

University of Plymouth

Faculty of Science and Engineering

School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences

Programme Specification

MSc Planning (4023)

September 2021

1. MSc Planning

Accredited Final award title MSc Planning

The School offers one planning-related programme: MSc Planning. The programme is offered as both a one year full-time course and a 2.5 year part-time course. The design of the Masters programme in Planning includes 100 credits of core modules, with 20 credits of specialist option modules and 60 credits of dissertation related to the specialism. The MSc Planning programme is accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute. Students who meet the requirements for the accredited award will be awarded MSc Planning.

Non-accredited Exit award title MSc Planning Studies

Students who do not meet the requirements for the professionally accredited award, but have achieved 180 credits at Level 7, may be awarded the non-accredited degree of MSc Planning Studies.

Level 7 Intermediate (non-accredited) award title(s)

Completion of 60 credits: Postgraduate Certificate

Level 7 Intermediate (non-accredited) award title(s)

Completion of 120 credits: Postgraduate Diploma

UCAS code -

JACS code L722

2. **Awarding Institution:** University of Plymouth

Teaching institution(s): University of Plymouth

3. **Accrediting body(ies)**

Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

Full programme.

In order to meet the RTPI's specifications of a 'full' programme, the MSc Planning programme includes 100 credits of core spatial planning modules, with 20 credits of specialist option module and 60 credits of dissertation, which must be related to the specialism.

Date of re-accreditation

Accreditation is renewed by the RTPI Plymouth Partnership Board on an annual and rolling basis. Plymouth was awarded full Partnership Board status by the RTPI in 2016 after receiving accreditation in 2013. The Partnership Board consists of the RTPI Dialogue member (who also acts as Chair), a RTPI appointee, a RTPI Education Officer, two local practitioners, a senior representative from the University (Dean) and representatives from the University and School. The partnership board meets annually at the Planning School, with a particular remit to assess the effectiveness of the Planning School, through a review of an annual report on activities and achievements by the Planning School, module evaluation feedback, external examiners' reports and a meeting with students. The criteria used to judge the effectiveness of a Planning School are: a clear planning focus and leadership, clear practice focus, quality assurance, institutional support and resources. Members of the Partnership Board have the option to meet in private session to discuss whether the school is acting as an Effective Planning School (and so retain its accreditation). Full minutes of these meetings and a report by the RTPI are produced, which are reported to the RTPI's Partnership & Accreditation Panel.

4. **Distinctive Features of the Programme and the Student Experience**

The distinctive strengths of the MSc Planning programme are built around:

- the **multi-disciplinary approach** to teaching and learning, drawing on expertise in environmental sustainability, marine studies and architecture and design;

- **delivery underpinned by scholarly activity:** The research profile and the scholarly activity of the staff across the contributing disciplines is an essential part of the intellectual culture which permeates the curriculum;
- **engagement with practitioners** dealing with the contemporary planning issues arising from peripherality, the marine and coastal interface, and urban and rural contexts of South West England. This engagement is reflected in specialist focus on marine planning, coastal urban regeneration, rural planning and sustainable transport, which are also transferable and relevant to planning more widely across the UK;
- **focus on practical application and experiential learning:** to provide a programme that is focused on the practice of planning, through a varied programme of fieldwork, practicals, role-play exercises, debates, and through contact with professional practitioners;
- **emphasis on key skills and professionalism:** to promote competence in the key skills and personal reflection to equip students for lifelong learning and preparation for the RTPI's Assessment of Professional Competence (APC);
- **a mix of academic and practice-based learning** drawing on the composition of the School's teaching staff and approach to engagement with external partners; and
- **student support:** The programme team embrace a culture of support for student learning.

5. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Group(s)

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (2019) *Benchmark Statement for Town and Country Planning*, QAA, Gloucester.

