

**IOWA**

School of Planning  
and Public Affairs

# MASTER OF URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING

## STUDENT HANDBOOK



**2026-2027**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

The purpose of this student handbook is to provide answers to questions that could arise during a student's time in The School of Planning and Public Affairs (SPPA) at the University of Iowa.

This handbook's policies are effective and binding for all students in the school who begin their studies during the **2026-2027** 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 handbook for the year they entered the program for policies related to their period of enrollment. All relevant versions of the handbook 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. This handbook should be consulted whenever questions on program policies arise. Any questions not answered by the handbook should be referred to a student's advisor or to the school director.

SPPA retains the right to interpret and adapt policies as needed under exceptional circumstances with the appropriate approval from the school director.

IMPORTANT DATES.....PAGES 2-3

QUICK REERENCE GUIDE.....PAGE 4

MISSION & VISION.....PAGE 5

SPPA PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY...PAGE 6

## ACADEMICS:

CURRICULUM.....PAGES 8-10

GRADING.....PAGES 11-12

AREAS OF CONCENTRATION.....PAGES 13-16

TRANSFER CREDITS.....PAGES 17-18

INTERNSHIPS.....PAGES 19-22

CAPSTONE PROJECTS.....PAGE 23

PRACTICUM OPTION.....PAGE 24

FINAL EXAMINATION.....PAGE 25

COMBINED DEGREE PROGRAMS.....PAGES 26-29

## GENERAL INFORMATION:

ADVISING.....PAGES 31-33

ASSISTANTSHIPS.....PAGE 34

STUDENT CONCERNS & RESOURCES.....PAGES 35-41

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA POLICIES.....PAGES 42-43

# IMPORTANT DATES 2026-2027

## UNIVERSITY OF IOWA REGISTRAR DEADLINES 2026-2027

### FALL 2026:

**August 24:** Classes begin

**September 7:** No classes (Labor Day)

**November 1:**

- plan of study due to advisor for approval prior to spring registration (first year students)
- Area of Concentration Form due to advisor for approval prior to spring registration (second year students)
- Progress self-evaluation due to advisor (all students)
- Internship paperwork due

**November 22-29:** Fall Break

**December 14-18:** Final Exams

### SPRING 2027:

**January 18:** No classes (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)

**January 19:** Classes begin

**February 26:** Degree application deadline (all students graduating in May)

**March 14-21:** Spring Break

**March 15:** URP Capstone Contribution papers due

**March 22-26:** URP Oral Exams

**April 1:** Progress self-evaluation due to advisor for approval prior to fall registration (first year students)

**May 10-14:** Final Exams

**May 13:** Spring Commencement

### SUMMER 2027:

**May 16:** 12-week summer registration deadline

**May 17-Aug 5:** 12-week summer session

**June 13:** 8-week summer registration deadline

**June 14-Aug 5:** 8-week summer session

# IMPORTANT DATES 2027-2028

## FALL 2027:

**August 23:** Classes begin

**September 6:** No classes (Labor Day)

**November 1:**

- Plan of study due to advisor for approval prior to spring registration (first year students)
- Area of Concentration Form due to advisor for approval prior to spring registration (second year students)
- Progress self-evaluation due to advisor (all students)
- Internship paperwork due

**November 21-28:** Fall Break

**December 13-17:** Final Exams

## SPRING 2028:

**January 17:** No classes (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)

**January 18:** Classes begin

**February 26:** Degree application deadline (all students graduating in May)

**March 12-19:** Spring Break

**March 13:** URP Capstone Contribution papers due

**March 20-24:** URP Oral Exams

**April 1:** Progress self-evaluation due to advisor for approval prior to fall registration (first year students)

**May 8-12:** Final Exams

**May 12:** Spring Commencement

## SUMMER 2028:

**May 15-Aug 3:** 12-week summer session

**June 12-Aug 3:** 8-week summer session

## WHO TO CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS

### School policies:

→ Haifeng Qian (School Director) or Samantha Zuhlke (Associate Director and Director of Graduate Studies)

### Course registration and special permissions:

→ Abbi Castle (Academic Coordinator) and/or your advisor

### Internship paperwork:

→ Jenny MacCourt (Administrative Services Coordinator)

### Reimbursements:

→ Jenny MacCourt

### Assistantship paperwork:

→ Jenny MacCourt

### Facilities & Maintenance:

→ Jenny MacCourt

### Career services:

→ Janet Bell (Career Services Coordinator)

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### REQUIRED COURSES:

All courses that satisfy a specific requirement toward your degree. Required courses are core courses, concentration core courses, and Capstone.

