

Master of Architecture Thesis Procedures

2/14/13

The Graduate School at the University of Washington policy on thesis asserts, “the master’s thesis should be evidence of the graduate student’s ability to carry out independent investigation and to present the results in clear and systematic form.” In preparing an MArch thesis the student demonstrates expertise in the field of architecture and reinforces a systematic, critical approach to architectural design. The Department of Architecture offers two separate but equivalent ways for students to undertake their thesis investigations: the studio option and the independent option. Students should choose the option that best accommodates their goals and working methods.

Master’s Thesis — Studio Option: The studio option for the master’s thesis involves a student-selected architectural design project. Students work on their projects over two quarters, first in *Arch 595: Thesis Research and Preparation*, then in *Arch 700: Master’s Thesis*. Students pursuing the thesis studio option work under the advisement of Department of Architecture faculty assigned to them in Arch 595 (one advisor) and Arch 700 (two advisors). As prerequisites for graduation, students present their final designs publicly at the end of autumn quarter and submit the thesis document to the Graduate School. The thesis document generally includes data generated in the research and preparation course, documentation of the thesis project, and summary conclusions.

The 2012 thesis studio faculty are: for *Arch 595: Thesis Research and Preparation* (spring 2012) Professors Louisa Iarocci and Sharon E. Sutton; for *Arch 700: Master’s Thesis* (autumn 2012) Professors Brian McLaren and Gundula Proksch.

Master’s Thesis — Independent Option: The independent option for the master’s thesis is intended for students who wish to pursue thesis projects that are best undertaken with an independent thesis committee, rather than in the context of the thesis studio (e.g. because the subject matter or research method suggests direct collaboration with one or more members of the faculty, or because the project necessitates extensive travel, or because it requires more time than the thesis studio option allows). The independent option provides students with an opportunity to undertake focused investigation – research or design – on an architectural topic of their choosing. Students pursuing this option work independently with a thesis committee consisting of at least two members of the Department of Architecture faculty: the faculty mentor and one or more additional faculty. One member of the thesis committee must also be a member of the graduate faculty of the university. (see Attachments B and C) Registration for *Arch 700: Master’s Thesis* requires the preparation of a thesis proposal in *Arch 599: Thesis Preparation*, an independent study under the supervision of the faculty mentor. This proposal must be approved by all members of the thesis committee before the student may register for Arch 700. As prerequisites for graduation, students present the results of their thesis investigations publicly at the end of autumn quarter and submit the thesis document to the Graduate School. (More detailed guidelines for the independent option can be found in “Master of Architecture Independent Thesis Option Guidelines.”)

Academic Credits: Both options yield 9 credits of *Arch 700: Master’s Thesis*, preceded by 4 credits of preparatory research, for a total of 13 credits.

Choosing a Thesis Option: It is up to students to choose the option that is most suitable to their interests and goals. Both options are equivalent, in that each fulfills the thesis requirement for the Master of Architecture degree.

General Notes

- Both options include preparatory research and submission of a thesis proposal, which must be approved before the student can register for *Arch 700: Master's Thesis*.
- An independent option thesis can be either research-based or design-based.
- For a student to pursue the independent option, a faculty mentor must concur that the proposed thesis project is more suitable to that option than to the studio option.
- Although there are recommended limitations to the kinds of buildings that are undertaken in the studio option (see Attachment A) these are meant to be flexible enough to allow students to pursue their own goals. If students can justify variations to the recommended criteria, exceptions to building type, size, scope, and so on may be allowed.
- All Master of Architecture candidates must submit a thesis document for approval by the Graduate School in order to receive the degree.

Issues to consider

Process

- Studio option. In Arch 595 the student works with the course instructor to develop a clear conceptual position and thesis statement, a well-researched building program, and all relevant background analysis – including literature review, case studies, and site documentation. Toward the end of the Arch 595 course each student also develops an initial schematic design. The student then continues to refine the project and develop the schematic design independently over summer quarter. In the subsequent thesis studio, during autumn quarter, the student works in consultation with thesis studio faculty and invited guests during regular studio hours. The studio faculty arrange mid reviews, verify the students' readiness to present the final thesis project, work with the department to arrange final reviews, and approve the thesis document before the student submits it to the Graduate School
- Independent option. In Arch 599 the student works with the faculty mentor to develop a thesis proposal that includes a clearly articulated thesis statement supported by a literature review and exposition of a theoretical framework. In Arch 700, the methods for testing the thesis statement can utilize research or design; in either case, the findings inform the theoretical framework. Students arrange all meetings with the thesis committee, which is responsible for verifying student progress and readiness to present at the final review. Students present their work formally at a public defense arranged by the department and submit the thesis document, with committee approval, to the Graduate School.

