

URP PhD Handbook

Taubman College of Urban and Regional Planning

University of Michigan

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Handbook Overview

Securing a spot in a PhD program is a great accomplishment. From here, success can look various ways - every student's PhD path can differ, in length and content - but to complete a dissertation takes scholarship, dedication, and organization. Being in a PhD program requires you to prioritize - there will always be opportunities to take on additional research, teaching or service responsibilities, but ensure that your dissertation is prioritized. To prepare for your dissertation and future career, coursework is just one avenue for learning and intellectual development.

As a PhD student, you should also engage actively in campus seminars and lectures, as well as national or international professional conferences. Seek out internal and external funding to support your fieldwork, supplement your stipend, support conference travel, or to add to your overall funding package so that you can extend your time to completion, and to demonstrate to employers that you can secure resources. Make use of campus workshops and other professional development to build your teaching skills, strengthen your writing, and obtain guidance on your methods. If a faculty position is your goal, seek out opportunities to publish throughout your time as a PhD student. Although every student's PhD journey is different, we hope this handbook and the URP program as a whole empowers you to succeed.

This handbook¹ aims to serve as a reference guide throughout your time in the PhD in Urban and Regional Planning program. It covers curriculum requirements, timelines, guidance on how to achieve milestones throughout the program and advising, college and university policies, and various resources. As a living document, the handbook will be regularly updated as we continuously strive to strengthen the URP PhD program.

¹ The handbook content comes from the URP PhD website, policy guidelines and helpful documents developed by past URP Directors of Doctoral Studies, especially Scott Campbell and Joe Grengs. Thanks too goes to Alex Judelsohn, who helped pull all of this information together starting Fall of 2021.

Summary of Program Requirements

This section will guide you throughout the course of the PhD in Urban and Regional Planning. It outlines the normal program timelines, pre-candidacy and candidacy requirements, curriculum, summer PhD research assistantships and other summer requirements, dissertation options, the annual review process, and funding structure.

Timeline overview

Table 1 on the next page offers an overview of the typical timeline for completing coursework and other milestones, mapped against the typical distribution of guaranteed program funding and associated GSI assignments and summer funding requirements, as well as other suggested grant writing and publishing goals. *(Note that Table 1 is for cohorts entering in 2025, when 5 years of funding began. Table 2 at the end of the handbook outlines the timeline for all students who began before 2025).*

Requirements During Pre-Candidacy

Students are typically pre-candidates until the summer term of their second year in the program. They achieve candidacy after completing all required coursework and the comprehensive exam during or at the end of their winter term of their second year.

Curriculum

Although not yet part of the required curriculum, as of Fall 2023, the [URP PhD Professional Seminar](#) (Pro-Sem) is being offered once a week as a non-required course. First year students are strongly encouraged to attend all sessions, and other URP PhD students are also invited to attend sessions that interest them. The Pro-Sem is intended to: a) Prepare students to navigate program requirements and the academic “hidden curriculum”, b) Offer students opportunities to explore and prepare for both academic and non-academic career paths, c) Strengthen students’ research acumen, grant writing and publishing skills, d) Create more equitable and consistent mentoring, and e) Leverage peer-mentoring and strengthen the PhD student support network.

The required coursework involves the following:

1. [URP 700: Advanced Urban Theory](#) [year 1 or 2]

This course is offered in alternating fall semesters and is designed to provide a solid theoretical foundation for conducting rigorous scholarly inquiry within the planning field

2. [URP 701: Epistemology and Reasoning for Planning Research](#) [year 1 or 2]
This course is also offered in alternating years. It reviews and critically evaluates various epistemological, methodological, and normative foundations of planning thought and practice.
3. [URP 801: Research Design](#) [Winter year 1]
The class will develop the logic of formulating questions and arguments and linking these systematically with evidence. The course will expose students to different approaches to research related to planning with a survey of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods.
4. [URP 802: Proposal Writing and Professional Ethics](#) [Winter year 2]
This course builds on URP 801 (Research Design). It is an intensive, interactive seminar training doctoral students to write research proposals and engage in ethical research practices.
5. [URP 810: Directed Study](#) [Winter of year 1 or Fall year 2]
This course allows for independent study and reading under the guidance of a faculty member – typically the student's faculty adviser. The purpose is to conduct a literature review that will demonstrate the student's ability to review and synthesize a body of academic work and that will advance the student's efforts toward identifying a topic for dissertation research. The body of literature the student reviews usually helps prepare them for the comprehensive exam as well; it can take the form of the student's field statement for their comp exam, or a more focused, potentially publishable literature review.

Since the directed study helps you articulate your future research focus areas and possible research questions, you must complete this requirement *before* you take URP 802. The directed study is evaluated on a pass/fail basis; initial drafts must be revised until they are of passing quality. The faculty member who you will work with must ask the Taubman College registrar to give you permission to enroll in URP 810. The registrar does not need a scope of work - just a short e-mail request.

[Examples of reading lists for directed studies can be found here.](#)

6. [Statistics](#)
One doctoral-level statistics course is required (*beyond* the masters-level courses URP 504-506 or equivalent). You must receive a B or higher. Most students try to finish their statistics requirement their first year. The choice of the course that will meet the requirement should be discussed with your advisor, including identifying a specialized or advanced statistics course if you already have substantial statistics training.

URP does not offer doctoral-level statistics courses, but many other departments do. In the past, students have typically selected from:

- Sociology 510 (Statistics) or Sociology 610 (Statistical Methods), or
- Biostatistics 501 or Biostatistics 522.

Students have also taken Political Science (594 and 595), Statistics (402 and 403), Social Work (SW 673), and SEAS (Natural Resources Statistics - EAS 538).

Students wishing to study statistics (or another methods course) during the spring or summer terms (usually between the first and second year) may apply for funding available (half covered by our program and half covered by ISR/Rackham) to take one or two courses through the [Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research](#) sponsored by the [Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research \(ICPSR\)](#) and/or the [Summer Institute in Survey Research Techniques](#) conducted by research staff of the [Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research \(ISR\)](#).

7. Methods: one qualitative and one quantitative

At least six credit hours of dissertation-related methods courses are required, beyond URP 801 and URP 802 and the statistics requirement. One should be a qualitative methods course and one quantitative (which can be a second, advanced statistics course). Depending on the research method, your background, and your research interests, more courses may be needed. Courses should cover methods used in planning research and should prepare you for your likely area of dissertation work. Courses must be completed with a grade of B or higher. All plans for satisfying this requirement are the joint responsibility of the student and their advisor.

Numerous analytic/research methods are appropriate; students need not be restricted to choices on this list: anthropological methods; case study methods; complex systems analysis; cost benefit & cost effectiveness analysis; decision theory & general risk analysis; demographic analysis; discrete choice analysis; differential equations; diffusion models; economic & other forecasting models; epidemiology; evaluation research; graph theory; historical analysis; institutional analysis; interview techniques; linear programming & general analysis using linear models; network & flow methods; population growth models; probability, both theoretical & heuristic; simulation/gaming & game theory; spatial analysis; survey research; time series.

8. URP 803: URP PhD Professional Seminar (ProSem)

First year students are required to enroll in the 1-credit URP 803 in the Fall and Winter of their first year for the URP PhD ProSem (graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory). All ProSem sessions are also open to all other URP PhD students. The Pro-Sem aims to: a) prepare students to navigate program requirements and the academic “hidden curriculum”, b) offer students opportunities to explore and prepare for both academic and non-academic career paths, c) ensure more equitable and consistent mentoring across the program, d) leverage peer-mentoring and build community/strengthen the URP PhD student

support network, and e) encourage more publications by strengthening writing skills/habits and sharing publishing tips.

