Architectural Thesis

A. Master of Architecture Program

Architectural Design Thesis

Architectural Design Thesis is an independent design research project on a topic selected and developed by the student. Design Thesis is an opportunity for each student in the Master of Architecture or Master of Science in Architecture (Architectural Design Track) to define an individual position with regard to the discipline of architecture. Normally, Design Thesis occurs during the final two semesters of a student's curriculum at UMSoA, and includes Directed Research (ARC 699) and Final Degree Project (ARC 610).

Graduate M.Arch. students are expected to pursue an independent thesis project in their last semester. In exceptional cases and only with the approval of the Program Director, student can pursue an alternative track after completing the thesis preparation course under the direction of selected instructors, including visiting critics if applicable.

During the Spring semester preceding their final year, the Program Director will ask students to prepare and submit a well-defined proposal of their research topic, along with their current portfolio. Research topics are individual, but may be constrained within a proposed 'meta-theme', or by selected topics. Students must prepare a concise 300-word proposal describing a topic and how it will be investigated. The proposal should introduce the topic and describe its relevance to the field of architecture; it should identify specific questions that will be addressed; and specify the methodology to be used, and explain the appropriateness of the methodology.

During the Spring semester preceding the thesis year, students will select a Fall Upper Level Design Studio that best corresponds with their research topic (to be taken in parallel with ARC 699 Directed Research).

ARC 699 Directed Research will be conducted during the Fall semester of the thesis year as independent research with a designated faculty member. The Graduate Director, with the help of the Coordinator and faculty, will evaluate proposals and interview the students, and assign students to each thesis faculty member. Students may arrange additional advisors. In order to enhance continuity for those students doing an thesis/independent scholarly research project, the same faculty member will be assigned to the student during both (thesis) semesters.

At the conclusion of their final year, all graduating students will be required to present their thesis project as a book.

Important ingredients of a good thesis:

- A relevant question

- A discussion of the context/discourse of the question
- Rigorous and well-targeted research
- Site documentation and analysis
- Demonstration of critical thinking
- Final project that tests the ideas discussed
- Indication of a direction for future development of the question
- Packaging (so that the thesis and its research can be shared)

The final Architectural Design Thesis should be packaged as a book. At a minimum, it should contain the following:

- Table of Contents
- Abstract Thesis Statement: a concise statement of the topic/subject you propose to address in your project, describing the theory/concept in terms of hypothesis and the approach/method to carry out the study/prove the result.
- A narrative that elaborates the thesis statement as an argument based on relevant evidence
- Methodology: Describe the process of how you have pursued your design/study, including the critical and theoretical basis of your investigation.
- Precedent Study: a summary of precedents relevant to the subject including appropriate analysis.
- Findings: design and text that illustrates the conclusion of the study, with a critical assessment of the result.
- Annotated Bibliography: research sources to be examined to inform the study (The Chicago Manual of Style format), and a concise explanation of its relevancy to the study/discourse.

Typical Schedule (subject to refinement):

Spring preceding thesis year

- Preparation of 300-word proposal describing a topic and how it will be investigated
- Assignment of advisors
- Meet with advisor
- Develop plan of study

Fall of thesis year

- Enroll in ARC 699 Directed Research (Pre-thesis)
- Develop a refined abstract thesis statement
- Develop and present a methodology
- Research and presentation of annotated bibliography
- Research and presentation of precedents
- Develop conceptual outline of design
- Develop a text narrative addressing topic
- Present pre-thesis book

Spring of thesis year

- Enroll in ARC 610 Final Degree Project (Thesis)
- Develop design/text, draft structure of final deliverable/presentation
- Refine design/text, final formatting
- Present final design
- Present final Architectural Design Thesis book

B. Master of Science in Architecture

Thesis and Thesis Alternatives

Master of Science in Architecture students must have an advisor or an advisory committee to guide his or her program of study, offer advice in meeting degree requirements, and aid in progress and accomplishments. It is the student's responsibility to select the advisor or advisory committee prior to completing 15 graduate credit hours and prior to enrolling in ARC 610 Directed Research. You should expect to have several conversations/meetings with your thesis advisor to focus your proposed work in advance of the beginning of Semester II.

