



Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills
that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an
award from
The University of Sheffield

1	Programme Title	Urban Design
2	Programme Code	ALAT001 (FT); ALAT002 (PT)
3	JACS Code	Not applicable
4	Level of Study	Postgraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Masters' in Urban Design (180 Credits)
5b	Position in the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications	Masters, M-Level
6a	Intermediate Qualification(s)	Postgraduate Diploma in Urban Design (PGDip) (120 Credits)
6b	Position in the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications	Masters', M-Level
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Social Sciences
9	Department	School of Architecture
10	Other Department(s) involved in teaching the programme	Through option modules: Town and Regional Planning; Landscape Architecture
11	Mode(s) of Attendance	Full-time or Part-time
12	Duration of the Programme	1 or 2 years
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	Envisaged to obtain 'specialist' accreditation for the programme through the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)
14	Date of production	January 2008, January 2019, December 2023, March 2026

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Urban Design

The MA Urban Design programme addresses the growing need for professionals, in practice and academia, who are knowledgeable and skilled in urban design, and able to mediate between individual architectural projects and overall planning strategies. Where many urban design courses in the UK focus on strategic planning issues, the one at Sheffield is at its core design based, with a strong participatory ethos which embeds the principles of liveness of sustainable, equitable, meaningful, and experimental co-production.

The School of Architecture

The School of Architecture, established in 1907, is one of the top architecture schools in the UK and one of the leading schools of architecture in Europe. The department's intellectual ethos builds strongly on social and environmental responsibilities in relation to the design and production of the built environment which is conducive to the national and international distinction of the School of Architecture. Besides its RIBA validated Part I and Part II courses, the School of Architecture currently runs three taught master courses and is one of the country's leading centres for architectural research.

Masters' in Urban Design

The Masters' in Urban Design programme expands the School's post-graduate programme portfolio and takes advantage of its existing national and international reputation. The programme specifically builds on the department's acclaimed research and teaching expertise, particularly in the field of participatory design, and extends the work on the social and environmental responsibility of the architects and spatial practitioners.

Distinctive features of the Masters' in Urban Design include:

emphasis on design work (105 of 180 credits)

integration and application of participatory design and planning processes

local and regional project focus in combination with national and international comparative research

integration of social, economic, political and cultural issues at every point of the design process
support through existing research groups at the School of Architecture

16. Programme aims

Programmes offered by the Faculty of Social Science and the School of Architecture have the following general aims consonant with the Mission Statement of the University of Sheffield:

1. to provide high quality teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels that is informed and invigorated by the research and scholarship of its staff in order to provide a stimulating culture of learning and enthusiasm for the subject.
2. to educate able and well-motivated students from a wide range of backgrounds.
3. to support students in developing intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and independent judgement.
4. progressively to develop competencies in a wide range of transferable and employment skills.
5. to instil in students a commitment to self-improvement and the development of life skills.
6. to emphasise informed applicant choice and equal opportunities in the admissions process.
7. to provide a supportive environment for students and involve them in the ongoing development of the programme.
8. to enable students to maximise their potential in all aspects of the programme.

More specifically the MA in Urban Design has the following additional aims:

