Cal Poly
City & Regional Planning Department

SENIOR PROJECT GUIDELINES (CRP 4461)
(Draft Revised October 29, 2026)

Every BSCRP student must complete a senior project to graduate from the program. These courses are taken in the spring semester of the final year of the program. The department offers two different options, described below.

Type	Description	Courses to Take
CRP 4461 Senior Project	The Senior Project is an applied research effort that incorporates practice-based methods to address a contemporary planning issue of concern to typical planning clients. The student must diagnose a problem situation, select appropriate analytic methods, evaluate alternative approaches, and recommend an approach or solution.	Fall: CRP 4400, 1 unit (OPTIONAL– consult with your advisor) Spring: CRP 4461, 2 units (It may be possible to take the course earlier–consult with your advisor)
CRP 4463 Senior Project – Studio	The Senior Project–Studio is an opportunity to develop a project that emerges from the Urban Planning Studio course (CRP 4410).	Spring: CRP 4463: 2 units

Important notes:

- No option is inherently better than the other. Choose the senior project that suits your interests.
- If you do not have a strong idea for a senior project in mind, take the studio version (CRP 4463).

Course Description CRP 4461: Research and problem analysis in planning. Selection and completion of a project under faculty supervision. Projects typical of problems addressed in planning practice. Project results presented in a variety of formats. Prerequisite: Senior standing and CRP 4410.

I. Scope: What is a Senior Project?

The Senior Project is a capstone experience required for all Cal Poly students receiving a baccalaureate degree. It is designed to give the student an opportunity to synthesize the material learned from required courses, support courses and electives, and to apply this knowledge to a specific problem.

The Senior Project subject matter may be any planning topic that the student, in consultation with their advisor, can demonstrate is pertinent to city and regional planning. For example, it may resemble a staff report or other professional work product but shall include some discussion of the context of the study, the method used to conduct it, and the rationale for any conclusions or recommendations. It also might resemble a research project that includes a literature search, data collection, analysis, and reporting on the findings. Reading examples of prior senior projects posted in the Digital Commons is a useful place to see what other students have done, and how they have done it.

II. CRP 4461: Individual or Group Effort

Students may work independently or in groups with prior consent of a faculty advisor. Students may undertake projects with students of other majors or use faculty from other majors as co-advisors or resource people. When working with others, students shall coordinate their work through their faculty advisor from their own major. Project scope should be sufficiently focused so that the entire project can be completed within 90-100 hours or one semester.

III. CRP 4461: Format

The Senior Project will usually consist of a written report with appropriate graphic supporting material or may assume a variety of different forms -- video, model, set of maps, website, or plans. The format shall be agreed upon with the student's faculty advisor as part of the senior project agreement. Any non-written form shall be approved in advance by the department head and in consultation with the library to determine how a record of it will be maintained. Any project in a non-written form shall be supplemented by a detailed written report that explains and documents the project.

IV. The Project Topic, the Advisor Selection and the Agreement

Before starting CRP 4461, the student shall explore possible senior project topics to identify a suitable project and a faculty advisor. It is recommended that the student enroll on one unit of CRP 4400 Special Problems for Advanced Undergraduates with the potential advisor prior to taking CRP 4461 for the purpose of exploring the senior project topic in more depth. The student must submit a draft senior project agreement (see Attachment A) to the potential faculty advisor(s) by the last day of regular classes in the semester prior to enrollment in

CRP 4461.

The basis of faculty selection shall be the type of project and the willingness of the faculty member to serve as an advisor for the CRP 4461 course. CRP faculty must agree to serve as advisor, therefore students may want to submit draft senior project agreements to more than one faculty member. More than one faculty member may participate in a project, but **only one shall assume the duties and responsibilities of advisor with the others serving as consultants.** The number of CRP faculty members available to serve as advisors is limited, so students are urged to make their arrangements as early as possible.

The final senior project agreement is to be completed and signed before students receive a permission code to enroll in CRP 4461.

CRP 4461 is normally taken in the student's final semester (most commonly, the Spring). Students who wish to take CRP 4461 prior to their final semester must submit a graduation plan with their senior project showing remaining courses to be taken and proposed graduation date.

~~After obtaining approval of a faculty member to act as advisor, students shall directly work with their advisor to prepare an agreement that outlines the scope of the particular project and the responsibilities and duties of all the parties involved. The agreement shall follow the form generally in use for the rendering of professional services (Attachment A), considering the department as the client and the student as the provider of the professional services. Please note that the content, scope, and method of the Senior Project are the responsibility of the student in consultation with their advisor. A written agreement shall be completed before the students receive permission code to enroll. Both the student and the faculty member shall keep a copy of the agreement for reference.~~

V. Duties of Faculty Advisor

The faculty advisor will be fully responsible for determining the adequacy of student performance. This includes guidance in writing the scope of work, review of drafts, timely response to student questions, a schedule of consistent review dates, guidance on production of the final product, the minimum expected outcomes, and giving the grade. However, the execution of the project is solely the responsibility of the student.

VI. What does Project Progress Mean?

All details regarding progress on the project shall be mutually agreed upon by the student(s) and their advisor and are to be outlined in the senior project agreement. It is general practice for students to submit a written progress report or meet in person with their advisors every other week. In addition, it is recommended that students schedule a mid-semester presentation aimed at receiving feedback on their work.

