GUIDELINES FOR URSP 762, PLANNING STUDIO II

Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs
Virginia Commonwealth University
Revised September 19, 2011

Course Description

Semester course: 6 credits. Prerequisite: All core courses in the Master of Urban & Regional Planning Program. This course requires students to apply theory and methodology gained from the core courses to address selected planning issues, generally through special-topic or sub-area plans. URSP 764 Thesis is an acceptable substitute for the Studio II.

Policies and Processes

Spring is the strongly preferred semester for students to do the Studio II, because we can provide a class structure and ample faculty resources. Students must complete all six credits during the spring semester.

Summer is not permitted for Studio II.

Fall is permitted, but not encouraged for Studio II, because we cannot provide a class structure and since we have fewer faculty resources to devote to Studio II then. In order to be permitted to complete a Fall Studio II, students must secure, by June 30, the approval via email of the MURP Chair, giving permission for the student to begin planning a Fall Studio II project (since it may not be feasible if the student has other courses to take). By August 16, the student must deliver to the Studio II Master a proposal that has been signed by the client and a faculty member who will also serve on the panel. If the Studio II Master agrees that the proposal meets all of the requirements of a Studio II proposal as described under November 15 (below), s/he will then sign on to create a panel of three persons – the client and two faculty members. The initial meeting of the entire Studio II panel must be organized by the student and it must take place by August 23. Only then will the student be given a course override form so that s/he can enroll in the Fall Studio II class. Students must complete all six credits during the fall semester.

Spring Studio II

The Studio II Panel
This panel consists of three persons – (1) Client, who represents the organization for whom the plan is being prepared; (2) Primary content advisor, who is a MURP faculty member who provides advice on appropriate methodology and literature, working frequently with the student throughout the Studio II process; (3) Second reader, who provides constructive critique of the Studio II work as it proceeds. All three panel members approve the initial project description and evaluate the work as it proceeds and after it has been completed.

Studio II Master
Organizes the spring Studio II process from September through May, serves as either the primary content advisor or the second reader on all Studio II projects, receives the evaluations of the students’ work from the other faculty panel member and the client, awards points for completion of required Studio II assignments and issues the final Studio II grade.
Other Faculty Member
Serves as either primary content advisor or second reader on the Studio II process, meets with the panel in December and at the final presentation in early May, provides feedback to the student throughout the studio process (with copies of written feedback to be emailed to the Studio II Master), and submits final evaluations to the Studio II Master of the written document and of the final presentation.

Outside Client
Provides information, access to the organization for whom the plan is being completed and data as needed and discussed during the initial panel meeting, as well as guidance to the student throughout the process. S/he also meets with the panel in December and at the final presentation in early May, and provides summary evaluations to the Studio II Master of the student’s written plan by May 1 and of the final presentation immediately following the presentation.

MURP Chair
Provides students with a list of the faculty who are serving as Studio II panel members, encourages faculty to serve as Studio II panel members if necessary/appropriate, receives complaints or compliments as necessary from students about the Studio II Master and faculty panel members during the course of the process, and receives the final evaluation of the Studio II process and faculty members from students after the Studio II process is complete. The MURP Chair administers the final, confidential evaluation of all panel members by the students, the results of which are reported in the aggregate after grades have been assigned.

Students
Comply with all requirements and deadlines concerning the Studio II and work 24 hours per week, on average, to complete an excellent studio project. Take responsibility for organizing meetings with the faculty and client panel members to review the work (in addition to the class meetings organized by the Studio II Master), and follow up diligently on recommendations made for improving their work. On April 18, each student must deliver to the Studio II Master a list of the dates on which s/he discussed the progress of his or her work with the client and primary content advisor.

Grading
The Studio II carries a total of 100 points: 90–100 = A, 80–89 = B, 65–79 = C, 50-65 = D, < 50 = F.

Process

September – October
Students who wish to complete the Studio II during the spring semester prepare their Studio II proposals (according to the criteria under November 1 & 15, below). In September, if they have not done so already, students should approach potential clients and discuss with them the requirements for the Studio II and the product that can be produced for the client. Students should clearly explain the Studio II criteria and, preferably, show the client a copy of a previous Studio II plan that may be similar to the one the student intends to complete. It is the student’s responsibility to find an appropriate Studio II topic and client. Students who are having difficulties in this regard can seek the advice of the MURP Chair.