9. to develop an ability to produce coherent and well resolved urban designs.
10. to develop the ability to integrate knowledge of social, cultural, political and economic issues into an urban design project.
11. to develop an understanding of the influence of historic and cultural background of urban design.
12. to develop an understanding of the relationship of urban design, architecture and town planning to other allied disciplines.
13. to develop the ability to use an appropriate range of visual, verbal and written communication methods.
14. to develop knowledge of the professional context of urban design.
15. to develop students' critical understanding of the nature of urban design and its practice, including its administrative, institutional and legal framework.
16. to develop students' critical skills in understanding the different contexts and environments relevant to the practice of urban design, including the political and economic environments in which these disciplines operate.
17. to instil an appreciation of the diversity of cultures and values in society and how urban designers may respond to these.
18. to provide students with research skills, the ability to analyse and synthesise knowledge and an understanding of the role of research.
19. to develop professional and policy making skills needed to analyse complex design problems, recommend appropriate courses of action, take decisions and communicate effectively to diverse audiences.
20. to develop through specialised studies, a deeper knowledge of a selected aspect or aspects of architecture, urban design and planning.
21. Develop a commitment to self-learning and the development of life skills and foster intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and independent judgement.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding:	
Candidates for MA and PGDip will have developed:	
K1	an understanding of conceptual ideas, research paradigms, methods and approaches within histories and theories of urban design, the history of ideas, and the related disciplines of architecture, landscape studies, planning, and cultural studies its application in critical debate.
K2	knowledge of approaches to urban design, participative urban design, sociology of urban design, funding, urban design for sustainability and regulatory requirements.
K3	knowledge and understanding of the history of participation and its implication for the production of the build environment.
K4	an understanding of briefs and critical appraisal techniques, to ensure that the design response is appropriate to the site and the physical and social context, and for reasons such as sustainability and budget.
K5	an understanding of the competing claims of various stakeholders in a participatory context.
K6	an understanding of social, economic, political and cultural issues relevant to their project along with an understanding of how these are part of the current and emerging trends within the profession and the development of the urban design practice.
K7	an understanding of sustainability and current environmental design issues and their impact on world resources and human well-being in relation to urban design.
K8	a critical understanding of the theoretical justifications for participatory urban design, the role of the professional within this practice and an awareness of the moral and ethical dimensions of participatory practice.
K9	an understanding of the political basis for urban design and the surrounding administrative, institutional and legal framework with a particular emphasis on decolonial and feminist critique.
In addition candidates for MA will have developed:	
K10	The ability to integrate the above areas of knowledge and understanding in a developed design based thesis.

Skills and other attributes:	
Candidates for MA and PGDip will have developed:	
S1	the ability to produce and demonstrate coherent and well resolved urban designs that integrate knowledge of: the social, political, economic and professional context that influences the production of the built environment.
S2	be able to demonstrate that they can analyse and appraise design options, and draw conclusions which display methodological and theoretical rigour.
S3	the ability to demonstrate knowledge of different types of participatory approaches in architecture and urban design, both historical and contemporary.
S4	the skill to critically assess the most appropriate form of participatory technique for a given situation.
S5	the ability to formulate an appropriate form of participation for a given situation.
S6	the ability to demonstrate the synthesis of all the design thinking related to urban design and participation.
S7	the ability to use architectural representations having critically appraised the most appropriate techniques available.
S8	the ability to independently define, and critically appraise, their ideas in relation to a design and to the work of others.
S9	the ability to work as part of a team, including team leadership.
S10	the ability to explain urban design proposals and the related social, political, economic and professional context of the project, both in written and oral form.
S11	the ability to express their critical position in a coherent written form following academic standards.
In addition candidates for MA will have developed	
S12	the ability to appraise and form considered judgements and develop a research proposal, a research strategy, theoretical programme and a project such as a dissertation, independently defining and critically appraising their ideas in relation to a specific urban design project and its participatory approach

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:

For candidates of MA and PGDip:

The programme offers a variety of different teaching modes including studio-based design work with individual and group tutorials; block seminars and workshops; lecture modules; as well as 'Live Projects' involving real clients and real community project.

Studio-based design work forms the core of the Masters' programme, and provides for approximately half the programme. Students will work here on given design projects as well as on projects that have been initiated by the students themselves. Studio teaching is structured through individual and group tutorial as well as interim and final project presentations and reviews. The design studio is promoted as a place of integration of skills and knowledge; thus all of these teaching and learning methods combine to develop design understanding and research, analytical and communication skills of the students in order to meet the appropriate objectives listed in **K 1-9** and **S 1-11** above.

