

# **URBAN STUDIES PROGRAMS**

## **Guidelines for Master's Papers**

The Master's Paper and its defense are the final requirements for receiving a Master of Science degree from **Urban Studies Programs**. This document presents the procedures for developing and defending the paper and presents some suggested guidelines for the four possible options. The guidelines presented below are necessarily broad and allow the student and faculty advisor to develop a specific orientation for the final product. This document should therefore be used as a vehicle for discussion and guidance rather than a series of rules that constrain the nature and substance of the paper. Four types of documents will satisfy the requirement for the Master's Paper:

- I. A document based on a social science model;
- II. A document based on an internship experience;
- III. A document based on a community focused project;
- IV. A document based on coordinated activity in course work.

### **PROCEDURES LEADING TO DEFENSE**

The first step in developing the Master's Paper is the selection of a topic. Once you have selected a general topic of interest to you, you should meet with your faculty advisor to discuss the appropriateness of the topic and to select a chairperson (master's paper director) for your committee. In many cases your advisor will also chair your committee although this is not always the case. It may be, for example, that your advisor does not have the necessary expertise to work with you on your paper in the area you have selected. Should you and your faculty advisor agree that another faculty member would be most appropriate, you should meet with that individual and obtain his/her concurrence. Your faculty advisor will then place a memo in your folder naming the chairperson of your master's paper committee.

Once you have reached agreement with the chairperson of your committee concerning your topic you must write up a short prospectus--a one or two page statement outlining what you intend to do and how you intend to go about it. You must secure your chairperson's written approval on the prospectus and then the prospectus is to be filed in your student file. At this time you and your chair should select the other two members of your master's committee. You and your chair should also develop a written schedule leading to the completion of your paper and your oral defense. This schedule will help to insure that you have time for any required revisions and, if met, will allow time for other members of your committee to read and comment on your paper. You should keep in mind that the process of planning and revising your paper is an extremely important step. Adequate planning and revision ultimately lead to a quality paper and a successful oral examination.

#### **I. MASTER'S PAPER BASED ON A SOCIAL SCIENCE MODEL**

This option is analogous to a Master's Paper in any traditional social science discipline. It should exhibit the formal organization and rigor about subject matter of these disciplines. A paper may be broad or specific. For example, the paper might encompass an abstract theoretical inquiry into a policy issue, an analysis of national policy formation implementation, or a "case study" of a particular program in Milwaukee or other area. The paper should be grounded upon specific objectives: either a formulation of a question which will be tested empirically or analytically, or the development of a theoretical or analytical structure for addressing an issue. Methodologically, the paper may be quantitative or qualitative.

The paper may also be a normative exposition of an issue. It should focus on the logical development of an argument leading to a new and/or unique conclusion about some problem. This option relies upon an extensive and critical review of the literature of the particular subject matter.

An overall framework for such a paper is likely to include:

- a) a general discussion of the issue/problem to be investigated and its theoretical and/or substantive importance
- b) a discussion of the general setting of the problem or issue
  - critical review of past research (if appropriate)
  - review of past or current events, legislation, policy, etc. relevant to the subject area
- c) the conceptual framework for addressing the subject
  - theoretical framework
  - formulation of hypotheses
- d) analysis and presentation of results or development of the logical argument leading to the normative exposition
- e) an evaluation/critique or summary
  - a discussion of conclusions, policy implications (if appropriate)
  - an evaluation of limitations and strengths of study, and any additional needs or directions for future research.

## **II. MASTER'S PAPER BASED ON THE INTERNSHIP**

This option is offered to those students who have undertaken an internship and who have in conjunction with an Urban Studies faculty member generated a plan or focus for the paper within the context of his/her internship. This document was prepared to provide the student with a vehicle for designing the paper to meet departmental requirements. Students participating in the internship program should be aware that the Master's Paper and the work completed during the internship are two distinct entities. Internship documents, however, may be included as one component of the Master's Paper and serve as the basis for an analytical statement. Consequently,

- a. Students participating in the internship program are not required to "use" their experience as the basis for a Master's Paper.
- b. Students who do wish to use their internship as the basis for a Master's Paper should make sure that they accept internship jobs that will provide a level of experience or data that will be useful in the preparation of a Master's Paper.

An acceptable Master's Paper that is based on the internship must demonstrate the student's ability to analyze some aspect(s) of the experience or produce a usable written product. Since the methodology of analysis is distinct from the institutional experience to be analyzed, most internship experience will qualify as potential basis for Master's Papers.

