ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Texas Tech University

College of Architecture

Ph.D. program in Land Use Planning, Management and Design (Ph.D. in LPMD)

External Reviewer : Dr. Filiz Ozel, Professor of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
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Texas Tech University, Ph.D. program in Land Use Planning, Management and Design (PhD in LPMD)

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Academic Program Review Executive Summary

The review of the graduate programs in the College of Architecture at Texas Tech University covers the Master of Architecture, the Master of Science in Architecture as well as the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Land Use Planning, Management and Design programs. Per Texas Tech Un., Graduate School program review guidelines provided by the Graduate School Associate Dean Clifford Fedler, the charge given to Dr. Filiz Ozel is to review the PhD in LPMD program only. Because the PhD program is currently under the College of Architecture, this review is conducted and the report written from that perspective.

During the site visit, the review committee that is comprised of committee chair Prof. Todd Devriese, Director of School of Art at Texas Tech, Doug Smith, Professor of Civil Engineering, Gary Harris, Professor of Mathematics and Dr. Filiz Ozel met with the Dean of Architecture Andrew Vernooy and Associate Dean Michael Peters on Feb 23rd, 2009. In this meeting, the committee had the chance to ask questions regarding the PhD program as well as the other graduate programs. The committee also met with the College of Architecture faculty and students separately in two meetings. Unfortunately, there were no PhD students available in the student meeting. In the faculty meeting, Dr. Saif Haq was available for questions. In addition, Dr. Ozel and Prof. Devriese met with Dr. Haq on Feb 24th 2009, to specifically ask questions about the PhD program. The review team had the chance to tour the facilities on Feb 23rd and visit the architecture library on Feb 24th to review the collections guided by the head of the Architecture Library.

The material provided for review by the Graduate School was a binder prepared by the College of Architecture that included data regarding the programs reviewed, summary of the College’s graduate program offerings, as well as faculty cv’s. Results of faculty and student surveys administered by the university were also provided. Unfortunately, the binder included little information regarding the PhD program as well as the other graduate programs offered by the College. Texas Tech University, College of Architecture website was referenced in the binder as main source of information. For the PhD program review, Dr. Ozel primarily used that website to understand the nature of the program before coming to Lubbock for the site visit. It is not clear how much guidance was provided to the College in the preparation of the document. The link included in the self study for the strategic plan of the College of Architecture primarily covered the accreditation aspects of the Master of Architecture program and thus was found not to apply to the PhD program.

Program Overview and Vision
Rating: Very Good

The Ph.D. program in Land Use Planning, Management and Design is an interdisciplinary program that is housed in the College of Architecture, but administered by a program
committee comprised of faculty from architecture, business, economy and geography, law, landscape architecture, and civil engineering. The deans of the College of Architecture and the Graduate School are also members of this committee. The program is designed to focus on multiple aspects of land use, with special emphasis on non-urban lands and especially those that relate to arid and semi-arid climates.

The Canadian Institute of Planners offers a definition: “[Land use] planning means the scientific, aesthetic, and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic and social efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_use_planning, 2009). Typically the following areas of focus are included in land use planning (ibid):

- Architecture
- Environmental planning
- Landscape architecture
- Regional Planning
- Spatial planning
- Sustainable Development
- Transportation Planning
- Urban design
- Urban planning
- Urban Renaissance
- Urban renewal

Therefore, the concept of land use planning is a rather broad vision that requires further articulation. In the United States and Canada, the terms urban planning and regional planning are more commonly used in lieu of land use planning (ibid). Considering the geographical location of the PhD in LPMD program as well as the climate in the area, program’s self identified non-urban focus as applicable to arid and semi-arid climates seems to be appropriate, and is more inline with the regional planning aspects of land use planning. Typically the nomenclature for PhD programs in the U.S. reflect the regional planning and/or the urban planning aspects of land use planning (such as the PhD in Regional Planning at University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign; the PhD in City and Regional Planning at UC-Berkeley; and the PhD in Community and Regional Planning at UT-Austin). In this sense the PhD in LPMD nomenclature is very unique. This can both be an advantage and a disadvantage for the program. With stronger articulation of the program’s areas of focus, I believe that it can be an asset, but this will require increased recruitment efforts as well as increased efforts to promote it as a program with a unique vision.

