


PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION (Taught Postgraduate)	 Newcastle University
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1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MSc / Pg Dip
4	Programme Title	MSc Urban Planning Postgraduate Diploma Spatial Planning PGDip Urban Planning – Accredited. MSc Urban Planning with named pathways: Development Accelerated route (MArch graduates)
5	Programme Code	5373F/P 3393F/P 5374F/P 3548F/P
6	Programme Accreditation	Royal Town Planning Institute; Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors 'MSc Urban Planning: property and development' route only
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	N/A
8	FHEQ Level	7
9	Last updated	May 2025

10	Programme Aims	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To produce graduates with enhanced research capabilities and transferable and professional skills to resume or pursue a career in the planning or built environment professions in the public, private and voluntary/community sectors in the UK or internationally. 2. To equip students with a broad understanding of urban planning that enables them to grasp the theoretical foundations of the discipline and the linkages between theory and practice in a range of contexts. 3. To develop advanced research skills and the ability to critically evaluate, synthesise and utilise current research. 4. To develop in students a comprehensive understanding of the values and ethics of working as a planning professional. 5. To enable students to develop depth of knowledge and/or skills in particular specialist areas of town planning, underpinned by current and relevant research. 6. To develop intellectual, transferable and professional skills which allow students to demonstrate initiative and personal and professional responsibility. 7. To meet the professional requirements of the Royal Town Planning Institute (MSc as a 'combined programme', Postgraduate Diploma as 'spatial planning programme') and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors for the MSc development route to provide planning and development accreditation. 8. To meet the criteria for Level 7 qualifications as laid down in the QAA's National Qualifications Framework. 9. To comply with University policy and QAA Codes of Practice.
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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 reference to the benchmark statements for Planning and map to the learning outcomes for the Royal Town Planning Institute and where relevant the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should:

- A1. Demonstrate understanding of planning as a process concerned with managing and creating space and place.
- A2. Demonstrate an understanding of planning as a social science discipline that integrates design, economics, environmental challenges and legal and institutional frameworks of development and place making, and how this has developed over time and operates in different contexts.
- A3. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the political nature of decision-making in planning and the significance of diversity issues, stakeholder involvement and rights in the planning process.
- A4. Demonstrate critical understanding of values, ethics and professionalism in planning and allied professions.
- A5. Be able to critically evaluate and recognise the complexities of planning issues and problems, and integrate different areas of the curriculum in response to these.
- A6. Demonstrate a critical understanding of theory and make appropriate connections between theory and planning practice.
- A7. Demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of sustainable development and the relationship between social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects of sustainability, and be able to identify the planner's role on supporting sustainability agendas.
- A8. Demonstrate understanding and depth of knowledge of selected specialist areas of planning based on critical evaluation of current research developments and practice.

Teaching and Learning Methods

As a conversion degree the programme does not expect students to come with any foundational or specialist knowledge as a result the primary method of teaching and conveying knowledge is through lecture based modules (A1-A8). The general use of twelve 2 hour teaching blocks for 10 credit modules enables these lectures to be interactive providing for student discussion with academic support to check learning and progress, this is key to core modules introducing and linking key concepts (A3, A5-6). This mode of teaching is developed in specialist module option workshops and seminars (A8) and in 1x20 credit module where a 3 hour teaching block is used to deliver common group lecture and then dedicated group project with tutorial feedback where students apply their learning to a local site and strategy development with external site visits (A1, A2, +A7). Specialist knowledge (A8) is specifically taught through a combination of 30 credits of specialist option pathway and 60 credit dissertation module with dedicated supervision support from the start of semester 2 onwards. The specialist 30 credits are delivered across the programme semesters with semester one typically providing introductory elements to the specialism with semester two moving towards students applying and taking forward that knowledge through designing their own guided desk-based study project or being able to complete more specialist appraisals and their techniques. Contributions from planning and development professionals in teaching specialist modules and contribution to other module sessions enhance the teaching offer through application of real world cases and issues specifically for A1-4 and A8. A2 and A7 are supported and expanded by optional fieldtrips (self-funded and available to all student regardless of specialism).

Throughout (A1-A8) the students are expected to supplement their classroom work with independent reading and study. The programme is supported with all lecture and dissertation handbook materials being available on Blackboard.

Assessment Strategy

Assessment of knowledge and understanding is undertaken for A1-8 through written assessment. Assessments are typically individual essays. For specific modules there is some variation to this format such as an individual research design proposal or appraisal calculation with commentary. Additionally for A1, A2 and A7 the 20 credit group project a visual poster and accompanying oral presentation and strategy report supported by group project meeting minutes forms the basis of the assessment. For A8 the individual dissertation (15,000 words) forms one significant element of the learning outcome and programme.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- B1. Articulate reasoned arguments based on critical evaluation of current research.
- B2. Demonstrate an ability to bring together theory and range of evidence to engage in critical debate about planning issues and professional practice concerns.
- B3. Identify, analyse and critically engage with the main debates within their chosen specialism.
- B4. Demonstrate an ability to critically analyse values and ethics in planning.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The primary means of teaching and learning the intellectual skills required is through introduction via the lecture based content of the programme. These are then honed through specific 'workshop' based discussions of readings, cases and issues within in each module such as using a 2 hour block with one hour as lecture and one hour as discussion or task. For example, these explicitly occur each week within research design module with student and staff discussions (B1 and B3) furthered by individual dissertation supervision, and in group discussions with staff during the lecture blocks or project related modules (B2, B3 and B4). Moreover, as students develop their specialisms teaching moves towards individual or group supervision to design and complete small projects or undertake practical appraisals (B2 and B3).