9. **Electives in a primary** (typically 3-4 courses) **and secondary** (typically 2-3 courses) **area of specialization**

Primary Specialization

Students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the literature, theory, and methods from a primary area of specialization. Each student defines this area of specialization in consultation with their faculty advisor(s). An area of specialization might be, for example, transportation planning, community development planning, regional planning, environmental planning, and so on. If appropriate, a student may further focus their area of specialization by demarcating a subfield within a broader planning topic, such as economic development finance within local economic development. Students take graduate-level course work in the appropriate discipline(s) and complete a comprehensive examination demonstrating competency in this primary specialization. During the first semester in the program, you should meet with your advisor(s) to:

1. *Identify a specialization:* Discuss your goals and interest in doctoral study and identify an area of specialization.
2. *Coursework:* Develop a program of study indicating courses to be taken, or courses that have been taken, covering the appropriate literature (theory and method) for the area of specialization. Students will normally take coursework totaling approximately 9 to 12 credit hours for the primary area of specialization.
3. *Directed Study:* As noted above, a student is expected to take a directed study course (URP 810 with their primary advisor) during the winter term of the first year or the fall term of the second year of study, focused primarily on their primary specialization, to inform their dissertation topic.

Secondary Specialization

In addition to the primary area of specialization, each student must also identify a secondary area of specialization (i.e., a "minor field" or "outside field") in consultation with their faculty advisor(s). The secondary area of specialization is frequently from a discipline outside urban and regional planning (examples include urban politics, urban history, urban sociology, demography, development economics, environment and behavior, etc.). Students normally take 6 to 9 credit hours in this secondary area. Students demonstrate sufficient knowledge in this secondary area (and their ability to integrate the secondary area into their main area of specialization) through their comprehensive examination.

NOTE: One or two courses taken for the master's degree may apply for either the primary or secondary areas of specialization, but master's level work normally should not be relied upon too extensively for the purposes of doctoral-level study.

[A full, up to date list of Taubman College courses and descriptions can be found here](#)

[Select syllabi and a review of non-URP courses can be found here.](#)

Summer PhD Research Assistantship

In the summer of their first year in the program (or the second summer), the PhD students must complete a *Summer PhD Research Assistantship*. This research assistantship must be a faculty-led (and faculty-defined) research project. The purpose is to train students in the process of conducting research through collaboration or apprenticeship with a faculty member, to prepare students for their independent research endeavors. The research assistantship is also intended to create more opportunities for possible co-publishing with faculty (though this is not guaranteed).

Advisors should help students strategize about how to identify a faculty member to work with if the advisor does not personally have a project in mind, but the responsibility will be on students to talk with them and/or other faculty (in URP or outside the program) to identify a project. The Director of Doctoral Studies can also help students find faculty to work with. Students are expected to work approximately 320 hours but whether the work will be remote, in-person or hybrid, and the distribution of hours is left to the discretion of the faculty and student (e.g. over 16 weeks at 20 hours per week, 8 weeks at 40 hours per week, etc.). Deadlines with this research assistantship include:

- **May 1:** The faculty member and student submit a SOW to the URP Director of Doctoral Studies outlining their plan for a Summer Research Assistantship.
- **September 1:** Students submit a 1-page memo to the Director of Doctoral Studies (Cc'ing the faculty supervisor) describing work accomplished, including progress made on or future plans to keep working towards a publication.

For more details see the [policy document on summer funding and requirements](#).

Comprehensive Exam

The Comprehensive Exam tests a student's knowledge of both their primary and secondary areas of specialization. Passing the exam advances a student to Candidacy status. The exam consists of a take-home, written examination followed by an oral exam. The examination normally occurs after completion of all relevant coursework, typically at the end of the winter semester, no later than the end of May. More information about the comprehensive exam can be found [here](#). Examples of field statements and comprehensive exams can be found [here](#).

1. **Forming the Comprehensive Exam Committee:** At least by the fall term and no later than the start of the winter term in their second year, students convene an examination committee of at least three faculty members who have expertise in their areas of specialization. The chair or co-chair of the committee must be an Urban and Regional Planning faculty member. At least one committee member should represent the student's secondary area of specialization, whether from Urban and Regional Planning or another UM department. On occasion, examiners from outside the university have served on students' examining committees. While this practice is generally not encouraged, written requests for an outside examiner by students are treated on an individual basis by the Director of Doctoral Studies. While different faculty may serve on the Comprehensive Exam Committee and the Dissertation Committee, it can be helpful to work with the same faculty, to provide continuity.
2. **The Field Statement:** You should meet at the start of the fall term of your second year with your advisor to plan for the Comprehensive Exam and agree on expectations. In consultation with the chair and committee members, during this period, students identify appropriate readings and prepare a detailed "field statement" that defines the primary and secondary fields, contains a detailed bibliography of readings, organizes the readings into subfields, and outlines a set of major questions for the fields. The field statement is normally designed principally with the chair, but with input from other Comprehensive Exam committee members who have expertise in one or both areas of specialization that the student will focus on for the exam. Some chairs use the fall term of the second year for Directed Study to have students develop their field statement. The structure of field statements is sometimes analogous to a detailed syllabus that one would prepare for a year-long graduate-level course on the selected specializations. The student often includes possible exam questions in their field statement as well that they feel are appropriate for the areas that the exam will cover. The exact questions will not be used for the exam; their major function is to help the committee and the student agree on the scope of the exam.
3. **Scheduling the Comprehensive Exam:** The Comprehensive Exam can be taken after all required coursework is complete - including incompletes. Students in URP are expected to take their exam by the end of May, just after the winter term in their second year. The exam is scheduled on your initiative. May can be a busy time for faculty, so scheduling discussions should begin no later than early April. Students must notify the Director of Doctoral Studies of their intent to take the exam, with a date and time, location, and names of the Exam Committee members at least two weeks prior to the exam, copying Lisa Hauser.

4. **The Exam:** The written part of the exam is in the form of several take-home essays. The committee chair typically solicits possible exam questions from the committee, selects the questions, and composes the final examination. The allotted time period to write the exam is determined by the chair, and typically is over three days. The length of time, however, can be negotiated with the committee chair and committee. You must submit the exam in the form as directed by the chair (usually as a Word document submitted by email), plus one copy to the URP Lisa Hauser to be placed in the student's records. The written exam is followed by a two-hour oral exam, generally scheduled to take place one week after the written exam. The exam is evaluated on a "Pass/Fail" or "Conditional Pass" basis. If the student does not achieve a passing evaluation, they may take the exam one additional time to achieve a "Pass" or "Conditional Pass" status. A "Conditional Pass" indicates that additional requirements must be met, but the exam need not be retaken. Upon completion of the oral portion of the exam, please refer below for next steps.

Applying for Candidacy

Students advance to candidacy when all program requirements except the dissertation proposal and dissertation have been satisfied. In addition to Urban and Regional Planning Program requirements, students must also meet [Rackham Candidacy Requirements](#). The student applies for candidacy by sending a request by email to the URP Director of Doctoral Studies and Lisa Hauser, along with [a signed Comprehensive Exam Certification Form](#).

Enrolling for Credits Just Before and After Achieving Candidacy

During the winter semester that you take your comprehensive exam (when you are technically still a pre-Candidate), enroll for 1 hour under URP 990 for the fall (this will convert to 8 hours and URP 995 once you achieve Candidacy). In future semesters, when you are a Candidate (when you have completed all your coursework and passed your Comprehensive Exam), enroll in URP 995 for 8 credits. See other [details](#) at Rackham.

After Achieving Candidacy - The Dissertation

Students transition to focusing on their dissertation proposal and dissertation research once they achieve candidacy. At this point, you should enroll each semester for eight credits under your advisor's name for URP 995. One additional course of no more than four credits [can also be taken](#) each semester if you choose.

