



URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING

2025-2026
STUDENT MANUAL

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Important Dates: 2025-26 Academic Year

University of Iowa Registrar Deadlines 2025-26

Fall 2025:

August 25	Classes begin
November 1	Plan of Study , and Area of Concentration (<i>first year students</i>) submitted to advisor for approval
November 1	Progress Self-Evaluation (<i>all students</i>) submitted to advisor for approval
November 1	Applications for spring 2026 assistantships (<i>all students</i>) open
December 1	Internship paperwork due for all summer and fall internships
December 15-19	Final Exams

Spring 2026:

January 20	Classes begin
February 26	Degree application deadline for May 2027 graduation and certificates
March 2	Two-page student paper for URP oral exam due to Graduate Coordinator
March 9-13	Final oral examinations for May URP graduates
March 15	Applications for fall 2026 assistantships (<i>first year students</i>) open
April 15	Progress Self-Evaluation (<i>first year students</i>) submitted to advisor for approval
April 15	Internship paperwork due for all spring internships
May 11-15	Final Exams
May 14	Graduate College Master's Degree Commencement - 7:00 p.m. at Carver Hawkeye Arena

Summer 2026:

May 17	12-week summer registration deadline
May 18-August 7	12-week summer session
June 14	8-week summer registration deadline
June 15-August 7	8-week summer session

Preface

The purpose of this student manual is to provide answers to questions that could arise during a student's period of study in The School of Planning and Public Affairs (SPPA) at the University of Iowa. It includes information on a wide range of potential student concerns and questions and provides a detailed explanation of program requirements and applicable policies. This manual should be consulted whenever questions on these matters arise.

This manual should allay any doubts and prevent possible misconceptions about students' obligations and rights. Any questions not answered by the manual should be referred to a student's advisor or to the School Director. SPPA faculty and staff stand ready to assist students in any way they can.

Effective Date of Policies

This manual's policies are effective and binding for all students in the school who commence their studies during the 2025-26 academic year. Students enrolled in a prior year are bound by the policies in effect when they entered the program. Students should refer to the **Student Manual** for the year they entered the program for policies related to their period of enrollment. All relevant versions of the Student Manual are available on the SPPA website.

When policies change, students can continue under the policies in place when they joined SPPA or choose to follow the new ones. Such policies include those pertaining to areas of concentration, final examinations, and academic performance. Any questions about which policies are applicable should be addressed to the student's advisor or to the director.

Mission Statement

The Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning (URP)'s **vision** is to promote just and inclusive human settlements in which economic development, environmental enhancement, and social justice jointly contribute to sustainability, resilience, and quality of life at all scales from local to global. Within this context, our **mission** is to educate professional planners who will be responsible future leaders and decision-makers into the 21st century. Further information about URP goals and objectives is available on the SPPA website.

The Planning Program

Planning is a dynamic and exciting field. Planners combine analysis with activism, and policy evaluation with implementation to improve quality of life in cities and regions. In addition to traditional jobs as city or regional planners, professionals are in demand in such diverse fields as regional transit, sustainability, public facilities provision, rural economic development, public health, nonprofit neighborhood housing, legislative analysis, and real estate development. Planning students may come from any undergraduate major. In practice, planning students come from a variety of educational backgrounds, e.g., art, geography, economics, English, political science, anthropology, engineering, architecture, sociology, urban studies, and history.

The University of Iowa is recognized as a leader in developing a curriculum attuned to the changing world of planning. At the heart of our master's degree program is an integrated curriculum that gives first-year students a solid foundation in the analysis of social problems and public policies and prepares them for careers beyond the traditional position of city planner. Students in the second year of our program focus on areas of concentration, which include **land use and environmental planning, housing, community, and economic development (HCED), and transportation**. Graduate students in the program will earn the M.S. degree in Urban and Regional Planning.

The University of Iowa's M.S. degree in Urban and Regional Planning is accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board. Information on planning accreditation can be found at

<http://www.planningaccreditationboard.org/>.

Curriculum

The URP curriculum is based on the philosophy that planners must develop the theoretical and analytic skills necessary to analyze social problems and evaluate public policies. Planners also need professional skills including analytics, report writing, oral presentation, public involvement, and team management to function successfully in various organizational and political environments. The planning curriculum is a two-year program leading to a Master of Science degree in Urban and Regional Planning and requires 45 semester hours of coursework.

In sum, the required curriculum comprises core and capstone courses.

- The core courses focus on institutions and social, economic, environmental, political, administrative, and legal systems that frame planning, policy analysis and public decision-making.
- Students develop the ability to identify social goals and normative criteria for evaluating public policies, and build their quantitative (statistics, forecasting, surveys, regional analysis) and qualitative skills for plan-making and evaluation.
- The capstone projects enable students to apply core class principles to actual planning problems.

Graduation Requirements

- GPA: Attain an overall 3.0 program grade point average for all courses taken at the University of Iowa that **can** be applied to the student's plan of study for the planning degree, **regardless of whether they exceed what courses are needed to complete the degree** (see section on "Grading and Academic Performance".)
- Credits: Complete **45 hours** of course credit, at least 36 hours of which must be planning courses. The remaining 9 credits are subject to the student's advisor approval based on their relevance to the planning field. **Planning courses include those listed under the planning program at Iowa (URP prefix) and graduate courses offered by planning programs at other universities that were taken prior to enrollment and have been accepted for credit by the UI program faculty.** (See section on "Credit for Courses Taken Prior to Enrollment.")
- Course Work: Complete satisfactorily all core and capstone courses, and a minimum of 9 semester hours in courses for an area of concentration. Satisfactory completion means attainment of a grade of B- or better in each required course. If the grade is lower than a B-, the course must be repeated. If a B- or higher grade is not obtained the second time the course is taken, the student is dismissed from the program. (See section on "Grades in Required Courses.") However, if a course is not used to satisfy any of the area of concentration or the core courses, and if the student's GPA is adequate, and the Graduate College accepts the credit, then the course may count towards the 45 hours for the degree even if the grade is below a B-, as long as it is no lower than a C-.
- Final Exam: Non-thesis students must pass a final exam (oral and written components, see "Final Examination" section of this manual) administered by the student's final exam committee. Thesis students must complete a thesis and pass a final oral examination based on their thesis.

Thesis Requirements

By default, all students are admitted into planning to pursue a master's degree *without a thesis requirement*. With their advisor's consent, students may elect to pursue a master's degree with a thesis. Students may change their degree objective to include a thesis by requesting a **change-of-status form** from the school's Graduate Coordinator and having it approved by the director. For more details, see the [Thesis](#) section of this manual.

Required Courses

Core courses are designed to provide students with the necessary skills and background for more advanced course work. All required courses must be completed or formally waived. For this reason, SPPA recommends that students take core courses in the sequence below.

If a student waives a core requirement, an elective may be substituted. However, a student should not postpone taking a core course that has not been waived. Written permission to postpone a core course must be obtained from the faculty advisor.

Part-time students, students in concurrent degree programs, and those entering joining the program during the Spring semester should be careful in planning their course of study to avoid later problems with electives that assume knowledge of the core material, and with core courses that build upon previous core courses.

Capstone projects build upon the core curriculum, therefore, prior to enrolling in the Sustainable Communities Lab Capstone course, students are expected to have:

- 1). Completed and passed all but two core courses**
- 2.) No more than one core course receiving C+ or lower**
- 3.) Completed a minimum of 22 semester hours**

When a SPPA course is offered at the 4000 and 6000 level, **students must register for the 6000-level course.**

Students with half-time assistantships may not register for more than 12 semester hours per semester.

First-Year		Course Title	Semester Hours	
URP:6200	Fall	Analytic Methods for Policy	core	3
URP:6202	Fall	Land Use Planning: Law and Practice	core	3
URP:6203	Fall	Making of Cities: History and Theories	core	3
URP:6205	Fall	Economics for Policy Analysis	core	3
URP:6208	Fall	Program Seminar	core	1
URP:6201	Spring	Data Science for Urban Analytics	core	3
URP:6225	Spring	Applied GIS for Planning & Policy Making	core	3
URP:6233	Spring	Public Finance and Budgeting	core	3
Second-Year				
URP:6258	Fall	Systems and Scenario Thinking	core	3
URP:6209	Fall	Sustainable Communities Lab I	capstone	3
URP:6210	Spring	Sustainable Communities Lab II	capstone	3

Waiver of Core Course Requirements

Core courses can be waived fully or in part for students who have completed comparable courses covering the same material before enrolling in the program and who received a grade of B or higher in those courses. For courses taken outside the University of Iowa, **SPPA's policy is to grant waivers for core courses only in exceptional cases.** However, students who believe they have a legitimate case for waiver can request one by contacting the course instructor and submitting a course waiver form.

To request waivers, students must supply sufficient supporting materials to demonstrate that the subject matter contained in the course for which a waiver is sought has been covered with comparable rigor elsewhere. It should be emphasized that the burden of proof lies with the student to demonstrate the adequacy of previous training. course syllabi, assignments (if applicable), exams, and transcripts are the types of documentation typically required.

The waiver form is available on the SPPA website and must be signed by the instructor of the core course and by the student's advisor, who enters their recommendation on the form (e.g., complete or partial waiver).

Waiver requests should be made as early as possible, but **no later than the first week of the semester during which the course would normally be taken.** If a request is denied, the student must enroll in the course. Under no circumstances is a waiver granted after the student has completed subsequent sequential courses, or after the student has completed Sustainable Communities Labs.

Approval of a course waiver exempts the student from the requirement to take a particular course but **does not reduce the 45 hours required for the degree.** A student who waives a core course has the same final examination requirements as one who did not. (See sections on "[Final Examination](#)" and "[Thesis](#)."") Therefore, it is important to that the necessary material has been adequately mastered before requesting a waiver.

Grades in Required Courses

A required course can be satisfied by waiver or completion with a **B- or better.** A required course for which a student receives a C+ or lower must be repeated with a grade of at least a B-.

If a required course is repeated, it will appear twice on the student's official university transcript. The original grade and the grade for the second time the course was taken will both be included in the official GPA. If a B- or higher grade is not obtained the second time the course is taken, the student is dismissed from the program.

For purposes of meeting the requirement of 45 semester hours, the second course replaces the first. That is, assuming at least a B- is received the second time, the semester hour credit(s) for the first time the course was taken do not count towards the 45-hour requirement. (See "[Grading and Academic Performance](#)."")

Areas of Concentration

Planning students select one or more area(s) of concentration (usually in their first semester). Students may change their concentration if they complete at least one to meet graduation requirements. The purpose of the area of concentration requirement is to ensure that the student develops depth in a particular substantive area of planning by mastering a set of elective courses that together constitute a coherent plan of study in that area.

The Urban and Regional Planning program offers three areas of concentration: **housing, community, and economic development (HCED); land use and environmental planning; and transportation planning**. The course offerings and requirements for each area of concentration are described below. Not all courses listed are offered every year.

Students may design alternative areas of concentration or combine two areas (subject to faculty approval). An area of concentration must be in a substantive field of planning. **A concentration in a skill, research method, or law, is not permitted**. Students interested in alternative concentrations should consult with their advisor. Plans for a specially designed alternative concentration must be presented by the advisor to the faculty in a faculty meeting and approved by the faculty, before the alternative is approved.

It is up to students, with the help of their advisor, to either (1) select a concentration (or more) from the list of options proposed, or (2) design an alternative or non-standard concentration. In all cases the student's plan of study must include at least nine semester hours of course work in the area of concentration. **The student must attain at least a B- in each course** for that course to be applied to the area of concentration requirement. No more than three hours of Readings courses or Independent Study may be counted towards a concentration. In cases when a student has re-taken a concentration course, both grades will be used in computing the program GPA. If a B- or higher grade is not obtained the second time a required concentration course is taken, the student is dismissed from the program. (See section on "Grades in Required Courses.")

