

**MASTER IN URBAN PLANNING DEGREE REQUIREMENTS 2020-2021  
HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN**

**I. OVERVIEW**

Urban planners play a central role in fostering a productive, sustainable, and equitable built environment. Encompassing private and public buildings, physical infrastructure, and public spaces, the built environment deeply affects the quality of human experience.

Harvard's accredited two-year Master in Urban Planning, a first professional degree program, prepares students to imagine, examine, and implement productive, sustainable, and equitable built environments. Four key areas of concern animate the learning environment: how planning can manage change in complex environments; dealing with multiple scales and systems; engaging ethically with problems now and in the future; and planning as an active practice where implementation matters. Students learn to understand, analyze, and influence the range of forces—social, economic, environmental, political, cultural, legal, aesthetic, and many others—shaping the built environment. They study the histories and theories of urban planning and urbanism as profession and phenomenon. They develop relevant qualitative, quantitative, and representational skills. They learn to implement through engaging with laws, institutions, and political and economic contexts. A variety of concentrations allow students to specialize.

- *Core* studio and required lecture courses, along with *methods requirement* courses, provide students with base knowledge and technical skills used by urban planners to generate, evaluate, and implement ideas, plans, and projects.
- *Areas of concentration* are explored through elective courses within several pre-approved topical areas or within an individually crafted area of concentration proposed by a student in consultation with a faculty member.
- Intensive, *project-based learning* experiences engage students in real-world problem-solving and deep exploration of areas of inquiry. Students select one or more of the following:
  - *Option Studios* present domestic and international projects that allow students, individually or as members of collaborative teams, to think creatively and apply interdisciplinary problem-solving methods to planning questions.
  - Writing a *thesis* in the fourth and final term is for students seeking a deeper engagement with research on a specific topic.
  - *Project-based courses (PBC)* offer students the chance to explore studio-type problems in less intensive seminar courses, within a broad range of areas of focus.
- *Elective courses* at the GSD and elsewhere provide a wide range of relevant knowledge and skills for students to sample and master.

At the beginning of each academic year, the program assigns a faculty advisor to each student to assist in thinking through curricular choices. However, students may sign up for the office hours of any faculty member for advice about topics and issues relevant to planning and their own careers. For very specific queries about requirements students should also consult with the Program Coordinator or Program Director. Concurrent and joint degree program students must

consult special rules posted online for information on residency, curriculum, and other program requirements.

## II. CURRICULUM

A student will be approved by the faculty for the MUP degree upon satisfactory completion of 80-units of courses. Students typically take 20-units per term, and four terms of full-time residence are normally required. Lecture and seminar courses are usually 4-units, studios are usually 8-units, and modules are usually 2-units. Thus, a typical term load may be one studio and three lecture or seminar courses or five regular courses. Note that the GSD has school-wide rules for what constitutes full-time residence, how many courses during each term must be taken at the GSD rather than at other schools through cross-registration, what is satisfactory completion of course load, and similar general issues. These rules are posted online at <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/resources/cross-registration-policies-procedures>. Under special circumstances, students may receive permission to reduce their course loads and extend their studies over a period longer than four terms.

Students are required to take 28-units for the core studios and course requirements, 12-units for the methods requirements (analytic methods, economic methods, and law and institutions methods), 12-units for the area of concentration requirement, and 8-units of project-based coursework (a studio, an independent thesis, or two 4-unit pre-approved project-based courses). The rest of the 80-units may be satisfied through elective courses, including additional studio or project-based options.

The curriculum for the MUP degree may be understood as having six components:

### 1. Core Studios (16-units)

Students must take the following studios during their first year in residence:

- GSD 1121: First Term Core Urban Planning Studio (8-units)
- GSD 1122: Second Term Core Urban Planning Studio (8-units)

### 2. Course Requirements (12-units)

Students must take the following course requirements, unless they are able to demonstrate sufficient experience to waive the requirement (see below for more information):

- GSD 2129: Spatial Analysis and the Built Environment (4-units)
- GSD 4115: Histories and Theories of Urban Interventions (4-units)
- GSD 5103: Public and Private Development (4-units)

### 3. Methods Requirements (12-units)

Students must take 4-units of courses within *each* of the three methods requirements for a total of 12-units, unless they are able to demonstrate sufficient experience to waive the requirement

or pass an exemption exam in the case of the quantitative methods requirement (see below for more information):