Forming the Dissertation Committee

After advancing to candidacy, the student must form a dissertation committee, in accordance with the Rackham Graduate School's ["Guidelines for Dissertation Committee"](#)

[Service](#)". This [table](#), in particular, is quite useful. As Rackham stipulates, the committee must be made up of at least four members, two of which must be tenure-track faculty from the Urban and Regional Planning (URP) Program and one of whom must be a "cognate" from a program outside of URP (with at least a .50 appointment in a Rackham doctoral program). According to [Rackham](#), the cognate's role "is to broaden the scholarly representation of the dissertation committee beyond the candidate's home program...providing a non-specialist's perspective on the quality of the dissertation." Other university faculty or people from outside the University of Michigan whose service on the Dissertation Committee would contribute significantly may be nominated for special membership; the student should submit a CV and short paragraph detailing the member's expertise in the dissertation topic to Lisa Hauser and copy the Director of Doctoral Studies.

The Dissertation Committee should be formed prior to defending the dissertation proposal. Once you have obtained agreements from all members of the committee, you should email a completed "[Dissertation Committee Worksheet](#)" to the URP Director of Doctoral Studies.

The Dissertation Proposal Defense

You must formally obtain approval for your dissertation proposal. You will develop a first draft in URP 802, during the winter term of your second year. Note that this should be a fully developed first draft - not a hypothetical exercise. During that class, share components you develop during the class with your committee members, and invite them all to your URP 802 presentation. Ideally, you should only need to work on additional revisions for a short time after URP 802. Proposals can be defended anytime after taking the Comprehensive Exam, but no later than the end of the fall semester in your third year (i.e. December), but we strongly encourage students to defend much earlier, as early as May or June, after passing your Comprehensive Exam. The earlier your proposal is defended, the better, freeing you up to begin your fieldwork.

Once the chair and committee members feel you are ready, it is your responsibility to schedule a proposal defense meeting. The student must notify Lisa Hauser by email of the proposal defense date approximately two weeks prior to the meeting, including the location of the defense meeting, a title, and an abstract, copying the Director of Doctoral Studies. Like the Comprehensive Exam, dissertation proposals defenses may end with students being required to make additional changes (and to potentially hold another meeting) before getting approval from the committee to proceed with their data collection.

After successfully defending your proposal, your dissertation chair must send an email to the URP Lisa Hauser and Director of Doctoral Studies that includes (a) the date of the proposal defense, (b) a list of all committee members present at the defense, (c) a title of

the proposal, (d) an abstract of the proposal (250 – 350 words), and (e) a copy of the final dissertation proposal to be filed with URP records.

[Examples and guidance for dissertation proposals can be found here.](#)

The Dissertation

The dissertation is prepared in accordance with the [Rackham Graduate School's Doctoral Dissertation Requirements](#). While the majority of students complete a traditional chaptered dissertation - similar to a book manuscript - the three paper model, with standalone papers that can be submitted for publication, is also an option. Talk to your advisor and other students about the pros and cons of each model. The student is responsible for several steps in completing the dissertation. A timeline outlining these is included below.

Table 2. Sample timeline for completing the dissertation

Register for credits each semester	Register for 8 credits each semester you work on your dissertation under URP 995 Dissertation Research. Candidates can take an additional course, up to 4 credit hours, without paying tuition (this is not typical, however, as students are usually focusing on their dissertations).
Seek feedback on all chapters from your chair	Build time to hear back from your chair on all chapters. Well in advance of starting your analysis and writing, agree on a plan and schedule. Do they prefer receiving drafts of chapters as you complete them? The entire dissertation draft? How many weeks or months ahead of time do they need something to get you feedback? Are they willing to offer feedback on multiple drafts? Are there dates when they will be traveling over the coming months or year when they will not be able to offer you feedback? How often should you meet to discuss your progress, roadblocks, to help you brainstorm how to analyze particular pieces of your data, etc.? This stage of your writing could take as long as a year .
Seek feedback from all committee members	After incorporating initial feedback from your chair and they feel you are ready for broader review, seek feedback from other committee members. Some may be willing to be more involved than others, and each will have preferences about waiting to see an entire full draft or reviewing chapters as you finish them. Talk to them in advance about their preferences and schedule. Getting early feedback from all committee members before you finish your first full draft could take several months or more .
Schedule a Full Draft Review Meeting	The Full Draft Review Meeting is a chance for your committee to come together as a group, to ensure all are on the same page and to collectively brainstorm and agree on the major changes to prepare for the final, oral defense. It can be structured like a dry run or a mock defense, (student presentation + discussion with the committee) or a more informal discussion of committee feedback. Submit your full draft to your committee one month before the Full Draft Review Meeting.

Incorporate feedback	After the Full Draft Review Meeting, incorporate your committee's feedback into your final draft. This often takes at least a month .
Schedule the Dissertation Oral Defense Send the final draft Schedule Pre Defense Review with Rackham and notify Lisa	When your chair and committee feels you are ready, schedule your dissertation defense no later than one month before Rackham's final deadline to submit all of your materials. Send the final draft to your entire committee one month before your dissertation defense meeting. Three to six weeks before the oral defense, schedule the Pre defense review with Rackham, to discuss formatting. See the LibGuide and dissertation template ; Rackham's formatting guidelines are very specific. Notify Lisa Hauser by email of the oral defense date approximately 3 weeks prior to the meeting. Include the location (and/or a Zoom link if virtual/hybrid), your committee members, a title, and abstract
Account for final edits and forms	Even after your oral defense, you usually need to build in at least one month for final revisions and various forms you will need to fill out or ensure that your advisor/committee have submitted

The Dissertation Defense

A dissertation defense typically consists of two parts: the first is a formal, public presentation of the dissertation research, followed by questions and answers from both the dissertation committee and the audience. Defenses are advertised and open to the public, and other students and faculty are frequently in attendance. The second part is typically a closed session for the candidate and the dissertation committee.

The duration of a defense can vary, but the candidate should reserve the room for at least a two-hour period. During the defense, you may be asked to reconsider certain aspects of the work and to make changes or corrections in the dissertation. At the end of the session, the chair will typically ask you to step out of the room so that they can discuss the oral defense with other members of the committee. You are then informed of the outcome.

The committee decides whether the dissertation is acceptable: As submitted, after minor typographical and stylistic corrections, after minor substantive changes, after substantial revisions, or not acceptable. After a successful defense, the Chair should submit the Final Oral Examination Report to Rackham, a form that is generated by Rackham just before the defense. Formal approval of the dissertation (e.g., formatting of the final document) and applying for graduation are governed by the Rackham Graduate School. [A document with final dissertation steps and a checklist can be found here](#) - this includes exit surveys Rackham asks you to complete, formatting information, and the option to

put your dissertation under "embargo", so that the dissertation is not made public for a period of up to two years.

(Note that, as of Fall 2023, dissertation defenses can still be virtual, but it's unclear if Rackham will keep this practice in the future).

Summer Job Prep Workshop Series

As part of the 12-month funding package and requirements for summer stipends, students from cohorts that began in 2022 and later are required to participate in a non-credit-based *Summer Job Prep Workshop Series* in the summer of their third year (or the last summer before their final year of funding). The workshop series is designed to prepare students to go on the job market and will be coordinated by the Director of Doctoral Studies. The individual sessions will be led by the Director, other URP faculty and staff from Rackham, CRLT and other units on campus who regularly offer workshops to prepare PhD students for careers in academia and non-academic career paths.

Students will need to dedicate a week mid-May, followed by two or three days in late August when students return for their final year. Another 30-40 hours of work will be needed to asynchronously work on drafting job application materials, obtaining feedback and revising them during the rest of the summer. This workshop series will be hybrid, but students are encouraged to participate in person if they live in Michigan. Please read the [policy document on summer funding and requirements](#) for more details.

