



The University of Kansas

School of Public Affairs and Administration

Master of Urban Planning Graduate Handbook



This handbook provides program information, general guidelines, and procedures concerning the Master of Urban Planning graduate program in the School of Public Affairs and Administration. It refers to Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs guidelines, but does not summarize all regulations applicable to graduate students at the University of Kansas. Please refer to the [Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs](#) section of the Academic Catalog for additional information and requirements.

MASTER OF URBAN PLANNING GRADUATE PROGRAM

SPAA Director: Maja Holmes

Email: maja.holmes@ku.edu

SPAA Assistant Director: Bonnie Johnson

Email: bojojohn@ku.edu

MUP Director: Hye-Sung Han

Email: hshan@ku.edu

Graduate Programming Manager: Cari Ann Kreienhop

Email: cak@ku.edu

Graduate Program Coordinator: Mary Kate Meara

Email: marykate.meara@ku.edu

SPAA Office Manager: Diana Moore

Email: dianak@ku.edu

Master of Urban Planning Program

203 Snow Hall

1460 Jayhawk Blvd.

Lawrence, KS 66045-7590

School of Public Affairs and Administration: <https://spaa.ku.edu>

Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs: <https://graduate.ku.edu>

College Office of Graduate Affairs: <https://coga.ku.edu>

THE MASTER OF URBAN PLANNING MISSION

Through our teaching, research, and service activities, the KU Urban Planning Program seeks to advance the capacity of public, private, and not-for-profit organizations to generate, analyze, evaluate, and administer policies that enhance the democratic values, social justice, and sustainability of communities and regions.

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PROGRAM ADVISING

Urban Planning students are encouraged to regularly meet with the Graduate Program Coordinator to advise on course selection and degree requirements. Regular consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator will help ensure timely progress to graduation and appropriate course selection. Students may also consult with Urban Planning faculty regarding the courses and topic areas they specialize in.

General Program Advising – Contact for questions regarding general advising, degree requirements, course information, and enrollment.

Mary Kate Meara, SPAA Graduate Program Coordinator
marykate.meara@ku.edu

Internship Opportunities – Contact for questions regarding internships and professional development.

Cari Ann Kreienhop, SPAA Graduate Programming Manager
cak@ku.edu

Topic Areas – Contacts for questions regarding topic area subject matter.

Sustainable Land Use

Ward Lyles, AICP, Ph.D., Professor
wardlyles@ku.edu

Housing and Development

Hye-Sung Han, Ph.D., Associate Professor
hshan@ku.edu

Transportation

Joel Mendez, Ph.D., Assistant Professor
jmendez2@ku.edu

Multidisciplinary Planning

Bonnie Johnson, FAICP, Ph.D., Professor
bojojohn@ku.edu

MUP ADMISSIONS

The Master of Urban Planning application is available online through the Graduate Admissions portal. Application materials required for admission to the program:

- Completed online application and required application fee
- Official Transcript
- Three Letters of Recommendation
- Current Resume
- Personal Statement
- Proof of English Proficiency

All supporting documentation for the application should be uploaded to the online application, with the exception of official transcripts, which should be sent directly from the issuing institution to:

Via mail:

University of Kansas Graduate Admissions
KU Visitor Center
1502 Iowa St.
Lawrence, KS 66045

Electronically:

graduateadm@ku.edu

For any questions related to the admissions process or current application status, please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator.

The application deadlines for domestic students are July 1 and December 1.

The application deadlines for international students are May 1 and November 1.

*International students are strongly encouraged to apply for the Fall semester. Orientation and start resources are limited in the Spring and Summer semesters.

English Proficiency Requirements

Non-native English speakers must demonstrate English proficiency to gain admission to a graduate program. The [Graduate Admissions](#) site details the standards and methods of meeting proficiency requirements.

Regular Admission

When reviewing the applications of prospective students, the admissions committee considers:

- A stated and/or demonstrated commitment to helping create and maintain sustainable, healthy, and equitable communities.
- A stated and/or demonstrated interest in planning policy – specifically in the areas of housing development, community development, sustainable land use, or transportation; and
- A bachelor's degree with an academic background, life experiences, and motivation that indicate an ability to be successful in the planning profession.

Deny Admission

Applicants who do not adequately represent themselves as meeting the main criteria of admission or have a holistic record that does not indicate the potential success in graduate level course work will be denied admission to the program.

THE MUP CURRICULUM

The MUP degree is awarded after successful completion of 42 credit hours of course work. This includes 24 hours of required core courses (8 courses) that all students complete, 9 credit hours (3 courses) toward one MUP topic area, and 9 credit hours (3 courses) of electives or towards a second topic area. The program is typically completed in two years of full-time study.

Only courses graded C or above are considered passing and may be counted for graduate credit.

Courses graded C-, D or F may not be used to fulfill degree requirements. Students that do not earn a passing grade may be required to retake the necessary courses for degree completion. **Graduate**

students must also maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0.

MUP Core Courses

UBPL 705 – Urban Economic Theory and Analysis
UBPL 736 – Planning Law and Institutions
UBPL 741 – Foundations of Compassionate Critical Thinking
UBPL 742 – Applied Data and Spatial Analysis
UBPL 763 - Politics and Planning
UBPL 777 - Equity, Justice & American Cities
UBPL 780 - Climate Change & Hazard Planning
UBPL 785 - History and Theory of Planning

The core courses prepare students to be generalist planners, while the topic areas develop further expertise in specific fields of planning.

Topic Areas

The curriculum requires each student to specialize in one of the following fields of planning. In each topic area, the student must complete the three courses listed for each topic area. There may be times due to idiosyncratic reasons, such as scheduling or changing interests, that all three of the listed courses are not available. As a result, substitutions are possible in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator and MUP Program Director.

