

Ph.D. Program Handbook

Ph.D. in Regional Planning

Department of Urban and Regional Planning
College of Fine and Applied Arts
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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Program Contacts

The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for the overall direction of the program, including approval of course credits and waivers. The Admissions and Records Office is responsible for tracking student progress and milestones, assisting with petitions, and also serves as the department's thesis format reviewer. For questions about the program, please contact:

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PhD in Regional Planning overview

The Ph.D. Program in Regional Planning educates scholars for positions in leading universities and research institutions. It builds a strong foundation of planning and social science theories, advanced research methods and design, and expertise in a chosen specialization. Our expectation is for students to complete their Ph.D. degree within four years. The first two years are devoted to coursework, a qualifying examination to demonstrate readiness for doctoral research, and preparation to defend a dissertation proposal. The third and fourth years are dedicated to the dissertation research and journal publication. Some students might need a fifth year (with approval and the financial support of their adviser) to build skills that require more coursework, the complexity of the dissertation research, an uncertain path to the dissertation topic, or an irresistible opportunity to teach a course or continue a productive research project.

Diverse interests draw us into Regional Planning, but we share the quest for knowledge that creates better places — better neighborhoods, communities, cities, and regions. Most of us fit under one or more of the program's historical research umbrellas: environment and land use, community development, and regional development. Our research modes and theoretical frameworks vary. For example, some of us use theories from economics and the latest spatial econometric techniques, while others use recent advances in social network theory and ethnographic research methods. We learn from our diversity, cross disciplinary boundaries together, and help each other do more impactful research. Recent dissertation titles and job placement of our graduates illustrate the intellectual breadth and multi-disciplinary strength of Regional Planning at Illinois.

You can find information about the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, admissions criteria, how to apply, admission FAQs, financial support, and campus visit on our website. You can also learn about current students on our department website. Doctoral students work very closely with their advisers and other faculty members. The Director of Graduate Studies provides administrative oversight and intellectual leadership to the Regional Planning Ph.D. Program.

Expectations of PhD in Regional Planning Students

An ideal candidate for a position in academia must demonstrate research imagination, scholarship, the ability to plan, conduct, and present research, and the ability to teach effectively. A top candidate for an advanced research position must demonstrate intellectual curiosity and creativity and ability to formulate a research plan, draw inferences, and make strategic decisions from those inferences. There are no specific indicators of these abilities, but some of the following types of accomplishments tend to be good indicators of adequate progress and success in meeting program expectations:

- Academic performance well above the minimum required performance (see [Requirements Summary](#) and [Probation Policy](#));
- Completion of courses that help acquire research tools, competency in a second specialization, or greater depth of understanding;
- Active participation in seminars and workshops as both discussant and presenter;
- Teaching experience and training in programs such as the campus Graduate Teacher Certificate program;
- Expeditionary completion of the requirements for the degree ([Milestones](#));
- Submission and publication of papers in refereed journals and books;
- Preparation, alone or in conjunction with a member of the faculty, of a proposal for research support;
- Presentation of research results in workshops, seminars, and regional, national, and international meetings;
- Work experience in appropriate organizations;
- Participation in workshops designed to support the intellectual development and progress of doctoral students and emerging scholars;
- External or campus recognition, such as teaching excellence, external fellowships, best paper or presentation awards, and outstanding thesis or dissertation prizes.

Summary of program requirements

Credit Hours: 64 to 96 hours. The University requires at least 96 hours of graduate credit without a master's degree. Students with a master's degree must take at least 64 hours of graduate credit, no more than 32 of which can be thesis or independent study hours. The Plan of Study Committee may require a student to take more than 32 hours of coursework to meet prerequisites or prepare for research. Graduate credit is given only for courses at the 400-level (unless the Catalog or Course Schedule specifies undergraduate credit only) and 500-level.

Planning Theory: 4 to 8 hours. UP 501 Planning History and Theory (4 hours), and UP 580 Advanced Planning Theory (4 hours) are required. UP 501 is a prerequisite to UP 580. Students who have taken a similar course in a Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) approved program can petition for exemption from UP 501. All other students must take UP 501 prior to UP 580.

Research Methods: 12 approved hours of research methods courses that prepare the student for their intended dissertation research and a research career in their proposed areas of specialization.

Research Design: 4 hours. This requirement is typically met by UP 589 Research Design and Methods, but a student may substitute a course from an approved list if the Plan of Study Committee agrees.

Area of Specialization: 8 hours. A minimum of 8 hours at the 400 or 500 level defines a specialization (defined by student and approved by Plan of Study Committee).

Other: The student should select courses in theoretical frameworks, complementary fields, planning methods, or other areas as needed to prepare themselves for advanced research and teaching.

Initial advising meeting: The Program requires an initial adviser-advisee meeting no later than week 1 or 2 of the first semester to go over mutual expectations, work habits, communication means, program milestones, and agree on topic and outcome of the first semester Independent Study. The expectation setting that occurs during this (and future) conversations should be a two-way process.

Annual meetings with adviser and committee as well as the (self-)evaluation: The Program requires students and advisers to participate in the annual student evaluation process and to close the academic year with a meeting between the student and their committee (SoP, Qualifying, or Dissertation committee); and to start each Fall semester with a meeting between the Adviser and student. For incoming students, this would be the time to develop an initial version of the plan of study. For ongoing students, the meeting is an opportunity to update the plan of study, evaluate current performance and adjust expectations accordingly.

First semester Independent Study: The Program requires that first semester doctoral students sign up for a 4 credit hour Independent Study with their adviser. In this Independent Study, they will produce the draft Plan of Study and an annotated bibliography. A typical aim of this annotated bibliography is to review the literature in the planning subfield in which advisee's research interest lies in.

DSUP Seminars: The Program requires participation in DSUP seminars for students in the first two years of their studies and highly recommends participation for years beyond that. In addition to the attendance requirement, second year students are required to make at least one presentation in the academic year. For details of seminar participation requirement see [DSUP Seminars](#).

Plan of Study: A written document that outlines how the student intends to meet doctoral course requirements; describes the expected focus of the dissertation; identifies topics and strategies for writing the two annotated bibliographies; lays out a schedule for the completion of course work, annotated bibliographies, qualifying exam or qualifying paper, and dissertation proposal; and explains how the course work and other elements of doctoral training will support the student's long-term research and career aspirations.

Annotated Bibliographies: You are required to develop two annotated bibliographies that demonstrate mastery of the existing schools of thought and prominent conversations in two distinct bodies of literature of critical importance to your doctoral research interest. The purpose of these Annotated Bibliographies is to identify the gaps and research opportunities in your field of interest.

