

MASTER IN URBAN PLANNING DEGREE REQUIREMENTS 2015-2016
HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

I. OVERVIEW

Urban planners play a central role in fostering a productive, sustainable, and equitable built environment. Encompassing private and public buildings, physical infrastructure, and public spaces, the built environment deeply affects the quality of human experience.

Harvard's Master in Urban Planning (MUP) degree program teaches students how to develop, preserve, and enhance a productive, sustainable, and equitable built environment. Students are taught to understand, analyze, and influence the variety of forces – social, economic, political, legal, historical, ecological, cultural, and aesthetic, among others – shaping the built environment. Students learn to *understand* these forces through deep immersion in the histories and theories of urban planning and urbanism as profession and phenomenon; to *analyze* these forces through intelligent application of qualitative, quantitative, and visual methods; and to *influence* these forces through technical facility and creative interventions with implementing laws, institutions, markets, politics, and design.

- *Core* studio and required lecture courses, along with *methods requirement* courses, provide students with base knowledge and technical skills used by urban planners to generate, evaluate, and implement ideas, plans, and projects.
- *Areas of concentration* are explored through elective courses within several pre-approved topical areas or within an individually crafted area of concentration proposed by a student in consultation with a faculty member.
- Intensive, *project-based learning* experiences engage students in real-world problem-solving and deep exploration of areas of inquiry. Students select one or more of the following:
 - *Studio options* present domestic and international projects that allow students, individually or as members of collaborative teams, to think creatively and apply interdisciplinary problem-solving methods to planning questions.
 - Writing a *thesis* in the fourth and final term is for students seeking a deeper engagement with research on a specific topic.
 - *Project-based courses* offer students the chance to explore studio-type problems in less intensive seminar courses, within a broad range of areas of focus.
- *Elective* courses at the GSD and elsewhere provide a wide range of relevant knowledge and skills for students to sample and master.

At the beginning of each academic year, the program assigns a faculty advisor to each student to assist in thinking through curricular choices. Concurrent and joint degree program students must consult special rules posted on-line for information on residency, curriculum, and other program requirements.

II. CURRICULUM

A student will be approved by the faculty for the MUP degree upon satisfactory completion of 80 units of courses. Students typically take 20 units per term, and four terms of full-time residence are normally required. Lecture and seminar courses usually count as 4 units, studios are usually 8 units, and modules are usually 2 units. Thus, a typical term load may be one studio and three lecture or seminar courses. Note that the GSD has school-wide rules for what constitutes full-time residence, how many courses during each term must be taken at the GSD rather than at other schools through cross-registration, what is satisfactory completion of course load, and similar general issues. These rules are posted online at <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/#/gsd-resources/registrar/registering/design-school-cross-registration-policies/index.html>. Under special circumstances, students may receive permission to reduce their course loads and extend their studies over a period longer than four terms.

Students are required to take 28 units for the core studios and course requirements, 12 units for the methods requirements (analytic methods, economic methods, and implementation methods), 12 units for the area of concentration requirement, and 8 units of project-based learning (a studio, an independent thesis, or two 4-unit pre-approved project-based courses). The rest of the 80 units may be satisfied through elective courses, including additional studio or project-based options.

The curriculum for the MUP degree may be understood as having six components:

1. Core Studios (16 units)

Students must take the following studios during their first year in residence:

- GSD 1121: First Term Core Urban Planning Studio (8 units)
- GSD 1122: Second Term Core Urban Planning Studio (8 units)

2. Course Requirements (12 units)

Students must take the following course requirements, unless they are able to demonstrate sufficient experience to waive the requirement or pass an exemption exam (see below for more information):

- GSD 2129: Spatial Analysis and Representation (4 units)
- GSD 4115: History and Theory of Urban Interventions (4 units)
- GSD 5103: Public and Private Development (4 units)

3. Methods Requirements (12 units)

Students must take four units of courses within *each* of the three methods requirements for a total of 12 units, unless they are able to demonstrate sufficient experience to waive the requirement or pass an exemption exam (see below for more information):

- Analytic methods requirement (2 units each of Quantitative and Qualitative):
 - GSD 5215: Analytic Methods of Urban Planning: Quantitative (2 units)
 - GSD 5216: Analytic Methods of Urban Planning: Qualitative (2 units)
 - Pre-approved alternate quantitative courses involve more units but include:
 - GSAS 3808: Introduction to Quantitative Methods for the Social Sciences and Humanities
 - HKS API-201 and API-202 (2-course sequence): Quantitative Analysis and Empirical Methods/Empirical Methods I
 - HKS API-201 Section Z (all other sections require 202 in addition)
 - HKS API-205: Politics and Policies: What Can Statistics Tell Us?
 - Pre-approved alternate qualitative courses involve more units but include:
 - HGSE S504: Introduction to Qualitative Research (requires permission of the instructor in advance and is research oriented)
 - HKS API-206: Fundamentals of Program and Policy Evaluation (has prerequisites or requires permission of the instructor)
 - Alternate courses as approved by the program director and instructor of the relevant required course.

- Economic methods requirement (4 units)
 - GSD 5203: Markets and Market Failures (4 units)
 - GSD 5222: Markets and Market Failures with Cases (at HKS) (4 units)
 - Alternate course as approved by the program director and instructor of the relevant required course.

- Implementation methods requirement (4 units)
 - GSD 5201: Urban Politics, Planning, and Development (4 units)
 - GSD 5206: Land-Use and Environmental Law (4 units)
 - GSD 5502: Urban Governance and the Politics of Planning in the Developing World (4 units)
 - Alternate course as approved by the program director and instructor of the relevant required course.