### CORE COURSES:

Content courses that introduce core concepts. Content knowledge from these courses will be assessed during the final examination in relation to your Capstone projects.

### CONCENTRATION CORE:

Required course for your chosen concentration area (e.g. Housing, Community, and Economic Development, Land Use and Environmental Planning, Transportation).

### CONCENTRATION ELECTIVE COURSE:

Electives taken to satisfy concentration area requirements.

### ELECTIVE COURSE:

All courses that do not satisfy a specific requirement toward your degree. This includes any approved elective coursework toward the 45-semester hour requirement for degree conferral.

---

# Principles of Community

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 people. We oppose 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.

---

## MISSION & VISION

# MASTER OF URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING

## Mission

The Urban and Regional Planning program cultivates future leaders and decision makers in planning through comprehensive education, cutting-edge scholarship, and collaborative engagement with communities. We prepare our graduates to lead transformational changes at the local, state, national, and international levels.

## Vision

The Urban and Regional Planning program's vision is to promote just and inclusive human settlements that enhance sustainability, prosperity, and quality of life at all scales, from local to global.

# ACADEMICS

CURRICULUM

AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

GRADING

INTERNSHIPS

CAPSTONE PROJECTS & PRACTICUM

FINAL EXAM

COMBINED DEGREE PROGRAMS



# CURRICULUM

---

The URP curriculum is based on the idea that planners need theoretical and analytic skills to analyze social problems and evaluate public policies. Planners also need professional skills including analytics, report writing, infographics, oral presentation, public involvement, and team management to function successfully in various organizational and political environments.

**The Master of Urban and Regional Planning program is designed to be completed by a full-time student in two academic years and requires 45 semester hours of coursework.** All students are admitted into the planning program to pursue a master's degree without a thesis.

---

## 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 the number of courses needed to complete the degree.

**Credits:** Complete 45 hours of course credit in planning courses or courses approved by the student's advisor that contribute to a degree in planning. These may include 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.

**Coursework:** Complete all **required** courses with a B- or above and a minimum of 9 semester hours in an area of concentration, including a concentration core course.

**Final Exam:** Students must pass a final exam administered by the student's final exam committee.

---

## Undergraduate Courses Taken for Graduate Credit

SPPA students may earn up to 6 semester hours of upper-level (3000-4999) undergraduate coursework towards their graduate degree. 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.

# Core 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 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:

- **Completed and passed (B- or above) all but two core courses**
- **Earned a B- average GPA with no more than one course receiving C+ or lower**
- **Completed a minimum of 22 semester hours**

# Course Progression\*

| Fall 1                                              | Spring 1                                        | Summer                               | Fall 2                                     | Spring 2                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| URP:6200<br>Analytic Methods<br>for Policy Analysis | URP:6201<br>Data Science for<br>Urban Analytics | URP:6335<br>Internship<br>(optional) | URP:6209<br>Sustainable<br>Communities I   | URP:6210<br>Sustainable<br>Communities II |
| URP:6202<br>Land Use<br>Planning                    | URP:6233<br>Public Finance &<br>Budgeting       |                                      | URP:6258<br>Systems &<br>Scenario thinking | Concentration or<br>Elective              |
| URP:6203<br>Making of Cities                        | URP:6225<br>Applied GIS for<br>Policy           |                                      | Concentration or<br>Elective               | Concentration or<br>Elective              |
| URP:6205<br>Economics for<br>Policy Analysis        | Concentration Core                              |                                      |                                            | Concentration or<br>Elective              |
| URP:6208<br>Program Seminar                         |                                                 |                                      |                                            |                                           |
| Total credits:<br>13                                | Total Credits:<br>25                            | Total Credits:<br>25-28              | Total Credits:<br>34-37                    | Total Credits:<br>45+                     |

9 \*This is the typical schedule for a full-time student. All students should review their course progression with their faculty advisor.

# WAIVER OF CORE COURSES

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. Courses cannot be counted if they were taken more than 5 years prior. 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 a 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.

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 Lab I or II.

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. Therefore, it is important that the necessary material has been adequately mastered before requesting a waiver.

---

## Overview

A core course requirement can be satisfied either by waiver of the course or by completion of the course with a grade of B- or better. A core course for which a student received a C+ or lower must be repeated with a grade of at least a B-.

If a core 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 will replace 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 will not count towards the 45-semester hour requirement.

**A is the highest grade possible in core courses.**

---

## 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 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 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 retaken a required or concentration course, both grades are used in computing program GPA.

# GRADING

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 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.

