A Guide to the UNC MCRP Program
Master’s Project

Overview
To fulfill degree requirements each DCRP student must submit a final project of professional quality on a topic in their specialization area(s). This master’s project serves to demonstrate the student’s capabilities in his/her area and his/her readiness for professional practice.

The master’s project is original work, involving a substantial degree of independent research and analysis, often for a client. The product is expected to have considerably more substance than the typical term paper. The project may expand on a paper or other work done in a course or on a research assistantship, be related to an internship, or be an original project.

In format, the master’s project may be a research paper, a critical essay, or a development and evaluation of a program, project, or plan. The requirement is ordinarily met by a word-processed paper with text supported by tables, charts, and a literature review, supplemented by a list of referenced works. The requirement can also be met by an original piece of work in some other form, such as a plan, an audiovisual presentation, or a computer program. (Faculty approval is required for these alternate forms of presentation.)

In the majority of cases, the student submits an individually-prepared master’s project. In exceptional cases, students may request permission to submit a jointly-prepared project. The faculty is authorized to approve requests for joint preparation and to set such special standards as may be required for such projects.

The deadline date changes slightly each year, but is usually in late April (see below for details). Students should register for PLAN 992 (3 credit hours) for the master’s project. Students who do not meet the deadline are not eligible to graduate. Students are advised that it will be difficult to receive advice and guidance from their faculty advisor over the summer months when classes are not in session. Also, the student must be registered during the semester in which the MP is submitted. Therefore, if this is after the student’s fourth semester ends, payment of additional tuition is required.

Master’s projects will be maintained on file by the department as a permanent record of the student’s work. Master’s projects may be used by the faculty after students graduate as evidence of a student’s professional interests, analytical capacities, and writing abilities for letters of recommendation.

MP Process, Timelines and Milestones

September: Proposal Phase
Each student should begin discussing her/his preliminary selection of topics for the MP with their specialization faculty before the end of September. The student is responsible for submitting an academic proposal in writing by the deadlines and processes outlined in this document. The proposal must include Attachment A.

The MP proposal should include:
1. Definition and description of the question or purpose;
2. Literature review (see explanation below);
3. Clear conceptual structure and proposed methodology;
4. Expected results and conclusions from the project—what you hope to learn—as well as their value;
5. Reference list (articles in journals and books listed in your literature review);
6. Timetable for completion, include major milestones; and
7. An outline of the project to aid review by the focus area faculty.

The proposal should be a written narrative; PowerPoint slides are not acceptable. It should be prepared as though it were an assignment for a course or a submission to a professional journal.

**Note on Literature Review:** The goal of this requirement is to ensure that students understand where their project fits within the literature, existing evidence, and/or planning practice. The literature review may include an annotated bibliography, but must also take the next step of synthesizing the annotations and nesting the project in the body of work contained in the bibliographic material. This will allow the faculty to identify glaring gaps and omissions and to more easily understand the source and direction of the project. In terms of length, two to three pages should serve most students’ needs.

Specialization faculty will review and approve the proposal, usually with modifications, and assign a master’s project advisor to the student. Student services will inform the student of their assigned advisor.

In coordination with the MP advisor, the student may select and obtain the consent of a second faculty member or an external person to serve as a reader who would review both the draft and the completed project.

**October - March: Analysis & Writing Phase**
Once advisor assignments are made each student should have their first MP advisor meeting prior to the end of the Fall semester to discuss their proposal feedback and next steps for research and writing. The student is responsible for submitting draft documents according to the timetable specified in the proposal, and to submit a final MP document by the deadlines and processes outlined in this document. The faculty advisor(s) will review and approve the draft, usually with modifications.

The master’s project advisor (and the additional reader, if applicable) will signify approval of the final master’s project in late March by signing the title page, which should have the format shown in Attachment B. The responsibility for assigning the MP grade rests on the faculty advisor. Once the MP is approved, the student is responsible for uploading and submitting all the required documentation to their DCRP Master’s Project folder in Sakai by the established deadline (more on this process below).