Full version available at: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/subject-benchmark-statement-town-and-country-planning.pdf?sfvrsn=e7f3c881_4

6. Programme Structure

The Plymouth MSc Planning programme fulfils the RTPI's criteria as a 'full programme'¹, in which at least one-half of the module credits must cover spatial planning (ie. 90 credits) and one-quarter of the module credits must be in a specialist area (ie. 45 credits). On the MSc Planning programme at University of Plymouth, 100 credits of core taught modules cover spatial planning (56 per cent) and 80 credits cover specialist elements (including one taught option module and the dissertation which must be on a topic in that specialist area, 44 per cent) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Module credits related to the spatial and specialist elements of a combined planning programme

Spatial Planning modules (at least one-half)	Specialist elements (at least one-quarter)
PLG501 (20 credits)	1 x 20 credits (20 credits) [Either PLG508 or PLG513]
PLG502 (20 credits)	
PLG503 (20 credits)	
PLG504 (20 credits)	
PLG505 (20 credits)	PLG510/511 (60 credits)
Total: 100 credits (56%)	Total: 80 credits (44%)

¹ <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/education-and-careers/find-a-course/accredited-qualifications/>

Programme structure of MSc Planning

Full-time (Tuesdays and Thursdays)				
Part-time Year 1 (Tuesdays)		Part-time Year 2 (Thursdays)		
	10am-1pm	2-5pm	10am-1pm	2-5pm
Semester 1 (15 weeks)	‘Extended induction’ for study skills	PLG502 Spatial planning & sustainable development	PLG505 Urban design: theories, methodologies and practice	PLG503 Environmental knowledge: from field to stakeholder
Semester 2 (15 weeks)	PLG501 Issues and values in planning practice	PLG504 Development management & delivery	Study time for dissertation preparation	Specialist module selected from choices
Dissertation	PLG510 (full-time)/PLG511 (part-time) Dissertation (Based on specialist module)			

Specialisms (options):

PLG508 Coastal Urban Regeneration

PLG513 Rural Planning

Figure 1. Structure of the MSc Planning programme with full-time and part-time routes

7. Programme Aims

The aims of the MSc Planning programme are to:

- offer a relevant and contemporary planning curriculum, enriched by the scholarly activity of staff and a multidisciplinary context
- provide plentiful opportunities for the assimilation of knowledge and understanding in planning, especially through experiential learning such as practical work and fieldwork
- develop a wide range of intellectual and key skills, such as research and problem-solving, an appreciation of design principles, team-working and communication, both written and oral and using a variety of media
- promote critical, rational, innovative, reflective and creative thinkers who are confident, adaptable and independent learners and who are readily employable, equipped for life-long learning, and
- equip individuals who are committed to be effective and responsible planning professionals.

8. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

8.1 Knowledge and understanding

On successful completion, graduates should be able to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of:

1. The processes of socio-economic and environmental change and their spatial outcomes as planning issues and problems
2. Human land use and development processes, including development viability and finance, and its relationship with planning
3. Political, legal and institutional frameworks for effective policy-making and implementation
4. Awareness and understanding of spatial planning, sustainable development (including climate change), community engagement and urban design
5. Conceptual and theoretical understanding of explanations underpinning the evolution and practice of planning, including values and ethics

6. Current debates and agendas in planning and be able to position these within historical and theoretical perspectives
7. An in-depth specialist area of planning and its inter-relationships with spatial planning

8.2 Cognitive and intellectual skills

On successful completion, graduates should be able to :

1. critically analyse literature
2. assess the reliability and validity of evidence
3. develop reasoned and informed arguments
4. synthesise and evaluate information from disparate sources in order to generate integrated and well substantiated responses to spatial planning challenges
5. evaluate the potential of data and methodologies for problem-solving within the context of planning
6. make sound judgements around complex and conflicting issues often in the face of partial and uncertain evidence

8.3 Key and transferable skills

On successful completion, graduates should be able to:

1. communicate ideas, principles and theories effectively by oral, written and visual means
2. undertake effective research information sourcing to establish an evidence base
3. collate, analyse and interpret data in quantitative and qualitative forms
4. work independently and organise his/her own learning
5. participate effectively and supportively in groups, meeting obligations to others (especially in a multi-professional working environment)
6. reflect on their own learning and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses

8.4 Employment-related skills

On successful completion, graduates should be able to:

1. demonstrate awareness and understanding of professional working, roles, responsibilities and ethical values

2. engage effectively in reflection and action planning for personal and career development
3. prepare for the RTPI's Assessment of Professional Competence
4. appreciate the importance of life-long learning and reflect critically on their career plans and skills needs

8.5 Practical skills

On successful completion, graduates should be able to

1. demonstrate negotiation, mediation, leadership and networking skills likely to facilitate collaborative policy formulation and implementation
2. employ appropriate techniques and methods for effective community engagement over the formulation and implementation of plans and development proposals
3. use creative problem-solving skills and generate spatial planning responses
4. critically evaluate urban design using appropriate theories and practice
5. plan, design, execute and report on an original research investigation
6. monitor and evaluate planning interventions and outcomes

9. Admissions Criteria, including APCL, APEL and DAS arrangements

The Programme Leader (who is also responsible for admissions making admissions decisions. Wherever possible, established relationships or equivalencies to other national or international qualifications will be used in making decisions.

