



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 Studies
2	Programme Code	TRPU103
3	JACS Code	L722
4	Level of Study	Undergraduate
5a	Final Qualification	BA with Honours (BA Hons)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	Honours
6	Intermediate Qualifications	None
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Social Sciences
9	Department	Urban Studies and Planning
10	Other Departments involved in teaching the programme	None
11	Mode of Attendance	Full-time
12	Duration of the Programme	3 years
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	None
14	Date of production/revision	April 2016, February 2017, March 2018, February 2020, March 2021, January 2022, March 2023

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Increasing numbers of people are living in towns and cities with urban areas recognised as critical sites of social, economic, and environmental opportunities, experimentation, transformation and challenges. Indeed, urban areas are typically localities where political decision making takes place, where finance and business investment is centred, and where environmental risk, cultural differences and consumption as well as complex networks of social relationships proliferate. Urban activities can offer many benefits and opportunities such as employment, healthcare, education, entertainment, diversity and neighbourliness. But cities can contribute to significant problems, including pollution, congestion, crime and challenges of affordability. They can also be the site of conflict over resources such as land, housing, schools and work, as well as about how different spaces in the city are used, controlled and planned, and over who has the right to use the city in different ways and who does not. Analysis of urban problems and devising solutions to those problems is a major area of government policy making, but also generates significant activity in the private and voluntary sectors. This BA Urban Studies programme allows students to engage with these issues and debates, developing core skills relating to these opportunities and challenges. As such, much of the learning on the course constitutes Education for Sustainable Development. The programme aims to be stimulating and challenging while providing you with a broad platform from which you can launch a variety of urban-related careers and/or develop further specialism through masters' level training. The BA (Hons) Urban Studies degree programme has been structured to be compatible with the MPlan Urban Studies and Planning course until the start of the second semester in the second year. Subject to agreement, you may transfer to the MPlan Urban Studies and Planning course (or to transfer from that course to the BA (Hons) Urban Studies course) should you wish to do so until this stage of your second year.

Students on the BA (Hons) Urban Studies course have an opportunity in their second and third years to select from a list of relevant modules from Urban Studies and Planning as well as from other Departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences. The modules on offer allow you to broaden your knowledge and gain access to

new insights into urban issues, as well as pursuing a number of different specialist interests.

The course has been carefully designed to enable you to acquire both general and specialised knowledge of urban issues and to develop the necessary skills to analyse complex issues, devise creative and effective solutions to problems, communicate ideas effectively and take action to put ideas into practice.

Students study urban issues and responses to these in order to develop in-depth knowledge of these areas. It includes project work in the first and second years, and field activities in all three years depending what options are selected. It includes the opportunity to apply to study abroad. The course is largely assessed via coursework including reports, projects, essays, presentations, and blogs. There is a mix of individual assignments and groupwork while formal examinations also play a role in assessment. Students will undertake an undergraduate Dissertation in their final year, focusing on an issue related to the 'urban' as a subject or context.

Employability is a key focus, with a Professional Skills Development module developing students' career and employability skills across each year, supplementing the development of 'urban professional' skills (such as mapping and analysing data) within core modules. Optional placements are offered to enhance this training. As a result of the high quality of the degree and the reputation of the department, our graduates from the course are in high demand and there are excellent prospects for employment in a very wide range of careers.

Further information on the course and on employment prospects may be obtained from the department web site at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/usp>.

16. Programme aims

The aims of the course reflect the overall teaching and learning aims of the Department.

1. To develop in students a broad understanding of contemporary urban challenges together with a more detailed and critical knowledge of specialised issues in urban studies.
2. To develop students' knowledge of the history and complexities of urban issues, as well as their understanding of different ways of theorising, knowing and researching urban concerns.
3. To support students in developing intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and independent judgement.
4. To maximise student employability in urban management professions by progressively developing competencies for making constructive interventions in the urban environment.
5. To develop and enhance the techniques and skills needed for graduate employability underpinned by a commitment to self-improvement through reflection and ongoing skills development.
6. To model and promote an appreciation of equality, diversity and inclusion in course practices and content.

To provide a supportive environment for students and to include them in shaping and managing an effective programme and their learning opportunities.

