



BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Urban Planning

Master of Urban and Regional Planning

2026 - 2027

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A. Overview of Handbook

This handbook highlights the graduate program policies and procedures for students in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree program in the Department of Urban Planning. These guidelines exist in addition to the policies outlined in [Ball State's Graduate Catalog](#). This includes student rights, campus security, admissions, course withdrawal, fees, counseling, accessibility, and many other issues. You are encouraged to become familiar with both guides. In all cases where there is a discrepancy between the Graduate Catalog and this Handbook, please let us know. Policies and degree requirements in the Graduate Catalog supersede any information in this Handbook.

B. About the Department

1. **Program Description** – The Department of Urban Planning is part of the R. Wayne Estopinal College of Architecture and Planning (CAP). The CAP also hosts departments of architecture, landscape architecture, and construction management and interior design. The Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) is accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) and is the only accredited Master of Urban Planning degree in Indiana.
2. **Department History** – Ball State established the CAP in 1965 and began offering a graduate urban planning program in 1975. The first master of urban and regional planning degree was awarded in 1977.

At this time, Ball State's College of Science and Humanities offered an undergraduate major in urban and regional studies (URS). In 1982, the URS program was transferred to the CAP, and work began on designing an undergraduate professional degree program.

Once the CAP developed the Bachelor of Urban Planning and Development (BUPD), the university phased out the URS program. In the fall of 1986, three students entered the BUPD program, and in 1990, the program's first students graduated. A year later in 1991, 34 master's degree students graduated, and in 2001, our accelerated track opened to graduates with accredited degrees. Both the MURP and the BUPD programs are accredited by the PAB and are the only accredited planning programs in Indiana.

Combined, more than 650 students have graduated from our degree programs. Our impact is strongest right here in the Hoosier state, but we have alumni from California to Maryland and from North Dakota to Florida. China, Ghana, Jordan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, and Spain are home to other graduates.

3. **R. Wayne Estopinal College of Architecture and Planning** –The CAP is home to three other departments including the Departments of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Construction Management and Interior Design. A graduate program in historic preservation is housed within the Department of Architecture and an urban design program is located in Indianapolis, at CAP: Indy.

The CAP has a long history of academic excellence and community engagement and enjoys strong alumni support. The dean of CAP is Dave Ferguson. You can find his office in AB 104. CAP also hosts events each year, including exhibits in the first-floor gallery and a guest lecture series.

Also on the first floor, you will find the Drawings and Documents Archive, the Building Materials Sample Collection, and a branch of the University Libraries. In the basement, you will find the Communications Resource Center (commonly called the CRC) where you can print documents and purchase basic art supplies. These are resources available to CAP students. Also in the basement is the Institute for Digital Intermedia Arts, a newer addition to the CAP family.

C. Admissions

1. **Materials & Criteria** – Admission information is on this [website](#). The department does not have a separate application for admission; apply to the graduate school at Ball State and select Urban Planning as your program of study.

To be eligible for admission to the MURP program, you must meet the criteria below:

- Earned a minimum of 3.0 GPA from your undergraduate degree-granting institution.
- Applicants whose GPA falls below the 3.0 department minimum but above the graduate school minimum of 2.75 may also be eligible for probationary admission to the MURP program. This option is available to students who have provided sufficient evidence of academic and/or professional achievement to indicate their potential for success in a graduate program. Additional application materials may be requested to be considered. Students admitted on a probationary status must earn a minimum GPA of 3.0 in their first 9 semester credits of graduate work or be academically dismissed.

To complete your application, you will need to upload the following required materials to your [Cardinal Landing Portal](#):

- **Transcript/credential evaluation from your highest earned degree:** learn more about BSU's [transcript/credential evaluation requirements](#).
 - **Resume:** summary of education, experiences, and skills.
 - **Statement of Purpose:** a 300- to 500-word statement of purpose.
2. **Deadlines** – All application materials, including a completed application form and unofficial transcripts, must be submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks before the term in which the student wishes to begin graduate study. Your application must be completed two weeks before the start of the semester you're planning to enroll. Start of term dates can be found on our [Academic Calendar](#). If you are an international applicant, your application must be received by the [international admissions deadline](#).
 3. **Selection & Notification** – Once you're admitted, please check back to your Cardinal Landing Portal for information about the post-admissions process. Please feel free to contact the Graduate Director, Dr. Sanglim Yoo, and the Department Administrative Coordinator, Ms. Christine Rhine.

D. Degree Requirements

See the [current Graduate Catalog](#) for the complete curriculum. Also see the [Curriculum Samples](#) for Two-Year Track (48 Credits), One-Year Track (36 Credits), and an Accelerated Track (48 Credits).

1. **Required Courses and Electives** – For the required courses, please see the [curriculum samples](#).

Elective classes at the 500 or 600 level with the prefixes ARCH, CAP, LA, PLAN, SUST, and UD can be used toward your MURP degree. Other electives must be approved by the MURP graduate director. Typically, these come from areas such as Sociology, Political Science, Public Administration, Religious Studies, Natural Resources, or Anthropology, but others may be permitted. A limited number of transfer classes may also count either as electives or in place of required classes. Your advisor can answer questions about these.

Electives give you an opportunity to explore multiple topics that interest you or to narrow in on a focused interest that you want to develop. This section is designed to point out some of those focused areas that fit well with our curriculum and are closely aligned with planning. Electives must be taken at either the 500 or 600 level to count toward a graduate degree.