Students shall upload a complete draft copy of the project to the Digital Commons for advisor review at least 10 days prior to the final deadline, so there is time to respond to comments and make corrections prior to a final grade being submitted**. Students should not assume that the project is accepted until they have received the advisor approved email from Digital Commons and a grade for CRP 4461.**

VII. Final Report

The results of the Senior Project shall be presented in a final report submitted in the form indicated below:

A. The report shall follow the Format guidance in section III, including a Title Page, as shown in Attachment B; a Table of Contents, ~~as shown in Attachment C~~; proper footnotes and bibliography. Students shall use the APA style for manuscript preparation, editing and citation. The APA style is documented in: American Psychological Association (2020), Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.), Washington, DC. The project should follow the basic format guidelines provided on the Cal Poly Library Senior Project webpage, including the "title page template."
B. All text material in the report shall be typed.
C. The student shall provide their faculty advisor a printed copy of the report (if requested). Check with the faculty advisor on any printing specifications.

VIII. University Facilities

The University will provide for the normal use of the Library and the experimental, demonstration and production facilities of the University, but will not provide for the purchase of any materials or equipment unless direct benefit to the University can be demonstrated. All printing, copying, and report distribution is the student's responsibility.

IX. Grading

Upon submittal of the Senior Project by the student to the Digital Commons, the advisor will receive an email letting them know it was uploaded and it is ready for them to review and add comments (if needed), suggest edits before final submission, and/or approve the project as is. They will check for the correct format and accessory items in accordance with these guidelines, then electronically sign and date the Student Senior Project Contributor Agreement.

The basis for grading shall be established by the advisor at the first meeting of CRP 4461 and shall include the student's independence and timeliness in executing the project chosen, as well as the quality of the work produced. Here quality refers both to the substance (research, discussion, analysis, design, solutions proposed, and recommendations) and the format (style, editing, completeness, and polish).

X. CRP 463 (Senior Project Studio Option)

Course Description CRP 4463: Culminating studio course for undergraduates. Practical applications of urban planning theory and practice solving problems related to the built environment. Course may be offered in classroom-based, online, or hybrid format. 2 laboratories. Prerequisite: Senior standing; and CRP 410 or CRP 4410. Formerly CRP 463.

CRP 4463 is typically offered in the Spring and is recommended for students who prefer a structured classroom setting as they complete their Senior Project. It is particularly well suited for students who value regular instructor guidance, peer support, a clear schedule, and defined project milestones. It may also be a strong option for students who are still refining their project interests or who prefer to complete their work within a studio environment. Unlike CRP 4461, students who meet the course prerequisites can generally enroll directly in CRP 4463 without first securing an individual faculty advisor.
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Attachment A: Senior Project Agreement (for CRP 4461 only)

SAMPLE SENIOR PROJECT AGREEMENT

1. Identification of parties:
   I.M. Good, (name of) BSCRP student
   U. R. Wright, (name of) CRP faculty advisor
   City and Regional Planning Department,
   California Polytechnic State University-SLO

2. Identification of project (topic or subject & tentative title):
   Mountain biking in city open space areas from access to trailheads, to trail maintenance, to impacts on local open spaces (habitat and biota), and rider responsibilities for safety of all trail users.

"*Bicycle Planning for Open Space Areas of San Luis Obispo"*

3. Agreement summary:
   I.M Good agrees to prepare an alternative bicycle plan for San Luis Obispo according to the method and outline established below. Good will register for CRP 4461 (2 units) and accomplish the work specified during [fall or spring] semester, 20XX, following the attached schedule. Upon satisfactory completion, Professor U. R. Wright will submit appropriate grades for this work and the department will consider the senior project requirement fulfilled.

4. Project proposal (elements to include):

   (1). Project purpose, objectives, relevance to planning:
   Write a description of the project, elaborating on the topic identified above, including the purpose of the project objectives and why it is relevant to the field of city and regional planning (2-4 paragraphs). Include a description of the final deliverable (plan, report, research paper, etc.).
   (2). Approach or method, including information sources:
   Discuss, in some detail, the approach you intend to take (e.g., is this a case study, survey, site design, etc.?) and how (where) you will obtain the information needed (e.g., field work, interviews, census reports).
   (3). Major headings, tentative chapter outline:
   This is a crucial step, indicating the sub-sections or aspects of the topic and the order in which you will cover them.
   (4). Annotated bibliography:
   At least five key references (academic articles, reports, or example plans) with annotations on which the senior project draws and builds on. These can be the starting point for literature review or best practice. Annotations are descriptions of the main arguments, topics, and scope of the reference; they should also include a statement explaining how the source is relevant and useful for the senior project.
   (5). Timeline:
   Proposed timeline for completing major milestones for the senior project. This could include literature review, data collection and analysis, field work, completion of drafts and the final project, etc.

5. Signature of parties:

   a. Student(s) date
   b. Advisor date

Attachment B: Title Page

Enter Senior Project Title

(capitalize the first letter of everyword in the title except for coordinating conjunctions ((and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet)), prepositions, and articles.)

A Senior Project

presented to

the Faculty of the City & Regional Planning Department

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Enter Your Degree Name; e.g. Bachelor of Science

by

Enter Name of Author(s)

Month, Year

(month and year your final project was provided to your advisor)

© Year Name of Author(s)
(**example**: © 2009 Jane Smith)

Attachment C: Sample Table of Contents

Table of Contents Page #

- Acknowledgements
- Introduction
- Statement of Objectives
- Review of Existing Data/ Models/ Practice/ Literature
- Acquisition of New Data/ Methodology/ Organizing Concepts
- Analysis/ Design Options
- Summary/ Conclusion/ Recommendations
- References
- Appendices
- List of Tables/Maps/Figures (Title and Page number for each one)