7. To enable students to maximise their potential in all aspects of their course.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding:	
K1	The complexity and comparability of global urban challenges and their particular and diverse manifestations in different urban areas.
K2	The historical theoretical and political context of urban development and processes.
K3	A critical approach to urban studies which foregrounds politics, urban inequality, the realities of urban conflict, goals of social and environmental justice, processes of public participation and an appreciation for diversity within urban contexts.
K4	How diverse knowledges and activities shape change in the economic, built and natural environment, including understandings from public participation and changes wrought through community action.
K5	The multiple scales of urban studies from the local to the global, including the rural, and the processes of connection and mobility across urban scales and spaces.

K6	The nature, purpose and methods of urban interventions and policies.
K7	Core debates, theoretical approaches, and critiques of urban scholarship.
K8	An understanding of key concepts and debates about the natural, social, economic, developmental, and political environments as they pertain to urban areas.
K9	The purposes and practices of a range of urban professions (such as planning, urban design, regeneration, community development, surveying, housing, and environmental management).
K10	Methods and methodologies underpinning critical urban research including a critical awareness of the politics of urban knowledge production and potential risks involved in undertaking research.
K11	Verbal, written, digital, visual and graphic means of representing and communicating urban phenomena, problems and solutions.
K12	The moral and ethical dimensions of urban research and the work of urban professionals.
K13	An appreciation of the diversity of cultures and views and an orientation to social justice offering a voice to the more marginalised, and equal opportunities for all.
K14	An awareness of the complex environmental challenges facing urban areas and the global imperative to reduce resource use through planning and urban development as part of an orientation towards environmental justice and sustainable development.
K15	An appreciation of key sectors around which integration of understanding needs to occur, such as infrastructure, services, environment, economy.

S1	Identify, synthesise, and critically review disciplinary knowledge in relation to a range of urban issues.
S2	Apply disciplinary concepts and methods in evaluating and interpreting urban phenomena including articulating their ethical and social justice implications.
S3	Use logical argument, critical thinking, and creativity to frame urban challenges and to suggest responses to a variety of urban problems in different contexts and at different geographical scales.
S4	Represent urban information and arguments to a range of audiences using appropriate written, oral, visual, graphical and GIS media, methods, and technologies.
S5	Design, execute, evaluate, and report an investigation of an urban or planning phenomena identifying and applying knowledge within and up to the frontiers of the discipline;
S6	Utilise intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and independent judgement.
S7	Work independently and as part of a team deploying effective organisation, personal responsibility, and planning skills.
S8	Describe skills, attributes, and experience, and critically reflect on professional development to foster lifelong learning skills.
S9	Relate to, work with, and learn from different people, recognising and being respectful to diverse perspectives and needs, taking account of social dynamics and power relations.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

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

A variety of teaching and learning methods are employed to support students' achievement of the learning outcomes. The whole course puts an emphasis on coursework and practice to engage progressively with the various skills and to build successively more in-depth and interconnected knowledge. There is a clear development of teaching and learning over the course to add value to the student's learning experience. The whole course puts an emphasis on coursework and practice to engage with different sets of skills and different sets of knowledge. At Level 1 students are introduced to this variety through lectures and, seminars, supplemented by field and project activities. Assessment is primarily coursework including essays, reports and posters, with some examinations. At Levels 2 and 3 these teaching techniques are supplemented by an increased emphasis on small group learning, with seminars, workshops, and project work to foster deeper understanding of issues, enhance research skills and give experience of collaborative working practices. Assessment at levels 2 and 3 are largely via coursework. Core skills and knowledge, such as the challenges of

undertaking urban research, are developed within the compulsory modules. Optionality is found in all three years, but it increases in extent as students' progress through the course. As well as optional modules provided by USP, students are permitted, with guidance, to choose urban-focused modules from a variety of other relevant Departments in order to deepen their understanding of particular academic approaches to understanding the urban context, alongside completing tailored modules focusing on critical urban issues). The third year concludes with a Dissertation in which, under supervision, students address an appropriate issue of their choosing and undertake independent research around that topic.

More generally, the following teaching and learning methods are employed, which relate particularly to the teaching and learning outcomes shown below but which may also contribute to other teaching and learning outcomes.

1. **Lectures** are used to impart fundamental knowledge. They provide the foundation on which more reflective teaching and learning is built up through seminars and self-directed study (including through reading). They contribute primarily to the development of knowledge (K1-15 above).

2. **Seminars** are an important part of some modules. They provide a smaller group format in which the ideas, concepts and knowledge introduced in the wider module are discussed and examined, deepening the student's understanding of a topic (K1 -K15 above) and allowing the student to develop their critical reading, communication and collaborative skills (S1, S2, S3 and S6 above).