Field work relates directly to the studio-based design work and aims at developing the students' skills in directly engaging with relevant stakeholders and local communities, experiment with various forms of traditional and creative site analysis, as well as comparative research. Field work is used to gain both knowledge and awareness as well as to develop and test relevant skills (**K1-9** and **S1-6, 8, 9**).

Lectures will deliver the core and contextual knowledge required for programme (**K1-9**). Lectures will be the main teaching mode in the 'History of Urban Design' unit, but also used in the 'Urban Design project 1+2' units, in the units 'Participation in Architecture and Urban Design' and 'Reflection on Urban Design Practice'.

Seminars in the unit 'Participation in Architecture and Urban Design' will be based on critical readings of key texts in order to develop the students' own approach to urban design and participation and an analytical understanding of urban design and participatory theory and practice (**K1-9** and **S3-6, 8-11**). Seminars in the 'Urban Design Project' units will be students led and allow students to present research work undertaken in the design studio (**K1-9, S1, 2, 7-11**).

Workshops will be used to develop innovative approaches to participation based on case study scenarios. These will be conducted in groups to encourage team working and role playing. Workshops are part of the unit 'Reflection on Urban Design Practice' and 'Participation in Architecture and Urban Design' but also used in the studio-based design projects. They are often combined with lectures and/or seminars. They are particularly used to develop skill listed under **S1-6, 8-10**.

Lectures, Seminars, Workshops offer also **Individual tutorials** as well as **group work** to support each student in the development of her/his individual enabling them to find the most appropriate subjects for their unit assessments and direction of the final project (**S1-12**).

Independent study is essential to the successful completion of the programme. Independent study is important to both the work undertaken in the design studio and in the supporting modules; in the former it has a central role in the design process, where a student's own design proposals develop around issues identified in small group and individual tutorials; in the latter, it is generally geared towards the assimilation and further clarification of material gleaned from lectures, seminars and workshops, the preparation for assessments, and the broader development of knowledge of the field of study. Supervised independent study is central to the researching and writing of the dissertation part of the final project (**K1-9, S1-12**).

Additionally for candidates of MA:

Research and Dissertation is part of the units 'Urban Design Project 3: Thesis Project' and 'Urban Design Thesis Proposal'. The student will develop a research proposal and a research strategy that supports the theoretical approach of the final urban design project. Research and design strategy will be documented in a written dissertation. (**S1-12**).

Opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes are provided through the following assessment methods:

The programme will use a wide variety of assessment methods to enable different skills and knowledge to be developed and to be assessed. All assessment on the MA in Urban Design is continuous and is organised as a structured mechanism by which skills and knowledge are developed by students. The programme has been designed so that assessments required by different modules fit within the overall structure and progression of the programme. In addition, whilst assessments will be used to develop all key areas of understanding and skills, there is an expectation that students will also develop their skills and knowledge without sole recourse to assessments. Skills in time management and self-motivation as well as self-development will not be solely fostered through

teaching and assessment; instead students are expected to develop these outside formal assessment mechanisms.

Studio-based design work and the units 'Urban Design Project 1, 2, and 3' make up 50% of the total credits taken. The learning and assessment processes mirror one another and take place and develop concurrently. Formative assessment occurs through dialogue with oneself, with other students, with and among tutors in tutorials and reviews, where judgments concerning quality are generally reached by consensus. Summative assessment will generally occur through the submission of **coursework**, usually in the form of a **portfolio**. This will, in particular, address the design and participatory aspects of the programme (**K1-7, S1-12**), but students are also expected to demonstrate awareness of cultural, theoretical, historical (**K1-3, K6, S3**) and professional aspects (**K4-9, S9-10**) in their design.

The studio-based courses also directly assess transferable skills such as group working (**S9**), the ability to express these skills being inherent in the submission of a successful portfolio of work. Much of the preparatory work in the design studio involves either independent study or group work, and without this the later work would not show signs of the required development. The design portfolio is often seen as an exemplar of the expression of transferable skills, in as much as it necessarily integrates a diverse set of skills and broad range of knowledge into a single, but complex, document.