- Analytic methods requirement (2-units each of Quantitative and Qualitative):
  - GSD 5215: Analytic Methods of Urban Planning: Quantitative (2-units)
  - GSD 5216: Analytic Methods of Urban Planning: Qualitative (2-units)
  - Pre-approved alternate **quantitative** courses involve more units but include:
    - GSAS 3808: Introduction to Quantitative Methods for the Social Sciences and Humanities (4-units)
    - HKS API-201 and API-202 (2-course sequence): Quantitative Analysis and Empirical Methods/Empirical Methods I (8-units)
    - HKS API-201 Section Z (all other sections require 202 in addition) (4-units)
    - HKS API-205: Politics and Policies: What Can Statistics Tell Us? (4-units)
    - HKS API-209: Advanced Quantitative Methods I (4-units; *approved for MPA-ID dual students only*)
    - HKS API-222: Machine Learning and Big Data Analytics (4-units)
    - HSPH ID 201: Core Principles of Biostatistics and Epidemiology for Public Health Practice (4-units)
    - HSPH BST 201: Introduction to Statistical Methods (8-units)
    - HSPH BST 210: Applied Regression Analysis (4-units)
  - Pre-approved alternate **qualitative** courses include:
    - HGSE S504: Introduction to Qualitative Research (requires permission of the instructor in advance and is research oriented) (4-units)
    - HKS API-206: Fundamentals of Program and Policy Evaluation (has prerequisites or requires permission of the instructor) (4-units, not currently offered)
    - GOV 2014 Research Design in Political Science: Qualitative and Mixed Methods (4 units).
    - HSPH 101 MPH Qualitative Methods for Public Health (4 units, **not available for cross-registration**)
    - HSPH HPM 559 Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods for Public Health (4 units, **priority to HSPH students**)
    - HSPH SBS 288: Qualitative Research Methods in Public Health (2-units)
    - HSPH GHP 504: Introduction to Qualitative Research for Global Health (2-units, **priority to HSPH students**)
  - Alternate courses as approved by the program director and instructor of the relevant required course.
- Economic methods requirement (4-units).

Students may choose one of the below courses to fulfill the economic methods degree requirement or petition the Program Director to waive the requirement with evidence of prior course work that covers state and local public finance, micro-economic approaches to market failures, and/or urban economics.

  - GSD SES 5495: Market Analysis and Urban Economics (4-units)
  - HKS API 135: Economics of Climate Change and Environmental Policy (4-units, prerequisite: introductory economics)
  - HKS DEV-210: Public Finance in Theory and Practice (4-units)

- HKS API 102: Economic Analysis of Public Policy (4-units, prerequisite: API 101 or equivalent, several sections with different emphases, **for HKS majors**)
  - HKS API 101: Markets and Market Failures (4-units, **required for dual degree MUP/MPP's, but otherwise closed to cross-registration**)
  - HKS API 105: Markets and Market Failures with Cases (4-units, not offered every year)
  - HKS MLD 410: State and Local Finance (4-units, not offered every year)
  - Alternate course as approved by the program director.
- Law and Institutions methods requirement (4-units)
    - GSD 5201: Urban Politics, Planning, and Development (4-units)
    - GSD 5206: Land-Use and Environmental Law (4-units)
    - GSD 5502: Urban Governance and the Politics of Planning in the Developing World (4-units)
    - Alternate course as approved by the program director and instructor of the relevant required course.

**Exemption and Waiver:** Students should contact the program office to pursue the possibility of waiving or exempting from a required course. It is a student's responsibility to pursue exemption in a timely manner. Exemption exams are generally offered only once a year, before the start of the semester in which the required course takes place. Other waivers are approved by presenting course syllabi that cover the same material as the requirement along with evidence of their successful completion which may include transcripts or work samples depending on the course. Waiver requests should be submitted, with all required supporting documentation, in time for approval before the end of the add/drop period in the relevant semester. The exemption/waiver process means that the student can take other courses—it does not reduce the number of units required for graduation. More information about exemptions and waivers can be found within the MUP Program Resource Center:

<https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/resources/mup-waivers-exemptions-and-substitutions/>

#### **4. Area of Concentration Requirement (12-units)**

Students must complete 12-units of coursework in an area of concentration as part of their degree requirements. By grouping together 12-units of elective courses it provides a deeper engagement with a specific subject area of urban planning. Core studios, required courses, methods requirements courses, independent thesis, and option studios (except for Urban Design\*; see below) may not be used to satisfy the area of concentration requirement.

Students occasionally seek to complete two areas of concentration. This is permissible if courses are not double counted within the two areas. Students should be aware that only one concentration is tracked as part of their program requirements.

Students must submit the form entitled *Declaration of Area of Concentration* to the UPD office at the beginning of their third term and no later than the last day of course registration (add/drop). Once you have declared your concentration, its progress will be tracked on your advising report within [my.harvard.edu](https://my.harvard.edu).

Students may choose one of the below-listed [areas of concentration](#) or design their own special area of concentration. The current areas of concentration include the following:

- Environmental Planning
- History and Theory
- Housing and Neighborhood Development
- International Planning
- Real Estate and Urban Development
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Urban Analytics
- Urban Design\*

Students wishing to pursue a special area of concentration instead of selecting one of the established areas of concentration must prepare a description of their proposed special area, secure the agreement of a faculty member to serve as the student's special area of concentration advisor, and obtain the approval of the MUP program director. Students are advised to speak to the MUP program director as a first step.

