

Master's Thesis Description

Definition

A master's thesis within the Department of Landscape Architecture will be an original inquiry into a particular issue or question that advances the body of knowledge within the profession and is relevant to the department's mission of providing leadership in the design and stewardship of the environment. In general the thesis will demonstrate originality and pertinence in its conception, competency in its execution, and credibility in its justification.

The required manuscript will define a question or hypothesis, articulate a methodology, discuss results within the appropriate context and draw an appropriate conclusion. The manuscript demonstrates a competency in the student's ability to conduct independent research. The student is encouraged to explore design, case studies, historical analysis, critical theory, community engagement, etc. The study will employ methods of inquiry that represent the leading edge of the field.

Curriculum Structure

The thesis usually requires at least a year and half of commitment by the student. While flexible in its arrangement, the student should develop a concept and conduct a literature review either in an organized research in landscape architecture course or independent study during the student's second year. Courses 16:550:701, 16:550:702 are research driven courses offered during the fall and spring semesters of the student's final year, with credit by arrangement. The number of credits offered are commensurate with the effort required and at the discretion of the thesis committee chair.

Often the methodologies employed in a thesis such as surveys, interviews and field experiments are time dependent and can have seasonal restrictions. The additional (3-6) credits required for a thesis reflects an expectation that the student will need significant time and effort in order to achieve an acceptable depth of analysis.

Format

The manuscript must meet the requirements of the Thesis and Dissertation Style Guide, for the New Brunswick Graduate School (<http://gsnb.rutgers.edu/academics/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation-style-guide>). While there is a tendency throughout the Graduate School to organize the chapters of a thesis into publishable papers, it is not a requirement. There is no required length for the manuscript as it will be evaluated on the depth of its content. The format of the project is flexible and determined by the student and the committee, however the final product or the essential elements within it must adhere to the Department of Landscape Architecture Archiving Procedure.

Advisory Committee

The chair of the advisory committee, chosen by the student from the graduate faculty of the Department of Landscape Architecture, is one whose own research is congruous with that of the student's interest. Committee members are chosen by the student and the chair as they bring a requisite level of expertise to the thesis. Two members (including the chair) must be from the Department of Landscape Architecture. An additional member(s) from the New Brunswick Graduate School is encouraged. External member(s) can be from another university or an accomplished practitioner not within academia. It is also required that a committee consist of no less than three members.

Defense

The student is expected to defend their thesis in a forum of at least 45 minutes, which is open to the public. The student should allow for at least 15 minutes of questions from the public after the presentation. The committee will then discuss the thesis in detail after the presentation in a private setting. At this time any final editorial comments and the final discussion will be determined by the committee. Thesis grades are not letter grades but satisfactory/unsatisfactory.