Housing and Development

UBPL 710 - Housing Policy and Planning
UBPL 715 - Community and Neighborhood Revitalization
UBPL 764 - Real Estate Development

Sustainable Land Use

UBPL 720 - Sustainable Land Use Policy and Planning
UBPL 725 - Environmental Planning Techniques
UBPL 735 - Site Planning and Design

Transportation

UBPL 750 - Transportation Policy & Planning
UBPL 758 – Transportation for Livable Cities
UBPL 767 – Creative Placemaking

Multidisciplinary Planning

UBPL 730 – City and County Planning
UBPL 750 – Transportation Policy and Planning
UBPL 764 – Real Estate Development

Outside Elective Course Approval

MUP students may take any UBPL topic area course outside of their chosen topic area, SPAA graduate level courses, or a graduate-level course outside of SPAA approved by the Urban Planning Director.

Graduate level courses outside of SPAA should be Urban Planning adjacent. If you are interested in enrolling in an elective course outside of SPAA, please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator and include the course description and a course syllabus (if available) to begin the review process.

FINAL EXAM MILESTONE

All students are required to complete a “synthesizing experience” where they demonstrate their learning and preparedness to be practicing planners. This is through the completion of the Comprehensive Portfolio Exam or master’s Thesis. The Comprehensive Portfolio Exam is completed in the final semester of study. The master’s Thesis requires at least two semesters to research and write.

Comprehensive Portfolio Exam

The default option for the MUP Final Exam is a Portfolio Exam. The Portfolio Exam was designed after incorporating student feedback, allowing our MUP students to showcase their learning that occurred throughout the degree.

The Portfolio Exam serves as a valuable opportunity for students to integrate and demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired throughout MUP coursework. It allows our students to showcase their competency as urban planners. The portfolio entails compiling relevant coursework and planning-related work completed during their studies. The portfolio should reflect the core practices, knowledge, skills, and behaviors essential for success in the planning profession. This process will also require students to reflect on their learning. Ultimately, this portfolio should demonstrate a student's readiness to pursue a career in urban planning.

Students are strongly encouraged to save all work completed in the MUP program to be used as part of their Portfolio Exam.

Thesis

The thesis provides an opportunity for the student to apply individual research skills in the context of their interest. The thesis is a continuation of the student’s course of study rather than a separate academic effort. The format, method(s), and focus of the thesis vary with the problem addressed. The thesis option is most appropriate for those students who wish to go on to study for a doctoral degree. While some of our joint degree programs do require a thesis, in most other cases, the UBPL faculty does not encourage students to take on the thesis option due to the time and effort required. The Portfolio Exam is a better simulation of what a practicing planner will do versus a planner going into academia.

A student wishing to pursue a thesis must have a GPA of at least 3.5 after their first two full semesters of study. The student must also identify an Urban Planning faculty member to serve as the thesis advisor. Please note, no faculty member is required to advise a thesis. Further information about the thesis can be found in [APPENDIX III](#).

Mentorship Agreements

The University expects that master’s degree should typically be completed in two (2) years of full-time study. Students who anticipate exceeding these targets should review the information in the link above and in the policies below, as well as consult with their program advisor to create a timeline for degree completion. In order to support this process, students are encouraged to use a Mentoring Agreement

Template and/or adapt to their own needs to support effective mentoring and a positive mentoring relationship.

Note that the College's Mentoring Agreement is required for doctoral students who are within 2 years of exhausting their maximum time to degree (which is 7 years for master's degree students). See the [College Graduate Regulations](#) or talk to your graduate program coordinator for more information.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Degree Program Time Constraints](#)
- [Mentorship Agreement Template](#)
- [Mentorship Agreement Timeline](#)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is a central value in the School. It rests on two principles: first, that academic work is represented truthfully as to its source and its accuracy, and second, that academic results are obtained by fair and authorized means. Academic integrity requires honest performance of academic responsibilities by students. Academic misconduct by a student can include, but not be limited to, disruption of classes; threatening an instructor or fellow student in an academic setting; giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on examinations or in the preparation of notebooks, themes, reports or other assignments; knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work; unauthorized changing of grades; unauthorized use of University approvals or forging of signatures; and plagiarizing of another's work. "Academic misconduct" occurs when these values are not respected.

JAYHAWK PLANNER RESOURCES

MUP Student Teams Resource

The MUP Students Teams site serves as a repository and resource. All current MUP students are added to and invited to regularly access the MUP Student Teams site to stay up-to-date on the following:

- MUP Updates in the General Channel
- Conferences and Seminars
- Enrollment
- Funding Resources
- Internship and Employment Opportunities
- Graduation Processes and Events

Internships

Experience as an intern is extremely useful to UBPL students' future job searches. Internships have also been a typical method through which students fund at least part of their studies in the program. Typically, employers want the intern to have at least one semester of academic experience in our program so that a student has some preparation to work. However, some students do obtain internships in their first semester. Students should monitor the MUP Student Teams site to see when internships are posted by the program and then apply for the ones they are interested in.

All students should regularly check their KU email and the Teams page to ensure that they do not miss out on internship opportunities.

Please contact the Graduate Programming & Career Services Manager via email with questions regarding internships or for help editing resumes.

National Planning Conference Travel Fund

The Professional Development Fund provides an annual allocation to ensure that each student in the Master of Urban Planning (MUP) program is eligible for up to \$1,000 to attend the National Planning Conference. This initiative supports recruitment efforts and enhances the Jayhawk Planner Experience. The fund gives priority to second-year MUP students; any remaining funds are first distributed to first-year MUP students, followed by second-year students seeking to attend the conference a second time. If requests exceed available resources, selection is determined by student need and level of involvement, including leadership roles, conference presentations, volunteer activities, or contributions to program visibility.

Job Placement

The Urban Planning Program does not have a regular job placement officer, although our faculty help to the best of our ability. The following are some things that can be done to help find a job:

- Prepare a resume and have it evaluated by the SPAA Graduate Programming & Career Services Manager. Guidelines for preparing a resume and establishing a LinkedIn profile are also generally covered in coursework.
- Consult the many helpful resources available online and in person at the KU Career Center or by the SPAA Graduate Programming & Career Services Manager.
- Systematically check for advertisements of planning jobs. The American Planning Association operates a job listing on its website. Students interested in pursuing careers with the Federal government may wish to visit the official listing of jobs for the United States government at <https://www.usajobs.gov/>. This site allows students to search positions by agency, position title, or by profession. Government jobs in the Kansas City area are often posted on the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) online job board: [Metro KC Gov Jobs | MARC](#).
- Attend professional meetings and conferences and try to meet practicing planners. News of many jobs is spread by word of mouth, often well in advance of the official advertisement of the openings. Employers are more likely to respond to a student's resume if they know them personally. APA's National Planning Conference includes a highly organized Job Market and mentoring, which may be helpful to job seekers.

