What Is a Thesis?
A Master’s Thesis should demonstrate a student’s capacity to deal convincingly with a subject at a professional level. This includes the ability to formulate a hypothesis and carry out independent research in its support.

A thesis must also clearly identify the polemical nature of the research and analysis you will conduct. *A thesis is not a report on a subject matter that has been conclusively studied by others* (although you may draw on such material in support of your own work). A thesis topic is often formulated as a question that you will be answering. A common test of the value of a thesis is that it will contribute to the body of knowledge either by modifying conventional thinking on a subject or by introducing new ideas into the discourse. Therefore, a thesis should include a literature review; a review of the current state of knowledge in the field about the topic under study.

A thesis within the expanding framework of historic preservation may have one or more avenues of inquiry. These could include: historical analyses of architecture, urbanism and landscape form; development and/or critical analyses of ideas and techniques for physical planning, specific legislative policies, planning tools, site management, or financial arrangements that affect preservation; critical analyses of theoretical approaches to historic preservation; critical analyses of the history of the field; critical analysis of historical issues pertinent to the field; critical analyses of design issues evident in historic buildings, landscapes or districts; development of original design approaches that reflect on or relate to historic buildings, landscapes or districts; development of original interpretation approaches for historic buildings, landscapes, or districts; histories of building technologies, laboratory investigations and evaluations of building and building conservation materials and related methods of testing, evaluation, and monitoring.
## Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis Topic Discussion</td>
<td>Friday, April 24th</td>
<td>9 a.m. – 12 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis Topic Presentation</td>
<td>Friday, September 11th</td>
<td>9 a.m. – 1 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit Name of Advisor</td>
<td>Friday, September 25th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit Research Proposal to Advisor</td>
<td>Friday October 9th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review Presentation w/ Advisor</td>
<td>Week of October 12th</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Thesis Review (all faculty)</td>
<td>Friday, October 23rd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit Thesis Outline</td>
<td>Friday, November 20th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit Literature Review to Advisor</td>
<td>Friday, December 18th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit Updated Research Proposal/ Outline to Advisor</td>
<td>Friday, January 22nd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit names of two readers to Assistant Director</td>
<td>Friday, January 22nd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review state of thesis w/ Advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Thesis Review with advisor and small group of faculty</td>
<td>Week of Feb. 5-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft of Thesis Due</td>
<td>Monday, April 11th</td>
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<td>Thesis Juries</td>
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<td>Thesis Due to Advisor for Grading</td>
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<td>Grades Due</td>
<td>Wednesday, May 11th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital Version of Thesis Due</td>
<td>Monday, May 16th</td>
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*Includes Thesis, Abstract, and signed Author Agreement Form*
Attachments

- Tips for Choosing a Topic
- Expanded Schedule
- Overall Thesis Guidelines and Formatting
- Digital Thesis Guidelines
- Policy for Historic Preservation Students with an Incomplete Thesis
- Digital Thesis Author Agreement Form
- Example 1: Bibliography vs. Footnote
- Example 2: Page of Bibliography
- Example 3: Page of Footnotes
- Example 4: Page of Endnotes
- Example 5: Sample Abstract
- IRB Policy and Guidelines
Tips for Choosing a Thesis Topic

1. Think about a general direction for your thesis – History/Theory, Design, Planning, Conservation, Materials History, etc.

2. Look at past preservation theses
   http://www.arch.columbia.edu/programs/historic-preservation/thesis
   http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/catalog/browse/departments/Historic+Preservation

3. Look through preservation journals and magazines for current issues
4. Look at social media and blogs within preservation groups

5. Think about internship projects as potential thesis topics
6. Re-read papers you wrote in your first year, ask yourself if these are ideas that could be formed into a thesis topic.

7. Talk to the professors!
   - You should be talking to professors about potential thesis topics, but don’t come to a meeting unprepared! Make sure you have a few ideas of which direction you would like to go in to start the conversation.

8. Choose a do-able topic. Make sure that the topic and question you are proposing can be explored in a limited time frame.

9. Make sure that you choose a topic that really interests you. You will be spending a lot of time with your chosen topic.

General Tips to Consider
Keep a running diary of all of your efforts that lead to completing your thesis. This diary might be approached in any number of ways, as long as it works for you in helping you to maintain your focus and organization. Some suggestions are listed below:

Write down each time you work on your thesis, and what you did on that date. This will allow you to form a progression of ideas and accomplishments that will help during your writing phase.

Write down all ideas that may come to you while working on your thesis, these may be useful once you have collected enough research to formulate your ideas.

Keep a running list of all references that you come across, including where you found them.

