

# **Ph.D. Student Handbook**

## **2020-2021**

**Ph.D. Program in Architecture  
and Landscape Architecture**

**University of Illinois  
Urbana-Champaign**

This handbook serves as a guide that will help you navigate the doctoral programs in Architecture or Landscape Architecture. For general information pertaining to university policies for graduate students, see the following:

**<http://www.grad.uiuc.edu>** and follow the links for the *Graduate Student Handbook* [www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook](http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook)

For the Student Code (applying to all students), see: [www.studentcode.illinois.edu](http://www.studentcode.illinois.edu)

## **ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PH.D. PROGRAM**

The Ph.D. Program in Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a unique, jointly administered program in which students may choose to focus in either Architecture or Landscape Architecture or to work in both areas in a cross-disciplinary fashion. The School of Architecture and the Department of Landscape Architecture are two of the oldest and most distinguished professional degree programs of their kind in North America. Both benefit from internationally distinguished faculty and from one of the largest academic libraries in the world, with more than ten million volumes and state-of-the-art electronic access to archival and data base information, as well as access to major collections in nearby cities. The programs emphasize both interdisciplinary study and cross-disciplinary inquiry, drawing upon faculty and resources in a range of campus units as well as in the parent disciplines.

Admission requirements include the submission of an application with specific and detailed letter of intent for study in History and Theory, Social and Cultural Factors in Design, or Technology and Environment. This statement is essential for the assessment of interest and intention with respect to our concentrations and our program faculty. Admission requirements also include the submission of academic transcripts, three letters of recommendation from individuals with whom the applicant has studied, GRE exam results, and TOEFL results when required.

The annual deadline for receipt of applications for fall admission is January 1 (note that this date may vary). Successful applicants may receive a fellowship, assistantship, and/or tuition and fee waiver to help defray their expenses.

Inquiries should be addressed to:

Chair, Ph.D. Committee  
117 Temple Buell Hall  
611 Taft Drive  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Champaign, IL 61820

Or e-mail: [phd-la-arch@uiuc.edu](mailto:phd-la-arch@uiuc.edu); [Arch-Grad@illinois.edu](mailto:Arch-Grad@illinois.edu)

Additional information about the University, the College of Fine and Applied Arts, the School of Architecture, or the Department of Landscape Architecture, can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.faa.illinois.edu>

<http://www.landarch.illinois.edu>

<http://www.arch.illinois.edu>

<http://www.phd.faa.illinois.edu>

## OVERVIEW AND DEFINITION

The degree "Doctor of Philosophy" is conferred upon qualified candidates in recognition of the fulfillment of the program requirements, command of specific areas of specialization, and an original contribution to the discipline. The dissertation, the culminating requirement of the Ph.D. degree program, establishes the candidate's mastery of the research methods of his/her specialized field and his/her ability to address a major intellectual problem and arrive at a successful conclusion.

The Ph.D. degree in Landscape Architecture and in Architecture is appropriate for those seeking careers in research and teaching or in roles in government or professional consultation, all of which require depth in specialization and experience in research.

There are three options or areas of concentration within each degree offered by the Ph.D. program:

- History and Theory
- Environment and Technology
- Health and Wellbeing
- Urbanism

Applicants must identify which of the two academic units they are applying to (Architecture or Landscape Architecture), as well as which option they wish to pursue.

This *Ph.D. Student Handbook* is designed to introduce you to the programs, their requirements, faculty and university resources, and to help you navigate as you progress toward completion of your degree. Most of the information described in this document outlines the stages of the doctoral program in Landscape Architecture and Architecture:

1. Fulfilling the course and degree requirements
2. Taking the preliminary exams
3. Researching and writing the dissertation.

## OPTIONS/AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

### History and Theory

History and Theory are critical components of both Architecture and Landscape Architecture, informing practice and education in both fields. They also, however, stand alone as independent disciplines that contribute to our understanding of human history. At the University of Illinois, histories and theories of the built environment are regarded as essential contributions to scholarship in the humanities. As such, our students and faculty engage in dialogue with a wide range of historians and theoreticians across the campus, contributing spatial and visual modes of inquiry. The concerns of this option encompass the evolution of the entire cultural landscape, including the work of architects, landscape architects, and planners, but also with builders, craftspeople, and the ordinary men and women who create the human environment. The study of architectural and landscape history continually incorporates new research and methods derived from its essential links to other humanistic, social scientific, and technical

disciplines. Some students in the History and Theory concentration elect to pursue the Graduate Minor in Heritage Studies.