Product

- Studio option. The goal of the studio option is to develop a building design whose primary mode of presentation is in the form of drawings, models, and other graphic media presented in a public forum. These must be documented and presented to the Graduate School in the thesis document. The required documentation involves collation of data from *Arch 595: Thesis Research and Design*, photographic documentation of presentation materials, and summary conclusions.
- Independent option. Although the independent option requires a public presentation and defense, the primary mode of presentation is a well-written, bound thesis document. This will include a problem statement, theoretical framework, review of the literature, research or design methods, documentation and analysis of findings (including design outcomes if applicable), and a concluding statement on how the findings inform the problem and the theoretical framework.

Faculty-student relationship

- Studio option. The *Arch 595: Thesis Research and Preparation* faculty and *Arch 700: Thesis Studio* faculty act as critics and advisors to the research and design process. Meetings are structured and on a pre-determined schedule.
- Independent option. Students seek out faculty with specific interests related to the subject of the thesis investigation to act as mentors. These faculty comprise the thesis committee and work with the student by mutual agreement at student-scheduled times appropriate to the project.

Evaluation

- Studio option. The thesis studio faculty determine whether the building design, public presentation, and thesis documentation meet departmental and university standards.
- Independent option. The thesis committee determines whether the research, public presentation, and thesis document meet departmental and university standards.

Procedure: Students use the Thesis Option Form (attached) to declare their choice of thesis option and proposed course of study late in the winter quarter of year two in the MArch program. Thesis preparation occurs during spring quarter, thesis during autumn quarter. Students must petition to undertake thesis outside of this schedule.

Studio Option

- Students electing the studio option on the Thesis Option Form submit a brief description of the design project they intend to pursue.
- Students who choose the studio option will be placed in Arch 595 with faculty appropriate to the project proposed. The final product for Arch 595 is a thesis proposal and preliminary design that must be approved by the Arch 595 faculty and thesis studio faculty, as well as the department's graduate program coordinator.
- Students continue design, presentation and final documentation of the project in Arch 700 during autumn quarter. Documents must be approved and signed by all thesis studio faculty before submission to the Graduate School.
- Students who do not present their projects in the autumn quarter must do so in the winter quarter under the guidance of a committee appointed by the department.

Independent Option

- Students electing the independent option on the Thesis Option Form submit a preliminary thesis statement for the proposed project, identify the areas of literature they intend to investigate in forming a theoretical framework, and specify whether they plan to carry out a research or design thesis. Students who chose the independent option must secure the signature of at least two committee members on the Thesis Option Form before submitting it to the department (see attached schedule). The Graduate Program Coordinator of the department helps to assure that faculty are not over-committed to thesis committees (no faculty member may mentor more than two theses per year, nor participate on more than 3 thesis supervisory committees).
- Students who are not able to secure the signature of two faculty by the submission deadline must then enroll in the thesis studio option.
- The faculty mentor acts as the principal advisor for Arch 599. The final product of Arch 599 is a fully-developed thesis proposal which must be signed by all thesis committee members and the department's Graduate Program Coordinator.
- Students prepare the thesis document while enrolled in Arch 700. All members of the thesis committee must sign the document before submission to the Graduate School.

Attachment A: Thesis Studio Project Criteria

While the building program and site for the thesis project will be determined by the student, the project must meet certain criteria:

1. The focus will be at a building scale (as opposed to an urban design or an interior).
2. The building program must include an adequate level of complexity to demonstrate mastery of the issues involved in building design.
3. Single family residential is generally not an appropriate building program type for the thesis.
4. The building program must include conditioned space.

Attachment B: The Independent Thesis Committee

1. The thesis committee is expected to give responsible advice, guidance and assistance to a graduate student working for an advanced degree at the University of Washington, and to evaluate the student's performance and assure that it meets the academic standards of the university.
2. Students electing to undertake an independent option for the master's thesis must seek out faculty who have expertise in the topic they intend to investigate. Accordingly, they must define a topic as a precursor to organizing a Thesis Committee.
3. The Thesis Committee must consist of two members of the faculty of the Department of Architecture. With the agreement of the Faculty Mentor, however, a third member can be added (who need not be on the Department faculty). Contributions of other university faculty and/or professionals to the thesis study who are not committee members should be appropriately recognized by acknowledging their contributions in the thesis presentation and document.
4. The chairperson of the Thesis Committee must be a voting member of the Department of Architecture faculty and a member of the University of Washington graduate faculty (see Attachment C)
5. The Faculty Mentor is preferably also the chairperson of the Thesis Committee. In cases where the Faculty Mentor is not a member of the graduate faculty, the second member of the committee must be on the Graduate Faculty and serves as the titular chair of the Thesis Committee.
6. Committee members representing the Department of Architecture must hold a departmental appointment during the proposed period of the thesis study. Those members who do not serve as chairperson may hold part-time or adjunct faculty positions.
7. Service on committees is at the discretion of individual faculty. However, no faculty member may act as Faculty Mentor on more than two thesis committees per year. Further, no faculty member may serve on more than three thesis committees per year (including committees on which the faculty member serves as Faculty Mentor). The Graduate Program Coordinator of the Department will help assure that faculty are not over-committed to service on thesis committees.
8. As a matter of courtesy, names and titles of all Thesis Committee members should appear in an acknowledgments section of the thesis document. To assure accuracy, review the proposed acknowledgement section with committee members prior to publication.

