The MED Program Handbook summarizes current information related to the Master of Environmental Design Program and is intended to serve as a reference for MED students and faculty advisors. The information in this Handbook includes and supplements the description of the Program published in the School of Architecture Bulletin and The Regulations and Rules of the School of Architecture.
1. MED Program Procedures

1.1. Upon Acceptance of Admission

Upon acceptance into the Program, MED candidates should contact the chairperson to discuss preliminary study plans. Whatever the status of one’s proposed study topic, it is appropriate to undertake advanced preparation as soon as practical prior to the beginning of the first term.

Prior to coming to Yale, a student new to the campus should make housing arrangements as soon as possible, following receipt of housing information sent to incoming students by the Registrar of the School. For students arriving in the United States from other countries, the Office of International Students and Scholars (www.oiss.yale.edu) offers assistance with introduction to the University and related matters.

At the beginning of the fall term, the University Library conducts tours of Sterling Memorial Library at Cross Campus that provide a valuable introduction to incoming Yale students. Also, an orientation to the Art and Architecture Library is required for all incoming students.

Over the summer prior to their first term, incoming MED students will be sent information on the library orientation and the required computer instruction course. The computer courses provide an introduction to the digital media facilities at the School, but may be waived if the student can demonstrate sufficient prior experience.

1.2. Registration for the First Term

Immediately upon registration at the School of Architecture, a myriad of tasks must be attended to including the preliminary selection of courses. The student should consult with the chairperson of the MED program, as well as refer to the Bulletin for information regarding the allotment of required and elective courses. MED students in their first term should expect to take three credits of independent research on their proposed topic of study. This independent research will be overseen by the chairperson during the first term, and after by the student’s thesis advisor.

In addition to courses offered at the School of Architecture, there may be courses of interest and pertinence to a student’s topic of study offered at one of the University’s other schools. The Schools of the University are listed in the Bulletin, and the list of courses offered at each is available online through the main Yale website. The
permission of the instructor may be required to enroll in courses outside of the School of Architecture. Seminars are often over subscribes. In that case students are encouraged to take a proactive role and communicate their interest in the subject matter to the professor in person. An extra email never hurts. The student might also seek the advice and help of the Chairperson.

Design studios offered in the M.Arch. Program are closed to M.E.D. students. Exceptions are considered only if the design studio is directly related to a student’s research, and are subject to approval by the M.E.D. chair, the dean, and the studio instructor.

1.3. MED Committee

The Dean of the School of Architecture, including faculty members who are involved with MED student work as principal advisors, appoints faculty serving on the MED Program Committee each year. In addition, one student representative is elected to the Committee early in the fall term of each academic year. The Committee is responsible, on behalf of the Dean and faculty of the School, for the curriculum of the Program and for recommendations to the Dean and other Committees of the School regarding MED program needs, rules and student work. In addition to administrative tasks, the MED Committee also conducts reviews of student work near the end of each term.

As described above, one student serves on the MED Committee. MED student positions are also available by election to the Admissions Committee and the Rules Committee. The student election process is held at the beginning of the fall term. MED students interested in Committee service are asked to nominate themselves. The incumbent MED Committee student member serves as liaison among the students to assure that there are nominations for each of the three Committee positions.

1.4. Funds Available to MED Students

Scholarship aid is available according to the terms for Financial Assistance described in the School Bulletin. In addition, teaching assistant positions may be available after a student’s first term at the School, provided the student is in good academic standing. Available positions within the School are advertised at the end of each term, and are filled according to the described selection process. Occasionally, teaching fellowships are also available to School of Architecture students within other departments of the University. Students should take the initiative to contact the registrars of departments, such as History of Art, for which they capable of serving as a teaching fellow.

MED students have an excellent record in securing outside scholarships and fellowships. Funding opportunities are regularly posted at the School and are compiled by the Dean’s office. The faculty advisor should also be consulted regarding outside funds that may be available within a student’s area of specialization, including from the AIA New York and Connecticut chapters and the Society of Architectural Historians. See also postings.
through different study areas within Yale University, (e.g. Gay and Lesbian Studies, International and Area Studies).

