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| <b>PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION<br/>(Undergraduate)</b> |  |
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| <b>1</b> | <b>Awarding Institution</b>     | Newcastle University                                                                                     |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Teaching Institution</b>     | Newcastle University                                                                                     |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Final Award</b>              | MPlan (after 4 years of study)<br>BA (Hons) Urban Planning (after 3 years of study)                      |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Programme Title</b>          | Master of Planning (4 years programme of study)<br>BA (Hons) Urban Planning (3 years programme of study) |
| <b>5</b> | <b>UCAS/Programme Code</b>      | K400 MPlan<br>K421 BA (Hons) Urban Planning                                                              |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Programme Accreditation</b>  | MPlan RTPI (spatial and specialist) and RICS<br>BA (Hons) Urban Planning RTPI (spatial)                  |
| <b>7</b> | <b>QAA Subject Benchmark(s)</b> | Planning                                                                                                 |
| <b>8</b> | <b>FHEQ Level</b>               | 7 MPlan<br>6 BA (Hons) Urban Planning                                                                    |
| <b>9</b> | <b>Last updated</b>             | March 2018                                                                                               |

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| <b>10</b> | <b>Programme Aims</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>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 Institute of Chartered Surveyors (MPlan only)</li> <li>3. To develop an understanding of the values and ethics of working as a professional</li> <li>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.</li> <li>5. To employ Newcastle and the North East Region as a living example for planning students, building on the School's wider regional engagement.</li> <li>6. To introduce students to professional practice and to obtain practice experience (in combination with CPP) (MPlan only)</li> <li>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).</li> <li>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</li> </ol> |
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9. To ensure that the programme conforms to University policies and the QAA 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. 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 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 Blackboard. 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 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.

### **Intellectual Skills**

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- B1 Define and analyse problems effectively and appropriately.

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| <p>B2 Develop research skills and experience in the context of the School's research interests.</p> <p>B3 Make effective use of evidence and information.</p> <p>B4 Articulate reasoned arguments.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Teaching and Learning Methods</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <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>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Assessment Strategy</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>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.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Practical Skills</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <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</p> <p>C2 Evaluate and effectively utilise a variety of plan and policy making methods and processes.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Teaching and Learning Methods</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <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>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Assessment Strategy</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>These skills are tested in project work presentations and reports.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Transferable/Key Skills</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <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> |
| <b>Teaching and Learning Methods</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p>Transferable skills are well embedded in the programme and are taught and developed in seminars, workshops and project work (D1, 2 &amp; 3). This development of transferable skills is encouraged through course work (D1, 2 &amp; 3) and through group activities such as project work. D4 is a particular outcome of modules on professionalism and the preparatory work for</p>                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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 overlap with 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 RTPI 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 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, urban infrastructure 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 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 (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 (either regeneration or environmental planning), either of which can include an ERASMUS exchange in the second 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 (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**

The Student Services portal provides links to key services and other information and is available at: <https://my.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 principal 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 University Library).

*Academic and Pastoral support*

Each undergraduate and taught postgraduate student will be assigned a personal tutor.\* A personal tutor is one part of a wider network of advice and guidance available to students to support their personal and general academic development. The module leader acts as the first point of contact for subject-specific academic advice. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of School may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Student-Staff Committee, and/or at the Board of Studies. Within the academic unit, students may also receive additional academic and pastoral advice from a range of other student-facing staff including degree programme directors, dissertation/project supervisors, and administrative support staff.

\*Arrangements may vary for students taking special types of provision.

The University also offers a wide range of institutional services and support upon which students can call, such as the Writing Development Centre, Careers Service and Student Wellbeing Service. This includes 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 team 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 the University's IT Service (NUIT), 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.

### **14 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. Student opinion is sought at the Student-Staff Committee and/or the Board of Studies. The introduction of new modules and major changes to existing modules are subject to approval by the Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (FLTSEC).

#### *Programme reviews*

The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to FLTSEC. The FLTSEC takes an overview of all programmes within the Faculty and reports any Faculty or institutional issues to the Taught Programmes Sub-Committee.

#### *External Examiner reports*

External Examiner reports are considered by the Board of Studies. External Examiner reports and the response to the External Examiner from the Board of Studies are shared with institutional student representatives, through the Student-Staff Committee.

#### *Student evaluations*

All modules and stages\* are subject to review through online questionnaires. Informal student evaluation is also obtained at the Student-Staff 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 students' views on the quality of the learning and teaching. 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.

\*With the exception of intercalating years and the final stages of undergraduate programmes.

#### *Mechanisms for gaining student feedback*

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

#### *Faculty and University Review Mechanisms*

Every six years degree programmes in each subject area undergo Learning and Teaching Review. This involves both the detailed consideration of a range of documentation, and a review visit by a review team (normally one day in duration) which includes an external subject specialist and a student representative. Following the review a report is produced, which forms the basis for a decision by University Learning, Teaching 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.  
The MPlan is accredited by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and is evaluated every two years.

*Additional mechanisms*

None

## **15 Regulation of assessment**

Please refer to the Undergraduate Examination Conventions at  
<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/2018.html>

### *Role of the External Examiner*

An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the subject community, is appointed by the University following recommendation from the Board of Studies. The External Examiner is required to:

- i. confirm whether the standards of the University's awards meet or exceed the academic standards specified in external reference points such as the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, the UK Quality Code, subject benchmark statements, and, where appropriate, the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies;
- ii. confirm whether the academic standards of the University's awards are consistent with those of similar programmes in other UK higher education institutions;
- iii. report on whether the University's processes for assessment measure student achievement rigorously and fairly and are conducted in line with University policies and regulations;
- iv. identify, where appropriate, examples of exemplary practice and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment;
- v. comment on opportunities to enhance the quality of the learning experience provided to students.

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/>

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.