**MP Proposal and Approved Final Draft Submission Procedures**

**Sakai for DCRP Master’s Project Folder**
The department creates private Sakai folders to house each individual student’s MP work during the MP process. Located with the student’s other Sakai course folders, the DCRP Master’s Project folder contains the information and contacts students need to meet the MP requirement.

Sakai allows for restricted access to important information: only the student, faculty advisor(s) and staff have access. Easy file uploads, group messaging, and an announcement function can be utilized for easy communication. Sakai’s document time stamp feature also allows precise document tracking to ensure deadlines are being met. Prior to the submission deadlines go to sakai.unc.edu and log in with your ONYEN and Password. A DCRP Master’s Project course folder will be visible along with your other course folders.
The MP Proposal and Final MP must be uploaded to Sakai in using the following file naming conventions. *(No exceptions will be made):*

**File Naming Convention**

“specialty_proposal_last name, first” *(example:  TRANS_proposal_reisinger,udo)*

“specialty_proposal_last name, first” *(example:  LUEP_proposal_stokes,pam)*

“specialty_final_last name, first” *(example:  ED_final_brownfield,shannon)*

“specialty_final_last name, first” *(example:  HCD_final_quercia,roberto)*

**Specialty names should be noted for file name format as follows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty Name</th>
<th>File Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing &amp; Community Development</td>
<td>HCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use &amp; Environmental Planning</td>
<td>LUEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>TRANS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a student is completing more than one specialty, he or she should use the name of the specialty that is most closely related to their MP topic.

**Master’s Project Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Discuss master’s project ideas and requirements with faculty in your focus area and make a preliminary selection of a topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30</td>
<td>Submit the Master’s Project proposal using Attachment A (requirements outlined above), to Sakai MP folder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 21</td>
<td>Focus area faculty complete review of proposals by specialization. MP advisor assignments are made by specialization committees. Faculty, by specializations, upload approved and signed proposal form (Attachment A) to student Sakai folders along with the specialization committee's review responses and suggestions for modification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October/November</td>
<td>Spring 2016 registration opens. Student should enroll in MP advisor’s PLAN 992 course section for credit hours. (The student must be enrolled in PLAN 992 during the semester the MP is submitted.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late October – November</td>
<td>Student meets with MP advisor to discuss the project and to develop a timetable for completion. Student may select and obtain the consent of a second faculty member to serve as a reader who would review both the draft and the completed project. (Faculty and the student must notify Student Services of any committee additions or changes.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 11</td>
<td>First advisor/advisee meeting must be completed by the end of the Fall semester. Note: Advisor may deem preliminary planning meetings from the proposal phase sufficient to fulfill this step provided the student has demonstrated acceptable progress in the advisor’s judgment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>Student must submit, via Sakai upload, a complete draft of their MP to their advisor. Master’s project advisor (and additional reader, if applicable) will review and provide comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 25</td>
<td>Final MP due to MP advisor for review and grading (additional reader, if applicable)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| April 8    | Student submits final electronic copy of the MP in PDF format along with other required documents* to their Sakai MP folder. A hard copy of the MP title page (Attachment B), approved and signed by the master’s project advisor (and second faculty reader, if applicable) must be submitted to Student Services.  

*Students must also complete and submit the last page of the MCRP exit survey, the Carolina Digital Repository Non-Exclusive Deposit License form (Appendix C), and the Graduate School Substitute Thesis Form (Appendix D). The survey is emailed to graduating students prior to the deadline for MP submission.|

**Required MP Forms**

**Attachment A - Cover Page for Master’s Project Proposal**

**Attachment B - Title Page for Master’s Project**

**Attachment C - Carolina Digital Repository Non-Exclusive Deposit License**
The Davis Library created an online digital repository of Master’s Papers submitted to the Department of City and Regional Planning. The *UNC Department of City and Regional Planning Masters' Papers Digital Collection* is made available for Internet access through the University’s online library catalog.