Research assistant positions are available only rarely, through faculty who has secured research grants and contracts. In such cases, work that is reimbursed is considered as employment of the School curriculum. Academic credit cannot be granted for work undertaken as employment.

A “Special Research Need” fund is allocated each year for students in the MED program. This provides a small amount of reimbursement (typically $200-300) for students in their second year to defray exceptional research costs related to thesis preparation and publication. These costs might include copyright expenses or photographic reproduction for the final thesis or conference attendance where the research paper has been accepted for presentation. Reasonable costs for photocopying and telephone usage at the School, when directly related to one’s thesis, are covered by the MED program budget. Requests for reimbursements must be approved in advance by the Chairperson and are based of availability of funds.
2. MED Thesis Requirements

2.1 General

The two-year program culminates in a written Masters Thesis. The student determines the topic and form of the thesis with consultation of his/her thesis advisor and the chairperson of the M.E.D. committee. In addition to meetings with principal advisor, the three-member Thesis Committee assigned to each student at the end of the second term monitors its progress. (See below “Advisory Arrangements”). Students and faculty involved with the MED program come together at the end of each term to exchange ideas in an open seminar format. (See “MED Presentations”)

2.2. Advisory Arrangements

The independent research that culminates in the thesis must be carefully planned, with faculty advisors working closely in its development and approval.

By the end of the first term, the chairperson, in consultation with the student, designates a principal advisor, who is in most instances a member of the MED Committee (for a listing of the current members, refer to the Bulletin). The principal advisor is the key faculty contact who supervises the work of the student and who is responsible for approving course selection and “independent study” credits each term. In cases where the most appropriate academic advisor is not a member of the MED Committee, but is a faculty member within the School of Architecture or one of the other Schools of the University, an administrative advisor is appointed from the MED Committee faculty, to serve as a liaison with the academic advisor.

By the end of the second term, each student, in consultation with the principal advisor and chairperson, selects one additional faculty member to serve as a “second reader” of the student’s thesis. A letter confirms the appointment of this faculty member to a student’s Thesis Committee, composed as well of the program chairperson and principal advisor. The Thesis Committee will meet twice: for the first time, at the end of the student’s second term to review and approve the thesis proposal; and for the second time, at the end of the fourth term to review and approve the completed thesis.

Except in extraordinary circumstances, the members of the Thesis Committee will be selected from the faculty of Yale. Such circumstances might occur if an outside advisor was uniquely qualified in the student’s topic area and equally willing to serve as an advisory committee member. The principal advisor will remain as the point of communication with the program chairperson.
Each student is responsible for arranging advisor reviews and meetings. Weekly consultation with the principal advisor is recommended, especially during the formative stages of the study plan. The MED Committee will review student progress once each term. This review takes the form of a presentation to the complete MED Committee, as well as to faculty advisors who do not sit on the Committee and visitors from outside the University chosen by the students and the program chairperson. These presentations occur on a date near the end of each term chosen by the chairperson.

In the event that there are serious questions that arise that are not resolved by discussion between the student and principal advisor, the MED Committee will mediate and make a final resolution, subject to the Dean’s review as provided in the Regulations and Rules of the School. The student and/or faculty advisor may request if it is considered necessary in the course of development of the student’s work and in the interest of the student’s academic development, a change in principal advisor. Requests for such changes must be approved by the MED Committee after due consideration of the cause.

2.3. Research Schedule

Although “keeping on schedule” often proves to be an elusive objective, the term-by-term outline listed below suggests reasonable measures of progress to allow ample time in the last term for final thesis preparation.

**Term 1:**
The main goal of the first semester is to define an area of interest. This could consist of identifying a physical phenomena relating to the built environment and identifying the key themes, concepts and issues relating to these phenomena. The second goal is to identify what is being researched (buildings/cities and other physical phenomena, primary and secondary texts, archival material, and other sources). The semester should also be spent familiarizing oneself with existing scholarship on the topic. The second term study plan and goal clearly defined by the end of the semester.