Please note: Courses offered by other departments may change, **students must check course offerings on MyUI**, consult with their advisors, and take care when including such courses on their plan of study.

Electives Outside of Areas of Concentration

The following courses are not part of any concentration but are good options to round out students' education. Students may want to look for those courses which are not offered every semester.

URP:6282	Grant Writing	2 s.h.
EPLS:5240	Topics in Education: Facilitating Controversial Dialogue/ Facilitator Preparation for Leaders	3 s.h.
EPLS:6217	Theory and Practice of Leadership	3 s.h.
IS:3910	Approaches to Advocacy	3 s.h.
CEE:3003	Project Management Skills	3 s.h.

Housing, Community, and Economic Development (HCED)

The well-being of urban populations depends on affordable quality housing, jobs, and wages that support access to quality housing and services, and community sense of place. Lack of reasonably priced housing options, loss of population and jobs, urban decay, residential segregation by race, gentrification, and costly public services threaten the prosperity of cities, regions, and communities. The concentration in housing, community, and economic development examines social inequities in the built environment; federal, state, and local housing and community development policies and programs; community organizing and placemaking; and innovative public/private/neighborhood partnerships. This concentration area focuses on building strong, economically resilient communities and organizations. It prepares students for positions in city, regional, and state planning and development agencies; housing and community development divisions; housing-focused nonprofits; neighborhood economic development groups; private planning and consulting firms; community development corporations; and other public, private, or nonprofit economic development organizations.

This concentration requires Housing Policy (URP:6271), Growth Management (URP:6245), or Creative Community and Economic Development (URP:6273), **at least one 3 semester hour course in Group 1, up to 3 semester hours in Group 2** (for a total of at least 9 hours in the concentration). Students should work with their advisor to select the courses that best meet their interests and professional specialization needs.

Required (choose 1) *	Course Title	Semester Hours
URP:6271 Spring (2026)	Housing Policy	3
URP:6245 Spring (2027)	Growth Management	3
URP:6273 Spring	Creative Community and Economic Development	3

Group 1 Electives:

URP:6243	Land Development Process	3
URP:6278	Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness I	3
URP:6400	Sustainable Development: The Kerala Experience	3
URP:3570	Poverty Policy	3
URP:6241	Strategic Management of Public and Nonprofit Orgs.	3
URP:6297	Economic Development Finance	3
URP:6271	Housing Policy	3
URP:6245	Growth Management	3
URP:6273	Creative Community and Economic Development	3

Group 2 Electives:

Finance

FIN:4230	Real Estate Process(<i>instructor approval; prerequisites</i>)	3
FIN:9230	Real Estate Finance & Investments (<i>instructor approval; prerequisites</i>)	3

Social Work

SSW:4843	Social Welfare Policy and Practice	3
SSW:6400	Theories & Skills for Working with Communities and Organizations (<i>instructor approval; prerequisites</i>)	3

Economics

ECON:3350	Industry Analysis	3
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Entrepreneurship

ENTR:4200	Entrepreneurship: Business Consulting	3
ENTR:4400	Managing the Growth Business	3

*Students may take the other required course(s) for elective credit toward this concentration.

Land Use and Environmental Planning

Human activity has a dominant and cumulative effect on climate and the environment. Examples include land development patterns that cause environmental damage, ecosystem disturbances, and material and energy consumption. These patterns contribute to climate change and worsen the frequency and scale of natural disasters (e.g., floods, fires, hurricanes, heat waves) both locally and globally. Students pursuing this concentration acquire the knowledge, skills, and techniques to develop plans and policies designed to protect, preserve, and regenerate ecosystems, and to promote sustainable, just, ecologically sound, and health-supportive environments for all.

This concentration requires Environmental Policy (URP:6256), **at least one 3 semester hour course in Group 1, up to 3 semester hours in Group 2** (for a total of at least 9 hours in the concentration). Students should work with their advisor to select the courses that best meet their interests and professional specialization needs.

<u>Required</u>		<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Semester Hours</u>
URP:6256	Spring	Environmental Policy	3
<u>Group 1 Electives</u>			
URP:6243		Land Development Process	3
URP:6253		Designing Sustainable and Healthy Cities	3
URP:6266		Transportation, Urban Form & Sustainability	3
URP:6280		Planning for Disaster Mitigation and Recovery	3
URP:6400		Sustainable Development: The Kerala Experience	3
<u>Group 2 Electives</u>			
<u>School of Earth, Environment, and Sustainability</u>			
SEES:3340		Ecosystem Services	3
SEES:3350		Urban Ecology	3
SEES:3500		Intro. to Environmental Remote Sensing	3
SEES:3760		Hazards and Society	3
SEES:4150		Health and Environment: GIS Applications	3
SEES:4200		Sustainability as a System Science	3
<u>Civil and Environmental Engineering Courses</u>			
CEE:3790		Resilient Infrastructure Emergency Response	3
CEE:4107		Sustainable Systems	3
CEE:4158		Solid and Hazardous Wastes	3
CEE:4159		Air Pollution Control Technology	3
CEE:5410		Politics of FEWS (Food, Energy and Water resources)	3
<u>Other Courses</u>			
EES:3390		Integrated Watershed Analysis	3
JMC:5266		Risk Communication	3
OEH:4240		Global Environmental Health	3
OEH:4260		Global Water and Health	3

Transportation

The field of transportation planning has become much broader in the past several decades, expanding from its focus on relieving traffic congestion to questions related to social responsibility, accessibility, climate impacts, and the benefits of physically active travel. This change has underscored the need to attract people from diverse disciplinary and social/ethnic backgrounds to the field. The next generation of transportation professionals cannot simply be one in a team of specialists. They need to have a range of knowledge that allows them to see and solve problems without disciplinary boundaries.

This concentration requires Transportation, Urban Form & Sustainability (URP:6266), **at least one 3 semester hour course in Group 1, up to 3 semester hours in Group 2** (for a total of at least 9 hours in the concentration). Students should work with their advisor to select the courses that best meet their interests and professional specialization needs.

<u>Required</u>		<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Semester Hours</u>
URP:6266	Fall	Transportation, Urban Form & Sustainability	3
<u>Group 1 Electives</u>			
URP:4262		Transportation Research Methods & Analysis	3
URP:6260		Transportation Policy and Planning	3
URP:6263		Special Topics in Transportation Planning	3
URP:6243		Land Development Process	3
<u>Group 2 Electives</u>			
<u>Civil Engineering</u>			
CEE:3763		Traffic Engineering	3
CEE:4730		Transportation Infrastructure Construction & Management	3
CEE:4762		Design of Transportation Systems	3
<u>Public Health</u>			
CPH:4220		Global Road Safety	3

Transportation Planning Certificate

The graduate Certificate in Transportation Planning requires 12 s.h. of credit. Completion of the Transportation Concentration automatically satisfies the requirements of the Transportation Certificate. Students who would like to earn the certificate **must add this to their program of study in MyUI and apply for the certificate in the semester they hope to graduate.**

Required Coursework:

Course #	Title	Hours
URP:6266 (Required)	Transportation, Urban Form, and Sustainability	3
URP:6210 (Required)	Sustainable Communities Lab II	3

Two of these:		
URP:4262	Transportation Research Methods and Analysis	3
URP:6202	Land Use Planning	3
URP:6233	Public Finance & Budgeting	3
URP:6260	Transportation Policy & Planning	3
CPH:4220	Global Road Safety	3

Internships

Course Credit Requirements

Students are eligible to receive course credit toward the degree in planning by:

- obtaining advisor approval before the internship begins
- completing an appropriate internship, working at least 240, 160 or 80 hours
- receiving an evaluation from their supervisor of “good”, “very good”, or “excellent”
- submitting a satisfactory internship paper before the due date

Forms must be completed for internship credit

All forms are located on the [website](#). Further important details about internships requirements follow this section.

1. **Before the internship begins**, the student must obtain advisor approval and submit the 'Internship Approval' form with the official position description attached.
2. **At the beginning of the internship**, students give the “Internship - Employer’s Report on SPPA Intern” form to their employment supervisor.
3. **Upon completion of the internship**, the employer mails the form to the SPPA administrative services coordinator who uploads it to the student's MAUI file.
4. The student and their advisor receive an email confirming the evaluation form has arrived and notifying them that they need to meet.
5. The student submits their internship paper to their advisor before the deadline date (see page 5).
6. The advisor reviews both the evaluation and the internship paper during the meeting with the student.
7. **To complete the process**, the student submits the “Internship Credit Approval” form to their advisor, attaching the employer report and the internship paper.
8. The advisor approves the form and uploads it to the student’s file (MAUI) before grades are due.

Internship Approval

The internship option can be satisfied through employment with a relevant agency, firm, or organization.

When pursuing course credit, internship details must be approved by the student's advisors beforehand. Students should seek internships in which their work efforts will be substantive and urban planning-related (i.e., scanning, receptionist, or shadowing are typically **not** acceptable internship arrangements). An internship cannot be done prior to beginning the program, except in extenuating circumstances.

In some unusual circumstances, a student may discover that an internship that was expected to be "substantive" turned into something less meaningful. If this is the case, the student should contact their advisor immediately (or the SPPA director, if the advisor is unavailable) and discuss the issue. Efforts will be made by the student and the advisor with the employer to improve the quality of the internship work experience.

Unpaid internship financial assistance

When a summer internship is unpaid and the student is pursuing course credit, they may wish to apply to the [Kenneth J. Cmiel Internship Funding program](#), offered annually through the UI Center for Human Rights. The program offers funding to be used towards travel and living expenses. The deadline to apply for summer funding is typically early April.

Students are encouraged to pursue paid internships. However, depending on whether funds are available, SPPA may offer summer fellowships to those who accept unpaid positions. To apply for the fellowship, applicants must have an internship that is closely related to urban planning and commit to complete a minimum of 160 work hours. The fellowship amount will be determined by the school director after all the applications are received and will be based on the number of applicants and the funds available. Students will be notified of the application deadline through an email in early May.

Course registration

Students have the options of competing a minimum of:

- 240 hours for 3 s.h.
- 160 hours for 2 s.h.
- 80 hours for 1 s.h.

Students should register for **URP:6335: Internship**, during the semester in which they complete their internship. Most students choose to complete their internship during the summer semester; this requires students to register for at least 1 s.h. during the summer semester and pay the associated tuition. Students may then register for the same course for up to 2 s.h. the following fall semester to receive credit for the total semester hours earned for their internship experience. The internship may continue beyond the summer. Remaining hours must be registered in the semester the internship is completed (fall or spring). Students may register for a maximum of three (3) internship credits.

International students must register for the internship in the semester they are doing the work. Check with International Students and Scholars Services to learn about the registration requirements.

If a student is employed full-time (30 hours per week or more) in a professional position related to their area of study, they may receive course credit for the work without pursuing a separate internship. An Internship Approval form must be signed by the student's advisor to assure the work meets the requirements needed to receive course credit. The requirement of an evaluation by the student's supervisor is waived. An internship paper must also be written after work has been completed in order to receive course credit (240 for 3 s.h., 160 for 2 s.h., 80 hours for 1 s.h.).

Supervisor Evaluation

Internship supervisors must evaluate their performance, sign the associated form, and submit it to the SPPA administrative office. If the supervisor reports that the student's internship was evaluated as "fair" or "poor," the grade for the class will be "unsatisfactory" and the student will not receive course credit for the internship.

