordinator for the program.

Impact on Current Students

Since the non-thesis course PLAN 7200 was approved in 2010 but approval of the option itself was omitted by the program, existing students have planned and are hopeful of the non-thesis option's approval this fall (2011). Most of the 20 students that entered the first year are planning on the non-thesis option. Many of the present students (about half) have been engaged in some practice before returning for a

graduate degree in Environmental Planning and Design. Five, of the twenty first year students, already have a master or law degree. The capstone experience/non-thesis option not only suits the existing students but will also prove to attract new students, particularly those with post graduate practice experience. These are very capable, driven, mature and academically attractive students. These same students are very successful in the areas of applied research and public service while in the program and are particularly employable when they graduate. A program's reputation for success in developing highly employable graduates in turn attracts more students. At the same time the record for graduate employment is important in the process of obtaining and keeping accreditation. Students in the second year will be allowed to opt for the non-thesis option in spring semester of 2012 if the option is approved this fall. The first year students will select their option in the fall of 2012.

Financial Impact

The addition of a non-thesis option MEPD will not have any financial effect other than probably making the program more professionally attractive to a greater number of applicants. Enrollment is presently at capacity making acceptance more competitive. The supervision of the thesis option or the non-thesis option is expected to be the same for the program's faculty.

Desired Effective Semester and Year 1 Spring 2012

Comparative Requirements for the Thesis and Non-Thesis Options

With the exception of the options, the core and elective requirements are identical. Both require the same core curriculum (37 credit hours). These same core courses are also required for accreditation by the PAB. The same 12 credit hour requirement for elective courses apply to both options. Each of the options PLAN 7200 (non-thesis) and LAND 7300 (thesis) are for 9 credit hours for a total of 58 credit hours (see table below page 4). An example of a capstone experience requirement is attached.

Comparison of MEPD Degree Requirements

Non-Thesis Option	Thesis Option
<p>PLAN 6520 Environmental Planning Studio 1 (4 hr., A-F) LAND 6210 Representation (3 hr, A-F) EDES 6270 GIS and LAB (3 hr, A-F) LAND 6310 Landscape Ecology (3hr., A-F) EDES 6650 City Planning (3 hr., A-F) PLAN 6540 Environmental Planning/ Design Studio 2 (4 hr., A-F) LAND 6900 Research Strategies (2 hr., S/U) EDES 6640 History/Theory American Urban Planning (3 hr., A-F) HIPR 6200 Planning & Preservation Law (3 hr., A-F) EDES 6540 Ideas of Community (2 hr., A-F) PLAN 6560 Environmental Planning/ Design Studio 3 (4 hr., A-F) PLAN 6124 Ethics, Justice & Professional Practice (3 hr., A-F)</p> <p>Elective courses: 12 credit hours elective graduate courses, chosen in consultation with the student's advisor to create an area of concentration</p> <p>Total: 49 hours</p>	<p>PLAN 6520 Environmental Planning Studio 1 (4 hr., A-F) LAND 6210 Representation (3 hr, A-F) EDES 6270 GIS and LAB (3 hr, A-F) LAND 6310 Landscape Ecology (3 hr., A-F) EDES 6650 City Planning (3 hr., A-F) PLAN 6540 Environmental Planning/ Design Studio 2 (4 hr., A-F) LAND 6900 Research Strategies (2 hr., S/U) EDES 6640 History/Theory American Urban Planning (3 hr., A-F) HIPR 6200 Planning & Preservation Law (3 hr., A-F) EDES 6540 Ideas of Community (2 hr., A-F) PLAN 6560 Environmental Planning/ Design Studio 3 (4 hr., A-F) PLAN 6124 Ethics, Justice & Professional Practice (3 hr., A-F)</p> <p>Elective courses: 12 credit hours of elective graduate courses, chosen in consultation with the student's advisor to create an area of concentration</p> <p>Total: 49 hours</p>
<p>PLAN 7200 Non-Thesis Option Area of Study (Capstone Experience) (9 hours, S-U)</p> <p>Oral presentation and defense of specialized works developed under a proposal approved by the faculty</p> <p>*Students will furnish final hard copy for Owens Library</p>	<p>LAND 7300 Thesis Option Area of Study (9 hours, S-U)</p> <p>Oral examination and defense of Thesis</p> <p>*Students will furnish final hard copy for Owens Library</p>
Total: 58 hours	Total: 58 hours