**Term 2:**
The second phase of one’s study will depend entirely upon the specific topic and research method. The second term is the best time for undertaking research in detail and for developing a position with respect to existing scholarship and contemporary architectural discourse. The area of research should be clearly bracketed by the end of the second term. This would mean defining some basic parameters of the project: the historical period, the key projects/themes/issues/concepts, and completing a working bibliography.

**Term 3:**
The third semester should be devoted to writing and research. The main goal is to finish a “core chapter” of the thesis and to complete key portions of the thesis as a
whole. The students are in charge of setting up an appointment schedule with their principal advisors. It is recommended that these meetings should take place every fortnight.

Term 4:
Continue writing and work towards the deadlines. You should remember to leave time for editing and formatting the thesis.

2.4. MED Presentations

Each student is required to do a formal presentation at the end of each term to members of the MED committee and invited guests. The latter consists usually of two leading architectural scholars and rotating visitors from other departments at Yale University who can offer special insights to individual study topics. The reviewers are determined in collaboration of the Chairperson and the student body during each term taking into account the availability of in house and visiting faculty. Although the presentation is optional for first semester students, it is highly recommended as they expose you and your work to students and faculty and vice versa. These presentations have in the past played a key role in finding suitable advisors. All in all, rather than a formal defense, the MED presentations offer a platform for exchange of ideas.

Presentation format: Each student is asked to give a 15-20 minute presentation on his or her independent research. Each is followed by ca. 25-minute discussion during which members of the MED committee and visitors comment on the students work. The goal is to help students define and communicate their research goals.

General rules apply to these presentations. First, a presentation differs from a lecture format and should not be read. An ideal presentation consists of a concise statement of intent (this could be read) and a more discussant slide presentation. In order to maximize the usefulness of these situations, each student should prepare a set of questions, Remember that identifying a good question is often the most valuable moment in your presentation. Students should see these events as a testing ground for their ideas. In addition each student is invited to submit relevant material to be sent out to the reviewers two weeks prior to the presentation. The submittal might consist of a relevant paper written for a class or a chapter from the thesis. Each student is in charge of making the copies to be sent out by the Chairperson. A submittal should not exceed 20 pages.

Although the scope and style of the presentations vary student by student they should generally meet the expectations set in the semester-by-semester research schedule listed above. With these in mind the presentations could take the following format.

1. Term
Start by reading loud a brief statement of intent -- what am I interested in and why, followed by a slide presentation, which starts to identify the key issues and
themes. You should also present also a working bibliography in an annotated format.

2. Term
Revisit the statement of intent and discuss what has been achieved so far. In addition to “what” and “why” students should address how they are going to go about writing their thesis. In addition to defining the scope of their research, students might bracket a specific area for closer discussion and analysis. Students should also present a working outline and bibliography.

3. Term
Start by reading your thesis statement that includes information about the scope and outline of the thesis. Zoom into presenting the core chapter.

4. Term
Present the overall scope of the thesis. Highlight structure and key issues. Certain level of self-reflectivity might be useful at this point: where did I start, where did I end, what did I learn.

All semesters
Prepare power point presentations. Students are invited to put their presentations in the class folder on the architecture school server prior to the event from where they can be retrieved. Avoid using own laptops in order to save time and technical complications.

2.5 Thesis Deadline

The deadline for submission of the final draft of the thesis is the second Monday in April of the fourth semester. At this time, a copy of the thesis should be given to each member of a student’s three-member Thesis Committee. A defense should be scheduled with the Thesis Committee between the third and week of April, prior to which the committee members will read and review the thesis.

The thesis defense will take the form of a ninety-minute dialogue between the student and the members of the Thesis Committee. It will begin with a verbal description by the student of the goals of the thesis and the approach taken, followed by a discussion. Thesis Committee members should offer suggestions for improvement, which the student should take into account while revising the thesis for final submittal.
A summary presentation of the thesis will occur at the end of the semester. At this time, the student will present a brief overview of the core arguments of the thesis and receive feedback from the entire MED Program Committee and from visiting critics.

