

Newcastle University Programme Specification

1	Awarding Institution	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
2	Teaching Institution	As above
3	Final Award	MA
4	Programme Title	Planning and Environment Research
5	Programme Accredited	Not appropriate
6	UCAS	Not appropriate
7	QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s)	Not appropriate
8	Date of production/revision	November 2004
9. Programme Aims <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) to meet the aims of the ESRC's postgraduate training guidelines by providing high quality research training at Master's level in Planning and Environment Research(ii) to provide learning opportunities to enable graduates to acquire the knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes necessary to undertake advanced research in the social sciences in general and in planning, environment and housing in particular(iii) to contribute to the University's objectives by providing high quality research training to an increasing number of postgraduates (Institutional Plan, 6.7 (ii) and (iii)) and enhancing their key skills and employability (5.7(iv))(iv) to produce graduates who can proceed to careers in research in Universities, the public sector, the private sector, or the non-profit sector(v) to provide a qualification which fully meets the learning outcomes at Level 4 in the national qualifications framework.		

10. Intended learning outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for the students to develop and demonstrate:

A General research skills

A1 Bibliographic and Computing Skills

- (i) the skills to identify and retrieve relevant materials relating to research, including annals, books, journals, theses, conference proceedings and resources available electronically and on the www
- (ii) the skills to maintain a personal research bibliography and use EndNote
- (iii) IT skills, including word processing and other basic computing skills, including spreadsheets and database management, SPSS and Nudist

A2 Ethical Issues

- (i) a knowledge and understanding of matters relating to privacy and confidentiality in research
- (ii) an awareness of the political context of research
- (iii) an awareness of professional codes of practice
- (iv) a knowledge and understanding of the power relations inherent in research field work
- (v) an awareness of the ethical responsibilities that a researcher has towards the researched

Teaching strategy

Bibliographic and computer skills are taught through workshops and practical classes. Ethical issues are taught by lectures and workshops.

Learning strategy

Students learn bibliographical skills (A1 (i - ii)) by developing an initial bibliography for their dissertation. Students acquire knowledge of ethical issues through team work, presentations, case studies and independent reading.

Assessment strategy

General research skills will be assessed by means coursework employing a range of approaches in order to accurately assess student abilities. The assessment for the information skills module will be constructing a bibliography, incorporating bibliographic search strategies and professional design and layout. IT skills will be assessed by the bibliographic exercise and data practical assessment. Ethical issues will be assessed by a combination of team work assessment and 3,000 word written reports.

B Training in Research Methods

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

B1 Principles

- (i) to be able to define and formulate research problems and questions and hypotheses
- (ii) will understand the rationale for research methods, evaluate and select them
- (iii) will understand sampling, sampling error, and biases in results
- (iv) will understand and be able to apply concepts of generalisability, validity, reliability and replicability

B2 Data collection and analysis

- (i) a knowledge and understanding of the application of selected methods of data collection
- (ii) an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of different types of data and the development of a critical use of sources
- (iii) an understanding of the use of methods and tools to analyse data
- (iv) proficiency in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis

Teaching strategy

B1 (i) and (ii) will be delivered through the modules “Thinking About Research” and “Dissertation Preparation”. B1 (iii) and (iv) will be delivered through the “Quantitative Research Methods” and “Qualitative Research Methods” modules.

The teaching strategy for B1 (i) and (ii) is a combination of lectures, workshops and both discipline-specific and multi-disciplinary teamwork. Students learn through preparation of a dissertation and team-based problem solving exercises. Teaching for B1 (iii) and (iv) will be through lectures and group discussions. Teaching for B2 (i - iv) will be delivered through the “Quantitative Research Methods” and “Qualitative Research Methods” modules. The teaching strategy for B2 (i - iv) is a combination of lectures, workshops and data analysis practicals.

Learning strategy

For B1 (i - iv) students will learn through completing assignments and practical exercises. For B2 (i - iv) students will learn by completing assignments, practical exercises and in the writing of their dissertations.

Assessment strategy

For B1 (i - iv) will be teamwork assessment, practical assessments and a 3,000 word written report. Assessment strategy for B2 (i - iv) will be a combination of data analysis practicals and 3,000 word reports and evaluation of the dissertation.

C Subject-related outcomes

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

- (i) An understanding of the various traditions in social science research and their applicability to planning, environment and housing research
- (ii) An understanding of current theoretical perspectives to planning, housing and environment research and their relationships to research and policy analysis
- (iii) An understanding of the ethical issues surrounding planning, housing and environment research and policy making
- (iv) An ability to develop research strategies to address policy and research issues in both core and specialised areas of planning, environment and housing research

Teaching strategy

C(i - iii) will be delivered through the module “Thinking About Research”. C(iv) will be delivered through the subject-specific optional modules and through the modules “Thinking About Research”., “Dissertation Preparation”, Introduction to “Quantitative Research Methods” and “Introduction to Qualitative Methods”.