2. **Concentrations, Tracks, Cognates** – The Department of Urban Planning offers the following three tracks:
 - **MURP Track 1 (Two-Year Track, 48 Credits):** If you're pursuing a degree in planning for the first time, this two-year, 48-credit program is for you. The standard track is also for students already in the workforce.
 - **MURP Track 2 (One-Year Track, 36 Credits):** This one-year, 36-credit course of study is for students who've earned a bachelor's degree in planning, accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board.
 - **Accelerated Track (Two Semesters and 2 Summers Track, 48 Credits):** Begin your studies as an undergraduate at Ball State and double-count 9 hours. Learn how an [Accelerated Master's Program](#) works.
3. **Dual Degree Options** – It is possible at Ball State to earn two master's degrees simultaneously and to share some credits between the two of them. This can sometimes be completed by adding as little as one more semester to your schedule. The best advice is to start planning early. The most common dual degree our students seek is the Master of Urban Design, which is a one-year program offered only at Ball State's Indianapolis campus.
4. **Certificate Program Options** – You might choose to earn a certificate alongside your MURP degree.
 - [Real Estate Development](#) is a common choice here and can easily be earned alongside your MURP degree. It is a popular certificate option offered through the Department of Urban Planning and requires 15 credit hours, with 9 credit hours of required core courses and 6 credit hours of electives.
 - [Geographic Information Science \(GIS\)](#) is another certificate option offered through the Department of Geography. It requires 15 credit hours, making it a comfortable use for your MURP electives and giving you expertise in using the industry-standard GIS software commonly used in cities and towns.

- **Social and Environmental Justice** is offered through the Department of Architecture in CAP and requires 12 credit hours, with our **PLAN 613 Quantitative Methods and Social Justice** counting for three of those.
- **Certificate in Sustainability** is an online certificate that requires 12 credit hours.

E. Guidelines for Satisfactory Progress

1. **Hours Required** – Even if you are allowed to make substitutions for required classes, you must complete 48 hours to earn the MURP degree (or 36 hours if you are a fast-track student with an undergraduate degree in planning from an institution accredited by the PAB).

Taking 12 credit hours per semester will keep you on track to graduate in two years. You are permitted to take up to 15 hours per semester. Fast-track students must typically take 15 hours per semester to finish in one calendar year and must ensure that 60 percent of their credit hours are taken at the 600 level, a requirement of graduate school.

2. **Thesis Proposal** – This applies only to *thesis students*. Students who want to write a master's thesis must submit a 2-page statement of intent ***by the Friday of the last week of their second semester***. The graduate director, Dr. Sanglim Yoo, will review the students' proposal. When approved, students schedule a public presentation of their thesis proposal before the end of the final week. During the Summer semester, students enroll in PLAN 683 Planning Thesis Methods (Online) as an independent study and develop the thesis proposal. After successfully completing both requirements, students are exempt from taking PLAN 685 Planning Capstone Studio and will register for THES 698 for six hours.

A statement of intent must include the following items briefly.

- Title of a study: A concise and descriptive title that clearly reflects the thesis topic
- Problem Statement: Clearly state the problem the study aims to address
- Objectives of Study: Define the specific objectives of the study
- Research Questions: List the questions the thesis will explore or investigate
- Methods: How you will answer the research questions you listed above. Provide a brief data collection and analysis plan, detailing where you will collect data and how you will utilize it.
- Significance of the Study: Explain why and to whom this study is important and how it will contribute to the discipline of urban planning. A student must include at least five citations.
- Timeline: A proposed timeline for the completion of the thesis, including major milestones and deadlines. The important dates and deadlines for the Graduate School are [here](#).
- Committee: If a student registers for 6-credit hours of THES 698, then the student must form a committee of three. The committee must include at least one advisor and two committee members. Students are responsible for forming a committee. The department needs committee members' resumes to verify graduate faculty status.

Upon approval by the graduate director, students must submit the Thesis Topic Approval Form to the graduate school.

3. **Independent Studies** – After successfully finishing the *first two semesters*, you are permitted to take up to nine credit hours of independent study as you work toward the MURP degree. You must submit your proposed course of study to a faculty member and gain that faculty member's approval to work with you and supervise your study. Faculty members are under no obligation to grant independent study requests, and students in an independent study course must work diligently and meet their obligations as in any other course. If a faculty member agrees to work with you, the administrative coordinator will create an independent study course specifically for you and will give the CRN for that course only to you.
4. **Advising** – The chair of the department is Dr. John West, and your academic advisor is Dr. Sanglim Yoo. You are encouraged to make an appointment to talk about your goals with either of them. Graduate School is a time for you to claim a specialty and to explore topics of interest to you. We allow for ample electives because of this. Your advisor can help you select classes that will meet your needs and set you up for future success. Progress toward your degree is tracked in a system called Stellic. You are encouraged to consult it frequently to make sure you are on track and to chart progress toward your degree. Access Stellic and other Ball State systems through the myballstate web page.
5. **Requirements** – You must maintain a 3.0 graduate GPA to remain in the MURP program after completing 9 credits. Students whose cumulative GPA falls below this minimum will be placed on academic warning and may need to take additional steps. To remove warning status, students must raise their GPA to 3.0 by the time they complete their next 9 credits.

F. Program Milestones

1. **Milestone #1: First Semester** – You must sign up for the **PLAN 500 Planning Entrance Survey**, an entrance assessment in your first semester. Your replies are important for our internal bookkeeping purposes. It is not a test and will not affect your admission to the program or grades. The assessment will be in Canvas and should be taken during the first month of the semester.

The first semester is also a good time to consider how you want to use your electives. You may organize these around a particular theme and develop a specialty. The department recommends considering a specialization that aligns with one of the graduate certificates offered at Ball State, such as sustainability or real estate development. Graduate Director Dr. Yoo can also work with students who want to complete dual degree programs. Regardless of whether you are choosing a certificate or a dual degree, your electives can often count towards both degree programs.

2. **Milestone #2: Second Semester**—In your second semester, you will register for the **PLAN 690 Planning Portfolio Review**. Appendix B explains the portfolio creation and review processes in detail, and **PLAN 605 Introduction to Design and Communication Techniques for Planners** discusses them in depth. Portfolio completion is required before registering in Banner to get credit for an internship.

For the portfolio review, you will create a portfolio of your coursework as detailed in the portfolio guide at the end of this document and throughout **PLAN 605**

Introduction to Design and Communication Techniques for Planners. Typically, in the spring semester of your first year, you will register for portfolio review, **PLAN 690 Planning Portfolio Review**. In this class, you will turn in printed and electronic copies of your portfolio and related documents and go through a mock interview with a team of faculty members who will provide feedback on your work. Passing the portfolio process is required before embarking upon an internship.

To learn more about the portfolio, see Appendix B. Sample portfolios will be provided in Canvas and in the department office.