Exemption: Students should contact the program office to pursue the possibility of waiving or exempting from a required course. It is a student's responsibility to pursue exemption in a timely manner. Exemption exams are generally offered only once a year, before the start of the semester in which the required course takes place. Waiver requests should be submitted, with all required supporting documentation, in time for approval before the end of the add/drop period in the relevant semester. More information about exemptions and waivers can be found on the departmental [Information for Current Students web page](#).

4. Area of Concentration Requirement (12 units)

Students must satisfy the area of concentration requirement by grouping together 12 units of elective courses that together provide a deeper engagement with a specific subject area of urban planning. Core studios and required courses, methods requirements courses, independent thesis, and option studios (other than for the Urban Design area of concentration) may not be used to satisfy the area of concentration requirement. Students sometimes seek to complete two areas of concentration, permitted as long as courses are not double-counted for the two areas.

Students may choose one of the below-listed areas of concentration or design their own special area of concentration. The current areas of concentration include the following; assigned faculty advisors and pre-approved course lists are posted online:

- Environmental Planning
- History and Theory
- Housing and Neighborhood Development
- International Planning
- Real Estate and Urban Development
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Urban Design

Students wishing to pursue a special area of concentration instead of selecting one of the established areas of concentration must prepare a description of their proposed special area, secure the agreement of a faculty member to serve as the student's special area of concentration advisor, and obtain the approval of the MUP program director.

Students must submit the form entitled *Declaration of Area of Concentration* to the UPD office at the beginning of their third term no later than the last day for adding or dropping a course without penalty.

5. Project-Based Learning Requirement (a minimum of 8 units)

MUP students must fulfill a minimum of 8 units through intensive, project-based learning experiences. These can take the form of an option studio (8 units), an independent thesis (8 units), or a total of 8 units in approved project-based classes or independent studies under faculty supervision (e.g. in a research lab).

All students must submit the form entitled *Decision on Project-Based Requirement* to the UPD office no later than the first Monday in March of their second term. Please note that, if this form is not submitted by the deadline, the student will be presumed to have decided to take a studio option in their third term only.

Studio Options (up to 16 units)

In addition to the two first-year core urban planning studios, MUP students may take studio options in their third and/or fourth term. These studio options may be chosen from those offered by any department at the GSD, with the exception of certain studios which require specific backgrounds in other disciplines. The Urban Planning and Design department always offers a selection of studios explicitly intended to be welcoming to planning students.

Independent Thesis (8 units, plus 4 units in GSD 9204: Preparation for Independent Thesis Proposal)

Students may write an independent thesis during their fourth and final term. A prerequisite to writing an independent thesis in the final term is successful previous completion of GSD 9204: Preparation for Independent Thesis Proposal, as well as agreement by a faculty member to serve as independent thesis advisor, and approval of the program director.

Project-based Courses

Project-based courses may be classes at the GSD, other schools at Harvard, at MIT, or independent studies under faculty supervision (e.g. in a research lab). The specific courses are approved by the MUP Program Director with the concurrence of the UPD Department Chair, and are reviewed on an annual basis by the MUP curriculum committee. Students may nominate courses to add to the pre-approved list, but such courses must be approved in advance, before the end of the add/drop period in the semester the course runs. A minimum of 8 units of project-based courses must be taken if this option is being used to fulfill the project-based learning requirement. There is no restriction on the total number of project-based courses students may take as electives. Project-based courses may count toward areas of concentration.

6. Elective Courses

Students may take elective courses offered by the GSD, other Harvard schools, MIT, and the Tufts Fletcher School to advance their specific intellectual interests. Core studios and course requirements, methods requirement courses, studio options, and independent thesis and the thesis preparation course are not considered elective courses. Elective courses complete the minimum 80 units of total credit required for the MUP degree. Students should be aware of the GSD-wide rule that at least 50% of their courses in any one term must be GSD courses.

III. SCHEDULE

The following schedule must be observed during a student's two years in the program. **Students are strongly advised to complete all methods requirements in the first year of study:**

First Term

GSD 1121: First Term Core Urban Planning Studio (8 units)

GSD 2129: Spatial Analysis and Representation (4 units)

GSD 4115: History and Theory of Urban Interventions (4 units)

Courses satisfying Methods Requirements, Area of Concentration Requirement, Project-Based Learning Requirement, and/or Electives (4 units)

Second Term

GSD 1122: Second Term Core Urban Planning Studio (8 units)

GSD 5103: Public and Private Development (4 units)

Courses satisfying Methods Requirements, Area of Concentration Requirement, Project-Based Learning Requirement, and/or Electives (8 units)

Third Term

Elective courses or studio option (8 units)

Courses satisfying Methods Requirements, Area of Concentration Requirement, Project-Based Learning Requirement, and/or Electives (12 units)

Fourth Term

Elective courses, studio option, or independent thesis (8 units)

Courses satisfying Methods Requirements, Area of Concentration Requirement, Project-Based Learning Requirement, and/or Electives (12 units)

IV. FORMS

In order to make administration of the MUP degree program requirements easier and more transparent for students, faculty, and staff, students must use the following forms, and are responsible for completing them accurately and submitting them in a timely fashion:

- Petition to Exempt from a Course Requirement (note that each course has its own form and required supporting documentation)
- Petition to Substitute an Alternate Course Satisfying a Methods Requirement
- Decision for Project-Based Requirement
- Declaration of Area of Concentration

All of these forms are available on the department website's Information for Current Students page: <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/#/academic-programs/urban-planning-design/info-for-current-students/index.html>