Qualifying Examination: Students will participate in their qualifying exam after completing the required coursework and two annotated bibliographies. The Qualifying Examination should occur within three months after the end of the student's fourth semester. The qualifying exam tests a student's ability to integrate materials from the courses in theory, research methods and design, and the specialization and apply them to advanced research questions. The qualifying exam has a written and an oral component. The written component of the qualifying exam can be satisfied through a Qualifying Written Exam (QWE) where student responds to set questions posed by the examining committee or through a Qualifying Research Paper (QRP) where the student demonstrates capacity to integrate theory and appropriate methods to design, conduct, and communicate original scholarly research. The QWE or the QRP assesses whether a student is ready to participate in scholarly discussions and be invited to submit a dissertation proposal. You will work with your adviser to determine whether you will satisfy the qualifying examination requirement via a QWE or QRP.

Dissertation Proposal Defense/Preliminary Examination: The oral examination of the written dissertation research proposal. Students must complete all non-dissertation course and examination requirements and remove all excused and deferred grades (other than thesis courses) before the oral examination. The department expects most students to defend their dissertation proposal before the end of the fifth semester of study.

Dissertation Defense/Final Examination: The oral examination of the completed dissertation manuscript. Students must be registered for UP 599 Thesis Research in the semester of the examination and must deposit the final dissertation within deadlines established by the Graduate College.

Milestones to Completion of the Ph.D.

The following guidelines and limits reflect timely completion of the degree requirements under the 64-credit hour requirement for a Ph.D. candidate entering with a master's degree. Requests to extend one or more of the limits can be made to the Director of Graduate Study. Extension requests should be endorsed by your adviser, and include the reasons for the extension and an estimated timeline for completion.

Ph.D. Milestones	Normal Progress	Limit
Select Academic Adviser	Included in admission letter	End of 1st year
Complete Plan of Study document	End of 2nd Semester	Before beginning of 3rd semester
Plan of Study Committee Meeting	End of 2 nd Semester	Before beginning of 3 rd seemster
Complete required coursework (32 credit hours)	End of 3rd or 4th semester	End of 4th semester
Pass qualifying examination	End of 4th semester	End of 5 th semester
Defend dissertation proposal (preliminary examination)	Beginning or during 5th semester	End of 6 th semester
Defend dissertation (final examination)	End of 4th year	Within 5th or 6 th year as specified by the Graduate College
Deposit dissertation	Within 2 months of defense	Within 1 year of defense

For a more detailed breakdown of progress through the program milestones see below.

	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 5	S 6	S 7	S 8
Initial meeting with Adviser Adviser and advisee meet no later than week 1 or 2 of semester 1 to go over mutual expectations, work habits, communication means, program milestones as they understand from review of Handbook, and agree on topic and outcome of the Independent Study.								
Independent Study with advisor semester 1 IS on the main planning subfield in which advisee's research interest field.								
Select Plan of Study Committee First few weeks of semester 1 a second faculty member is invited to SoP								
Complete Plan of Study document Adviser-advisee meet to start SoP first two weeks of the semester 1 Draft SoP by end of semester 1 Complete and approve SoP latest by end of semester 2								
Identify potential bodies of lit for bibliography								
Complete required coursework (32 credit hours) Identify semesters and courses. To make a viable plan please note the two required PhD courses are only taught on alternate years; keep in mind the prerequisites, as well as fall or spring offerings for courses you plan to take. If you wish to invite a particular faculty (inside or outside DURP) to your committee, it makes sense to take a course with them before inviting them to your committee.								
Complete annotated bibliographies Beginning of Semester 3 complete first bibliography Beginning of semester 4 complete second bibliography End of semester 4 qualifying exam								
Complete QRP								
Pass qualifying examination								
Defend dissertation proposal (preliminary examination)								
Data gathering and dissertation writing								
Defend dissertation (final examination)								
Deposit dissertation								

Your adviser and plan of study committee

Faculty who may serve as your adviser

Faculty with zero percent or higher appointment in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning may serve as an adviser to the PhD students in Regional Planning. This includes the following:

- [Dustin Allred](#)
- [Lindsay Braun](#)
- [Colleen Chiu-Shee](#)
- [Marc Doussard](#)
- [Mary Edwards](#)
- [Andrew Greenlee](#)
- [Bumsoo Lee](#)
- [Faranak Miraftab](#)
- [Magdalena Novoa](#)
- [Sandy Dall'Erba](#)
- [Brian Deal](#)
- [Lynne Dearborn](#)
- [Ruby Mendenhall](#)
- [Shaowen Wang](#)
- [David Wilson](#)

The role of your Adviser

Your faculty adviser can help you select initial courses, prepare for qualifying examinations, develop a research project, submit research proposals, publish your research, hone your ideas until they become feasible dissertation questions, and understand Department and University requirements. Your adviser can also offer career planning advice and will serve on your Plan of Study Committee and assist you in completing your Plan of Study document.

You will rely on the guidance of this adviser to choose courses for the first semester of residence. By the end of the first semester you should have defined an area of specialization, identified appropriate theory and methods courses, selected or confirmed an adviser, enlisted other members for your Plan of Study Committee, and prepared a draft Plan.

You will be assigned a faculty adviser upon admission into the program. Most matches continue throughout a student's degree program and for years thereafter, but you or your adviser may request a change to serve your needs better. You might develop new interests and choose a dissertation topic in which the original adviser has no interest or expertise. Another faculty member may offer multi-year financial support on a new project if you agree to write your dissertation as part of the project. Your adviser may have other responsibilities that suggest someone else might serve you more attentively. Sometimes student and adviser find themselves incompatible in research style, skills, interests, or personalities. You are free to approach any other member of the Planning faculty about becoming your adviser, but you should be sensitive to responsibilities and commitments you may have incurred to an original adviser who provided you financial support and on-the-job training in anticipation of doing advanced research with you.

You are ultimately responsible for decisions affecting your academic progress. You should expect to rely largely on your own effort for your success. Admission into the graduate program does not convey an obligation on the part of advisers, the Department, or the University to ensure that you successfully complete the requirements for a graduate degree.

Orientation of New Faculty Advisers

The Director of Graduate Study is required to initiate and hold a meeting with first time advisers during the first month of new student joining the program to review the Handbook and student's milestones for program progress. The Director of Graduate Study is also required to initiate and meet with new recruited students during or prior to the first week of their first semester in the program for a more detailed program orientation.

