Urban and Regional Planning, MS

The Master of Science in urban and regional planning is a two-year degree program fully accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board. It is built on the premise that planners must be educated in methods of policy analysis and that there is a common body of knowledge, represented in the core curriculum, that provides a solid foundation for all specializations in the field.

A wide range of educational backgrounds provides good preparation for graduate study in urban and regional planning. Students with undergraduate majors such as environmental policy and planning, architecture, anthropology, public policy, geographic information science, business administration, economics, engineering, communication studies, finance, geography, education, marketing, political science, sociology, history, journalism, and English currently study in the school. With an increasingly diverse student body and a low student-faculty ratio, the School of Planning and Public Affairs is committed to creating an environment that is inclusive and welcoming of all students. Approximately 20 full-time students and some part-time students are enrolled and about 20% are international students.

The common core of courses and the design of the facilities allow students to get to know each other quickly. Students interact closely with faculty members in the classroom, in informal conversation, and while working on research projects. Students and faculty also collaborate in the second-year capstone courses, URP:6209 Sustainable Communities Lab I and URP:6210 Sustainable Communities Lab II, to prepare plans and reports for communities throughout Iowa. This work is supported by the university's Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities, which was created by the School of Planning and Public Affairs.

Graduate students working toward a master's degree in urban and regional planning may elect to pursue one of the combined degree programs offered by the school in collaboration with the colleges of Education, Engineering, Law, and Public Health, and the schools of Earth, Environment, and Sustainability and Social Work (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences).

Learning Outcomes

General Planning Knowledge

The comprehension, representation, and use of ideas and information in the planning field, including appropriate perspectives from history, social science, and the design professions:

- purpose and meaning of planning—appreciation of why planning is undertaken, the impact of planning;
- planning theory—appreciation of the behaviors and structures available to bring about sound planning outcomes;
- planning law—appreciation of the legal and institutional contexts within which planning occurs;
- human settlements and history of planning—understanding of growth and development of places over time and space;
- the future—understanding relationships between past, present, and future in planning domains, potential for intervention; and
- global dimensions—appreciation of interactions, flows of people and materials, cultures, and differing approaches to planning.

Planning Skills

Use and application of knowledge to perform specific tasks required in the practice of planning:

- research—tools for assembling and analyzing information from practice, scholarship, from primary/secondary sources;
- written, oral, and graphic communication—the ability to prepare clear, accurate, compelling text, graphics, and maps for presentations;
- quantitative and qualitative methods—data collection, analysis, modeling tools for forecasting, analysis, and projects/plans design;
- plan creation and implementation—tools for sound plan formulation, adoption, and implementation and enforcement;
- planning process methods—tools for stakeholder involvement, community engagement, and working with diverse communities; and
- leadership—tools for attention, formation, strategic decision-making, team building, and organizational/community motivation.

Values and Ethics

Values inform ethical and normative principles used to guide planning in a democratic society:

- professional ethics and responsibility—appreciation of key issues of planning ethics, public decision-making, research, and client representation (American Institute of Certified Planners Code of Ethics);
- governance and participation—appreciation of the roles of officials, stakeholders, and community members in planned change;
- sustainability and environmental quality—appreciation of natural resources, how to create sustainable futures;
- growth and development—appreciation of economic, social, and cultural factors in urban and regional growth and change; and
- social justice—appreciation of equity concerns in planning.

Requirements

The Master of Science in urban and regional planning requires a minimum of 45 s.h. of graduate credit. Students must maintain a Graduate College program grade-point average of at least 3.00.

The graduate curriculum is based on the philosophy that planners must develop the theoretical and analytic skills that will permit them to analyze social problems and evaluate public policies. Planners must also cultivate professional skills such as report writing, oral presentation, computer use, and team management in order to work effectively in various organizational and political environments.

Work for the master's degree includes core courses, an area of concentration, electives, and capstone courses. A final examination is required. A thesis is not required, although

students may petition to write one. Students are encouraged to complete an approved internship or practicum.

The MS in urban and regional planning requires the following coursework.

Requirements	Hours
Core Curriculum	25
Concentration Area	9
Elective Courses	5
Capstone Courses	6

Core Curriculum

The core curriculum helps students develop an understanding of the institutions—social, economic, political, administrative, and legal systems—that provide the context for policy analysis and that constrain public choices. It also promotes developing the ability to identify social goals and normative criteria for evaluating public policies, as well as the analytic skills to perform such investigations.

The core requires a minimum of 25 s.h., including an advanced economic methods course. The advanced economics methods course usually is taken during the first three semesters. Early core courses are drawn primarily from traditional disciplines, particularly economics and statistics, and include an introduction to land use planning and to theories and practice of planning. As students proceed through the curriculum, increasing emphasis is placed on the development of critical judgment and insight, achieved through the application of theory and methods to realistic planning problems and case studies.