Graduate Research and Teaching Assistantships

The Master of Urban Planning is a professional program within the School of Public Affairs and Administration. We do not have regular opportunities for GRA, GTA, or Graduate Assistant positions within the program like graduate research programs.

Funding Resources

There are a limited number of merit-based scholarships that are awarded to our continuing and incoming Master of Urban Planning students.

A helpful financial resource is the [Graduate Admissions Funding and Aid](#) webpage.

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT RESOURCES

The University of Kansas offers a variety of support services and resources for students. These include:

- The Academic Achievement & Access Center (AAAC), which works with the School to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed at KU. For more information about the services provided, see <http://access.ku.edu/>
- The KU Libraries System: <https://lib.ku.edu/>
- The KU Writing Center. To see specific services offered to Graduate Students by the Writing Center, see <http://writing.ku.edu/ku-graduate-students>
- KU Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): <http://www.caps.ku.edu/>
- Watkins Health Services: <http://www.studenthealth.ku.edu/>
- KU Career Center: <https://career.ku.edu/>

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Graduate students should make every attempt to resolve issues directly with the instructor, the party involved, the MUP Director, or the School's Director. If a grievance arises that cannot be resolved directly or if the student does not feel comfortable attempting to resolve the issue with the School's Director, the student should then follow the [School's official, university-approved grievance procedure](#).

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

This section contains information on requirements and policies of the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs, hereafter referred to as “the University”. It is not a complete list of all policies pertaining to graduate students. Only those policies that *most commonly* affect graduate students are included.

Policies are described in general terms and are intended to help students understand what is expected. They do not reflect the exact language of the official policy and should not be confused with official policy. Specific information and restrictions as well as links to relevant forms may be accessed by clicking on the policy headings. Links to the official policies in the KU policy library are found at the bottom of each policy description. Students are accountable to and should familiarize themselves with the University's official policies.

GENERAL POLICIES

The following University policies apply to ALL graduate students regardless of degree, program, or department. These are minimum general requirements. Your department or program may have more restrictive policies in any of these areas.

Admission

Degree or non-degree seeking applicants must have a bachelor's degree (as evidenced by an official transcript from the institution the degree was obtained).

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Admission to Graduate Study](#)

English Proficiency Requirements

The University requires all applicants, international or domestic, to demonstrate English proficiency for admission to any graduate program at KU. There are multiple ways to prove English proficiency:

- Declaration of native or native-like speaker status on the online application for graduate study.
- Official scores from an English proficiency standardized test (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS-Academic, or PTE), sent by the testing agency to the University of Kansas. Official scores must be less than two years old. Scores must be reported to KU directly by the testing service. Self-reported scores or unofficial scores are not accepted. TOEFL scores should be sent by ETS to KU institution code 6871. IELTS should be sent to KU Graduate Admissions via the e-delivery service. PTE score sheets containing the Score Report Code and Registration ID should be emailed to graduateadm@ku.edu for verification.
- Graduation with a baccalaureate degree (or higher) earned in residence from an accredited English-medium college or university or an accredited college or university in the United States. Degrees earned online may not be used to verify English proficiency. Note: this option is not sufficient for employment as a Graduate Teaching Assistant.
- AEC Curriculum: Students who haven't taken one of the listed tests may complete coursework through the KU Applied English Center (AEC) to demonstrate English proficiency.

- US Military Employment: If you are employed as an officer in the U.S. military with documentation of selection or promotion to the rank of Major or higher (or the equivalent U.S. Navy or Coast Guard rank), then you will be considered fully proficient and will not be required to complete AEC testing.

Additional English Competency Requirements for GTAs:

English proficiency requirements for GTAs are governed by the Kansas Board of Regents and must be met separately from the English proficiency requirement for admission to a KU graduate program. Detailed information on English proficiency requirements for GTAs may be found on Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' Spoken English Competency page.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [English Proficiency Requirements for Admission to Graduate Study](#)
- [Spoken English Language Competency of Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants, Kansas Board of Regents Policy](#)

Enrollment

For graduate students, advising on enrollment and course selection take place at the department level. While individual units may have additional enrollment requirements, for students who are required to enroll full-time (e.g. students holding a GTA/GRA/GA appointment, international students on an F-1 or J-1 visa, students receiving federal financial aid, etc.) the University defines full-time enrollment it as follows:

Fall and Spring semesters:

- Enrollment in 9 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s). *See Doctoral post-comprehensive enrollment.
- Enrollment in 6 competencies for students in a Competency-Based Education (CBE) program

Summer sessions:

- Enrollment in 6 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;

- Enrollment in 3 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s).
- Enrollment in 6 competencies for students in a CBE program

Graduate students are not normally permitted to enroll for more than 16 hours a semester or more than 8 hours in summer session.

While these are KU's definitions of full-time enrollment, other institutions may have different definitions. Be sure to consult with your financial aid and/or health insurance providers before making enrollment decisions.

Students not enrolled by 11:59pm the day before the first day of classes will be assessed a late enrollment fee. The University Registrar then deactivates the KU ID of any not enrolled by the last Friday in October (for Fall) or last Friday in March (for Spring). Students who wish to enroll after that must submit a Permit to Re-Enroll to be reactivated.

Students who wish to leave their graduate program should inform the department of such plans in writing so that a Voluntary Withdrawal form may be submitted on their behalf. Please note that voluntarily withdrawing from your program does not automatically withdraw you from coursework. You must also withdraw from all classes in Enroll & Pay via the "Withdraw from the University" option.