Other units will be assessed through:

essay writing where part of the assignment will be used to test understanding and knowledge of theories and precedents in participation. Particular attention will be paid to ensuring that the students make a critical interpretation of various approaches, reasons and implications of participation and participatory practices in urban design. This form of assessment will also be used to test subject knowledge, communication skills, increasing autonomy in student learning, and the development of transferable skills. as well as demonstrating evidence of knowledge of, and a critical attitude towards, the components covered in the programme objectives. Essays also help to develop the students' ability to communicate clearly through fluent writing and the construction of well-developed arguments.

project reports that will be used to test the critical self-appraisal of a student's experience of practice as well as the student's skills in applying knowledge to particular situations and contexts. They are particularly important in assessing skills in analysis (S4), formulation of responses and making decisions (S5, S6, S8, S12) and the ability to communicate findings and recommendations in a clear manner (S10, S11). They also provide a means of checking students' ability to work as teams as well as independently (S8, S9).

oral presentation that is seen as an important part of the assessment strategy. Students are required to present project findings and recommendations to peers, outside professionals and members of staff, and such presentation is assessed. Oral presentation particularly allows the assessment of the ability to communicate clearly and effectively (S16). Oral presentation will be used throughout the programme as a means of students presenting their work and reporting back to the year or module group. Oral presentation is a particularly important skill for urban designers and students are expected to develop their abilities in this throughout the programme.

graphic presentation that will be used as a means of assessment to test the ability of students to communicate the results of analysis, research and make recommendations in a graphical form (S10). This is an important skill for urban designers to acquire.

The **dissertation** as part of the culmination of the programme. Whilst it allows the expression of core and particularly specialist knowledge and skills to be demonstrated, it is not intended as a summative assessment for the whole programme. Instead, the dissertation is intended to demonstrate particular understandings and skills. In particular, the dissertation is seen as a key expression of specialist knowledge and skills (K1, K6-9, S2, S3) and the ability to identify research problems and formulate and carry out a programme of research (S12) that informs and supports that final urban design project.

Reviews and assessments draw on the innovative, student-led modes that have been already developed and implemented by the School of Architecture ('Swap Review', 'Role Play', 'Project Surgery', 'Peer Review', 'Interview' or 'Exhibition Review' etc).

19. Reference points

The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:

External Reference Points

The programme addresses a growing national and international need for professionals that are knowledgeable and skilled in urban design. It has been increasingly recognized (RIBA, RTPI, CABE, ODPM) that urban design and urban designers form the long neglected yet crucial link that can mediate between individual architectural projects and overall planning strategies.

The following documents have been used to inform this:

- Urban Task Force Report (R. Rogers) 1999
- Urban White Paper 2000,
- CABE Reports 'The Value of Urban Design' and 'Urban Design Skills Working Group'
- Egan Review 2004

In particular, regional initiatives such as Yorkshire Forward Renaissance Towns and Cities increasingly require the expertise of urban designers. To date, only a very limited number of professional practices, academics and trained graduates can cater for this need. It is anticipated that the programme will provide for this professional market and field of research. The School of Architecture has already cooperated with a number of Yorkshire Renaissance towns, conducting research and developing projects that can inform their regeneration processes. The Masters' in Urban Design programme builds on these experiences and strengthens the schools engagement with the region and its stakeholders.

In preparation to the new programme a number of external experts in the field of urban design were consulted on the direction and relevance of the programme and assure the programmes suitability for the practice of urban design. The consultants represent bodies like CABE, The Academy of Urbanism, Yorkshire Forward, Urbed Trust, or the Urban Design Group as well as renowned practices such as Fluid, DEG, Urbed, and BaumansLyons.