The core curriculum includes the following courses; students may request a substitution of selected core courses on the basis of previous coursework. Students must earn a grade of B-minus or higher in all core courses except PBAF:6208 Program Seminar.

Course #	Title	Hours
All of these:		
URP:6200	Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Policy	3
URP:6201	Data Science for Urban Analytics	3
URP:6202	Land Use Planning: Law and Practice	3
URP:6203	The Making of Cities: Histories and Theories of Planning	3
URP:6205	Economics for Policy Analysis	3
URP:6208	Program Seminar	1
URP:6225	Applied GIS for Planning and Policy Making	3
URP:6233	Public Finance and Budgeting	3
URP:6258	Systems and Scenario Thinking	3

Concentration Area

Beginning in the second semester, students choose a concentration area and develop it by applying the concepts and skills developed in the core. Currently, the school's faculty and course offerings support three concentration areas: housing, community, and economic development; land use and environmental planning; and transportation planning.

Each concentration area consists of one required course and two electives; at least one of the electives must be in a School of Planning and Public Affairs course (prefix PBAF or URP) numbered 5000 or above. Students must earn a grade of B-minus or higher in all concentration area courses.

Students may combine two concentration areas as approved by the student's advisor. Examples of combined areas are environmental and economic development planning, and transportation and community development planning. Students may also design other concentration areas, subject to faculty approval. For example, they may specialize in health services planning with appropriate coursework in the departments of Health Management and Policy or Occupational and Environmental Health, or in human services planning with courses in the School of Social Work.

Housing, Community, and Economic Development

Course #	Title	Hours
One of these:		
URP:6295	Community and Economic Development Policy	3
URP:6271	Housing Policy	3
URP:6245	Growth Management	3
At least one of these:		
URP:6243	The Land Development Process	3
URP:6273	Creative Community and Economic Development	3
URP:6278	Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness I	3
URP:6400	Sustainable Development: The Kerala Experience	3
One of these:		
URP:6266	Transportation, Urban Form, and Sustainability	3
PBAF:3570	Poverty Policy	3
PBAF:6241	Strategic Management of Public and Nonprofit Organizations	3
ECON:3350	Industry Analysis	3
ENTR:4200	Entrepreneurship: Business Consulting	3
ENTR:4400	Managing the Growth Business	3
FIN:4230	Real Estate Process	3
FIN:9230	Real Estate Finance and Investments	3
SSW:4843	Social Welfare Policy and Practice	3
SSW:6400	Theory and Skills for Working With Organizations and Communities	3
An additional course from this list		3

Land Use and Environmental Planning

Course #	Title	Hours
This course:		
URP:6256	Environmental Policy	3

At least one of these:		
URP:5310	Informatics for Sustainable Systems	3
URP:5800	Environmental Policy: Theory and Practice	3
URP:6243	The Land Development Process	3
URP:6245	Growth Management	3
URP:6253	Designing Sustainable and Healthy Cities	3
URP:6266	Transportation, Urban Form, and Sustainability	3
URP:6280	Planning for Disaster Mitigation and Recovery	3
URP:6400	Sustainable Development: The Kerala Experience	3
One of these:		
CEE:3790	Resilient Infrastructure and Emergency Response	3
CEE:4107	Sustainable Systems	3
CEE:4158	Solid and Hazardous Wastes	3
CEE:4159	Air Pollution Control Technology	3
CEE:5410	Politics and Economics of the Food, Energy, Water Nexus	3
JMC:5266	Risk Communication	3
OEH:4240	Global Environmental Health	3
OEH:4260	Global Water and Health	3
SEES:3340	Ecosystem Services	3
SEES:3350	Urban Ecology	3
SEES:3390	Integrated Watershed Analysis	3
SEES:3500	Introduction to Environmental Remote Sensing	3
SEES:3760	Hazards and Society	3
SEES:4150	Health and Environment: GIS Applications	3
SEES:4210	Sustainability as a System Science	3
SEES:4500	Advanced Remote Sensing	4
SEES:4770	Environmental Justice	3
SEES:6300	Seminar in Environment, Conservation, and Land Use	3
An additional course from this list		3

Transportation Planning

Course #	Title	Hours
This course:		
URP:6266	Transportation, Urban Form, and Sustainability	3
At least one of these:		
URP:6260	Transportation Policy and Planning	3
URP:6263	Special Topics in Transportation Planning	3
One of these:		
URP:3350	Transportation Economics	3
URP:4262	Transportation Research Methods and Analysis	3
CEE:3763	Principles of Transportation Engineering	3
CEE:4730	Transportation Infrastructure Construction and Management	3
CEE:4762	Design of Transportation Systems	3
CEE:4763	Traffic Engineering	3
CEE:5998	Individual Investigations: Civil and Environmental Engineering	3
CPH:4220	Global Road Safety	3
An additional course from this list		3

Elective Courses

Students complete an additional 5 s.h. of elective courses; a minimum of 3 s.h. must be completed in School of Planning and Public Affairs courses (prefix URP or PBAF) numbered 5000 and above. With the permission of the program, courses not listed below may supplement those offered by the School of Planning and Public Affairs.

