

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MPlan
4	Programme Title	Master of Planning
5	Programme Code	K400
6	Programme Accreditation	RTPI
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Planning
8	FHEQ Level	7
9	Last updated	May 2012

10 Programme Aims

The aims of the programme are:

- To provide a broad applied and integrative social science training, underpinned by current and relevant research, that equips students with a coherent understanding of planning and an appreciation of the links between theory and practice and to develop both transferable and professional skills
- To meet the professional learning outcomes specified for spatial planning (stages 1-3; BA (Hons) Urban Planning) and specialist planning (stage 4) programmes by the Royal Town Planning Institute
- To develop an understanding of the values and ethics of working as a professional
- To meet the appropriate criteria as laid down in the QAA's National Qualifications concerning: causes and processes of change in the environment; the practice of planning, debates in planning.
- To employ Newcastle and the North East Region as a living example for planning students, building on the School's wider regional engagement.
- introduce students to professional practice and to obtain practice experience (in combination with CPP)
- To equip students who choose not to complete their professional accreditation with a range of transferrable skills appropriate to the graduate job market (the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility; decision making in complex and unpredictable contexts; and the learning ability needed to undertake further professional training).
- To ensure that the programme meets the requirements of a level 7 qualification as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

- To ensure that the programme conforms to University policies and the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A: Setting and Maintaining Threshold Academic Standards.

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. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements for Town and Country Planning

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should:

Causes and process of change in the environment

- A1. Demonstrate understanding and critical thinking of planning as a form of action concerned with managing and creating space and place
- A2. Demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of planning issues and problems and be able to integrate different areas of the curriculum
- A3. Demonstrate an understanding of planning as a social science discipline and as a discipline that integrates concern with design and place, economic issues relating to development, environmental challenges and legal and institutional frameworks

Practice of planning

- A4. Demonstrate an understanding of the political nature of decision-making in planning and the significance of diversity issues, stakeholder involvement and rights in the planning process
- A5. Demonstrate an understanding of theory and make appropriate connections between theory and practice.
- A6. Demonstrate depth of knowledge in selected specialist areas of planning, including its social, economic, environmental and political context and its contribution to managing and creating space and place

Debates in planning

- A7. Evaluate arguments for planning as a form of action within processes of change
- A8. Demonstrate a critical understanding of values, ethics and professionalism in planning
- A9. Engage in theoretical, practical and ethical debate at the forefront of the area of the specialism in the context of spatial planning

Teaching and Learning Methods

The primary means of conveying knowledge and understanding is through lectures (A1-9). The general use of 2 hour teaching blocks enable these lectures to be interactive and often in workshop or seminar mode. In addition A2, 6 & 7 are taught partly through project work with students working on specific planning problems. Throughout the programmes the students are expected to supplement their classroom work with independent reading. The programme is mostly supported with material on Blackboard. In attaining A2, 3, 6 & 7 students undertake independent research with appropriate supervision from staff.

Assessment Strategy
<p>Knowledge and understanding of subject are tested in a variety of ways. Generally A1–A9 are assessed through course work (stages 1-4) or written examination (stages 1-3). In most cases there is one major assessment (coursework or examination) per module, but some modules will have 2 pieces of course work or a mixture of coursework and a written exam. Course work tests the ability to research and reflect on material often gained largely in private study while examinations test ability to bring together material from the whole module in succinct arguments.</p>
Intellectual Skills
<p>On completing the programme students should be able to:</p> <p>B1 Define and analyse problems effectively and appropriately. B2 Develop research skills and experience in the context of the School's research interests. B3 Make effective use of evidence and information. B4 Articulate reasoned arguments.</p>
Teaching and Learning Methods
<p>Intellectual skills are developed through research projects (B1 and 2); supervisions (B1, 2 and 4); group project work (B3); teaching of statistical packages (B3) and study skills sessions. Students are expected to undertake independent research having framed their own research questions. The emphasis in cognitive skill development is to learn by doing.</p>
Assessment Strategy
<p>Intellectual skills B1-4 are largely assessed through course work including essays and reports (B1 and 3), the production of a research outline, dissertation (B2), project work based on field work (B2); group presentations (B3); seminar papers (B4). B4 is also tested in the junior years particularly by unseen written examination.</p>
Practical Skills
<p>On completing the programme students should be able to:</p> <p>C1 Formulate and propose cogent policies, strategies and courses of action as responses to planning problems, translating theory and knowledge into practice C2 Evaluate and effectively utilise a variety of plan and policy making methods and processes.</p>
Teaching and Learning Methods
<p>Subject specific skills are introduced and developed through project work where students work in teams to solve problems and present ideas for action (C1-2). Students are encouraged and expected to undertake field-work to develop their skills.</p>