## Minimum Grades:

To receive credit towards graduation, students must earn a minimum of a B- in **required** courses. In other classes, students must earn a minimum grade of a C-.

|    |      |
|----|------|
| A  | 4.00 |
| A- | 3.67 |
| B+ | 3.33 |
| B  | 3.0  |
| B- | 2.67 |
| C+ | 2.33 |
| C  | 2.00 |
| C- | 1.67 |
| D+ | 1.33 |
| D  | 1.00 |
| D- | 0.67 |
| F  | 0.0  |

## Incompletes:

An "I" or Incomplete Grade will only be used when a student cannot complete their course work due to a documented illness, accident, or other extenuating circumstances beyond a student's control. Incomplete grade requests must be reviewed and approved by the school director, as well as the course instructor. To request an incomplete please complete the following:

- Speak with your course instructor as soon as possible; instructor agreement must be obtained.
- Collect any supporting documentation that you would like to submit with your request (e.g., medical note);
- Complete and submit an Incomplete Grade Request Form along with any additional documentation to the SPPA Program Coordinator.
- After the student submits a request, the school director will review to determine if an Incomplete is appropriate. If the request is approved, the student must work with the course instructor to develop a timeline for finishing their work. Per Graduate College policy, an Incomplete grade will automatically convert to an F at the end of the next academic semester (fall or spring), if the coursework has not been completed. No work will be accepted after the automatic grade conversion, and the course will have to be repeated for credit.

## Overview

Planning students select one area of concentration in their first year of study. 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.

- In all cases the student's plan of study must include **at least 9 semester hours of course work in their area of concentration including 1 concentration core course and 1 course from Group A electives.**
- 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 3 hours of readings courses or independent study may be counted towards a concentration area.** In cases when a student has re-taken a concentration course, both grades will be used in computing the program GPA.
- SPPA students **may earn up to 6 semester hours of upper-level (3000-4999) undergraduate coursework** towards their graduate degree.

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.

- **URP:6282** Grant Writing 2 s.h.
- **EPLS:5240** Topics in Education 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.
- **CBH:5310** Qualitative Research for Public Health 3 s.h.

# AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

## Housing, Community, and Economic Development (HCED)

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.

| Concentration Core: choose one* |                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| URP:6271                        | Housing Policy                                 |
| URP:6245                        | Growth Management                              |
| URP:6295                        | Creative Community and Economic Development    |
| Group A Electives:              |                                                |
| URP:3570                        | Poverty Policy                                 |
| URP:6243                        | Land Development Process                       |
| URP:6278                        | Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness I       |
| URP:6241                        | Strategic Management of Public and Non-Profit  |
| URP:6400                        | Sustainable Development: The Kerala Experience |

| Group B Electives: |                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FIN:4230           | Real Estate Process<br>(instructor approval required; pre-requisites)                                                |
| FIN:9230           | Real Estate Finance & Investments<br>(instructor approval required; pre-requisites)                                  |
| SSW:4843           | Social Welfare Policy and Practice                                                                                   |
| SSW:6400           | Theories and Skills for Working with Communities and Organizations<br>(instructor approval required; pre-requisites) |
| ECON:3350          | Industry Analysis                                                                                                    |
| ENTR:4200          | Entrepreneurship: Business Consulting                                                                                |
| ENTR:4400          | Managing the Growth Business                                                                                         |
| SSW:6400           | Real Estate Process<br>(instructor approval required; pre-requisites)                                                |

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

# AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

## Land Use and Environmental Planning

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.

| Concentration Core: |                                                | Group B Electives |                                               |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| URP:6256            | Environmental Policy                           | SEES:3350         | Urban Ecology                                 |
|                     |                                                | SEES:4150         | Health & Environment: GIS Applications        |
| Group A Electives   |                                                | SEES:4200         | Sustainability as a System Science            |
| URP:6243            | Land Development Process                       | CEE:3790          | Resilient Infrastructure and Emergency        |
|                     |                                                | CEE:4107          | Sustainable Systems                           |
|                     |                                                | CEE:5410          | Politics of Food, Energy, and Water Resources |
| URP:6266            | Transportation, Urban Form, and Sustainability | EES:3390          | Integrated Watershed Analysis                 |
|                     |                                                | JMC:5266          | Risk Communication                            |
| URP:6280            | Planning for Disaster Mitigation and Recovery  | OEH:4240          | Global Environmental Health                   |
|                     |                                                | OEH:4260          | Global Health and Water                       |
| URP:6400            | Sustainable Development: The Kerala Experience | LAW:8433          | Environmental Law                             |
|                     |                                                | LAW:8622          | International Environmental Law               |



# AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

## Transportation Planning

The field of transportation planning has expanded from relieving traffic congestion to questions related to social responsibility, accessibility, climate impacts, and the benefits of physically active travel. This underscores the need to attract people from diverse disciplinary and social backgrounds to the field. The next generation of transportation professionals will need a range of knowledge and skills that will allow them to see and solve problems without academic disciplinary boundaries.

| Concentration Core: |                                                | Group B Electives |                                  |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| URP:6266            | Transportation, Urban Form, and Sustainability | CEE:3763          | Traffic Engineering              |
| Group A Electives   |                                                |                   |                                  |
| URP:4262            | Transportation Research Methods & Analysis     | CEE:4730          | Transportation Infrastructure    |
| URP:6260            | Transportation Policy and Planning             | CEE:4762          | Design of Transportation Systems |
| URP:6263            | Special Topics in Transportation Planning      |                   |                                  |
| URP:6243            | Land Development Process                       | CPH:4220          | Global Road Safety               |

---

## Minimum Requirements for Transfer Credits:

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:

- Students must have been classified as enrolled in a graduate program during the semester(s) in which they took the requested "transfer" courses.
- The courses are evaluated as graduate-level classes. The Office of Graduate Admissions will make this determination for all external transcripts.
- 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.
- Their subject area is closely related to that of school courses.
- SPPA applies no more than 15 graduate semester hours that were completed prior to SPPA admission toward a student's plan of study.
- Courses older than ten years are inadmissible for credit.

All other Graduate College rules are complied with, including the minimum of 60 hours for two master's degrees.

---

## Timing

Students requesting credit for courses taken elsewhere should present their request, with supporting data, to the director of graduate studies at the beginning of their first semester in the program. Timing of the request is especially important since they may affect the student's first-year plan of study.

**Note:** It is important for students to understand that credits earned for work done elsewhere require approval by the SPPA Director of Graduate Studies.

---

## 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 appropriate 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 will be tested on the final exam.

---

## Credit for Prior Coursework 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, but the number of semester hours needed to graduate is not reduced.

**A student who is classified as a non-degree seeking 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 (e.g., 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 75% of total required 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.

## Overview

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.

The online SPPA Career Services Manual (available on Teams) provides program-specific career resources, including guidance on resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn profiles, interviewing, online portfolios, professional conferences, and other career-related topics. Students are encouraged to consult the manual as a first resource.

The career services coordinator is available to give individualized feedback and guidance. 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.

### Fall semester:

- Presentations on resumes, networking, and interviewing skills Complete resume and LinkedIn profiles.
- Mentor matches
- Begin applying for summer internships and post-graduation jobs.
- Organize your internship/job search utilizing links to potential employers are on our website.
- Create online portfolio.

### Spring semester:

- Mock interviews
- Specific internship/job openings posted daily on website Resume book sent
- Continue applying for positions.

# INTERNSHIPS

---

## Overview

Internships offer valuable, hands-on experience through on-the-job training. While not required, they are strongly encouraged. Internships provide students with three special opportunities:

- To obtain “real world” planning experience
- To reflect critically on how the URP curriculum links to those activities.
- To give a competitive edge when applying for jobs

Students may complete an internship for either course credit or not, depending on whether the credits are needed for the student's plan of study. Students may receive course credit for either paid or unpaid positions.

If a student completes an internship, regardless of whether they register for course credit or not, SPPA is still required to collect information for our accreditation agencies. Before the internship begins, students should send the career services coordinator their position title, the employer's name, and start date.

---

## 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 public affairs-related (i.e., scanning, receptionist, or shadowing are typically not acceptable internship arrangements).

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.

---

## Internship 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

---

## Internship Course Registration

Students have the option of completing a minimum of:

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

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

Students should register for **URP:6335: Internship**, during the semesters in which they work on 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 when the internship is completed (fall or spring). Students may register for a maximum of three (3) internship credits.

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 to receive course credit (240 for 3 s.h., 160 for 2 s.h., 80 hours for 1 s.h.).

---

## 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's 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:

- 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.
- 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 planning 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.
- 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 Credit Forms

All forms are located on the website.

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

---

## Financial Assistance for Unpaid Internships

When a summer internship is unpaid, 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 for 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 from alumni donations, 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 or 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.

# CAPSTONE PROJECTS

---

## Overview

All URP students are required to complete the Capstone courses in Sustainable Communities Labs I and II (URP:6209 and URP:6210).

URP students typically complete their Capstone project for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree during their last two semesters in the program.

In this project-based course, students work in a team that includes a project partner (or “client”), with faculty supervision, and produce a professional-quality deliverable. Capstone projects focus on planning related topics.

Every year, the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC) manages multiple community engagement projects. The purpose of Sustainable Communities Lab is to give students field project experience in which students work in teams to 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.