Plan of Study Committee

The Plan of study (POS) committee consists of your adviser and one other faculty member, agreed upon by both the student and the adviser. The POS committee should be appointed during the first semester and serve to guide the student in the first year.

The Plan of Study Committee supports, monitors, and assesses progress toward the Ph.D. up to the formation of the Qualifying Committee. It consists of at least two faculty members (including the adviser), one of whom must have more than a zero-time appointment in the Department. The members of the Plan of Study Committee do not necessarily become members of the Qualifying Committee or Dissertation Committee.

The student prepares the Plan in consultation with the Plan of Study Committee, but also may consult other members of the Department faculty whose teaching and research are relevant to the student's plans as well as faculty members of other departments in which the student intends to do significant coursework. The student and Committee should explore alternative emphases and time schedules so that the completed Plan becomes a firm, feasible, considered way to satisfy all the degree requirements of the Department and University. The Plan also serves as the source document to identify appropriate faculty to participate in the Qualifying and Dissertation Committee.

Your Plan of Study

The Plan of Study makes clear the shared expectations of the student and adviser, draws on the insights of additional faculty members, includes agreed upon targets for successful completion of the Ph.D., and serves as a basis for encouraging and evaluating progress. No later than end of semester 1, the student and adviser (if possible with the additional faculty member of PoS committee) have completed a full draft of the PoS document.

The Plan of Study outlines how the student intends to meet doctoral course requirements; describes the expected focus of the dissertation; identifies topics and strategies for writing the two annotated bibliographies; lays out a schedule for the completion of course work, annotated bibliographies, qualifying exam or qualifying paper, and dissertation proposal; and explains how the course work and other elements of doctoral training will support the student's long-term research and career aspirations. PoS document should also draft the timeline for graduation, for publication and funding.

For students who intend to pursue an academic career, the POS must also include a publication and teaching plan. We are facing an increasingly competitive academic job market and publication as well as teaching experience are important consideration for a successful academic job placement. The adviser and the student must discuss and layout the timeline with specific progress expectation along the student's doctoral studies timeline such that by the time they participate in the academic job market they have minimum of one, preferably two or more, published or forthcoming article(s) in peer reviewed international journals. Similarly, POS needs to identify potential courses that the student can serve as a TA for and/or potentially serve as an instructor for. The adviser needs to communicate this potential teaching needs and suitability of the student with the Director of Graduate Study who will share the information with the department Head as a consideration in allocation of teaching responsibilities.

Preparing Your Plan of Study

The first page should identify the document as a proposed Plan of Study and include student's name, adviser's name, the name of the other Plan of Study Committee member(s), and the dates the plan was prepared, Plan of Study Conference occurred, and Plan of Study Committee approved the plan.

The completed Plan should contain the following elements:

1. **Goals After Receiving the Degree:** Briefly indicate the type of work you hope to do and the institutional setting in which you would prefer to do it. Identify the level of research or professional practice in which you hope to participate and the general methodology you expect to employ. Mention specific subjects and long-term research objectives.
2. **Focus of Proposed Doctoral Work:** Briefly indicate the focus of your doctoral work and the way in which it will serve your long-term interests. This section describes your plans and their underlying logic and coherence; it is not a course list. Organize your remarks by:
 - a. Area of specialization within planning and supporting areas or minor if any;
 - b. Expected dissertation subject or area;

- c. Anticipated research design and methods.
3. **Previous Preparation:** Indicate the extent to which previous work — academic or other — has already contributed to the achievement of the intentions explained above. This section should contain the prior degrees, courses, and/or work experiences that qualify you to undertake your plan.
 4. **Ph.D. Coursework:** List all the courses you propose to satisfy doctoral requirements, including courses you plan to take, those already taken at Illinois, and those you propose to transfer from another institution (if any). Your courses should prepare you to (a) do scholarly research in your chosen area of specialization, (b) undertake original dissertation research upon completion of the coursework, and (c) teach in a planning curriculum or in courses closely related to a planning curriculum. Plan your credit hours carefully to avoid taking unnecessary courses.

Arrange your completed and intended coursework in the following sections according to their requirements: To make a viable plan please note the two required PhD courses are only taught on alternate years; keep in mind the prerequisites, as well as fall or spring offerings for courses you plan to take. If you wish to invite a particular faculty (inside or outside DURP) to your committee, it makes sense to take a course with them before inviting them to your committee.

- Planning Theory
- Research Methods
- Research Design
- Area of Specialization
- Other

Below this initial listing, re-list the courses by semester, including current and future semesters' courses. List the course number, title, instructor, and any grades already earned. List other courses you propose to take that are not to be credited toward Ph.D. requirements but are related to your program (e.g., language courses, make-up prerequisites, or computer skills courses).

5. **Pre-Proposal Requirements:** Briefly describe tentative plans for completing program milestones: your two Annotated Bibliographies, your Qualifying Exam (qualifying research paper or qualifying exam), and Preliminary Exam (defending your dissertation proposal). Indicate how you will accomplish each of these goals, during which semester, related to what course, and on what topic.
6. **Dissertation Research:** Briefly, describe any tentative plans you have for a dissertation project.
7. **Research Skills:** Ideally, you are able to outline a plan to obtain research experience and build research skills beyond what you will learn in your research design and methods courses. The preferred approach is to work closely with one or more faculty members as a research assistant

on a formal research project. We realize this might not be an option for all students. Independent study courses provide another pathway.

8. **Teaching Skills and Experience:** Indicate potential courses that you can serve in as a TA and/or potentially serve as an instructor for. These would be identified not only based on department's curricular needs but also for those who wish to pursue an academic career as means to provide student with opportunities to improve your teaching repertoire, skills, and record as you prepare for job market. Ideally, you should specify at least one course in which you could participate as a teaching assistant or provide guest lectures.
9. **Publication Plan:** Indicate the potential themes and outlets for publishing your research during your doctoral studies. The research might have been conducted before the student joins PhD program, or might be the outcome of collaboration with the faculty adviser or other colleagues on a project during the course of student's doctoral studies. It is important that the student and the POS committee identify the potential papers and the outlets/ audience for each potential publication early on in student's doctoral studies and chart out a detailed step by step plan as to how that goal can be accomplished before graduation. Please see the [PUBLICATION](#) section in the Handbook for further discussion on authorship and relationship between publication and dissertation.
10. **Funding Sources and Plan:** student and advisor will identify the potential sources of funding that the student and faculty can apply for at different stages of advisee's doctoral study. They identify the source, the deadline, and the stage at which they can submit a funding application for that source.
11. **Other Concurrent Activity:** If you expect to follow any related or unrelated professional commitments while enrolled in the doctoral program, or expect to interrupt your participation in the program before completing it, indicate those plans.

