

Master of Architecture Thesis Options and Procedures

The Graduate School at the University of Washington suggests “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. Preparing a thesis assures students' expertise in a chosen area of architecture and reinforces a systematic, critical approach to architectural design. Because the thesis is the culmination of the student's work in the graduate program, it is of considerable importance to the student and faculty.

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: Master's Studio Pre-design* (during the summer, autumn or winter of the student's final year in the program), then in *Arch 700: Master's Thesis Studio*. Students in the thesis studio work under the advisement of Department of Architecture faculty during the spring quarter of their final year in the program. As prerequisites for graduation, students present their final designs publicly at the end of spring quarter, and submit the thesis document to the Graduate School. The thesis document generally includes data generated in the pre-design course, documentation of the thesis project and summary conclusions.

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 allows). The independent option provides students with an opportunity to undertake focused investigation, research or design, on an architectural topic of their choosing. Students choosing this option work independently with a Thesis Supervisory Committee consisting of at least two members of the Department of Architecture faculty: a Faculty Mentor (usually the Chair) and a second faculty member. One member of the Thesis Advisory 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* under the supervision of the Faculty Mentor. The proposal must be approved by all members of the Thesis Advisory 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 spring or fall 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 3 credits of preparatory research for a total of 12 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. Except under exceptional circumstances, students in the Post-professional M. Arch. program should choose the Independent Thesis Option.

General Notes

1. Both options include a preparatory research component.
2. All Master of Architecture candidates must submit a document for approval by the Graduate School in order to receive the degree. The nature of the document is different, however, for each option. See below.
3. 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.
4. The methods of an independent option thesis can be primarily research or design.
5. 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.

Possible issues to consider

Process

- Studio option. The student develops a clear conceptual position, a well-researched building program and all relevant background analysis during *Arch 595: Master's Thesis Studio Pre-design*. During the thesis studio, the student meets regularly with studio faculty and invited consultants and presents work formally at a mid-review and final review.
- Independent option. The student develops a literature search and theoretical framework in support of a thesis statement during *Arch 599: Thesis Preparation*. The methods for testing the theoretical framework can utilize research or design. In either case, the findings should inform the theoretical framework. Students are responsible for arranging all meetings with the Supervisory Committee. They present their work formally at a public defense arranged by the department.

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: Master's Thesis Studio Pre-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 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 thesis pre-design and thesis studio faculty and consultants act as critics and advisors to the design process. Meetings are structured and on a pre-determined schedule.
- Independent option. Faculty with specific interests related to the subject of the thesis investigation act as mentors. They work with the student by mutual agreement at student-scheduled times appropriate to the project.

Evaluation

- Studio option. The studio faculty determine whether the building design and its documentation meet departmental and university standards.
- Independent option. The supervisory committee determines whether the bound document meets departmental and university standards, with the committee chair playing a principle role in the approval process.

Procedure

Students use the Thesis Option Form (attached) to declare their choice of thesis option and proposed course of study late in the spring quarter of year one, when registered for Arch 502. This allows both students and faculty to plan the following year and for the department to plan the Master's Studio and Master's Studio Pre-design Courses.

Studio Option

Students who elect the studio option on the Thesis Option Form submit a brief description of the design project they intend to pursue and indicate whether they will take *Arch 595: Master's Studio Pre-design* in the summer, autumn or winter quarter. Students who choose the studio option will develop the building program, select and analyze the building site, do all background research, and develop the direction for the project in Arch 595. They will undertake design, presentation and final documentation of the project in *Arch 700: Master's Thesis Studio* during spring 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 spring quarter must do so in the autumn quarter of the following academic year, 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. They must also secure the signature of a Faculty Mentor on the Thesis Option Form before submitting it to the department (see attached schedule). Students subsequently work with the Faculty Mentor to select one or more additional committee members. Students who are not able to secure the signature of a Faculty Mentor by the submission deadline must then enroll in the Thesis Studio option. The Assistant Chair 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). The Faculty Mentor acts as the principal advisor for a mandatory independent study, *Arch 599: Thesis Preparation*, to prepare the Thesis Proposal. Students prepare the Thesis Document while enrolled in *Arch 700: Master's Thesis*. All members of the Thesis Supervisory Committee must sign the document before submission to the Graduate School.

