

URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING, MASTER OF (M.U.R.P.) WITH A CONCENTRATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

Program accreditation

Planning Accreditation Board

Program goals

The Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree program advances social justice and quality of life through planning, designing and evaluating options to create, enhance and sustain the social, economic and environmental conditions that improve communities. The program maintains a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion. The goals for the program are to:

1. Prepare students to connect knowledge, skills and values to reflective action that informs their work in planning and related fields
2. Recruit and retain excellent students
3. Produce research and service that advances planning knowledge, practice and the public good through scholarship, civic engagement and professional work
4. Promote diversity and inclusion broadly as a primary feature and strength of the M.U.R.P. program

Student learning outcomes

M.U.R.P. core outcomes

1. Students will understand the historical, legal and theoretical contexts in which planning operates.
2. Students will understand the functions and processes of an equitable, sustainable and livable community; how planning practice strives to achieve and maintain such communities; and the impact of these actions for future planning.
3. Students will appreciate the approaches and perspectives of planning across world regions and how that differs from planning approaches in the U.S.
4. Students will think critically, analyze and assess information, and exhibit technical competence related to plan and policy analysis, long-range plan creation and current planning practices (i.e., implementation and enforcement).
5. Students will engage with diverse planning constituencies via effective communication, listening, empathy and understanding.
6. Students will communicate effectively through use of writing, oral, visual and design skills.
7. Students will evaluate questions and approaches using principles of diversity, inclusion, social justice and sustainability to guide planning in a democratic society.
8. Students will lead and engage in civic action and the political process through innovative planning approaches and policy-making that reflect diversity and inclusion and contribute positive changes in society.

Environmental planning concentration-specific outcomes

1. Students will develop a well-rounded knowledge of environmental planning, in the context of prevailing economic and social conditions, with particular emphasis on multilevel governance approaches to environmental protection; the roles of state and non-state actors in environmental governance; and the ways in which planning tools can be used to address specific environmental challenges.
2. Students will acquire the analytical and research skills needed to investigate environmental problems, in the context of prevailing economic and social conditions, and develop strategies for addressing them.
3. Student will develop a grounded understanding the values and ideologies that shape approaches to environmental planning, including conservation and preservation, sustainability, resilience, and environmental justice.

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (<http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/>) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/>)

Degree candidacy requirements

A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master's or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student's graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student's faculty regarding the student's academic achievements and the student's readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements. (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/candidacy/>)

Graduation requirements

As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the [academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements](https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/). (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>)

Apply online today. (<https://www.vcu.edu/admissions/apply/graduate/>)

Admission requirements

Degree:	Semester(s) of entry:	Deadline dates:	Test requirements:
M.U.R.P.	Fall	Feb 1 (early admission); Apr 1 (priority deadline); May 1 (final deadline)	
	Spring	Oct 1	

Special requirements

- These deadlines are designed to allow sufficient time for application review and admission processing. Applications may be submitted after the deadline; however, there is no guarantee of sufficient time for processing. Any application submitted too late for current semester processing will be considered for the following semester.

In addition to the **general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School**, the following specifications apply:

1. Students must have a minimum undergraduate GPA of 2.7 (on a 4.0 scale).
2. Students not meeting these requirements may be admitted to the program on a provisional basis. The provisional period shall consist of the first nine-to-12 hours of designated graduate work in which all grades must be, at minimum, a B.
3. Generally, at least two of the three letters of reference should come from former faculty.

All courses in the graduate certificates in Geographic Information Systems, Sustainability Planning or Urban Revitalization may be applied to meet the requirements of the Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree. However, successful completion of either certificate does not guarantee admission into the M.U.R.P. degree program.

Degree requirements

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>), students in the M.U.R.P. degree program must:

1. Complete a minimum of 48 graduate credit hours plus an internship (not for credit). A core of required courses accounts for 24 of these credit hours. A capstone requirement accounts for three or six of the

required 48 credit hours. The remaining 18 or 21 credit hours consist of concentration requirements and electives. A minimum overall GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) is required for receipt of the M.U.R.P. degree. In addition, students must receive a minimum grade of B for all core and capstone courses.

2. Complete either a six-credit thesis (URSP 764) or prepare a three-credit professional plan project through the professional plan course (URSP 762). Program administrators request permission to utilize the grade of PR, in addition to normal letter grades (A, B, C, D or F) in URSP 762. This will allow students the ability to work on their plans over a more extended period of time, if necessary.