Attachment C: Department of Architecture Faculty¹

Faculty whose primary appointment is in the Department of Architecture

Alex T. Anderson	ARCH	Design; Representation; History and theory of modern architecture and decorative arts
Steve Badanes	ARCH	Sustainable building technology; Public art; Community based design/build
Ann Marie Borys	ARCH	Design; Architectural history and theory
Peter Cohan	ARCH	Design; Building technology; Scandinavian architecture
Rob Corser	ARCH	Collaborative design; Construction systems; Strategies for deployable and sustainable structures
Jennifer Dee	ARCH	Design; History and theory of architecture
Katrina Deines*	ARCH	Design; History/theory; Local/rural/agricultural issues; International topics, especially Italy
Daniel Friedman	ARCH	Design; History and theory of architecture; Professional practice
Elizabeth Golden	ARCH	Design; Urban issues; Materials; Building technology
Kimo Griggs	ARCH	Design; Digital design and fabrication technologies; Making
Dean Heerwagen	ARCH	Environmental controls (active & passive); Sustainable technologies
Nicole Huber	ARCH	Urban restructuring; Urban representation using photography, film and digital media; Metaphor in architectural and urbanistic discourse
Ann Huppert	ARCH	Architectural history and theory
Louisa Iarocci	ARCH	Design; Representation; Spatial Theory; Social Practices
Mehlika Inanici	ARCH	Design Computing
Brian Johnson	ARCH	Computing in architectural design; 3D modeling and rendering; Web-based collaboration and communication
Susan Jones [†]	ARCH	Design; Conceptual and Tectonic Ideas of Making Space
Joel Loveland	ARCH	Sustainability; Daylighting; Energy conservation; Architecture of the Landscape; Design; Research
Brian McLaren	ARCH	History and theory of architecture and urbanism; Modernism; Fascism; Postcolonial studies; Islamic architecture; Italy, Africa and the Middle East
Chris Meek	ARCH	Design; daylighting, energy modeling
Kathryn Rogers Merlino	ARCH	Design; Vernacular and Domestic Architecture; American/European architectural history
David Miller	ARCH	Design; Design development
Galen Minah	ARCH	Design Process; Design; Professional practice; Color theory; Color in architecture and urban design
Richard Mohler	ARCH	Design; Professional practice
Robert Mugerauer	ARCH	Sustainability; Impact of information technology; Values, social and cultural factors in design and planning; Theory and current research methods
Jim Nicholls	ARCH	Furniture design; Public art; Tectonics; Design-build
Jeffrey Ochsner	ARCH	History; Preservation design; Urban design; Monuments and memorials; Northwest architecture; Arts and Crafts
Ken Oshima	ARCH	Design; History; Japanese architecture
Robert Peña	ARCH	Design; Ecological design; High performance buildings
Vikramaditya Prakash	ARCH	Cultural theory; Non-Western, Asian, Indian architecture; Postcolonial studies; Le Corbusier; Modernism
Gundula Proksch	ARCH	Design; Architectural representation; Urban agriculture, Landscape architecture, Urbanism, Urban landscapes, Designing with living systems
Michael Pyatok*	ARCH	Design; Affordable housing for lower income communities - urban and suburban regions
Kate Simonen	ARCH	Design; Structures; High performance building systems

David Strauss [†]	ARCH	Theory of public space; Design; Building and renovation
Sharon E. Sutton	ARCH	Participatory planning and design; design of learning environments; design of child-friendly cities

*Faculty who hold a **JOINT** appointment in the Department of Architecture, but whose primary appointment is in a department other than Architecture*

Meredith Clausen	ARTH	History; Contemporary architecture; Ethics; Criticism; Architecture and urbanism in Paris
Anne Vernez-Moudon	URBDP	Urban design; City form and neighborhood studies; Design research

*Faculty who hold an **ADJUNCT** appointment in the Department of Architecture, but whose primary appointment is in a department other than Architecture*

Daniel Abramson	URBDP	Urban design; Socio-spatial inquiry; Cross-cultural dimensions of design
Ashley Emery	ME	Bioengineering; Energy conservation in buildings; air conditioning
Julie Johnson	L ARCH	Community design; Urban parks; Children's outdoor learning and play environments.
George Rolfe	URBDP	Urban development process, Finance, Feasibility and market analysis; Urban design process; Retail design
Nancy Rottle	L ARCH	Ecological health; Culturally meaningful design
Thaisa Way	L ARCH	Landscape architecture design; History of landscape architecture
Daniel Winterbottom	L ARCH	Urban landscape architecture; Cultural landscapes; Therapeutic and healing landscapes; Landscape construction

¹ Faculty in **bold** are eligible to chair thesis committees, others on this list can serve as the primary faculty mentor as long as a second committee member listed in bold here agrees to act as the official chair (for signing the application to graduate and the final thesis document).

* Emeritus faculty who are currently active in the department

[†] Affiliate faculty