Plan of Study Conference

A Plan of Study conference should take place during the second semester. The student provides the committee the draft Plan and meets with the committee to present and discuss the contents. The committee will judge the Plan of Study by considering three primary questions:

1. If this Plan is implemented, is there a high probability that the student will have mastered the chosen area of specialization and the appropriate theory and research methodology?
2. Is the student qualified to complete the Plan with distinction?
3. Are there sufficient departmental and university resources (e.g., course offerings) in the student's proposed area of specialization and supporting areas?

Three possible outcomes of the Plan of Study Conference are possible: (1) acceptance of the student's plan as presented, (2) acceptance of the student's plan as amended at the conference; or (3) rejection of the student's plan with or without recommendations for change. The Committee may specify key concepts it regards as part of the student's area(s) of specialization and for which the student will be responsible, whether or not those concepts are part of the student's formal coursework. The Committee may also develop a list of important books and articles in the area(s) of specialization for which the student is responsible. That list of concepts and literature may be

refined and extended as the student proceeds through his or her program and approaches the preliminary exam.

After the Plan of Study has been approved by the Committee, the adviser files an electronic copy with the Director of Graduate Studies. Changes in the student's proposed coursework may be made on the recommendation of the adviser if they are minor in the judgment of the adviser because they do not significantly affect the definition of the student's area of specialization or supporting areas or the competences the students can be expected to develop. Changes the student proposes that in the judgment of the adviser are major, in that they affect substantially the content or level of study, may require a revised Plan followed by review and approval by the Plan of Study Committee. Any approved major program changes should be reported by the adviser to the Director of Graduate Study in the form of an amendment to the original program prepared by the student, including a revised version of the course list and time schedule previously approved by the Plan of Study Committee.

Your Courses

The following sections are designed to help you and your adviser select theory, methods, and specialization courses to meet the PhD requirements and prepare you for a successful career of advanced research and teaching.

- Theory
- Methods
- Area of Specialization

Theory courses

Students enter the PhD program in Regional Planning with widely varied backgrounds in planning, social science, and environmental science theories. Some have master's degrees in planning or another profession; others in biology, economics, geography, or another discipline. Only one theory course is required of all students, UP 580 Advanced Planning Theory. Your adviser and the Director of Graduate Study are responsible for providing guidance to help you select additional theory courses, including ones specific to your area of specialization.

Theory courses give you helpful lenses for planning scholarship on how human settlements, regional systems, and planning and public policy work. They also enable you to participate in fruitful scholarly conversations within and across disciplines. Although not required to do so, you should consider building at least master's level competency in the core theories of at least one discipline. Also seek out theory courses that focus directly on the subject of your specialization. They might be sub-fields of disciplines, such as environmental economics, or they might draw on several disciplines, such as community studies theory.

As you plan your program of study with your adviser and other professors, you might want to keep in mind a requirement being met by students in another leading doctoral program: "demonstrate competence in a sub-field of another academic department at the level of performance expected of PhD students in that department. This may mean completing a two or three-course sequence in a designated sub-field (e.g. organizational behavior as a subfield of political science), completing a doctoral field examination in the department, or writing a paper or bibliographic review of literature."

Listed below are the required planning theory courses. Students with equivalent of UP501 from their master's program can consult with their adviser about bypassing this course.

Planning Theory	UP 501: Planning History & Theory (REQUIRED)	4 hours
	Offers students a survey of classic and contemporary theories of planning. Students will gain a deeper appreciation for the profession's roots as well as be introduced to some of "the theoretical tools" used to analyze planning. An important aspect of the course is intellectual dialogue through critical reading, informed discussion and writing assignments. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in Urban Planning or consent of instructor.	
	UP 580: Advanced Planning Theory (REQUIRED)	4 hours

Recent advances in planning, policy-making and decision-making theories as they relate to the efficient use of land and to the complex interrelationships among the major uses of land, i.e., housing, transportation, agriculture; specific applications vary annually, reflecting the students' dissertation research topics. Prerequisite: UP 501 or consent of instructor.

In addition to the two required planning theory courses, students usually find theory courses in their area of specialization and/or in graduate programs for disciplines that planning scholarship often draws on. These include theory courses in sociology, geography, anthropology, political science, psychology, education, law, communication, economics and agricultural economics, as well as engineering and environmental sciences.

Research methods and research design

You are required to take 4 credit hours of research design and 12 credit hours of research methods. These courses prepare you for the research methods and design component of the qualifying exam, but, far more importantly, they determine what kind of research you can do and what methods courses you can teach important factors when you compete for coveted faculty positions. Most research design courses focus on writing journal articles or research proposals, so you can learn by doing and make progress on your dissertation.

In addition to the required research design course listed below, students usually find methods courses in their area of specialization and/or in graduate programs for disciplines that planning scholarship often draws on. These include methods courses in sociology, geography, anthropology, political science, psychology, education, law, communication, economics and agricultural economics, as well as engineering. We encourage students to identify relevant methods courses offered on our campus in graduate programs for disciplines that planning scholarship often draws on. These include sociology, geography, anthropology, political science, psychology, education, law, communication, economics and agricultural economics, as well as engineering and environmental sciences. We encourage you to take at least one basic methods course in quantitative and one in qualitative areas. You can then build further on this exposure to develop depth in either or both methodologic approaches. Charting out the sequence from basic to advanced methods courses will be helpful. We provide couple of examples for possible sequences of quantitative and qualitative courses in the Appendix. While not a requirement, to expand your research and teaching repertoires, you may want to consider taking more credits than the minimum and develop research skills in more than one kind of method.

Research Design	UP 589: Research Design and Methods (REQUIRED)	4 hours
	Prepares students to embark on thesis research and independent grant proposals. Introduces the phases of research design process, including literature review, identification of the research problem, statement of research objectives and questions, establishment of the conceptual framework, and selection of methods, sampling strategies, measurements, and analyses that are most suitable to address the research questions. Provides an overview of the commonly used quantitative and qualitative research methods, e.g., survey, quasi-experiment, and case study. Guides students through the process of	

	writing and reviewing a research proposal and providing feedback to others. Prerequisite: Enrollment in a PhD program or consent of instructor.
Research Methods	See Appendix

Area of Specialization

You are required to take a minimum of 8 credit hours, consisting of approved hours in Urban and Regional Planning at the 400 or 500 level to define the specialization (could be from list of examples or defined by faculty advisers) and in theoretical frameworks, complementary fields, planning methods, or other courses that contribute to your capacity for advanced research and teaching in the specialization.

