Professional Report or Thesis:
Developing Your Proposal

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APRIL 2020
FIRST...

My office hours:
Mon-Tue 10-12
And by appointment!

My office location:
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Email first! My email address:
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1. Reminder of the process and deadlines
2. The 10-step program
3. Working with “Readers”
4. Preparing for a PR or a Thesis
5. Writing an abstract
6. Writing a proposal
7. ACTIVITY

soa.utexas.edu/programs/community-and-regional-planning/mscrp-program/thesis-professional-report-guidelines
REMINDER OF THE PROCESS AND DEADLINES
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 (September-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)
6. Submit your PR/Thesis abstract (March 13 by midnight)
7. Matching and meeting your reader (March-April)
8. IRB application and travel authorization (March-April)
9. Attend PR/Thesis Workshop 3 (April)
10. Submit PR/Thesis preliminary proposal (Date TBD with your reader)

SUMMER: CONDUCT YOUR RESEARCH
PR/Thesis Schedule

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FALL SEMESTER YEAR 1

1. Meet with your assigned Faculty Mentor (September)
2. Attend PR/Thesis Workshop 1 (September-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)
6. Submit your PR/Thesis abstract (March 13 by midnight)
7. Matching and meeting your reader (March-April)
8. IRB application and travel authorization (March-April)
9. Attend PR/Thesis Workshop 3 (April)
10. Submit PR/Thesis preliminary proposal (Date TBD with your reader)

SUMMER: CONDUCT YOUR RESEARCH
PR/Thesis Schedule

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Fall Semester Year 2

1. Keep meeting with your First and Second Reader (September)
2. Attend fourth PR/thesis workshop (September-October)
3. Submit your PR/Thesis final proposal (October)
4. Submit at least one chapter of your PR/thesis to your First Reader (By last day of class)

(Note: Thesis students attend Research Design in Fall)

Spring Semester Year 2

5. Submit your complete PR/Thesis draft to your First and Second Reader (April; ask your readers what their deadline is)
6. Submit your final PR/Thesis to the Graduate School (Last day of class).
Remember 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…and revise

SUMMER BREAK!
WORKING WITH YOUR READERS
1. Before your first meeting

- Before your first meeting with your reader, think through what your goals are for your degree program and your PR.
- Think about how your PR can help you reach those goals.
- Think about what your needs are in terms of mentorship (how directed, how often you want to meet, what you need the most help with, etc.)
- If you want, don’t hesitate to share specific concerns you have that might hinder your progress with the PR, make it difficult to meet, etc.
2. Establishing a Good Working Relationship

- Respect their time and communicate clearly about your availability.
- Make appointments early and confirm them with emails.
- Share materials ahead of time.
- Set clear expectations for each meeting, maybe prepare an agenda to bring to the meeting.
- Before you leave the meeting, make sure you understand when your next deliverable is due.
- Don’t be afraid to ask clarifying questions, it is a dialogue!
3. Staying on Track

- Set up a timeline together that provides support for pursuing your PR/Thesis.
- Make sure your timeline is realistic!
- Stick with your timeline...and adjust as needed!
- In your meetings with your reader, take stock of where you are in the process to make sure you are on track...it’s important to step back from the writing process.

https://www.brown.edu/academics/gradschool/academics-research/graduate-advising-and-mentoring/advising-and-mentoring-resources-students/guide-m
4. Developing a PR you are proud of!

- Ask your reader **specific** questions to help you improve your PR. For example, ask questions about:
  - the specific topic, issue or place you are/want to research
  - theoretical framework
  - literature to read
  - research methods
  - analysis methods

https://www.brown.edu/academics/gradschool/academics-research/graduate-advising-and-mentoring/advising-and-mentoring-resources-students/guide-m
PREPARING FOR A PR OR A THESIS
HOW DO I START!? 

- Consider the purpose of the project **for you!**
- What are **topics or questions** 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.)
Option 1: Planning research project

Option 2: Client-based project

Option 3: Plan evaluation

See the PR/thesis website!

WRITING YOUR ABSTRACT
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... A CHEESY GRAPHIC

- Issue
- Case/Place
- Methods

Your PR (or Thesis)!
And now... Writing your proposal!
THE ELEMENTS OF THE FINAL PROPOSAL

1. Describe the topic—i.e. the planning debate/issue/concern that you wish to engage with—and explain its relevance.

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. List your hypothesis and/or your research question(s).

4. Describe your methods and justify why they are appropriate.

5. Indicate what data and data sources you will use.

6. Include a provisional chapter outline.

7. Include a research plan with timeline.

8. Include a source bibliography (15-20 references).

Due in October!
Examples of final proposals:


https://soa.utexas.edu/sites/default/disk/PR%20Proposal%20sample_Contradictions%20of%20Smart%20Growth.pdf
**Why do I have to write a preliminary proposal first?**

The purpose of the preliminary proposal is to help your reader better understand:

a. The planning issue you’re investigating  
b. The case and place  
c. Your research questions  
d. Your methods  
e. Your data sources  

...so they can better...

Assess the feasibility of your study  
Guide you on your study  
..and for all three of you to commit to your project!
1. Describe the topic and explain its relevance.

2. Describe the specific case AND place.

3. List your hypothesis and/or your research question(s).

4. Describe your methods and justify why they are appropriate.

5. Indicate what data and data sources you will use.

6. Also include a source bibliography (10-15 references)…this might be a separate page.
THE PROCESS AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL

Content: Same elements as the final proposal...but...

Length: 1 single-spaced page, plus the additional page for references as needed.

Submission: Submit via email directly to your first and second readers by the end of April, so you can meet before the semester ends.

Follow-up: Ask your readers to meet and discuss.

NOTE: Feel free to contact your readers right away (prior to submitting your preliminary proposal) if you feel this is right and you have an understanding with them already.
YOUR TURN!