At the same time (September), students should seek the advice of faculty members who have expertise in the area most closely related to the student’s potential Studio II topic, as potential primary content advisors. Students who are not able to identify faculty members who are available to serve on their Studio II panels should seek the advice of the MURP Chair. Note that not all faculty members are assigned to serve on Studio II panels, and of those who are, they serve on a limited number of panels. Hence students who wish to have faculty who are knowledgeable about the topics they plan to study should prepare early and approach faculty members as soon as they have developed coherent proposals and identified clients.
November 1
Students deliver their Studio II proposals to the primary content advisors and to their clients for feedback and/or approval. Students must immediately address any issues raised and get approval from their clients and content advisors before proceeding.

November 15
Students must present Studio II proposals of about 8 pages in hard copy only to the Studio II Master. Each proposal must include:

1. Cover page with title of project and name of student; names, signatures and dates of signatures of panel members; and name of the program: Master of Urban & Regional Planning Program, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government & Public Affairs, Virginia Commonwealth University.

2. 150-word description of the client organization for whom the plan is being completed and who will be the organization that is primarily responsible for implementing the plan. This should include the mission or purpose of this organization, or at least the aspect of the mission that relates to this plan.

3. 250 words: Why does this organization need a plan? How will the plan help it achieve its mission? What is it trying to achieve? (e.g., revitalize a dilapidated business corridor, improve access to nutritious foods for low-wealth neighborhoods, etc.) How does your proposed plan relate to other plans on this subject that have been done for this organization? If another plan has been done, why is a new plan needed? How does your proposed plan relate to the community’s comprehensive plan (if relevant) or to other overarching plans?

4. 1,000+ words: How does one go about doing a plan of this sort?
   o What planning theories are most relevant to developing an appropriate approach? Cite (using Chicago style) at least two specific pieces of literature and explain, in about 250 words for each, exactly how that theory will help you to develop an appropriate approach. In particular, how does the literature help you determine what questions to ask and answer in order to do an appropriate plan? Explain how those questions arise in the literature.
   o What other plans can serve as examples of a good approach to the type of plan that you are doing? Cite at least two specific plans (one should be a previous, high-quality VCU Studio II project) and explain, in about 250 words for each, how the approach to the planning process taken in each plan has informed your approach in the plan you will do.

(Note that you should use such literature and precedent plans throughout your entire Studio II plan – to develop an approach to the task and questions to ask, and also later to stimulate your thinking of ways to address the issues that you uncover in your research. This point will be addressed again in subsequent guidelines.)

5. 250 words: Drawing on your answers to #4 above, state what information you need to have in order to make intelligent plan recommendations to your client.
   o What questions do you need to ask? Why do you need to ask them?
   o Where will you get the information to answer the questions (e.g., government documents, surveys, focus groups, secondary literature, existing community plans, other)? Each studio II plan should employ an appropriately participatory element among its research methods.
   o What tools will you use to digest and analyze this information (e.g., descriptive statistics with SPSS, demographic maps with GIS, etc.)?
- How do you intend to organize the data so that you can use it to answer the questions you posed (above) and create the basis for a plan (e.g., SWOT, assets and liabilities, trends, patterns of responses, other)? The purpose of your plan and the questions you pose at the outset should guide the way you organize and present the data.

_Students will receive up to 4 points for this portion of the project, based primarily upon the completion of the required elements. Late proposals will be downgraded by 1 point per calendar day. Each student must complete an acceptable Studio II proposal in order to be permitted to enroll in Studio II, even if s/he receives no points due to lateness penalties._

If the November 15 proposal is complete and acceptable and has the required signatures, the Studio II Master will sign on to the panel and schedule the first panel meeting for early December. It is the responsibility of the student to work with the primary content advisor and the client to develop an acceptable Studio II proposal prior to submitting it to the Studio II Master. (In cases where the Studio II master is the primary content advisor, the student will work with the Studio II Master prior to November 1.)