Keep a running list of contacts that have assisted you or could potentially assist you in writing and researching your thesis.
Expanded Schedule

Friday, April 24, 2015: Thesis Topic Discussion
9am-12pm
Initial discussion of student’s thesis topic idea/proposal (five minutes maximum). This is relatively informal. You may use images in a PowerPoint, but this is not required. You should hand in a one-page synopsis of your idea with a short bibliography. The presentation will be followed by short responses from a small group of faculty (ten minutes). This is meant to be an informal discussion. If you have a thesis proposal, it should be presented. If not, discuss your ideas about what you would like to investigate. The faculty understands that this may not be your final thesis topic, since many students develop topics out of their internship experiences.

If the initial topic idea does not appear to be an appropriate preservation thesis, the student will receive notice from the department head. You should be reading on your topic and discussing ideas with several faculty members in an attempt to focus your thinking. This should continue through the summer, as new ideas are developed.

Friday, September 11, 2015: Thesis Topic Presentation
9am-1pm: Location TBD
Students will present their thesis topics verbally in a second informal presentation (five minutes). The presentation will include further thinking about the topic for those students who have continued to work on their initial proposal, or the presentation of a new topic for students who have changed their thinking over the summer. The student will receive notice from the department head when the topic needs sharpened focus or other modifications. Those who have a new or substantially changed topic should hand in a one-page synopsis of their idea and a short bibliography.

Friday, September 25, 2015. Advisor’s Name Submitted
You must choose your advisor and submit their name to the Assistant Director within a week after your topic has been accepted. The advisor must be a full-time or adjunct member of the Historic Preservation faculty.

Friday, October 9, 2015: Submit Research Proposal to Advisor
Each student should submit a research proposal to their advisor. This will include a succinct statement of their topic, a rationale for why the topic is important for preservation; the sources that you intend to explore for data in your research; the methods that you intend to use for your analysis; and a preliminary timetable.

October 12-15, 2015: Review with Advisor
At some point during this week, you should meet with your advisor to review your presentation for the First Thesis Review (see below). Preliminary bibliographies should also be given to your advisor at this time.

October 19, 2015: Submit Revised Proposal and October 23, 2015: Submit Review Presentation
Students should send in Revised Proposals to the Assistant Director by this day so that they can be distributed to the faculty digitally prior to the Thesis Review. Digital presentations are due to the Assistant Director no later than 3pm on Friday, October 23rd so that all presentations are loaded onto the computer prior to starting the review on Saturday morning.
Friday, October 24, 2015: First Thesis Review
1pm, Location TBD
Each student is allotted 5 minutes for presentation of their topic and proposed methodology. Faculty comments for 10 minutes. The format is a PowerPoint presentation (unless this is not appropriate to your topic). The entire full time and adjunct faculty is invited to this presentation.

Following the presentations, faculty will confer. If a student’s topic is determined not to be proceeding well, the student will be notified to re-present a more focused version of the initial topic or propose a new topic in early November.

Friday, November 20, 2015: Thesis Outline Due
Each student should submit an outline of their thesis to their advisor for review. This should include proposed chapters, updated information on data sources, and an expanded bibliography.

Friday, December 18, 2015: Submit Literature review to Advisor
The literature review is not an annotated bibliography, but an analysis of the literature on your subject. You should summarize and analyze the information that is available relating to your subject; discuss how this material is relevant to your thesis; what the gaps are in knowledge on the subject; and how your work will contribute to the body of knowledge. This will then be integrated into the text of your thesis.

January 22, 2016: Submit Updated Proposal to Advisor; Submit Names of Two Readers
By this date your thesis idea should be well advanced. Submit an updated proposal to your advisor in preparation for the second thesis review. Submit the names and contact information for your two readers to the assistant director. Your readers need to be approved by your advisor.

Week of January 25, 2016: Preliminary Thesis Review with Advisor
At some point during this week, you should meet with your advisor to review your thesis presentation for their comments and suggestions.

Submit Updated Proposal to Assistant Director
Students should send in updated Abstracts and Bibliographies to the Assistant Director by 3:00pm so that they can be distributed to the faculty digitally prior to the Second Thesis Review.

February 5-12, 2016: Second Thesis Review
You and your advisor will arrange a date and time for a second thesis review that will include your advisor and select other faculty with knowledge about your topic. You may also invite your readers to attend if they are local.

Here are some questions that you might wish to address in this presentation:

- Are you on track with the assumptions that you made when you began your thesis or have your ideas about the topic changed as research has proceeded?
- If your ideas have changed, how have they changed and how has this impacted your initial thesis ideas?
- If your original thesis ideas have remained constant, what have you done to develop your ideas more fully?
- What have you discovered about your topic? What have you learned that will have an impact on the preservation field?
April 11, 2016: Thesis Draft Due to Advisor and Readers
The thesis draft can be delivered to your advisor and readers in hard copy or digital format. Please ask your advisor and readers how they prefer to receive the draft. Provide proof of e-mailed copies to those accepting digital delivery of the thesis by copying the Assistant Director. The student is responsible for preparing hardcopy thesis submissions to advisors and readers who request them. Hardcopies with mail address may be brought to the HP office for Fed-Ex delivery if necessary.