Capstone, or Thesis: In the spring of your first year, **PLAN 613 Qualitative Methods and Social Justice** must be taken prior to PLAN 683 Planning Thesis Methods (Summer semester, for thesis students only) or PLAN 684 Planning Capstone Proposal (Third semester, for capstone students only).

3. Milestone #3: Summer Semester

Internship: An internship of 200 hours or more is required of all students. Most graduate students do their internship during the summer between the first and second years. It is permissible to do it during a later semester, however.

The office receives many notices of internships each semester. These are posted on the bulletin board outside the conference room and emailed to students. CAP organizes a job and internship fair each spring, and typically half a dozen providers of planning internships attend. Most of our providers, however, do not make the trip to the fair and will expect you to apply online and to schedule an interview.

Often, students find internships by approaching people they would like to work for and asking for an opportunity. It's best to do this early, even over the holiday break. The [Career Center](#) provides many opportunities to have your resume reviewed, practice interview skills, and receive other job-related help. Sometimes employers post internships there as well.

Besides signing up in Banner to get credit for your internship (**PLAN 691 Internship**), you will also fill out the internship registration form and send it to the administrative coordinator once you have confirmed a position. At the close of your internship, you and your supervisor will both evaluate your work. The forms for these processes will be posted in Canvas; you can request them at any time from the department office by emailing planning@bsu.edu

Thesis: Upon approval of the thesis proposal by the department chair and the graduate director, students who wish to write a thesis will take **PLAN 683, Planning Thesis Methods** (Online), during the summer.

4. Milestone #4: Third Semester – In your third semester, you will have more space for electives and will study research methods as you begin thinking about your final project.

Capstone, or Thesis: Part of your education includes a final 'capstone' experience. The capstone sequence includes **PLAN 684 Planning Capstone Proposal**, which

you will take in the fall of your second year, and **PLAN 685 Planning Capstone Studio**, which you will take in your final semester. These classes will be oriented around a year-long collective project with real-world impact. Students move from theory to practice to reflection over the year, honing both practical skills and a critical sense of what constitutes good planning. In the past, students have worked on the sustainability plan for Ball State University and a public participation plan for the Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission.

Alternatively, highly motivated students may complete an independent thesis if they have met the requirements described elsewhere in this document prior to their third semester. To learn more about the thesis, see Appendix A.

5. **Milestone #5: Fourth Semester** – In your fourth semester, you will register for **PLAN 699 Planning Exit Survey**, an exit assessment. Like the entrance assessment, it is found in Canvas and is used for internal bookkeeping purposes.

Typically, you will follow the MURP curriculum plan in the Graduate Catalog, but exceptions can be made if you have taken similar classes in the past or have a design background. If you think you qualify for an exception, provide documentation such as a syllabus or course description of your previous work to the graduate director and discuss your options.

6. **Milestone #6: Graduation** – Graduation is not automatic. You must apply in Banner to graduate. Do this at the beginning of your final semester. If you are working toward a dual degree or have added a certificate to your curriculum, be sure to apply to graduate from both programs. The [Graduate School web pages](#) contain important information about deadlines, forms, and procedures. Please become familiar with what is there.

If you have not finished your coursework by the end of the fourth semester, you may still walk at graduation. You will have to reapply for graduation and pay the fee again in the semester you expect to complete your work. To receive the degree, you are expected to complete it within 6 years of enrollment. See the Graduate Catalog for full details.

7. **Milestone #7: After Graduation** – You will always be part of the CAP family, and we hope you will continue your relationship with us after graduation. Toward the end of your program, we will ask for your permanent email address so we can keep in touch. It is important to our accreditation and to our ability to continue to meet the needs of professionals in the field that we can occasionally send you a survey to see how your education is meeting your needs and to hear any feedback you have for us. We will occasionally share news with you as well. You will be welcome to come back and serve on review juries in our studio classes, take part in the annual job/internship fair, or perhaps be a guest lecturer. We hope you will follow us on social media and keep us informed about your accomplishments as well.
8. **Milestone #8: The Job Market** – Each year, many of our graduates land jobs before they even finish classes. They find jobs with city, state, regional, and national government agencies, nonprofit organizations, community development corporations, architecture firms, real estate development firms, and others. A few pursue teaching or apply to PhD programs as well. Many grads work in Indiana, particularly in Indianapolis and its suburbs. Chicago draws other alumni. Our graduates are

scattered across the United States, from Florida to Montana and California to Rhode Island. A few work overseas as well. The job market for planners is strong: The Bureau of Labor Statistics says it is growing at an average clip with a median salary of \$78,500. Good places to hunt for open jobs include APA, ACSP, Planetizen, Indiana APA, LinkedIn, as well as other social media sites.

G. Graduate Assistantships

1. **Description** – Holding an assistantship is a privilege. If you have been awarded such a position, a great deal of trust has been placed in you and your abilities. Graduate assistants are required to work either 10 or 20 hours per week, depending on the position. Graduate assistants are required to work each week during a semester, including finals week. They are not required to work during university breaks (fall break, spring break, etc.), but students working for off-campus sponsors must communicate these dates to their supervisors. All of our off-campus sponsors are supportive of students' needs to take part in events like field trip week and to attend conferences, but again, it is critical to discuss these events and the dates with supervisors in advance.

You can learn more about what to expect as a graduate assistant [here](#). Please see the graduate assistantship guidelines.

2. **Application Process** – Open graduate assistantships are posted in Workday, which you can access from the myballstate.bsu.edu web page. Applicants will describe their background and upload a resume. March 1 is our priority consideration deadline, and most assistantships are granted in the fall semester. Please make sure you have applied for admission before applying for an assistantship. We will consider your transcript, admissions essay, and assistantship application materials when making our decisions. Assistantship decisions are made by a committee, not by individual instructors, so there is no need to contact faculty members about your application. It's a great idea to email the department office, however, at planning@bsu.edu to introduce yourself.
3. **Expectations** – Full-time graduate assistants are required to work 20 hours per week. Part-time graduate assistants are required to work 10 hours per week.

All on-campus graduate assistants must maintain an on-campus presence during their assistantship. They are required to work each week during a semester, including finals week. They do not work during federal holidays when the University is closed, per the University calendar, and thus they can pro-rate their hours during these periods.