The teaching strategy for C(i), and C(iv) is a combination of lectures, workshops and both discipline-specific and multi-disciplinary teamwork. Students learn through preparation of a dissertation and team-based problem solving exercises. Teaching for C1 (ii) and (iii) will be through lectures and group discussions.

Learning strategy

For C (i) and C(iv) students will learn through completing assignments, practical exercises, and the completion of their dissertations. For C2 (ii and iii) students will learn by completing assignments, practical exercises, and written examinations.

Assessment strategy

For C (i) and (ii) will be by practical assessments. Assessment strategy for C (ii and iii) will be a combination of essay-based assignments and written examinations.

D Key skills

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

- D1 the skills to communicate and present research findings effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- D2 the skills of effective written communication and presentation
- D3 the skills to manage research, including writing proposals, planning the research project, and implementation on time
- D4 the skills to work effectively as a member of teams both subject specific and multi-disciplinary

Teaching strategy

D1, D3 and D4 are taught through teamwork and individual presentations which provide opportunities to cooperate, develop ideas, improve problem-solving capacity and work to deadlines. D2 is taught through a range of iterative written assessments.

Learning strategy

Students acquire the key skills through active participation in large and small multidisciplinary and discipline-specific groups. The dissertation project provides specific opportunities of skill development through the construction of a research plan, through synthesizing knowledge and by participating in dissertation workshops and individual meetings with supervisors.

Assessment strategy

Key skills are not independently assessed. However, D1 - 4 are indirectly assessed through coursework, team presentations, data practicals, research papers and the dissertation.

11 Programme features**12**

This programme has been designed to meet the new ESRC 1+3 training guidelines. These guidelines emphasize the need for students to acquire key generic and subject-specific research skills in the Masters year prior to embarking on a doctoral programme. The programme will also cater for non ESRC-sponsored students, who could progress on to a doctoral programme or pursue a career in academic or non-academic research..

This is a one year full time or two year part time programme. It consists of three parts: training in research methods and skill development; modules in the discipline of planning; and a dissertation project. 70 credits are taught at Faculty level and 50 credits within the School.

The 70 credits taught at faculty level focus on generic research skills and competencies across the social sciences. They are:

LES801 Thinking About Research

LES802 Introduction to Information Skills

LES803 Dissertation Preparation

LES804 Qualitative Methodology in the Social Sciences

LES805 Quantitative Methodology in the Social Sciences

The 50 credits taught within the School are discipline-specific. These engage with a full spectrum of state-of-the-art planning, environment, housing and design research issues. To reflect the wide variety of disciplinary and research

interests amongst MAPER students, all modules selected here are options. Students are able to customise their portfolio of courses to fit with the particular orientation of their own research interests. Such choices will be made under the individual guidance of the Degree Programme Director. This approach is designed to maximise the degree to which the customised MAPER options programme provides a foundation for later Ph.D study.

Four groups of modules are available. First, theoretical and epistemological modules available address the nature of planning theory (TCP 810), the ethical considerations surrounding the reflective practitioner (TCP 902), and the equal opportunity dimensions of planning practice (TCP 708). Second, technical skill based options include, for example, Geographical Information Systems (TCP 711) and Land Economics (TCP 723). Third, a wide range of substantive modules, addressing current arenas of planning, housing and environmental research, are available, from, for example, Cities and New Technologies (TCP 719), and Rural Planning (TCP 702) to Regenerating Places (TCP 917). Finally, research-based modules, which involve individual and team-based research and specialised research training, include Linked Research (TCP 825), which offers a choice of themes each year.

Students will complete a dissertation project (60 credits) which will enhance and demonstrate their research skills and training in planning and environmental research. There are no formal restrictions on the type of project that can be chosen although projects are likely to employ some empirical research.

12 Criteria for Admission

First degree: Normally a good first degree (First or 2:1 Honours) or equivalent in architecture, planning, landscape or a related and relevant subject

Alternative entry qualifications : Other qualifications and related experience may be considered.

Admissions policy and additional requirements : In addition to the First degree, the main criteria for the selection of a postgraduate research student are: Supportive reference letter(s) and, TOEFL for those who have not studied their first degree in English, a good knowledge of the English language (with a score of 6.5 IELTS or 575)

The process of selection within the School can take only a few days, if all the relevant documents are supplied by the candidate. If any of these documents are missing, the applicant is contacted directly. If the applicants are in the UK, they may

be invited for an interview. The interviewers complete the Form A2 and make a recommendation. If more than one supervisor is needed for the research project, the Director of Postgraduate Research facilitates the process of identification of, and communication between, supervisors.