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.

Regular meetings with project partners and faculty mentors are essential for project success. Student teams working on IISC projects meet regularly with project partners and faculty mentors (at least monthly), to discuss progress and receive mentorship.



# PRACTICUM OPTION

Occasionally, an exceptional opportunity arises for a student to complete an extended internship or professional role while still a student in SPPA that requires student effort for all or part of a semester in addition to the normal summer internship period. Under certain circumstances, this experience can qualify as a practicum (with DEO approval). If the requirements below are met, the practicum may count as an internship and substitutes for the required Capstone courses Sustainable Communities Lab I and II. Students choosing the practicum option must register for URP/PBAF:6229, Practicum, for one to five semester hours during the practicum experience. Five total semester hours are required, spread across one or more semesters. At least one semester hour must be taken in the semester the student expects to graduate. The requirements for the practicum are as follows:

1. The practicum can be taken only after all but two core course requirements have been satisfied.
2. The student must obtain an internship or staff position with a planning or planning-related organization consisting of at least five continuous months of full-time employment.
3. The practicum experience must consist of a specific, structured project that will result in a polished final report. Students cannot receive practicum credit for an ordinary internship or job role, where the student is functioning primarily as a staff member assigned a variety of duties from day-to-day or week-to-week. The practicum must include a project similar in scope to a Sustainable Communities Lab project and this project must be a primary focus of the internship or job.
4. The project must include teamwork and institutional engagement in the same way that a Sustainable Communities Lab project entails teamwork. In other words, there must be shared responsibility for conducting the required analyses and for the final product, and there must be an internal client or interagency or community partner. Working independently under the supervision of an organization official does not constitute sufficient "teamwork."
  - a. The practicum will be conducted under a committee of three faculty members. The student must develop a work plan for the practicum in consultation with his or her committee. The work plan constitutes a contract and should include a description of the project, the milestones to be attained, the community engagement activities, and the final report to be produced. The work plan should also identify the person or persons to whom the final project is to be presented and should describe the nature of the teamwork involved. The plan is subject to the approval of the faculty, upon the committee's recommendation.
  - b. As the milestones identified in the work plan are attained, this should be reported to the committee. Minor work plan revisions may be made during the internship with the committee's approval. Upon returning to SPPA, the student must make a formal presentation of the project's final report to the committee and other faculty. The final report produced during the practicum must be submitted to the committee. The final report, the formal presentation, and the students' responses to questions asked by faculty at the formal presentation will constitute the final examination for students who select the practicum option.
5. Students undertaking a practicum should understand that agencies may alter the job description after the job or internship has begun, and that the nature of the project and of the teamwork involved may change as a result. The student is responsible for requesting faculty approval of a revised work plan, and the student should know that the faculty might not approve it. Thus, there is no guarantee that practicum credit will be awarded if the project is substantially changed. The committee awards a grade for the practicum based on the quality of the final report, the oral presentation, and the attainment of the milestones specified in the work plan.

**Retroactive approval will not be granted under any circumstances.**

# FINAL EXAMS

---

SPPA requires that a final examination be administered to each graduate student prior to receiving a degree. **The final examination builds upon core course content and the Sustainable Communities Capstone project.**

**The purpose of the final exam is to measure the student's ability to not only practice good planning but also to reflect on one's practice in the context of core 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 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.

The final exam consists of two parts: an oral exam, and a written exam. Faculty may waive a student's participation in the written exam depending on the student's performance during the oral exam, which takes place first.

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 a two-page paper that describes the specific contributions the student made to the Capstone project.**

Oral exams evaluate students' application of core course content to their Capstone projects. We evaluate student understanding, on a S/U basis, of each core course and professional ethics.

Students are offered a maximum of two oral question opportunities per core course. If a student successfully answers the first question, the examiners may move on to a new course. If a student response to the first question is unsatisfactory, a second question will be asked. If a student fails both questions orally, they will take the written exam for that course. Faculty should move on to a new course if a student fails to answer both questions.

Student responses are evaluated as "Satisfactory" (S) or "Unsatisfactory (U)" based on the answers agreed on by faculty in the Oral Exam Question Bank.

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.

## Undergraduate-to-Graduate (U2G)

### U2G Overview

U2G students are required to meet the course requirements outlined earlier as regular non-U2G students. However, U2G students may only apply a maximum of 16 semester hours of graduate courses completed prior to receiving their undergraduate degree (i.e., in their first year in SPPA) towards their URP degree. Students must complete at least a minimum of 26 additional hours toward the graduate degree after bachelor's degree conferral.