## **Health & Wellbeing**

Students focused on Health and Wellbeing investigate the relationship between the built environment and human mental and physical health across a range of environment types from housing to education to healthcare to public space. Students work at a range scales from the micro to the macro. Recent research includes health equity and neighborhoods; housing and health; health and aging; experience, perception and identity; Daylighting, circadian rhythm and sleep disorders, and supportive environments for vulnerable populations. Students employ quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches in their research.

## **Technology and Environment**

The option of Technology and Environment explores and studies the tools, methods and theories to improve our surroundings and building environments. This option presents a fertile field of research, which has a direct impact on design, management and construction, human comfort, economics, materials and structural systems. Technology encompasses several areas of study:

1. Building Science and Environmental Technology deals with the science and theory of thermal, luminous, acoustical environments as they relate to building design and human comfort, and environmental control systems
2. Ecological Design focuses on research related to the design of human-constructed environments as they relate to ecosystem health, human health and comfort, and restoration, remediation and preservation of earth's natural resources
3. Structures, Materials, and Construction deals with the strength and properties of materials, structures, construction methods and business practice and management

## **Information and Digital Technology deals with the development of new methodologies of communication and design management, integration and execution of design, methods of visualization, representation and experiencing of designed environments. Urbanism**

Urbanism students focus on the city and its complex spatial productions at the intersection of the social, political, cultural, technological and economic realms. Investigations may encompass the historical or contemporary city in the global north and/or global south and employ a mixed qualitative and quantitative methods approach.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Student**

According to the aims and intentions stated in your application for admission to the Ph.D. Program, you will carry out a program of advanced study of formal class work and individual investigation. You will specialize in individually tailored areas of study: one major field within Architecture or Landscape Architecture and one related minor field, usually from outside these two disciplines. Depending on your area of concentration and your faculty advisor, you may

also be required to fulfill foreign language and research methodology requirements. After that, you will take your preliminary exam, which qualifies you to be a "Ph.D. Candidate". Finally, you write your dissertation based on independent research and original investigation.

## **Faculty Advisor**

Upon entering the Ph.D. program, you will be assigned an individual faculty advisor. Your faculty advisor provides counsel on matters pertaining to course work and degree requirements. S/he also maintains a familiarity with your overall progress and each year approves your annual progress report to the Ph.D. Committee. It is your responsibility to maintain regular communication with your advisor, even during periods when you or your advisor is on leave from the University. It is also your responsibility to work on your dissertation research independently and make good progress in meeting all degree requirements. Note that your faculty advisor need not necessarily serve as the chair of your dissertation committee, but in most cases, your faculty advisor is also the chair of your dissertation committee. Any request for a change of advisor requires the approval of the old and new advisors and notification of the Ph.D. Committee Chair.

## **Ph.D. Committee**

The Ph.D. Committee, composed of faculty representing each of the study areas of the program, directs the Ph.D. program. The Committee is responsible for the following:

Defining the scope of the Ph.D. program and maintaining its overall standards, policies, and procedures

- Conducting annual year-end reviews of all Ph.D. students
- Examining petitions for withdrawal and readmission
- Reviewing applications for admission to the Ph.D. program
- Making recommendations for fellowships and tuition waivers
- General administration of the doctoral programs

## **A Community of Students**

Your fellow Ph.D. students will be one of your richest resources, and it is to your advantage to stay in contact with the other Ph.D. students. You can compare notes, exchange reading lists, discuss required coursework and test-taking strategies, support each other and commiserate. An office for the Ph.D. students in both programs is provided in the Architecture Building (note that the location may change in the future). We hope you will use the Ph.D. office as a place to congregate, create a community, discuss ideas, and create an on-campus "home" for yourselves. Keys to the office can be obtained from the Graduate Office of the School of Architecture (104 Temple Buell Hall).

## **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

### **Ph.D. in Architecture or in Landscape Architecture Admission Requirements**

Students may be admitted to the program in 1 of 4 ways as detailed below.