Some of our graduate assistants work for off-campus sponsors such as the city of Muncie or the Department of Metropolitan Development in Indianapolis. Graduate assistants who are working for off-campus sponsors must communicate these dates to their supervisors. All of our off-campus sponsors are supportive of students' needs to take part in events like field trip week and to attend conferences, but again, it is critical to discuss these events and the dates with supervisors in advance.

All graduate assistants are required to record PPACA hours in Workday every two weeks as instructed by the administrative coordinator, who verifies those hours with each graduate assistant's supervisor.

4. **Teaching Assistant Evaluation** – The performance of graduate assistants who are assigned to classes is evaluated by class instructors. See Appendix B for the evaluation form.

H. Additional Resources: Department Level

1. **Field Trip Week:** Planners must become familiar with a variety of cities and neighborhoods and be exposed to new environments. These first-hand experiences will be part of the toolbox of ideas you will take into the world as a professional planner. The trips provide a great opportunity to really get to know the faculty member leading the excursion and students in other cohorts in the department as well.

Field trip week takes place each year in October and involves most departments in CAP. You may be able to take a trip to a major US city such as New York or Seattle (budget in the \$800 to \$1,000), a medium-range trip to a large Midwestern city such as Pittsburgh or Nashville (budget in the \$300 to \$500 range), or a one-day Indiana-based trip of minimal cost. You may choose which trip best suits your needs and budget. Signing up by the deadline you are given ensures that you will receive an electronic notice that you can share with instructors whose classes you will miss by attending our trip. Plan ahead and talk with each instructor to be sure you understand what work is required of you and the associated deadlines.

Field trip week is NOT a vacation from classes.

Typically, a deposit will be required **early** in the semester for a field trip, maybe even during the first week of classes. You will be able to make the payment online after you have signed and returned a field trip permission form to the department. The down payment is not refundable. The remaining trip cost must be paid before the trip begins.

We will also require you to fill out an emergency contact form before the trip. The form can be filled out electronically at the beginning of the school year. If the trip you have chosen includes airfare, you will be required to provide us with a copy of your driver's license so that we can secure your flight.

2. **American Planning Association (APA):** The [American Planning Association](#) is the national association of professional planners. Membership is free to students, and you are encouraged to join. It is up to you to sign up for membership. The APA website contains career resources, news, and an explanation of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) Candidate Pilot Program, a path to earning the professional (AICP) certification you may wish to pursue to become a professional planner. (AICP certification is not required to be a planner, but being able to put those initials after your name shows that you have a depth of knowledge and experience in the field.)
3. **Conferences:** Sometimes we travel to the fall and spring conferences offered by the Indiana APA chapter. These typically rotate among cities such as Bloomington, Lafayette, Muncie, and South Bend and offer great networking opportunities with people who may someday be your internship supervisor or even your employer. We

encourage students to attend, and we help with the costs when we are able. Typically, these are inexpensive trips and involve only one overnight or perhaps none at all. Sometimes there is an option for online attendance as well. We will keep you apprised about those opportunities.

We also travel to the national APA conference site most years. These conferences are in major US cities such as New Orleans and San Francisco. There is much you can learn at such a conference, as there will be many professional sessions for you to choose from each hour of the day. The networking opportunities are endless, and we typically have a meet-up event for students and alumni as well. We encourage you to plan ahead for these spring conferences and try to schedule at least one into your education plan.

Important note about the 2027 national APA conference: This year's conference in Houston occurs after the school year has ended, so the department will be unable to organize a group trip.

Faculty also attend conferences such as the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), which gathers planning professors and scholars in North America and is also attended by large numbers worldwide. Attending these will enable you to learn the latest knowledge developed in the field, learn about research, meet graduate students from other planning schools, and be particularly helpful to you if you are drawn to research or are considering applying to a PhD program after you finish the MURP program.

There are many other conferences in geography, anthropology, GIS, transportation, and drawing that may be useful to you. Some of our faculty members attend these, and they may be able to provide timely information if you need it. Don't hesitate to ask.

I. Additional Resources: All Ball State University Level

1. [The Graduate School](#): Is a good one-stop shop for students with concerns or inquiries about graduate student policies in terms of graduation processes; thesis/dissertation processes; time limits; graduate assistantship policies, etc., and can also refer you to additional resources as needed. Students can always call the office to ask questions (765-285-1301) or email gradschool@bsu.edu
2. [Graduate Student Success Initiative](#): This ongoing program summarizes opportunities and resources to support all Ball State University graduate students, both online and on campus.
3. [Cardinal Central](#): In addition to serving as a one-stop to answer students' registration, financial aid, and academic support needs, Cardinal Central includes Enrollment Support Services, which should be contacted as soon as an extended familial, health, or mental wellness crisis presents. You can also reach out to the Director of Enrollment Support Services, Gloria Pavlik (765-285-3311) for assistance in navigating the situation appropriately.