Internship Paper

At the end of the internship, a paper about the internship must be submitted to the student's advisor, who may accept, reject, or require changes to the paper. With advisor approval, the paper may be reviewed by another faculty member in certain cases. This is typically due to their familiarity with the subject, internship provider, or the student. Although the precise form of an internship paper may vary with the nature of the internship, in general the paper should contain the following elements:

1. **A description of the internship:** the employer, the student's position in the organization, and the tasks performed or the project on which the student worked;
2. **A critical discussion of the planning process and the organization:** In this section, the student should think critically about the work they performed, the purpose of the work, where and how it fits in the organization's mission; the structure of the agency/organization, the relation of the agency or the project to local politics and community involvement; and, the method of policy development. This section should be reflective, thoughtful, and critical, yet constructive.
3. **The value of the experience as it relates to the student's individual development** and the potential value of such an internship for other students in SPPA.

Internship papers should be typed and double-spaced. They should be written clearly and concisely, avoiding unnecessary detail. An appropriate length is between 5 and 10 pages. Internship papers are due on the date specified on page 5 of this manual.

If you complete an internship, regardless of whether you register for course credit or not, we are still required to collect information for our accreditation agencies. Before your internship begins, you should send the career services coordinator your position title, the employer's name, and your start date.

Students can only register for a maximum of three (3) internship credits.

Capstone Projects

Key Information

- Projects are two semesters
- Projects are identified through IISC
- Projects are group-based, typically with 3-6 students per group
- Capstone projects build upon the core curriculum. Students are expected to have completed **all but two core courses** and completed a minimum of 22 semester hours prior to enrolling in the Sustainable Communities Lab Capstone course. Exceptions to the group work requirement will not be made

- In rare circumstances, students can receive approval to complete individual capstone projects. This requires a formal application process and approval from faculty advisors, the SPPA director, and confirmation from a community partner.

Overview

All URP students are required to complete the capstone courses in Sustainable Communities Labs I and II (URP:6209 and URP:6210). The purpose of Sustainable Communities Lab is to give students a field project experience in which students, working in teams, apply what they have learned in core courses to an actual planning problem with an actual client such as a planning department, community organization, or a public agency.

Sustainable Communities Lab represents the planning program's opportunity to prepare a professional planning report for an actual client and is therefore an important step in the education of a professional planner. It provides an excellent opportunity for the transition from theory to practice, which is the foundation of professional planning education, while enabling the student to further develop important professional skills and credentials. It also provides practical experience that complements students' internship. The resulting report or plan is itself a testimonial to the student's level of professional development and can be used to establish a student's credentials in the labor market. Finally, Sustainable Communities Lab is also an important opportunity for students and faculty to perform important community outreach activities that benefit Iowa communities and adds value to a degree in planning.

Final Examination

SPPA requires that a final examination be administered to each graduate student prior to receiving a degree.

The final examination builds upon the Capstone projects completed in Sustainable Communities Lab I and II. Students apply what they have learned in core courses to a real-world problem with a client such as a planning department, community organization, or a public agency (for more information, see the Sustainable Communities Lab or Capstone sections). There are two parts to the final exam: oral and written. Students who pass the first part (oral) do not need to take the written portion. Students who do not pass the oral portion will take the written test within two weeks, before the Graduate College's deadline for final exam reports. Students who pass the written portion have successfully passed the final examination.

The purpose of the final exam is to measure the student's ability to not only practice good urban and regional planning but also to reflect on one's practice in the context of critical theories and methods featured in the core curriculum. Thus, in the final examination, students are asked specific questions requiring demonstration of how knowledge obtained in the core courses was applied to the work performed in Sustainable Communities Lab or Capstone. The examination's purpose is to ascertain students' ability to effectively and intelligently apply knowledge, skills, and abilities developed in the core courses to a real-world problem.

Approximately two months before the oral final exam, second-year students are given a set of study questions to help them prepare.

The oral part of the final examination is administered to each URP student in mid-March. **One week prior to the oral exam date, each candidate for degree must submit to the a two-page paper that describes the specific contributions the student made to the Capstone project.**

If a written exam is necessary, the student should arrange the exam time with their examining panel being mindful of the Graduate College's deadlines for graduating that same semester. If a student does

not take the written portion of the exam prior to the Graduate College deadline for final examinations, the student will be ineligible to graduate that semester.

Each student is examined by an panel of three faculty members named by the SPPA director. At least two of the members must be tenured or tenure-track faculty in SPPA. The faculty committee remains the same for both the written and oral parts. Consistent with Graduate College requirements, members of the evaluating panel evaluate each examination as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory and two votes for an unsatisfactory performance on the examination result in failing the oral portion of the final examination. A report of the outcome of the final examination (including the oral portion and, if taken, the written portion) is due in the Graduate College no later than 48 hours after the examination, and by the deadline date established by the Graduate College.

If a student fails the final examination (both oral and written), the student is entitled to one retake. Under the Graduate College rules, a retake cannot be taken until a subsequent semester. Students must be registered in the semester in which they graduate, so extra tuition/fees would apply to delayed graduations. The retake may be written or oral (not both). If the student fails the retake, they are dismissed from the program. For the retake, the new committee consists of the chair of the first committee plus two faculty members who did not serve on the first committee. They are appointed by the director. The retake exam must be taken no later than 12 months after the first exam.

According to the Graduate College rules, a student must graduate within three sessions after passing the final examination for a master's degree. A session is defined as beginning in the semester after final exam completion and includes summer semester but excludes the winter session.

Thesis

Some URP students may wish to undertake a major piece of planning or policy-related research while in the program. Theses may be helpful in gaining desired employment, or for continuing graduate work at the doctoral level. A thesis can demonstrate students' research capabilities, writing abilities, and analytical skills. The program supports students interested in writing theses.

Curriculum Requirements

Coursework requirements for thesis students are identical to those for all other students: completion of core coursework (24 semester hours), development of an area of concentration (9 semester hours), completion of a Sustainable Communities Lab capstone, and completion of 45 semester hours total. Of the 9 units necessary for a concentration, up to 3 units may be Readings (URP:6305). Remaining units for the 45 total hours are combinations of elective courses, Readings, and Thesis (URP:6325). In all cases, a maximum of 8 semester hours of Readings may be used toward the degree requirements and a maximum of 6 semester hours can be Thesis (URP:6325) units.

Under the above curriculum arrangement, students may use up to 14 semester hours (8 in directed readings and 6 in thesis hours) for research and writing a thesis. However, they are encouraged to use elective units to broaden their coursework experiences by completing at least one course in a somewhat different field than those of the thesis and area of concentration.

Topic and Committee Selection

Students who select the thesis option are responsible for choosing a thesis topic and finding a faculty member to serve as their thesis advisor. This should occur during the second semester of their first year in planning.

Research for the thesis (including background research or a literature review, and the preparation of a preliminary thesis prospectus) should be performed during the summer between the second and third semesters. A maximum of two units of Readings (URP:6305) can be applied toward this work.

Benchmarks should be established with the thesis advisor at this stage, and at subsequent stages of the thesis preparation, in order to insure substantive progress in a timely fashion.

Students selecting the thesis option are required to form a thesis committee, which should be done early in the third semester but must be done before the end of that semester. The thesis committee will include at least three members of the University Graduate faculty, with no fewer than two being tenure or tenure-track from SPPA. Whenever a thesis topic is closely related to a discipline outside planning or is a thesis by a combined-degree student, it is required that at least one faculty person from that related discipline be included on the committee. After selection of the thesis committee, a schedule of thesis-review sessions between the student and advisor should be prepared.

URP Undergraduate-to-Graduate (U2G) Degrees

[Undergraduate-to-Graduate](#) (U2G) degree options are available, allowing students to earn a graduate degree in urban and regional planning and an undergraduate degree in less time than required to obtain the two degrees independently. This is because courses for one degree are considered as elective credit for the other degree program. Typically, both degrees can be completed in five years.

The **universal** U2G is open to **students in all undergraduate majors** at the University of Iowa.

Tuition

U2G students are assessed undergraduate level tuition and fees during their first year of the U2G program (students' 4th or senior year), and until the bachelor's degree is conferred. Students are encouraged to consult the Graduate College to determine the tuition amount.

Funding

While in their senior year, students remain enrolled as undergraduate students and are eligible to keep their undergraduate financial aid. In their second year in the SPPA program, they are enrolled as graduate students and eligible for financial aid through SPPA and the Graduate College. Funding is competitive and allocation is primarily based on GPA in SPPA courses.

Advising

While an undergraduate, U2G students will have a URP advisor in addition to their undergraduate advisor. The undergraduate advisor can approve students for registration; however, it is important to also consult with the URP advisor to assure the student is meeting the requirements for both programs and is able to graduate in a compressed timeline. Additionally, the URP advisor's approval is needed to grant the special permission required to register for URP courses while an undergraduate. After completing the undergraduate degree(s), U2G students will be advised by an URP advisor only.

Courses

U2G students are required to meet the course requirements outlined above as regular non-U2G students. However, U2G students **may only apply a maximum of 18** semester hours of graduate courses completed prior to receiving their undergraduate degree (i.e., in their first year in SPPA) towards their URP degree. This means that if a student completes additional grad-level courses or program requirements prior to conferral of the bachelor's degree, any credit in excess of 18 sh for URP will not be counted toward the minimum number of semester hours required (45 sh) to earn the degree. Put another way, students must complete **a minimum of 27 additional study hours toward the graduate degree after bachelor's degree conferral**

Once admitted to the U2G program, the student will complete courses specifically designated to count towards their bachelor's and graduate degrees, typically during their fourth or senior year. The graduate degree program must approve the U2G credit designation for each course and will guide students through this process.

The 18 semester hours of cross-counted courses are selected from the following URP core courses (descriptions available in the [General Catalog](#)).

Required	Title for 2024-25	Semester Hours
URP:6200	Analytic Methods for Policy	3 s.h.
URP:6201	Data Science for Urban Analytics	3 s.h.
URP:6202	Land Use Planning	3 s.h.
URP:6203	History of Theories of Planning	3 s.h.
URP:6205	Economics for Policy Analysis	3 s.h.
URP:6208	Program Seminar	1 s.h.
URP:6225	Applied GIS for Planning and Policy Making	3 s.h.
URP:6233	Public Finance and Budgeting	3 s.h.

Specific features of the universal U2G program follow; however, the student should verify the most recent combined-degree requirements with the department of interest, because courses and requirements in other departments are subject to change with little prior notification. Course descriptions are available in the [General Catalog](#).

Combined Degree Programs: Graduate-to-Graduate

Various combined-degree options are available allowing students to earn a graduate degree in planning and another graduate degree in less time than would be required to obtain the two degrees independently. Courses for one degree are considered as elective credit for the other degree program.

Requirements

While the requirements of each combined graduate-to-graduate-degree option vary, all have key features in common. In each case a student must:

- Complete an approved area of concentration in planning. Work in the other academic unit does not, in and of itself, necessarily constitute a valid area of concentration (e.g., "law" is not a concentration, although an environmental law course may be part of an environmental concentration).
- Courses in other programs can sometimes be substituted for planning core courses. Students should contact the SPPA director of graduate studies or admissions coordinator to discuss a plan of study and the specific number of semester hours of planning courses that will count towards the combined degree.
- Unless otherwise specified, Sustainable Communities Lab is required of students in combined degree programs.
- Satisfy planning's final examination requirement.

JD-URP Requirements

JD Requirements	URP Requirements
<p>88 semester hours total required for graduation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 semester hours counted from URP <p>Of the 88 semester hours required for graduation, the following general additional requirements must be satisfied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All required first-year courses At least 64 semester hours of Faculty Instruction Courses At least 6 semester hours of experiential coursework At least 4 upper-level writing units, of which at least 2 must be faculty-supervised Professional Responsibility and Constitutional Law II <p>See Graduation Requirements for the J.D. Degree, <i>Iowa College of Law Academic Policies and Procedures</i>, II., for additional requirements and limitations.</p>	<p>45 semester hours total required for graduation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 semester hours counted from JD <p>Of the 45 semester hours required for graduation, the student will complete 33 semester hours that are unique to the URP (11 courses):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytic Methods for Policy (URP:6200) Data Science for Urban Analytics (URP:6201) Land Use Planning: Law & Practice (URP:6202) Making of Cities: History & Theory (URP:6203) Economics for Policy Analysis (URP:6205) Applied GIS (URP:6225) Public Finance and Budgeting (URP:6233) Sustainable Communities Lab Capstone (URP:6209 and URP:6210) Program Seminar (URP:6208) 5 or 6 semester hours of electives

Combined total minimum amount of credit earned is 112 semester hours.

