

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION (Undergraduate)



1 Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2 Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3 Final Award	BA (Hons)
4 Programme Title	BA (Hons) Architecture and Urban Planning
5 UCAS/Programme Code	K190
6 Programme Accreditation	N/A
7 QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Town and Country Planning (2008) and Architecture (2010)
8 FHEQ Level	6
9 Last updated	July 2021

10 Programme Aims

- 1 To provide a grounding in the disciplines of architecture, planning and urban design with a focus on the interfaces between the three
- 2 To develop an understanding of urban development and the role of built environment professionals therein
- 3 To equip graduates with transferable skills in the built environment, which could lead to many varied career paths including, urban designers, community activists, environmental officers, project managers, film makers, journalists and other creative industry specialists
- 4 To extend what professionals can achieve in the built environment through alternative approaches to professional practice
- 5 To introduce collaborative and participatory practices in the built environment
- 6 To provide a programme which complies with University policies and meets the requirements of the FHEQ for a level 6 programme
- 7 To provide a programme which fully meets the requirements of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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:

- A1 Demonstrate understanding of the role of design in the built environment
- A2 Evaluate arguments for intervention in the built environment and an understanding of processes for change and the role of professionals in achieving it
- A3 Evaluate political, legal, institutional and administrative frameworks and procedures in relation to the built environment
- A4 Demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of issues and problems pertaining to the built environment, particularly in relation to alternative practice

A5	Demonstrate an understanding of theory and make appropriate connections between theory and practice
A6	Demonstrate a critical understanding of values and ethics in built environment intervention

Teaching and Learning Methods

The primary means of conveying knowledge and understanding in stages two and three is through lectures (A2-6). Stage One has a large orientation to design practice (A1). The large scale use of 2 hour teaching blocks enable lectures to be interactive and often part-delivered in workshop mode. In addition there is a strong emphasis on presentations through seminars either singly or in groups (A1, 3 and 6) and A4 taught partly through project work with students working on specific problems. Throughout the course the students are expected to supplement their classroom work with independent reading. In addition, the undergraduate programme is almost wholly supported with material on Blackboard. In attaining A3 and 4, students undertake independent research with regular supervisions from staff.

Assessment Strategy

Knowledge and understanding of the subject are tested in a variety of ways. Generally these are assessed through design work, course work or unseen written examination (A1-6) but not all three. Design work and course work tests the ability to research and reflect on material often gained largely in private study, while unseen examinations test the ability to bring together material from the whole module in succinct arguments.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

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

Teaching and Learning Methods

Intellectual skills are developed through research and design projects (B1 and 2); supervisions (B1, 2 and 4); group project work (B3); and study skills sessions. Students are expected to undertake independent research and design work having framed their own research questions. The emphasis in cognitive skill development is to learn by doing.

Assessment Strategy

Cognitive skills B1-4 are largely assessed through course work including design work, 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 by unseen written examination.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

C1	Formulate and propose cogent courses of action as responses to built environment problems through activism, policy design, strategy-making and spatial design
C2	Evaluate and effectively utilise a variety of methods and processes to achieve C1

Teaching and Learning Methods
Practical subject-specific skills are introduced and developed through project and design work where students work individually and in teams to propose, communicate and present ideas. Students are expected to undertake field-work to develop their skills.
Assessment Strategy
These skills are tested through design reviews and in project work presentations.
Transferable/Key Skills
On completing the programme students should be able to:
D1 Effectively and fluently communicate information, ideas, principles, arguments and proposals through written, graphic, oral and electronic means, and demonstrate written, numerical, oral, IT and literary skills effectively.
D2 Work effectively individually and in groups.
Teaching and Learning Methods
Transferable skills are well embedded in the programme and are taught and developed in design studio, seminars, project work, and study skills group tutorials (D1 and 2). In addition, the ability to work effectively in groups is developed through project work and through seminars. This development of transferable skills is encouraged through course work (D1 and 2) and through group activities such as project work and local field work.
Assessment Strategy
Assessed by design reviews, design portfolios, unseen examinations, essay writing, report writing, seminar papers, and dissertation. D2 is assessed through project work and group presentations.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features
Basic structure of the programme
Year One is closely allied with existing programmes in architecture and planning. The first year also introduces students to the history of alternative practice and the key principles embedded in this unique part of the degree. Year Two develops the key building blocks of the programme with a bespoke module covering the theories of alternative practice and optional modules engaging with the role and practice of participation in the built environment, design as a relational practice as well as a range of existing modules in planning and from other schools.
Year Three focuses on dissertation and project work with some taught elements and optional specialist material from elsewhere in the Faculty. Alternative practice and participation are continued into Year three through a design module focusing co-producing space and community participation. Year three allows students to develop a dissertation that may stretch from humanities to social sciences as well as creative practice, allowing students to expand upon their visual and creative research skills. We would expect and encourage wide ranging dissertation topics, expecting students to focus around their particular interests ranging with project based dissertations or more focused on planning, architecture and societal issues pertaining to the building environment.
Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)
The programme represents an innovative degree course aimed at students who have design skills, together with an interest in architecture, cities and the ways places come into

being as well as the way they are governed and managed, both through formal and less formal processes. It draws from existing programmes, but includes its own focus which are represented by a series of bespoke modules, some core and some optional throughout the degree. The degree focuses on “**alternative practice** or critical spatial practice captured in two core modules in the first and second years emphasising the traditions of radical planning and radical urbanism, community planning and community architecture. A feature is the ways buildings and places are co-constructed among communities, users and professionals and how they are governed beyond the mainstream of professional practice.