4. [The Multicultural Center](#): The Multicultural Center offers programs and events throughout the year that educate the Ball State community, support students of color, and celebrate faculty, staff, and students' achievements.
5. [Title IX](#): This is where you or students should report a sexual assault or harassment, intimate partner violence, or other sexual misconduct toward or by a student; or report a concern about a student or a student's well-being: (765) 285-1545 or complete the Person of Concern Report. All faculty and GAs are mandatory reporters.
6. [The Counseling Center](#): The Counseling Center is for graduate students, too, especially given the adjustment issues and imposter syndrome often facing first-time graduate students (765-285-1736). For online students far from campus, note that the Counseling Center has a [page devoted to self-help](#), including an online screening for some common mental wellness issues and some basic information and resources on common mental wellness afflictions.
7. [Disability Services](#): Graduate students can work with this office to receive accommodations if needed (765-285-5293).
8. [The Career Center](#): The Career Center has increased its focus on and services for graduate students in the past few years. Take a look at its offerings and see how they can help you with your career goals.
9. [Sponsored Projects Administration](#): A number of grants (research and travel) and some Fulbright opportunities exist through SPA. Students interested in having their research funded up to \$700 should look into the campus-wide ASPIRE program for students (765-285-1660).
10. [University Libraries](#): This is an incredible resource for on-campus and online students. Staff are happy to assist students. Every year, they host a very comprehensive Thesis Research Workshop, which is highly recommended. Tech Center is another resource in Bracken Library that students can reach out to for deals on software and assistance with hardware and software. Students can also [borrow equipment](#) (e.g., laptops, cameras, microphones, etc.), [reserve](#) study rooms, take advantage of [InterLibrary loan](#), and request a [scholar carrel](#).
11. [The Writing Center](#): Every semester, the Writing Center holds a Graduate School-sponsored writing boot camp for graduate students, called "A Write Start" which trains students about tools and skills for approaching their large research and writing projects.
12. [Office of Community Engagement](#): Ball State has some amazing initiatives for community outreach and partnerships, and they are often willing and able to assist students in becoming involved in these efforts.
13. [Research Design Studio](#): The Research Design Studio, run as a co-op by a number of units on campus, is a free service for students and faculty. Staffed by a cooperative group of researchers, students, and educators, the Studio provides the following services: research design, grant development, instrument selection and design, professional development and research mentoring, synthesis, and support of research collaborations. This unit is always willing to help graduate students with their research projects, once approved by their faculty advisor, and can assist.

J. Appendix A – Thesis

What is a Thesis?

If you choose, you can elect to do a six-hour thesis, which will be submitted to the graduate school instead of the final capstone studio project. The thesis comes with deadlines and forms that will need to be completed, and it requires some early planning on your part. If you think you will want to pursue a thesis, please talk this over with the graduate advisor early in your academic career and familiarize yourself with the dates and deadlines available from the [Graduate School](#).

Students must complete a draft thesis proposal and submit it to the Graduate School in the Spring before their final year to be eligible to do a thesis.

Our qualitative and quantitative courses, **PLAN 613 Qualitative Methods and Social Justice** and **PLAN 614 Quantitative Analysis**, will prepare you to understand and conduct research for the capstone or thesis. The research course, **PLAN 683 Planning Thesis Methods or PLAN 684 Planning Capstone Proposal**, will teach you how to apply those skills to your project.

A thesis is a research project. It is an attempt to contribute to our knowledge about planning by thoroughly investigating some problems. A thesis poses a question or hypothesis and sets out to answer it using data or evidence from the real world. The "issue" should be a significant one, relevant to planning. It should also be sharply focused so that you can do a convincing job of investigating it. The most common thesis problem is picking a topic that is too broad, and then being unable to deal with it conclusively.

Topic Examples

Examples of thesis topics might be:

1. Determining whether a particular public program is successful (Example: Does urban homesteading work in Indianapolis?). This requires setting the criteria for success and collecting data to see whether these criteria are met. The data could be a case study of a single program application, or it could be a statistical analysis of data from lots of applications.
2. Determining options or strategies for a planning body to follow (Example: Would regional planning agencies in Indiana be more effective if they concentrated on economic development or on coordination?). Usually, this involves comparing what is actually being done with some alternative models or comparing two examples that follow different models.
3. Developing a new technique for dealing with some planning problems (Example: Developing a new methodology for locating transit extensions in peripheral urban areas). This approach requires thorough knowledge of the present state of the art in some areas, so you don't simply reinvent the wheel.
4. Investigating problems or aspects of applying some present planning methodology (Example: Exploring problems and consequences in applying a standard air quality dispersion model in urban areas).
5. Studying the dynamics of urban growth (Example: Why and how does a "commercial strip" evolve in a specific city?).
6. Examining various roles of those involved in planning (Example: How do neighborhood planning groups interact with the central planning agency in shaping city plans and priorities?).

The key to a good thesis topic is that it is specific and has a clear methodology. A good topic is one on which there is a reasonable amount of data or information, but not an overwhelming amount. Studying the relative interest of eighth graders in Muncie in planning-related issues would be a manageable topic; examining the correlation between commuting distance in the New York metropolitan region and hybrid-car ownership would require far too much data gathering and analysis to be worth undertaking for a master's thesis or project. On the other hand, an attempt to study the careers of all professional planners who graduated from Muncie Central High School could be very frustrating -- first, because the data would be difficult, if not impossible, to assemble; second, because there may be none. It is also important to pick a topic that interests you because you will be spending a lot of time on it. A thesis is worth six credit hours.

The Graduate School provides a guidebook for students working on a thesis. Use [this page](#) to find the document.

Declaring and maintaining thesis qualification:

1. After following the thesis proposal requirements summarized on page 6 of this handbook, students must submit a full graduate school proposal (including the identification of an advisor) one week prior to the end of the spring semester.
2. Students must complete the summer thesis course.
3. Faculty instructors of the summer thesis course have an obligation to discuss concerns or lack of progress in the summer thesis with thesis advisors prior to the start of the Fall semester.
4. Thesis advisors may choose to decline to work with thesis students at any point.
 - a. If the topic strays outside the thesis advisor's area of expertise, indicate to the student that they will no longer serve on their thesis committee. Recommend and assist the student in finding a more appropriate advisor,
 - b. If the student is not making adequate progress towards the completion of the thesis, indicate to the student that they will no longer serve on their thesis committee. Recommend to students that they complete the master's capstone sequence, in lieu of continuing to pursue the thesis. When possible, this determination and recommendation should be made in a time frame that is as minimally disruptive to student progress towards degree as possible. (i.e., prior to the fall of the student's final planned academic year).

K. Appendix B – Teaching Assistant Evaluation Form

Teaching Assistant Evaluation Form

Course: _____ | Instructor: _____

Semester/Year: _____

Graduate Assistant (GA): _____

Instructions

This form focuses on the GA's responsibilities in supporting the professor and students. Please rate each statement on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Section 1: Attendance & Presence

The GA consistently attended scheduled lectures/studios. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

The GA was present and supportive during class/studio presentations. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

The GA actively accompanied students during fieldwork and site visits. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

The GA attended and participated in pin-ups and presentations. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Section 2: Responsiveness & Communication

The GA communicated promptly and effectively with the professor. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

The GA was accessible and responsive to students. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

The GA maintained a professional and respectful attitude in all interactions. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Section 3: Overall Support & Reliability

The GA demonstrated responsibility in carrying out assigned tasks. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

The GA's presence and support made a positive contribution to the course. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Overall, I am satisfied with the GA's reliability and effectiveness. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Section 4: Open-Ended Feedback

What aspects of the GA's support were most helpful?