The School and Faculty committed to equality of opportunity and treats all applicants as equals, disregarding their gender, nationality, religion, ethnicity, age, and any disability as can be seen in the current mix of our research students from around the world.

13. Support for students and their learning

Coherence and coordination will be assured at the faculty level by the Director of the faculty postgraduate training programme.

Induction

There will be an induction meeting at faculty level for the students from all the MA/MSc programmes where the Postgraduate Dean, Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme and all the module leaders of the generic modules to be delivered at faculty level would be present. This would complement School induction procedures, and serve to introduce the students to the faculty part of their programmes and also to each other and to the idea of a multi-disciplinary learning environment.

Study skills support

Both general and discipline specific study skill support is provided as an intrinsic element of “Thinking About Research”

Academic support

The Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme will have overall responsibility for ensuring coherence and continuity in the faculty delivered modules and also for their administration and management. All students will have access to the Director and all the module leaders for advice and discussion of academic issues arising.

Pastoral support

The Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme and the module leaders will be available to discuss pastoral issues arising from the faculty delivered modules. The overall responsibility for pastoral issues, however, will lie within the School.

The Postgraduate Dean and Faculty Postgraduate tutors will also be available for consultation on pastoral issues

The HASS Postgraduate Training Room provides an ideal environment for the teaching of the faculty delivered modules. The room has comfortable chairs

and kitchen facilities for refreshments and can be used by the students for social, as well as self-organised academic, events.

Support for special needs

The HASS Postgraduate Training Room is accessible for wheel-chair bound students.

Learning resources

The HASS Postgraduate Training Room has space for up to seventy students to engage in group discussion and teamwork exercises. There are also overhead and Powerpoint facilities available.

13. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning:

Mechanisms for review and evaluation of teaching, learning, assessment, the curriculum and output standards

- Student opinion is gathered by means of student questionnaires which are issued on completion of the programme .
- Module questionnaires will be issued to all students on completion of each module. Summaries of the module and programme questionnaires will be considered at both the School Board of Studies and the Faculty Board of Studies, although the later will be particularly concerned with evaluations arising from the generic component of the linked Masters programmes.
- Feedback from past graduates
- External examiner reports (A report following consideration of the comments external examiner appointed to oversee the faculty generic modules will be forwarded annually to each School Board of Studies)
- Taught Programme Review
- Internal Subject Review
- Periodic feedback from ESRC monitoring visits
- Consideration of annual programme monitoring statistics
-

Mechanisms for gaining student feedback on the quality of teaching and their learning experience

- Staff Student Committee
- Student representation on Boards of Studies
- Student evaluation questionnaires

Committees Responsible for Monitoring and Evaluating Quality and Standards

There will be separate but linked forums at faculty and School level for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning.

Faculty Level

- A separate Board of Studies will monitor and evaluate quality and standards of the generic modules on the MA programme which are delivered in common across the faculty. This Board will be chaired by the Postgraduate Dean, and its members will include the Director of the Postgraduate Training Programme, DPD's of all the linked Masters programmes, module leaders of the five generic modules, and all teachers on these modules delivered at faculty level. The Board will also include appropriate student representation.
Overall responsibility for assuring quality and standards of the MA programme will lie with the School Board of Studies.
- A Board of Examiners will also exist to consider issues related to examinations and marks for the five modules delivered at faculty level to all linked Masters programmes. An external examiner will also be appointed for the 5 modules delivered at faculty level, who will also report on the standard of, and coherence between, the generically- taught modules.
- This Board of Examiners will met before the meetings of the School Board of Examiners who will consider the marks from the faculty Board alongside the marks from the subject- specific modules. Overall responsibility for the award of the degree will lie with each School Board of Examiners.

School Committees.

- An MA Board of Studies including representative(s) from the Faculty Board of Studies. Membership will consist of the main course teachers and a student member nominated by the student body.
- Examination Board which will include one representative from the generic Board of examiners.
- Staff Student Committee for Architecture, Planning and Landscape which draws membership (from Degree Programme Directors and student representatives
- School Teaching and Learning Committee
- School representation on Faculty Postgraduate Committee

13. Regulation of Assessment Assessment rules and degree classification are set out in the degree regulations attached .

14. Role of the external examiners

An external examiner is being appointed to oversee the generic modules that are being delivered to all of the linked Masters programmes. The role of this

external examiner is to moderate these modules. He/she will attend the June Board of Examiners and will be concerned with maintenance and comparability of standards of this aspect of the MA programme.

15. Board of Examiners

- A Faculty Board will be held in June. It will be chaired by the Postgraduate Dean, and its members will include the Director of the Postgraduate Training Programme, the module leaders of the 5 generic modules, and the DPD's of all the linked Master's programmes. This board will report back to the subject-specific Board of Examiners.