3. **Projects** allow the student to work collaboratively to examine an issue in depth (K1-K15), often incorporating fieldwork in which the student is brought into contact with practitioners or members of the public, and requiring the synthesis of knowledge from differing parts of the curriculum (S1-S3). In addition, projects encourage the student to develop research skills (S5), to improve their group working (S7), to practice respectful interactions with diverse people (S9) and to develop their skills at presenting urban evidence (S4).

4. **Workshops** form a core component of some modules. These offer tutor-guided focused work on a specific topic where the student's participation is a key part of the process (S2, S3, and S6 and S7).

5. **Group Work** forms a central part of the teaching and learning experience for the student (S7 above). Some group work is formative, contributing to individual assessments, in other cases group assessment are undertaken and are accompanied by peer review.

6. **Individual research** is employed in teaching to aid the student to deepen their knowledge of a particular area of urban issues, scholarship and practice activity and to improve their research skills and self-management skills (S5 and S7 above).

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

There is a progressive development of assessment methods and criteria to reflect the developmental attributes of the teaching.

At Level 1 there is an emphasis on a variety of coursework formats and some formal examinations to impart, practice and assess core knowledge and skills. Students are given formal and informal feedback during the course of modules.

At Level 2 there is increased emphasis on coursework and project work in order to foster deeper understanding of issues, enhance research skills and give experience of collaborative working practices. Depending on options selected assessed coursework may take a variety of forms, including essays, reports, presentations, posters and visual materials, financial appraisals and virtual outputs from multi-media computer packages.

Level 3 offers students the opportunity to deepen their understanding of urban issues through a choice of modules. The assessment for these will vary according to the combination of choices the student makes. Students will also complete a dissertation which enables them to practice the management and presentation of an independent piece of research.

19. Reference points

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

From external professional and academic institutions:

The Honours and Masters level qualification descriptors within the Quality Assurance Authority for Higher Education (QAAHE) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, 2014;

The QAAHE Subject Benchmark Statement for Town and Country Planning, 2016;

The Learning Outcomes contained in the Royal Town Planning Institute Policy Statement on Initial Planning Education, 2012;

The University of Sheffield's Our vision and strategic plan 2020-2025.

From within the Department's internal processes and procedures:

The Department of Urban Studies and Planning's Statement of Educational Philosophy, 2016;

Past reports from external examiners, RTPI Accreditation Boards and undergraduate Year Tutors;

The Department's external Liaison Committee consisting of professional planners, planning academics, staff and students and the RTPI Dialogue Member for the Department.

20. Programme structure and regulations

The programme structure is modular and in each year students study modules worth a total of 120 credits.

The first year is an introductory year consisting of 100 credits of core (compulsory) modules and 20 credits of guided module choice from relevant urban-related modules from a number of Departments.

The second year introduces more conceptual and theoretical aspects of urban issues and consists of 80 credits of core modules, and a further 40 credits of specialised study chosen from an approved list of modules from GEO, SCS and TRP F5 Level units.

In the third year students take a core of 80 credits including the dissertation, and they then choose an additional 20 credits of TRP optional modules. They choose their remaining 20 credits of guided modules choices from cognate departments (GEO, SCS, EAS F6 Level units. Students' registered for the BA (Hons) Urban Studies programme may, up to the beginning of the second semester of their second year, transfer to the four-year undergraduate MPlan Urban Studies and Planning, as the first eighteen months of both programmes are identical. In that case, the student normally will not graduate at the end of the third year but will continue into the fourth year, graduating at the end of that year with a MPlan Urban Studies and Planning.

The course offers the opportunity to spend the whole of the second year as a study abroad student overseas at approved institutions. The modules taken there are carefully selected to be equivalent to those in the second year of the programme so that the student may resume their studies in the third year on their return.

Each level of the programme has a zero credit Professional Skills Development module seeking to deliver a range of employability skills through a series of sessions over the academic year, tailored to each student cohort. The module combines careers events and workshops and is designed as an opportunity for all undergraduate students' in Urban Studies and Planning to improve their student experience through enhanced employability skills development. Through a series of lectures from visiting practitioners, the careers service and academic staff along with seminars discussing key skills development, students will develop an understanding of the skills required to succeed in the workplace.