Deadlines for adding, changing, dropping, or withdrawing from all courses, as well any fines associated with the change, are set by the University. **Deadlines vary from year to year. Students should carefully review the current Academic Calendar.**

You may also wish to consult the Registrar's page on Effects of Dropping or Withdrawing on your Transcript.

Your graduate program coordinator (or similar title) is available to guide you through any enrollment scenarios or questions that come up. In order to avoid problems on your record, please consult with them prior to dropping or changing enrollment.

Related Policies:

- [Discontinued Enrollment](#)
- [Enrollment](#)
- [Full-time Enrollment for Graduate Students](#)
- [Graduate Coursework Expiration Dates](#)
- [Master's Degree Requirements](#)

Graduate Credit (Including Transfer Credit)

The University's Graduate Credit policy defines KU's conditions for the following:

- Definition of graduate credit for the purposes of a course “counting” towards a graduate degree or graduate certificate at KU;
- Transfer of graduate credit to KU from an outside institution;
- Reduction in the required number of graduate hours for Master’s students;
- Counting credit hours taken as non-degree seeking student towards a later graduate degree at KU;
- Counting credit hours taken as a certificate seeking student toward another graduate degree.

Transfer Credit

The transfer credit option allows master’s students to add graduate-level coursework completed at another institution to their KU transcript to count toward their KU degree. Upper-level coursework taken as an undergraduate, even courses numbered at the graduate level, is not eligible for transfer in any case. Additional restrictions apply to what non-KU graduate courses and the number of credit hours that can be counted toward a KU master’s degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below, as well as consulting with their DGS. In all cases, transfer credit must first be approved at the department or program level. To begin the transfer process, students should consult with their DGS to submit the required transfer materials. These include a transcript reflecting the courses to be transferred and descriptions and/or syllabi for the courses in question.

No transfer of credits is allowed for the Ph.D. In circumstances where students enter the Ph.D. program with an M.A. from another institution or other relevant graduate coursework, it may be possible for students to request a reduction in the number of hours required for the Ph.D. Students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

Reduced Credit Hour Degree

KU policy defines 30 hours as the minimum for master's degrees. Departments may petition for a reduced hour degree master's degree for individual students in cases where they may provide evidence that the student entered the program especially well-prepared to complete a graduate-level degree and the student is able to maintain a superior grade point average. Reduced credit hour degrees must be based on coursework or experiences that can be objectively measured, such as coursework or qualifying internship or study abroad programs. Professional or life experience does not qualify. A reduction in hours is distinct from a transfer of credit and is reserved for students whose prior coursework doesn't qualify for transfer credit (e.g. was already used to fulfill requirements towards a completed degree) and there are no modifications on the transcript.

Restrictions apply to the number of credit hours that can be reduced for a master’s degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below.

In all cases, a reduction in hours must first be approved at the department or program level, so to begin the process for approval, students should consult with their DGS. Students must also provide

documentation of the coursework or experience being used to justify the reduced hours (e.g. transcripts, program descriptions).

Because there is no minimum number of required hours for the Ph.D., reduction of required hours based on prior degrees or experience is determined solely at the program level. Doctoral students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

Related Policies:

- [Graduate Credit](#)
- [Co-enrollment](#)
- [Master's Degree Requirements \(on Reduced Hour Master's Degree\)](#)

Credit/No Credit

The University supports and encourages interdisciplinary study, which may include graduate students enrolling in coursework at the graduate level that is outside of their primary discipline. The Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) is an option for graduate students who are taking a course that is not required for their degree or certificate and who do not wish to have the course grade reflected in their cumulative graduate GPA. Rather than a grade appearing on the transcript, the student receives a designation of CR or NC, which does not factor in the GPA.

No course graded CR/NC will count toward the satisfaction of any graduate degree or certificate requirement. This includes, but is not limited to, courses taken to fulfill the Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirement for doctoral students.

Students make the CR/NC election via the Registrar's CR/NC online request form. Elections and changes to elections can only be made during the specific CR/NC period. For regular semester courses, this period begins after the last day to add a class and extends for approximately two weeks. Exact dates may be found on the current KU Academic Calendar. Please keep in mind, short courses may have alternate dates.

The student should consult with their own program advisor about the appropriateness of the course prior to enrolling; however, in cases where CR/NC is elected, the course instructor is not informed of the election unless the student chooses to share this information.

Additional restrictions apply. Students should carefully review the information in the link above.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [University Senate Rules and Regulations \(USRR\), Section 2.3.8](#)

Probation & Dismissal

Probation is an academic status that can be assigned to a graduate student that is not making satisfactory progress toward completing their degree. The department initiates the probation process and will inform the student of why they are not making satisfactory progress, what they must do to return to good standing, and the deadline for doing so.

Students are most commonly placed on probation due to their graduate cumulative GPA dropping below a B average (3.0 on a 4.0 scale). In these cases, probation occurs automatically and is reflected on the student's record for the semester following the semester in which the student's GPA drops below 3.0. If the student's cumulative GPA is raised to 3.0 by the end of the probationary semester, the student will be automatically returned to good academic standing.

Individual Schools/the College may set more stringent GPA requirements.

Students may also be placed on probation by their departments for other reasons that constituting a failure to make satisfactory progress towards degree. These may include, but are not limited to;

- Lack of progress on the thesis, dissertation, or capstone project
- Unacceptable academic performance on program milestones outside of coursework (e.g. exams)
- Unsatisfactory grades or GPA within foundational required courses (despite the overall cumulative GPA)
- An unsatisfactory result in their department's annual progress evaluation
Nearing or going beyond their maximum time to degree. See the Time Limits section below for more information.

Students should carefully review the Good Academic Standing policy for graduate students at KU for more information on what constitutes making satisfactory academic progress.

Individual programs may also have additional measures of progress. Students should also consult the Annual Review section of their department graduate handbook or the degree requirements section and with their program advisor for more information.

If a student is unable to raise their cumulative GPA or otherwise meet the communicated terms of the academic probation, the department will reconsider their continuation in the program, and in most cases will recommend the student for dismissal. Once dismissed, a student is no longer able to be enrolled in coursework and cannot complete their degree. Students dismissed from any graduate program may not be admitted to any other graduate program at the University of Kansas.

