

## **School of Planning Master's Research Paper Guide**

The Master's Research Paper (MRP) should be an applied research project focused on an issue related to urban and regional planning. It identifies a problem and seeks a solution to demonstrate problem solving ability. Normally completed in eight months (or two terms), the research project is narrower in scope and shorter in length than a thesis and entails a lesser time commitment than a thesis. Students explore a well-defined research problem in planning. The MRP discusses the research students undertake and the lessons learned in relation to published literature. The MRP is assessed by a supervisor and a reader, who review the paper independently, and then agree upon a final numerical grade.

The MRP must display research and independent analysis and demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the literature relating to the chosen planning topic. In completing the MRP, the student will make a moderate contribution to knowledge in one or more of several ways:

- 1) Empirical contribution to planning knowledge through the collection of new data (e.g. primary data) where necessary, and/or the interpretation of existing data (e.g. secondary data).
- 2) Practical contribution to urban and regional planning policies through critically reviewing and analyzing a set of related planning policy documents or a particular planning policy/document.
- 3) Conceptual/theoretical contribution to planning knowledge through refining a particular concept or theory and/or apply an existing concept or theory to an empirical case study that has not previously been examined from this conceptual/theoretical perspective.
- 4) Methodological contribution to planning knowledge through the development of a new epistemological or methodological framework and the application of them to a new research area in planning.

The master's research paper should be normally 8,000 - 10,000 words, excluding references, tables, footnotes, endnotes (if these are used). Appendix and supplementary methodological data set that are closely relevant to the master's research paper are additional to the word count limit. The master's research paper is in the form of a professional report or an extended briefing document and can be organized into clearly defined sections on problem statement, current relevant research, research methodology and procedure, analyses and findings, and conclusions and recommendations. Most research papers contain 4 - 6 sections, usually including:

- 1) an introductory section;
- 2) a literature review or research context section;
- 3) a methodology section;
- 4) one or more analytical results and findings sections; and
- 5) a concluding section.

### **School of Planning Thesis Guide:**

<https://uwaterloo.ca/planning/current-graduate-students/school-planning-thesis-guide>