#### **1. Students entering the Program with a Bachelor's Degree**

Students may be admitted to the Ph.D. program with a bachelor's degree. In this case, the student is required to complete 96 hours of coursework comprising Stages I, II, III. (Please consult Ph.D. Handbook for further details)

#### **2. Students may enter the Program with a Master of Science or Master of Arts Degree**

Students may be admitted to the Ph.D. program having already completed a relevant Master of Science (M.S.) or Master of Arts (M.A.) degree, either at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign or at another institution. Using student transcripts, the Ph.D. committee, in consultation with prospective advisors in the student's area of focus, will determine during the admissions review whether the previously earned M.S. or M.A. degree meets the requirements for Stage I during the admissions review. If the M.S. or M.A. degree does meet the Stage I requirements, students must complete 64 hours of coursework comprising Stages II, III. If it is determined that the M.S. or M.A. degree does not meet the requirements for Stage I, then the student must complete 96 hours of coursework to complete Stages I, II, and III of the Ph.D. program.

#### **3. Students Entering the Program Directly from the Master of Science in Architectural Studies Program in the School of Architecture from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**

Students may be admitted to the Ph.D. program directly from the M.S. in Architectural Studies in the School of Architecture. In these cases, students must complete 64 hours of course work beyond the M.S. coursework in order to complete stages II and III of the Ph.D. program. Students may petition for entry to the Ph.D. program at the end of their second semester in the MS program. Such petitions will be taken up and evaluated by the Ph.D. Committee in consultation with the student's M.S. advisor. The authority to admit or not admit these students to the Ph.D. program rests with the Ph.D. Committee. Students admitted in these cases will be awarded the M.S. Degree provided they complete a terminal research project under the guidance of the primary M.S. advisor.

#### **4. Students Entering the Program with a Master of Architecture (M.ARCH) or Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA)**

Students may be admitted to the Ph.D. program after having completed a M. ARCH at the University of Illinois or another institution. In these cases, students may petition the Ph.D. Committee for advanced standing in Stage I, where up to 16 hours of the M.ARCH course work may satisfy elective hours required in Stage I. Coursework used to satisfy elective hours in Stage I must be focused on research topics, including research methods courses or advanced subject area coursework applicable to the prospective student's focus area in the Ph.D. Program. Design-based seminars and studios will not be considered.

#### **Notes:**

1. All course required work must be completed in accordance with the Graduate College requirements for residency and any other Graduate College requirements.
2. The Graduate College Handbook shall be the governing document in any case where a conflict exists between unit documents and the Graduate College Handbook

## CURRICULUM

This section of the Handbook outlines general requirements for the doctoral degree. For more specific requirements that pertain to each area of concentration, please see the relevant sections that follow.

Four areas of focus are offered:

- History and Theory
- Environment and Technology
- Health and Wellbeing
- Urbanism

A minimum of **96 hours of graduate work** must be completed with a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (on a scale where A=4.0) to receive the Ph.D. Of these 96 total hours, a minimum of 64 hours must be earned while in residence. The 32 hours requirements of coursework will vary as explained in the previous section "Admission Requirements". These 64 hours will typically consist of 32 hours of course work and 32 hours of dissertation research. These are graduate-level courses taken for a grade. Except in the case where the course is *only* offered on a credit/no credit basis, courses must be taken for a grade to fulfill the requirements for the doctorate. For more information on credit and residence requirements, please consult the Graduate College Handbook ([www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook](http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook)).

The curriculum for each option is broken into three stages consisting of core courses, electives, and the dissertation.

All students are required to take two semesters of Arch/LA 589. This is a one-credit, credit/no credit, introductory seminar aimed at students in their first and second years of the program. All options require 32 hours of elective coursework, of which at least 8 hours must be courses outside of Landscape Architecture and Architecture. Unless permission is obtained from the PhD Chair, no more than 12 hours may be taken at the 400 level. After completion of the course work for stages one and two, students are required to pass a preliminary exam. The final stage is dissertation work, which will consist of a minimum of 32 hours (registered as Arch 599 or LA 599, pass/fail only).

*Each student's curriculum is tailored to his/her individual needs and is determined in close consultation with and under the approval of the primary faculty advisor.*

### Stage One

Each option begins with a foundations or methodology course(s) that introduces the research methods of that discipline. Additional core courses provide grounding in the basic issues, theories, concepts, and methods of the different options.