PLAN 7200

Non-Thesis Option (Capstone Experience) Master of Environmental Planning and Design (MEPD)

Background

Begun in the Fall semester of 2009, the (professional) Master's Degree in Environmental Planning and Design (MEPD) was designed to prepare graduate students for entry into the field of planning. In addition, it was designed to be accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) of the American Planning Association (APA) which recognizes exit requirements that include a thesis, comprehensive exam, or a capstone experience. In UGA's MEPD program the exit option includes a thesis or a capstone experience whose requirements are herein defined.

General Description of the Capstone Experience

A capstone experience implies that the student be immersed in an actual planning practice experience that includes the experience itself and the development of a planning document of professional and archival quality. The Planning and Design Project involve applied research, client and stakeholder engagement and full use of the planning process. While it is understood that every project is different, listed below are baseline requirements.

Baseline Requirements

1. The student submits a proposal to the Graduate Program Coordinator including a description of the project, the client(s), sponsor(s), project methodology, outcomes and description of the planning document.
2. In cases of large, significant and more complex projects more than one student may be engaged in the project if the proposal is accepted by the Coordinator.
3. The project should entail at least 12 weeks of immersion in the research and development of the plan document. This can be accomplished under MEPD faculty supervision or the supervision of a professional agency or firm accepted by the Coordinator.
4. Each project will be supervised by a member of the faculty of the College of Environment and Design or other qualified faculty deemed acceptable to supervise a specific project by the Coordinator.
5. The supervising faculty will convene a review panel before which the project is formally presented when it is completed by the student. The reviewing committee which requires at least two College of Environment and Design faculty members and at least one professional in a planning field related to the project. The reviewing committee may recommend passage with amendments or additional work, or no pass to the major professor who is also a member of the reviewing committee and to the Graduate Coordinator of the MEPD Program. The committee may also recommend the project's passage as an Exemplary Planning Project to the College through the Graduate Coordinator.

6. As in the case of a thesis the plan document and its digital equivalent will be archived in the library (Owens Library) of the College of Environment & Design.

Capstone Experience

1. Work on a specific planning project with a public agency or nonprofit organization (local, state or federal) resulting in the development of a plan and plan document with the student (or student team) as project principal and primary author under the supervision of a professional in the agency or organization.
2. Work on a specific planning project for a planning and design firm or corporation resulting in a plan and plan document with the student (or student team) as project principal and primary author under the supervision of a professional in the firm or corporation.
3. Work on a specific public service planning project assignment through the College of Environment and Design resulting in a plan and plan document with the student (or student team) as project principal and primary author under the supervision of the Planning, Landscape Architecture and Historic Preservation faculty.
4. Planning project work in another country or state under the supervision of individuals or agencies acceptable to the Graduate Coordinator resulting in a plan and plan document with the student (or student team) as project principal or significant participant and primary author of the Plan document.
5. An applied research and planning project which may be suggested by faculty which addresses a relevant planning need that does not have a client. The result and plan principally authored by the student (student team) results in an implementable project which is designed to attract a client or client organization.

Format

The principal format requirement is that the document is designed as a professional plan rather than a research or academic thesis document. It should facilitate implementation by the client. To the extent, practical, a CED library copy should be bound for archival purposes. The format will be reviewed and approved by the Graduate Coordinator or faculty designated by him/her at the proposal stage and at the presentation stage for compliance with the proposal. The document will not be advanced to the Graduate School for format review because of the nature of the requirements for a professional plan.