Students admitted to the MSc programme are expected to have an Honours degree in a relevant discipline (e.g., planning, geography, architecture, environmental science, sociology, economics, engineering, history, geosciences, biological sciences or otherwise suitably qualified candidates). The Programme Leader will be responsible for ensuring that applicants have, through prior learning (formal study and/or experience) in the critical required for the successful participation in this programme. The suitability of candidates will be assessed through a combination of the written application, evidence of formal qualifications, personal references and candidate interviews required for the successful participation in this programme. The suitability of candidates will be assessed through a combination of the written

application, evidence of formal qualifications, personal references and candidate interviews (where appropriate).

In compliance with the University's equal opportunities policy, all appropriately qualified applicants will be given equal consideration during the selection process and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, colour, disability, religion, nationality, age, occupation, marital status, sexual orientation or any other irrelevant distinction.

The University welcomes applications from people with disabilities who will be considered on the same academic grounds as other potential students. Considerations about individual needs arising from disability will be made separately, and the University will strive to meet an individual disabled student's needs wherever possible.

Entry requirements (in summary):

- Normally an honours degree (second class or better) in a relevant discipline (e.g., planning, geography, architecture, sociology, environmental science, geosciences, biological sciences) OR overseas equivalent.
- A minimum grade C in English Language at GCSE level OR a minimum overall score of 6.5, with at least 5.5 in each element, IELTS.

Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL): Students can exceptionally apply for exemption from any modules through APEL or APCL, following standard University procedures. This decision will be made by the Director of the Effective Planning School and the Programme Leader, in consultation team and other staff in the Faculty of Science and Environment Office. Each case will also be referred to the RTPI Dialogue Member and Education Officer for approval.

Students submit their application to the Admissions Office in the University either by post or email. The Admissions Office then sends the application to the Programme Leader for consideration, who will usually consult with Head of Effective Planning School. If necessary, such as when the applicant does not have a first degree and is

applying on the basis of professional experience, an interview with the applicant will be arranged usually with both the Head of School and Programme Leader. The applicant will be asked to submit examples of their written work, such as reports, which will be used to make a decision concerning their ability to complete a Masters course. On the basis of the interview and discussions, a decision will be reached about whether the applicant is capable of coping with the programme. At least five years of professional experience is the minimum requirement for applications from applicants without the usual academic qualifications. All applications, even those from local authorities in the region, are considered on an individual basis.

Any non-standard academic entry onto the programme will be expected to seek support from the University's Learning Gateway team before commencing their studies as well as during the programme. This support will be additional to any support provided by staff on the MSc Planning programme. The onus is on the student to ensure that they are aware of the requirements of higher education study at Masters level and to seek appropriate help and support where extra guidance and tuition is considered necessary. Early feedback on coursework and discussions with module leaders and personal tutor will identify cases where such support would be advisable.

All applicants must have GCSE (or equivalent) Maths and English at Grade C or above.

10. Progression criteria for Final and Intermediate Awards

The MSc Planning meets the normal University academic regulations with some additional accrediting body (RTPI) requirements. In order to be eligible for the award of MSc Planning, students must achieve a pass mark of at least 50% in all assessments.

Students that do not meet the criteria for professional accreditation, but still meet the University's standard regulations for a Masters' degree (180 credits at Level 7), may be awarded an unaccredited MSc Planning Studies, or an intermediate award if 60 L7 credits (PGCert) or 120 L7 credits (PGDip) are achieved.

The University's assessment regulations can be found at:
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/regulations>

11. Exceptions to Regulations

The following exception to regulations has been agreed by the University due to the requirements of the professional accrediting body (the Royal Town Planning Institute). Each module and individual assignments within the modules must be passed with a minimum of 50%; the modules are not compensatable on the MSc Planning programme.

12. Transitional Arrangements

Not applicable.