Students are encouraged but not required to complete an internship in a planning agency or related organization by taking URP:6335 Internship. To earn 2 s.h. of credit for the internship, students must submit a brief paper summarizing and evaluating their experience. Internships are usually paid staff positions and are completed during the summer between the first and second years or during the academic year.

Course #	Title	Hours
At least 5 s.h. from these:		
CEE:3003	Project Management Skills	1
EPLS:5240	Topics in Education	arr.
EPLS:6217	Theory for Scholar Practitioners	2-3
IS:3910	Approaches to Advocacy: From Theory to Practice	3
School of Planning and Public Affairs courses (prefix URP or PBAF) numbered 4000 or above		
Non-School of Planning and Public Affairs courses (prefix URP or PBAF) approved for a concentration area; consult "Concentration Area" above		

Thesis

A thesis is not required, although students may petition to write one. Up to 5 s.h. of credit from URP:6305 Readings and URP:6325 Thesis: Urban and Regional Planning may apply toward the elective requirement.

Capstone Courses

Students complete the following two capstone courses, usually during the third and fourth semesters. A grade of B-minus or higher is required for both courses.

Course #	Title	Hours
Both of these:		
URP:6209	Sustainable Communities Lab I	3
URP:6210	Sustainable Communities Lab II	3

Alternatively, an extended internship, consisting of at least five months of full-time employment in a planning-related organization, may qualify as a practicum. The practicum course URP:6229 Practicum generally takes place during the summer after the first year and fall semester of the second year. Students register for the practicum course in two consecutive sessions for a total of at least 6 s.h.

Final Exam

A final exam is required for all students. Thesis students are required to pass an oral defense of their thesis in place of the final exam. An oral and written examination constitutes the final exam for students who do not write a thesis. Students who do not write a thesis do not enroll in any course to prepare for the final exam. If the oral examination is passed, then the written examination does not need to be taken.

Combined Programs

The School of Planning and Public Affairs participates in several combined degree programs, in which students work toward an MS in urban and regional planning at the same time they work toward another degree. Combined degree programs enable students to earn both degrees in less time than it would take to earn the two degrees separately.

Undergraduate Degree/MS

Students working on an undergraduate degree program in the Tippie College of Business or the colleges of Education, Engineering, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Public Health who are interested in earning the MS in urban and regional planning may apply to a combined undergraduate degree/MS graduate degree program. The Undergraduate to Graduate (U2G) program enables students to begin work on the MS as they complete their baccalaureate degree. Combined degree programs enable students to earn both degrees in less time than it would take to earn the two degrees separately.

A separate application for each degree program is required. Applicants must be admitted to both programs before they may be admitted to the combined degree program. For more information, visit Undergraduate to Graduate (U2G) on the Graduate College website.

Graduate Degrees/MS

Visit "Two Master's Degrees" under Master's Degrees in the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website for information on earning concurrent master's degrees. The following combined degree programs for the Master of Science in urban and regional planning are available.

- JD/MS; visit Juris Doctor, JD (College of Law) in the catalog.
- MS in civil and environmental engineering with a sustainable water development subprogram/MS; visit the MS in civil and environmental engineering (College of Engineering) in the catalog.
- MS in occupational and environmental health/MS; visit the MS in occupational and environmental health (College of Public Health) in the catalog.
- MSW/MS; visit the Master of Social Work, MSW (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) in the catalog.
- MA in educational policy and leadership studies with a higher education and student affairs subprogram/MS; visit the MA in educational policy and leadership studies (College of Education) in the catalog.

Requirements for each combined degree program can vary. The minimum requirements for the urban and regional planning part of any combined degree include completion of at least 35 s.h. in School of Planning and Public Affairs courses (prefix URP), the core and capstone courses, 9 s.h. of a concentration, and the master's degree final examination. In the case of two master's degrees, all programs require at least 60 s.h. of credit.

Students who wish to enter a combined degree program must apply to each program separately; they must be admitted to both programs before they may be admitted to the combined program. Other combined degrees may be possible. Contact the admissions coordinator at the School of Planning and Public Affairs for more information about combined degree programs.