A student on probation or facing dismissal should discuss their status with their advisor.

Related Policies:

- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)
- [Good Academic Standing policy](#)

Grading

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' (GPA) Grading policy governs requirements for the grading of graduate students above those described in Article II of the University Senate Rules and Regulations. Additionally, individual schools, departments, or programs may have grading policies that are more stringent than those of GPA.

Students should also consult their advisor and the departmental grading section of this handbook for additional information that may affect them.

At minimum, for all graduate students at KU, at least a B average is required on course work counted toward any of the master's degrees at KU, and only courses graded A, B, or C (excluding C-) may be counted. Course work counted toward a doctorate, including that for a master's degree if obtained at KU, should average better than a B.

Related Policies:

- [University Senate Rules & Regulations](#)
- [Grading](#)
- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)

Time Limits

The University expects that master's degree should typically be completed in two (2) years of full-time study, the doctorate degree in five (5) years of study, and both the master's and doctorate together in six-seven (6-7) years of study.

Students who anticipate exceeding these targets should review the information in the policies below, as well as consult with their program advisor to create a timeline for degree completion. In order to support this process, students are encouraged to use a Mentoring Agreement Template and/or adapt to their own needs to support effective mentoring and a positive mentoring relationship.

Note that individual schools/the College/degree programs may require Mentoring Agreements for students who are nearing their maximum time to degree.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Degree Program Time Constraints](#)
- [KU CLAS Mentorship Agreement Template](#)
- [Univ. Michigan Rackham Graduate School Mentoring Plan Templates](#)
- [KU Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs IDP template](#)

Leave of Absence

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military leave, to pursue family responsibilities, or to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals) it may be necessary for graduate students to take a break from their program temporarily, without having to withdraw entirely from the program. An approved leave of absence allows a student to take a temporary break from enrolling in graduate coursework while remaining in good standing with the

University and the department and while “stopping the clock” on their time to degree. When a student is on Leave of Absence status it is understood that they have temporarily suspended their graduate work and therefore will not make use of University resources, including faculty time.

Requesting a Leave of Absence is done through a University petition. University petitions must first be approved and supported at the program level, so students wishing to initiate the petition process should first consult with their Director of Graduate Studies and review their department’s internal petition procedures. Units or the Director of Graduate Study may request documentation to support the student’s need for a leave of absence.

In order for a Leave of Absence to be approved, the student must be withdrawn from all active and/or future enrollment. Withdrawal for the purposes of Leave of Absence is still subject to all Registrar deadlines, required forms, and applicable tuition and fees.

Students on Leave of Absence are automatically reactivated after their leave is over and are eligible to enroll for their intended semester back during the normal enrollment periods. See the KU Academic Calendar for exact dates that enrollment begins.

If at any time plans change and a student wishes to return and enroll before leave was supposed to end, they may contact their department to be reactivated early.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Leaves of Absence \(policy\)](#)
- [Leave of Absence \(GPA website, form linked at bottom of page\)](#)

Required University Milestones

All graduate students must complete one or more exams as part of their degree requirements. In addition to department or program guidelines, the following milestones are required for all students and specific regulations apply:

- Master's Final Culminating Exam (written or oral)/Thesis Defense for Master's degree
- Doctoral Comprehensive Oral Exam
- Doctoral Final Exam/Dissertation Defense

*A final culminating effort is not required for departments with an approved coursework-only master’s degree option in the Academic Catalog (note that programs with a capstone are considered coursework only).

Before a student is allowed to complete any of these three exams, pre-approval from the school/College is required in advance of the exam date. This pre-approval request will be submitted on the student’s behalf by their department after the exam date has been scheduled. The school/College reviews the student record and verifies all University requirements have been fulfilled. The full list of these requirements may be found via the link in the heading above. Students should work with their

departments well in advance of their planned exam date, to schedule their exams in a timely fashion and to ensure that all University policies relating to oral exams are being followed.

There are additional policies requirements for oral exams. The following are University policies pertaining to oral exams:

Oral Exam Committee Composition

All voting committee members must be appointed members of the Graduate Faculty of KU. Additionally, a majority of committee members serving on a graduate student oral examination committee must be tenured/tenure-track faculty in the candidate's department or program of study.

Many additional restrictions apply, especially for doctoral exam committees. Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the University policies pertaining to exams, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies when forming an exam committee. Your graduate program coordinator can assist with confirming the qualifying status of any faculty member at KU, or outside of KU.

Oral Exam Attendance

Oral Exams may be conducted in-person, remotely, or a hybrid of both. There are no University level requirements for physical presence; however, there are strict regulations on participation.

In all cases, all committee members must be present, either physically or via phone/video conference, for an exam to commence. **If a committee member does not arrive or appear, the exam may not begin and if a committee member leaves or loses connection such that they cannot fully participate, the exam may not proceed. Oral examinations that do not meet these attendance requirements are not valid.**

Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the policies below, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies in the formation of an oral exam committee.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Oral Exam Attendance](#)
- [Graduate Faculty Appointments](#)

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS

The University offers a variety of Approved Graduate Certificate Programs to encourage current graduate students to pursue interdisciplinary study, gain a credential for expertise in an outside area of study, or provide an option for a coherent course of advanced study for those not ready to commit to a full degree program. Note that students must be fully admitted to a graduate certificate by the end of the last course that will count to fulfill the certificate. Students wishing to complete the certificate should apply as early as possible. Students whose interests or career goals may be served by a Graduate Certificate should familiarize themselves with the University's policies relating to Certificate programs (found below) early in their graduate career, in addition to individual certificate program requirements.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Graduate Certificate Programs: Eligibility and Admission Criteria](#)
- [Policies & Procedures for Graduate Certificate Programs](#)

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (Master's & Ph.D.)

In addition to all program requirements, students planning to graduate must complete all University graduation requirements **prior to the published Graduation Deadline** in a given semester. Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which varies by semester.

Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs Graduation Checklists ([Master's](#))

These graduation checklists provide a comprehensive list of all University requirements for graduation and should be consulted by every graduating master's or doctoral student as soon as graduation is expected. Submission of the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is done electronically. Students must comply with all University requirements for formatting and electronic submission of the thesis or dissertation. There is no University requirement that students provide a bound or printed copy of the draft.

We strongly encourage students to submit an Application for Graduation as early as possible; ideally prior to the 20th day of classes of the semester they intend to graduate.

GRADUATE & POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs (GPA) offers funding opportunities in several different categories. Students interested in applying should direct inquiries to the department's Director of Graduate Studies or to GPA. Some of the available funding includes:

[Summer Research Scholarships](#): intended primarily for post-comp doctoral students.

[Graduate Student Travel Fund](#): intended for graduate students presenting a paper at a national or regional meeting of a learned or professional society. A student may receive an award (max \$750) only once per academic year, with priority given to students who have not received the fund previously. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

[Doctoral Student Research Fund](#): Designed to support KU doctoral students who need assistance to carry out research that advances progress toward the degree. Applications for this fund are accepted only for a limited time as funding is available. Students are eligible to receive one award from this fund during their doctoral career. Students should check the link above for additional information and restrictions.

Policies Regarding Freedom of Expression on Campus

Kansas State Law (HB2333) requires postsecondary educational institutions in Kansas to publish in their handbooks and orientation programs the institution's policies, regulations, or expectations of students regarding free expression on campus.

Per KU General Counsel, this includes the following two policies:

- [KU Public Assembly Policy](#)
- [Kansas Board of Regents Statement on Free Expression](#)

Note that the two policies listed above apply to ALL members of the campus community; they are not specific to graduate students.

APPENDIX I: ACCELERATED DEGREES

About the Programs

The accelerated master's programs offered by the Urban Planning Program allow students to earn a bachelor's degree and a professional master's degree in urban planning in less time than both degrees pursued separately, including one year of graduate school at the undergraduate tuition rate.

Prospective students should consult with their undergraduate advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator regarding the requirements for the accelerated program. **Students planning to apply for the program are not approved to enroll in graduate level urban planning courses without admission to the program and coordination between their undergraduate advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator.**

Students admitted to the accelerated program are approved to enroll in 6 graduate level urban planning courses that "double count" toward their undergraduate and graduate degree. Admitted students will work with the Graduate Program Coordinator to select the appropriate urban planning courses for timely progress in the Master of Urban Planning program.

Accelerated Master of Urban Planning

This Accelerated Master's program combines a College of Liberal Arts & Sciences undergraduate degree in any major and Urban Planning masters and is designed for students who have a passion for problem solving and helping communities engage with their futures. It allows well-qualified students to earn a bachelor's and a master's degree in five years, rather than the six years it would take to earn each degree separately. This program combines in-depth training in the major of the student's choice with an accredited professional master's degree in urban planning. Graduates are prepared for careers in the public, private and not-for profit sectors helping make communities better places.

Accelerated Master of Urban Planning/BA or BGS in Environmental Studies

This Accelerated Master's program combines a BA or BGS in Environmental Studies and Urban Planning masters and prepares students to understand the impacts of human activity on the natural environment while developing the knowledge and skills to enable sustainable community futures. As a student, you will have engaged learning opportunities to address real-world issues, as well as opportunities for research. Top faculty across campus will help you prepare for careers ranging from land conservation to policy and plan development, to program implementation. This Accelerated Master's program at KU allows students to earn a bachelor's and a professional master's degree in less time than both degrees pursued separately, including one year of graduate study at the undergraduate tuition rate.

Procedures for Applying to the Accelerated Master of Urban Planning Program

Only current KU undergraduate students are eligible to apply to the accelerated master's program.

Prospective students should work closely with their undergraduate advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator to ensure they meet requirements for applying to an Accelerated Master of Urban Planning Program.

Prospective students should officially declare their interest in the Accelerated Master of Urban Planning program by completing an Accelerated Master's Inquiry Form. All prospective students should discuss their interest in the accelerated program with their undergraduate advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator **no later than the student's junior year.**

Prospective students are eligible to apply to the Accelerated Master or Urban Planning program in the **spring semester of their junior year.** Applicants must be on track to complete all undergraduate requirements for a CLAS degree from KU within 2 semesters of approval to begin completing graduate coursework.

Required Application Materials

- Statement of interest that succinctly summarizes the students' interests, education, long-term career goals, and how the accelerated degree program will help them achieve those goals;
- A copy of their advising report
- Three reference forms or letters of recommendation. Provided references should be qualified to comment on the applicant's academic abilities and probable success in graduate study. At least two should be faculty members who have had the student in class.

Approval to Begin Coursework

- Upon review of the application for admission, the Urban Planning Program will notify the student of their eligibility to begin graduate level coursework in the program.
- Approved students will meet with the Urban Planning Program director to plan the urban planning graduate courses to be taken for elective undergraduate credit.
- Students should continue to work closely with their undergraduate advisor to ensure all requirements for the undergraduate degree(s) are met.

Progression Requirements

- In the final spring semester of undergraduate study, the student will meet with the Graduate Program Coordinator to review the student's performance in urban planning courses.
- The student must earn a grade of "B" or better in these courses to be eligible for regular admission to the Master of Urban Planning.

Final Acceptance

Final acceptance to the Master of Urban Planning graduate program will be contingent upon the following:

- Successful completion of all requirements for the bachelor's degree;
- Grades of B or above in all urban planning graduate-level coursework taken in the student's senior year

Following completion and award of the undergraduate degree, the admitted student will again meet with the Graduate Program Coordinator to review the course plan for the fifth year of study and update as needed.

For those students who do not meet the minimum GPA requirement in the first semester of year 5 an alternative plan of study to address the student's deficiencies may be developed, at the program's sole discretion. Students may also be dismissed from the program.

Accelerated Master of Urban Planning Degree Plan

For further information on this dual degree, please see the [course catalog](#) and speak with the Graduate Program Coordinator.