Your adviser, other faculty members in your specialization, and the Director of Graduate Study will guide you in selecting coherent sets of courses appropriate to your goals and dissertation plans. Students in the same area of specialization do not necessarily take the identical set of courses because they might prefer different theoretical frameworks, planning methods, or complementary fields.

DSUP Seminars

The Doctoral Seminar is an invaluable platform of intellectual development for PhD students in the Department of Urban & Regional Planning, and an effective medium in building a community of scholars. The seminars facilitate exchange of ideas and perspectives among doctoral students and faculty. It serves as a support system for doctoral students at different stages in their research and doctoral studies, and provides a shared space for students to present their research and to solicit critical, yet constructive, peer reviews and advice.

Recognizing the important role doctoral seminars play in the academic development of PhD students and in building a community of doctoral students, the Program requires participation in for students in the first two years of their studies and encourages participation for the years beyond that.

To meet this program requirement, 1st year students are required to attend doctoral seminars every semester and are required to present on their work in their first year in the program. In addition to the attendance requirement, 2nd year students are required to make at least one presentation in the academic year. Students in the 3rd, 4th and subsequent years of their doctoral studies are encouraged to attend the seminars and are encouraged to present once every year for at least two of the remaining years of their studies. If needed, these presentations can be delivered online. The Director of Graduate Studies will be present in the seminar and when they are not available, a student convener of the seminars will take attendance.

If a first or second year student experiences a time conflict—such as a conflict with a program-required class or a teaching assistantship responsibility—the said student can petition to postpone the seminar attendance requirement for that particular semester. That petition does not waive the requirement to attend doctoral seminars, but the petitioning student can fulfill the requirement by enrolling in four semesters of Doctoral Seminar before they graduate.

Your Qualifying Exam

Your Qualifying Process and Requirements

To qualify, you must satisfactorily complete two Annotated Bibliographies and pass a qualifying exam. The qualifying exam has a written and an oral component. The written component of the qualifying exam can be satisfied through a Qualifying Written Exam (QWE) or a Qualifying Research Paper (QRP). The oral and final component of the exam will be held not more than ten days after you submit the written component of the exam. You and your Plan of Study Committee must agree whether you will do the QWE or the QRP. It is, however, your Qualifying Committee that assesses your qualifying exam or qualifying papers. Below we describe each of the requirements for students to pass their Qualifying exam.

Annotated Bibliographies

All doctoral students need to successfully complete two Annotated Bibliographies in preparation for your qualifying examination. Through these Annotated Bibliographies, you demonstrate mastery of the existing schools of thought and prominent conversations in two distinct bodies of literature of critical importance to your doctoral research interest. The purpose of these Annotated Bibliographies is to identify the gaps in existing literature in your field of interest. Toward that goal, for each Annotated Bibliography, you compile key texts in the field and group them to identify the main conversations in the field as you see prominent to your research interest.

Annotations entries should not simply summarize the text, but should assess or evaluate the source, and reflect on the source's relationship to other texts in the subgroup. In addition to annotation entries for each text, your bibliography should include a brief discussion of the rationale for the grouping of the texts. Each subgroup should start with a narrative that lays out how the texts included in that subgroup fit in terms of their conceptual framework, methodological approach, political commitment, theoretical tradition, point of vantage etc. It is through identifying these fits that the gaps will be identified within and across subgroups. These subsections of your Annotated Bibliography should help you arrive at a closing statement where you explicitly identify the gaps in the key conversations you have reviewed in your field. Your closing statement should discuss questions, voices, points of vantage, are missing in the field emerges from the review of fits and gaps you have already identified in subgroups as shaping the prominent conversations in the field.

The Qualifying Committee will guide and assess your Annotated Bibliographies. Annotated bibliographies could be on theory or methods, but at least one should draw on literature within the broadly defined field of planning. Successful strategies for developing Annotated Bibliographies in preparation for your qualifying examination include building strength in your primary research area by covering literature in fields that are complementary to your dissertation field or by expanding your competence in a wider variety of fields by covering literature independent of the dissertation topic. There is no required length these bibliographies, but most should have at least 4 or 5 subgroups and under each group at least ten important texts.

Qualifying Written Exam (QWE)

The Qualifying Written Exam (QWE) tests your ability to integrate materials from your courses as well as your Annotated Bibliographies. QWE pose three questions for your response and elaboration: one in theory (not necessarily planning theory), another on research methods and design, and the third one in your area of specialization. It assesses whether you are ready to participate in scholarly discussions and should be invited to submit a dissertation proposal. You

should take the exam at the end of the semester in which you complete your required coursework or within three months thereafter.

The content of these exams and the courses you take to prepare for them depend on the type of research you intend to pursue. Prepared by members of your Qualifying Committee, the questions are integrated, sequenced, or otherwise edited by the chair of the committee with the review and consent of the other committee members. You have one week to complete written responses to the questions. The length of responses vary, but each response should be **approximately five single-spaced pages, plus cited references for each response**. Some students do one set of questions each day, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, picking up the questions at 8 AM and e-mailing their answers by 5 PM. Others start with all three exams and submit the complete response to by the following week (eg starting Monday 8am and ending Monday 8am the following week).

Qualifying Research Paper (QRP)

The Qualifying Research Paper builds and demonstrates your capacity to integrate theory and appropriate methods to design, conduct, and communicate original scholarly research. Your topic may originate in your master's thesis, gaps you identify through Annotated Bibliographies you develop, research problems you encounter as a research assistant, courses that require you to write research papers, or independent study courses, research you read, and ideas you have. Your Plan of Study Committee can offer guidance in defining and producing the qualifying paper, **but the analysis and writing must be your own, and in that it should be a single-authored paper**. You should submit your QRP at the end of the semester in which you complete your required coursework or within three months thereafter. The assessment and approval of the Qualifying Research Paper are by the Qualifying Committee. There is no required length or format for the QRP, but it should be similar in size to journal articles, which are typically about 6,000 to 8,000 words, and be typed in double space font 12. Your QRP should also list five keywords and include a clear and concise abstract of approximately 300 to 500 words in length. **This abstract should indicate (a) the scholarly conversation(s) your paper engages with and your contribution to that scholarship; (b) your methods and methodologic approach; and (c) your theoretical framework and/or theory(ies) you employ.**

As we encourage you to explore all possibilities for publication, we also encourage you to invest in QRP as a publication opportunity. We encourage you to revise your QRP based on your committee's feedback, submit it to journals for publication. If appropriate, you may further develop your QRP to constitute one of the essays or chapters of your dissertation, should it remain sole-authored by the student.