Three categories of papers are possible under this option:

- a. A paper which is a document produced during the internship.

- b. A paper which uses a document produced for the internship as a part of the requirement.
- c. A paper which employs no document produced for the internship.

#### A. INTERNSHIP PAPERS BASED UPON A DOCUMENT PRODUCED DURING THE INTERNSHIP

Most interns are involved in projects which require original research and analysis and are in a format similar to the Master's Paper based on a social science model. Students carrying out such a project may elect to use the written research report as their Master's Paper. Students should keep in mind, however, that this paper should closely follow the design for the paper based on the social science model. See Section I.

#### B. INTERNSHIP PAPERS USING A DOCUMENT AS A PART OF THE REQUIREMENT

Under this option, a project document which is a product of the work undertaken by the intern becomes the appendix to the Master's Paper. Reports, grant proposals, program designs, and the like generally meet this requirement. In this case the document may lack many of the features of the internship document which satisfies the requirement of "A" above. It may, for example, contain no literature review or it may be methodologically or analytically deficient. Thus the project document, its strengths and weaknesses, becomes the focus or subject of the Master's Papers.

The paper itself is an analytical statement which explains some aspect of the internship as it relates to the document contained in the appendix. The analysis may focus on one or more of the following aspects:

- (1) Methodology
- (2) Substantive Material
- (3) Organizational Process

##### (1) Methodology

In choosing to emphasize the methodological elements of the document, the intern should stress one or more of the following areas as necessary: a) operationalization of concepts, b) the formulation of research design, or c) the limitations placed by the organization on the methodology. The paper should contain some, but not necessarily all, of the following:

- 1a) Elaborate fully the conceptual thrust of the research, i.e., the question(s) which is (are) being asked.
- 1b) List alternative methods of addressing the question(s) and critique each of them. The methods may be evaluated as to their resource consumption (time, money, etc.) as well as their ability to provide evidence relevant to the question(s).
- 1c) Specify the research design employed.
- 1d) Explain the implementation of the design.
- 1e) Document the discrepancies between the ideal and the implemented model.

1f) Discuss and analyze the integrity of inferences from the implemented model.

(2) Substantive Material

The statement of an intern electing to address the substantive material contained in the document must show exceptional knowledge of the material. The areas of substantive knowledge may, of course, vary with the nature of the internship.

Possible approaches which would exhibit evidence of substantive knowledge are the following:

- 2a) A critical review of relevant public or private programs or policies related to the document.
- 2b) An analytical/theoretical review of the issues or problem area from a broader perspective than is contained in the project document.
- 2c) A survey and assessment of empirical research or studies related to the project document, such as national studies, demonstration projects in other cities, etc.
- 2d) An historical survey of a national/local program or policy development on issues relevant to the project document.
- 2e) An assessment to the limitations of current programs, policies, or studies and an outline of proposals to advance the current state of knowledge.

(3) Organizational Process

The choice of this option would permit the intern to focus on the process of production of the document. The process could be analyzed from one or two points:

- 3a) The role of an intern in producing the document is the point of departure for the analysis. Here the day-to-day activities as recorded in a journal may be used as a means of generating categories of relationships between the intern and the organization in the production process. The intern would be expected to formulate an explanation of the process in terms of the organization structure and to generalize about the role of an intern.
- 3b) The intern could describe and analyze the process through which the document was produced. The organizational structure, resources, history, etc., would be used as explanatory variables in analyzing the process. Data would come from information gathered during the internship experience.

### C. INTERNSHIP PAPERS WITHOUT A DOCUMENT

The intern may have responsibilities which do not produce a document or product during the course of his/her internship. She/he may still choose to use the experience as a basis for his/her Master's Paper. The intern would select and analyze the appropriate role which they filled within the organization such as:

Organizer: skills include - developing an issue, strategy selection, building an organization, organizational maintenance. Motivating involvement, conflict resolution, coalition building, etc.

Administrator: skills include - structuring tasks and schedules, allocating responsibilities, mediation, monitoring performance, etc.

Coordinator: skills include - facilitation of intra-organization cooperation, administration (see above) in settings where authority and accountability are fragmented, etc.

Communicator: skills include - liaison between groups with different perspectives or knowledge base, interpretation of materials to be effectively utilized by another group identifying needs for information and education, etc.

Consultant: skills include - problem definition, feeding back observations, application of substantive models to a problem, creating an atmosphere for advice to be implemented, utilized technical resources, fostering independence for client organization, etc.