Schedule

Year One

First week in March	Introductory meeting with students. Thesis Options forms available.
First week in April	Independent Thesis Option workshop
Last week in April	Forms selecting the independent option due to potential faculty mentors
First Friday in May	Earliest date for faculty to commit to becoming mentors for Independent Thesis Option candidates
Second Friday in May	Completed Thesis Options Forms (with signatures, if appropriate) due by 3:00 pm to the Graduate Program Assistant

Year Two

Last day of Winter Quarter.	Last day to present signed Independent Thesis Proposals for approval to register for Arch 700
Last Friday in April	Intent to Present Thesis forms due to the Graduate Program Assistant
Spring Quarter exam week	Public thesis presentations
Last day of Spring Quarter.	Last day to turn in thesis documents and warrants to the Graduate School
Autumn Quarter exam week	Public thesis presentations
Last day of Autumn Quarter	Last day to turn in thesis documents and warrants to the Graduate School (all students in the Thesis Studio who have not yet completed the thesis must do so by the end of autumn quarter)

ATTACHMENT A: Project Criteria for the Master's Thesis Studio Option

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 should include 15,000 to 50,000 sf. of functional floor area.
3. The building program must include an adequate level of complexity to demonstrate mastery of the issues involved in building design
4. Single family residential is generally not an appropriate building program type for the thesis
5. The building program must include conditioned space

ATTACHMENT B: Supervisory Committee for the Independent Thesis Option

1. The Supervisory 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 by spring quarter of year one (when registered for Arch 502) as a precursor to organizing a Supervisory Committee.
3. The Supervisory Committee shall 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 Supervisory Committee shall be a voting member of the Department of Architecture faculty and a member of the University of Washington graduate faculty.
5. The Faculty Mentor is preferably also the chairperson of the Supervisory 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 Supervisory 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, but no faculty member may be Faculty Mentor on more than two Supervisory Committees, or serve as a member of more than three Supervisory Committees per year. The Assistant Chair 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 Supervisory 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 Faculty (graduate faculty in bold)

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
Thomas Bosworth*	ARCH	Design; History; Preservation design
Francis D. K. Ching	ARCH	Design drawing process and principles
Peter Cohan	ARCH	Design; Building technology; Scandinavian architecture
Jennifer Dee	ARCH	Design; History and theory of architecture
Katrina Deines	ARCH	Design; History/theory; Local/rural/agricultural issues; International topics, especially Italy
Jerry Finrow	ARCH	Design; Building technology and assembly; Housing
Dean Heerwagen	ARCH	Environmental controls (active & passive); Sustainable technologies
Grant Hildebrand*	ARCH	Design; History; Preservation Design
Nicole Huber	ARCH	Urban restructuring; Urban representation using photography, film and digital media; Metaphor in architectural and urbanistic discourse
Louisa Iarocci	ARCH	Representation; Spatial Theory; Social Practices
Mehlika Inanici	ARCH	Design Computing
Philip Jacobson*	ARCH	Design; Urban Design; Professional Practice
Brian Johnson	ARCH	Computing in architectural design; 3D modeling and rendering; Web-based collaboration and communication
Norman Johnston*	ARCH	Urban Design; History
Susan Jones[†]	ARCH	Architectural Design; Conceptual and Tectonic Ideas of Making Space
Elaine LaTourelle	ARCH	Design of public architecture (specialties include library design, designing for children and elderly); Site, urban and landscape design; Professional practice issues
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
Kathryn Rogers Merlino	ARCH	Vernacular and Domestic Architecture, American/Europe Arch History, Design
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
Folke Nyberg*	ARCH	Theory; Urban Design; Professional practice; Scandinavian architecture
Jeffrey Ochsner	ARCH	History; Preservation design; Urban design; Monuments and memorials; Northwest Architecture; Arts and Crafts
Barry Onouye	ARCH	Structural technology; Building technology and assembly
Ken Oshima	ARCH	Design; History; Japanese Architecture