Typically, Social and Cultural Factors students will take courses on behavioral/design research approaches, a course on cultural issues in design, an appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative methods course, and a course on historical and contemporary cultural landscapes.

History and Theory students will typically take courses in the history of cultural landscapes, buildings, and cities, as well as more specialized history offerings dependent upon their program



goals. Theory oriented courses include specific architectural or landscape design theory seminars and urban design theory.

Technology and Environment students will take courses in any number of areas including, but not limited to, building science, environmental technology, ecological design, structures, materials, construction methods, business practice and management, and information and digital technology.

Course requirements may vary depending on the area of student's focus. Generally, students are required to take a quantitative course (such as Arch 563) and a qualitative course (such as LA 470 or LA 505). Students are also highly encouraged to take as many statistics courses as needed according to their research focus.

All students in the History and Theory option are required to have a high-level reading proficiency in one foreign language, to be determined by the student's advisor. Depending on the areas of concentration, proficiency in additional languages may be required by the advisor. All students in the History and Theory option are required to take LA 505 (Methods and Approaches in Landscape and Architectural History). Additional courses in Methodology or Theory may be required by a student's advisor, as deemed appropriate, such as LA 501, LA 506, or Arch 577.

These language and statistics course requirements and proficiency vary by focus area. Prospective students are encouraged to inquire with the Chair of the PhD Committee as to these requirements for their area of study.

## **Stage Two**

Each student will choose his or her elective courses, in consultation with his/her faculty advisor, to develop an individual specialization or minor field within the option. A minimum of 8 hours must be from departments other than the home department. All but 12 hours must be from courses above the 400 level (unless approved by the PhD Chair). The University of Illinois offers a broad range of resources that make the elective options strong and numerous. The program faculty has identified potential elective courses from a variety of University departments including Geography, Psychology, Educational Psychology, Sociology, History, Art History, Anthropology, Linguistics, Philosophy, Theatre, Leisure Studies, Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, Material Science, Computer Science and Urban and Regional Planning. This is just a partial list; courses from additional units may be added as necessary and contingent on the approval of the student's faculty advisor.

### *Outside Fields*

The purpose of the outside field requirement is to insure the correlation of knowledge and methods of inquiry from one field relating to but outside of the major (the area of concentration). Outside fields should be selected that will broaden knowledge, expand methodological skills, and provide new insights for the major field of study. The subject must be in a field outside the home department. *The proposed outside field must not duplicate or substantially overlap the major field or work performed to fulfill requirements for language or research methods.*

As you begin your program, discuss your outside field with your faculty advisor and define those subjects most appropriate to your major field of research. Begin basic coursework in your intended outside field(s) as soon as possible and identify a faculty member in an appropriate department who is expert in the outside field and may potentially act as a dissertation committee member.

Consistent with the requirements described above, you, your faculty advisor, and this outside field faculty member may develop the objectives, content, means for fulfilling, and method for demonstrating competence in the outside field. You and your advisor should agree upon the most relevant courses to support your outside field study. Ideally, your course work will consist primarily of regular established courses. Reading courses may also be included as necessary. Note also that some departments have prescribed programs and procedures for frequently selected “minor” subjects, in which case those procedures must normally be followed.

Fulfilling of your outside field requirement implies the development of master's-level competence in both fields, that is, a reasonable knowledge of the theory, research methods, literature and current issues.

Stage Two is completed when all course and language requirements have been met, and a preliminary examination passed.

#### *Foreign Language Requirement (Required for all students in the History/Theory option)*

You may satisfy the language requirement with any language in which you will do primary research. This choice must be approved by the primary advisor. Some language requirements may be fulfilled by either taking a University proficiency exam or completing approved University language courses that are designed to demonstrate graduate-level competence. Courses must be passed with a letter grade of “B” or better.

