

Urban and Regional Planning, M.S.

The M.S. 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 provide 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 26 full-time students and some part-time students are enrolled, and about 26 percent 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 Field Problems in Planning I and URP:6210 Field Problems in Planning 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 College of Engineering, the College of Law, the College of Public Health, the Department of Geographical and Sustainability Sciences, and the School of Social Work.

Requirements

The Master of Science program in urban and regional planning requires 50 s.h. of graduate credit. The 50 s.h. required to complete the degree must include a minimum of 38 s.h. in the School of Planning and Public Affairs. Students must earn a grade of B-minus or higher in all core and concentration area courses and must maintain an overall program g.p.a. 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 also must 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 M.S. with a major in urban and regional planning requires the following work.

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 development of 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 total of 24 s.h., including an advanced economic methods course (3 s.h.). 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 waiver of selected core courses on the basis of previous coursework.

Code	Title	Hours
All of these:		
URP:6200	Analytic Methods I	3
URP:6201	Analytic Methods II	3
URP:6202	Land Use Planning: Law and Practice	4
URP:6203	The Making of Cities: History 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	1
URP:6258	Systems and Scenario Thinking	3
Advanced Economic Methods		
And this course:		
URP:6233	Public Finance and Budgeting	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 five concentration areas: transportation planning, housing and community development, economic development, land use and environmental planning, and geographic information systems.

Students complete at least 9 s.h. of courses in their concentration area and 11 s.h. in additional elective coursework. Courses offered by other University departments and programs may supplement those offered by the School of Planning and Public Affairs.

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

Capstone Courses

Students complete the following two capstone courses, usually during the third and fourth semesters. Students who complete a practicum are exempt from this requirement.

Code	Title	Hours
URP:6209	Field Problems in Planning I	3
URP:6210	Field Problems in Planning II	3

Internship

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. Internships usually are paid staff positions and are completed during the summer between the first and second years or during the academic year.

Code	Title	Hours
This course:		
URP:6335	Internship	2

Practicum

An extended internship, consisting of at least five months of full-time employment in a planning-related organization, may qualify as a practicum. A practicum generally takes place during summer after the first year and into the fall semester of the second year. It carries 5 s.h. of credit and substitutes for the internship and the capstone courses.

Code	Title	Hours
This course:		
URP:6229	Practicum	1-5

Thesis

A thesis is not required, although students may petition to write one. Students may register for up to 6 s.h. of thesis credit. In addition, they may take up to 8 s.h. of readings to develop a thesis topic and prepare a literature review.

Code	Title	Hours
This course:		
URP:6325	Thesis: Urban and Regional Planning	arr.

Final Exam

A final exam is required for all students. An oral and written examination constitutes the final exam for students who do not write a thesis. 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 M.S. 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/M.S.

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 M.S. in urban and regional planning may apply to a combined undergraduate degree/ M.S. graduate degree program. The Undergraduate to Graduate (U2G) program enables students to begin work on the M.S. degree 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.

Separate application to 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 Undergrad to Grad (U2G) on the Graduate College website.

Graduate Degrees/M.S.

See "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 are available.

- B.A. or B.S. in environmental policy and planning/M.S.; see Environmental Policy and Planning (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) in the Catalog.
- B.S.E. in civil engineering/M.S.; see the Bachelor of Science in Engineering and the B.S.E. in civil engineering (College of Engineering) in the Catalog.
- J.D./M.S.; see Juris Doctor, J.D. (College of Law) in the Catalog.
- M.S. in civil and environmental engineering with a sustainable water development subprogram/M.S.; see the M.S. in civil and environmental engineering (College of Engineering) in the Catalog.
- M.S. in occupational and environmental health/M.S.; see the M.S. in occupational and environmental health (College of Public Health) in the Catalog.
- M.S.W./M.S.; see the Master of Social Work, M.S.W. (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) 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 the two degree programs separately; they must be admitted to both programs before they may be admitted to the combined program. Contact the admissions coordinator at

the School of Planning and Public Affairs for more information about combined degree programs.

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 January 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 November 1 if funding is requested. Applications are accepted until December 1.

To apply, follow the directions on the Graduate Admissions website. Applicants can apply online and upload all supporting materials. International students without a U.S. degree or whose first language is not English must submit official Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or Duolingo English Test (DET) scores before admission and then funding decisions can be made. All students requesting funding also must complete and upload the Funding Application/Award Form.

Financial Support

Students in the School of Planning and Public Affairs receive financial support from the program primarily from teaching or research assistantships and from contract or grant-funded assistantships. Assistantships typically require 13-20 hours of work per week under the direction of a faculty member and are accompanied by a tuition scholarship.

Students initiate applications for financial support, and awards are made on the basis of merit, experience, and interests. Assistantships may be renewed for a total of up to four semesters.

Fellowships are offered to new students and are awarded as a flat sum of money. There is no work requirement for a fellowship.

Students applying for financial support are encouraged to submit application materials and requests for support by January 15. Students who apply after that date are considered only as remaining funds permit.

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, see MyUI.

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Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		

50 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- or higher in all Core and Concentration Area courses and must maintain an overall program GPA of at least 3.00; maximum of 8 s.h. of readings credit.

	Hours	0
First Year		
Fall		
URP:6200	Analytic Methods I	3
URP:6202	Land Use Planning: Law and Practice	4
URP:6203	The Making of Cities: History and Theories of Planning	3
URP:6205	Economics for Policy Analysis	3
URP:6208	Program Seminar	1
	Hours	14
Spring		
URP:6201	Analytic Methods II	3
URP:6225	Applied GIS for Planning and Policy Making	1
URP:6233	Public Finance and Budgeting	3
	Concentration Area course ^b	3
	Elective course ^c	3
	Hours	13
Summer		
URP:6335	Internship ^d	2
	Hours	2
Second Year		
Fall		
URP:6209	Field Problems in Planning I ^e	3
URP:6258	Systems and Scenario Thinking	3
	Concentration Area course ^b	3
	Elective course ^c	3
	Hours	12
Spring		
URP:6210	Field Problems in Planning II ^e	3
	Concentration Area course ^b	3
	Elective course ^c	3
	Elective course ^c	2
	Final Exam ^f	
	Hours	11
	Total Hours	52

- 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 Students must complete at least 9 s.h. in one of the following concentration areas: Transportation Planning, Housing and Community Development, Economic Development, Land Use and Environmental Planning, or Geographic Information Systems. Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate coursework and sequence.
- c Complete at least 11 s.h. of electives. Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate coursework and sequence.
- d Typically done during the summer semester; credit can be taken during the summer, fall or spring. To earn 2 s.h. of credit for the internship, submit a brief paper summarizing and evaluating the experience.
- e Capstone coursework; grade of B- or better required.
- f If oral exam not passed, must pass written exam.