

## PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION



1	<b>Awarding Institution</b>	Newcastle University
2	<b>Teaching Institution</b>	Newcastle University
3	<b>Final Award</b>	MA
4	<b>Programme Title</b>	Planning and Environmental Research
5	<b>UCAS/Programme Code</b>	4006
6	<b>Programme Accreditation</b>	N/A
7	<b>QAA Subject Benchmark(s)</b>	N/A
8	<b>FHEQ Level</b>	7
9	<b>Date written/revised</b>	July 2007

### 10 Programme Aims

1. 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
2. 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
3. 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))
4. to produce graduates who can proceed to careers in research in Universities, the public sector, the private sector, or the non-profit sector
5. to provide a qualification which fully meets the learning outcomes at Level 4 in the national qualifications framework.

### 11 Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas.

#### Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should have:

#### Ethical Issues

- A1 a knowledge and understanding of matters relating to privacy and confidentiality in research
- A2 an awareness of the political context of research
- A3 an awareness of professional codes of practice
- A4 a knowledge and understanding of the power relations inherent in research field work
- A5 an awareness of the ethical responsibilities that a researcher has towards the researched

#### Data collection and analysis

- A6 a knowledge and understanding of the application of selected methods of data collection
- A7 an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of different types of data and the development of a critical use of sources
- A8 an understanding of the use of methods and tools to analyse data
- A9 proficiency in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis

#### Teaching and Learning Methods

Ethical issues are taught by lectures and workshops. Students acquire knowledge of ethical issues through team work, presentations, case studies and independent reading. Teaching for A6-A9 will be delivered through the HSS 8005 Introduction to Quantitative

Research Methods and HSS 8004 Qualitative Research Methods modules. The teaching strategy for A6-A9 is a combination of lectures, workshops and data analysis practicals. Students will learn by completing assignments, practical exercises and in the writing of their dissertations.
<b>Assessment Strategy</b>
<p>Ethical issues will be assessed by a combination of team work assessment and 3,000 word written reports.</p> <p>Assessment strategy for A6-A9 will be a combination of data analysis practicals and 3,000 word reports and evaluation of the dissertation.</p>
<b>Intellectual Skills</b>
<p>On completing the programme students should be able to:</p> <p><b>Principles of Research</b></p> <p>B1 define and formulate research problems and questions and hypotheses</p> <p>B2 understand the rationale for research methods, evaluate and select them</p> <p>B3 understand sampling, sampling error, and biases in results</p> <p>B4 understand and be able to apply concepts of generalisability, validity, reliability and replicability.</p> <p><b>Subject-related outcomes</b></p> <p>B5 develop and demonstrate an understanding of the various traditions in social science research and their applicability to planning, environment and housing research</p> <p>B6 develop and demonstrate an understanding of current theoretical perspectives to planning, housing and environment research and their relationships to research and policy analysis</p> <p>B7 develop and demonstrate an understanding of the ethical issues surrounding planning, housing and environment research and policy making</p> <p>B8 develop and demonstrate an ability to develop research strategies to address policy and research issues in both core and specialised areas of planning, environment and housing research.</p>
<b>Teaching and Learning Methods</b>
<p>B1 and B2 will be delivered through the modules HSS 8001 Thinking About Research and HSS 8003 Dissertation Preparation. B3 and B4 will be delivered through the HSS 8005 Quantitative Research Methods and HSS 8004 Qualitative Research Methods modules.</p> <p>The teaching strategy for B1 and B2 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 B3 and B4 will be through lectures and group discussions.</p> <p>B5-8 will be delivered through the module HSS 8001 Thinking About Research. B8 will be delivered through the subject-specific optional modules and through the modules HSS 8001 Thinking About Research, HSS 8003 Dissertation Preparation, HSS 8005 Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods and HSS 8004 Qualitative Research Methods.</p> <p>The teaching strategy for B5 and B8 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 B6 and B7 will be through lectures and group discussions.</p> <p>For B1-B4 students will learn through completing assignments and practical exercises. For B5 and B8 students will learn through completing assignments, practical exercises, and the completion of their dissertations. For B6 and B7 students will learn by completing assignments, practical exercises, and written examinations.</p>
<b>Assessment Strategy</b>
For B1-B4 will be teamwork assessment, practical assessments and a 3,000 word written

report. For B5 and B6 will be by practical assessments. Assessment strategy for B7 and B8 will be a combination of essay-based assignments and written examinations.

#### **Practical Skills**

On completing the programme students should be able to:

##### **Bibliographic and Computing Skills**

- C1 demonstrate 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
- C2 demonstrate the skills to maintain a personal research bibliography and use EndNote
- C3 demonstrate IT skills, which may include word processing and other basic computing skills, including spreadsheets and database management and SPSS.

#### **Teaching and Learning Methods**

Bibliographic and computer skills are taught through workshops and practical classes (HSS 8002 Information Skills, HSS 8004 Qualitative Methods and HSS 8005 Introduction to Quantitative Methods). Students learn bibliographical skills (C1-C2) by developing an initial bibliography for their dissertation.

