

MIT Department of Architecture
Thesis Review Schedule: Fall 2021

Week 1 (On or before, September 17)

DESIGN REVIEW 2.: RESEARCH, SITE, PROGRAM, and PROPOSITIONS (with advisor virtually)

This review concludes the work done over the summer, on the basis of the proposed plan laid out at the end of the thesis prep semester in the thesis proposal and consultation with the thesis advisor.

The review is to ensure each student is in a position to proceed with design studies and that all supporting research and information gathering is complete. It is also expected that each student has a clear understanding of how to proceed to the next stage of the thesis (and design review 2)

The following components are required to be presented in the form of a clear presentation (drawing boards -and PowerPoint if required).

1. A completed review of the research analysis required for the thesis design investigation, including work completed over the summer.
2. A completed analysis and documentation of the site and its surroundings. This is not a generic mapping operation, but a comprehensive analysis of the site from the viewpoint of the hypothesis that had been formulated by the end of thesis preparation.
3. A completed program brief. The functions and processes that the design will accommodate are to be precisely formulated by this stage. For instance, in case of a building, landscape or urbanism project, the program brief including the square footage for each of the elements is to be included. If thesis involves a critical element that asks for a different thesis outcome than a building, then the presentation should clearly outline the desired “product” of the thesis process: e.g. film, the technique for a typological examination, and so on. The program needs to be analyzed critically, comparing it to other precedents, to market forces, or to strategic alliances for which they may be no precedence. In either scenario, program should be viewed as speculative parameter, and not a mere given.
4. A clear outline of preliminary design concepts, ideas and propositions – two or three alternatives if appropriate– that can be used to address the thesis problem and become illustrative of the design methodology of the thesis. These should be regarded as your ‘first thoughts’ and be a point of departure for discussion with your advisor and readers for the work to follow in the next month. Sketch 3D-model studies, conceptual drawings, as well as the diagrams and ideograms illustrating the ideas and hypotheses underlying the project are appropriate and need to be present. Most importantly, these strategies must be visually represented, and not just listed out as potential narrative threads through which the thesis will be undertaken.
5. Finally, the student should argue for one of the propositions as more effective than other ones at elaborating the hypothesis developed during thesis preparation. The student and committee can debate which option or direction is to be further pursued – and agree a plan of work for the weeks ahead.

It should be clear from the above that the summer break is a period for intense exploration and study; missing this step will result in problematic delays of the thesis as a whole. This first design review is a crucial launch point to develop the thesis. Lack of progress will result in a REPEAT of the 1st design review, before February 26. If at repeated 1st design review, still no progress is apparent, the thesis student should extend his/her track and shall not present in final public review.

Week 5: (on or before Friday, October 8)

DESIGN REVIEW 2: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT (Virtual Internal review with committee, i.e. advisor and readers).

At this stage, the student has substantially developed the methodology (process), major concepts and ideas of the thesis - and can present substantive development of design project beyond the first diagrams and formations. The overall precision of the project begins to take shape in its direction is clear. At this stage, the overall scheme should be at a 'Competition Entry-level' stage thereby requiring the project to be legible and understandable as a whole based on the drawings presented:

1. Final formalization of thesis question, and clarification of architectural strategy as a critical and deliverable response to the thesis question
2. A narrative structure, and crucial drawings to back up each step of the narrative
3. An explanation of the project, using whatever means required, that succeed in answering basic question required to understand the overall project: sections, plan, views, models...
4. Plan for further development, including writing plan
5. The project should show the potential to "zoom-in" into detail examinations in the next stage.

Furthermore, at this stage, the committee shall discuss and may propose for the student to focus /elaborate on a particular component, aspect or element of the project in greater detail, solving all the final conceptual, organizational and technological or socio-political problems within the focus on the component.

The presentation material should be a combination and summation of the major design studies /investigations completed since the last review together with new drawings that communicate the overall intent of the design project as a response to the thesis topic.

Should the results of the second design review be inconclusive or progress inadequate, the committee will recommend which segments of the project to that need to be revisited or further developed.

Week 8: (October 28 + 29, 9 am to 12:40 pm, 7-421 and adjacent pin-up space)

DESIGN REVIEW 3: PUBLIC MID REVIEW (with entire thesis committee: advisor and readers, scheduled by M.Arch Administrator)

With 8 weeks gone and about 6 remaining, the thesis should be at a stage of substantial completion and development, and the focus should be upon refinement and identifying the areas of the design that need to be focused upon the time remaining, as well as the means of presenting the work for the penultimate review. The following should be presented:

1. The architectural content of the project and the means by which it addresses the thesis with a clear understanding of the issues and the means to bring it to a final project:
Here, fundamental changes to the project as brought up after the 1st and 2nd design review need to have been addressed and resolved. It should include (at a minimum) a comprehensive set of scaled drawings, models and visualizations that clearly communicate the process, content and component parts of the design. The thesis questions should also be articulated using a written narrative and diagrams that link the thesis topic to the architecture of the design project as presented.
2. Presentation of a 'zoom-in' part of the work in the form of a more detailed study, design development of a critical system or a supporting piece of design research.

Week 9: (to be scheduled the week of November 1)

PRESENTATIONS: M.ARCH THESIS-IN-PROGRESS PRESENTATIONS (school-wide audience)

Based on previous week's design development reviews, advisors nominate and suggest to their thesis advisees to participate in this Pecha Kucha-like event. Thesis director will approve the group based on project documentation and development up to this point.

Week 11: (November 18 + 19, 9 am to 12:40 pm, 7-421 and adjacent pin-up space)

DESIGN REVIEW 5: PENULTIMATE REVIEW (with all thesis committee: advisor and readers, scheduled by student)

With 3+ weeks remaining, this 45-minute review is a mock-up of the final review, including the complete setup of boards, panels and models envisaged by the student as being necessary in order to transform the hypothesis into a thesis. Of course, some panels will contain placeholders, and incomplete sequences, but these will have to be delineated *as such*.

The penultimate review is where student will lay out progress so far, point out what is missing and which areas need work in terms of remaining semester time, in addition to scheme of presentation, drawings, narration, audio-visuals, envisaged for the final review. This is to be scheduled by the MArch administrator and MArch faculty coordinator as a public review.

NOTE: THIS IS A PENULTIMATE REVIEW: Presenting at the final review is to be seen as a privilege, not a right. If student's progress is found wanting, s/he will not be allowed to present at the public final review, but be advised to take the winter/summer break to work on the thesis, finishing up just before the beginning of the next semester. The student will be expected to register for the following term and submit the approved, signed archival-ready thesis by the end of the first week of the new semester. Tuition will be prorated to one week.

Week 15: (Friday, December 17 in the afternoon, and Saturday, December 18, In the morning, E14-6th floor)

DESIGN REVIEW 5: FINAL REVIEW. For those students who were approved to proceed at the Week 11 review. (It is expected that ALL students will make a public presentation of their work, unless has been agreed otherwise by the advisor and MArch faculty coordinator, as in the note above)

Week 8: (Thursday, January 13, by 5 pm)

FINAL THESIS DOCUMENT. The thesis will be one approved, PDF archival-ready thesis document uploaded to STOA thesis submission portal, or two copies of the approved, signed, archival-ready thesis documents due to MArch administrator. Thesis document format to be announced by MIT Archives.