



Sustainability Thesis Prework Form (ENVR 496)

After completing at least eight courses - one of which must be ENVR 495 Experimental Design and Research Methods - degree candidates in the 12 course thesis track are eligible to register for ENVR 496 Crafting the Thesis Proposal in Sustainability.

Sustainability degree candidates in the 10 course thesis track are eligible to register for ENVR 496 Crafting the Thesis Proposal in sustainability after completing at least six courses. ENVR 495 Experimental Design and Research Methods is recommended, but not required.

The major objective of ENVR 496 Crafting the Thesis Proposal in sustainability is to produce a thesis proposal which 1) defines the research scope, 1-2 main research questions, and 1-2 hypothesis to be tested, 2) organizes and critically evaluates the background literature that leads to the formulation of original research questions and hypotheses, and 3) states the research methods.

In some cases, research may focus on comprehensive analysis of a policy or practice, or involve modeling such as life cycle or cost-benefit analysis. Even in these cases, hypotheses should be formulated that delineate major predictions of the analysis. However, in all cases a research-based thesis must contain original work carefully done and well presented to be worthy of an advanced degree for Harvard.

Prior to enrolling in ENVR 496 you are required to have your topic approved by your designated Research Advisor, Dr. Mark Leighton or Dr. Rick Wetzler. It is important to plan this process accordingly, and have your thesis preapproved well in advance of registration for ENVR 496. Multiple discussions and revisions are needed and approval is not guaranteed for all projects. We recommend that you begin this process the semester before your ENVR 496 registration and not to make travel arrangements until the topic is approved.

The final write-up for this course is a complete or nearly complete thesis proposal

1. What is the working title of your thesis research (be as specific as possible)?
2. What is the significance of your proposed research, and what are a few broad objectives or goals it addresses?
3. What is the main research hypothesis and specific research questions you expect to examine?
4. Provide a background section for your research topic that summarizes the current status of knowledge about your subject in the form of a literature review. You should include the rationale for your proposed research. List at least 5-10 references at the end.
5. Outline a research methodology you expect to employ, including the sources of data and methods of analysis.
6. Describe how your courses (including ones you might take in the future) prepared you for this research topic and methods.

Please note: Once your prework is approved by your research advisor, permission to register for ENV 496 will be sent via email from the ALM advising office. If you are enrolled in any prerequisite coursework in the prior term, registration in ENVR 496 will be approved after your prior term grades are made available.