The final submittal of the thesis is due to the MED program chairperson by noon on May 2. Following material must be included:

- 2 unbound paper copies of the final revised thesis
- 2 CD’s with the thesis in digital format’s
- 3 copies of the signed title page
- $70 check for binding

Thesis format instructions are listed below.

2.6. MED Thesis Format

One copy of the final thesis signed by the members of the student’s Thesis Committee must be submitted to the program chair prior to graduation. For archival purposes, the copy should be printed on 8.5” x 11” alkaline-buffered bond paper of 20-pound weight. Body text should be double-spaced, in twelve-point font. The left-hand margin throughout should be 1 1/2 inches to permit possible future binding; all other margins should be 1 inch. Illustrations should be high-resolution scanned images.

The following information should appear on the title page:

1. Title.
2. Author.
3. Statement to read: "A Thesis submitted to the faculty of the School of Architecture in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of: Master of Environmental Design”
4. Date.
5. Name and signature of principal advisor.
6. Name and signature of reader.
7. Name and signature of chair.

An abstract of a maximum of 300 words is required. It should be a concise description of the thesis topic, its goals, and its unique aspects. This abstract may be published in Retrospecta or on the School of Architecture website or appear in the Year-End exhibition in the gallery of the School.

Tables and illustrations should be placed at the end of the text in the order in which they are referenced.

References should be listed completely and accurately, conforming to the requirements listed in the most current edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.

Refer to guide books (e.g. Chicago Manual of Style) for writing style and standards, including punctuation, style and convention for referencing sources.
The organization of the thesis is as follows:
1. Title Page.
2. Abstract.
3. Table of Contents.
4. List of Figures.
5. Main Body of Text.
6. Figures.

3. Suggestions for Thesis Writers

The following suggestions are intended to be informal, to avoid restrictions upon how a thesis for the MED degree “must” be written. Every thesis products is different, as are the topics, the research methods and the writers. A thesis should evolve from the work that each student has developed under the guidance of faculty advisors. Advisors will have their own suggestions and requirements for the standard of scholarship and writing that is most appropriate to the thesis topic. Copies of students’ theses from previous years are available for consultation in the office of the MED program chairperson.

3.1. what is a thesis?

A thesis is, literally, a position taken, explained and substantiated. In scientific research, a thesis is a hypothesis that can be proven true or false, following methods that are explicit and replicable by others. In humanities based scholarship, a thesis is a hypothesis about concepts, which may be concrete or theoretical, about which agreement is achieved by argument and the evidence of scholarship. An MED thesis usually falls within or across these three areas (described in the Bulletin of the School): History, Theory, and Criticism of Architecture and Urbanism, Ecologies and Economies of the Built Environment, and Multimedia Research.

An MED thesis may also be explained through the use of diagrammatic materials, such as graphs and maps. The analysis of visual materials usually plays a large role in the development of the thesis and in the final thesis product. The method of study has to be defined by each student and the faculty advisor, to meet the standards of research/scholarship appropriate to the best work in the topic area.

3.2. What should a M.E.D. thesis accomplish?

A thesis in a Master’s program is primarily a summary of work by the student, focused upon a specific topic. In the MED program, the focus is an area of specialization related to the study of architecture and the built environment. A Master’s thesis is not expected to contribute original work to the topic (this being the requirement of a Ph.D. thesis).
expected to document a high level of competence in the topic area and to identify pertinent issues. A MED thesis is more speculative in nature than a dissertation, including more room for academic risk and personal narrative. The following three “rules of thumb” are intended to suggest possible ways to undertake the task of thesis definition and execution.

1. “Who writes and to whom” A thesis writer should acknowledge authorship (e.g. “Why am I interested in this topic? What are my vested interests in it?) as well as identify an audience.

2. Be contemporary. An author should also acknowledge that he/she writers in a particular historical moment in time. Even historical research can and should be approach this way: we rewrite history from a certain vantage point, with certain interest. Every historian as Giedion put is a “contemporary historian.”