What responsibilities should the TA improve upon?

Additional comments or suggestions:

L. Appendix C – Urban Planning Department Student Complaint Policy [approved August 2023]

Ball State University and the Department of Urban Planning give their primary emphasis to teaching and are committed to an organizational culture of inclusive excellence. The department recognizes the crucial role of equity, access, and transparency in the classroom to ensure the success of all our students. Furthermore, we value curriculum content and teaching practices that are inclusive of race, ethnicity, color, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, class, religion, disability or other protected status, parental or caregiving status, age, or military status. Our learning environments are spaces of mutual respect, and we encourage an open dialogue between student and instructor regarding the course expectations.

If the Urban Planning chair receives a student complaint about a department instructor, we will follow the process outlined below:

1. Should a student believe their educational progress has been impeded due to an issue regarding fairness, discrimination, harassment, classroom mismanagement, or other perceived misconduct by an instructor, they may initiate a conversation the department chair.
2. The student will first be encouraged to contact the instructor to discuss the issue if such issue needs no administrative mediation. Ideally, the student and instructor will be able to come to a common understanding of the incident and the best method for moving forward in a manner conducive to educational goals.
3. If the student does not wish to contact the instructor and the chair agrees there is reason for not doing so, or if the instructor will not respond to the student's attempt to contact (the faculty member has one work week to respond), or if the student and instructor cannot come to a resolution on their own, the chair will meet or correspond with the student to assess the nature of the complaint. Notes describing the content of the meeting will be written by the chair and signed by the student and chair at the conclusion of the meeting. When appropriate, or when dictated by other policies (e.g., Policy on Sexual Harassment and Misconduct), the chair may refer the matter for resolution to another campus authority.

If a solution to the issue is reached during this meeting between the chair and the student, the complaint is resolved. Following the meeting, an email will be sent to the student verifying the complaint as resolved.

4. The chair will hold a meeting with the instructor regarding the nature of the complaint. Notes describing the content of the meeting will be written by the chair and signed by the instructor and chair at the conclusion of the meeting.

If a solution to the issue was reached during the meeting between the chair and the instructor, the outcome will be reported to the student. If the student is agreeable to the resolution, the complaint is resolved. Following the meeting, an email will be sent to the student and instructor verifying the complaint as resolved.

5. All notes of the initial meeting with the student and with the instructor will be destroyed at the end of the semester following a successful resolution of a complaint.
6. If no solution to the complaint is reached during the meeting with the instructor, the chair will determine an appropriate resolution, which may include a letter in the instructor's personnel file. This decision will be communicated to the instructor no more than 10 days after the meeting. If a letter is added to the personnel file, the instructor will have the opportunity to place a written response in the file. The written response must be submitted to the department no more than 10 days after receiving the decision.

Additionally, the issue may be forwarded to an appropriate college administrator to evaluate and investigate the student's complaint in order to reach a resolution. In some cases, the chair may refer the complaint to another campus authority.¹

¹ Pursuant to Ball State's Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy, allegations of sexual harassment or misconduct will be referred to Ball State's Title IX Coordinator.
<https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/associate-dean-of-students>

Incidents of Bias may be reported here: <https://www.bsu.edu/campuslife/multicultural-center/bias-incident-reporting>

M. Appendix D – Portfolio



Portfolio Guide

Ralph M Holmes III, AICP
Professor of Urban Planning
Department of Urban Planning
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306



- Every cover letter must be written for a specific job description. Therefore, your skills and work experience must relate to and emphasize the job skills that the employer is seeking.
- Cover Letters should be written using active language NOT PASSIVE.
Active: The subject does the action. *"I did the thing."*
Passive: The subject is acted upon. *"A thing was done as part of my coursework."*
- Use Strong Confident language
Strong: *"I did the thing in a collaborative group."*
Weak: *"As a part of my coursework I participated in doing a thing."*
- Directly relate your experience to what the employee is asking for.
Direct relationship: *"I did a thing and I can do similar things that your firm is doing."*
Weak Relationship: *"I'm excited about the thing your firm is doing. I did a similar thing."*
- Be sure to include your address and that of the firm/business at the top right corner and left corner of the cover letter, respectively.
- Include your contact information in the cover letter, including your phone number.
- Create a new email account specifically for jobs. Be sure the account name is as similar to your name as is available. Your bsu email will sunset within 6 months of graduation. This ensures communications are not lost in your general email and allows you to have a professional personal email account that isn't ProGammer4000@hotmail.com