As this is a draft version, it must be legible, but there is no formatting rule for this version, other than to paginate and include your name. Also ensure that pertinent illustrations including sources are adequately identified.

Note: You MUST have your advisor review the draft before it is released to the readers, even if your advisor is only receiving it chapter-by-chapter over the course of weeks. The advisor must make first-pass edits. It is inappropriate for your readers to be presented with a draft that needs basic editing.

If readers and advisors do not receive your thesis in sufficient time to properly review it before the Thesis Jury, they can decline to review it. Without a thesis jury, you cannot graduate.

April 12–April 23, 2016
You can, and should, continue to work with your advisor to improve your thesis. Even though your draft is submitted, it does not mean work stops.

Schedule your thesis jury: Communicate with your advisor and readers to find an appropriate time on Saturday, April 23rd for your jury to take place.

Saturday, April 23, 2016 – Thesis Juries
You will meet with your advisor and readers for one hour to discuss the thesis. If there is another date prior to Saturday, April 23rd that works better for your jury, you may arrange it yourself, and let the HP Office know. The advisor and readers will have read your draft, and will offer comments to you on how to finish. Every effort should be made to have advisors and readers present at the final review. When this is not possible, alternative arrangements can be made.

After April 23, 2016
Refine your thesis, incorporating comments from your jury. Work closely with your advisor (and readers if they wish) to complete the text. Begin the final formatting of the document. Finalize your abstract, with the final title, your name, your advisor’s name, and the short summary of your findings.

Friday, May 6th, 2016: Final Thesis Due to Advisor for Grading

May 11, 2016: Grades are Due
If you do not finish your thesis by this date you will receive a failing grade for Thesis II and will be required to enroll in and pay for an additional semester in order to complete your thesis.

May 16, 2016: Submit archival copy of your thesis
There are precise instructions attached about archiving your thesis and making it available on University Commons
General Thesis Guidelines

Advisors and Readers
The thesis advisor is a member of the Historic Preservation faculty. Students are strongly encouraged to speak with the faculty to determine which faculty member might be most appropriate to guide their work. Students may request that a specific faculty member be their advisor, but faculty members are not obliged to serve as advisors. Advisors will review the student’s work on a regular basis and will be principally responsible for grading the thesis. Note that adjunct faculty members cannot advise more than three students per year. In addition to the advisor, students are required to have two readers. Their role will be similar to the advisor although they may consult less frequently with the student and will not be responsible for determining the final grade. Readers do not require an official affiliation with the University. All readers must be approved by the thesis advisor.

Approval of a Topic
An initial thesis topic discussion will take place at the end of the spring term. Students will be asked to discuss their initial thesis ideas in an informal discussion with faculty. A small group of faculty members will be in attendance and they will be given time to make comments and suggestions.

During the summer break students are encouraged to discuss their thesis topic with faculty members to refine their idea and gain a strong sense of who could act as their thesis advisor. Feel free to speak with faculty members who you know will not be your advisor, just to get different responses to your proposed topic.

Thesis topics will be discussed again in the fall during a second informal presentation before a small group of faculty members. Within one week following the approval of your topic students must submit the name of their advisor to the Assistant Director.

Reviews
During the third semester, each student is required to make a formal presentation to the collected Historic Preservation faculty that lays out the thesis topic, research methods and the relevance of the subject to the field. A second formal presentation in this same semester may be required if a student has not demonstrated adequate progress. An additional presentation, before a smaller group of faculty, at the beginning of the fourth semester is required of all students, which should provide evidence of significant progress and maps out plans for completion.

Dual Degree Candidates

Historic Preservation/ Urban Planning
The thesis must combine historic preservation and urban planning issues and must satisfy the requirements of both programs. A thesis jury is required by the Urban Planning Program and the Historic Preservation Program. The jury may occur at the same time, but advisors and readers from both disciplines must be present. Students register in the fall semester of the final year (term 5) for Urban Planning Thesis I (3 credits) and Historic Preservation Thesis I (1 credit). In the spring semester (term 6) students register for Urban Planning Thesis II (3 credits) and Historic Preservation Thesis II (4 credits).
Historic Preservation/Architecture
By the end of the spring semester of the fourth year, dual degree candidates must have completed a Historic Preservation thesis. Most dual degree student have completed their thesis in the fourth year, but the thesis can be started during your second or third year if all other HP requirements have been met. Since the Architecture Program does not require a thesis, you are free to choose any Historic Preservation topic; your thesis may be a design problem, but this is not required.