## Graduate-to-Graduate

### Combined Graduate Program Overview

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 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 area, although an environmental law course may be part of a planning 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 SPPA courses that will count towards the combined degree.
- Unless otherwise specified, Sustainable Communities Lab is required of students in combined degree programs.
- Satisfy SPPA's final examination requirement.

# UNDERGRADUATE-TO-GRADUATE (U2G)

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. Students must complete a minimum of 27 additional hours toward the graduate degree after bachelor’s degree conferral.

| Fall (3)       | Spring (3)      | Fall (4)                                      | Spring (4)                                 | Fall (5)                                | Spring (5)                       |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| UG Courses     | UG Courses      | URP:6200: Analytic Methods                    | URP:6201: Data Science for Urban Analytics | URP: 6335: Internship                   | URP:6210 Sustainable Comm Lab II |
|                |                 | URP:6202 Land Use Planning                    | URP:6225 Applied GIS                       | URP:6209 Sustainable Comm Lab I         | SPPA Concentration or Elective   |
|                |                 | URP:6203: Making of Cities History & Theories | PBAF:6233: Public Finance & Budgeting      | URP:6205: Economics for Policy Analysis | SPPA Concentration or Elective   |
|                |                 | URP:6208: Program Seminar (1 hr)              | UG courses needed                          | URP:6258: Systems & Scenario Thinking   | SPPA Concentration or Elective   |
|                |                 | UG Courses needed                             | UG courses needed                          |                                         |                                  |
|                |                 | UG Courses needed                             |                                            |                                         |                                  |
| UG Credits: 75 | UG Credits: 90+ | UG Credits: 106<br>Grad Credits: 10           | UG Credits: 121<br>Grad Credits: 19        | Grad Credits: 31                        | Grad Credits: 45+                |
|                | Apply to U2G    |                                               | Bachelor's degree conferred                |                                         | MS Conferred                     |

# URBAN PLANNING & LAW

| URP Requirements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | JD Requirements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>45 semester hours total required for graduation:</b></p> <p>12 semester hours counted from JD.</p> <p>Of the 45 semester hours required for graduation, the student will complete 31 semester hours that are unique to the URP (11 courses):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analytic Methods for Policy (URP:6200)</li> <li>Data Science for Urban Analytics (URP:6201)</li> <li>Land Use Planning: Law &amp; Practice (URP:6202)</li> <li>Making of Cities: History &amp; Theory (URP:6203)</li> <li>Economics for Policy Analysis (URP:6205)</li> <li>Applied GIS (URP:6225)</li> <li>Public Finance and Budgeting (URP:6233)</li> <li>Systems &amp; Scenario Thinking (URP:6258)</li> <li>Sustainable Communities Lab Capstone (URP:6209 and URP:6210)</li> <li>Program Seminar (URP:6208)</li> <li>5 or 6 semester hours of elective</li> </ul> | <p><b>88 semester hours total required for graduation</b></p> <p>12 semester hours counted from URP.</p> <p>Of the 88 semester hours required for graduation, the following general additional requirements must be satisfied:</p> <p>All required first-year courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 64 semester hours of Faculty Instruction Courses.</li> <li>At least 6 semester hours of experiential coursework.</li> <li>At least 4 upper-level writing units, of which at least 2 must be faculty-supervised.</li> <li>Professional Responsibility and Constitutional Law II.</li> </ul> <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> |

**The combined total minimum amount of credit earned is 112 semester hours.**

# URBAN PLANNING & SOCIAL WORK

| URP Requirements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | MSW Requirements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>45 semester hours total required for graduation:</b></p> <p>9 semester hours counted from MSW.</p> <p>Of the 45 semester hours required for graduation, the student will complete 31 semester hours that are unique to the URP (11 courses):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analytic Methods for Policy (URP:6200)</li> <li>• Data Science for Urban Analytics (URP:6201)</li> <li>• Land Use Planning: Law &amp; Practice (URP:6202)</li> <li>• Making of Cities: History &amp; Theory (URP:6203)</li> <li>• Economics for Policy Analysis (URP:6205)</li> <li>• Applied GIS (URP:6225)</li> <li>• Public Finance and Budgeting (URP:6233)</li> <li>• Systems &amp; Scenario Thinking (URP:6258)</li> <li>• Sustainable Communities Lab Capstone (URP:6209 and URP:6210)</li> <li>• Program Seminar (URP:6208)</li> </ul> <p>An approved URP concentration area through elective coursework in SPPA and SSW</p> | <p><b>36 semester hour MSW with Advanced Standing subprogram and 54 semester hour MSW with the null or no subprogram (called 'regular standing' by the MSW program)</b></p> <p>9 semester hours counted from URP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All core course requirements for the MSW – 22 semester hours (or 4 hours for Advanced Standing).</li> <li>• An approved MSW Specialization through coursework in SSW– 23 semester hours.</li> </ul> |

**Students in the combined URP-MSW program must satisfy the practicum/Capstone requirement for both degree programs.** This requirement may be satisfied by a sufficiently demanding applied community engagement commitment approved by both programs.