There are currently four tracks in the program:

- Environmental/natural resource management and planning
- Community planning and design
- Public policy administration,
- Historic preservation

These areas seem to be appropriate considering the disciplines involved in offering the program. Two of these tracks directly coincide with the areas of expertise and research interest of the architecture faculty, namely “community planning and design” as well as “historic preservation”. Program focus and suggestions regarding further articulation and
integration of the areas of interest are discussed below under the Curriculum and Programs of Study section of this report.

Faculty Productivity
Rating: Excellent

In assessing the productivity of the faculty, I must state that only the cv’s of the Architecture faculty were available for review although this is an interdisciplinary program. Architecture faculty and PhD director Dr. Saif Haq have very impressive formations, and are very productive in research, scholarly and creative work. I can only infer that faculty from other units involved in the PhD program are equally productive. Dr. Haq is providing great leadership to the program as its director.

Looking at the involvement of some of the Architecture faculty in funded research as well as in the research oriented MS in Architecture program, there seems to be great interest in research in the traditional sense of the word as well as in creative work. Both community design faculty and the historic preservation faculty should be encouraged to be involved to a much greater extent in the PhD program. The visualization focus of many other architecture faculty members can play a unique role in bringing further strength to both the community design and historic preservation areas of focus of the PhD program.

At some institutions there is strong differentiation between design studio faculty and non-studio faculty which can at times make it difficult to involve the studio faculty in PhD programs. Whereas at Texas Tech, College of Architecture, there seems to be a teaching model where all faculty are involved in architectural design studio teaching. This is certainly an advantage for the PhD program since a studio based inquiry culture can be brought into the program more easily.

Some faculty members’ reluctance in getting involved in the PhD program can be attributed to two factors. First one has to do with the relatively high teaching loads of the architecture faculty which can be a factor in the faculty’s inability to take on additional teaching loads in the PhD program. This point certainly needs attention. Secondly, the ambiguity regarding the ownership of the PhD program can be another reason for the reluctance of the faculty. Due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the PhD in LPMD program, architecture faculty may not be quite clear regarding their role in the program. The cv’s of 21 architecture faculty members who are approved by the Graduate School to serve as graduate faculty were included in the self study report. Most of these faculty members have terminal degrees in architecture; many others have either a second post-professional master’s degree or a PhD degree. Therefore, the credentials of the architecture graduate faculty are very strong for their involvement in the PhD program.

Quantity and quality of Graduate Students and Graduates
Rating: Satisfactory

The number of students in the PhD program seems to hover around 8 to 10 students total, with an average of one to two new admits every year as well as an average of one to two degrees awarded each year (3 graduated in 2006). Considering the interdisciplinary nature of the
program and the variety of disciplines involved, such a class size is rather small. The applicant pool each year also seems to be small. According to the information received from Dr. Saif Haq, roughly half of the students in the program are either working with the architecture faculty or have architecture background, thus plan on working with architecture faculty. The make up of the students seems to be heavily international students with a few domestic students. Although this is typical in many doctoral programs across the country, the very small nature of the student numbers makes it even more difficult to bring student diversity to the program.

According to the PhD program website, nine degrees were awarded since 2003. I have had the chance to review the titles of their dissertations. They seem to be evenly split between environmental resources and built environment topics, with four dissertations more closely related to architecture and built environment issues. Looking at the research and scholarly work of architecture faculty and given the opportunity, I believe the number of students who do research related to the built environment can be increased considerably. The backgrounds of the current students point to this direction as well, i.e. there seems to be a greater interest among potential applicants with design or architecture background to apply to the program. Being the only design related PhD program in West Texas, I think it is important for the program to maintain and strengthen its existing focus on design and architecture. In any case, the diverse disciplinary backgrounds of the students that come to the program must be further discussed and a more systematic recruitment plan be developed. This also relates to the next section where I discuss possible ways of sharpening the focus of the program.