The concept of alternative practice is inspired by the work of radical architects and planners who have argued that specialised, professional ways of speaking and behaving can alienate people. They have argued that new, alternative, forms of practice are needed which engage better with people and communities, and encourage them to participate actively in the world around them. Through practical case studies, historical examples, theoretical ideas, these ideas are supported throughout the programme encouraging students to think about how architecture and cities could be developed. This lens is reinforced through two optional modules: In second year Participatory theories and practices module allows students to understand approaches and methods by which communities and citizens can shape their built environment. It is also practised through a live design project focusing on the co-producing space through urban prototyping.

Throughout the programme, design as well as social enterprise, poverty and informal housing, sociology and the politics of urban space are supported by optional modules from either within APL or another schools within the University. The programme is articulated in 5 strands and a pathway to RTPI accreditation.

Design in this programme seeks to capture an understanding of the making of contemporary cities taking into account social issues, the role of community/communities (including excluded communities) and principles of citizen empowerment in the design process. The focus stretches from the micro-scale to the neighbourhood scale. The **design** strand refers to modules whereby students engage in the iterative practice of drawing, modelling, space making as well as prototyping to articulate concepts and ideas relevant to spatial practice and place making. This strand focuses on to communicated ideas visually; **visual culture** is also expanded upon in the context of visual and creative practice research skills module that enable graduates of this degree to articulate concepts that emerge from the visual and the spatial.

Urban planning, poverty and informal housing is a theme that draws upon a range of modules in both planning and architecture (and within the specialist modules within the course) that try to address quick fix and/or cost efficient ways to house vulnerable and poor communities across the planet. This pathway has a focus for students who wish to further their knowledge in planning and development in their future career.

The **social enterprise and business** strand seeks to explore new ways of co-operative community practices that have emerged in recent years in the fields of architecture, planning and the arts. As option, this is supported by modules that give students the chance to explore the inner workings of new types of creative social enterprise that are emerging in the interfaces between professional architects and planners and the community at large. This strand allows students with an interest in business to gain a sense of the way in which these forms of neo or post-professionalism have grown in the western workplace.

Finally the strand focusing on **sociology and political theory** in the urban space, fills another implicit narrative that intersects throughout the course. Indeed, this strand which draws upon modules within the school and outside, tries to introduce the students to the social and political contexts in which arts, creative practice, architecture and the built form (more generally), is located. Whilst primarily theoretical, this theme has an important role in giving students a broader understanding of the way in which art and artistic practitioners are located in wider social and political movements.

Most of the modules compulsory on the programme work at the edge of architecture and planning promoting an integrated understanding of the management of built environment processes. Other modules taken from existing programmes deal with regular practice more centrally. In the final year modules from elsewhere in the Faculty further open up the terrain of enquiry to students fascinated with the ways cities and urban practices come into being and the trans-disciplinary challenges created therein.

The course is then an alternative to professionally accredited ones. Alternative, in the sense that it provides a general overview and an insight into the professions and academic disciplines of planning and architecture; equipping graduates with transferable skills in the built environment and public engagement. Alternative, too, in that it is formulated to extend what professionals can achieve in the built environment. Both architects and planners have become concerned with the potentially introvert nature of the professions. Radical practitioners and theorists in both disciplines have questioned the distance that training, accreditation and specialised ways of speaking can put between professionals and the people who they work and design for. This new, exciting and thought-provoking undergraduate degree introduces the context of the two professions – in the UK and on a global scale – but it also questions the ever-increasing professionalisation of the built environment, and the corresponding disempowerment of 'ordinary' people. Its graduates will be well equipped to follow a number of career paths: including urban designers, community activism and development, and progressive government roles.

A key feature of this programme is the **pathway to RTPI accreditation** including all design modules thus developing a very skilled and equipped urban designer with a particular understanding of alternative processes to shape the built environment and the role of citizens and communities in place-making processes. The full RTPI accreditation includes the BA (Hons) Architecture and Urban Planning + Certificate in Planning Practice + MA in Urban Design.

Students of this programme may transfer to the RIBA accredited programme: BA (Hons) Architecture for those students able to demonstrate their architectural design abilities and wanting the RIBA accreditation Part 1. Equally students wanting to pursue the accredited planning programme focusing may transfer into the BA Urban Planning/MPlan.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[K190 Programme Regulations 23-24](#)

13 Support for Student Learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

14 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

Accreditation reports

The degree is a pathway to Royal Town Planning Institute accreditation and is evaluated annually within a two day 'Partnership' meeting. The pathway is achieved by completing a pathway through the K190 BA Hons Architecture and Urban Planning programme followed by the 3038U Planning Practice Certificate and the 4004 MA Urban Design.

Additional mechanisms

N/A

15 Regulation of assessment

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

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

The University Prospectus: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/#subject>

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

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.