# **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**ADVISING  
ASSISTANTSHIPS  
STUDENT CONCERNS  
STUDENT RESOURCES  
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA POLICIES**

## Advisor Assignments

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 program requirements.

## 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.

## Plans of Study

Each student is to develop and review a two-year plan of study with their advisor during their first semester. Advisors should add the approved plan of study to each student's MAUI advising notes.

Before a student can register for the next semester, their plan should be reviewed and revised, if necessary, in conversation with their advisor. Students must obtain advisor approval prior to registering for courses. Students should be aware that MAUI tools do not calculate if the student has met requirements for graduation.



---

## Area of Concentration Forms

Each student should work with their advisor to declare an area of concentration during their first semester. All students must submit an official Area of Concentration form before they can register for their final semester of courses. Area of concentration forms are completed in workflow and will be included in electronic student records (MAUI).

---

## Progress Self-Evaluation

All students must submit a Progress Self-Evaluation to their advisor near the end of each semester of study. The form and content for the progress self-evaluation can vary and may include an Individual Development Plan form available through the Graduate College. The topics for each semester's evaluation are outlined below.

**Fall 1:** How is the adjustment to graduate school?

**Spring 1:** What are your goals for yourself in this program?

**Fall 2:** How close are you to reaching the goals you set?

**Spring 2:** Reflect on your progress.

In addition to the above topics, students should include any challenges or difficulties they are facing in a given semester, so their advisor can address concerns on a timely basis.

---

## Best Practices

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.

# Registration Reminders

## Avoid scheduling issues with concentration core courses

- Map out all required coursework in the first semester.

## Note any course grades below B-

- Track grades each semester.
- Check in regularly to find discuss any issues.

## Calculate program credits and GPA

- Any courses under 3000 cannot count toward program degree or GPAs.
- ESL coursework does not count toward program degree or GPA.
- In cases when a student has re-taken a required course, both grades will be used in computing the program GPA.

## Register for Graduate level courses

- All SPPA students should register for level **5000-6000** if offered.
- No more than 3 hours of **Readings** courses or **Independent Study** may be counted towards a concentration area.
- SPPA students may earn up to **6 semester hours** of upper-level (3000-4999) undergraduate coursework towards their graduate degree.

## Balance Group A and Group B electives

- Students **must** take at least one 3 semester hour course in Group A (SPPA courses)
- Students **may** take up to 3 semester hours in Group B (courses in other departments)

## Assistantship Assignments

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, 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, school needs, student skills that can meet those needs, and past performance as a graduate assistant. 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.

## Assistantships 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. 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

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 time period indicated in the written notice, the student's assistantship may be subject to suspension 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.

---

# 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.
8. 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.

---

## **SPPA Student Association (SPPASA)**

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

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.

# Course Evaluations

## Purpose

Standardized forms for evaluation of the SPPA'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:

- They inform the instructor about course elements where students feel they did well or poorly;
- They provide insight into ways a course could be improved (e.g., select another text), and;
- 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 Surveys

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, SPPA's facilities, curriculum, and procedures. If students wish, they may follow up their responses to the survey with an oral interview with the director. SPPA uses the results from the survey to plan and implement improvements.

---

## Committee on Progress

Student progress is monitored by the faculty. One indication of unsatisfactory progress toward completion is 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.

---

## 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.

---

## Career Services

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.

Tips specific to students in each program can be found in the online SPPA Career Services Manual (available on Teams).

---

## Conference Travel

SPPA will provide one-time partial funding to support student travel to a professional conference that enhances students' education and career preparation. 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](#)



# International Student & Scholar Services

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) provides leadership in international education and intercultural learning through services to international students and scholars, their dependents, the University, and the surrounding community.

ISSS is more than the "immigration" office. Although helping international students and scholars with immigration issues is a significant part of our work, with nearly 9,000 in-person visits to advisors each year and thousands of electronic forms processed, we are also heavily involved in intercultural and adjustment programming for students and scholars, providing cultural competency and intercultural awareness training for staff and faculty, and supporting the Iowa City area community to be a welcoming place for international visitors.

## Federal Updates on Immigration



### Federal Updates on Immigration Regulations

Federal Updates on Immigration Regulations managed by the University of Iowa International Student and Scholars...