Annual Review of Student Progress and Mentoring Plans

At the end of each year of study, students are required to complete an **Annual Review**. The advisor and the Director of Doctoral Studies may make recommendations for any modifications deemed necessary prior to the start of the following academic year. Financial support for the subsequent year, if applicable, depends on timely completion of a satisfactory annual review. Below are the steps to completing an annual review:

1. Late in March each year, students will be notified of the Annual Review deadline, typically set at the end of April.
2. You should share a draft of their annual review and updated CV with their advisor and schedule a meeting at least two weeks before the deadline (May 1).
3. The advisor should meet with the student (in person or by Zoom) to discuss their annual review and CV - and to agree on the plan of study for the coming year - and where necessary, recommend changes.
4. You should provide the advisor and the URP PhD Program Administrator with copies of their final Annual Review by the deadline (May 1).
5. Once the advisor has approved the plan of study for the coming year, the advisor sends the URP Lisa Hauser a short narrative of student progress (one paragraph).
6. The URP Doctoral Advisory Committee reviews the materials later in May, and sends a letter to the student by June, either confirming their good standing in the program or specifying additional requirements to be in good standing.

Written **Mentoring Plans** are intended to complement the Annual Review, offering a long-range view - over the student's 4+ years - and are more holistic and process-oriented, asking advisors and advisees to explicitly discuss how to best work together. Mentoring plans are not contracts, and are private - not shared with the URP PhD Advisory Committee - and will likely be most useful in the student's first year, revisiting thereafter to ensure that advisors and advisees are continuously looking further down the road than just the year ahead. The goal of mentoring plans is to:

- Develop shared expectations about the advisor-advisee relationship,
- Make explicit a student's long-term goals beyond coursework, the comprehensive exam, and dissertation (e.g., around publishing, external funding, conferences, career paths, etc.)
- Support more productive and rewarding mentoring, saving time on the back end by reducing miscommunication, confusion and conflict.

First year students will begin to fill out a mentoring plan in the URP PhD ProSem and later approach their advisors to discuss and finalize their plan together. URP PhD advisors, however, should initiate the discussion by early winter if an advisee has not approached them. The expectation is that all first year students will have a mentoring plan in place by the end of their first year. Because mentoring needs evolve over the life of a PhD program, mentoring plans should also be revisited, adjusted, or added to at least once per year (e.g. in April before the Annual Review). While the mentoring plan itself should not be shared with the Advisory Committee, students and their advisors will be asked if they have created/revisited mentoring plans in the Annual Review.

See the URP [Mentoring Plan policy](#) and suggested template.

Funding Structure and Residency

The Urban and Regional Planning Program is committed to funding doctoral students for five years, which includes four years of 12-months of funding, covering a stipend, tuition (fall and winter semesters), and health care (which also covers dependents and partners), as well as a fifth year of tuition, stipend and health care in the fall and winter semester. See a funding chart [here](#). Five semesters (fall or winter) require a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) and five semesters (fall or winter) are offered as a "fellowship", with no work requirement. As Table 1 (and Table 2 at the end of the Handbook) notes, students are typically assigned a fellowship during semesters when they are adjusting to starting the PhD program, working on their directed study and comprehensive exam, defending their proposal and doing data collection.

Additionally, funding is provided for a student's first four summers. In the summer of their first (or second) year, students are required to complete *Summer PhD Research Assistantship* with a faculty member. Their second and fourth summers, they are offered *Summer Fellowships* to work on their dissertation proposal, research and dissertation

writing/defense. Their fourth summer, students are required to participate in the *Summer Job Prep Workshop Series*. Please read the [policy document on summer funding and requirements](#) for more details on deadlines and work expectations.

Residency Requirements

A student must be in full-time residence in Ann Arbor during the entirety of the fall and winter semesters of their first and second year. Typically, the student must also be in residence during the fall of their third year of study until the dissertation proposal is successfully defended. The student need not be in residence after the fall of their third year of study, but GSI positions can only be offered when a student is in person. Residency status may also affect health insurance options (see this required [off-site form](#) for health insurance if living outside Michigan) and international student visa requirements. In one case, a URP international student who moved to an area of the U.S. where healthcare providers did not take GradCare, the International Center required them to instead have I-Center Insurance. All students - domestic and international, should **consult with Lisa Hauser** regarding any health insurance implications *before* deciding to move off campus; she may advise you to or help you consult with Rackham and/or the International Center.

GSI Appointments

The URP Program Chair assigns Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) appointments, in consultation with the Director of Doctoral Studies and course instructors. You will have the opportunity to provide input on skills and knowledge you offer and courses you would like to GSI for, which will be taken into consideration along with teaching needs. In consultation with the Program Chair, faculty may also use funding to hire a student as a GSRA (replacing one of their GSI appointments) by following the Program's policy for buying out the stipend for a student's fellowship support.

Payment Schedule

Pay schedules differ whether it is a GSI semester or fellowship semester, but students are always paid monthly, September through August. Additionally, health care coverage extends through the year. Information on pay schedules when on a fellowship semester can be found [here](#) and when on a GSI semester can be found [here](#). Questions about payment can be directed to the Human Resources Officer (during a GSI semester) or Lisa Hauser (during a fellowship semester).

External Funding

We encourage students to apply for additional funding from independent sources. A list of [funding resources is available on page 24](#). These include fellowships, conference and travel grants, and internship resources from Rackham, as well as funding other units at

the university and from non-university sources. Being able to obtain support from an outside source demonstrates to future employers your academic achievement and ability to secure funding. Grants and fellowships are important for covering exploratory and dissertation fieldwork expenses, to secure additional support during summer months, and if sufficiently large (e.g., covering tuition, stipend and health care) can sometimes extend your time to completion at the discretion of the Program Chair and Director of Doctoral Studies.

Students also often supplement their stipend and gain additional experience through work as a research assistant. Early each academic year, inquire about opportunities to join research projects with faculty in the Urban and Regional Planning Program or other units on campus, including faculty in courses you take.

The process for students receiving funds from Rackham are as follows. This may be a similar process when receiving funding from other UM funding as well:

1. Student receives email notification of award from Rackham.
2. Student forwards email to taubmancollegefinance@umich.edu
3. Taubman College Finance looks for funds sent to Taubman by Rackham
4. Taubman College Finance requests Taubman Student Affairs to process payment.
5. After confirmation of processing email from Taubman Student Affairs, Taubman College Finance emails student letting them know to look in their student account for the payment.

Time Limits and Making Satisfactory Progress

The funding package covers twelve semesters (fall, winter, and summer) for four years and two semesters in the fifth year. If a student continues to make adequate progress (determined by their committee), in year six, Taubman College will continue to cover tuition and health coverage but will not provide a stipend. After year six, Taubman College will no longer cover tuition and health care. Taubman College also does not cover tuition during the summer.

Students who began the URP PhD program before 2025 will typically have a Rackham One-Term Dissertation Fellowship available to use during one of their last semesters or summer; this is funding that extends beyond the four year package. Applications to be considered are due May 20 each year. Speak with your advisor and the Director of Doctoral Studies prior to your last year of study to determine if and when you can use a Rackham One-Term and see this [guide](#) for more information.

Students must remain in good academic standing by making satisfactory progress to continue receiving financial support from the URP Program, this includes - according to Rackham's [policy](#) - maintaining a minimum Rackham cumulative grade point average (GPA) of B (3.0 on a 4.0 point scale). Following the policy of the Rackham Graduate School, students may take a single semester of academic [leave of absence](#) for personal

reasons, with no justification required, and one or more additional semesters of leave for cause (such as for medical reasons).

Advising

Advising throughout your time at Michigan comes from a variety of sources. In addition to guidance we offer below, Rackham also created a [guide](#) for students regarding how to work with faculty advisors, supervisors, dissertation chairs, and other mentors.