#### *Plan of Study and Year-End Review*

At the beginning of the second semester of study, the student should submit a plan of study that charts how requirements will be met and which courses will be taken and according to what sequence. At the end of each academic year, the student must submit a year-end review which is a written summary of academic progress to be evaluated by the advisor and the Ph.D. Committee. The faculty advisor will review the statement and prepare an independent evaluation of progress, consulting the student in this process. The Committee reviews the plan of study, year-end reviews, and grades earned during that year; the student will be notified if the committee judges that there are any difficulties or concerns. Once the student has advanced to candidacy, the purpose of the year-end review is to obtain a progress report on the dissertation. The Plan of Study and End-Year review forms will be available either through the Ph.D. Chair or the program web site. *Failure to submit an end-of-year review may result in probation, suspension, or the Committee's refusal to readmit you after an absence from the program.*

#### *The Preliminary Examination*

The Preliminary Examination tests the student's competence in the theoretical and methodological subjects of the student's chosen areas of concentration (major and outside fields). The purpose of this examination is to appraise the ability to synthesize facts, techniques, and ideas as evidence of preparation for pursuing independent investigation.

The preliminary examination consists of a written exam followed by a comprehensive oral examination before the preliminary examination committee. It is administered by a committee of four faculty members. These include the dissertation committee chair, a faculty member from an outside field/department (see Outside Fields above), and two additional faculty members with whom ideally the student has closely worked and from whom the student has taken courses. At least two of the exam committee members must be from the student's home department. All of the examiners must be members of the University's Graduate Faculty. In rare cases, an examiner from outside the university may be permitted, subject to the approval of the dissertation committee chair and the Ph.D. Program Chair. While in most cases, the members of the preliminary examination committee will be the same as the members of the

dissertation committee, a new committee can be convened (**as per Grad College Handbook chapter vi, section 04**).

For consistency, all doctoral prelims in the School of Architecture and Department of Landscape Architecture will adhere to the following format.

1. The dissertation proposal must have been read and provisionally accepted by the members of the committee as a prerequisite to setting the exam date.
2. Approximately three weeks prior to the examination date, the Committee Chair (with assistance from the unit's graduate records officer) will file the form with the Graduate College requesting constitution of the committee. The Committee Chair convenes the committee, conducts the examination, maintains the schedule, and recognizes committee members for questions.
3. The examination in the major field will consist of a five-day take-home exam (the period of time defined as five consecutive 24-hour periods (e.g. 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Saturday, or noon Wednesday to noon Monday). The minor field exam may be taken separately but should take place within a few weeks of the major field exam. The minor field exam consists of a one-day (24-hour) take-home exam. The oral portion of the preliminary exam must include a presentation of the dissertation proposal. The content and format of the examination should be agreed upon by the preliminary examination committee at the time of the application for the preliminary examination, and the agreement must be communicated in writing to the student. All parts of the preliminary examination should be completed within a two to three-week time frame.
4. The preliminary exam is typically held in the semester immediately following the completion of coursework. Coursework is typically completed at the end of the second year or beginning of the third year of study.

Once the student has passed the preliminary exam and is recognized by the Graduate College as having done so, the student becomes a "Ph.D. Candidate." If, however, the committee administering the qualifying examination finds the student's performance unsatisfactory, they may recommend that another opportunity for examination be allowed or that the student be dropped from the program. Ordinarily, three months must elapse before a second examination is given, and the committee must be the same as for the original examination unless approved by the Ph.D. Chair for extraordinary circumstances. A third exam is not permitted under any circumstances.

### *Selecting the Preliminary Examination Committee*

The preliminary exam is administered by a committee of four faculty members appointed by the Dean of the Graduate College on recommendation from the advisor.

Preliminary examination committees must also fulfill the following requirements:

- The committee must have a minimum of four members, the chair and the majority of which should be from the Department of Architecture/Landscape Architecture. The chair of the preliminary examination committee generally also serves as the dissertation committee chair.
- Committee members should be members of the U of I Graduate College (that is, regular faculty with appointments as Professor, Associate Professor, or Assistant Professor). Members of Ph.D. preliminary exam and dissertation committees must be part of the

University's Graduate faculty and it is expected that they will themselves hold the doctorate OR possess equivalent peer-reviewed research credentials (e.g., published academic books) in subjects appropriate to the exam and dissertation.

- Members of the professional community or outside research organizations may be included as an additional (fifth) member of the examination committee but may not substitute for Graduate College faculty. Any additional members (beyond the required four) must be approved by the dissertation advisor and the Graduate College.
- At least one member of the committee must be from outside of the home department. The "outside" member must always be a member of the U of I Graduate College.