Assessment Strategy

B1-B4 are assessed through individual essays and comparative assignments such as appraisal with narrative. B2 and B3 are assessed in the group poster, oral presentation and strategy report. B1 and B3 are assessed as part of the research proposal design and completion of an individual 15,000 word dissertation study complemented by smaller individual specialist study projects which are assessed by synthesis reports or essay, and in some cases with a small presentation element or student study blog providing for phased feedback and assessment.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- C1 Formulate and propose cogent policies, strategies and courses of action as responses to complex planning problems based on a critical evaluation of available evidence and information.
- C2 Identify key stakeholders within the built environment and formulate appropriate engagement strategies.
- C3 Show an awareness and knowledge of how to design and undertake original research through appropriate application of methods.

C4 Apply knowledge of specialist methods or techniques that are pertinent to their specialism.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Key skills required for C1-4 are again introduced through lecture based content, typically in semester one. C1 and C2 are embedded as key outcomes for a number of core programme modules and this learning is applied to a real world situation in semester 2 with their chosen group strategy location. As the programme progresses from the start of semester 2 students will be undertaking guided self-designed study projects for their specialisms or applying advanced techniques in their specialism guided by staff in practical sessions and be able to progress to fulfilling C1 and C3-C4. C3 methods and their application are introduced to students to help their design of their dissertation in lecture and through further staff workshop discussions and then with supervisory guidance. C4 particular specialist techniques such as appraisal and valuation techniques and standards, field methods for data capture, townscape evaluation with practical 'field' teaching and workshops to support learning.

Assessment Strategy

C1 and C2 skills are assessed through essays, and synthesis reports (working with real world or hypothetical scenarios as the basis of assessment) and group project strategy. C3 is assessed in respective specialist module projects and in research proposal design and completion of the individual dissertation study. C4 is assessed in relevant specialist option module through different formats including a combination of calculation or other task with interpretive narrative, reports and essays.

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- D1 Communicate ideas and concepts clearly in a range of formats to a high professional standard.
- D2 Work effectively as individuals and as team members.
- D3 Develop effective self-management skills such as priority setting and time management to take responsibility for his/her own learning and professional development.

Teaching and Learning Methods

D1-3 is taught through introducing key study skills early in the programme. D1 is taught through provided written feedback on all assessed work and using examples of good academic and professional work.
D2 is developed explicitly through the 20 credit group strategy project and implicitly through discussions and tasks related to other modules either within lectures or as informal group work to help prepare for assignments. Team work is also emphasised in the property and development pathway.
D3 This is developed progressively with clearly staggered submissions in semester one and is further supported by staff support through project and dissertation supervision.

Assessment Strategy

D1 is assessed through a variety of written assignments requiring a variety of clear communication styles such as reports as well as essay. Visual and oral communication may be a component of the assessment such as preparation of poster or powerpoint and accompanying oral presentation.
D2 is assessed explicitly through the group strategy project presentation, poster and report and also through the attendant minute and group strategy log.
D3 This is primarily assessed through student's planning and completing a 60 credit individual dissertation study.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

The programmes can be studied on a one year full-time basis or over two years on a part-time basis, the latter would be reflected by years 1 and 2 within stage 1. The MSc comprises of 180 credits the PgDip 120 credits. All modules are core. For the MSc 150 credits are compulsory with 30 credits of specialisation options designed along specific pathways; For the PgDip 90 credits are compulsory with 30 credits of specialisation options designed along specific pathways. The PgDip credits reflect that the dissertation module (60 credits) is not studied.

There is no exchange study opportunity for this programme.

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

The MSc Urban Planning programme offers a comprehensive planning education to students with an opportunity to develop their own specialism which is reflected in their award title. The pathways are as follows: Development; Global Development; Regeneration; Conservation; Green Infrastructure and Landscape Planning. The programme reflects the world leading expertise of the School both in the provision of core planning teaching and the expertise of particular staff through the specialist pathways offered.

The MSc Urban Planning has 'combined' accreditation from the RTPI. MSc students following the Development pathway are also accredited by the RICS planning and development pathway. The PgDip Spatial Planning has 'spatial' accreditation only from the RTPI. Accreditation is only provided on award of degree.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[Programme Regulations 2025-26](#)

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 programme reports annually to the Royal Town Planning Institute's Partnership Board for accreditation purposes. In addition, the 'Property and Development' pathway reports to a bi-annual Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' Partnership Board. Other annual returns are also completed as part of the accreditation structure.

Additional mechanisms

None.

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: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/#subject>

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

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.