3. Participate in contemporary architectural and wider intellectual discourse. Nobody talks by himself or herself. An important part of thesis writing is to situate your work in a wider intellectual milieu.

3.3. General advice:

- *Proceed by discreet, modest steps:* At the beginning of one’s two-year curriculum, the deadline of thesis writing may appear to be far-off. In reality, it comes all too soon. A study plan that accomplishes thesis writing in small steps, possibly writing relatively complete sections each term, is favorable. As a minimum in each term, a written paper should be prepared and submitted prior to the end-of-the-semester review as a record of work. This paper may or may not be incorporated into the final thesis.

- *Focus upon the “core” of the research:* While some writers work from general to specific topics, it is recommended that MED students focus upon the specific “core” of the topic of study. In book writing, a publisher wants to see the “core chapter” before committing to the book. In research, one wants to get directly to the unique aspect of the study. MED thesis efforts in the past have suffered because the work undertaken is too ambitious and as a result unique aspects are not adequately pursued, or because of a lack of primary research to support theoretical claims.

- *Rehearse a thesis outline:* Same material can be organized and structures in myriad ways and your argument is based on the way you structure it. The structure of your thesis might evolve during the research and writing period. Therefore rather than settling for a rigid structure, students are encouraged to rehearse alternative structure and outlines for their thesis.
• *Writing an introduction.* Same holds true to the introduction. It is hard to write an introduction before you have written the thesis. Yet, you might want to rehearse the way you introduce your thesis throughout your writing period in order to help you define the scope, key issues and structure of your thesis.

• *Writing an abstract:* An abstract summarizes a report and is usually limited to max. 300 words or less. Because an abstract may be published in a listing of thesis abstracts, it is often all that a reader is able to review. The abstract must be concise, eliminating general and obvious statements. It should be written with the assumption that the reader is already informed about the general topic. An abstract should contain the following information. An abstract, or opening statement of any report, is the author’s one best chance to capture the interest of the reader. Writing clearly helps to convince the reader that the entire thesis is worth reading.

• *Style of Writing.* The MED program allows students to rehearse various ways of writing about architecture. Yet certain general rules exist: avoid jargon and use easily understood terms; avoid terms and concepts that are too broad and that can be understood in many ways. If you do use them, make sure that your reader understands your reading of the term. This pertains particularly to terms like modernism, modernity, post-modernity. All good writers have a voice; the MED thesis is a unique opportunity to gain and refine your voice. The bottom line of every piece of writing is to tell a good story that other people might want to share with you. There are numerous guidebooks on how to prepare a thesis, including standards for punctuation, format and references.

• Learn by doing. A Master’s thesis is best seen as a documentation of learning. To the extent possible, a student learns “by doing”, the most difficult task of any study endeavor: to review the current scholarship on a topic and to draw from it one aspect for investigation. Thesis efforts, which aim at book publication, while admirable, are likely to be too long, if not too ambitious (nonetheless, several MED theses have been published as books). An effort that might be published as a journal article or a conference paper is preferable. For most thesis writers, it can become the culminating experience in one’s formal education, in achieving competence in undertaking independent research and scholarship.

• **SUGGESTED REFERENCES FOR STUDY AIDS**

  *Chicago Manual of Style*
  William Strunk, Jr. & E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*
  William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*
Appendix I: Thesis Catalog

Listed on the following pages are the Theses completed in the MED Program at the Yale School of Architecture, which are on file at the School, or in the University Library. An author list and a general topic listing precede a complete chronological list of author, title and advisor. The Program requirement to complete a written Thesis was initiated in 1971, so that the lists begin with the Class of 1973, with a few earlier exceptions.

The Thesis that are currently boxed in Sterling Library Manuscript collection are designated by “SML-MSS”. Those marked * indicate that the Thesis is not yet filed in the SML collection, but are on file in the MED Chairman’s office. ** Indicate that a digital file of the thesis is available.