The **Director of Doctoral Studies** serves as a general advisor for everyone. This person does not know enough about all your subjects to be able to give you very specific direction, but is available to help you lay out your plan for how to get your degree, to identify the holes in the information you need to do your plan, and to help identify helpful people and resources. The Director will also keep all students informed about funding and other opportunities and is available to help you work through any PhD committee challenges you might encounter.

Lisa Hauser works closely with the Director of Doctoral Studies and is the person students should communicate with to schedule their exams and defenses. She also helps compile and submit nomination letters for grants through Rackham, and manages the logistics for the student annual reviews. She is also a good point person for general questions you may have about timelines, requirements, insurance and Rackham resources.

Traditionally, the **advisor/chair** serves as the students' main point person. The primary advisor (who a student eventually indicates to Rackham as the "Chair" of their Comprehensive Exam Committee and Dissertation Committee) should offer detailed guidance on coursework, setting a timeline for meeting key milestones, and regular feedback on early drafts of any grant applications, conference abstracts, your field statement, dissertation proposal, and dissertation chapters. They will typically be the first person you turn to when you need a recommendation for a fellowship or grant application, and when you go on the job market. They can also offer advice about how to identify other committee members, cross-campus courses, funding opportunities and other resources, and how to work through other challenges that may emerge.

While students are initially assigned a URP advisor based on research interests included in their application, this can change after arrival if the student identifies someone else in URP who is better aligned with their research interests. Students have the option of switching advisors - and any other committee members - at any point during your PhD program, though we encourage students to finalize their primary advisor by the end of their first semester and to notify Lisa Hauser and the Director of Doctoral Studies (as well as the original advisor). (See further guidance on changing advisors or other committee members in this [Change of Advisory Policy](#)).

Comprehensive Exam Committee members, at a minimum, should offer advice on reading lists to focus on for your primary and secondary specializations, writing your field statement and preparing for your Comprehensive Exam. Many or all of the Comprehensive Exam Committee members may also become your **Dissertation Committee** members, each of whom should offer guidance on identifying a strong research question and designing your research, methods, and analysis; they should also be actively involved in reviewing dissertation drafts and will attend and sign off on the final dissertation draft and defense. Please read [Rackham's Guidelines for Dissertation Committee Service](#), which outlines roles, eligibility, and how to submit your Dissertation Committee to Rackham.

Additionally, it is important to develop a strong **network of advisors** beyond your chair and committee. Ideally, your chair and/or other committee members should be your primary advocates and someone to turn to during any challenges you confront that may affect your progress - not just advice regarding your coursework and dissertation - but many other people can also offer you advice. These can be other faculty in the Urban and Regional Planning Program that you get to know through courses you take, who you may GSI for, work for as a research assistant, or who you get to know informally during their office hours or other program events. You may also seek the advice from faculty or researchers in different departments at UM or from your Master's program, PhD students in your program or other programs on campus, faculty at other universities that are in your sub-field that you see annually at conferences, etc. Think about who you would go to to talk about big picture ideas for a grant, to get feedback on a draft article or your CV and first cover letter, to discuss specific methodological questions, career advice, how to strive for work life balance, managing being a parent while a PhD student or on the tenure track, choosing a path outside of academia, and more.

There are many others in **non-advisory positions** who can provide guidance to you during the PhD program as well. Staff at Taubman College or Rackham Graduate School can offer useful advice regarding finance, enrollment, health care insurance, and administrative issues. [GEO 3550](#), the graduate student union, can provide guidance on your rights as graduate student instructors (GSIs) and can advocate on our behalf. [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) can provide mental health support and the [Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\)](#) has a Rackham Graduate representative who works with PhD students to identify appropriate accommodations, when needed. [Rackham also offers emergency funding](#), a [Resolutions office](#) that provides resolution services, and the option to take a [Leave of absence](#) (for personal reasons that require no explanation or for medical leave, which can include health care coverage). There is also [childcare support](#) for students living in Michigan with dependents. And if you are an international student, the [International Center](#) can help with visas and also has emergency funding. These contacts and more are listed in the [miscellaneous resources section](#) on page 26.

Meeting schedule with chairs and committees

Communicating often with your chair and other committee members ensures that you will not be surprised by any key milestones, that you are receiving regular feedback and advice, and that your committee members are on the same page with you and each other about the direction you are headed.

While all relationships and working styles differ and the intensity of interactions varies over the course of the PhD program, students should be meeting with their **chair** at least twice a semester and communicating over e-mail every couple of months. During more intensive work periods, such as finalizing your proposal or final dissertation draft, you may want to meet or share updates weekly or every other week. You could also ask your chair to be a sounding board during your data collection (to talk through challenges you are facing, agree on next steps, or discuss your initial findings, etc.), and you may meet weekly if you are doing a directed reading under the direction of your chair. To ensure a good working relationship, it is important to discuss working styles and expectations at the beginning of your program. Completing an advisor-advisee mentoring plan can assist with this ([see this example](#)). [Rackham also offers many resources regarding mentoring](#) including yearly workshops held with advisors and their students.

You should also discuss with your chair and **other committee members** how often you should meet together as an entire committee (once formed) and individually with other committee members. Have this discussion several times, since the frequency of meetings will change as you move through your program. You may have close working relationships with other committee members who you meet with almost as frequently as your chair, while others may only receive updates from you about once a semester. Most students gather their entire committee together at least once per year, but this will be more frequent during the dissertation writing phase. You will meet with them at least twice in the last semester or spring/summer of your program, when you are ready to defend - once for the Full Draft Review and once for your Oral Defense (described above).

Policies

Taubman College Policies and Forms

1. [Annual review](#) (2024-2025 version)
2. [Change of Advisor Policy](#)
3. [Comprehensive Exam Certification Form](#)
4. [Policy on Academic Progress and Dismissal](#)
5. [Summer Funding Requirements Policy](#) (including the Summer PhD Research Assistantship and Job Prep Workshop Series)

University of Michigan Rackham Graduate School [Policies](#)

1. [Dissertation Handbook](#): this is a guide provided by Rackham, focusing on submitting your dissertation and completing doctoral degree requirements. Read closely for steps to complete the dissertation.
2. [Dissertation Committee Composition and Service Guidelines](#)
3. [Doctoral Degree Deadlines and Rules](#)
4. [Final Dissertation Steps and Checklist](#)
5. [Full time enrollment requirements](#)
6. [Incompletes](#)
7. [Leave of absence](#)
8. [Residency requirements](#)
9. [Scholastic requirements](#)
10. [Credit and degree requirements](#)

Resources

This section outlines a list of resources that you can utilize during your time at Taubman.

Key Contacts

Faculty

A list of current faculty can be found in the [Taubman College Faculty Directory](#). The Directory has Calendly links or email contacts for signing up for office hours.

Staff

Listed below are staff positions in Taubman College of people who can help with a variety of issues. Current staff contact information can be found on [this page](#).

Table 3. Staff and roles at Taubman

Name and Title	Role
Lisa Hauser (Assistant Director of Admissions and Recruiting)	Students first schedule their exams and defenses and send this information to Hauser. This staff member also helps compile and submit nomination letters for grants through Rackham, and manages the logistics for student annual reviews. They are a good point person for general questions you may have about timelines, requirements and Rackham resources.
Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Officer	This staff person runs DEI initiatives, manages the college's DEI strategic plan and is the person to speak about any DEI matters.
College Registrar	The College Registrar can answer questions about registering for courses or credit requirements.
Director of Career and Professional Development	This person primarily works with Master's students, but they may be able to provide guidance and assistance with resumes/CVs, job searches, and application materials.
Facilities Supervisor	The facilities supervisor provides office keys, manages office furniture and hosts a lost and found.
Human Resources Officer	The Human Resources Officer processes GSI appointments. Questions regarding pay during GSI semesters should be directed to them.
Information Technology Manager	IT issues at Taubman can be directed to the IT Manager or IT Help Desk.