More Tips

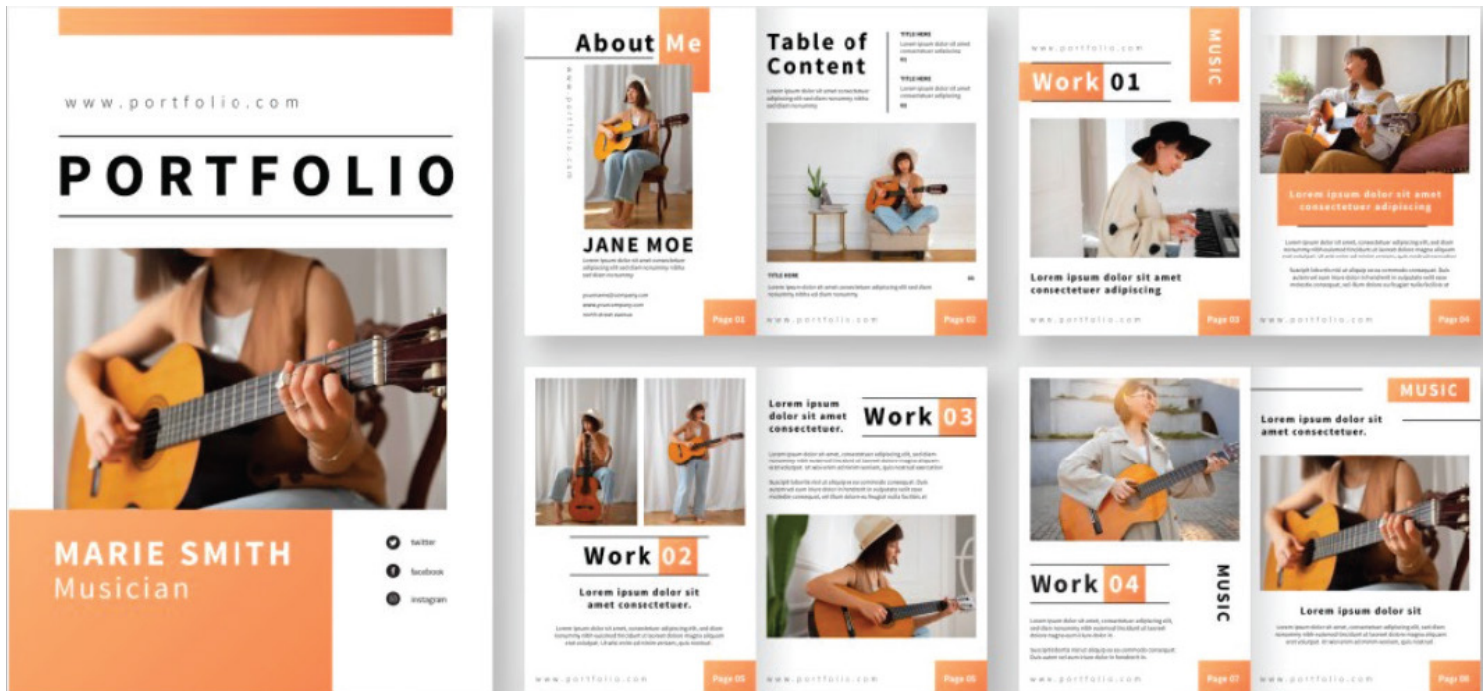
- Begin the letter with a salutation to the person to whom you are sending the letter.
- Do not use “To Whom It May Concern”. This may be interpreted as not doing enough of a background research on the firm to know who to send your letter. If no name is included in the job ad, you should call the firm to find out to whom you should address the letter.
- Use a byline after the salutation to indicate the position you are applying for in the organization. Since the firm is likely to have more than one position opening, it is important for them to know how to file your application letter and documents.
- Your letter should directly link your skills to the job for which you are applying.
- Highlight both your professional skills and technical skills in the letter. You will be hired for your professional planning skills so those are the most important ones to emphasize in the letter.
- Your technical skills are supportive of your planning skills and not the other way around.
- Be sure you directly address or quote skills or attributes that are desired of successful applicants that are part of the initial job listing.
- The cover letter should show how you will add value to the work or service that the company provides.
- End the letter on a positive and proactive note. E.g., *I look forward to hearing from you and discovering more about your firm [agency]. Please allow me to contact you [please receive my call] in two weeks to discuss the status of my application.*





- At your age, resumes should be single page. As you gain work experience they get longer.
- Every resume should be written and tailored to a specific job. You should therefore avoid using the same resume for all job applications.
- It is conventional practice to have your education credential first, followed by your work experience, and technical skills.
- Be sure that your resume differentiates between your professional skills and your technical skills. Indeed, you should categorize your skills into the two areas of professional skills [e.g. land use and comprehensive planning, data analysis, economic analysis, development impact analysis, GIS], and technical skills [e.g., sketch-up, spreadsheet formulations].
- Skills may be graphed on a scale of competency; don't puff your ego.

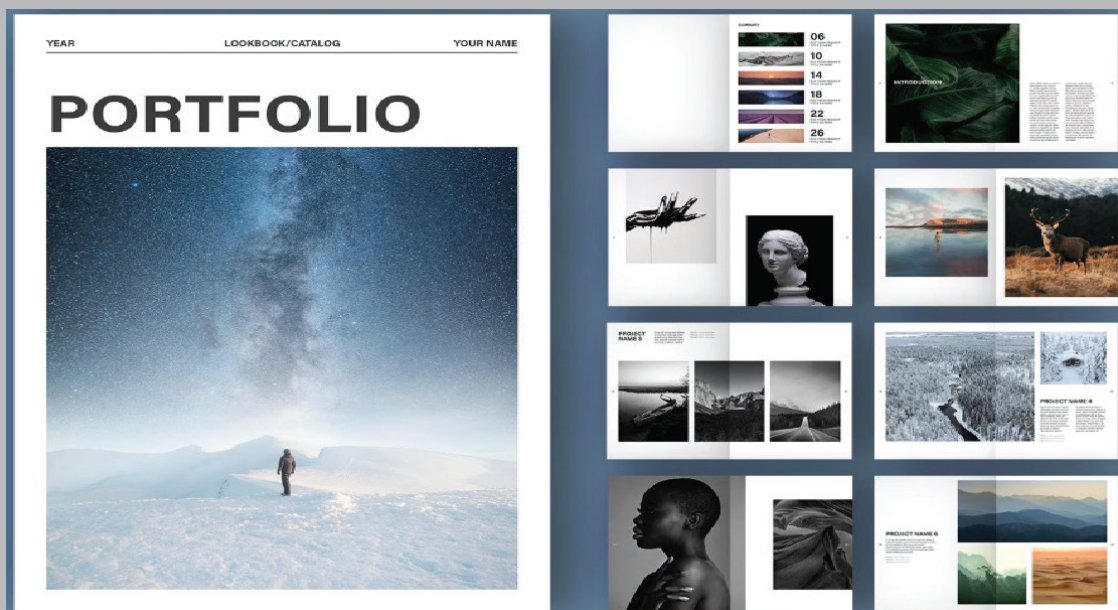
- Your latest educational attainment should come before previous educational degrees. For your Ball State degree, since you have not yet completed the degree requirements, you can show the anticipated graduation date or year.
- You are likely to have worked in non-planning jobs such as landscaping, retail, or customer service. Do not discount these jobs in your resume. Be sure to identify the skills sets you used or gained from these work places that will be relevant to your planning career. These are your transferable skills. For example, a job as a restaurant waiter provided you with skills in multi-tasking, customer relations, time management, dealing with difficult customers, teamwork, and organizational skills. These same skills will be useful in your planning career.
- Make special note projects/tasks that can be attributed to you from these jobs as employees can and will independently look them up.
- You should always assume that employees first exposure to you will be your resume. Therefore it should be comprehensive onto itself. This means it should also provide your contact information, including your address, phone number, and email address, and a brief 3 sentence summary of your resume.
- Hobbies and references are best left to the interview or follow-up letter. However, travel and volunteer/ political/ social experiences can be of relevance.
- It is good practice to include a short link to your digital portfolio in the footer of your resume as well as the phrase "references available upon request" the initial job posting may not explicitly ask for these but you should make it know that you have these.
- Reciting officers have limited time when viewing your resume. You can use publicly available link shortener (bittylink) to compress your portfolio url so that it takes less time to type than www.janesmithsportfolio.squarespace.com These services also allow you to track clicks and traffic through the shortened url so you can know how much traction you are getting on your job application.
- Bitty Link also allows you to create a QR code but this graphic is best used on a business card, do not include one on your resume.