Graduate-to-Graduate Options with Other Disciplines

Even when an established combined graduate-to-graduate degree program does not exist, students can receive a master's degree in planning in conjunction with another graduate degree, e.g., with journalism or public health.

University policy requires prior administrative approval be granted, and at least 60 semester hours of graduate credit be completed to receive two master's degrees. However, courses taken to satisfy one unit's requirements also may be applied to meet the other unit's requirements. Some credits can be shared when one master's degree requires, or both master's degrees require, more than 30 semester hours of graduate credit. (No more than ¼ of the credits necessary for one degree may be composed of coursework taken for the other degree.) In all cases, combined degree programs require at least 60 semester hours of graduate credit and each unit's degree requirements must be met. Students should consult with their advisors, and consult the Graduate College Manual, Part I The Academic Program, section X. Master's Degrees G. Two master's degrees:

<https://grad.uiowa.edu/academics/manual/academic-program/section-x-masters-degrees>.

Admission

Students already admitted to another academic unit are formally assigned to that unit. Students interested in pursuing two master's degrees should contact the SPPA admissions coordinator. When most of their coursework is in planning, students should file a Change of Status form with the Graduate Admissions Office to be formally assigned to planning.

Students first admitted to planning and then wanting a second master's degree should contact their advisor and the admissions coordinator in the other unit. The other unit will submit a Change of Status form to confirm admission to their program, after which SPPA will either approve or deny.

A Change of Status form should be filed when students complete their coursework in planning. Doing so enables the student to be formally assigned to the other academic unit. For students who plan to complete all degree requirements in planning and in the other academic unit simultaneously, no Change of Status form is needed.

Tuition

As a member of a graduate-to-graduate degree program, students may pay the greater of the two programs' tuition costs. Students are encouraged to consult the Graduate College to determine the tuition amount.

The student should verify the most recent combined-degree requirements with the department of interest, because courses and requirements in other departments are subject to change with little prior notification.

General Program Information

Orientation

During the week before classes start in the fall, SPPA holds an orientation session with new students in the masters' programs. Curriculum structure, academic progress, course waivers, and other general requirements are explained. In addition, students are given keys and instructions on the use of departmental facilities, and their responsibilities are explained regarding the student space known as the drafting room.

All [forms](#) and documentation related to student advising should be uploaded into MAUI by the advisor after the student has completed them. These include:

- Snapshots of plans of study/MyPlan
- Area of Concentration forms
- Change of Advisor forms
- Core Course Waiver forms
- progress self-evaluations (no specific form)
- Internship Approval form
- Internship - Employer's Report on SPPA Intern
- Internship Credit Approval form (with internship paper)
- Certificate in Transportation Planning Completion form

Plan of Study

Each student is to develop and review with their advisor a two-year plan of study (referred to in MyUI as MyPlan) during their first semester using the process described below. The purpose of the plan of study/MyPlan is to ensure that the student satisfactorily completes all course requirements for graduation, including core courses and courses in an area of concentration (see section on "Areas of Concentration"). MyPlan multi-semester plans of study are to be approved by advisors before becoming effective. This is done directly in MAUI (the University's electronic repository for faculty to record student advising and related files) by the advisor, through taking a "snapshot" of the reviewed and agreed upon plan of study/MyPlan. "Snapshots," are automatically stored under Advising Notes.

Video tutorials for Sample Plan, MyPlan and Schedule Builder are available at <https://myui.uiowa.edu/my-ui/help/registration/academic-planning.page>.

Students may view/edit their plan and view advising notes in MyUI's Student Information section, through Advising Notes/Files.

MyUI serves as a hub to access most of the UI systems and tools students use. A **Sample Plan** of study, showing requirements for the student's program, is uploaded for them in MyUI at the beginning of their first semester, found under Student Information, Advising. Planning students will find a non-thesis and thesis version.

The Sample Plan is only an outline of the recommended coursework and sequence and should be exported into **MyPlan**. (Video available on "[Creating a MyPlan from a Sample Plan](#)"). MyPlan is a multi-semester document, which must be created and customized as part of the student's official

record. The student must include courses to complete at least one area of concentration. The student's advisor can view MyPlans, but only the student is able to create, edit and save them.

Each semester, when the next semester's courses are available in MyUI, the student can export their desired courses from MyPlan into **Schedule Builder**. Schedule Builder is an unofficial document used as a road map for scheduling. Versions of Schedule Builder combinations can be saved, allowing the student to use one-click registration.

Before a student may register for the next semester, their MyPlan should be revised if necessary and they must meet with their advisor. Obtaining the advisor's approval serves as permission for course registration each semester. After the student's first semester, their course registration date and time can be found on MyUI on the Home tab. All previous versions of MyPlan remain as part of the student's advising record (saved as "snapshots"). Revisions are subject to the same approval process.

Students are encouraged to create sample plans in Schedule Builder ahead of all semesters to assist the school in planning for course offerings.

Students should be mindful that Sample Plans and MyPlan do not calculate if the student has met requirements for graduation.

Area of Concentration

Each student must declare an area of concentration during their first semester (see Important Dates) and submit the [Area of Concentration form](#) to their advisor for inclusion in their electronic student record (MAUI). Students should input grades for their concentration courses at the end of each semester. Any changes to the Area of Concentration, require completing and submitting a new form. If through the course of study the student wants to change their area of concentration, a new form must be submitted to their advisor and also included in their electronic record. See "Area of Concentration" section for detailed information about the concentrations and requirements.

Dropping/Adding Courses

[Dropping and adding](#) courses after the semester registration has closed is done electronically through MyUI. Students are responsible for obtaining the required signatures/permissions and then processing the drop/add. Those who need to sign do not automatically receive notification. When the dean's signature is required, students should contact either Sara Pettit, Academic Affairs Coordinator or Heidi Arbisi-Kelm, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, who are the dean's delegate for signature/authorization in the Graduate College.

Advising and Progress Self-Evaluation

New students are assigned faculty advisors based on their stated areas of interest and advisors' availability. Students are asked to meet with their advisors during the first two weeks of the semester to introduce themselves, review class schedules, and make certain that each student understands School requirements.

Students are to submit a one-page self-evaluation, reflecting on their academic progress during their first semester's experience, by **November 1** (for students whose first semester is a fall semester). That evaluation is to be submitted to the student's advisor for placement in the Advising section of the student's electronic record (MyUI for students and MAUI for faculty). Before the

advisor authorizes registration for the spring semester, the advisor and student are to meet to discuss the statement and the preparation of a two-year plan of study/MyPlan (previously created on MyUI). Once a completed plan of study/MyPlan is reviewed by the student with the advisor, who is to include a snapshot of that plan in MAUI, the advisor is to authorize the student to register for the spring semester.

Before **April 15**, the student should provide a second one-page reflective evaluation of his/her progress and hold another meeting with the advisor. This second student evaluation is to be deposited in MyUI/MAUI, registration authorized, and any necessary revisions to the plan of study/MyPlan saved in MyUI/MAUI. In this meeting with his/her advisor, the student is to be reminded of internship requirements, and if the student knows they are taking an internship, the [Internship Approval form](#) should be approved at this time by the advisor and uploaded into MAUI. See the “Internship” section for details on internship requirements.

By **November 1** in the third semester of study, a third and final evaluation of academic progress should be provided by the student, a discussion held with the advisor (to include calculations to ensure all graduation requirements will be met and that final-semester registration is consistent with the plan of study/MyPlan), and, if necessary, a revised plan of study/MyPlan agreed to by the advisor and an approved snapshot saved in MyUI/MAUI. Progress towards passing the final examination should be discussed at this time.

No further student progress self-evaluation is needed for students in a two-year plan of study/MyPlan. The exit survey will serve as a final evaluation. Students in combined programs or in programs of study extending beyond two years should consult with their advisor to determine whether additional student evaluations are needed.

Change of Advisor

Under some situations, it may be appropriate for a student to change advisors. Students may initiate the procedure for changing advisors by discussing the proposed change with the existing and the proposed advisor and then submitting a Change of Advisor form (available on the SPPA website) to both advisors and the director for their permissions. To effect the change, the new advisor should upload the form into the student’s advising record in MAUI after all permissions have been granted. Students should not hesitate to request a change if they feel that doing so will enhance their educational experience.

Credit for Courses Taken Prior to Enrollment

Minimum Requirements

Credit for courses taken prior to admission to the School of Planning and Public Affairs may be allowed to apply toward the program's credit requirement under the following conditions:

1. Students must have been classified as enrolled in a graduate program during the semester(s) in which they took the requested “transfer” courses.
2. The courses are evaluated as graduate-level classes. The Office of Graduate Admissions will make this determination for all external transcripts.
3. They were not part of the requirements for any degree previously completed, or currently in progress, except courses taken to meet the requirements of formal combined-degree programs with our school.
4. Their subject area is closely related to that of school courses.
5. SPPA applies no more than 15 graduate semester hours that were completed prior to SPPA admission toward a student’s plan of study.
6. Courses older than ten years are inadmissible for credit.
7. All other Graduate College rules are complied with, including the minimum of 60 hours for two master's degrees. (See the Academic Program, section X. G.: <https://grad.uiowa.edu/academics/manual>)

Student Obligation

A student who wishes to transfer course credits must present course syllabi, reading lists, and other supportive materials as necessary to demonstrate that courses for which credit is sought are germane to the degree offered by SPPA, and comparable in rigor to courses taught at Iowa. When transferring credits, students should be mindful that content knowledge mastery may be tested on the final exam.

Timing

Following admission into SPPA, but before the beginning of the first semester of classes, students requesting credit for courses taken elsewhere should present their request, with supporting data, to the director of graduate studies. Timing of the request is especially important if the credits applied for, and any courses to be waived, would affect the student's first-year plan of study.

Students already at the UI may submit the request to a faculty advisor who may submit the request for approval to the director.

It is important for students to understand that credits allowed for work done elsewhere (and waivers of specific courses – see “Waiver of Core Course Requirements” page), are allowed only upon approval; under no circumstances should a student alter their plan of study in anticipation that credits will be allowed by the faculty before such determination is made.

Non-U2G Courses Taken at The University of Iowa

If a student classified as an undergraduate, and not a U2G student, takes graduate courses in SPPA, these courses **cannot** count as graduate credits if the student is later admitted to the program for a master’s degree. SPPA will normally waive the requirement to take those specific courses (see

“Waiver of Core Course Requirements” page), but the number of semester hours needed to graduate is not reduced.

A student who is classified as a non-degree seeking student (“special student”) in the **Graduate College** may take up to two courses of SPPA coursework for graduate credit. If a non-degree student is later accepted into the program, courses taken in SPPA as a non-degree student **will** count toward the required number of semester hours. Courses taken when a person is enrolled as a non-degree student in the **College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**, however, **cannot be applied** for graduate credit.

If a student in another graduate-level college at the University of Iowa (i.e., College of Law) takes graduate courses in planning or public affairs prior to admission to a combined-degree program involving that other college and planning/public affairs, those semester hours **are counted**. They are counted as transfer credits rather than academic residence credits. The student must still complete at least 24 hours of academic residence credit after admission to planning or public affairs. Due to the number of hours required in the various combined-degree programs, it is rare that this limitation constitutes a problem.