Oral Exam

An oral defense of the written component of your exam (be it Qualifying Research Paper or Qualifying Written Exam) should occur before your Qualifying Committee. The oral exam is an important component of your qualifying process. At this oral defense you need to demonstrate your ability to articulate your thoughts and reflect on your subject matter and disciplinary insights in your fields of expertise, engage in scholarly discussion and defend your written papers and statements.

This oral exam is a closed meeting (not open to the public) and should be held not more than ten days after completion of the written component of the exam. Your Qualifying Committee determines your qualification based on the two Annotated Bibliographies on file, the written component of the exam you have submitted, and the oral component of your exam. At the conclusion of the oral exam, the committee will vote whether you pass the qualifying requirements,

must be re-examined, or are not qualified to continue your doctoral studies and work toward a dissertation proposal. Any disagreement must be discussed by the committee members and a single result agreed upon. If the committee decides there is sufficient promise to allow a student a re-examination attempt, it may do so only once and must either pass or fail the student on the second attempt. Any reexamination must occur within six months of the student's initial attempt at the qualifying exam. The committee must then record its decision on the form [Certification of Candidacy for the Ph.D. in Regional Planning \(PDF\)](#), and submit the form to the Director of Graduate Study for signature and filing.

Public Presentation of your QRP

After the Qualifying Committee approves your Qualifying Research Paper, you will need to make a public presentation of your approved QRP organized through the department's doctoral seminars. This public presentation needs to be held at the earliest date possible within the semester you qualify or latest the semester that follows.

Archiving your Qualifying Material

To enhance future program review and consistency in expectations, once a student is qualified, the faculty adviser and the advisee are responsible for filing the final written components of the student's qualifying requirements with the Director of Graduate Study. This includes final copies of the two Annotated Bibliographies and final copy of the Qualifying Written Exam (questions and answers) OR the Qualifying Research Paper. The Director of Graduate Study and staff will upload these material to a closed access Box folder accessible to PhD program faculty only.

Your Qualifying Committee

In the second year, the student should form a Qualifying Committee. This Committee will pick up where the POS committee leaves off and continue to guide the student through their courses, with the purpose of ensuring that they have the appropriate qualifications to do independent research in their chosen field. The Qualifying Committee will guide and assess the student on their Annotated Bibliographies and the qualifying exam.

The Qualifying Committee must include your adviser and at least two other faculty members who in combination are knowledgeable about theory and methods critical to your research and your area of specialization. Faculty members from other departments may be included on the committee, but at least two of your committee members must be DURP faculty. Composition of the Qualifying committee may differ from the POS but it is often similar to the Preliminary Exam committees.

Your Dissertation Proposal, Preliminary Exam and Preliminary Exam committee

A successful dissertation reports original research on a significant problem or issue in planning. It demonstrates rigorous and thorough research and scholarly originality, and it presents significant advances in knowledge. Your quest for a dissertation question and appropriate research design does not wait until you have completed all other degree requirements. It begins with your letter of acceptance into the Ph.D. program and continues while you are taking courses, preparing for your qualifying examination, working as a research assistant, attending seminars and conferences, and collaborating with your adviser and other faculty members.

The Preliminary Examination is an oral defense of the written dissertation proposal. An acceptable dissertation proposal and successful defense should indicate beyond doubt that (1) you have a clear and concise research question appropriate to the Ph.D. in Regional Planning, (2) answering the question will produce a significant advance in knowledge, (3) the research design is feasible and adequate to deal with the research question, (4) you are familiar with the literature on the question and topic, and (5) you have the scholarly expertise and research skills to complete the research. There is no limit to the number of times a proposal can be defended and amended, other than the five to seven-year Graduate College limits to complete the degree. Your adviser or examination committee might require additional courses to help write or refine the proposal or develop analytical skills critical to the research.

You should defend your proposal within six months of passing your qualifying examination. You are eligible to do so after satisfying all pre-dissertation course requirements, including the removal of all excused and deferred grades other than for UP 599 Thesis Research. Your adviser fixes the exact date of your oral proposal defense/preliminary examination within these bounds. At this time, you should also complete the [Requirements Table \(PDF\)](#). This Table asks you to break down all of the courses you have taken into the categories of Planning Theory, Research Methods, Research Design, Specialization and Other. You will then have your adviser sign off on it before submitting it to the department.

Your examination committee administers your proposal defense. The committee should be formed as early as possible after your successful completion of the qualifying exam. Its members assist you with your research. To enrich your work, they should be chosen for their expertise in your research area and methods and provide diversity in viewpoint, methodology, or academic discipline.

The composition of your committee must meet several requirements. It has at least four voting members, of whom at least two must be faculty members in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, one of whom serves as your committee chair, and at least one must be a faculty member from outside the Department in a discipline appropriate for your dissertation topic. At least three committee members, including the chair, must be members of the Graduate Faculty and at least two must be tenured faculty. A person not on the faculty of the University of Illinois with expertise in the area of research may serve on this committee, but such external readers must be nominated in a statement that justifies the involvement and identifies the resources that will be used to defray the associated expenses, if any. Non-voting members, such as an external reader, a member of the faculty who is off campus, or others who can make a significant contribution to the research, may be

appointed. Requests for deviation from these membership requirements will be considered by the Director of Graduate Study, the Department Head, and, if required, the Graduate College.

At least one month prior to your proposed examination date, your adviser will request that the Director of Graduate Study formally recommend the members of the examination committee to the Dean of the Graduate College. This request also includes the nomination of a committee chair and a director of research (generally, but not necessarily, the chair of your committee) and the proposed date of the examination.

Prior to the oral examination, you complete a research proposal which typically includes (1) identification of the problem or issues, (2) review of the literature usually augmented in the dissertation itself, (3) the conceptual basis for the analysis, (4) description of the data on which the analysis will be based, (5) description of the research method, and (6) whatever preliminary analyses are necessary to demonstrate that the research is feasible. Some proposals consist of initial chapters of the dissertation that cover these materials; others are a freestanding research prospectus. Discuss the appropriate format for your proposal with your adviser and committee. Your research proposal should be distributed to the examination committee members at least one week prior to the proposed examination date.