#### **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.

#### **Transferable/Key Skills**

On completing the programme students should be able 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 and Learning Methods**

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. 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.

## **12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features**

### **Basic structure of the programme**

This programme has been designed to meet the 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:

HSS 8001 Thinking About Research

HSS 8002 Introduction to Information Skills (Social Sciences)

HSS 8003 Dissertation Preparation

HSS 8004 Qualitative Methods for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

HSS 8005 Introduction to Quantitative Methods

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 8010), the ethical considerations surrounding the reflective practitioner (TCP 8902), and the equal opportunity dimensions of planning practice (TCP 7008). Second, technical skill based options include, for example Land Economics (TCP 7023). Third, a wide range of substantive modules, addressing current arenas of planning, housing and environmental research, are available, from, for example, Issues in Landscape Planning and Sustainability 1&2 (TCP8096, TCP8097), Rural Planning (TCP 7002) and Regenerating Places (TCP 8917). Finally, research-based modules, which involve individual and team-based research and specialised research training, include Linked Research (TCP 8025), which offers a choice of themes each year.

Students will complete a dissertation (60 credits) (TCP 8099) which will enhance and demonstrate their research skills and training in planning and environmental research. There are no formal restriction on the type of project that can be chosen although projects are likely to employ some empirical research.

#### **Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)**

The programme caters for the following students:

- UK students preparing for PhD study
- UK Students wishing to study on the 1+3 PhD route at Newcastle University
- International students
- Mid-career or professional students wishing to specialise

Key features of the programme are:

- Strong research training
- Flexible specialist module choice
- Preparation for PhD or professional research career
- Taught by research staff
- Close links with PhD programme
- ESRC recognised

This programme provides a strong research training for those who wish to specialise in environmental or landscape planning research. The programme provides a high quality, in-depth and comprehensive research training programme through modules provided by the Faculty Graduate School, while specialised subject modules are taken within the School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape with options to take modules in other departments in the University. This means that students can select modules that relate directly to their personal research interests while underpinning that specialism with a broad understanding of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The structure of the programme means that students are allied with PhD and MPhil students in the School and Faculty so that they can take part in the many benefits afforded to these students. MAPER students also join with the large body of taught postgraduate students in the School to take advantage of a variety of specialised modules in environmental and landscape planning.

**Programme regulations (link to on-line version)**

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/programme/2009-2010/documents/PlanningEnvironmentResearchMA.pdf>

**13 Criteria for admission**

First degree: Normally a good first degree (First or 2iHonours) 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 is 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.

**14 Support for Student Learning**

*Induction*

During the first week of the first semester students attend an induction programme. New students will be given a general introduction to University life and the University's principle support services and general information about the School and their programme, as described in the Degree Programme Handbook. New and continuing students will be given detailed programme information and the timetable of lectures/practicals/labs/ tutorials/etc. The International Office offers an additional induction programme for overseas students (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/arrival/jan/index.phtml>)

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 module leaders of the generic modules to be delivered at faculty level are present. This complements School induction procedures, and serves 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*

Students will learn a range of Personal Transferable Skills, including Study Skills, as outlined in the Programme Specification. Some of this material, e.g. time management is covered in the appropriate Induction Programme. Students are explicitly tutored on their approach to both group and individual projects. Both general and discipline specific study skill support is provided as an intrinsic element of "Thinking About Research

Numeracy support is available through Maths Aid. Further details are available at:

[http://www.ncl.ac.uk/library/news\\_details.php?news\\_id=159](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/library/news_details.php?news_id=159) Help with academic writing is available from the Writing Centre. Details can be obtained from [Alicia.Cresswell@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:Alicia.Cresswell@ncl.ac.uk)

### *Academic support*

The initial point of contact for a student is with a lecturer or module leader, or their tutor (see below) for more generic issues. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of School may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Staff-Student Committee, and/or at the Board of Studies. 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*

All students are assigned a personal tutor whose responsibility is to monitor the academic performance and overall well-being of their tutees. Details of the personal tutor system can be found at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/support/tutor.phtml>

In addition the University offers a range of support services, including the Student Advice Centre, the Counselling and Wellbeing team, the Mature Student Support Officer, and a Childcare Support Officer, see

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/support/welfare/index.phtml>

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 students with disabilities*

The University's Disability Support Service provides help and advice for disabled students at the University - and those thinking of coming to Newcastle. It provides individuals with: advice about the University's facilities, services and the accessibility of campus; details about the technical support available; guidance in study skills and advice on financial support arrangements; a resources room with equipment and software to assist students in their studies. For further details see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/disability-support/> The HASS Postgraduate Training Room is accessible for wheel-chair bound students.

