



CORNELL ARCHITECTURE
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PROGRAM

REGULATIONS GOVERNING THESIS
ARCH 812: INDEPENDENT DESIGN THESIS

January 2007

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1. INDEPENDENT THESIS

All students who are candidates for the professional Master of Architecture degree are required to satisfactorily complete a Thesis in the seventh term of study. The Thesis should be investigate an architectural proposition, show evidence of research into the potential of architecture, and represent a synthesis of the student's understanding of architecture.

PREREQUISITE: Students are required to satisfactorily complete **all required studios** and **ARCH 811: Proseminar in Thesis Research** prior to undertaking the Thesis term.

2. ADVISOR

Each student shall have an Advisor drawn from permanent or term-appointed design faculty. Additional Advisors may be drawn from faculty in the Department of Architecture. Unofficial advisors from other disciplines may also be added at the student's discretion. It is the student's responsibility to arrange appropriate Advisors. Advisors may also be appointed by the Department Chair.

3. EXPECTATIONS

Thesis students are expected to work in the studio and to see their assigned advisor on a regular basis. Both faculty and students should adhere to a regular schedule of meetings for discussing the student's progress and for critical feedback. Failure to meet these obligations should be brought to the attention of the program coordinator or the Director of Graduate Programs. Work done primarily outside the studio and without criticism may be excluded from final evaluation and may result in an automatic failing grade.

A Thesis is to represent the work of an individual. The only form of assistance authorized is in the model of a limited apprenticeship, with a maximum of two graduate or undergraduate students. No other assistance will be allowed. All work performed by assistants must be given proper credit in the Thesis Defense and in the Thesis Book. See *The Code of Academic Integrity and Acknowledging the Work of Others*.

4. EVALUATION AND GRADING

The student and Thesis Advisor(s) should ensure a minimum of two formal interim reviews. Following these two reviews and the mandatory Thesis Defense, the student will be evaluated by her/his Advisor(s) as to whether s/he has satisfied the minimum requirements for a "satisfactory" evaluation of the semester's work. A "satisfactory" evaluation is followed by:

- 1) final suggestions on how the student may effectively compile and communicate her/his research within the Thesis Book, and
- 2) a provisional letter grade that is kept on record (and not shown to the student) until the Thesis Book is approved, and the final course grade assessed.

If a student receives an "unsatisfactory" evaluation for the semester's work, s/he is given an "NGR" on her/his transcript, written clarification of the deficiencies of the work, and an additional time period of 6 months maximum (unsupervised by her/his Advisor(s)) to resubmit the Thesis documents: the Thesis Advisor(s) will stipulate whether another Thesis Defense is required. Upon this second submission, one of two final evaluations is assessed: "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory." An evaluation of "satisfactory" is followed by:

- 1) final suggestions on how the student may effectively compile and communicate his/her research within the Thesis Book, and
- 2) a provisional letter grade that is kept on record (and not shown to the student) until the Thesis Book is approved, and the final course grade assessed. If the student receives an "unsatisfactory" evaluation, s/he will be required to take a required leave of absence of at least one academic term, after which time — if s/he wishes to continue the Thesis investigation or begin a new one — s/he must petition the M. Arch.I Program Committee to do so.

In cases where the Thesis Book is submitted, and the student's Advisor is not in residence at Cornell, the Director of Graduate Programs shall – as best as possible – attempt to contact the Advisor(s) to judge the acceptability of the Thesis Book. If the Advisor(s) is/are not available, the DGP shall judge the acceptability of the Thesis Book, and assess the final letter grade based upon the provisional grade and the Thesis Book submission.

The grade of "INCOMPLETE" may be authorized by the Chairperson only when the two University conditions for an "INCOMPLETE" have been met:

- a. The student has substantial equity in the course, and
- b. The student has been prevented by circumstances beyond her/his control from completing the work on time.

5. THESIS DEFENSE

The Thesis Defense is a mandatory component of the Thesis. Work presented at the Defense should be consistent with the Thesis research. Methods of representation shall be determined by the student and her or his Advisor(s) prior to the presentation. Documentation of the work should elucidate the intentions of the project and be reproducible.

Unfinished and incomplete submissions for the Thesis Defense may, at the discretion of the Advisor(s), be reviewed and receive such penalty as the Advisor(s) may deem appropriate. Submitted materials may be excluded from Thesis Defense altogether if they are substantially unfinished and incomplete. Preliminary work outlining the development of the project may be hung as an addendum, but should be organized and edited.

Work submitted late will not be considered for review.

The final Thesis Defense shall be scheduled during the Final Review period. The preparation of the schedule and the selection of the examining committees are the joint responsibilities of the Chairperson and the professor-in-charge. Examining committees shall consist of the Advisor(s) and not less than two additional members.

Each student shall be permitted to make an uninterrupted presentation of her or his project (limited to a maximum 25 minutes) with only questions for clarification permitted. At the conclusion of the presentation, the examining committee shall discuss the project's merits and shortcomings and examine the student on all matters pertinent to the project. At the conclusion of the examination, the student shall be excused while the committee deliberates its evaluation.

While critical evaluations are the primary focus of the Final Defense, the actual grading of a Thesis project shall be the responsibility of the student's Thesis Advisor(s). Additional examining faculty in attendance at the review will submit grades to be used by the Thesis Advisor(s) in determining the final letter grade.

Awards for outstanding thesis work will be made by the Design Faculty as a whole.

6. THESIS BOOK

As part of the thesis requirements, each student must submit one professionally hardbound Thesis Book complete with representations of the final project for deposit in the Fine Arts Library.

FORMAT: the Thesis Book should be in 8.5 x 11 inches in dimension. The following should be printed on the spine and front cover:

- the student's full name
- the title of the thesis
- the year the book is submitted
- on the front cover only: the degree (professional M.Arch)

There shall be a title page that lists:

- the student's full name
- the title of the thesis project
- the statement: "In partial fulfillment of the professional M.Arch. degree, Cornell University"
- the date of submission: (May, August, or January, and the year the book is submitted)
- the name(s) of the advisor(s)

Pages inside the book may be folded. All pages shall be numbered, and all references properly cited in footnotes, endnotes, and/or bibliographies.

The Thesis Book should be professionally stitch-bound – not glued (eg: "perfect binding" is not acceptable).

ACCEPTANCE OF THESIS BOOK:

The Thesis Book is due within 12 months of the Thesis Defense. It must be formally "accepted" by the Thesis Advisor– or, in the absence of a committee member, by the Director of Graduate Programs – by means of a signature and a date of receipt on the title page.

Acceptance of the bound Library copy is prerequisite for the assignment of a final grade in Arch 812, which the student would require to fulfill the M.Arch requirements and to receive her/his degree. Submissions after the 12-month due date would require a petition for acceptance. Late submissions beyond four years of the student's last term of enrollment cannot be accepted nor petitioned: following University regulations, the student would have to re-apply and be re-accepted into the program for the book to be accepted and the degree granted.