When the required coursework for the degree has been completed, the student enrolls in the dissertation preparation course (Arch 599 or LA 599) under the supervision of the advisor or the proposed chair of the examination committee while preparing for the preliminary examination. This course allows the student to be fully registered during the semester of preparation for the exam and/or during the semester that the exam is taken. This course is taken on a credit/no credit basis.

### *Application for the Preliminary Examination:*

#### *1. Getting Departmental and Graduate Division Approval*

To be eligible for the preliminary examination, the student must:

- Complete at least one year in residence as a doctoral student
- Be registered during the semester in which the exam is taken
- Have not less than a B average in all work undertaken in graduate standing
- Have no Incomplete grades outstanding on the transcript
- Complete all degree coursework, outside field, and the foreign language and methodology requirements
- Submit and receive committee approval for the dissertation proposal before setting the exam date

#### *2. Setting the Preliminary Examination Date and Questions*

Once the dates for the preliminary exam are established, the preliminary examination committee chair, in consultation with the other members of the committee, will formulate the examination questions. The student will also submit a copy of the dissertation proposal to each member of the committee. Generally, at least a week should elapse between the completion of the written portion and the date of the oral examination to give the committee ample time to read the results. See the Graduate College Handbook ([www.grad.uiuc.edu/gradhandbook](http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/gradhandbook)) for more information on preliminary exams and committees.

### *Human Subjects Protocol*

If the dissertation will involve human subjects in any way (including such interaction as interviews or questionnaires), the research plans must be reviewed and approved by the Campus Committee for the Protection of Human subjects. This approval must be obtained

**BEFORE THE RESEARCH IS BEGUN.**

*Federal law and University policy require that all research, on or off campus, involving human subjects **in any way** conducted by graduate students in pursuit of an advanced degree must be approved or exempted by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS). Approval must be gained **before** the research is begun. Research involving human subjects conducted without the approval of CPHS is invalid and the degree will not be awarded.*

Only CPHS can determine whether your research is eligible for exemption or will require a full review. Each student must be granted individual approval by CPHS. To ensure compliance with federal law and University policy, please contact the Graduate College. Their staff will be glad to provide you with a copy of its Guidelines and advise you on writing a research protocol for the Committee's review.

For more information, please consult the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects:

<https://oprs.research.illinois.edu/about-oprs-irb>  
<https://oprs.research.illinois.edu/forms-templates>

### **Stage Three: Dissertation Work**

The Doctor of Philosophy degree is the highest academic degree granted by American universities. It is awarded to those who have demonstrated mastery of the field and successfully completed and defended a dissertation. The degree is a clear recognition of the candidate's ability to complete a substantial piece of research work, to formally present the results of this work, and to appreciate its significance in the general field. The dissertation embodies the results of original and independent research, and should represent a meaningful contribution to the field.

Students are encouraged to select a topic that can be carried out in two or three years and to observe the limitation on normative time set by the Graduate College. According to the Graduate College, all requirements for the degree must be met within seven calendar years of first registration. If the student enters the program with a Master's degree, then all requirements must be met *within six years*.

A minimum of 32 hours of dissertation work (599 registration) must be completed to fulfill the degree requirements. This stage begins with development and presentation of a dissertation proposal at the time of the preliminary exam. The dissertation proposal presentation serves to insure that the student has chosen a topic that is reasonable, that hypotheses are adequately formed, that research methods are appropriate, that the resources for completion of the research are available, and that the student is sufficiently prepared to carry out the research. After writing the dissertation, each student must defend his or her dissertation in an oral examination called the final exam or defense.

#### ***Definition: The Nature of a Dissertation***

The dissertation research is the culmination of a period of intellectual growth and directed training; the dissertation is the manifestation of the knowledge garnered and the skills and techniques inculcated.

There is a consensus across disciplines that a doctoral dissertation must fulfill the following general requirements:

- A dissertation is a work of **original research** that makes a **significant contribution** to the existing knowledge in the field of study
- A dissertation demonstrates the ability to address a **major intellectual problem** and arrive at a **successful conclusion**
- A dissertation demonstrates **competence in research methods** and tools of the chosen field of specialization
- A dissertation is based on a **suitable topic** that embraces some significant problem or body of material that will sustain a study of the scope of a book
- A dissertation should be **publishable** or potentially publishable writing accepted through a process of peer review in the academic world

The dissertation topic need not necessarily originate with the student, but the approach must be developed by him/her. It is generally agreed that the choice of approach, the adaptation of it to the project, and the application of it, are the student's responsibility.