APPENDIX II: DUAL MASTER'S DEGREES

Master of Urban Planning and Master of Arts in Geography

This joint degree combines in a 3-year program the 2-year MUP degree and the normal 1½-year M.A. degree in Geography, both offered through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The program is designed for students interested in careers in policy planning and research involving GIS cartography, environmental planning, and land use planning. A master's thesis is required for this joint degree.

MUP/Geography Dual Degree Plan

For further information on this dual degree, please see the [course catalog](#) and speak with the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Master of Urban Planning and Master of Public Administration

This program combines the normal course work requirements for the Master of Urban Planning (42 credit hours) and the Master of Public Administration (40 credit hours) into just 72 credit hours for both degrees in 3 years. Students interested in learning about and leading cities into the future will gain critical planning, sustainability, and administrative skills through the combination of these degrees.

MPA/MUP Dual Degree Plan

For further information on this dual degree, please see the [course catalog](#) and speak with the Graduate Program Coordinator.

APPENDIX III: THESIS REQUIREMENTS

Permission for a student to pursue the thesis option is contingent upon the student achieving a grade point average of 3.5 or better over the first two full semesters of study. This is because a student with a grade point average below 3.5 is unlikely to gain admission to a doctoral program.

A student desiring to prepare a thesis must develop a thesis proposal with the assistance of a faculty advisor. This proposal shall be submitted to the faculty thesis committee no later than the first day of classes of the semester before the semester in which the student plans to graduate. The committee's approval is required before the student may pursue the thesis option. A final general examination on the thesis and course work is held.

For Spring (May) graduates, the proposal must be submitted by the start of classes of the preceding Fall semester, and the Committee will decide by September 15.

For Fall (December) graduates, the proposal must be submitted by the start of classes of the preceding Spring semester, and the Committee will decide by February 5.

As six hours of course credit is given for the thesis, a student who prepares a thesis needs to complete only 42 hours of formal courses. The thesis course (UBPL 806) carries variable credit ranging from one to six hours. It is possible to take all six hours in a single semester, but typically the student takes three hours in each of the third and fourth semesters.

Thesis Guidance

Selecting a Topic

The thesis is a written report of original research conducted by the student. It is generally understood in the academic world that a Ph.D. dissertation contains a substantial contribution to knowledge in the field, while a master's thesis shows the student's potential for making such a contribution. Before preparing a thesis proposal, students should ask the following questions about the proposed topic:

1. Are there faculty members available who know something about the topic and are willing to work with me?
2. Is the necessary data available?
3. Are there pertinent references available?
4. Am I competent in the methodology I propose to use?
5. Would the research cost money, and if so, where would I get it?
6. Can the project be completed in the time I have available?

The Committee

Before developing a thesis proposal, the student should discuss their plans with a potential advisor and two potential committee members. This thesis committee will supervise and assist in the research and preparation of the thesis document, and shall consist of three persons, as follows:

1. The chairperson of the committee must be a member of the Urban Planning faculty.
2. A second member should also be from the Urban Planning faculty.
3. The third member is to be from outside the Urban Planning faculty in order to provide a broader perspective. Usually this is a faculty member from another department in the University, but it may also be a qualified practitioner who is not connected with the University.

Please note that part-time faculty and non-faculty members are not routinely eligible to serve on thesis committees. It is necessary to process a special appointment for such a person to be on a committee, and this requires proof that the person is qualified by reason of education or experience.

The committee chair is the key individual in supervising the student's work. The other two committee members (sometimes called the minor members) may do nothing but read and comment on a completed draft of the thesis. However, it is often useful to have a minor member who is especially knowledgeable in the methodology the student intends to use (such as statistical analysis or qualitative methods).

It is the student's responsibility to find committee members and to secure their consent to serve on the committee. No faculty member is compelled to be on a thesis committee.

The Proposal

After selecting a topic and the prospective thesis committee, the student should write a brief proposal in consultation with the prospective thesis advisor. This proposal should include:

1. A general description of the proposed research.
2. Formal statement of hypotheses to be tested (if relevant).
3. Description of the methodology to be used.
4. Explanation of the expected importance of the findings.
5. A condensed outline of the chapters.
6. A list of the most important references.

As noted earlier, the Thesis Committee must approve the proposal by the designated deadlines, in order for the student to continue to pursue the thesis option.

Carrying Out the Thesis Work

The first step in implementing a thesis proposal is to conduct a thorough search of the literature to learn what has already been published about the subject. Students do not want to repeat something that has already been done.

Keep careful notes when completing a literature search. Put down all the data that will be needed to prepare a formal bibliography to avoid having to recheck the sources later to get items that were neglected being recorded. Students may want to write a draft of their literature review chapter right away. However, students may come across additional references later that will need to be incorporated into the review.

How students should proceed from this point will vary according to the nature of the research. It may be that the next step will be collecting data from secondary sources, designing a survey form, administering interviews, or simply thinking hard about what has been read. The thesis advisor will help guide this process.

As students continue with the work, they should keep their thesis advisor regularly informed of their progress. Most thesis chairs like to have the student submit drafts of individual chapters as they are completed, so that there will be some warning if the student is headed in the wrong direction. However, the committee chair may prefer a different arrangement.

The Examination

It is the practice of the Urban Planning Program to require each student who prepares a thesis to take an oral examination before the student's thesis committee. This examination consists in part of a defense of the thesis, in which the committee members ask questions and make comments about the thesis draft. The examination may also include a review of the entire course work taken by the student to assure that the student is competent in areas other than the subject of the thesis. No written examination is required of students who prepare a thesis.

Please note: The examination is a formal step required by the Graduate School. The Graduate School must be notified in advance of the scheduled date of the examination and must be notified of the results afterwards. Please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator with questions regarding this process.

For further information regarding this process please refer to:

<http://graduate.ku.edu/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation>
<https://coga.ku.edu/graduation/masters-degree-checklist>

Committee members should receive a complete draft of the thesis at least two weeks before the examination. Please ask each committee member if they prefer a digital or hard copy.