Students who need assistance finding a faculty member for the panel should ask the MURP Chair.

**December 5-16**

Initial panel meetings of 30-40 minutes each will be held by the Studio II Master. Each meeting must include the student, the Studio II Master, the other faculty member, and the client. At this meeting, the panel will review the written proposal, the schedule for completion of the document and review by the panel members, and the final presentation. This will include the establishment of a schedule for meetings of the student with the primary-content faculty member and the client to discuss the progress of the project.

_Students will receive 2 points for this portion of the project. If the other faculty member does not attend the meeting (generally in person), the student will lose 1 point, but the meeting may still proceed. If the client does not attend (either in person or by speaker-phone), the meeting will not proceed and the student will receive 0 points, but s/he will still be required to organize a panel meeting prior to being permitted to proceed with the project._

_No student will be permitted to register for Studio II until after the December panel meeting has taken place. At the end of this meeting, the panel will decide if the student's proposal indicates that he or she is ready to tackle the Studio II successfully. If the student is deemed not ready, then he or she will have to wait until the following fall or the following spring semester to do the Studio II. If the student is deemed ready to proceed, s/he will receive a course override form with which to register for Studio II._

**December – May**

Students should begin gathering information for their projects between the December panel meeting and the first section meeting in January. Students whose projects require surveys, focus groups or charrettes will need to at least set up the research prior to January 15, so that there is time to collect and analyze the information.

_There will be two or three sections that will meet on two or three consecutive weeks throughout the semester. The Studio II meets Wednesdays, 4 – 6:40 PM. Each section will be organized and led by the Studio II Master. Students will be assigned to persons so that students addressing similar topics can meet in the same section._

_At each class meeting, students will present their work (as indicated below) and will receive feedback from the Studio II instructor(s) and from fellow students. Students must take careful notes on this feedback and, following each class, send an email to each member of the panel, summarizing the feedback and the student’s plans to address it._
January 18 / 25 – Studio II written plan introduction due and presented in class.

The Studio II Master will discuss the Studio II process and product and address student questions. Each student will make a 5-minute powerpoint presentation (with minimal graphics) of the introduction to his or her plan to the other students in the section. This must be a well-crafted introduction that will be used in the final plan. It must clearly explain the client, purpose of the plan, the questions to be posed and answered, and include a brief description of the analytical approach used to answer the questions. The introduction must also provide a road-map to the rest of the document, so the reader knows what to expect and why those things are necessary in this plan.

By January 18, each student must place a copy of the written introduction and a copy of the powerpoint presentation on the Blackboard site and also send a copy of each via email to all three members of the panel.

 Students will receive up to 5 points for completion of this portion of the project. Late submissions and presentations will not be accepted, except for reasons of documented illness or emergency.

February 22 / 29 / March 7 – presentation of research

Written research, analysis, etc., and powerpoint presentation to be posted on Blackboard and sent via email to all three panel members by February 29. Panel members will send written comments via email to the student and Studio II Master by March 7.

Each student will make an 8-minute powerpoint presentation (with graphics) to the other students in the section, explaining how s/he has addressed comments received from the students, the faculty panel members and client at the previous section meeting, and presenting the following new material:

- All research completed for the project (all of the main research and information-gathering should be finished by this date);
- Synthesis of the information using appropriate tools.
- Analysis and interpretation of the information collected in light the purpose of the project and key questions to be answered;

 Students will receive up to 5 points for completion of this portion of the project on the date specified. Late submissions and presentations will not be accepted, except for reasons of documented illness or emergency.

March 14 – Written outline of plan statement, goals, objectives and strategies must be emailed to each member of the student’s Studio II panel and posted on Blackboard. The panel will provide feedback to the student on this outline by March 21, with copies via email to the Studio II Master.

 Students will receive up to 4 points for completion of this portion of the project on the date specified. Late submissions and presentations will not be accepted, except for reasons of documented illness or emergency.
March 21 / 28 / April 4 – presentation of completed Studio II to class. All written material due March 28.