Undergraduate Courses Taken for Graduate Credit

Before conferral of their bachelor’s degrees, U2G students who have been admitted to the UI Graduate College can count upper-level (3000-4999) undergraduate courses towards their graduate degree while still classified as an undergraduate, which is typically their senior year.

Both non-U2G students and U2G students whose bachelor’s degrees have been conferred may receive graduate credit towards their graduate degrees for a maximum of 6 s.h. of upper-level (3000-4999) SPPA or non-SPPA undergraduate courses.

If such courses are not listed on the student manual, a written approval from the faculty advisor is needed. The students must prove that a substantial portion of the material in an upper-level course is not covered in a graduate-level course offered by SPPA, or in the list of non-SPPA courses in the URP or MPA curricula, and that the upper-level course potentially helps the students’ career goal.

In rare cases (e.g., there are not enough available graduate courses offered or there are scheduling challenges), students may request more than 6 s.h. upper-level undergraduate courses to be considered for graduate credit towards their degree. Students must prove that the substantial portion of the material in an upper-level course is not covered by any other available graduate course on campus and that the upper-level course potentially helps the students’ career goal.

Grading and Academic Performance

SPPA utilizes a grading system that includes pluses and minuses. The [program GPA](#) is calculated using grades for all courses taken at the University of Iowa that **can** be applied to the student's plan of study/MyPlan for their degree, **regardless of whether they exceed the requirements needed to complete the degree**. The program GPA is used in making financial aid awards and in determining academic performance for meeting the 3.0 grade point requirement for graduation.

The plus/minus system is translated into grade points according to the policy in effect for the University, as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Grade Points</u>
A+	4.33
A	4.00
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.00
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.00
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.00
D-	0.67
F	0.0

The program GPA may differ from the UI cumulative GPA because the program GPA only includes courses on the university transcript that **can** be applied to the URP degree. In those cases when a student has re-taken a required or concentration course, both grades are used in computing the program GPA.

In core classes, the maximum grade is an A. Also in core classes, A's and A minuses are limited to no more than 50 percent of the class; in non-core classes, A pluses are highly restricted, and it is recommended to instructors that there be no more than 50 percent A's and A minuses.

Minimum Grades

To receive credit towards graduation, students must earn a minimum of a B- in core, capstone and concentration classes. In other classes, students must earn a minimum grade of a C-.

Incomplete Courses

Students should make every effort to complete their coursework during the semester of registration. Occasionally, however, students find it necessary to take an incomplete in a course. The Office of the Registrar's policy is that an incomplete automatically converts to an "F" at the end of the next full semester (winter session excluded), even if the student does not enroll after the session the "I" was posted. The exact date of the conversion each semester is determined by the Office of the Registrar (typically when transcripts are run at the end of the following semester).

To change a grade that has become an "F," approval by the instructor, the SPPA director, and the collegiate dean is required. It is the SPPA policy that only in exceptional cases will grade changes be approved at this point. Therefore, a student should **not** anticipate that an incomplete removed after the Registrar's deadline will be assigned a grade other than "F." Merely revising work is not, in and of itself, a sufficient basis for the instructor to change an F grade. The work needs to be completed to the instructor's satisfaction.

One final point: it is unwise to submit work required to remove an incomplete just prior to the Registrar's deadline. If the instructor believes that revisions or additions to this work are necessary, a student could miss the deadline. Sufficient time for review and grading should be allowed, and extra burdens should not be placed on instructors at busy periods.

Assistantships

Award Criteria

All assistantships are subject to funding availability. Most graduate assistantships are awarded based on merit. For entering students, merit is determined holistically by their application materials, including undergraduate GPA, work experience, qualifications as teaching assistants, the statement of purpose, and letters of recommendation. For continuing students, a leading measure of merit is the program GPA. However, consideration is also made of faculty and school needs, student skills that can meet those needs (e.g., as a teaching assistant for a large SPPA course), and past performance as a graduate assistant. Calculation of the program GPA is explained in the previous section of this handbook. Performance includes the promptness of task completion, the quality of work, adherence to scheduled hours, general initiative, availability, and regular contact with the faculty supervisor.

Students requesting aid must take at least 9 semester hours of classes that count towards their degree during the semester(s) in which they receive aid. SPPA's policy is to not award any student more than **four** semesters of aid in the form of assistantships or substantial fellowships. Students working full-time jobs outside of the University will not be eligible for assistantship funding.

Full-Year Assistantships

Assistantships for incoming students are typically awarded for the fall and spring semesters. Returning second-year students who meet the criteria above may also be awarded assistantships for both semesters. It should be stressed that all students who are awarded full-year assistantships are reviewed after the fall semester. Continuation of an assistantship for the spring semester cannot be assured unless the student has performed their assistantship duties satisfactorily. In addition, **the second semester of aid is contingent on achieving at least a 3.2 program GPA during preceding semesters.**

In making assistantship offers to continuing students, funds are first allocated to meet commitments to students awarded aid for a full year. Remaining funds are then divided into two portions, one for first-year students, and the other for students in their second year or later. Within each of these groups, assistantships are awarded according to the criteria described above.

One-Semester Assistantships

Incoming and returning students may be awarded assistantships for one semester. Whether such students receive further assistantships depends upon their program performance (see award criteria above), and upon the demand for and availability of funds.

Requests for Assistantships

To apply for an assistantship, students should apply in response to appointment postings publicized by SPPA no later than **April 15 for the fall semester**, or by **November 1 for the spring semester**. Students must submit an "Assistantship Request" form, which can be obtained from the graduate coordinator. The form requires information about students' preferences for an assistantship assignment (e.g., research assistant, teaching assistant, career services, student outreach). Students may also be asked to fill out a form about their individual skills. Students who have been awarded full-year assistantships (contingent on high-level performance) must submit a similar form stating their assistantship preferences for the upcoming semester. Assistantship request forms and preference forms must be returned by the date indicated on the application. If the deadline is not met, the student may be ineligible for an assistantship the following semester. Students are notified of their appointments in writing by April 15 for fall assistantships and by November 1 for spring assistantships.

Assistantship Awards and Incompletes

Assistantships will not be awarded to continuing students who have one or more incompletes from any UI course remaining at the time assistantship decisions are made or by the start of the semester an assistantship begins. An exception is in those cases where the grade could not change the decision. That is, aid will be awarded if substitution of an F for each incomplete results in a GPA high enough to warrant aid, and aid will be denied if substitution of any other grade for each incomplete results in a GPA too low to warrant aid.

Failure to Perform Duties Satisfactorily

Students who fail to perform their assistantship duties satisfactorily will receive written notice from the SPPA director. This letter informs the student of any performance problem and indicates what conditions must be met to remedy the situation. If these conditions have not been met within the period indicated in the written notice, the student's assistantship may be subject to reduction in pay or complete termination. If job performance is considered unsatisfactory at any subsequent time for the same student, the student is again notified of the problem and may be subject to termination immediately. Any financial hardship created by any assistantship reduction or termination are the responsibility of the student, not SPPA.

Scholarships

Scholarships are awarded primarily to new students. A scholarship is a set amount of money that the student may apply to their tuition. There is no work requirement for a scholarship. Scholarships offered at the time of admission are not renewed for subsequent semesters. Scholarships might become available for later semesters subject to funding availability, but this is not guaranteed.

Student Awards

Jim Harris Memorial Scholarship Award

The Jim Harris Memorial Scholarship award was established in 2002 to honor the memory of the planning program's first Chair, Jim Harris. The cash award scholarship recognizes students who best exemplify Jim's commitment to community service and passion for social justice.

The award is based on the faculty's evaluation of the person(s) best demonstrating excellence in community service. Community service may include volunteer work with a non-profit organization, involvement in a professional planning-related organization, or in advocacy on planning-related issues. Paid employment does not typically qualify as community service. The service may have taken place anywhere – in Iowa City, elsewhere in the state of Iowa, elsewhere in the nation, or internationally. At least part of the service should have occurred during the student's time in SPPA. One scholarship is typically awarded to a student from each of the two programs.

Nominations are to be submitted to the awards committee by February 1st. Nominees are asked to provide a resume and brief description of community service activities. The recipient of the award will be announced in May during our graduation celebration.

APA Outstanding Student Award

The American Planning Association (APA) and SPPA sponsor an outstanding student (cash) award each year. This is not a national competition. Instead, each planning school selects a student for the award. Under our procedures, nominations for the outstanding student may be made by faculty, staff, or students. Any student who graduates during a given academic year and has a cumulative GPA of at least 3.50 is eligible to be nominated for the award for that year.

Nominations are to be submitted to the awards committee by February 1st. Nominees are asked to provide a resume and brief description of the criteria as listed below. A Student Award Committee, consisting of three faculty members, makes a recommendation to the faculty, which then selects the recipient.

Planning's selection of an outstanding student is based on the faculty's assessment of the quality of the student's work in planning and the student's promise of success as a professional planner. In making this assessment, the faculty will look for evidence of the student's intellectual ability, acquired skills, and commitment to planning. Definitions of these three categories are provided below.

Intellectual Ability as demonstrated by:

- The innovative nature of work accomplished while in planning;
- The ability to analyze problems and methods critically;
- The ability to synthesize concepts and apply them to real situations, and;
- A minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.50.

Acquired Skills as demonstrated by:

- The ability to communicate clearly and succinctly in written and oral forms;
- The ability to design a research effort and monitor its implementation;
- The ability to apply analytic methods to their appropriate uses, and;

- The ability to work effectively in a team or group situation.

Commitment to planning as demonstrated by:

- Contribution through service to the students, staff or faculty;
- A sense of professional direction;
- Individual initiative and desire for a successful career in planning;
- Leadership in student organizations, and;
- Contributions to the planning profession through participation in planning activities of state or local government, such as planning boards or commissions.

MPA Outstanding Student Award

Each year, SPPA faculty will select a student to receive the MPA Outstanding Student Award with an associated cash reward. Any MPA student who will graduate during a given academic year and has a cumulative GPA of at least 3.50 is eligible to be nominated for the award that year. Self-nominations are allowed.

The selection of an outstanding student is based on the faculty's assessment of the quality of the student's work and the student's promise as a future leader in public governance. In making this assessment, the faculty will look for evidence of the student's intellectual ability, acquired skills, and commitment to public service. Details of these three categories are provided below:

Intellectual ability as demonstrated by:

- The innovative nature of public affairs work accomplished;
- The ability to analyze problems and methods critically;
- The ability to make evidence-informed decisions regarding public problems;
- The ability to synthesize concepts and apply them to real situations, and;
- A minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.50.

Acquired skills as demonstrated by:

- The ability to participate in, and contribute to, the public policy process;
- The ability to articulate a public service perspective including ethics and values;
- The ability to apply analytical methods to their appropriate uses, and;
- The ability to work effectively in a team or group situation, and;
- The ability to communicate clearly and succinctly in written and oral forms.

Commitment to public service as demonstrated by:

- Contributions to SPPA students, staff, or faculty through department service;
- Individual initiative and desire for a successful career in public affairs;
- Leadership in SPPA and/or UI student organizations, and;
- Contributions to local or state community through participation in public affairs activities.

Student Appeals Procedure

Sometimes, a student may feel wronged by a decision made by a faculty member, a committee of the faculty, or the faculty. In such a case, the student may appeal the decision according to the following procedure:

1. Appeal is made to the director, giving the facts of the case and the basis for the student's appeal. This appeal must be made in writing;
2. The director may then either conduct an investigation personally or appoint a committee of the faculty (which must consist of at least two faculty, and which may consist of the entire faculty) to conduct an investigation. When the appeal involves a decision or action of one faculty member, that person shall not be on the investigating committee. The student shall be permitted to present their case to the investigating committee;
3. If the director conducts an investigation, the director may either grant or deny the appeal, take other appropriate action, or refer the matter to the faculty for a decision;
4. If the investigation is conducted by a committee, that committee may grant or deny the appeal, or take other appropriate action;
5. Where the appeal involves a matter of School policy, it should be noted that any change in policy is normally approved by the faculty as a whole;
6. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of a faculty committee, they may ask that the faculty review it. Such a review is conducted at the option of the director;
7. It should be noted that further appeal can be made to the Graduate College, according to the policies and procedures of the Graduate College. These are outlined in the [Graduate College's Academic Policies](#). The Graduate College should be contacted for further information.