- In a page before your sample work on writing, analysis, and graphics, you should provide the reader with:
 - The types of work you are including for each of the sections.
 - The rationale for including the sample work [e.g., this demonstrates by capabilities in site plan review, etc.].
 - Which of the work included is your individual work, and which is group work, if any. If group work is included, then you should specify your contribution to the group work as a collaborator.
- Preliminary to presenting each work you should provide context [e.g., the studio assignment __ , and my team assignment_____].

More Tips

- Your portfolio is NOT just a collection of works that you are showcasing but a piece of work itself. It should be constructed with utmost care and with deliberate intent. Just throwing things together in word will not create the professional aesthetic you want and employers will make note of it.
- Do not wholesale copy and paste text from past projects into your portfolio. Should employers investigate your projects further they will discover this shortcut you took and make decisions accordingly.
- Consistent typography, color schemes, and predictable page placement of items in a portfolio speak just as loudly as the work being referenced on each page.
- Pages of the portfolio should stick to at most 4 unique page layouts.
- Consideration should be given to the pagination and spread layout of the portfolio. The portfolio is a story of your work and should be written in a logical (chronological, alphabetical, ascending course number etc) order.
- You can set a PDF files default reading and scrolling behavior. (File > Properties > Initial View) use this to ensure end users are experiencing the digital version work as you intend.
- Unless you plan on printing and mailing a physical copy of your portfolio always assume prospective employers have terrible printers. Do not make documents with full bleed art. Utilize CMYK color schemes. Use web safe colors. Use standard font (or embed your font into your document.) The last thing you want is a potential employer to print your portfolio and since their printer has an out of date font driver your portfolio is filled with □□□□□□





Written Works

- Throughout your academic career thus far you have written several academic papers. For the purposes of your portfolio they can be broken down into two classes of papers. Technical Papers, and Research papers.
- In urban planning a technical is likely to take the form of an environmental impact assessment, housing needs assessment for a community, level of service by transportation mode, or an infrastructure project. The goal of the technical paper may be to change people's behavior, or to disseminate information. The technical paper should grasp the interest of the audience, and show how the problem can be solved or addressed.
- A research paper is an academic writing that documents research into a topic, describes the procedure and methodology, and presents the findings from the investigation. A research paper builds on existing knowledge on the subject. A research paper includes a title, a statement of the problem and hypothesis, review of the literature on the subject, limitations of the study, methodology, body of the paper that includes a discussion of the results of the research, and conclusions or proposals.



Analytical Work

This section should demonstrate your ability to conduct planning analysis and understanding of planning problems or how to solve them, or both.

The analysis sample should not just be a dumping of information, and should not end with a graph or chart, but with the interpretation and implications of your findings. It should include work that demonstrates a multistep process of analysis in each of your sample work. These include:

- What problem or challenge were you presented?
- What you did to better understand or solve the problem (the methodology used in the analysis).
- What you found as salient and significant?
- What you recommend as to actions in addressing the problem and acting on
- your findings? How the findings should be or were used (the action you took, for example how the findings were used to prepare a plan, a policy, adopt regulations, or design modifications to the environment)?

The analysis section should include examples of your work in at least three areas as relevant to your profile:

1. Land use and development controls.
2. Urban economics or economic development.
3. Demographics.
4. Development impacts on human settlements and the environment.
5. Functional areas, such as affordable housing, transportation, public facilities, etc.



This section should provide an example of a land use analysis you performed and the proposals emanating from the analysis. An example would include a site analysis, a land use compatibility analysis, a land use change analysis, etc. The document should show how you used findings from the analysis to make proposals for improving the site or land use.



This segment should demonstrate your ability to conduct economic analysis including economic base analysis, basic and non-basic activity analysis, changes in the economic sectors of a settlement over time, shift share analysis, input-output analysis, etc. Here again, the goal is to show that you have a good understanding of these analytical skills, and also that you used the results of the analysis to take action to improve the situation. This could take the form of a plan, policy, design or regulation.



All plans are for the purpose of improving the welfare of a population. It is therefore important to know the population that will be beneficiaries of the plan. Planning is also about the future so we need to know the demographics of the future population of the municipality or settlement for which we are planning. This makes understanding the present and future population critical to planning. The demographic analysis should therefore include a projection of the future population, its composition, and structure.



Graphical Work

People have different ways of absorbing information, and graphics is one way to communicate planning information to our audience. The graphics section of the portfolio is a means to show how you communicate information visually. A Chinese proverb admonishes that “A picture is worth a thousand words.” However, the medium of “boards” presents both graphics and narratives.

The graphics sample of your work could take several forms including hand rendering visuals, computer aided design, and digital drawings and graphics.

Basic information that should be included in your graphics include:

- Scale, so the reader can tell distance.
- North arrow, to provide orientation.
- Context of the graphics, so they are not in an island but provide information of the surrounding land uses.
- Legend where appropriate, to tell different land uses apart from each other.

More information about requirements and due dates can be found in the Canvas course associated with your portfolio class.

**Undergraduates: PLAN 368.
Graduate students: PLAN 690.**