In order to provide the most comprehensive collection possible, DCRP would like to include your digitally submitted Masters’ paper in this database. We request your permission to include your paper in this repository. Review the attached Copyright License in full, complete the information requested at the top of the form, and submit your signed license indicating your permission or refusal to include your MP in this digital collection.

**Attachment D - Graduate School Substitute Thesis Form**
This is the Graduate School form that is required in all instances where a formal thesis is not submitted. This form confirms that the student has successfully completed a project or course as a thesis substitute in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the master’s degree. The substitute must be on record as having been reviewed and approved by the Graduate School.
ATTACHMENT A
COVER PAGE FOR MP PROPOSAL
(Due to Student Services Manager by October 1)

Date:________________________

Name:____________________________________________________________________

Topic or Tentative Title:____________________________________________________________________

To help identify the appropriate faculty members to review your proposal, please check the general concentration area of your project:

- Economic Development □
- Housing & Community Development □
- Land Use/Environmental Planning □
- Transportation Planning □

Requested Advisor (if you have a preference):____________________________________________________________________

Checklist of sections to include in the attached proposal:

1. Definition and description of the research question or purpose YES NO
2. Detailed literature review YES NO
3. Proposed methodology (e.g., research design, data collection methods) YES NO
4. Expected results from the study and value to the field of planning YES NO
5. Preliminary reference list YES NO
6. Timetable for completion YES NO
7. An outline of the project to aid review by specialization faculty YES NO

If you answered “no” to any of the above, please explain.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

For Office Use Only:
Specialization Faculty Action and Comment (see back for additional comment):

Approved
Approved conditionally
Not approved

Assigned Master’s Project Advisor

Signed (member of specialization faculty):____________________________________________________________________
This paper represents work done by a UNC-Chapel Hill Master of City and Regional Planning student. It is not a formal report of the Department of City and Regional Planning, nor is it the work of the department’s faculty.
Carolina Digital Repository Non-Exclusive Deposit License

Please take a moment to read through the terms of this license. Your agreement is required for the University Libraries to reproduce, translate, and make your submission publicly available through the CDR.

By signing and dating this license, you (the author(s) and copyright owner(s)) grant the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) the non-exclusive right to reproduce your submission, translate the submission to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation and public access, and/or publicly and globally distribute your submission in electronic format.

You also grant that UNC may keep more than one copy of this submission for purposes of security, back-up, and preservation.

You agree that the submission is your original work, and/or that you have the right to grant the rights contained in this license. You also agree that your submission does not, to the best of your knowledge, infringe upon anyone's copyright.

If the submission contains material for which you do not hold copyright, you agree that you have obtained the unrestricted permission of the copyright owner to grant UNC the rights required by this license, and that such third-party owned material is clearly identified and acknowledged within the text or content of the submission.

If the submission is based upon work sponsored or supported by an agency or organization other than UNC, you agree that you have fulfilled any right of review or other obligations required by such contract or agreement.

UNC will not make any alteration, other than as allowed by this license, to your submission.

Author's Name: ________________________________________________
Student ID: ________________________________________________
Specialization: ____________________
Geolocation: ____________________
Advisor's name: ________________________________________________
Date of DCRP Master's Degree: ____________________

Author's Signature: _____________________________________________
Date: __________________

Master's Paper Title: ________________________________________________

Related keywords: ________________________________________________

Abstract: ________________________________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's Name</th>
<th>PID#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Department/Curriculum/School: __________________________________________________

This student has successfully completed a project or course as a thesis substitute in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the master’s degree.

Project/course title/number and description:
__________________________________________________________

Date work submitted: _____________________

☐ I certify that this student was registered as required during the term(s) this work was completed.

________________________  _______________________
signature of committee/department chair          date

This report is required in all instances where a formal thesis is not submitted. Where approved substitute is a course in progress, please indicate the number of that course and “in progress” on the date submitted line.

Substitute must be on record has having been reviewed & approved by the Graduate School.

Submit copies 1 and 2 to the Graduate School. Keep copy 3 for your departmental file.

NOTE: Student must be registered as required during the term(s) this work was completed.