Assessment Strategy
These skills are tested in project work presentations and reports.
Transferable/KeySkills
<p>On completing the programme students should be able to:</p> <p>D1. Effectively and fluently communicate information, ideas, principles, arguments and proposals through written, graphic, oral and electronic means; and demonstrate effective written, numeric, oral, IT and information literacy skills.</p> <p>D2. Work effectively both individually and in groups</p> <p>D3. Develop personal self-management skills such as setting priorities and time management</p> <p>D4. Develop critical self reflection and understand the need for lifelong learning</p>
Teaching and Learning Methods
<p>Transferable skills are well embedded in the programme and are taught and developed in seminars, workshops and project work (D1, 2 & 3). This development of transferable skills is encouraged through course work (D1, 2 & 3) and through group activities such as project work. D4 is a particular outcome of modules on professionalism (TCP2029 & TCP2027) and the preparatory work for undertaking the work placement year. It is built on through the Certificate in Planning Practice undertaken as an intercalating degree.</p>
Assessment Strategy
<p>D1&2 are primarily assessed through, essay writing, report writing, seminar papers, oral presentations, application of statistical tests to problems, and in some instances by examination. D2 is assessed through project work (including peer evaluation of group projects) and group presentations. D4 is assessed through mock interview and CV preparation in stage 2 and built on through assessments in the Certificate in Planning Practice undertaken as an intercalating degree.</p>

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features
Basic structure of the programme
<p>Stage 1 of the programme provides an introduction to the wide range of skills and knowledge that a professional town planner requires. These include: an introduction to the idea of a planning system and its legal framework; environmental issues and sustainability; applied interdisciplinary social science and its relation to planning practice; understanding the development of cities and neighbourhoods; and key skills in academic study, analysis and design. Stage 2 consolidates these skills and knowledge within compulsory modules dealing with analysing evidence bases for development and conceptual debates on environmental issues. Students begin to develop specialist interests within planning, taking options from a range of modules (currently including concerns with urban design, critical urban theory, urban poverty and housing). This stage also introduces students to the idea of professional practice, codes of conduct and the work of a town planner and the range of social science research skills necessary for conducting planning research, and preparing a dissertation proposal.</p>

Stage 3 is focussed on preparing for professional practice, with both theoretical / reflective components and practical skills-based components. The structure encourages reflection on the relationships between theory and practice. The spine of the year is an individual dissertation project on an applied planning topic. Academic planning theory and the politics and ethics of planning practice are introduced and debated, with students encouraged to consider these issues alongside their other work, which focuses on the two main aspects of planning practice: designing planning strategies and managing the development process.

Stage 4 follows a year in paid professional practice (the year out is accompanied by an intercalated qualification, the Certificate in Planning Practice) and provides a focussed examination of a particular specialist area of planning practice (either regeneration or environmental planning), either of which can include an ERASMUS exchange in the first semester. Students on either route can engage in both academic research relating to staff interests and professional planning consultancy projects. All students engage in structured reflection about the problems and ethics of professional planning practice (building on their year-out in practice).

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

This is a vocational programme designed to prepare students for a professional career as a Town Planner, including preparing them to apply for Chartered Town Planner Status. Stages 1-3 meet the RTPI's requirements for a spatial planning programme and Stage 4 meets the requirements for Specialist Planning Programmes (and so consists of several specialist option routes), giving the full programme Combined recognition status. The (currently) unique feature of the Newcastle programme is the embedding of a year in practice between stages 3 and 4 which counts for one of the two years in practice which graduates must acquire before applying for chartered town planner status.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/programme/>

13 Criteria for admission

Entry qualifications

GCSEs required - Candidates are expected to have GCSE Maths

A-Level Subjects and Grades – Candidates are expected to have achieved ABB-BBC from “A” level examinations.

Scottish Highers - Candidates with Scottish Highers should have achieved BBBB and combinations of Highers and Advanced Highers are accepted

Admissions policy/selection tools

All students who are offered a place will be invited to a University and School Open Day

Non-standard Entry Requirements

Where practicable, the student would be interviewed prior to being offered a place.

Additional Requirements

Level of English Language capability
IELTS 6.5 (or equivalent)

14 Support for Student Learning

The Student Services portal provides links to key services and other information and is available at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/>

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.

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.

Numeracy support is available through Maths Aid and help with academic writing is available from the Writing Development Centre (further information is available from the Robinson Library).

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.

Pastoral support

All students are assigned a personal tutor whose responsibility is to monitor the academic performance and overall well-being of their tutees. In addition the University offers a range of support services, including one-to-one counselling and guidance or group sessions / workshops on a range of topics, such as emotional issues e.g. Stress and anxiety, student finance and budgeting, disability matters etc. There is specialist support available for students with dyslexia and mental health issues. Furthermore, the Student Union operates a Student Advice Centre, which can provide advocacy and support to students on a range of topics including housing, debt, legal issues etc.

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.

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.

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.

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 Board of Studies and/or the School Teaching and Learning Committee. 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, Learning and Student Experience Committee.

Programme reviews

The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Committee. The FTLSEC takes an overview of all programmes within the Faculty and reports any Faculty or institutional issues to the University Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Committee.

External Examiner reports

External Examiner reports are considered by the Board of Studies. The Board responds to these reports through Faculty Teaching, Learning and Student Experience 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 results from student surveys are considered as part of the Annual Monitoring and Review of the programme and any arising actions are captured at programme and School / institutional level and reported to the appropriate body.