The University ombudsperson may prove of assistance in instances of this sort and should be contacted directly by the student.

Other student concerns: Student representatives are elected by students to represent student opinion at faculty meetings. Each semester a town hall meeting takes place at which students can express concerns. When students have concerns about how specific classes are taught, they should meet directly with the director. The director will take up the matter directly or to an executive faculty meeting.

Committee on Progress

Student progress is monitored by the faculty. One indication of unsatisfactory progress toward completion is a failure to maintain a program GPA of 3.0. This is above the Graduate College's standard of 2.75, below which a student is considered on academic probation by the Graduate College. The program GPA is derived from all courses taken at the University of Iowa which can be applied to the student's plan of study, regardless of whether they exceed what courses are needed to complete the degree. The student should be aware that incomplete grades, while not computing the grade point average, do not indicate successful completion of the required semester hours.

Students who do not show progress toward the degree according to their plan of study, or whose program GPA is below 3.0, are automatically placed in a status of Official Concern and a Committee on Progress is convened. The Committee on Progress is composed of the student's academic advisor and one other faculty member appointed by the director. Its task is to assist students in overcoming academic problems. The students are allowed one semester in which to bring their program GPA up to the 3.0 level, or to make substantial progress toward bringing their GPA up to 3.0, while making progress toward the degree according to their plan of study. The

Committee on Progress establishes the conditions that must be met for a student to be removed from Official Concern status and determines if these conditions have been met. Failure to meet the conditions set forth by the Committee on Progress shall result in dismissal from the program.

Conditional Status

Students may be admitted on “conditional status.” Students on conditional status must meet the obligations of regularly admitted students and may have additional conditions attached to their admission, e.g., the obligation to take remedial course work. Conditional students who do not satisfy admission conditions are subject to dismissal by faculty decision.

Student Organization and Input

School of Planning and Public Affairs Student Association (SPPASA)

The School of Planning and Public Affairs Student Association (SPPASA) is a university-recognized student association comprised of graduate students in the School of Planning and Public Affairs at the University of Iowa. SPPASA’s primary goal is to further their professional interests in the fields of planning and public affairs.

Throughout the year, SPPASA is involved in many activities, including garnering financial support for trips and conferences. To take advantage of the maximum number of funding opportunities and ensure continuity of the association over the summer months, students elect SPPASA officers in the spring for the following academic year.

Other SPPASA activities include planning social activities, organizing volunteer opportunities, and intramural athletics. All students are encouraged to participate, as this organization's success depends on student involvement.

Student Representatives

Representatives within SPPA

Each class from both programs selects one representative and an alternate to attend regular faculty meetings. In faculty meetings, student representatives are expected to contribute to discussions related to SPPA students, convey student concerns to the faculty, and communicate relevant information from the meetings to students. Student representatives are entitled to participate fully in discussions but may not vote. Sometimes, the faculty must go into executive session, in which case the student representatives will not be present.

Representatives in campus-wide organizations

Each department or interdisciplinary program is allotted one full senator per fifty students to have a representative on the Graduate Student Senate (GSS). Planning and public affairs students should each select an appropriate number of GSS senators and alternatives for their programs.

SPPA Students can run for positions in the various committees of the UI [Graduate & Professional Student Government](#) which advocates for graduate and professional students.

Students with assistantships can be Research Assistants (RAs) or Teaching Assistants (TAs). Both TAs and RAs are represented by the UE Local 896 – [COGS](#) (Campaign to Organize Graduate Students) and attend COG meetings or can run for positions with COGs.

Evaluations of Courses by Students

Purpose

Standardized forms for evaluation of the School's courses are distributed through ICON near the end of each semester in all courses. All students are requested to complete these forms for each course. The course evaluations serve several important purposes:

1. They inform the instructor about course elements where students feel they did well or poorly;
2. They provide insight into ways a course could be improved (e.g., select another text), and;
3. They aid the director in assessing the overall teaching performance of each faculty member.

These evaluations are an important source of information about the quality of a faculty member's teaching.

Students are asked to disassociate their ratings of an instructor with their performance in the course, to be objective; avoid using the evaluations to "help" an instructor they are fond of or to "get even" with one they may be less favorably disposed toward. The sole purpose of the course evaluation process ought to be to improve the quality and relevance of instruction.

Procedure

All class evaluations are performed online during the final two weeks of classes—before final exams begin. Instructors should permit time for completion of the evaluations in class. In any event, students are encouraged to complete these evaluations. The instructor does not receive the evaluation results until final grades are submitted for the semester. They are also reviewed by the director and utilized in annual performance reviews of faculty as well as at the time of consideration for promotion and tenure.

Exit Survey

An exit survey will be conducted with **all** graduating students at the end of their final semester. Each student will have the opportunity to respond anonymously to an internet-based survey that includes both closed and open-ended questions that allow the student to express their opinions, ideas, and suggestions about their program, the School's facilities, curriculum, and procedures. If students wish, they may follow up their responses to the survey with an oral interview with the director. The School uses the results from the survey to plan and implement improvements.

SPPA Career Service Resources

Career Assistance

(Note: More detailed information about various career assistance resources can be found in Teams, in the SPPA Students, Faculty, and Staff channel within the Career Services Manual file.)

SPPA is committed to providing outstanding career assistance for both summer internship and post-graduation job seekers, with a dedicated career services coordinator. Students are urged to use all the services offered, and to begin preparing early. SPPA offers job information access and personal advising support until the student secures their first job or for up to one year after a student's graduation date, whichever comes first.

In addition to having an advanced degree, students need experience to be competitive. The majority of SPPA students complete internships in the summer between their first and second year. (See the section on "Internships.")

Resume

All students should write or update their resume **and** have the career services coordinator and a faculty member review it before the beginning of their second semester. Tips specific to students in each program can be found in the SPPA Career Services Manual. The SPPA career service coordinator specializes in supporting URP and MPA students. The UI Pomerantz Career Center primarily serves undergraduates, but their [website](#) offers general resume and cover letter examples.

Students should begin to submit resumes for job and internship applications to consulting firms and post-graduation fellowships in the fall semester. Local governments are more likely to advertise openings after January. Students interested in nationally competitive internships should be mindful of early deadlines during the fall semester.

Resume Book

Every year SPPA compiles a Resume Book which students may contribute to. To be included in the book, students must attend the career services presentation on resumes during the fall semester. The book is distributed by email to approximately 800 alumni every spring. Each year one or more students obtain a position through one of the alumni contacted in this way.

Job Postings

Beginning in January, a combination of 30 new jobs and internships are posted weekly on the SPPA [website](#). This service brings outstanding job, internship, and fellowship opportunities to SPPA students, and assists in securing challenging, interesting positions nationwide. SPPA also maintains a list of more than 2000 links to potential employers including local governments, planning and public affairs organizations, and consulting firms nationwide. [This site](#) is available to assist students and enhance individual searches.

Alumni

We maintain close contact with our alumni. We also receive employment notifications from alumni and other professionals who would like to advertise internship and entry-level positions directly to our students. Graduates tend to move up the ladder quickly; and years later, they are still happy with the education they received at Iowa. Alumni and students are encouraged to join and be active in the LinkedIn group, University of Iowa School of Planning and Public Affairs Alumni & Student Group. Students are welcome to contact alumni for advice, informational interviews, and networking opportunities. If alumni contact information is not available through LinkedIn, the career services coordinator can assist students in obtaining it.

Mock Interviews

In the spring semester SPPA arranges mock interviews in which selected planning and public affairs employers “interview” students for hypothetical positions. At the end of the interview, the employer provides feedback on the student’s resume and interviewing strengths and weaknesses.

Networking

LinkedIn profiles are equal in importance to a well-written resume. It is highly recommended students create a competitive one to increase networking, build a professional online presence, and boost the chances of being found by employers. In addition to guidelines in the SPPA Career Services Manual, the career services coordinator offers feedback.

Students are also encouraged to begin networking with professionals in the field, including at local, regional, and national conferences. To support this, the school is often able to provide some travel expense assistance. (See the following sections on SPPA and UI support for attending conferences.)

Mentors

Students should contact the SPPA career services coordinator for assistance in identifying alumni to approach about mentoring. A mentor match service is also offered by the Iowa Chapter of the American Planning Association before each annual conference.

Resume Builders

Additional strategies for finding a position include joining a national professional organization; creating your own website to highlight your skills and portfolio; becoming involved with local or regional planning or public affairs related organizations; running for a [campus charter committee](#); and running for a position on the Executive Committee of the American Planning Association’s [Student Representatives Council](#).

Conferences and Travel

Planning-related conferences:

Additional funding comes from the American Planning Association's Iowa Chapter, which assists students to attend one APA meeting per year, whether it is the [Iowa APA](#) (typically in October) or [national conference](#) (varies between Mar.-May). The School receives an amount that is divided among planning students after travel to one of the conferences has been completed. A list of planning-related conferences and the months they occur can be found in Teams.

SPPA Support for Attending Conferences

SPPA may provide one-time partial funding to support student travel to a professional conference that enhances students' education and career preparation each year – up to \$250 for an in-state travel or up to \$350 for an out-of-state travel – depending on funding availability. In years of limited funding, priority is given to second-year students and to students involved in the school's student organization, SPPASA. Funding is only provided when a student is registered as a full-time student.

The faculty will consider requests for support to be used towards travel costs or registration fees related to attending an appropriate conference. An appropriate conference is one directly related to some aspect of urban and regional planning or public affairs.

Conference dates may change, and it is recommended students check the organization's website for the most up-to-date information.

UI Sources of Support for Attending Conferences

The University of Iowa offers additional sources of support for student travel:

- The [Graduate and Professional Student Government](#)
- The [Graduate Student Senate](#)
- The [Student Impact Grant](#)

Facilities

Computer Facilities

SPPA students can use the Instructional Technology Center (ITC) in room 327 (the "drafting room"). This facility has been established using student fees to promote computer-based instruction of students in SPPA and other academic units. The computers are available by HawkID login to all students on campus for 40 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters. [Printing](#) output (black and white or color) is directed to the printer in the ITC.

SPPA's computers are housed in room 351 (the SPPA library). ArcGIS and other specialized software are available on both the library and ITC computers. Adobe Creative Cloud is available only on the library computers. Output is directed to the printers in the ITC.

Note: The hard drives on all computers (ITC and library) are periodically cleared by ITS throughout the semester, as they are not intended for personal data storage. Remember to save your work to OneDrive, the shared network drive, or your personal flash drive.

OneDrive features are available in all ITCs on campus and the SPPA library computers.

1. Users are automatically signed into OneDrive when they sign into an ITC workstation.
2. Files On-Demand allows users to see and access files in the cloud and download them on-demand only when they need them, saving space on the computer.
3. All files in Desktop, Documents, and Pictures folders are stored in OneDrive.

Depending on the type of machine used (Windows vs. Mac), user experience may differ. Learn more about these updates in the [OneDrive support article](#).

Laptops

SPPA has 5 Dell laptops available for students to borrow. These laptops are meant for temporary usage & are available to borrow for a 4-week period with a one-time 2-week renewal.

If you would like to request a laptop, please fill out the Workflow form here: https://workflow.uiowa.edu/form/SPPA_Student_Laptops & sign a checkout form with Jenny in JH 347.