In addition, studio participation of PhD students can help punctuate the design focus of the program better while also giving students valuable opportunity and experience in studio teaching. The program is doing this already to a certain degree through the required community design studio for PhD students, but it is our understanding that this does not always involve teaching assistantships. Studio participation can be a pull in bringing a larger pool of applicants (especially domestic students, possibly underrepresented students in the discipline) to the program while also providing the College and the University a pool of trained professionals who can teach in the professional program (please see Facilities and Resources section below regarding using this for recruitment of mid-career professionals as students to the PhD program.) It can also give to the architecture faculty increased opportunity to be more involved in the doctoral program, by possibly reducing their teaching load and by allowing them to see the overlap with their studio teaching.

**Curriculum and Programs of Study**

**Rating : Good**

The very broad and diverse nature of the areas focus of the program is both an asset and a challenge for the program. The focus of the program seems to shift based on the nature of the applicant pool as well as the interest areas of the faculty. It is not always obvious how the tripartite nature of the degree title, i.e. planning, management and design, applies to any one particular student’s dissertation work. There are six core courses listed plus a research methods course and an alternate core course. These core courses seem to relate to the disciplines represented on the steering committee of the program, covering a broad range of topics from nature and ecology in arid and semi-arid lands to the built environment and
community design. Relating the courses to more tightly defined areas of focus can benefit the program greatly. One possible way to do this would be to identify “the built environment and land use planning in arid and semi-arid climates” as one area of focus while identifying “resource management, policy and land use planning in arid and semi-arid climates” as another area of focus. With this, it can be possible to recruit students and Texas Tech faculty more tightly into these areas as well as guide the students better in their coursework and dissertation research. For example:

1. Students in “the built environment and land use planning in arid and semi-arid climates” track can take ARCH 5605: Community Design Studio, HMG 5323: Principles of Heritage Management, ARCH 5324 History and Theory of Historic Preservation as well as a course on Design of Buildings in arid and semi-arid climates as required core courses. A research methods course appropriate for the track as well as the LAW 6025 Land-use planning course can also be required for this track.

2. Students in “the resource management, policy and land use planning in arid and semi-arid climates” track can take LARC 5302 Advanced Environmental Planning, PAUD 5333 Environmental Policy and Administration, GEOG 5306 Seminar in Geography in Arid Lands as required core courses. A research methods course appropriate for the track as well as LAW 6025 Land-use planning can also be required for this track.

Furthermore, identifying these two broad areas can also help solve the ongoing discussion regarding the administration of the program. Architecture faculty as well as the faculty in the Landscape Architecture program who are in another college at Texas Tech can contribute greatly to the “built environment” focus of the program. Therefore, the administration of that track (recruitment of students, admissions, advisement, and student support) can be completely undertaken by the College of Architecture. Dean Vernooy has very eloquently articulated the vision for the Master of Architecture program that was recently implemented at Texas Tech where architectural professionals are strongly involved in M.Arch. students’ education. Currently much research is undertaken by architecture and design firms as the design problems they face are ever more complex and larger in scale. A PhD level research addressing real world problems can align well with the current direction identified by the College of Architecture faculty at Texas Tech. This can also include a doctoral research internship in the industry as an elective. Such a PhD program track can be a natural extension of what is already happening in the industry and the profession in terms of their research enterprise.

On the other hand, the administration of the “resource management, policy and land use planning” track can be undertaken by another entity in the University such as the Graduate School (due to the more interdisciplinary nature of this track). Currently, the program requires students to identify primary and secondary areas of interest. This can still be done, where “the built environment” track students can take electives from the “resource management” track, and vice versa as needed. But the final dissertation topic must clearly relate to the focus of the student’s track. This can help bring a stronger identity to the program and a broader national recognition it already deserves. It can also increase the sense of community and ownership for each track in the respective colleges. I know that administratively, degree programs must usually be housed under a single organizational entity, but with a little coordination it is possible to manage the program in these two areas.
through two different colleges while housing the degree on paper under a single college. I know of many models of such collaborative administration of degrees elsewhere. There might already be such models at Texas Tech.