 International Programs

This page lists all presidential proclamations and federal agency actions which appear to be related to international students. If there is any change that affects those in F or J status, we will explain it in detail.

## F-1 Student Resources



### F-1 Students

information for F-1 visa status international students at the University of Iowa

 International Programs

A compiled a list of resources that you'll need to stay up-to-date on current policies and procedures, travel, inviting family to the U.S., and more.

# General Use Guidelines

Note: SPPA will be moving to a new space in 2027. Policies regarding keys and shared spaces will be updated accordingly.

**Any misuse of school supplies, resources, or facilities may subject a student to disciplinary action.**

## 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.

## Cheating and Plagiarism

In practice, the exact definition of "plagiarism" is dependent upon the unique attributes of the creative work of a particular discipline. Thus, different academic disciplines and cultures may have different interpretations regarding what constitutes plagiarism. With this in mind, the Graduate College will operate in the following manner when a program or department discovers an act or acts of plagiarism on the part of a graduate student.

1. If the faculty members of a program or department determine that the transgression is not major, or else feel that there is a misunderstanding of the acts which constitute plagiarism, the program or department may wish to work with the student so as to prevent future occurrences of plagiarism on the part of that student. Written notification of the offense and the remediation for the offense must be sent to the Graduate College for inclusion in the student's file.
2. If the faculty members of a program or department discover an act (or acts) of plagiarism that is (are) sufficiently egregious that expulsion from the program is warranted, the student will be terminated from their graduate program for reasons of plagiarism. In this case, the student will be simultaneously terminated from the Graduate College of The University of Iowa. The program or department must notify the student of their termination in writing. All relevant facts, as well as the process for appealing the decision, must be contained in the termination letter. The Graduate College must receive a copy of the termination letter.

The appeal process for students accused of academic misconduct is specified in The University of Iowa document, "Policies and Regulations Affecting Students, C. Academic Misconduct," which states: "Questions of academic dishonesty arising within the colleges of Medicine, Law, Pharmacy, and Dentistry, and the Graduate College are treated on an individual basis.

In the Graduate College, questions of academic dishonesty are handled at the departmental level. If the departmental decision is appealed, the dean may appoint an appeals committee of faculty and students from a slate of nominees prepared by the Graduate Council and the Graduate Student Senate to recommend an appropriate course of action."

The appeal process must be initiated by the student. If the student wishes to appeal the department's or program's action, that appeal must be lodged with the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the Graduate College within 30 days of program or departmental dismissal.

## AI Use

Generative AI is rapidly transforming the academic and research landscape, offering new opportunities for discovery and innovation. It is important to approach generative AI with a thoughtful approach, balancing the benefits with potential risks and ethical considerations. More information about university wide AI policies can be found on the ITS website.

**AI usage varies from class to class. Students should check with their course instructor about that specific courses policies.**

## Sexual Harassment and Misconduct

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.

## Non-Discrimination

Complaints alleging discrimination based on race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth and related conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, or associational preferences, may be brought to the Office of Civil Rights Compliance (OCRC) pursuant to the Policy on Human Rights. Any student, staff member, or faculty member may file a complaint of discrimination with the OCRC against any other member of the university community who is believed to have violated the policy. Where appropriate, such complaints may be filed against units, departments, or other organizational components of the university. Discrimination complaints may be filed as either informal or formal complaints with the OCRC. For more information, consult the Office of Civil Rights Compliance website.

9 Core Classes (25 SH)

| Core Class                         | Semester | Hours | Grade Earned |
|------------------------------------|----------|-------|--------------|
| Analytic Methods (6200)            | Fall     | 3     |              |
| Land Use Planning (6202)           | Fall     | 3     |              |
| Making of Cities (6203)            | Fall     | 3     |              |
| Economics for Policy (6205)        | Fall     | 3     |              |
| Program Seminar (6208)             | Fall     | 1     |              |
| Applied GIS (6225)                 | Spring   | 3     |              |
| Public Finance & Budgeting (6233)  | Spring   | 3     |              |
| Systems & Scenario Thinking (6258) | Fall     | 3     |              |

Electives (14 SH)

| Concentration Area & Electives | Semester | Hours | Grade Earned |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------|--------------|
| Concentration Core             |          | 3     |              |
| Conentration Elective 1        |          | 3     |              |
| Concentration Elective 2       |          | 3     |              |
| Elective 1/Internship          |          | 3     |              |
| Elective 2                     |          | 3     |              |

Capstone (6 SH)

| Capstone                   | Semester | Hours | Grade Earned |
|----------------------------|----------|-------|--------------|
| Sustainable Communities I  | Fall     | 3     |              |
| Sustainable Communities II | Spring   | 3     |              |