Format
The thesis takes one of several forms, depending on the topic. These forms range from largely written to largely graphic. The appropriate format for the final document is determined by each student in consultation with the advisor.

General Requirements for the Thesis
- Quotations of more than 8 lines are indented 10 spaces on the left and the right, are single-spaced in block form, do not include quotation marks.
- Footnotes/endnotes and bibliography are singed spaced.
- Page Numbering: Must be consecutive from first page of text. Material that precedes the text, such as table of contents, acknowledgements, preface, etc., are numbered in lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.) with the number omitted from the title page.
- Images must be numbered and their sources identified in captions or on a separate page listing the illustration numbers and their respective sources. They should be presented in a readable manner - i.e., not rotated from the normal viewing plane, and in a high enough resolution and size as to clear. Figure numbers should be keyed to the text.
- Appendices are optional. They should be reserved for relevant information on which the thesis draws, or to which the thesis refers (e.g. data collected, surveys, specific laws, maps, or images, etc.). Appendices should be numbered sequentially and listed in the table of contents.

For the proper formatting of footnotes, bibliography, captions, and appendices, you are strongly encouraged to follow The Chicago Manual of Style (also available as an e-book). Specific formats for footnotes, bibliography, and other elements may vary from thesis to thesis, but they must be consistent within any one thesis.
The title page of the thesis will carry the following information in the format shown below.

**FULL TITLE OF THESIS**

(in capital letters)

Your Full Name

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Science in Historic Preservation

Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

Columbia University

(month and year of submission)
Digital Thesis and Abstract Submission Requirement and Guidelines

Requirements for Submission
Students are required to submit their thesis and abstract as separate documents, saved as a .pdf document, to the Historic Preservation Office no later than Monday, May 16, 2016. Each file should be clearly labeled as shown below:

Thesis
LastnameFirstname_GSAPPHP_2016_Thesis

Abstract
LastnameFirstname_GSAPPHP_2016_Abstract

Theses may be delivered via email or sent through a file transfer tool, such as Dropbox, or if the file is too large it can be brought to the Historic Preservation office to be manually uploaded.

Academic Commons
Students are also recommended to submit their thesis to Academic Commons for digital archiving. For posting of your thesis to Academic Commons, students must include a signed author agreement form (available within these guidelines and on the Historic Preservation Program’s website) which permits Academic Commons to post your thesis on their website. Students have the right to keep their thesis closed from public view for one or two years, (this option is on the form) which is generally used by students who wish to publish their thesis material.

The program will deliver theses to Academic Commons and upon receipt; they will assign a permanent URL to each thesis. This will allow a link to the full thesis from the GSAPP website as well as for the library catalog. The theses will be located and accessed via the Internet; there will be “universal access” to this material (i.e., it will not be restricted to those with a Columbia UNI/log-in).

Where student work incorporates the intellectual property of other authors and creators their copyright needs to be respected and credited – this is especially important because your work will be readily available on the Internet and rights-holders can easily identify where their work has been cited or reproduced. For additional information about utilizing copyrighted material within your thesis, please visit the webpage of Columbia’s Copyright Advisory Office: http://copyright.columbia.edu/copyright/.

The thesis has always been the “master-piece” of the Planning and Preservation degrees – literally that which makes you a “master” of the subject. With wider availability than paper copies ever had, there is more reason to believe that students will present their very best work.
Policy for Historic Preservation Students with an Incomplete Thesis

The thesis for the Master of Science in Historic Preservation is the centerpiece of your education, and should reflect the thought and rigor that makes it, literally, your “master” piece. Following University policy, a student who fails to finish their thesis by the required due date will be given an “F”, a grade that erases the credit for that course. In this case the thesis can only be completed if the student re-registers and pays for the required thesis course. The only exception is when there is a documented medical issue or extenuating circumstances that have been approved by the Admissions Office, in which case you would be given a CP (Credit Pending) or INC (Incomplete) and would be given until the beginning of the fall term to complete your thesis.

Registration must take place the week prior to each semester – in other words, in the week preceding Labor Day for the fall semester, and in the week preceding the Martin Luther King holiday for the spring semester. Students register and pay the current tuition rate for the thesis course that is missing. If thesis is not offered in the semester you register, you may use an Advanced Research course number for the purposes of registration. Consult the registration office for how to register for Advanced Research or Independent Study.

Prior to re-registering to complete your thesis, you must contact Historic Preservation Program Director Andrew Dolkart (asd3@columbia.edu) or the Assistant Director to discuss your thesis. You should have a clear idea of your methodology and timeline for completion before you register, so you are certain you can complete your work in the semester in which you are paying tuition. You will continue to coordinate with your chosen advisor and readers and will be required to hold a thesis jury prior to receiving your final grade.