

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION
(Undergraduate)**



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MPlan (after 4 years of study)
4	Programme Title	Master of Planning (4 years programme of study)
5	UCAS/Programme Code	K400 MPlan
6	Programme Accreditation	MPlan RTPI (spatial and specialist) and RICS BA (Hons) Urban Planning RTPI (spatial)
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Planning
8	FHEQ Level	7 MPlan
9	Last updated	

10 Programme Aims

1. 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
2. To meet the professional learning outcomes specified for spatial planning (Stages 1-3; BA (Hons) Urban Planning) and specialist planning (Stage 4 MPlan) programmes by the Royal Town Planning Institute and by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (MPlan only)
3. To develop an understanding of the values and ethics of working as a professional
4. 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.
5. To employ Newcastle and the Northeast Region as a living example for planning students, building on the School's wider regional engagement, as well as enable students to network internationally in bridging the gap between UK town planning and international development.
6. To introduce students to professional practice and to obtain practice experience (in combination with Certificate in Planning Practice) (MPlan only)
7. 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) (BA Urban Planning only).
8. To ensure that the programme meets the requirements of a Level 6 (BA Urban Planning/Stage 3 MPlan) and 7 qualification (Stage 4 MPlan) as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

9. To ensure that the programme conforms to University policies and the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education.

For Career Placement Year Students

10. Provide students with the experience of seeking and securing a position with an employer.
11. Facilitate independent self-management and proactive interaction in a non-university setting.
12. Provide a period of practical work experience that will benefit current academic study and longer term career plans.
13. Enable students to ethically apply their knowledge and skills in the workplace, reflect upon their development and effectively evidence and articulate their learning in relevant future settings.

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

For Career Placement Year Students

- A10. Apply personal and professional development strategies to prioritise, plan, and manage their own skills development and learning.
- A11. Research, select and apply relevant knowledge aimed at enhancing their own skills and effectiveness in specific duties at their placement.
- A12. Demonstrate an understanding of a work environment, how it functions and their contribution to it.
- A13. Relate their work based learning to other areas of personal development, including academic performance.

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 enables 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 Canvas. In attaining A2, 3, 6 & 7 students undertake independent research with appropriate supervision from staff.
Assessment Strategy
Knowledge and understanding of subject are tested in a variety of ways. Generally A1–A9 are assessed through course work (stages 1-4 MPlan and stages 1-3 BA Urban Planning) or written examination (stages 1-3 MPlan and BA Urban Planning). In most cases 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.
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 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.
Assessment Strategy
Intellectual skills B1-4 are largely assessed through course work including essays and reports (B1 and 3), the production of a research outline; a 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 examinations.
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 planning problems, translating theory and knowledge into practice. C2 Evaluate and effectively utilise a variety of plan and policy making methods and processes.
Teaching and Learning Methods
Subject specific skills are introduced and developed through project work and collaborative presentations where students work in teams to solve problems and present ideas for action (C1-2). Students are encouraged and expected to undertake fieldwork to develop their skills.

Assessment Strategy
These skills are tested in project work presentations and reports.
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 effective written, numeric, oral, IT and information literacy skills. D2. Work effectively both individually and in groups. D3. Develop personal self-management skills such as setting priorities and time management. D4. Develop critical self-reflection and understand the need for lifelong learning. For Career Placement Year Students: D5. Reflect on and manage own learning and development within the workplace. D6. Use existing and new knowledge to enhance personal performance in a workplace environment, evaluate the impact and communicate this process. D7. Use graduate skills in a professional manner in a workplace environment, evaluate the impact and communicate the personal development that has taken place.
Teaching and Learning Methods
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 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 (MPlan only).
Assessment Strategy
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 (MPlan only).

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features
Basic structure of the programme
Stages 1-3 of the MPlan are identical to Stages 1-3 of the BA (Hons) Urban Planning. Students can enrol in either programme from Stage 1. Students who enrol on the MPlan may choose to leave the programme at the end of Stage 3 and be awarded a BA (Hons) in Urban Planning. Students who enrol on the BA Urban Planning or leave the MPlan at the end of Stage 3 will have obtained Spatial RTP1 accreditation only. Students who proceed onto Stage 4 of the MPlan, are expected to undertake the work placement Certificate in Planning Practice year (an intercalating qualification between Stages 3 and 4 of the MPlan).

Stage 1 of the programme introduces 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, urban infrastructure, digital technology, 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.

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 a 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 (MPlan only) 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. Students on their chosen pathway 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). The candidates can undertake the final year on a part-time basis.

For Career Placement Year Students

Students have the option to take part in a Careers Placement Year in-between Stage 2 and 3 of their programme. They will be transferred on to programme code 1960U.

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

This programme has vocational modules designed to prepare students for a professional career as a Town Planner, including preparing them to apply for Chartered Town Planner Status. The programme is in dialogue with other disciplines and practices, and helps develop students' understanding and critical engagement with planning and places. Stages 1-3 meet the RTPI's requirements for a spatial planning programme and Stage 4 (MPlan only) 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 MPlan 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. MPlan is also accredited by RICS for the planning and development pathway.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[Programme Regulations 2026 - 27](#)

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 accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute and is evaluated annually during a 'Partnership Meeting'.

The MPlan is accredited by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and is evaluated every two years.

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:
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The University Prospectus: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/#subject
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Degree Programme and University Regulations: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/
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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.