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 <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar/>

21. Student development over the course of study

Level 1

A key aim of Level 1 is to allow new students to develop a strong knowledge base covering the basic contextual knowledge areas, which then will serve as a foundation on which the more advanced parts of the course are developed. The programme structure ensures a progressive development of knowledge from TRP131 (The Making of Urban Places) and TRP113 (Contemporary Urban Challenges) in the Autumn semester through to TRP133 (Development, Planning and the State), TRP105 (Climate Action) and TRP107 (Urban Economics) in the Spring semester.

Skills are an important focus at Level 1. TRP132 (Cities, places and people) includes project work in the field to develop introductory coverage of research issues (such as why we do research, types of research methods, who does research, etc.). You will also undertake a presentation and experience working in a team. Your understanding of employability and teamworking will be further developed in TRP112 (Professional skills). TRP108 (Information and Communication Skills) coupled with TRP131 focuses on developing your skills at academic argument. TRP114 (Cities, space and urban design) introduces design skills and requires the development of a poster.

The 20-credit guided module choice is important in allowing students to broaden their knowledge. For example, language skills gained at school may be taken further, or political or sociological knowledge enhanced. Students are given guidance in Intro Week, when choosing their modules for the year, on how to plan the progressive development of their specialised study throughout their course.

At the end of Level 1 the successful student will have a thorough basic grounding in urbanisation and planning processes, will have an appreciation of architectural and landscape design, will have enhanced quantitative research skills and will have experience of computing, team working and project work.

Level 2

There are two main aims at Level 2: first, to deepen students' understanding of urban concepts and the theoretical debates that inform urban practice; and second, to extend students' knowledge of substantive urban processes and practices. These aims will be achieved in the Autumn semester through modules TRP210 (Urban Design and Placemaking), TRP234 (Urban Theory) and TRP216 (Urban Analytics) and through TRP215 (Researching the city: applied skills for practice) in the Spring semester. TRP222, Professional Skills additionally requires that you practice basic skills needed to gain employment.

Guided module choice at Level 2, semester 2 allows students to further extend their knowledge of a particular urban or planning topics, often building on the optional modules at Level 1. Students are guided by Year Tutors as to the most appropriate module(s) to consider from a range available from cognate departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences including USP, Geography, Sociological Studies, and East Asian Studies.

At the end of Level 2 the successful student will have developed conceptual and theoretical understanding of urban issues, will have further developed their knowledge of urban practice, will have enhanced research skills, and will have deepened their specialised knowledge of urban issues.

Level 3

The aim of Level 3 is to conclude students' course through developing in depth understanding of the central challenges facing cities while also enabling students to develop specialised knowledge of specific topics according to their interests. The modules TRP339 Future Cities and TRP335 Housing and Urban Inequalities are taken by all students offering detailed examination of these topics. Students are also required to take the TRP337 Dissertation, in which, supported by a supervisor, they build on their learning from levels 1 and 2 to conduct an in-depth independent investigation of one urban issue or topic. Alongside their dissertation students have the choice of 40 credits of guided module choice from relevant modules from the Departments of Urban Studies and Planning, Geography and Sociological Studies. At the end of Level 3 the successful student will be able to apply conceptual and theoretical understanding to real urban issues, will have improved their research skills, and will have deepened their specialised, multi-disciplinary knowledge of urban issues.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

All applications are treated individually but the normal entry requirement for admission to the course is three 'A' Levels at grades ABB or the equivalent in other qualifications. In addition, GCSE grade 4/C or equivalent is required in English Language and Maths. No specific subjects are required at 'A' Level or equivalent, and the course attracts students with backgrounds in the social sciences (such as geography, economics, politics, sociology or business studies), humanities and design, including a broad interest in architecture and the environment. Applications are particularly welcomed from minority ethnic students, from women, from mature students and from disabled students.

Detailed information regarding admission to the programme is available in the undergraduate brochure for the department, which is available on-line at www.shef.ac.uk/usp. Further information about admission to the University may be obtained from the University's On-Line Prospectus at www.shef.ac.uk/prospective/prospectus.html.

23. Additional information

As part of TRP215 Researching the city: Applied skills for practice, students undertake field class activities which may include a residential visit to a city in the UK or within Europe. The costs of transport and accommodation are covered as part of the student fees but subsistence is self-funded. Students should anticipate a daily expenditure of £40.

Destinations for field classes may change from year to year in response to our course content, our world-leading research, feedback from previous students or wider global events. We will contact students in advance of any changes to our field classes.

Further information about the programme and about the department is available on the department web site at www.shef.ac.uk/usp

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.