Or the role may be chosen by the intern, e.g.:

Observer: skills include - participant observation, gaining access to participants with specific insights and attitudes, developing models of organizational or policy process, interpreting and projecting events through use of models, etc.

And finally, the role may be a mixture of organizationally and individually selected aspects, such as the following:

Policy Researcher: skills include - locating resources for substantive information, evaluating the appropriateness of information, designing models for organization based research (such as, needs assessment, evaluation, policy testing), organizing material to assist in the development of organization policy.

The intern under this option must demonstrate that beyond simply carrying out the tasks assigned him/her, he/she was able to generalize the experience. The paper should contain a description of the role, an analysis of the work, and posit a framework for understanding the organizational process or the function of the role within the organization.

The intern may choose to proceed deductively by offering a model for the role and then noting the differences between the model and the actual role performed, or the intern may proceed inductively by using events or activities to build a model of the role. The paper should explain the organizational environment as it effects the role, the forms of interaction with other individuals, barriers to role fulfillment, and recommended changes to facilitate role performance.

### **III. MASTER'S PAPER BASED UPON A COMMUNITY FOCUSED PROJECT**

Under certain circumstances, a student may write a master's paper based upon a work experience or volunteer effort in an appropriate community, city, or service organization. This option would be analogous to the internship option, though the lack of a formal internship experience necessitates careful procedures in designing the project/paper so that it fulfills the requirements for a master's paper. The option permits a student not enrolled in the internship program to produce a practically-oriented product similar to the assignments given interns. It also permits projects which are appropriate to a community audience with whom a contract would not be possible.

### Overview:

1. The student would prepare, in consultation with an advisor, two documents. One would be a practically-oriented product such as a needs assessment, program evaluation, grant proposal, policy recommendation, etc. The second document would be an evaluation of the practical document.
2. This option would not be available for projects which were begun before the student began the Urban Studies Master's Program.
3. The option would be available only to students who could show that a project or product of the work or volunteer experience was primarily the result of their own efforts. If a student indicated that he/she wished to use a project on which a group of people worked, there would have to be some way to distinguish the student's efforts from those of the other participants.

### Specific Requirements:

#### Project Document:

1. The document should fit the model for such work, for example a proposal, program evaluation, etc.
2. The document should be sensitive to the perspective and capabilities of the audience for whom it was written.
3. The document should make a contribution toward fulfilling the needs of that audience.

#### Evaluation Document:

In addition to the project document, a second paper should be written for the departmental review. This paper should put the project in a broader perspective and comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the product. The statement must include:

1. A discussion of the model for the paper.
2. An analysis of the audience and its needs.
3. A discussion of the strategies employed which limited the document and the reasons for those choices.
4. The potential use and impact of the document.

The evaluation document should also include an analysis and comment on the methodological, organizational, or substantive issues which the project document raises. See the requirements for the Internship option – IIB. (Internship Papers Using a Document as a Part of the Requirement.)

The preparation of both the document and the additional paper should be done in close consultation with a faculty member. Each phase of the process, from initial planning to preparation of the documents should be reviewed by the faculty advisor to insure that the product will be sufficiently rigorous to qualify as an acceptable master's paper.

#### **IV. MASTER'S PAPER BASED UPON COORDINATED ACTIVITY IN COURSE WORK**

A student may fulfill the master's paper requirement by writing term papers for three courses and a synthesizing essay on a particular urban issue, for example, transportation policy, the politics of health care, metropolitan development, etc. In the three papers, the student would bring to bear the methods and perspective of the three courses on the particular issue. In the synthesizing essay, the student would integrate the insights from the courses and the individual papers into an overall evaluation of the issue.

##### Overview:

1. The term papers must be written for three different faculty members, at least two of whom are in the program.
2. The student must inform the instructor at the beginning of the course of his/her intention to use the course term paper as part of an Option (4) master's paper.
3. The student should make sure that the written work for the course would be appropriate as a term paper for the master's essay. If the course does not require a term paper, the student should discuss with his/her instructor whether an appropriate assignment is possible for the particular course.
4. The term papers must be of excellent quality. They generally should go beyond the course requirements and be judged of unusually high quality by the course instructor.
5. At least one of the term papers should be developed from the first half of the program.

The student should coordinate the writing of the three papers and the synthetic essay should comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the individual term papers, and hence the course perspectives, for the particular issue