### *Learning resources*

The University's main learning resources are provided by the Robinson and Walton Libraries (for books, journals, online resources), and Information Systems and Services, which supports campus-wide computing facilities, see

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/facilities/index.phtml>

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

All new students whose first language is not English are required to take an English Language Proficiency Test. This is administered by INTO Newcastle University Centre on behalf of Newcastle University. Where appropriate, in-session language training can be provided. The INTO Newcastle University Centre houses a range of resources which may be particularly appropriate for those interested in an Erasmus exchange. See <http://ncl.ac.uk/langcen/index.htm>

## **15 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning**

### *Module reviews*

All modules are subject to review by questionnaires which are considered by the Board of Studies. Changes to, or the introduction of new, modules are considered at the School Teaching and Learning Committee and at the Board of Studies. Student opinion is sought at the Staff-Student Committee and/or the Board of Studies. New modules and major changes to existing modules are subject to approval by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

### *Programme reviews*

The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

### *External Examiner reports*

External Examiner reports are considered by the Board of Studies. The Board responds to these reports through Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. External Examiner reports are shared with institutional student representatives, through the Staff-Student Committee.

### *Student evaluations*

All modules, and the degree programme, are subject to review by student questionnaires. Informal student evaluation is also obtained at the Staff-Student Committee, and the Board of Studies. The National Student Survey is sent out every year to final-year undergraduate students, and consists of a set of questions seeking the students' views on the quality of the learning and teaching in their HEIs. Further information is at [www.thestudentsurvey.com/](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/) With reference to the outcomes of the NSS and institutional student satisfaction surveys actions are taken at all appropriate levels by the institution.

### *Mechanisms for gaining student feedback*

Feedback is channelled via the Staff-Student Committee and the Board of Studies.

### *Faculty and University Review Mechanisms*

The programme is subject to the University's Internal Subject Review process, see [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/aqss/qsh/internal\\_subject\\_review/index.php](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/aqss/qsh/internal_subject_review/index.php)

### *Accreditation reports*

Internal Subject Review.

### *Additional mechanisms*

Periodic feedback from ESRC monitoring visits.

## **16 Regulation of assessment**

### *Pass mark*

The pass mark is 50 (Postgraduate programmes)

### *Course requirements*

Progression is subject to the University's Masters Degree Progress Regulations, Taught and Research (<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/university.regs/tpmdepr.pdf>) and Examination Conventions for Taught Masters Degrees (<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/university.regs/tpmdeprexamconv.pdf>). Limited compensation up to 40 credits of the taught element and down to a mark of 40 is possible and there are

reassessment opportunities, with certain restrictions.

#### *Common Marking Scheme*

The University employs a common marking scheme, which is specified in the Taught Postgraduate Examination Conventions, namely:

#### **Summary description applicable to postgraduate Masters programmes**

<50	Fail
50-59	Pass
60-69	Pass with Merit
70 or above	Pass with Distinction

#### **Summary description applicable to postgraduate Certificate and Diploma programmes**

<50	Fail
50 or above	Pass

#### *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 meet 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

#### *Role of the External Examiner*

An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the subject community, is appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. 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.

The External Examiner is expected to:

- See and approve examination papers
- Moderate examination and coursework marking



Attend the Board of Examiners  
Report to the University on the standards of the programme

A Faculty Board of Examiners 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.

In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/>)

The School Brochure (contact [enquiries@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ncl.ac.uk))

The University Regulations (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/university.regs/>)

The Degree Programme Handbook

Please note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

### Mapping of Intended Learning Outcomes onto Curriculum/Modules

Note: Most of the ILOs here are also covered in addition by optional modules.  
 Potential optional modules are not shown in relation to ILOs here except as examples.  
 Specific Module Outlines should be examined for further information.

Intended Learning Outcome	Module codes (Compulsory in Bold)
A1	<b>HSS 8004, HSS 8005</b>
A2	<b>HSS 8004, HSS 8005</b>
A3	<b>HSS 8004, HSS 8005</b>
A4	<b>HSS 8004, HSS 8005</b>
A5	<b>HSS 8004, HSS 8005</b>
A6	<b>HSS 8004, HSS 8005</b>
A7	<b>HSS 8004, HSS 8005</b>
A8	<b>HSS 8004, HSS 8005</b>
B1	<b>HSS 8001</b>
B2	<b>HSS 8001</b>
B3	<b>HSS 8004, HSS 8005</b>
B4	<b>HSS 8004, HSS 8005</b>
B5	<b>HSS 8001</b>
B6	<b>HSS 8001</b>
B7	<b>HSS 8001</b>
B8	<b>HSS 8001, HSS 8003, HSS 8004, HSS 8005 + Options</b>
C1	<b>HSS 8002</b>
C2	<b>HSS 8002</b>
C3	<b>HSS 8002, HSS 8005</b>
D1	<b>HSS 8001, HSS 8003, HSS 8002, HSS 8004, TCP 8099,</b>
D2	<b>HSS 8002, HSS 8003, HSS 8004, TCP 8099 + Options</b>
D3	<b>HSS 8002, TCP 8099</b>
D4	<b>HSS 8001, HSS 8003 + Optional modules e.g. TCP 8096</b>