Internal Reference Points

The internal reference points generally reflect on the distinctive nature of the programme in terms of research led teaching, student self-development, integration of all aspects of the programme, and the aspiration for a rigorous knowledge base. They also inform the emphasis on social and environmental aspects within the programme.

The following documents and positions have been used to do this:

University Strategic Plan <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/strategicplan>

University Vision and Strategic Plan
<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/vision>

The programme follows the intellectual ethos of the School of Architecture, building strongly on social and environmental responsibilities in relation to the design and production of the built environment.

The programme complements the two already existing taught Postgraduate programmes at the department, MArch Studies and MSc in Computer Aided Environmental Design, and hence enhance the already strong student body and post-graduate culture at the school.

The programme builds on the department's acclaimed research and teaching expertise, specifically in the field of participatory design, and extend the work already done in the MArch programme.

20. Programme structure and regulations

Programme Units

Core to the programme is the work in the design studio and the units 'Urban Design Project 1', 'Urban Design Project 2' and 'Urban Design Project 3 – Thesis' which are taught in the autumn and spring semesters and over the summer respectively.

Students will here be confronted with every aspect informing Urban Design and the realisation of urban design projects in quasi real situations and in exchange with professional as well as local/lay people.

In particular the unit will lead the student to explore participatory approaches to urban design and give the opportunity to implement and test them within the design project.

The design units are not stand-alone units but build on and integrate the knowledge and skills gained in the other core units of the programme. One option unit offers the student the opportunity to put a particular personal emphasis on the programme in order to match personal interests or future practice requirements. The Option unit is ideally taken in the autumn spring semester.

Qualifications and Credits

The Programme is a Postgraduate Masters' Course with **180 Credits** in total of which all have to be taken at Level M. The Masters' course runs over one full academic year with the taught units predominantly in the autumn and spring semester and a continuation over the summer in which the student works on their dissertation and the final urban design project. The Programme also offers the option of a Postgraduate Diploma with **120 Credits** of which all have to be taken at Level M. Students taking the Postgraduate Diploma route will finish their studies after the spring semester.

The Programme is design focused which is reflected in the weighing of the credits with, at Master Level, 105 Credits

given for design work and 75 credits given for the supporting units (60/60 respectively for the PGDip level).

Structure/Timetable

Formal teaching is structured with two consecutive core teaching days per week. Full-time students are expected to conduct independent study on the other three days and are encouraged to use the design study for this in order to profit from the exchange with their peers.

The two-day structure allows for a part-time route of the programme, that runs over the course of two consecutive years. The core modules are streamlined for 1 day of the week for both years of part time study. This allows students who work parallel in practice to gain knowledge and acquire skills in the field of Urban Design.

CPD Modules

The programme offers the following units as CPD (Continuous Professional Development) modules to be taken by professionals in relevant fields of architecture, urban design and planning.

Participation in Architecture and Urban Design.

Trajectories of Urban Design Practice.

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available on-line at www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar

21. Student development over the course of study

As a one-year post-graduate programme, it is assumed that students will enter the programme with an already established set of skills. The main development within the programme is in the sequence of design projects which gradually increase in complexity and scale. The final thesis project also integrates the knowledge developed in the non-studio-based courses.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

The entry requirement to the programme will be a first undergraduate degree (2.1 or above) or other equivalent qualification related to design in the built environment including architecture, landscape architecture, and town planning. Applicants will also have to present a portfolio.

Students with a degree from non-design-based courses but with substantial professional design experience can still be considered. Additionally, to a portfolio that substantiates the candidate's design abilities, students will have to go through an interview process.

For students whose first language is not English, or who have not gained previous academic qualifications with English as the main language, we ask that you demonstrate satisfactory proficiency. Applicants are normally expected to have a qualification such as IELTS (or an equivalent) with a score of 6.5 (with no component less than 6.0).

23. Additional information

For further information about the School of Architecture go to <http://www.shef.ac.uk/architecture/>

This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching department(s) and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at www.shef.ac.uk/ssid.