Professional Report or Thesis: Goals, Process, Content

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What’s the point of a PR/Thesis?

- The project is meaningful to you.
- The work will challenge you in many good ways.
- Chance to delve into topics/questions that interest you.
- Demonstrate individual research and analysis skills.
- Demonstrate deep knowledge in a subject area for prospective employers.
- Make contacts in the field.
1. The process and deadlines
2. What is a PR and a Thesis?
3. Getting started
4. Examples
5. Brainstorm Topic Ideas
6. The 10-step program
7. Activity: Workshop your PR/Thesis idea

soa.utexas.edu/programs/community-and-regional-planning/mscrp-program/thesis-professional-report-guidelines
THE PROCESS AND DEADLINES
PR/Thesis schedule

Students must meet all these requirements to receive full consideration for CRP scholarship funding, including travel funding for the APA conference.

FALL SEMESTER YEAR 1

1. Meet with your assigned Faculty Mentor (September)
2. Attend PR/Thesis Workshop 1 (October)
3. Develop your PR/Thesis idea
4. Meet with your Mentor and relevant faculty (November)

SPRING SEMESTER YEAR 1

5. Attend PR/Thesis Workshop 2 (February-March)
6. Submit your PR/Thesis abstract (February-March)
7. Matching and meeting with your readers (March)
8. Attend PR/Thesis Workshop 3 (March-April)
9. Submit preliminary proposal to your readers (April)
10. Follow-up meetings with readers (April-May)

SUMMER: CONDUCT YOUR RESEARCH
PR/Thesis Schedule

Students must meet all these requirements to receive full consideration for CRP scholarship funding, including travel funding for the APA conference.

**Fall Semester Year 2**

1. Keep meeting with your First and Second Reader (September)
2. Attend fourth PR/Thesis workshop (October)
3. Submit your PR/Thesis final proposal (October)
4. Register for the PR class for spring semester
5. Submit a chapter to your First Reader (by last day of class)

**Spring Semester Year 2**

6. Submit your complete PR/Thesis draft to your First and Second Reader (by April 1 at the latest)
7. Submit final PR/Thesis to the Graduate School (Last day of class)
What is a thesis and a PR?!
What’s the difference between a Thesis and a PR?

- **A professional report** involves documenting and analyzing a specific, real-world planning issue or case, drawing on planning concepts and literature you have learned in class.
- Original data collection is limited and developed together with your first reader.
- You will ideally develop your PR on the basis of an internship experience.
- Most students choose to do a PR.
- Most PRs are between 50-70 pages.
- There are 3 types of PRs: 1) Open, 2) Client-based, and 3) Plan evaluation-based.
What’s the difference between a Thesis and a PR?

- A thesis involves in-depth research of a complex, planning-related problem. You need to conduct a literature review of previous research both inside and outside planning, develop a research design, and collect extensive, original data.

- The data can be quantitative, qualitative or both. You select the research methods appropriate for your study.

- A thesis is highly recommended for students considering doctoral studies or research-oriented professional work.

- Theses are typically around 100 pages.

www.soa.utexas.edu/crp/thesis
What’s the difference between a Thesis and a PR?

- **PR students** enroll in one, 3 credit-hour PR course (final graduating semester), leaving time for more electives.

- **Thesis students** enroll in two, 3 credit-hour Thesis courses (Thesis A and B; Thesis B must be taken during the final graduating semester). They must also take Research Design as one of their electives. **Plan carefully** when to take a practicum to balance the course load in the second year.

- All students (whether you choose the PR or Thesis option) must attend the four PR/Thesis workshops in order to receive full consideration for CRP scholarships.
Remember, dual degree students may have specific program requirements.

CRP-LAS and CRP-SD require a Thesis. CRP-UD requires a design project with a Thesis. LBJ requires a PR.

Talk with the dual degree coordinator!

CRP-LBJ: Dr. Michael Oden
CRP-LAS: Dr. Bjørn Sletto
CRP-UD: Dean Almy
CRP-SD: Matt Fajkus
CRP-Law: Professor Eden E. Harrington, eharrington@law.utexas.edu

What’s the difference between a Thesis and a PR?
GETTING STARTED
How do I start!?

**PR TOPICS**

...tend to be more practice oriented ("practical")

Tend to provide recommendations for a specific place or program, or research and analysis methods

*Use of Instagram analysis for parks planning*

**THESIS TOPICS**

...tend to place greater emphasis on theory (be more "theoretical", building on past research)

Tend to take longer

*Informal urbanism through individuals’ path-making*
How do I start!?  

- Consider the purpose of the project for you!
- What are topics or areas in planning that you are passionate about?
- Are there debates or arguments that you really care about?
- Are there places (cities, neighborhoods, street corners, parks) and/or cases that you are particularly interested in?
- Are there research and/or analysis methods you really like? (Pedestrian observations, interviewing, GIS, statistical analysis, etc.)
Finding past PR/Theses on Library website:
https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/4 or www.lib.utexas.edu

Use “library services” pull down menu--select Scholarly Publishing page
Select TexasScholar Works from left side menu
Select “communities and collections”, then “electronic theses and dissertations.” You can then search by department or subject to find PRs and Theses produced since 2008.

