

URBAN PLANNING, POLICY AND DESIGN (PH.D.)

Offered by: Urban Planning (Faculty of Engineering)
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Program Description

The Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Planning, Policy and Design aims to prepare students for interdisciplinary research and teaching on the management of urban development as well as for leadership in the design and evaluation of urban policies and plans for cities in North America and the world. The program will focus on five identified areas of urban planning (land use planning and urban design; environmental planning; transportation planning; international development planning; real estate and economic development). Students are expected to spend the first two years of study taking courses, preparing for their comprehensive examination and writing their dissertation proposal. The remaining two (or more) years are spent conducting research and writing a thesis.

Note: For information about Fall 2025 and Winter 2026 course offerings, please check back on May 8, 2025. Until then, the "Terms offered" field will appear blank for most courses while the class schedule is being finalized.

Thesis

A thesis for the doctoral degree must constitute original scholarship and must be a distinct contribution to knowledge. It must show familiarity with previous work in the field and must demonstrate ability to plan and carry out research, organize results, and defend the approach and conclusions in a scholarly manner. The research presented must meet current standards of the discipline; as well, the thesis must clearly demonstrate how the research advances knowledge in the field. Finally, the thesis must be written in compliance with norms for academic and scholarly expression and for publication in the public domain.

Required Courses (9 credits)

Every student must take courses worth at least 18 credits. Only one reading course can be included in this minimum requirement. The Advisory Committee may raise the requirement up to 24 credits (up to 36 credits for students entering as Ph.D. 1) in order to meet the specific needs of the student. With approval of their committee, students may elect to take a larger number of courses than is required, but in no case will the number of credits exceed thirty unless the student enters the program in Ph.D.1.

Expand allContract all		
Course	Title	Credits
URBP 612	History and Theory of Planning.	3
URBP 701	Doctoral Comprehensive Examination.	0
URBP 703	Doctoral Research Seminar 1.	3
URBP 704	Doctoral Research Seminar 2.	3
URBP 709	Doctoral Research Proposal.	0

Complementary Courses (6 credits)

3 credits in advanced research methods at the 600 level or higher. It may be taken in any academic unit at McGill or another university, subject to the approval of the Graduate Program or School Director.

3 credits in advanced theory at the 600 level or higher. It may be taken at McGill or at another university and must be approved by the Graduate Program or School Director.

Elective Courses (3 credits)

Minimum 3 credits at the 500 level or higher, or more if the Advisory Committee so decides.

These credits may be taken in any academic unit at McGill or at another university, subject to the approval of the Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee may require that the number of electives be increased to improve the student's preparation in certain areas. Other courses, at the 500 level or higher, may be added with the approval of the Advisory Committee. In general, students will be asked to limit their elective coursework to 9 credits. In no case will they be allowed to take more than 15 credits in elective courses.

Up to two reading courses may be taken and only one may be included in the minimum 18 credits of course work. A reading course is taken when no appropriate course is available and is (at least) equivalent to a 3-credit course in terms of work load. Procedures for reading courses are outlined in the Reading Course guidelines.