The thesis draft submitted for the examination is not the final version of the thesis. It is rare for a committee to accept a draft at the examination without finding some errors or requesting some changes. These may be relatively easy to make, such as deleting some sections or rewriting certain paragraphs. They may also be difficult, such as reorganizing the entire thesis or writing new chapters. The committee also has the option of rejecting the entire thesis and failing the student on the examination.

Passing the examination is not equivalent to acceptance of the thesis; that is a separate step. As discussed above, the student always has some changes to make after the examination. The committee gives its final acceptance of the thesis by signing the title page that will be submitted to the Graduate School.

Preparing the Final Version

After the student passes the examination, they make the changes requested by the committee and then prepare the final version that will become a permanent record of the student's work. The KU Graduate Studies department has specific rules for the final copy. These rules must be strictly observed and can be found at <http://graduate.ku.edu/etd-formatting-and-working-multimedia-files>.

This resource does not specify style. Students should ask their committee chairperson whether they should follow a particular style manual. If not, please note that it is important to be consistent throughout the thesis.

Information regarding submission for digital copies can be found at <http://graduate.ku.edu/submitting>.

Regular and Timely Feedback for Thesis Students

Students carrying out thesis work will collaborate with their faculty advisor to establish mutually agreed upon norms for feedback and communication. Regular and timely feedback on thesis work will be established through the completion of a Mentorship Agreement with their faculty advisor.

Change in Advisor

You may complete your degree with a different advisor than the one you initially worked with. You do not need your current advisor's permission to seek a new advisor. If the process is complex, the Director of Graduate Study can serve as a caretaker advisor for one semester to manage administrative matters requiring an advisor's name or signature. Common reasons for changing advisors include:

- Your interests or your advisor's may change, resulting in incompatibility.
- With at least one semester's notice, your advisor may end the advising relationship, typically if you are not making timely progress toward your degree.
- Your advisor leaves the School or KU, or your advisor retires, dies, or is otherwise unable to continue advising.

When possible, the faculty advisor should notify the Graduate Program Coordinator of the need for an advisor change. In all cases, the student must complete a Record of Change in Advisor form, available from the Graduate Program Coordinator, and submit it for filing. The form will be stored in the student's electronic file

APPENDIX IV: PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

American Planning Association

The national organization of planners is called the American Planning Association. Members include not only professional planners, but also planning commissioners, city councilpersons, other public officials, and citizens interested in planning. **Membership in APA is free for as long as a student is a student. Join here <https://www.planning.org/join/students/>** They provide opportunities for scholarships, networking, getting a mentor, and presenting a poster at the national conference. Students can volunteer to help with the annual national conference. Contact Professor Johnson, bojojohn@ku.edu, for further information on how to become a member and get involved with APA.

APA is divided into Chapters, most of which correspond with states. There is a Kansas Chapter and a Missouri Chapter. The Kansas Chapter holds an annual state conference and Spring Symposium which students can attend. Also, students can volunteer to help with the annual conference.

Some of the larger Chapters are subdivided into Sections. There is a Metropolitan Kansas City Section, which is a subdivision of both the Kansas Chapter and Missouri Chapter. The Section usually meets once a month in Kansas City, Missouri or its suburbs. Attending Section meetings is an excellent way to meet practicing planners and, among other things, find out about employment opportunities.

APA is also divided into "Divisions" like Arts and Planning, Food Systems, International, Housing and Community Development, Latinos and Planning, Planning and the Black Community, LGBTQ and Planning, Technology, etc. As a student member you can sign up to join divisions for free so – start your network and expand your horizons now!

American Institute of Certified Planners

APA has a supplementary organization for certifying professional planners called the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). "AICP" after someone's name means they are an certified planner. To become certified, a person must meet certain education and experience requirements, pass an examination, and continue to educate themselves on planning issues and skills. A candidate with a master's degree from an accredited planning school is eligible to become certified after only two years of professional planning experience. The Urban Planning Program at the University of Kansas is accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board. Since November of 2017, graduates of accredited programs like KUs can enter the AICP Candidate Program which means they can sign up to take the AICP exam upon graduation and become certified when they have the necessary 2 years of experience. In the past, people had to get their years of experience and then take the exam. It could be beneficial to take the exam when subjects like planning history, theory, law, and statistics are still fresh in their mind, although the questions requiring years of experience to answer might be harder.

Other

There are many other professional and scholarly organizations to which planners belong. Those interested in real estate development often belong to the Urban Land Institute. Other organizations that have both a practitioner and scholarly focus include: the Transportation Research Board, the Floodplain Management Association, WTS International, and the Land Trust Alliance. Scholarly associations that include the work of planners are: the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, the Regional Science Association, the American Economic Association, the Association of American Geographers, and the American Sociological Association. Most students join such organizations after they graduate, although many of them have reduced fees for students.

Kansas Association of Planning Students (KAPS)

The Kansas Association of Planning Students (KAPS) is our program's student organization. All UBPL students are automatically included and encouraged to be active in the organization. Among the functions of KAPS are: to organize learning activities, such as UBPL brown bag lunches; to plan social and volunteer events; to gather input and suggestions from students to present to the faculty; and to plan student travel to the annual APA conference or regional conferences. This is the official Planning Student Organization (PSO) registered with the American Planning Association for KU students. Among the officers are positions representing KU UBPL students to the national organization and to the Kansas Chapter of APA. APA has annual awards competitions to recognize PSOs doing good work in their communities.

Since KAPS is entirely student-led, its level of activity varies from year to year, depending on the commitment of its members and officers. KAPS elects officers each year. The KAPS president is invited to faculty meetings, where they report on student business, represent students, and are eligible to vote on most matters at those meetings.

Faculty Meetings

Urban Planning faculty meetings are open (except for the closed sessions), and any student is welcome to attend. However, no special effort is made to publicize the meetings, other than to notify the president of the student organization. When matters are brought up involving individual persons whose privacy should be protected, the faculty goes into closed session, and all students are asked to leave.

The elected president of KAPS (Kansas Association of Planning Students) is specifically invited to UBPL faculty meetings and is entitled to vote at them. It is also the president's responsibility to convey the concerns of the students, and a faculty meeting is generally the appropriate occasion to do this.