Graduate Education

Graduate education prepares students with advanced knowledge and skills in specialized fields. At the University of Iowa, the Graduate College advocates for student-centered graduate education and supports equitable application of rules and policies across graduate programs.

Academics

University of Iowa graduate credentials are regulated by policies and requirements found in the Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations. This includes minimum grade-point average (GPA) requirements for academic standing and degree conferral. The Graduate College sets the minimum requirement. Individual graduate programs may establish higher GPA requirements.

Admissions

Graduate student applicants must meet admission requirements for both the Graduate College and the program to which they have applied. University of Iowa graduate admission requirements are published by the Graduate College and on the Graduate Admissions website.

Financial Support

Graduate students might be eligible for financial support. Several contingencies apply, including degree program and award type, satisfactory progress toward degree, satisfactory completion of all duties related to an appointment, and availability of funding. Graduate students should inquire directly with their program for more information about funding availability. The Graduate Student Employment Standards govern the employment relationship between the University of Iowa and all graduate teaching and research assistants in all matters except wages, which are covered by an existing collective bargaining agreement or the conditions of an applicable federal grant.

Admission

Admission to the School of Planning and Public Affairs requires an undergraduate degree and fulfillment of the minimum requirements of the Graduate College. For fall admission, prospective students should submit complete materials to graduate admissions by Jan. 15 if funding is requested. Funding for those who submit materials after these dates is considered only as funding permits. Applications for admission are accepted until July 15; April 15 for international students.

For spring admission, the deadline is Nov. 1 if funding is requested. Applications are accepted until Dec. 1.

To apply, follow the directions on the Graduate Admissions website. Applicants can apply online and upload all supporting materials. All students requesting funding must also complete and upload the Funding Application/Award Form.

Career Advancement

Today's planners find themselves in demand for such diverse jobs as sustainability coordinator and planner, environmental analyst/planner, land use planner, transportation planner, community development planner, zoning coordinator, water resources planner, community organizer, economic development planner, recycling coordinator, planning director, neighborhood planner, state legislative analyst, planning consultant, and nonprofit project manager or director.

Recent graduates have taken positions with city, metropolitan, and regional planning agencies; state and federal government; nonprofit organizations; and private consulting firms. They work in all geographic regions of the United States and in countries around the world.

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, visit MyUI.

Urban and Regional Planning, MS

Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		
45 s.h. of graduate level coursework must be completed; graduate transfer credits allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. [a]		
Students must earn a grade of B-minus or higher in all Core and Concentration Area courses and must maintain an overall Graduate College program GPA of at least 3.00; maximum of 8 s.h. of readings credit. [b]		
	Hours	**0**
First Year		
Any Semester		
URP:6335	Internship [c]	1-3
URP:6229	Practicum [d]	1-5
	Hours	**2-8**
Fall		
URP:6200	Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Policy	3
URP:6202	Land Use Planning: Law and Practice	3
URP:6203	The Making of Cities: Histories and Theories of Planning	3
URP:6205	Economics for Policy Analysis	3
URP:6208	Program Seminar	1
	Hours	**13**
Spring		
URP:6201	Data Science for Urban Analytics	3
URP:6225	Applied GIS for Planning and Policy Making	3
URP:6233	Public Finance and Budgeting	3
Concentration Area course [e]		3
	Hours	**12**
Second Year		
Fall		
URP:6209	Sustainable Communities Lab I [f]	3
URP:6258	Systems and Scenario Thinking	3
Concentration Area course [e]		3
	Hours	**9**
Spring		
URP:6210	Sustainable Communities Lab II [f]	3
Concentration Area course [e]		3
Elective course [g]		3
Elective course [g]		2
Exam: Master's Final Exam [h]		
	Hours	**11**
	Total Hours	**47-53**

a Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.

b Graduate College program GPA is comprised of all courses that are approved degree requirements. If a student takes more than the minimum required number of semester hours to complete the degree, but all courses taken are eligible to count toward the degree, those courses will be included in the Graduate College program GPA.

c Students are encouraged to complete an internship in a planning agency or related organization. To earn 2 s.h. of credit for the internship, students must submit a brief paper summarizing and evaluating their experience.

d An extended internship, consisting of at least five months of full-time employment in a planning-related organization, may qualify as a practicum. It carries 5 s.h. of credit and substitutes for the internship and the capstone courses.

e Students must complete at least 9 s.h. in one of the following concentration areas: housing, community, and economic development; land use and environmental planning; or transportation planning. See the General Catalog for lists of approved courses and work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate coursework and sequence.

f Capstone coursework; grade of B-minus or better required.

g Complete at least 5 s.h. of electives. See the General Catalog for list of approved courses and work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate coursework and sequence.

h If the oral examination is passed, then the written examination does not need to be taken.