Students in Architectural Design track must select a single advisor. The advisor must be a full-time member of the School of Architecture faculty (regular, educator or lecturer) unless approved otherwise by the Graduate Architecture Program Director.

Students in the Architectural Studies track must select a three-member advisory committee. The advisory committee chair must be a full-time member of the School of Architecture faculty (regular, educator or lecturer) unless approved otherwise by the Graduate Architecture Program Director. In addition to the chair, students in the Architectural Studies track must select two additional faculty readers (a maximum of one may be from outside the School of Architecture.

Plan of study

All Master of Science in Architecture students must submit a Plan of Study prior to completing 15 graduate credit hours and prior to completing any Research and Thesis or Project and Report hours. The Plan of Study must meet the requirements of a student's particular concentration and the minimum requirements for the Master of Science in Architecture degree. The Plan of Study must be signed by all members of the student's advisory committee, and the Director of the Master of Science in Architecture Program. A written abstract must be approved by the thesis advisor (and readers, where appropriate), signing a copy of the abstract, before the semester begins.

M.Sc.Arch Architectural Design Track:

Students in the Architectural Design Track follow thesis procedures for Master of Architecture students, with the following difference:

- All students are required to take ARC 629 Proseminar in the Fall semester (Semester I). Before the end of Proseminar, students must:
    - Prepare a 300-word proposal describing a topic and how it will be investigated
    - Select a thesis advisor
    - Meet with advisor
    - Develop plan of study

- ARC 699 Directed Research, and all related tasks, are done in Spring semester (Semester II)

- ARC 610 Final Degree Project, and all related tasks, are done in Summer or Fall (Semester III)

M.Sc. Arch Architectural Studies Track
Students in the M.Sc.Arch Architectural Studies Track have the following options, depending on the specific area of research concentration and the requirements of their advisor or the advisory committee:

- Option 1. Coursework with Project and Report (non-thesis option)
- Option 2. Research and Thesis (thesis option)

Option 1: Coursework with Project and Report (non-thesis option)
Project and Report students will work under the guidance of a project advisor who, along with an advisory committee, will approve the Plan of Study, help guide the project development, and review the final work. The final examination and/or defense will be based on coursework and/or project work as determined by the examining committee. Students following this option may count up to 6 credit hours for the Project and Report, towards the 36 (min.) credit hours required for the degree. Two options are available:

> Practicum: Non-thesis students may participate in a practicum studio and produce research on a specific topic of interest in collaboration with the office in which they are working as part of the practicum. The research work should result in a design application with significant impact on the built environment that can be documented and applied to other projects. Students participating in the practicum option will deliver a Project Report following a format set by the advisor.
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> Case Study: Non-thesis students may alternatively develop a Case Study. A case study will be an in-depth investigation of a single study topic identified within the area of interest defined by the student. It may be based on a single building or component of a built environment or community and may include experiments, project(s) or analysis of archival information. The structure of the Case Study will include a literature case study, and the definition of at least three relevant questions about the topic area. Students will write a paper describing and detailing a case study that explores the questions previously identified.

Option 2: Research and Thesis (thesis option)
Research and Thesis students will work under the guidance of a research advisory committee, with a designated advisory committee chair, who will supervise the research, approve the Plan of Study, and form the thesis review committee. The final evaluation will be comprised of a public defense of the thesis work and the final thesis document. Students following this option are required to take ARC 629 Pro-seminar: Research in Design, ARC 699 Directed Research, and ARC 610 Master Thesis. Submission of the thesis documentation electronically to the Graduate School,

according the University's ETD (Electronic Theses and Disertations) format, is required for completion of the degree.

Thesis students are required to engage in research work that demonstrates their preparation to contribute to the body of knowledge within their chosen disciplines and to the resolution of complex questions regarding the built environment. The thesis should provide the opportunity for maturation of the student's knowledge and abilities, demonstrating their academic accomplishment and professional potential. The student's thesis work must be documented in a manner acceptable to the student's advisory committee and in accordance with the requirements of the Graduate School.