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. Every six years degree programmes in each subject area are subject to periodic review. This involves both the detailed consideration of a range of documentation, and a one-day review visit by a review team which includes an external subject specialist in addition to University and Faculty representatives. Following the review a report is produced, which forms the basis for a decision by University Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Committee on whether the programmes reviewed should be re-approved for a further six year period.

Accreditation reports

The degree is accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute and is evaluated annually within a two day 'Partnership' meeting.

Additional mechanisms

16 Regulation of assessment

Pass mark

The pass mark for Level 7 modules is 50, and for Level 4, 5 and 6 modules is 40.

Course requirements

Progression is subject to the University's Undergraduate Progress Regulations and Integrated Masters Examination Conventions. In order to progress a student must meet the internal progression thresholds at the end of Stages 1, 2 and 3, which are 40 at the end of Stage 1, 40 at the end of Stage 2, and 50 at the end of Stage 3. An exception to the Integrated Master's Examination Conventions has been granted to allow 40 to be the [progression threshold at the end of Stage 2, as opposed to 50 in the Conventions. Students not meeting the threshold at the end of Stage 3 will not be permitted to progress to stage 4 and will be considered for the appropriate Stage 3 exit award. Compensation rules do apply to this programme at Stages 1, 2 and 3 along with reassessment opportunities and these are fully outlined in the Examination Conventions.

Weighting of Stages

Marks from all modules studied at Stages 2, 3 and 4, may contribute to degree classification as specified in the relevant degree programme regulations.

Common Marking Scheme

The University employs a common marking scheme, which is specified in Integrated Masters Examination Conventions, namely:

Summary description applicable to Honours level Degree Classification Modules (levels 4-6)

<39	Fail
40-49	Third Class
50-59	Second Class, Second Division
60-69	Second Class, First Division
70 or above	First Class

Summary description applicable to level 7 Degree Classification Modules

<39	Fail
40-49	Fail
50-59	Second Class, Second Division
60-69	Second Class, First Division
70 or above	First Class

Role of the External Examiner

An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the subject community, is appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, following recommendation from the Board of Studies. The External Examiner is expected to:

- i. See and approve assessment papers
- ii. Moderate examination and coursework marking
- iii. Attend the Board of Examiners
- iv. Report to the University on the standards of the programme

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

The University Prospectus: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/>

The School Brochure <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/marketing/services/print/publications/ordering/>

Degree Programme and University Regulations: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/>

The Degree Programme Handbook – made available to all students once registered (electronically and in hard copy)

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

Stages 1-3 (and opt-out BA Urban Planning)

Module	Type	Intended Learning Outcomes			
		A	B	C	D
TCP1014	Compulsory	1,2,3,5,7	2,3,4	2	1
TCP1027	Compulsory	1,2,3,5,7	4	2	1,3
TCP1018	Compulsory	1,2,5,7	1,4	1	1
TCP1019	Compulsory	1,2,5	3,4		1
TCP1020	Compulsory	1,2	1,4		1
TCP1023	Compulsory	1,2	1,2,3,4	1,2	1
TCP1024	Compulsory	1,2,7	1,2,3,4	1,2	1,2
TCP1025	Compulsory	1,2,5,7	1,2,3,4	1,2	1,2
TCP1026	Compulsory	1,2,4,7,8	1,3,4	1	1,3
TCP2023	Compulsory	1,2,5,7,8	1,4		1
TCP2025	Compulsory	1,2,7	1,2,3,4	1,2	1
TCP2027	Compulsory	1,5,8	1,2,3,4		1
TCP2029	Compulsory	1,2,3,5,7,8	4	2	1,2,4
TCP2005	Optional	1,2,5,7	1,4		1
TCP2006	Optional	1,2,5,7	1,4	2	1,2
TCP2028	Optional	1,2,5	1,4		1
TCP2030	Optional	1,2,5	1,4		1
TCP3054	Compulsory	1,2,4,5,8	1,4		1
TCP3053	Compulsory	1,2,3,4,8	1,4	2	1
TCP3049	Compulsory	1,2,3,4,5,7,8	1,3,4	1,2	1,2
TCP3051	Compulsory	1,2,3,4,5,7,8	1,2,3,4	1,2	1,2,3
TCP3099	Compulsory	1,2,3,5,7,8	1,2,3,4	1,2	1,3

Stage 4

Module	Type	Intended Learning Outcomes			
		A	B	C	D
TCP7026	Comp (Erasmus)	3,4,5	1,3,4		1,2,3
TCP8025	Comp (Reg/env)	3,4,5,6,9	1,2,3,4	1,2	1,2,3
TCP8026	Comp (Reg/env)	1,4,6,7,8,9	1,3,4	1,2	1,2,3
TCP8901	Comp (all)	1,3,5,7, 8	2,3		1,2,3,4
TCP8902		1,3,5,7, 8	2,3,4		1,2,3,4
TCP8922	Comp (Reg)	1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9	1,3,4	1,2	1,2,3
TCP8923	Comp (Env)	1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9	1,3,4	1,2	1,2,3
LAW8147	Comp (Env)	2,3,4,5,7	3,4		1,2,3