



# Sustainability Thesis

## Crafting the Thesis Proposal (CTP) Application Form (ENVR 496)

After completing at least eight courses - one of which must be a research methods course - degree candidates are eligible to register for ENVR 496 Crafting the Thesis Proposal in Sustainability.

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 hypotheses 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 from Harvard.

Prior to enrolling in ENVR 496 you are required to have your topic approved by your designated Research Advisor, Dr. Mark Leighton. 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.

**The CTP application outlining your proposed topic must address the following questions in a 3-5 page Word document (excluding references):**

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 in 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.

## CTP Application Submission and CTP Registration Approval

The CTP application must be emailed to your research advisor's attention at [CTP\\_application@extension.harvard.edu](mailto:CTP_application@extension.harvard.edu).

The CTP application must be submitted by:

- February 1, for permission to enroll in the three-week on campus summer semester\*
- September 1, for permission to enroll in the three-week on campus January semester

**\* International sustainability students who need a student visa to attend Harvard Summer School must be officially admitted to the degree program before February 1, must submit the CTP application on February 1, and must register for the CTP course on March 1 in order to submit timely I-20 paperwork. See the international student guidelines for more information:**

<https://summer.harvard.edu/adult-college-students/course-registration/international-student-registration/>

**Please note:** Once your application 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. If you have any questions regarding your academic plan or CTP registration status, please contact the ALM Academic Advising Office at [academic\\_advising@extension.harvard.edu](mailto:academic_advising@extension.harvard.edu).