Program Guidelines for Master's Thesis and Professional Project Proposals

Introduction

The preparation of a formal <u>thesis or professional project proposal</u> is a very important step in the process of completing the thesis or professional project in the Master of Community and Regional Planning (MCRP) degree program.
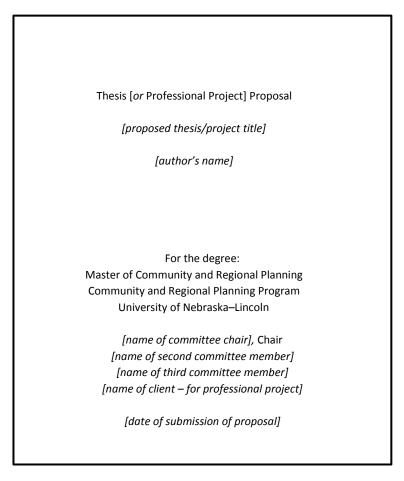
Preparation of a thesis/project proposal by the student and approval of the proposal by the student's faculty advisory committee must occur before the student can assume that his or her thesis/project topic and methodology are acceptable for fulfillment of the thesis/project requirement in the MCRP program. The student must obtain approval of the thesis/project proposal before pursuing substantial in-depth focused work on the topic and before writing significant portions of the thesis/project document.

Proposal Elements

The proposal is comprised of the following elements:

1. **Cover page**

   The following items should appear on the proposal cover page, in the order indicated:

   <div style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center;">

   Thesis [*or* Professional Project] Proposal

   [proposed thesis/project title]

   [author's name]

   For the degree:
   Master of Community and Regional Planning
   Community and Regional Planning Program
   University of Nebraska–Lincoln

   [name of committee chair], Chair
   [name of second committee member]
   [name of third committee member]
   [name of client – for professional project]

   [date of submission of proposal]

   </div>

2. **Introduction**

   The overall context and setting of the thesis research problem or professional project is succinctly presented and discussed in the introduction. The scope of the research or project, especially in terms of its significance, importance, and utility in the field of planning, must be presented in this section. Definitions of key terms must be included.

   The relevance of the thesis/project subject to one's current or past work experiences, classroom experiences, area of concentration in the MCRP program and/or career goals, may be addressed in the introduction.

3. **Statement of thesis research questions, hypotheses, or project intent**

   Relationships among key concepts, variables, phenomena, events, etc., are identified in this section, and one or more research questions or project intentions to be investigated in the thesis research or project are stated in the form of interrogative sentences.

   Definitions of key terms contained within the research questions must be included hi this section.

4. **Description of methodology**

   This section should describe the organizational framework for pursuing the topic/project and should precisely explain the methods that will be employed in addressing the research questions or hypotheses, or project intentions. All of the methods envisioned for information gathering and analyses for the thesis or project should be described.

5. **Proposed table of contents**

   An initial table of contents of the thesis/project should be included in the proposal. The suggested table of contents should encompass all dimensions of the research problems or project.

6. **Timetable for completing the thesis/project**

   A tentative schedule for each stage of completing the thesis/project, from the early stages of research, to completion of chapters and drafts, to the final oral examination and graduation, is outlined in this section. Specific dates should be targeted for the key stages of the process. This will aid members of the thesis/project advisory committee in gauging their availability for advising and reading related to the thesis/project.

7. **Initial bibliography**

   All of the relevant sources, that the author has consulted in preparing the proposal, as well as any additional sources that the author envisions pursuing as part of the thesis research, should be listed in proper (see Kate L. Turabian's *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Latest Edition) bibliographic format.

   For the benefit of the thesis/project advisory committee reading the proposal, some or all of the sources may be annotated (i.e., the content of each source and the usefulness of the source for the proposed research may be briefly described after the source citation).

   The initial bibliography gives the thesis/project advisory committee an indication of the scope and quality of the sources that have been pursued and enables the committee to suggest other useful references that may have been overlooked.