



Guidelines for Preparing a Thesis, or Research-Based Independent Study Proposal in Sustainable Design

A Master of Science in Sustainable Design Thesis is a demonstration of the ability to synthesize the knowledge gained during your course of study, and to apply that knowledge in the writing of an analytical text grounded in evidence derived from relevant literature(s) and empirical analysis. The thesis is not a summary of existing knowledge in the field created by others, but the production of new knowledge.

Your first opportunity to develop a thesis 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 Thesis supervisor and Reader. This will open a critical dialogue, very likely over several meetings, in the process of which you will bring your written proposal to the level of development appropriate for committee consideration. Your Thesis supervisor will confirm that you that he or she believes your proposal is ready to go forward for review by the Program Director, GSC Chair and Graduate Adviser. All three will sign their approval of your proposal on the forms provided by the Graduate Office.

Please note all due dates stipulated by the Graduate Office and implicit in pre-registration. Also note the Graduate School instructions and deadlines for format and submission.

The Thesis 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 those requirements.
3. **Methodology and method:** 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, noting how they are consistent with your methodological assumptions.
4. **Anticipated findings:** Keeping in mind that research is both empirical and interactive, discuss what you hope will be the result of your work, how it might be applied in the real world, and how you will present your finding in a manner that is consistent with methodology and methods employed.
5. **Relevance:** Articulate why your thesis 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 conform to a standard format required by the most closely related discipline, ie planning, architecture, engineering, philosophy, etc.
7. **Schedule:** Include the start date and key deadlines for the sub-objectives 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).