Under some circumstances, students are allowed to use work done in collaboration with others as part of the dissertation. While in the humanities and social sciences this is uncommon or not permitted at all, some disciplines (often in the sciences) allow collaborative research, but only for a portion of the dissertation. If some collaboratively developed material is used, the part that is the student's work must be clearly defined. Permission for the inclusion of the work must be sought beforehand from the other collaborators and from the Dean of the Graduate College. A dissertation may not have joint authorship, that is, several students may not collaboratively produce a dissertation.

### *Dissertation Committee*

The preparation of the dissertation is supervised by a committee of four faculty members, one of whom must be from a department outside Architecture or Landscape Architecture. The committee will guide the research and pass judgment on the merits of the dissertation.

Normally, the chair and the majority of the committee members will be faculty in the student's home unit. The dissertation committee chair must be a member of the U of I Graduate College faculty and hold a Ph.D. degree. Note that in most cases the faculty advisor and dissertation chair will be the same faculty member. However, in cases where the faculty advisor does not hold a Ph.D. and thus cannot be a dissertation chair, or in cases where faculty members have left the university, the dissertation committee chair may be another faculty member who directs the specific dissertation research.

In formalizing a dissertation committee in consultation with a student's anticipated committee chair, the student should ensure that all potential committee members have a common and thorough understanding of the nature of the proposed dissertation. This consideration involves a sufficient level of familiarity with the research practices and ideals of potential committee members, which enables the student to anticipate potentially conflicting expectations and contradictory advice. For example, a Ph.D. student in the Social and Cultural Factors in Design

may get caught in the middle if one committee member were to expect a quantitative discussion of the results while another expects a qualitative discussion.

### *Dissertation Defense / Final Exam format*

At the Graduate College of the University of Illinois, the dissertation defense is known as the Final Exam. For consistency, all doctoral defenses in the School of Architecture and Department of Landscape Architecture will adhere to the following format.

1. Three weeks prior to the defense date, the Committee Chair (with assistance from the unit's graduate records officer) will file the form with the Graduate College requesting constitution of the committee. (The form is filed even if the committee has not changed since the preliminary exam.) The Committee Chair convenes the committee, conducts the examination, maintains the schedule, and recognizes committee members and any others for questions.
2. In accordance with Graduate College rules, the defense must take place on campus and is open to observers from the university and the public. Attendance by doctoral students is encouraged.
3. The defense begins with a formal presentation of the dissertation by the student, explaining the dissertation's central questions, methodology, and major conclusions or findings.
4. Following the presentation (typically 30-40 minutes), the committee members provide comments and pose questions. If time permits, and at the discretion of the Committee Chair, questions and comments may also be invited from the others in attendance before or after the committee members' responses.
5. At the conclusion of the defense, which typically lasts 2 to 2.5 hours, the student and all observers must leave the room while the committee determines the outcome of the examination. When the committee has come to agreement, the student returns to the room and is informed of the committee's decision by the chair.

### *Additional Matters:*

#### *Residence Requirement*

University regulations generally require that a student be registered for each semester until all requirements for the degree, including the dissertation, have been completed. Please note that being "in residence" means registered for courses through the University. This is not the same as being physically on-campus. In some cases, it is highly advantageous for students in Stage III to be located off-campus. However, to continue with the Ph.D. program, students must be registered, even if they are only registered for the dissertation preparation course (599).

#### *Funding*

To the best extent possible, the program aims to provide at least some degree of funding to support doctoral students through their years of course work. Given the limited resources, however, students are strongly advised to apply for financial support from sources outside their departments. The Graduate College web site is an excellent source of information on graduate student fellowships both on campus and off. The IRIS database is an important source of such information. Moreover, we urge students to surf the web to find out as much as possible about

available external fellowship opportunities. Additional lists of potential funding sources may be available from each departmental graduate office.



## FACULTY RESOURCES

Abbas **AMINMANSOUR** (Ph.D. Penn State)  
Associate Professor of Architecture  
Steel Structures, Integrated Design and Construction Of Buildings

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