The Graduate College requires a preliminary examination for completion of PhD studies. Examination format, committee membership requirement, committee appointment process, the role of the chair as well as procedure for examination approval are all governed by the Graduate College rules and regulations. Please closely observe those requirements as outlined by the [Graduate College website](#). In brief, all voting members should be present at the examination, physically or via videoconference. The Chair, the student, and at least one member of the committee must be physically present during the examination.

Your proposal defense and preliminary examination is open to the public. Your committee chair arranges for the time and place of your examination and announces your topic and the time and place via email to Planning faculty and graduate students at least ten days prior to the exam.

The deliberations of the committee are held in an executive session (without you present). The committee determines whether you shall advance to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree and whether your dissertation topic and research plan, as presented in your research proposal, are acceptable. The committee's decision must be unanimous and reported as pass, deferred decision, or fail. In cases of deferral, the committee specifies the activities required to earn a pass, including the possibility of reconvening the examination based on a revised proposal. A reconvened examination is scheduled within every six months until a pass or fail outcome is reached. Failure is final unless the committee records a failure and, at the same time, grants the student another opportunity to take the examination after completing additional course work, independent study, or research.

The committee chair communicates the decision in writing to the Director of Graduate Study and Head. The chair also is responsible for submitting the Certificate of Result to the Department as soon as possible after the examination. All voting members must sign this form with original signatures, but non-voting members (if any) do not sign the form. If a result is not communicated within six months of the exam date, the committee is dissolved.

Your Dissertation & Final Examination

After successfully completing the proposal defense and preliminary examination, you must register each regular academic term until you have met the 96-hour credit requirement. Thereafter, if you are away from campus, you need not register each semester until the term of your defense as defined below. You may take a maximum of 32 hours of UP 599 Thesis Research or as few as 8 hours if you want more flexibility in your course work.

Keep in close contact with your adviser and other individual committee members to discuss ideas and findings regularly. Do not wait until substantial portions of the work are completed; your committee members can help you avoid unnecessary and unproductive effort. Committee members should respond promptly with constructive criticism and assurances, when appropriate, that you are making good progress. Meet with the director of your dissertation research at least monthly (typically weekly) to discuss your research progress.

Your dissertation is an original piece of research of publishable quality that focuses on an important, currently unanswered question. The length and format of the dissertation are determined by agreement between the candidate and the committee. The dissertation format could be a monograph or could consist of three articles. The dissertation typically requires data collection, which may or may not involve field-based research, data analysis, and the final writing. You are expected to complete your dissertation within one year, but not more than two years, from the date of your oral proposal defense. An exception occurs if at the proposal defense you and your committee explicitly agreed on the additional time needed because of factors inherent in your research plan. One year after passing your proposal defense, and subsequently at six-month intervals, you must demonstrate to the full committee that you are making reasonable progress on your dissertation research.

You must successfully defend your dissertation in a final oral examination (the dissertation defense), which evaluates the quality of your dissertation research. Procedures for the final examination are governed by the [Graduate College](#) (Graduate College Handbook). You must register during the entire term in which you have your final dissertation examination. For this purpose only, term is defined as extending through the day prior to the first day of the following term. If more than five years elapse between the oral preliminary and final Ph.D. examinations, you must pass another preliminary examination.

Generally the same committee that administered the oral proposal defense examines the completed dissertation, but substitutions may be made. At least one month prior to the examination, the chair of your committee requests that the Director of Graduate Study recommend to the Dean of the Graduate College that the members of this committee be designated as the examining committee. The same membership requirements as for the oral proposal defense committee apply to the final examination committee. Examination format, committee membership requirement, committee appointment process, the role of the chair as well as procedure for examination approval are all governed by the Graduate College rules and regulations. Please closely observe those requirements as outlined by the [Graduate College website](#). All voting members should be present at the examination, physically or via electronic communication mediums. The Chair, the defending

student, and at least one member of the committee must be physically present during the examination.

The chair is responsible for scheduling the examination and notifying committee members. The examination is open to the public, and the chair of your committee arranges for the time and place of the examination to be announced to the department faculty and graduate students at least 10 days in advance of the exam via e-mail. You must submit a copy (typically an electronic copy) of your dissertation to your committee members at least two weeks prior to the examination.

Although the examination is open to the public, deliberations of the committee are held in an executive session. The committee must reach a unanimous decision of pass with a satisfactory thesis, pass pending revision of thesis, decision deferred, or fail. The chair is responsible for submitting the Certificate of Result of Final Examination with original signatures of all voting members to the Department. The decision is communicated by the Department to the Graduate College. If the committee cannot agree on a decision, the chair confers with the Director of Graduate Study and the Head.

After passing the final examination and having your dissertation approved, you must provide a copy (electronic version in PDF format accepted) for format review to the Department thesis reviewer at least one week before the dissertation is due to be deposited in the Graduate College. Graduate College guidelines for dissertation preparation and deposit are described at the Graduate College Thesis and Dissertation website (<https://grad.illinois.edu/thesis>). For program archives you must also provide to the Department the website link to the finalized version of your dissertation as accepted by the Graduate College.

Ph.D. degrees are awarded in May, August, and December. Students must apply to be on the degree list and deposit the dissertation by deadlines established by the Graduate College. These deadlines are available from the [Graduate College Academic Calendar](#) and the Department Office. If more than one year elapses between your final Ph.D. examination and depositing the dissertation with the Graduate College, the dissertation must be accompanied by a signed petition and a statement from the Head to the Dean of the Graduate College. The statement must address whether the dissertation being deposited is essentially the one that you defended and whether an award of the degree is appropriate under the circumstances.

Three-Article Dissertation Option:

With the consent of your PhD Committee a three-article option may be completed in lieu of the traditional single monograph dissertation. The three papers must have a common focus and be of a quality that your PhD Committee feels would be publishable in peer-reviewed journals in your field. While the three papers are thematically linked and maintain a common focus, the material covered in the papers should not significantly overlap, and each paper must contribute to new knowledge and be of a quality to be publishable in a peer reviewed journal. The three-article dissertation needs to conform to Graduate College requirements for standard monograph long dissertation format and there must be a separate chapter introducing the work and one summarizing the conclusions found in the work. You would still write and defend a dissertation proposal and sit the preliminary examination as detailed in the PhD program Handbook and the Graduate College. The three-article dissertation

option should be discussed (and decided upon) between the student and their PhD committee at the dissertation proposal defense or once you pass your Preliminary Exam.

