guidelines for preparing a masters design study, or design-based independent study proposal in sustainable design

A Master of Design Study is a demonstration of the your ability to synthesize the knowledge gained during your course of study, and to apply that knowledge as a design proposal grounded in evidence derived from relevant literatures and empirical analysis.

Your first opportunity to develop an M.D.S. proposal will be in the required course, Research Design. Using the product of that course as a starting point, you should discuss your proposed project with your MDS advisor. This will open a critical dialogue, very likely over several meetings with him or her, in the process of which you will bring your written proposal to the level of development appropriate for committee consideration. Your MDS advisor will confirm with you that he or she believes your proposal is ready to go forward for review by the Program Director, Chair of the GSC, and Graduate Advisor. All three will need to sign their approval of your proposal on the forms provided by the Graduate Coordinator.

Please note all due dates stipulated by the Graduate School as well as those implicit in pre-registration for thesis courses. As these specific dates change annually, contact the Graduate Coordinator to confirm them. Also, note carefully any details of format that the Graduate School may require for submission of an M.A. thesis.

The M.D.S. proposal consists of the following:

1. **Question:** Provide a concise Research Question, or Statement of Purpose, which you intend to answer through your project investigation. Provide an outline, in prose form, of the argument you intend to make.
2. **Precedents and literature:** Provide a written analysis of built precedents and relevant literature (identified by subfield) related to the topic. Each precedent and subfield of the literature should be summarized by comparing and contrasting the position taken by relevant authors and how your own position fits within the field. Note any special language skills necessary for your work and how you will satisfy these requirements.
3. **Methodology and methods:** First describe the epistemological and ontological assumptions that you bring to the inquiry. Second, describe the tactical methods you intend to employ in the collection and interpretation of data that will inform the design process. Lastly, describe how analysis and design will be integrated as a single process.
4. **Anticipated findings:** Keeping in mind that design is intuitive, empirical and interactive, discuss what you hope will be the result of your work. How will you present your finding in a manner that is consistent with the methodology and methods employed.
5. **Relevance:** Articulate why your study is significant and how it contributes to the field.
6. **Bibliography:** List sources of research, both secondary and primary, by grouping into subfields. The bibliography should confirm to the standard format as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
7. **Schedule:** Include the start date and key deadlines for the sub-objectsives of your thesis project. (Depending on the anticipated length of your research, the schedule should be broken down into monthly objectives, or, preferably bi-monthly dates.)

(last revised 29 April 2014)