Each student will make an 8-minute powerpoint presentation to the other students in the section, explaining how s/he has addressed comments received from the students, the faculty panel members and client since the previous presentation, and presenting the following new material:

- An appropriate plan statement (vision statement, etc. – whatever is appropriate to the project)
- Complete goals, objectives, strategies, implementation; executive summary.
  - Goal: a desired end state to be achieved.
  - Objectives: measurable outcomes that collectively constitute the goal.
  - Strategies: activities to attain the objective.
  - Implementation: who does what, when, and if it involves significant expenditure, how much does it cost?
- Appendix draft

Draft of complete document and powerpoint presentation to be posted on Blackboard and sent via email to all three panel members by March 28. Panel members will send written comments via email to the student and Studio II Master by April 4.

_Students will receive up to 4 points for completion of this portion of the project on the date specified. Late submissions and presentations will not be accepted, except for reasons of documented illness or emergency._

Plan Completion and Presentation

April 11 (all sections meet together) – Powerpoint presentation tips
A recent MURP graduate will reprise his or her Studio II presentation and discuss do’s and don’t’s for a successful presentation. The class will review _The 13 Deadly Sins of Powerpoint_ presentation and discuss questions and strategies. The class will also complete the exit survey as part of the MURP assessment process.

_Students will receive 2 points if they attend this session; 0 points if they do not attend, unless excused due to documented illness or emergency._

April 18 – Final revised & completed plans due in hard copy, on Blackboard and via email to all members of the panel.

The plan must include all elements – text, graphics, etc., as well as the technical appendix. Panel members are expected to review the plan and submit an evaluation, using the _Urban & Regional Planning Studio II Evaluation Form_, to the Studio II Master via email by May 1.

_Students will receive up to 55 points for the final plan and appendix. Late materials will be downgraded by 1 point per calendar day._
April 23 – 27 – Final presentation rehearsals
Students will be divided into about seven sections of four-five students each.

*Students will receive up to 3 points for full participation in this session; 0 points if they do not attend, unless excused due to documented illness or emergency.*

April 30 – May 4 – Final presentations to the client, the University and to the wider community
(The presentations will be publicized in the community and MURP and BURS students will be required to attend.)
Each student will make a presentation of 30 minutes, followed by up to 30 minutes of Q & A from the audience.
The faculty panel member and client will submit evaluations of the student’s presentation (in hard copy) to the Studio II Master, immediately after the presentation has concluded.

*Students will receive up to 8 points for this presentation. Late presentations will not be accepted, unless excused due to documented illness or emergency.*

May 7 – 11 – “Plan-Off” five-minute public presentation and poster competition, venue to be determined.
Each student will present a brief (5-minute) synopsis of his or her plan to a panel of judges, who will vote for winners on each of three nights. On the fourth night, the winners of the previous nights will compete again for a grand prize.

*Participation in the Plan-Off is mandatory. Students will receive up to 8 points for the poster and presentation. Late presentations or posters will not be accepted.*

*Note that students cannot increase the number of points they receive over the course of the project by correcting the deficiencies noted by the panel members. Students must correct these deficiencies, but the points received on the initial effort will not be adjusted.*

Summary schedule of tasks and dates by which they are to be completed. Each student’s schedule must include the dates and tasks listed below, when the Studio II class will meet. In addition, each student must schedule meetings with the faculty primary content advisor and the client and specify these meeting dates no later than the December panel meeting.

- November 1 – initial proposal due to Primary Content Advisor and Client
- November 15 – proposal due to Studio II Master
- December 5-16 – first panel meetings for each Studio II project (30-45 minutes each)
- January 18 / 25 – Studio II written introduction due and presented in class.
- February 22 / 29 / March 7 – presentation of research; all must be collected by February 29
- March 21 / 28 / April 4 – presentation of completed Studio II draft to class. All written material due March 28.
- April 11 – presentation pointers class meeting.
- April 18 – final, revised and completed Studio II plans due.
- April 23–27 – Studio II presentation rehearsals.
- April 30 – May 4 – final presentation of Studio II to client and community
- May 7 – 11 “Plan-Off” competition and poster session.