Computer Cluster Use by Non-SPPA Students

During the 40 hours per week when the ITC in room 327 is open to all university students, SPPA students do not have priority use of computers or printers. After hours, on weekends, and during university breaks, the computer facility is available **only** to SPPA students and faculty.

Students in our School are asked to use good judgment when the hour arrives to close the facility for the day. Non-School students should be informed courteously that the cluster closes at 5:00. Good interpersonal relations are important in working with the somewhat different usage circumstances of SPPA versus other students.

Software Downloads and Copyrights

There are restrictions on what may be installed on university computers due to security concerns, usage, and the cost. If you have any software requests, contact the SPPA director and the School's ITS support person at grad-help@uiowa.edu.

It is important to keep in mind that essentially all computer software is copyrighted. Under no conditions are users of SPPA computers allowed to copy any software programs.

Reserving Facilities

There are a few occasions when an instructor wishes to use the computer lab for a course. On those occasions, there will be a sign posted stating the date, time and course number. Generally, however, the facility will be operated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Fishbowl Meeting Room

SPPA's space also includes a meeting room available to students, faculty, and staff commonly referred to as the Fishbowl. The Fishbowl includes two large HD screens, a computer, and teleconferencing equipment. The space is to be used for groups such as Sustainable Communities Lab/Capstone meetings, web conferencing with project partners, and faculty meetings. The equipment can also be used by individuals to facilitate job and internship interviews. Please refer to the document "**Searching and Reserving the Fishbowl**" for guidance on reserving this space.

The University's preferred web conferencing software is transitioning to Teams. Students should make sure they are familiar with the software and that all equipment is working several days before a scheduled meeting or interview.

SPPA Shared Drive

We have two spaces divided on our shared drive (U: drive, Urban folder), one for course materials and the other for shared student file storage. The "Courses" folder is writable by faculty and readable by students. The "Students" folder is writable by all SPPA students and faculty. The "Students" folder will be emptied every year by August 1st. Please make sure any files you wish to keep are copied elsewhere by then, or they will be lost.

The file services are available on campus or [remotely](#) when connected to the campus Virtual Private Network (VPN). The UI Information Security and Policy Office has issued more [stringent restrictions](#) regarding using a personal computing device or a university provisioned resource while abroad. When planning to travel or work abroad and there is a possibility of performing any type of UI work or research, contact our School's ITS support person as early as possible at grad-help@uiowa.edu.

From a Windows machine, you can create a mapped drive to the following location: <\\iowa.uiowa.edu\\shared\\Urban\\Students> or <\\iowa.uiowa.edu\\shared\\Urban\\Courses>. The mapping does not transfer between computers. Students who log in to a different computer will have to map to the drive again.

On a Mac you can connect to the server at: <smb://iowa.uiowa.edu/shared/urban>

At the end of the academic year, students in Sustainable Communities Lab/Public Affairs Capstone will be directed to archive their files on a research drive under the school's control. Otherwise, all student work will be swept over the summer.

Wireless Hot Spots

The Eduroam [WiFi](#) network is available throughout Jessup Hall and the surrounding outdoor areas.

Student Use of Equipment, Supplies and Drafting Room

Use of Copier/Scanner

Students may use the SPPA's copier/scanner for scanning only. Scanning may be done by emailing the document to yourself at no charge. Students have access to the copier/scanner in the SPPA library from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on a non-priority basis.

Duplication of Materials at School's Expense

The student is to obtain permission from the instructor for work to be charged to SPPA in instances where such reproduction is for the instructor's use.

Faculty will determine how to reproduce materials like student papers to be distributed in a class.

Use of Supplies

Students are expected to provide their own supplies for class work. The supply closet contains supplies for staff and faculty use. Research and teaching assistants may draw supplies directly related to their employment from their faculty supervisor.

Office supplies needed to complete Sustainable Communities Lab and Capstone projects are to be provided by the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC) on a limited basis. Please consult with IISC's director about whether IISC can purchase the item or not. Examples include copying, envelopes, postage, name tags, paper cups, plates, napkins, coffee, etc.

All professional printing must be completed by University of Iowa Printing and Mailing Services. Please allow at least one week to process printing requests.

Stationery, envelopes, stamps, and related items are exclusively for official School purposes and are not for personal use.

Use of Letterhead

Students may use SPPA's electronic letterhead only for correspondence related to official school business and after permission from a faculty member. An electronic letterhead is available from the administrative services coordinator. The faculty person must read and approve the correspondence before it is sent out on letterhead; advance permission alone is not sufficient.

Keys

On the day of orientation, students are issued two keys, one for the drafting room and one for their desk. Keys are to be returned by commencement day. If keys are not returned by the deadline students will be charged \$50 on their U-bills for each key they receive.

A limited number of keys are available for use of the SPPA library and are available on a first-come basis. These are typically checked out for the semester for those wishing to use special software located on the library computers or using the room for research on evenings or weekends.

Please note: Jessup Hall (JH) is locked after hours and on weekends. You may access JH at these times by using your Iowa One ID card which you should obtain at the beginning of your first semester. For problems with building access, contact the SPPA administrative services coordinator.

Drafting Room

The Drafting Room (327 Jessup) is an important part of SPPA. It provides master's students a place to work and keep materials. Along with the School's reference library and the ITC, it provides space where students can work and meet with fellow students. The sense of community that develops among students throughout their studies has much to do with the shared space they enjoy in the Drafting Room.

Because the Drafting Room is a shared space, students should not leave the room unlocked and unattended overnight or on weekends. The Drafting Room cannot be occupied overnight.

Students should also exercise caution in working late at night in the Drafting Room. Jessup Hall is locked in the evening, but students should take care when they leave the building. Students should look to assist each other so no one must leave the building alone. Information about [personal safety](#), the [Rave Guardian app](#), and [Nite Ride](#) are available on the University's [Safety and Support site](#).

General

Misuse of School supplies or resources may subject a student to disciplinary action.

Personal Effects

SPPA does not accept responsibility for lost or missing items left unattended in Jessup Hall. Because of the high cost of books and laptops, students are urged to exercise care in where they place them and to consider locking them in their desks

SPPA's Principles of Community

Preamble

The School of Planning and Public Affairs is a learning, teaching, and research community. These principles of community spell out our values, intentions, as well as best practices guiding our behaviors and interactions.

These principles, initially developed by students, faculty and staff on February 12, 2021, will be revisited annually. It is our intention that SPPA students, faculty and staff will commit to these principles. Implementing these principles requires honing our collective skills over time. Thus, we will regularly make time for open discussions, training, and skill-building as we seek mutual and life-long learning.

Principles

- Honesty and integrity are core values in our teaching, learning, research and administration.
- We respect the dignity and humanity of all persons. We oppose violence and advocating violence and seek nonviolent solutions to interpersonal and social issues.
- We strive to uphold a just community free of discrimination in our interactions, teaching, research, administration, and outreach practices.
- We recognize the intrinsic connections between different perspectives and experiences, and excellence in learning, teaching, research and administration.
- We are committed to freedom of expression and open dialogue that respect all perspectives, differences and commonalities, and to creating conditions where everyone feels safe to express their views.
- We show leadership in addressing the most pressing issues facing our local and global communities are central to our educational mission, and guide our curriculum, research, and outreach activities.
- We promote open and equitable access to opportunities for learning and development for students, staff and faculty.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth and related medical conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, gender identity, and associational preferences. The university also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to university facilities. For additional information on nondiscrimination policies, contact the Director, Office of Civil Rights Compliance the University of Iowa, 202 Jessup Hall, Iowa City, IA 52242-1316, 319-335-0705 (voice), 319-335-0697 (TDD), ui-ocrc@uiowa.edu.

University of Iowa Policy on Human Rights

The University is committed to the principle of equal opportunity including access to facilities. Differences in treatment are prohibited when based on race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including child and related conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, or associational preferences. This principle must be observed in the internal policies and practices of the University; specifically in the admission, housing, and education of students; in policies governing programs of

extracurricular life and activities; and in the university's treatment of its applicants and its employees. Consistent with state and federal law, reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities and to accommodate religious practices. The University shall work cooperatively with the community in furthering these principles. For additional information on nondiscrimination policies, contact the Office of Civil Rights Compliance, The University of Iowa, 202 Jessup Hall, Iowa City, Iowa, 52242-1316; telephone (319) 335-0705.

Persons who believe they have been subjected to discrimination in violation of the University's policy on human rights can report it following the procedures described in the Operations Manual. (<https://opsmanual.uiowa.edu/community-policies/human-rights#3.3>).

Assistance for Students with Disabilities

SDS collaborates with students, faculty, and staff to create an accessible educational environment for all. Students with disabilities are welcomed as valuable contributors to the University of Iowa community.

SDS provides an [orientation video](#) for new students on their website. Specific information about the [application process for an accommodation](#) is also available on their website.

Some [possible accommodations](#) include:

- Exam accommodations
- Class notes
- Alternative media
- Deadline and absence accommodations
- Other accommodations

Students who require an accommodation are advised to contact SDS during the first week of classes and to fill out the SDS Application for approval of their accommodation. The office recommends allowing 10 business days from the time all materials have been received for this review to be completed, and four weeks for accommodations related to final exams. The application process is outlined on the [SDS website](#). Each semester students need to generate their Letter of Accommodations. They should share this letter with the instructor of each class for which the accommodations apply, and work with the instructor to determine how the accommodation will be provided.

Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

This section stems from the UI policy. The university community seeks to eliminate sexual harassment and sexual misconduct through education and accountability. Everyone is encouraged to report concerns or make complaints, including third parties when the respondent is a member of the university community or a visitor. The university is committed to stopping sexual harassment and sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. In accordance with regulatory requirements and institutional values, this policy defines expectations for the university community and establishes mechanisms for determining when those expectations have been violated.

Several University of Iowa policies can come into play when there is a complaint of sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and/or stalking. It is not unusual that someone might

make a complaint or simply inquire about making a complaint without understanding the policies involved. To review the Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct, please see <https://opsmanual.uiowa.edu/community-policies/sexual-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct>. Guidelines for involved parties are also on this page.

The Office of Civil Rights Compliance (OCRC) coordinates the university's response to reports of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct, including dating/domestic violence, and stalking when those reports involve members of or visitors to the university community. Reporting sexual misconduct by University students, faculty, or staff may be made [online](#), at 319-335-0705, or ui-ocrc@uiowa.edu.

If you are experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment or misconduct, remember: you are not alone. You can find numerous resources for friends, faculty, staff, and families.

The University and the School have established procedures to respond to questions, complaints, or concerns. Research suggests that impacted parties who work with a counselor or advocate heal more quickly and experience less postsecondary trauma. *OIE is not a confidential resource*. Connecting individuals with confidential, supportive resources is among the University's primary concerns. [Confidential victim advocates](#) are below:

- Rape Victim Advocacy Program: 335-6000 (24-hour hotline)
- Domestic Violence Intervention Program: 800-373-1043 (24-hour hotline)
- Monsoon Asian and Pacific Islanders in Solidarity: 866-881-4641 (24-hour hotline)
- Nisaa African Family Service: 338-7617
- Transformative Healing: 319-389-8430
- University Counseling Service (for students): 335-7294
- Faculty and Staff Services, Employee Assistance Program (for faculty or staff): 335-2085
- Women's Resource and Action Center: 335-1486

Coping with Graduate Study, Stress and Mental Health Challenges

Being a graduate student can be stressful, from balancing school and work, plus family issues, to keeping up GPA and passing final exams. Students have access to a number of resources to help deal with these pressures.

Students are encouraged to seek help as a preventive measure or if feeling stressed or overwhelmed. Students should talk to their instructors for guidance with specific class-related concerns. SPPA faculty and staff are committed to supporting all students as much as possible during difficult periods and recommend that students communicate their challenges and seek support as early as possible.