Planning Related Resources

1. **ACSP PhD Bowling Listserv**

The Bowling League is a space for planning PhD students and others to share job announcements, information about conferences and events, and to connect with other planning academics. They utilize Google Groups. To join, email phd-bowling-league@googlegroups.com and include your name and school/affiliation. It is encouraged that you join this group.

2. **National Conferences**

Which conferences you attend will be determined by your sub-area of planning, but there are three main conferences that many planning academics attend:

- [Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning](#) - normally occurs in the fall with abstracts submitted the previous spring.
- [Urban Affairs Association](#) - normally occurs in the spring with abstracts submitted the previous fall.
- [American Association of Geographers](#) - normally occurs in the spring with abstracts submitted the previous fall.

3. **Planners Network Listserv**

The Planners Network listserv connects progressive planners that are academics, activists, students, and professionals. A student membership costs \$25 a year. You can learn more on their website, [here](#).

4. **Planet New Listserv**

PLANET is a space for planning academics to share resources, job postings, publication opportunities, and ask relevant questions of other planning scholars and educators. This group also utilizes Google Groups. To join, email planetnew@googlegroups.com. It is encouraged that you join this group.

5. **[Thriving With Your Dissertation](#)**

Recommended by a former URP PhD student and written by planning faculty at another institution, this document provides guidance and perspective throughout all phases of the PhD - from selecting a dissertation topic, to comprehensive exams, to landing a job.

6. **UpDoc and PARC**

The Urban Planning Doctoral Student Group (UpDoc) and the Planners and Architects Research Groups are led by doctoral students from the two programs at Taubman. Leadership changes yearly, but generally the groups engage in advocacy work, organizing colloquium, and hosting speakers. UpDoc has an e-mail list that you will be added to.

7. **[Yellow Book](#)**

The Yellow Book was started by the Faculty Women Interest Group (FWIG) of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning. The purpose was to help faculty get ahead. While it has not been updated since 2011, much of the information is timeless and still useful for those pursuing academic careers.

Research and Dissertation Writing Resources

1. **ACSP Doctoral Workshop**

Held annually (typically in the fall), this workshop attracts doctoral students from member planning programs from around the world to help them develop their research questions and methods, and on writing their dissertation proposal. The website states: "The workshop is oriented toward planning doctoral students who have passed their qualifying examination (or equivalent) and have a strong working draft of a dissertation proposal that would benefit from refinement (i.e., already developed a research question and conceptual framework, possible methods, etc.). To benefit from this workshop, participants should be at the stage where there are opportunities for substantive change. Often this means that they have not started collecting their data, conducting analysis, or writing results." Students advise one another as scholars pursuing unique research paths within a community of shared inquiry. The faculty work jointly as learners, advisors, and coaches. Typically students attend the workshop in year three of their program. Applications are normally due in the summer. More information can be found on the [ACSP website](#).

2. **Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)**

CRLT is a phenomenal resource for anything teaching related. They can provide [consultations](#) and [trainings](#) for Graduate Student Instructors and also [run a variety of seminars](#) on topics such as teaching techniques, and equity-focused teaching. Students can also earn a [Graduate Teacher Certificate](#) which involves two semesters of teaching and lecturing (not working as a grader). CRLT also offers consultation services and guidance on preparing your [teaching and diversity statements](#), typically required for the academic job market.

3. **Consulting for Statistics, Computing and Analytics Research (CSCAR)**

CSCAR can provide individualized assistance and training around data management, collection and analysis of statistical data.

4. **English Language Institute (ELI)**

The ELI offers a wide range of credit-bearing English for Academic Purposes courses for international graduate students. ELI classes are small, interactive, and provide students with extensive one-on-one feedback. Prior to registering, you can partake in a one-on-one counseling session with an ELI faculty member which includes an assessment of your language needs and guidance in choosing an appropriate course.

5. **Institute for Social Research (ISR)**

The ISR is a social science survey and research organization that provides educational opportunities, awards, and classroom resources.

6. **Library Services**

The university has extensive resources through the library. Rebecca Price is the librarian for the College of Architecture and Planning, and has created an [Urban Planning Research Guide](#). Reach out to her for any questions regarding sources -

global government documents, maps, etc.. The libraries also have a [variety of workshops](#) on learning, software, teaching, and research.

7. [Office of the Vice President for Research](#)

The Office of Vice President for Research (OVPR) often has workshops on research for faculty that PhD students can partake in.

8. [Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshops](#)

The Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshops provide grants for interdisciplinary groups of graduate students (and faculty, postdocs) to exchange ideas related to their research. As the website states, some groups work together to develop “a publishable paper, a grant proposal, or a research project”. Funding can support student coordinators, honoraria, workshop expenses, food, etc..

9. [Sweetland Writing Center](#)

Sweetland has a variety of resources available to graduate students at all phases of the PhD process. These include, but are not limited to, dissertation writing groups (you can apply to lead a group for a modest stipend), a dissertation writing institute, write-togethers, and paper editing. Sweetland also leads a variety of workshops. Some examples include “Transition to Graduate Writing”, “Academic Writing in the Social Sciences & Humanities”, “Beyond Plagiarism: The Role of Citation Norms in Establishing Scholarly Credibility” and “Structuring and Developing Arguments” (and many others). Also, Students can earn a small stipend if they work as a [dissertation writing group leader](#).

10. [The Michigan Institute for Data Science \(MIDAS\)](#)

MIDAS offers workshops around specific data science tools or software packages.

11. [University of Michigan Institutional Review Board](#)

All research conducted with “human subjects” (e.g., surveys, focus groups, interviews, observations, etc.) while at the University of Michigan needs to be approved by the [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#). The application must be submitted for review and approval prior to any interaction with human subjects. The [PEERRS Training](#), the university’s online Program for Education and Evaluation in Responsible Research and Scholarship, needs to be completed prior to engaging in research. Check with your advisor regarding questions about this.

12. Several books may also be useful, including:

- a. [Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student’s Guide to Earning a Master’s or a PhD](#) (by Robert Peters, 1997). This book, recommended by Prof. Goodspeed, provides comprehensive advice on navigating graduate school.
- b. [A Field Guide to Grad School](#) (by Jessica Calarco, 2020). This book was recommended by someone from Rackham who is involved in supporting the development of pro-seminars for PhD students on campus.
- c. [Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life](#), (by Anne Lamott, 1995) is a writing and graduate school guide Prof. Larsen recommends.
- d. [Undoing the Silence: Six Tools for Social Change Writing](#) by urban planning scholar Louise Dunlap, 2007, is a book that Prof. Hoey has started recommending with practical tools for becoming a more confident writer and to learn more empowering peer review writing group strategies.

Infrastructure Resources

1. **Equipment Rentals**

Equipment can be rented and photocopies or printed material can be ordered from the [Taubman Media Center](#). Some equipment, such as OWLs and media carts, need to be reserved by a faculty member. More information can be found [here](#).

2. **Event Spaces**

A variety of spaces are available throughout Taubman. For smaller group meetings, the PhD student lounge is available. For larger gatherings, other spaces in Taubman can be reserved. Information on rooms available can be found [here](#). Rooms can be reserved by emailing TaubmanRoomSchedulers@umich.edu.

3. **Health Facilities**

Various health facilities exist across campus. [University Health Services](#) provides medical care, and information about emergency and after hours care can be found on their website. [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) provides tele-counseling, crisis support, and virtual outreach to UM students. Taubman also has a therapist from CAPS who is embedded in the college, listed at the top of this [list](#). For physical fitness, [various recreation centers](#) are located around campus.

4. **Office Space**

Shared offices are available for PhD students throughout the duration of their program. At the beginning of the academic year, Hauser will organize office spaces.