Inclusion of Published Research in Dissertation

All three articles must be your original research, just as is the case with the conventional dissertation monograph. While you could have co-authored papers drawing on the same data as that used for your dissertation, your dissertation (independent of its format monograph or three-article) must be your original analysis and writing.

Should any of your three-essays be published or accepted for publication prior to you submitting your dissertation, make sure you comply with the Graduate College requirements for reprint copyright. See [Graduate College copy right info](#) for appropriate forms to be submitted with your dissertation.

Publication

As indicated earlier in preparing your POS for those who intend to pursue an academic career after obtaining their doctoral degree, publication is a strong element of their success in obtaining an academic position in the North American job market. As early as the first year in the program as part of the POS the student and the adviser shall develop a publication plan and assure that the student meets the progress expectation along the POS timeline. Ideally, the student will have two or more peer reviewed journal articles in-press or published at the time of their graduation.

While there is no single path successful publication, there are several ways that students can accomplish this goal while fulfilling their program milestones. We try to sketch a few paths, but first a cautionary word regarding your choice of publication outlet.

Be smart about where you publish. We advise that if you have primary data, your first publication venue is a peer reviewed journal, not a book chapter. You can, however, include in an edited volume versions of articles that you have already published with your primary data. Other outlets that are not peer reviewed such as blogs and editorials might be a wise choice if they are low effort and high visibility outlets that will draw broader audiences to your scholarship. Keep in mind these are not outlets to “come out with” your primary data which should be first targeted for peer reviewed journals.

To accomplish publication while meeting the program milestones, a general rule of thumb is that any graduate seminar you take needs to help you in some way either toward your milestone (eg annotated bibliography, QRP), or publication. Moreover, any conference presentation you make needs to get you a step closer to having a published paper. Your work should be out in the world, not gathering dust on the shelf, so to speak.

Independent studies and graduate seminars are both valuable opportunities to do extensive readings that will help you develop your annotated bibliographies and QRP. You may also wish to extend components of master’s thesis or other prior work.

Your QRP does not have to be published, but you should strive to make it publishable. By year three, you should have one paper based on your QRP, or your master’s thesis under review and by the end of that year this manuscript should be a complete publication.

Your path to publication may vary, particularly if your publication is based on collaborative research you conduct with your adviser or other faculty (a co-authored publication). We highly suggest you discuss authorship order and responsibilities frankly and early on in the collaboration.

If you choose a three-paper format for your dissertation, it is possible to send out the first paper under review while you are working on the second and third papers. It is also possible that you develop one of the chapters for your dissertation manuscript in a way that can be sent out prior to completion of the entire monograph. This allows you to have one publication from your dissertation before you submit your dissertation. In such cases please make sure you comply with the Graduate College requirements for reprint copyright. See Graduate College copy right info for appropriate forms to be submitted with your dissertation.

We advise frequent conversations with advisers and other faculty about potential themes, questions, topics and collaborations that can lead to publication. This might be a faculty you took a graduate seminar with within, outside the department, or with fellow PhD students.

We advise you to have a frank discussion of authorship between adviser and PhD students to be clear roles and responsibilities and order of authorship.

Please note that the PhD Dissertation needs to be an original work completed by a PhD student. Hence after a student has submitted their work toward satisfaction of a milestone (QRP or dissertation) they can further develop and publish it with others as a co-authored piece. However, the work that is submitted in partial satisfaction of the PhD degree needs to be student's original work, and not co-authored.

Graduate College Time Limits

The time by which a doctoral candidate is expected to complete all degree requirements varies depending on whether or not the student was accepted with a relevant master's degree.

- A doctoral candidate who must complete all three stages of the degree is expected to complete all degree requirements within seven years of first registering in the Graduate College.
- If the doctoral candidate has completed a master's degree at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign within the last three years, the student is expected to complete the Stage II and III requirements within five years of first registering in as a doctoral student.
- If three or more years passed between receipt of the master's degree at Urbana-Champaign and returning for the doctoral degree, the student is allowed six years to complete Stage II and III requirements.
- If the doctoral candidate has completed a master's degree from another university he or she is allowed six years to complete Stage II and III requirements.

With the written approval of the Graduate College, a department may set different time limits for completion.

Annual Self-Evaluation and Review

To monitor students' overall performance in the program each PhD student and her/his respective adviser will participate in an annual self-evaluation and review process. These annual evaluations reporting on students' activities and achievements reflect on all aspects of student's intellectual and academic performance. The annual reviews help monitor the overall performance and advancement of PhD students in the program and their ability to meet the program milestones.

At the end of each academic year following completion of self-evaluation by student and their adviser, a meeting needs to be held with your adviser and entire committee in place at that point. This meeting is to have a conversation on the state of student's progress not only in respect to their program milestones but also their publication plans. It is the responsibility of both the student and their faculty adviser to assure these annual meetings with the student and the committee takes place at the closing of each year.

Probation Policy for Performance Below Minimum Requirements

Graduate students must make satisfactory progress in all aspects of their program in order to continue pursuing a doctoral degree in Regional Planning. The factors that the Regional Planning PhD program uses to determine satisfactory academic progress include, but are not limited to, performance on qualifying, preliminary, and other examinations; performance in coursework; satisfactory and timely completion of program milestones; satisfactory progress in research; and overall graduate and/or program grade-point average (GPA). To determine satisfactory academic progress the Graduate College monitors overall graduate grade-point average (see [Graduate College Handbook](#) Academic Standing on page 23). The degree program (PhD in Regional Planning), however, monitors all aspects of academic progress through an annual self-evaluation and review process. Completion of courses specifically required for the degree (Planning Theory and Research Design) with a grade B minus or above and an overall GPA of 3.0 or above are requirements for minimum performance by students enrolled in the Regional Planning PhD program. Students who need to take UP 501 as a prerequisite to UP 580 must comply with the Degree Program's minimum performance criteria of obtaining B minus or above *in order to register for UP 580*. Failing to meet these minimum performance expectations can result in the program recommending to the Graduate College that the student be placed on probation or dismissed from the program (see [Graduate College Handbook](#) -Academic Standing-Probation on page 24).

Students placed under probation have one semester to improve their GPA. Independent study courses cannot be the basis for improved GPA during the student's probationary semester. Students who fail to earn the minimum grade for the required *or a prerequisite to the required* PhD courses in Planning Theory and Research Design might be able to retake those classes should their adviser make a strong justification based on other factors pertinent to the program's determination of satisfactory academic progress. Based on a successful petition to the graduate program committee, a student on probation might be granted permission to re-register in the required course. If so, the student's record will be updated with the most recent grade obtained for the course.