**\*Note:** Only option studios offered by the UPD department (STU 1500-level) count towards the satisfaction of the Urban Design area of concentration.

#### **5. Project-Based Learning Requirement (a minimum of 8-units)**

MUP students must fulfill a minimum of 8-units through intensive, project-based learning experiences. These can take the form of an option studio (8-units), an independent thesis (8-units plus a 4-unit thesis prep course. GSD 9204), or a total of 8-units in approved project-based classes or independent studies under faculty supervision (e.g. in a research lab). A project-based course has a substantial amount of the assignment load (40% or more) comprising an applied, real-world, project for an external client; the only exception is a project conducted under close faculty supervision in a research lab. Those interested in more theoretical or conceptual projects should do a thesis.

All students must submit the form entitled *Binding Declaration Form: Thesis, Option Studio, or Project-Based Courses* to the UPD office no later than the second Monday in April of their second term. Please note that, if this form is not submitted by the deadline, the student will be presumed to have decided to take a studio option in their third term only. Changes to a declaration form are not possible after the stated deadline.

#### ***Option Studios (up to 16-units)***

In addition to the two first-year core urban planning studios, MUP students may take an option studio in their third and/or fourth term. These option studios may be chosen from those offered by any department at the GSD, except for certain studios which require specific backgrounds in other disciplines. The Urban Planning and Design department always offers a selection of studios explicitly intended to be welcoming to planning students.

***Independent Thesis (8-units, plus 4-units in GSD 9204: Preparation for Independent Thesis Proposal)***

Students may write an independent thesis during their fourth and final term. A prerequisite to writing an independent thesis in the final term is successful previous completion of GSD 9204: Preparation for Independent Thesis Proposal, as well as agreement by a faculty member to serve as independent thesis advisor, and approval of the program director.

***Project-based Courses***

Project-based courses may be classes at the GSD, other schools at Harvard, at MIT, or independent studies under faculty supervision (e.g. in a research lab). The specific courses are approved by the MUP Program Director with the concurrence of the UPD Department Chair, and are reviewed on an annual basis. Students may nominate courses to add to the pre-approved list, but such courses must be approved in advance and before the end of the add/drop period in the semester the course runs. A minimum of 8-units of project-based courses must be taken if this option is being used to fulfill the project-based learning requirement. There is no restriction on the total number of project-based courses students may take as electives. Project-based courses may count toward areas of concentration.

**6. Elective Courses**

Students may take elective courses offered by the GSD, other Harvard schools, MIT, and the Tufts Fletcher School to advance their specific intellectual interests. Core studios and course requirements, methods requirement courses, option studios, and independent thesis and the thesis preparation course are not considered elective courses. Elective courses complete the minimum 80-units of total credit required for the MUP degree. Students should be aware of the GSD-wide rule that at least 50% of their courses in any one term must be GSD courses.

<b>III. SCHEDULE</b>
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The following schedule must be observed during a student's two years in the program. **Students are strongly advised to complete all methods requirements in the first year of study:**

**First Term**

GSD 1121: First Term Core Urban Planning Studio (8-units)

GSD 2129: Spatial Analysis and Representation (4-units)

Courses satisfying Methods Requirements, Area of Concentration Requirement, Project-Based Learning Requirement, and/or Electives (4-units). **We highly recommend:**

- GSD 5215: Analytic Methods of Urban Planning: Quantitative (2-units)
- GSD 5216: Analytic Methods of Urban Planning: Qualitative (2-units)

Courses satisfying Methods Requirements, Area of Concentration Requirement, Project-Based course Requirement, and/or Electives (4-units).

### **Second Term**

GSD 1122: Second Term Core Urban Planning Studio (8-units)

GSD 4115: Histories and Theories of Urban Interventions (4-units)

GSD 5103: Public and Private Development (4-units)

Courses satisfying Methods Requirements, Area of Concentration Requirement, Project-Based course Requirement, and/or Electives (4-units).

### **Third Term**

Project-Based Courses, Thesis Prep, and/ or Studio Option (0-8 units)

Courses satisfying Methods Requirements, Area of Concentration Requirement, Project-Based Learning Requirement, and/or Electives (12-20 units)

### **Fourth Term**

Project-Based Courses, Studio Option, or Independent Thesis (0-8 units)

Courses satisfying Methods Requirements, Area of Concentration Requirement, Project-Based Learning Requirement, and/or Electives (12-20 units)

## **IV. FORMS**

In order to make administration of the MUP degree program requirements easier and more transparent for students, faculty, and staff, students must use the following forms, and are responsible for completing them accurately and submitting them in a timely fashion:

- Petition to Exempt from a Course Requirement (please contact your program coordinator, Sarah Hutchinson, for the online petition form)
- Petition to Substitute an Alternate Course Satisfying a Methods please contact your program coordinator, Sarah Hutchinson, for the online petition form) Decision for Project-Based Requirement
- Declaration of Area of Concentration

All of these forms are available on the department website's Information for Current Students page: <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/resources/current-mup-degree-requirements/>