5. **Technology**

Computer labs in Taubman can be utilized for technological needs. One commonly used by URP students, [the Spatial and Numeric Data \(SAND\) Lab](#), has software such as ArcGIS Desktop, QGIS, R, Adobe CS6 and more. [The Duderstadt Center](#), located across from AAB, houses, the Digital Media Commons (3D Lab, GroundWorks Media Lab, Video Studio, Design Labs, etc.) the Art, Architecture and Engineering Library and other services

Funding Resources

Internal funding

Below we include a list of funding sources that planning students often utilize, to cover research and cost of living expenses. While these may not all be available at certain times, it is a list of what is routinely available at the University. [Here](#) you can also find a guide of internal funding sources that the library maintains.

1. **[Center for Afroamerican and African Studies](#)**

Fellowship and grant funding is available through the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies, some of which requires you to complete a DAAS certificate.

2. **[Center for the Education of Women +](#)**

CEW+ has a variety of funding sources, primarily for women and non-traditional students. Scholarships, fellowships, and more immediate emergency grants are available.

3. **[Center for Global Health Equity](#)**

Funding for summer research internships and a post-doc (to work with a UM faculty member)

4. **[Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies](#)**

a. **[Tinker Field Research Grant Program](#)**

Small grants to conduct pre-dissertation fieldwork in Latin America.

b. **[Alfredo D. & Luz Maria P. Gutierrez Dissertation Award](#)** - over \$24,000 to support dissertation write-up for interdisciplinary work carried out in Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

5. **[Center for Russian and East European Studies-Fred Cuny Fellowship](#)**

Language fellowships and specific program grants are available.

6. **[Center for Poverty Solutions](#)**

Full summer or semester-based funding for “research strategies to prevent and alleviate poverty”

7. **[Edward Ginsberg Center](#)**

The Ginsberg Center is a community and civic engagement center that aims to steward equitable partnerships with communities. They sometimes have funding opportunities, but also help prepare students for community engagement and provide connections with community groups. One program they run that students from our department have been involved in is as a [Graduate Academic Liaison](#), where they provide perspectives on their home departments, while deepening their knowledge and application of community engaged scholarship and practice.

8. **[Foreign Languages and Area Studies Fellowship \(FLAS\)](#)**

FLAS fellowships are available for students studying designated foreign languages in combination with area studies.

9. **[Graduate Student Instructional Consultants \(GSIC\) Program](#)** A paid consultancy position for experienced GSIs who work 1-5 hours per week offering advice to new GSIs across campus.
10. **[Graham Sustainability Institute \(GSI\)](#)**
GSI offers various opportunities, including The Dow Sustainability Fellowship Program which provides the opportunity to work in interdisciplinary teams to develop actionable, and meaningful sustainability solutions on local-to-global scales, engaging with UM faculty on a one year project.
11. **[Inclusive History Project funding](#)**
Mini (\$3,000) grants available for “research projects, creative endeavors, and engagement activities that develop and share deeper knowledge of U-M’s history through a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens.”
12. **[Institute for the Humanities](#)**
The Institute for the Humanities offers year-long fellowships and mini-grants to graduate students.
13. **[Institute for Social Research](#)**
Many different kinds of awards with different forms of eligibility, managed by different centers within the Institute. The site also says to “see awards offered by the **Center for Political Studies**, **ICPSR Summer Program**, **Population Studies Center**, and **Research Center for Group Dynamics** at the bottom” of the page linked here. One of our students recently received the [Marans/Chen Dissertation Award](#) in Sustainability and Survey Research
14. **[International Institute and Area Studies funding](#)**
The International Institute compiles a list of funding sources for graduate students doing work in international settings. Many area studies affiliated with the International Institute (such as two in the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies - [DAAS](#)) also offer certificates which then afford students the opportunity to apply for additional funding for their dissertation work. One in particular that many URP PhD students secure, co-administered with Rackham is the [Rackham International Research Award \(RIRA\)](#) which provides up to \$10,000 in funding for students conducting degree-related research abroad. Another one available is the [Global Individual Grant \(GIG\)](#), which provides up to \$5,000 in funding for students conducting degree-related research abroad or participating in an international academic internship.
15. **[Office of Financial Aid Child Care Subsidy](#)**
The Office of Financial Aid offers subsidies for child care if using a licensed provider within Michigan.
16. **[Poverty Solutions](#)**
Working with community partners, Poverty Solutions aims to find novel solutions to poverty. While most of their funding opportunities are for UM faculty, they sometimes have job opportunities for students.
17. **[Rackham](#)**

The Rackham Graduate School has a variety of grants available. For research, all students are encouraged to apply for [graduate student research grants](#)- one before candidacy, and one after. Rackham also offers funds for [conference travel](#) annually and [emergency funds](#) if needed. [The Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship](#) and [Barbour Scholarship](#) are one-year, competitive fellowships that students often apply for to fund a fifth year of study. [Rackham Public Scholarship Grants](#) provide funding for publicly engaged scholarly projects and the [Rackham Doctoral Intern Fellowship Program](#) allows candidates to participate in internships as part of their training and secure an additional semester of funding.

18. [Robert Kahn Fellowship for Scientific Study of Social Issues](#) Offers two semesters of full funding in the final year of study for PhD candidates “committed to using empirical science to help solve the deep and abiding challenges confronting society.”
19. [Stone Center for Inequality Dynamics](#) Emerging Inequality Scholars Award for PhD students who have achieved Candidacy - 1 semester of funding + 3K towards research
20. [Student Affairs at Taubman College](#)
Our College maintains the [Scholarship/Fellowship Opportunities site](#) and the [Taubman College Emergency Fund](#).
21. [Student Sustainability Coalition](#) SSC offers two different grant options in support of student-driven sustainability projects.
22. [Transportation Research Institute](#)
Some students have occasionally been involved in research projects through the Transportation Research Institute.
23. [University of Michigan International Center](#)
The International Center offers emergency funds and grants.
24. [University of Michigan Library, Grants and Fundraising](#)
The libraries offer a variety of mini grants for research.

External funding

There are numerous external grants that urban planning PhD students can apply to. Below we have included databases that compile many of these opportunities as well as funding opportunities that planning students commonly apply to (some links may not be current but provide examples of grant opportunities). Rackham offers cost-sharing (i.e. covering some or all tuition, health care and/or adding to stipend awards) for many external fellowships; see this [link](#) - it also lists other external funding opportunities).

1. [American Council of Learned Societies \(ACLS\)](#). Some grants available for dissertations or internships for PhD students, and possible post-doc funding, for humanities and “interpretive” social science projects. A review of projects shows that mostly historians and anthropologists get the awards, but there are a few urban planning scholars.
2. [Boren Awards](#)
Boren fellowships fund research and language study proposals by U.S. graduate students in world regions critical to U.S. interests.

3. [**Databases of Grant Opportunities**](#)

UM subscribes to a variety of databases to search for external grant opportunities.

4. [**Fulbright-Hayes Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad**](#)

This grant provides funding to doctoral students who conduct research in other countries in modern foreign languages. Funding is for 6-12 months.

5. [**Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy**](#)

Grants awarded to support dissertations and publications that address contemporary issues in the social sciences.

6. [**Humane Studies Fellowship**](#)

Three fellowships are awarded on a rolling basis for conference support, publication acceleration, and graduate sabbaticals.

7. [**IJURR Foundation: Studentships**](#) and [**Writing Up**](#) Grants

Students must be of a nationality of a low or middle-income country and preference is given to students who completed their first degree/s in their home country. IJURR broadly supports doctoral research in urban planning.

8. [**Lincoln Institute of Land Policy**](#)

The Lincoln Institute routinely has funding available to write policy briefs and to conduct other applied research.

9. [**NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants**](#) and [**Graduate Research Fellowship Program**](#)

These grants support doctoral dissertation research across a variety of disciplines.

10. [**Social Science Research Council \(SSRC\) Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship**](#)

The SSRC offers six to twelve months of support to graduate students in the humanities and humanistic social sciences who are enrolled in PhD programs in the United States and conducting dissertation research about US Indigenous or non-US cultures and societies.