13. Mapping and Appendices:

13.1. ILOs against Modules Mapping (Appendix 1 & 2)

PROGRAMME LEARNING OUTCOME	MODULES
KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING	
1. The processes of socio-economic and environmental change and their spatial outcomes as planning issues and problems	PLG502
2. Human land use and development processes, including development viability and finance, and its relationship with planning	PLG504
3. Political, legal and institutional frameworks for effective policy-making and implementation	PLG502
4. Awareness and understanding of spatial planning, sustainable development (including climate change), community engagement and urban design	PLG502 PLG505
5. Conceptual and theoretical understanding of explanations underpinning the evolution and practice of planning, including values and ethics	PLG501
6. Current debates and agendas in planning and be able to position these within historical and theoretical perspectives	PLG501 and all modules
7. An in-depth specialist area of planning and its relationship with spatial planning	PLG513 PLG508
COGNITIVE AND INTELLECTUAL SKILLS	
1. critically analyse literature	All modules
2. assess the reliability and validity of evidence	All modules
3. develop reasoned and informed arguments	All modules
4. synthesise and evaluate information from disparate sources in order to generate integrated and well substantiated responses to spatial planning challenges	All modules
5. evaluate the potential of data and methodologies for problem-solving within the context of planning	PLG503

6. make sound judgements around complex and conflicting issues often in the face of partial and uncertain evidence	All modules
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KEY AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS	
1. communicate ideas, principles and theories effectively by oral, written and visual means	All modules
2. undertake effective research information sourcing to establish an evidence base	PLG503 and all modules
3. collate, analyse and interpret data in quantitative and qualitative forms	PLG503
4. work independently and organise his/her own learning	All modules
5. participate effectively and supportively in groups, meeting obligations to others (especially in a multi-professional working environment)	All modules
6. reflect on their own learning and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses	PLG501
EMPLOYMENT RELATED SKILLS	
1. demonstrate awareness and understanding of professional working, roles, responsibilities and ethical values	PLG501
2. engage effectively in reflection and action planning for personal and career development	PLG501
3. prepare for the RTPPI's Assessment of Professional Competence	PLG501
4. appreciate the importance of life-long learning and reflect critically on their career plans and skills needs	PLG501
PRACTICAL SKILLS	
1. demonstrate negotiation, mediation, leadership and networking skills likely to facilitate collaborative policy formulation and implementation	PLG501
2. employ appropriate techniques and methods for effective community engagement over the formulation and implementation of plans and development proposals	PLG501 and PLG504

3. use creative problem-solving skills and generate spatial planning responses	All modules
4. critically evaluate urban design using appropriate theories and practice	PLG505
5. plan, design, execute and report on an original research investigation	PLG510 & PLG511
6. monitor and evaluate planning interventions and outcomes	All modules

13.2. Assessment against Modules Mapping

Assessment map for MSc Planning

(S: summative and F: formative)

Module code	Report	Practical project	Group work presentation	Individual presentation	Critical Review Essay	PDP	Exam
PLG501	S			F	S	F&S	
PLG502	S				S	F	
PLG503	S	S				F	
PLG504	S		S			F	
PLG505		S	S		S	F	
PLG513		S			S	F	
PLG508	S			F	S	F	
PLG510/511	S	S				F	

13.3. Skills against Modules Mapping

See Section 13.1

13.4. Appendices

I Programme Specification Mapping: module contribution to the meeting of Award Learning Outcomes

II RTPI Learning Outcomes Matrix (professional body accreditation)

Appendix I. Programme Specification Mapping (PGT): module contribution to the meeting of Award Learning Outcomes

Module	Credits	C core E elective	Award Learning Outcomes contributed to (for more information see Section 8)																		Compensation Y/N	Assessment elements(s) and weightings [use KIS definition] E1 - exam E2 - clinical exam T1 - test C1 - coursework A1 - generic assessment P1 - practical							
			8.1 Knowledge & Understanding						8.2 Cognitive & intellectual skills						8.3 Key & transferable skills								8.4 Employment related skills						8.5 Practical skills
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6		
PLG501	20	C	x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x	x					No	C1 (100%)
PLG502	20	C	x		x	x				x	x	x	x		x		x							x			x	No	C1 (100%)
PLG504	20	C		x	x	x	x				x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x			x	x		No	C1 (90%); P1 (10%)
Learning Outcomes 60 credits			x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
PLG503	20	C								x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x		No	C1 (100%)
PLG505	20	C				x	x	x		x		x		x		x	x		x						x			No	C1 (90%); P1 (10%)
Specialism PLG513	20	E	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x								x	x		x	No	C1 (100%)
Specialism PLG508	20	E	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x								x			x	No	C1 (100%)
Learning Outcomes 120 credits			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
PLG511	60	C								x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	No	C1 (100%)
Learning Outcomes 180 credits			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Confirmed Award LOs			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		