We have also posted recent award-winners on MSCRIP/Thesis and PR Guidelines page. (Scroll down to the bottom of the page).
EXAMPLES
WHAT'S YOUR TOPIC?
NEXT STEPS...
In the 10-step program!
THE 10 STEPS TO AN AWESOME PR

1. Submit your abstract
2. Get matched
3. Submit your preliminary proposal to your readers
4. Apply for IRB approval
5. Conduct your research
6. Submit your final proposal
7. Register for PR class in the spring
8. Process and analyze your data
9. Outline your PR or Thesis
10. Write
1. Write your abstract
WRITING YOUR ABSTRACT

The abstract is a 150-250-word description of the topic, why it’s important, and how you want to study it.

By the way ...

250 words is really short!!

(Roughly half a single-spaced Word page.)

Really!
1. Describe the broader planning debate/issue/concern that you wish to engage with (just a couple of sentences).

(Research suggests that the focus on creative industries prompts gentrification, some argue that New Urbanism promotes walkability but might reduce diversity, etc.)
2. Describe the specific case AND place that you want to investigate, explaining why this case AND place might illuminate this broader debate/issue/concern in planning. (Just a few sentences).
3. Your tentative research question(s).
4. What methods you might want to use.
1. Describe the broader planning debate/issue/concern that you wish to engage with (just a couple of sentences).

2. Describe the specific case AND place that you want to investigate, explaining why this case AND place might illuminate this broader debate/issue/concern in planning.

3. Your tentative research question(s).

4. What methods you might want to use.
You can think of a PR or a Thesis as a confluence of:

- A planning issue
- A case and a place
- Research and analysis methods
Writing your Abstract

Issue

Case/Place

Methods

Your PR (or Thesis)!
Writing your Abstract

Remember, the abstract is due in the...

Spring!

Yes, we will provide more information in the workshop in spring!
2. Get matched
4. Write your preliminary proposal & submit to your readers
The proposal is basically a longer version of your abstract, with more justification for the significance of the topic, more details about the case and the issue, more details about your research methods, and including a research plan and a bibliography.

Your proposal should be between 2-3 pages single-spaced, 12 point.

Your first reader might have her/his own requirements—and you and your first reader might decide on a different structure together—but typically a proposal is structured like this:
3. Submit your preliminary proposal to your readers
4. APPLY FOR IRB APPROVAL AS NEEDED
IRB REVIEW

- **Purpose of IRB review**—protect people involved in your study, especially anyone in a vulnerable position.

- **Process**
  - Online training. Required for any project involving people.
  - Waiver/expedited review (for projects posing little to no risk to participants.)
  - SOA IRB contact: Megan Hammock (512-232-2625) Email or call her before submitting if you’re in doubt!
  - **Allow ample time for this process!!** After submitting, it might take three weeks or more before you receive a response…and then you might have to revise or provide more information.

https://research.utexas.edu/ors/human-subjects/student-research/
5. **Conduct your research**
When should you do most of your research?

In the summer!

...because it is more difficult to do your research during the semester.
Conduct your research

You should assume that your readers are not available to work on your thesis or PR during the second summer.

Which means you need to do research in the summer of your first year...

So you can start writing in the fall...

In order to graduate in May
6. Submit your final proposal in October and register for PR class in the spring
7. REGISTER FOR PR CLASS IN THE SPRING
8. **Process and Analyze Your Data**
9. OUTLINE YOUR PR/THESIS
10. WRITE
SUMMARY OF THE 10 STEPS
THE 10 STEPS TO AN AWESOME PR

1. Submit your abstract
2. Get matched
3. Submit your preliminary proposal to your readers
4. Apply for IRB approval

SUMMER BREAK!

5. Conduct your research
6. Submit your final proposal
7. Register for PR class in the spring
8. Process and analyze your data
9. Outline your PR or Thesis
10. Write
FORMS AND MORE INFO ABOUT IRB, FORMATTING, FILING YOUR PR/THESIS

CRP website: Thesis/PR guidelines and process:

SOA Useful info for Graduate Students page: http://soa.utexas.edu/life-work/student-life/graduate-office/useful-info-graduate-students
   Forms for approval for Thesis, Master’s Report proposal

IRB for student researchers:
https://research.utexas.edu/ors/human-subjects/student-research/
   Statement of research with human participants (required):
   https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/forms (located under “other forms”)

Graduate School deadlines & submission instructions page
https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation/deadlines-and-submission-instructions
Format guidelines:
https://gradschool.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/August%202016%20Format%20Guidelines.pdf
Key contacts

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Activity: Workshop your PR or thesis idea!