Fellow students can be the most understanding and provide very effective support. Anyone concerned about another student's state of mind should encourage them to talk to faculty or staff, or to look into the wide variety of resources found on the university's [Mental Health at Iowa](#) page.

Anyone who is feeling stressed, overwhelmed, depressed or otherwise struggling with mental health is encouraged to contact [University Counseling Service](#) (UCS) at 319-335-7294 during

regular business hours to schedule an appointment. UCS, [located](#) at 3223 Westlawn South, is available to all currently enrolled students and most services are provided free of charge. Their [services](#) include individual and group therapy, relationship therapy, trans-inclusive services, eating disorder network, referrals, same-day appointments, and [self-help resources](#) (such as how to manage speaking anxiety, sleep issues and stress management).

24-hour support and crisis resources include:

- [UI Student Support and Crisis Line](#) (call/text) at 844-461-5420
- [Johnson County CommUnity Crisis Helpline Service](#) (call/text) 988
- 988 Suicide and Crisis [Lifeline Chat and Text](#)
- [24-hour National Graduate Student Crisis Line](#) (1-877-GRAD-HLP; 877-472-3457) “All counselors have completed training to understand the unique issues faced by graduate students.”

If you have a mental health condition and are experiencing a medication issue, [Student Health](#) may be the best resource. The mental health providers are located in [4189 Westlawn South](#) and appointments may be scheduled by calling 319-335-8394.

For those with food insecurity, assistance is available through these organizations:

- The [UI Food Pantry](#), 278 IMU (Student Activities Center)

Provides nutritious food and basic necessities for University of Iowa students, faculty, and staff in need.

- CommUnity Crisis Services and [Food Bank](#)
- [Coralville](#) and [North Liberty](#) each have a community food pantry as well.

Tobacco Free Campus

As mandated by Iowa law, the University of Iowa campus, including all buildings and grounds, are designated as tobacco free. For the purpose of this policy, tobacco products are defined as including but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookahs), bidis, kreteks, smokeless tobacco, chewing tobacco, snus, snuff, electronic cigarettes, and any non-FDA-approved nicotine delivery device. Information on the smoking policy, smoking cessation resources, boundary maps and other frequently asked questions is available on the Human Resources [website](#).

Cheating and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is not tolerated in academic or professional contexts. A person can lose their job for plagiarizing as well as suffer major public embarrassment. Both the University of Iowa and the School of Planning and Public Affairs take issues of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. This section defines cheating and plagiarism, provides guidelines for how to avoid plagiarism, and explains the procedures followed in the event a student in the school is accused of cheating or plagiarism. Further information about the University’s expectations regarding student conduct, including academic conduct, can be found in the [Code of Student Life](#).

What is Cheating?

Cheating occurs when a student receives inappropriate help in completing an assignment, quiz or examination. It is quite proper to ask fellow students for help to understand concepts or other aspects of a homework assignment, and proper to give other students such help if they ask for it. However, it is never appropriate to ask someone else to do an assignment for you, or to copy their answers (or to provide answers or do work for someone else). Neither is it appropriate to ask fellow students for help *during* a quiz or in-class examination. Many students in planning and public

affairs work in teams on assignments, or in preparing for examinations. Unless the instructor informs you otherwise, this is appropriate, *as long as each member of the team participates in team discussions and work, and as long as each member of the team completes their own work*. Merely listening to the solutions other students discuss and then copying them down to present as your own work does *not* constitute teamwork and should not be tolerated by other members of the team. The following list of examples may clarify what cheating (or the appearance of cheating) includes:

1. Copying other students' answers to assignments, exams, or quiz questions;
2. Allowing another person to copy your answers to assignments, exams, or quiz questions;
3. Taking notes or books to an in-class examination or quiz (unless the instructor has given you explicit permission to do so) and using them to answer questions;
4. Misrepresenting your contribution to a group project;
5. Having your assignments or exams completed by others or online services; and
6. Collaborating with other students on any piece of work if you have been explicitly instructed not to do so.

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the misappropriation of intellectual property, which can take many forms. It can range from purposeful cheating (pretending someone else's work is your own), purchases of term papers, to lack of appropriate citations or references or too heavy a reliance on other people's words and/or ideas. Ideas are presented in many formats, and just because something exists only on the internet or in some other electronic format does not mean it is not intellectual property. Given the seriousness with which the University and the school treat plagiarism, it is important to avoid any appearance of inappropriate or unattributed use of other people's ideas and words. The Graduate College addresses plagiarism in the [Manual of Rules and Regulations of the Graduate College](#), Part I, section IV, part F and G. The following list of examples may clarify what plagiarism (or the appearance of plagiarism) includes:

1. Using someone else's phrases and/or sentences without citing the work from which they are drawn or identifying the words as a direct quote;
2. Presenting someone else's argument in your own words and as if it were your own, without referring to or citing the author. Obviously, you may have come up with the same thought independent of someone who published it. If you did, you should be able to show how you came to that conclusion;
3. Relying on other people's written words for a portion of your paper (cutting and pasting) even though you may cite them;
4. Paraphrasing someone else's paper or work sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph, although you do not copy their words precisely. This is still "stealing" someone else's intellectual property, especially if you do not cite them at every point;
5. Copying someone else's paper or work (or large portions of it) verbatim without quotation marks and passing their word as yours, whether you cite them or not; and
6. Including illustrations, tables, maps, etc. from a report, web page, article or any other piece of work without properly citing the source.

When and how should work be referenced or cited?

If you refer to an argument someone made, a finding they report, or anything else that is not "common knowledge" that someone else has provided, you should reference them, using either

footnotes or the author's last name(s) and an accurate date of publication in parentheses at the end of the sentence or paragraph in which you finish explaining their point/argument in your own words.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Direct subsidies to private producers have been largely replaced by block grants and tax credits that provide only partial subsidies. Nevertheless, HUD retained responsibility for much of the housing produced under earlier programs, through mortgage insurance provided by the FHA and through Section 8 contracts that subsidize projects. *[Both of these points count as "common knowledge" and don't require a citation, although they were mentioned in this and several other reports referenced.]* By the mid-1990s, the appropriations necessary to renew contracts (and avoid mortgage foreclosures that would cripple the FHA) threatened to eclipse all other housing needs (CBO, 1994). *[This is a less well-known fact, and a specific finding of the report referenced.]*

If you want to use the author's precise words, because they are a particularly good, colorful or distinctive description, or because they are reported conversation, a direct quote is proper. Direct quotes may be as long as a paragraph; direct quotes longer than three lines should be set off in a block, but shorter quotes of phrases or sentences are indicated with quotation marks. All direct quotes should be followed by a citation - usually, the author's last name, date of the work, and page number of the direct quote. Specific citations should also be used for any illustrations (tables, pictures) that you cut and paste into your own work. It is quite acceptable to use footnotes instead of the citation method shown here. The point is the work should be acknowledged accurately.

FOR EXAMPLE:

As Feldman and Chowdhury (2002) note, compact housing forms achieved through space efficiencies and multistory design have a significant impact on both construction and life cycle costs.

Compact building forms minimize the building's "envelope," and thus decrease costly building components, such as the foundation, roof, and exterior walls. A one-story single-family dwelling is more expensive to build than a two-story structure with the same square footage, quality of construction and amenities. Compact building forms also reduce life-cycle costs because they are less expensive to heat, cool, and maintain. (Feldman and Chowdhury 2002, page x)

All works referred to or cited should be listed (unless your instructor tells you otherwise). If you use the method shown above, a reference list should be attached to the paper. If you use footnotes, that is where the works should be listed.

There are several acceptable referencing styles: The American Psychological Association (APA, 7th edition) and the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS, 17th edition). More information and examples on the APA and CMS styles can be found at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html.

If you are unsure whether a reference or citation is needed, err on the conservative side. Your instructor can also provide advice on this issue. A good UI guide to citation styles can be found on the [Library Guide](#) resource website created for students in your program, under Citation Help.

Penalties for cheating and plagiarism

Both cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses. In cases where either cheating or plagiarism is suspected, the school's policy is that the faculty member involved submits the evidence to the director. The director then evaluates the evidence to determine if there is probable cause to suspect that cheating or plagiarism has occurred. If there is probable cause, the director confronts the suspected student(s) with the evidence. If the student(s) acknowledges participating in cheating or plagiarism, the director takes one of the following actions:

1. If the student(s) has not committed a prior offense of this nature, the penalty shall be that the grade of zero is assigned to the assignment involved. Such a zero grade is conclusive and may not be changed by re-doing the item involved.
2. If the student(s) has committed a previous offense, such student(s) shall be dismissed from the school.

If the suspected student(s) denies cheating or plagiarizing, the director forms a committee composed of three faculty members (not to include the faculty member directly involved) and three non-voting students (not to include the student(s) involved). This committee interviews the student(s) involved, investigate the evidence, call witnesses if necessary, and take all measures to determine if cheating or plagiarism has occurred and to identify the responsible person(s).

Upon completion of its task, the committee reports the results of its investigations to the director. If the committee has determined that there is not sufficient evidence to substantiate an incident of cheating or plagiarism, or that there is insufficient evidence to identify the person(s) at fault, the director notifies the faculty and any students who have been directly involved in the investigation and close the inquiry. If, however, it has been determined that plagiarism has occurred and the wrongdoer(s) have been identified, then the director applies the appropriate penalty as specified in items (1) and (2) above.

It should be noted that it is the policy of SPPA that those who knowingly assist a person in cheating or plagiarism are equally at fault and are subject to the same penalties.

Best Practices for Graduate Students and Their Advisors

The progress, development and success of a graduate student hinges on the commitment of both the student and the advisor. Basic principles of best practices in mentoring and graduate student life appear below. Graduate students should be aware of what is necessary for their success, and their advisors likewise should be aware of practices that promote their students' best interest.

Expectations of Graduate Students

1. A graduate student has the **primary responsibility for successful completion of their degree**. Graduate students should be committed to their graduate education, demonstrate this by efforts in and outside the classroom, and in research. A graduate student is expected to maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, excellence, scholarly curiosity, and ethical standards.
2. A graduate student should **meet regularly with their advisor** and provide updates on the progress and results of ongoing research.
3. A graduate student should be **knowledgeable of the policies and requirements of the graduate program, the graduate college, and the institution**. The student should strive to meet these requirements, including teaching responsibilities.
4. A graduate student should **contribute to maintaining an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment and discrimination**.
5. A graduate student should **acknowledge primary responsibility to develop a career following the completion of the degree**. The student should seek guidance from available resources, including but not limited to their advisor and SPPA career services coordinator.
6. A graduate student should **comply with all institutional policies, including academic program milestones**. The student should comply with both the letter and spirit of all best practices and policies of the institution.

Expectations of Advisors

1. The advisor should be **committed to the education and training of the graduate student as a future member of their professional community**.
2. The advisor should **meet one-on-one with the student on a regular basis**.
3. The advisor should **upload forms from students into MAUI in a timely manner** to prevent problems when evaluating the student's record for meeting graduation requirements and as a resource for staff when assisting students during their time in the program.
4. The advisor should be **knowledgeable of the requirements and deadlines of their graduate program(s) as well as those of the institution**, including teaching requirements and human resources guidelines. The advisor should guide the student in these areas to ensure academic and professional success.
5. The advisor should **encourage the graduate student to attend professional meetings**.
6. The advisor should **provide an environment for their graduate students that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment and discrimination**.
7. The advisor should **not require the graduate student to perform tasks unrelated to their academic and professional development**.
8. The advisor **should provide career advice and assist in finding a position** for the graduate student following the student's graduation. The advisor should provide honest letters of recommendation and be accessible for advice and feedback on career goals.