Facilities and Resources
Rating: Very Good

Texas Tech University, as a comprehensive university, provides many resources and opportunities for its students and obviously also for those in this PhD program. The review team had the chance to tour the facilities guided by a very knowledgeable faculty member who manages the shops and other facilities as well as to tour the architecture library guided by a very knowledgeable architectural librarian. Student work spaces dedicated to the research focused students (MS in Arch. and PhD in LPMD students) are well designed and can help build a sense of community among these students. The architecture library and subscriptions to on-line databases and journals are great resources for PhD students. Greater involvement of the very knowledgeable architectural librarian herself in the first year PhD courses, especially in the research methods course, can be an important boost to the student’s research skills.

Financial opportunities exclusively for the PhD in LPMD students exist through an Urbanovsky fellowship. This is a very important opportunity for the students coming to the program as this is a multi-year support for three years. I am assuming that the Ph.D. program regularly assesses student’s progress in the program as a condition for the continuance of the multi-year award. Two additional Urbanovsky assistantships that were provided by the Graduate School last year is a very important source of support for the program as well. How to use these funds to bring the best and the brightest to the PhD program must be discussed further. A careful balance between multi-year fellowship awards and one-year recruitment awards must be carefully weighed. Many times, in a large university like Texas Tech, students find other assistantship opportunities once they come to the university. Therefore, one of the two additional assistantships can be dedicated every year to the support of an incoming student for one year. This will help greatly with recruitment.

One other method used primarily in the European universities is to offer teaching fellowships to incoming PhD students. Since the intention of the founder of the PhD program, Prof. Urbanovski was to bring mid-career professionals to the university for their PhD work, bringing experienced mid-career architects as PhD students who can also teach lower division studios can be one way of linking the PhD program to architectural design. This can not only help them gain teaching experience but also provide support to the teaching mission of the College. The backgrounds of these students in the profession can be very valuable for the dissertation research they undertake in the PhD program. On the other hand, the “resource management, policy and land use planning in arid and semi-arid climates” track can bring more traditional doctoral students from diverse backgrounds to the program. In addition to the existing fellowship and scholarships, funded faculty research can support both tracks.
Summary

As a summary, by reconceptualizing its areas of focus in a more integrated manner, the Ph.D. program can not only sharpen its intended focus on these topics, but also better relate faculty expertise to the program’s areas. It can also help clarify the administrative structure of the program and help with systematic recruitment of students to the program. Furthermore, the Built Environment track of the PhD program can be a model for similar programs elsewhere in architecture and design disciplines as most programs struggle with the question of how to inform doctoral level research by issues related to architectural design and the profession.

Under the strong leadership of Dean Vernooy, the capable guidance of Dr. Haq and with the critical involvement of Architecture faculty, the program will undoubtedly make big strides if such a track were to be established. Unfortunately I have not had the chance to meet with the other members of the steering committee during my visit, but their input will also be critical to the future direction of the PhD program.

Regarding any concerns, rather heavy teaching load of the architecture faculty can be cited as an issue in the greater involvement of architecture faculty in the PhD program. Besides reducing teaching loads where possible, clarity regarding the administration of the program and a focus that is better integrated with architectural design and built environment issues should help in this regard.

The relatively small size of the applicant pool to the PhD program is another concern that needs attention. Some of my suggestions above for recruitment of more diverse and more professionally experienced cohorts are intended to address this issue. Pairing incoming students with individual faculty members as their primary dissertation advisor during admissions rather than a year or so after they come to the program can also help with recruitment efforts as well as with time to degree in the program.

In closing, I would like to thank the Graduate School at Texas Tech University for giving me the opportunity to participate in this review. It was certainly a pleasure to work with the review team, to meet with the Architecture dean, associate dean, PhD program director, architecture faculty and students as well as with the Graduate School associate dean. I have found the PhD program to be a strong and vibrant program. I have provided some suggestions here which I think can bring further recognition to the program by clarifying its framework for both internal constituents at Texas Tech as well as for those in the outside world including the academia, the professions related to the represented disciplines and potential students.

Sincerely,

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