APPENDIX II

RTPI LEARNING OUTCOMES MATRIX

RTPI Learning Outcomes Matrix – Postgraduate Courses

Planning School	UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH
Title of course	MSc Planning and MSc Town Planning (L7 Chartered Town Planner Degree Apprenticeship)
Date form completed	26 APRIL, 2019

Within the matrix, please indicate where the learning outcomes have been **Introduced (I)**, **Consolidated (C)** and **Assessed (A)**.

Introduced = the learning outcome is first presented to the student

Consolidated = the topic is developed further, allowing the student to engage with the concept on a deeper critical or intellectual level – the student is able to engage in discussion about the concept

Assessed = the student’s knowledge of the concept presented in the learning outcome is tested

If the course is longer than one year FTE, please complete a copy of the matrix for each year of the course. **If the programme is to carry specialist accreditation only, please do not complete the spatial learning outcomes section of the matrix.**

Should the ‘commentary’ column be insufficient for your needs, as an alternative, please provide a supplementary MS Word document with a short paragraph outlining how the learning outcome is addressed in the module(s).

RTPI Learning Outcomes	Core Modules						Optional Modules		Commentary – please outline briefly how the learning outcome is met by the module
	PLG501 Issues & Values in Planning Practice	PLG502 Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development	PLG504 Development Management and Delivery	PLG503 Environmental knowledge: from field to stakeholder	PLG505 Urban Design: theories, methodologies and practice	PLG510/511 Dissertation	PLG513 Rural Planning	PLG508 Coastal Urban Regeneration	
1. Explain and demonstrate how spatial planning		ICA	CA		CA				Separate commentary available

operates within the context of institutional and legal frameworks.									
2. Generate integrated and well substantiated responses to spatial planning challenges.		C	CA		ICA				
3. Reflect on the arguments for and against spatial planning and particular theoretical approaches, and assess what can be learnt from experience of spatial planning in different contexts and spatial scales.	CA	ICA			C				
4. Demonstrate how efficient resource management helps to deliver effective spatial planning.		ICA	C						
5. Explain the political and ethical nature of spatial planning and reflect on how planners work effectively within democratic decision-making structures.	CA	IC	CA	C	C				

6. Explain the contribution that planning can make to the built and natural environment and in particular recognise the implications of climate change.	C	ICA	C						
7. Debate the concept of rights and the legal and practical implications of representing these rights in planning decision making process.	C		ICA						
8. Evaluate different development strategies and the practical application of development finance; assess the implications for generating added value for the community.		IC	CA						
9. Explain the principles of equality and equality of opportunity in relation to spatial planning in order to positively promote the involvement of	CA	IC	CA	CA	C				

different communities, and evaluate the importance and effectiveness of community engagement in the planning process.									
10. Evaluate the principles and processes of design for creating high quality places and enhancing the public realm for the benefit of all in society.			ICA		ICA				
11. Demonstrate effective research, analytical, evaluative and appraisal skills and the ability to reach appropriate, evidence based decisions.		IC	CA	ICA	ICA				
12. Recognise the role of communication skills in the planning process and the importance of working in an inter-disciplinary context, and be able to demonstrate negotiation, mediation,	IC		CA	IC	CA				

advocacy and leadership skills.									
13. Distinguish the characteristics of a professional, including the importance of upholding the highest standards of ethical behaviour and a commitment to lifelong learning and critical reflection so as to maintain and develop professional competence.	ICA	IC	C	C	C				
Specialist Learning Outcomes									
1. Engage in theoretical, practical and ethical debate at the forefront of the area of the specialism in the context of spatial planning						ICA	ICA	ICA	
2. Evaluate the social, economic, environmental and political context for the area of specialism						ICA	ICA	ICA	
3. Evaluate the distinctive contribution of the						ICA	ICA	ICA	

specialism to the making of place and the mediation of space									
4. Assess the contribution of the specialism to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change						ICA	ICA	ICA	