11. [**The American Association of University Women**](#)

AAUW offers dissertation, postdoctoral and publication fellowships to women. Dissertation fellowships are for the last year of writing.

12. [**The Interamerican Foundation Fellowship**](#)

As of January 2023, this fellowship was on hold, but may be renewed. It offers funding for fieldwork in Latin America.

Miscellaneous U-M Resources

1. [**Conflict Resolution and Student Grievances**](#)

Rackham offers graduate students formal and informal dispute resolution services, can provide resources and referrals, and can offer alternative resolutions with other offices.

2. [**Graduate Employees' Organization \(GEO\)**](#)

GEO represents graduate student instructors (GSIs) and staff (GSSAs) and they bargain for our contract. GEO is the way to collectively organize and advocate for your needs while at UM.

3. [Graduate Housing](#)

On campus housing is available for graduate students.

4. [International Center](#)

The International Center offers a variety of resources including assistance with visa applications as well as navigating health insurance and social security.

5. [Off Campus Housing Site](#)

The off campus housing site has rental listings and a sublet and roommate search.

6. [Rackham Career Center](#)

The Rackham Career Center offers support services for those exploring both academic and non-academic career paths. Resources they offer:

- [Preparing Future Faculty Seminar](#)
- [Preparing Future Faculty Web Resources](#)
- [Postdoctoral Short-Course on College Teaching in Science and Engineering](#)
- [U-M Graduate Teacher Certificate \(GTC\)](#)

7. [Student Legal Services](#)

Student legal services can help with a variety of issues, including criminal, housing, family and consumer issues as well as notary services.

8. [Urban Planning Doctoral Committee \(UPDoc\)](#)

UPDoc is a group of PhD planning students. UPDoc advocates within the school for the needs of students and also runs workshops and seminars on relevant topics. Leadership changes annually.

9. [UM-Maize & Blue Cupboard](#)

Maize & Blue Cupboard is a food bank for students who are “on a tight budget or physically restrained from getting to a grocery store”. You will need your M-Card to access the food bank. Nothing else will be asked or required of you, and your privacy will be respected. The food bank restocks on Mondays and Thursdays. Hence, consider going on these days, but other days will work well too.

Preparing for the Job Market

While traditionally, graduates of our program find positions as postdoctoral associates or professors in higher education, URP PhD graduates have followed many other routes as well, as [Rackham's career outcomes](#) dashboard shows. Rackham's launch of the [Rackham Intern Fellowship Program](#) in 2022 for PhD students at UM to explore opportunities to put their research skills to use in non-academic settings also demonstrates that there is growing recognition that a PhD can open many varied doors to exciting research or teaching paths that lay outside of academia. URP PhD graduates have secured employment opportunities as consultants, directors of nonprofits, and as research analysts in a variety of types of private, government, and international agencies. The Pro-Sem is one place to interact with alumni and learn more about these diverse

pathways, and URP faculty and Taubman College Career and Professional Development staff can also provide introductions to students who have taken these paths if you would like to explore them further.

The remainder of this section outlines basic information on the academic job market, if that is the route you are interested in taking. Detailed tips to landing an academic job in urban planning can be found in the classic [Yellow Book: How \(not\) to get ahead in academia](#) (2011), initially written by “The Irrepressible Women Planners” in 1988 when women were poorly represented in urban planning faculty positions.

Types of Academic Positions

There are various types of academic positions, with a tenure track position being the most competitive. Other options include visiting assistant professors, research scientists, lecturers and adjuncts. Postdoc positions, though less common in urban planning than other fields, provide the opportunity to focus on increasing publications and additional research before moving into a faculty position. Opportunities sometimes emerge to work as a postdoc on a major research project. Several universities operate central programs to recruit postdocs which are then placed in various departments including the [Michigan Society of Fellows](#) and the [Harvard Society of Fellows](#).

There are three legs to the stool of responsibility for faculty: research, teaching, and service. What is most valued will depend on the type of institution you are applying to. For example, an R1 “research university” will want you to have robust research skills, publications and evidence that you can attract funding, while a small liberal arts college will value teaching experience.

Academic Job Applications

Traditionally, urban planning academic jobs are posted in the fall, with a start date of the following fall. Urban planning programs host information sessions about open positions at conferences such as ACSP. Two ACSP interest groups also host CV books for anyone on the job market, usually collected over the summer, including the Faculty Women Interest Group’s [FWIG Resume-CV Book](#) and the Planners of Color Interest Group [POCIG Resme-CV Book](#).

Most students go on the job market as they are writing their dissertation in their final year of the program. Today, most academic job applications require a cover letter, research statement, teaching statement, and diversity statement. The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching ([CRLT](#)) offers guidelines and consultations on teaching and diversity statements, and the URP program plans to launch a pilot Summer Workshop Series starting summer of 2024 to help students develop these materials. Start drafting these the summer you intend to go on the job market, and get multiple rounds of feedback from committee members, other faculty or recent alumni.

Preparing for the Interview

When you land an interview for a faculty position, you are invited to give a “job talk” and will typically take part in a 1-2 day in-person visit. It is highly encouraged that you prepare for the talk by giving a presentation at Taubman in advance. Again, see the [Yellow Book](#) for great tips on how to prepare for the job interview, negotiating that first offer, and then how to continue thriving and advocating for yourself well into your first academic position.

Table 2. Urban and Regional Planning PhD Program – Timeline of coursework, milestones, program funding, and external funding and other goals (cohorts who began 2024 and earlier)

	YEAR 1			YEAR 2			YEAR 3			YEAR 4			YEAR 5 +
	Fall	Winter	Summer	Fall	Winter	Summer	Fall	Winter	Summer	Fall	Winter	Summer	
Coursework	URP 700 Advanced Urban Theory			URP 700 Advanced Urban Theory			Enroll in URP 990 for Fall of Year 3 for one hour; once a Candidate, the Registrars Office will change to URP 995. From then on, enroll in URP 995 for 8 credits.						
	OR	URP 801 Research Design		OR	URP 802 Research Seminar								
	URP 701 Epistemology			URP 701 Epistemology									
	URP 803 Pro-Sem	URP 803 Pro-Sem		Directed study (or Winter of Yr 1)									
	Statistics I	Statistics II			Methods II								
	Primary or secondary specialization elective	Methods I		Primary or secondary specialization elective	Primary or secondary specialization elective								
	OR												
Milestones	URP 500 Planning Theory, if not taken during Master's	Primary or secondary specialization elective		Primary or secondary specialization elective	Primary or secondary specialization elective								
	Consider dissertation topics		Conduct preliminary research	Form comp exam committee (ideally dissertation committee too)	Complete all coursework	Defend dissertation proposal	Dissertation data collection and writing (stay in regular contact with your committee; share your work in conferences and publishing)						
	Meet with potential committee members				Write field statement		Hold Full Dissertation Review						
					Take comp exam		Complete Rackham Pre-Defense Review						
Program Funding	Fellowship	GSI	Summer PhD Research Assistantship	GSRA	Fellowship	Fellowship	Fellowship	Fellowship	Summer Job Prep Workshop Series	GSI	GSI	Fellowship	No guaranteed stipend. Tuition and healthcare available for years 5 and 6. Rackham One-Term for final semester may be available
												Last term guaranteed funding	
External Funding Goals	Apply for Rackham Pre-Candidacy Grant or others for summer research			Apply for fieldwork funding			Apply for Rackham Candidacy Grant			Apply for Rackham Pre-Doc Fellowship			
							Consider dissertation writing funding			Consider dissertation writing funding			
[Conference and emergency funding from Rackham available each year]													
Other Goals				Begin journal article	Continue with article	Submit first article			Draft job materials	Work on publishing from dissertation			
										Start applying to jobs			