Bill Parker	ARCH	Health care design
Vikram Prakash	ARCH	Cultural theory; Non-Western, Asian, Indian architecture; Postcolonial studies; LeCorbusier; Modernism
Michael Pyatok	ARCH	Design; Affordable housing for lower income communities - urban and suburban regions
Claus Seligmann*	ARCH	Design; Design process; Theory
Anne Stevens	ARCH	Digital representation: Drawing; Graphic design
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
Andris Vanags	ARCH	Furniture design; Design/build practice
Douglas Zuberbuhler	ARCH	Design; Graphic simulation and representation; Building construction, technology, and assembly

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
Dennis Ryan	URBDP	Educational democracy; Theory and practice of interdisciplinary education; Urban design and planning as communicative process; Community and the socio-cultural dimensions of planning and place; Issues associated with urban change and continuity
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

Ashley Emery	ME	Bioengineering; Energy conservation in buildings; air conditioning
Judith Heerwagen [†]	NURS	Behavioral ecology
Kristina Hill	L ARCH	Human dimensions of landscape; Urban ecology; Urban design related to water and biodiversity; fuzzy logic for spatial modeling; Gender and environment; Landscape folklore
Julie Johnson	L ARCH	Community design; Urban parks; Children's outdoor learning and play environments.
Ron Kasprisin	URBDP	Community design; Town planning; Planning/design communications; Urban design principles
Asuman Kiyak	O S	Behavioral Aspects in Health Care
George Rolfe	URBDP	Urban development process, Finance, Feasibility and market analysis; Urban design process; Retail design
David Streatfield	L ARCH	Regional Landscape Planning; Environmental history; Landscape studies; Historic landscape preservation; Landscape theory
Daniel Winterbottom	L ARCH	Urban landscape architecture; Cultural landscapes; Therapeutic and healing landscapes; Landscape construction

**Emeritus*

[†] affiliate

The list of the University of Washington Graduate Faculty can be found on line at
<http://www.grad.washington.edu/gradfac/Find_By_Dept.asp>

THESIS OPTION FORM

Name: _____ Date: _____
 E-mail: _____ Student Number: _____

1. Indicate the thesis option you intend to pursue for completion of the Master of Architecture degree.

- Master's Thesis—Studio Option** (*continue with questions 2–3 only*)
 Master's Thesis—Independent Option (*continue with questions 4–6 only*)

Studio Option

2. On an attached sheet, please provide a brief description of the design project you intend to pursue in the Master's Thesis Studio (300 words max.). Even though you may not know the specific building program or site, describe the focus or major issues you would like to investigate in your design project, i.e., urban or rural context, housing, tectonic development, environmental systems, etc.
3. *Arch 595: Thesis Studio Pre-design*, for students choosing the Master's Thesis Studio option, will be offered summer, autumn and winter quarter. Please indicate which quarter you intend to take Arch 595.
- Summer quarter
 Autumn quarter
 Winter quarter

Independent option

4. On an attached sheet, please provide a preliminary thesis statement and theoretical framework for the research or design project you intend to pursue (300 words max.). Specify why you think it is more appropriate to pursue the project as an independent thesis, rather than in the context of the Master's Thesis Studio. Also briefly describe your preparation for this work (previous courses, professional experience, etc.). Please indicate which quarter you intend to take *Arch 599: Thesis Preparation*, to prepare the thesis proposal.
- Autumn quarter
 Winter quarter

5. Who have you chosen as your Faculty Mentor for thesis preparation, and thesis?

Faculty mentor (print name) _____

Faculty mentor signature _____

Graduate faculty member? Yes No

(note: if your faculty mentor is not on the Graduate Faculty, you must choose a member of the Graduate Faculty as your second committee member. (See Attachments B and C.)