In selecting their elective courses, students may (1) opt for exposure to a wide array of planning-related subject matter (the generalist or comprehensive approach), (2) select one of the areas of specialization defined by the department's faculty or (3) develop an individualized program, focusing on one or more self-defined topics. Regardless of the approach selected, students are expected to meet regularly with their faculty advisers for discussion of their courses of study in relation to their career plans.

Curriculum requirements

Course	Title	Hours
Core courses		
URSP 610	Introduction to Planning	3
URSP 622	Community Socioeconomic Analysis Using GIS	3
URSP/GVPA/PADM/URSP 623	Applied Research Methods	3
URSP/GVPA 632	Planning Theory and Processes	3
URSP 635	Legal and Legislative Foundations of Planning	3
URSP 662	Foundations for Development Planning	3
URSP 760	Capstone Proposal Development	3
URSP 761	Planning Studio	3
Capstone course		
Select one of these two capstone options.		3 or 6
URSP 762	Professional Plan (3 credits)	
URSP 764	Thesis or Projects (6 credits)	
Concentration requirements		12
Electives		6 or 9
Total Hours		48

The minimum number of graduate credit hours required for this degree is 48.

Environmental planning concentration

Course	Title	Hours
Required concentration courses		
URSP 650	Natural Resources and Environmental Planning	3
URSP 655	Environmental Policy and Planning	3
Concentration electives		
Select six credit hours from the following: ¹		6
URSP 515	Watershed Planning and Governance	
URSP 520	Park Planning	
URSP 545	Sustainable Energy Policy and Planning	

URSP 591	Special Topics in Urban and Regional Studies and Planning ²
URSP 628	Land Use Planning
URSP 637	Sustainable Community Development
URSP 672	Food Systems, Rural Development and Landscape Conservation
URSP 691	Topics in Urban and Regional Planning ²

URSP 672	Food Systems, Rural Development and Landscape Conservation
URSP 681	International Urban Policy and Planning
URSP 691	Topics in Urban and Regional Planning
URSP 794	Planning Practicum Seminar
URSP 797	Directed Research

¹
 With the approval of the program chair, other appropriate graduate courses may be applied toward the concentration.

²
 URSP 591 or URSP 691 may be selected when the topic is related to environmental planning.

Electives

Course	Title	Hours
Select six or nine credit hours (depending on selected capstone option) from the following: ¹		

FIRE 627	Real Estate Development	6 or 9
FIRE 629	Cases in Real Estate	
URSP 502	Global Economic Change and Development	6 or 9
URSP 515	Watershed Planning and Governance	
URSP 517	Historic Preservation in Planning	6 or 9
URSP 520	Park Planning	
URSP 521	Introduction to Geographic Information Systems	6 or 9
or URSP 621	Introduction to Geographic Information Systems	
URSP 523	GIS for Land Use and Transportation Planning	6 or 9
URSP 525	Site Planning and Graphics	
URSP 526	Design of Sustainable Places	6 or 9
URSP 541	Urban Public Policy-making Processes	
URSP 545	Sustainable Energy Policy and Planning	6 or 9
URSP 561	Real Estate Development Finance for Planners	
URSP 591	Special Topics in Urban and Regional Studies and Planning	6 or 9
URSP 611	Principles of Urban Design	
URSP 625	Spatial Database Management and GIS Modeling	6 or 9
URSP 627	GIS Applications in Urban Design	
URSP 628	Land Use Planning	6 or 9
URSP 629	Quantitative Geospatial Data Analysis	
URSP 637	Sustainable Community Development	6 or 9
URSP 641	Public Participation and Negotiation	
URSP 643	Housing Policy	6 or 9
URSP 647	Adaptive Reuse of Buildings	
URSP 651	Transportation Policy and Planning	6 or 9
URSP 657	Regional Policy and Planning	
URSP 664	Urban Economic Development Policy	6 or 9
URSP 666	Urban Commercial Revitalization	

¹
 With the approval of the program chair, other appropriate courses may be applied as electives.

Students who complete the requirements for this concentration will receive a Master of Urban and Regional Planning.

Internship

The internship is designed to give students practical experience in planning-related activities in an institutional context. Normally, the internship is taken during the summer between the first and second year or during the second year. Many opportunities for internship positions, as well as part- and full-time jobs in planning at all levels of government, exist within the Richmond area. Upon request, the internship requirement may be waived for students with substantial planning-related professional experience.

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Program website: wilder.vcu.edu/academic/urban/grad.html (<http://wilder.vcu.edu/academic/urban/grad.html>)