



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 and Planning
2	Programme Code	TRPU104 (BA); TRPU105 (MPlan)
3	JACS Code	K400
4	Level of Study	Undergraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Master of Planning (MPlan)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	Masters
6a	Intermediate Qualifications	BA (Hons) Urban Studies and Planning
6b	QAA FHEQ Level	Honours
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	4 years
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	Royal Town Planning Institute, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Chartered Institute of Housing.
14	Date of production/revision	March 2018, February 2020, February 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 and their hinterlands 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 also contribute to significant problems, including pollution, congestion, crime, and the challenge of affordability. They can also prompt conflict over how different spaces in the city are used, controlled and planned, over resources such as land, housing, schools and work and, more broadly, over who has the right to use the city in different ways and who does not. Planners work with others to make the most of the benefits and opportunities while minimising the problems of urban living. In short, they aim to make our world a better place to live in.

The MPlan in Urban Studies and Planning is a professionally accredited 'undergraduate Masters' programme', which means it integrates a strong undergraduate level understanding of urban issues and the planning context with tailored accredited Masters level understanding to launch professional careers. Successful completion of the degree allows the graduate professional level entry into a career in urban planning, real estate development, housing management or other related areas within both the public and private sectors. Subject to agreement, you may transfer to the BA (Hons) Urban Studies course until the start of your third year, and the BA (Hons) Urban Studies and Planning course up until the commencement of your fourth year.

The MPlan programme has been carefully designed to enable students to acquire both general and specialised knowledge of urban and planning issues and to develop the planning-related and generic skills to analyse complex issues through critical thinking, to devise creative and effective responses to planning problems, to communicate ideas effectively and to take action to put ideas into practice. As such, much of the learning on the course constitutes Education for Sustainable Development.

Teaching on this programme draws on staff research including our varied collaborations with partners ranging from international, national and local government to community groups and voluntary sector organisations.

The programme includes field visits and project work and the opportunity to study abroad. There is a range of types of assessment used, including examinations, coursework essays and reports, presentations, posters, and project work. Coursework assessment is used extensively to help develop deep understanding, develop skills, and consolidate prior learning in later levels. Students will undertake an undergraduate Dissertation in their third year, focusing on a specific area of planning and planning-related policy and practice to develop in-depth knowledge.

The integrated four-year MPlan is a long-standing feature of professional accreditation in town planning in the UK. The degree is widely recognised by employers and offers students very good prospects to develop a career in the field. Pedagogically, the focus of the final year of the degree is fourfold: i. to consolidate and apply prior learning through application to real world projects and challenges (i.e. TRP466; TRP468); ii. to further develop critical understanding of planning theories through reflection on practice (TRP466, 46X, 468); iii. To prepare for professional practice through engagement with a range of contemporary challenges and the experiences of professionals in practice (TRP468; 46X) and iv. through specialisation in chosen areas of planning and urban studies that enable students to explore their own interests further whilst developing a more detailed appreciation of key areas of practice (option module choices).

Graduates achieving the MPlan are in high demand and there are excellent prospects for employment in local authority planning departments or in private planning consultancies. Many other careers are also open to graduates.

Further information on the programme and on employment prospects may be obtained from the department web site at www.shef.ac.uk/usp

16. Programme aims

The aims of the MPlan in Urban Studies and Planning reflect the overall teaching and learning aims of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning in that they seek:

1. To develop in students a broad understanding of contemporary urban challenges together with a more detailed and critical knowledge of issues in planning, real estate and housing practice.
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 prepare students for professional planning, real estate, housing and other urban professional practice by offering a programme which meets accreditation requirements and which provides teaching informed by professional experience.
5. To maximise student employability in planning, real estate, housing and related professions by progressively developing competencies for making constructive interventions in the urban environment.
6. To model and promote an appreciation of equality, diversity and inclusion in course practices and content.
7. 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.
8. To provide a supportive environment for students and to include them in shaping and managing an effective programme and their learning opportunities.
9. 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 contexts of urban development and processes and their role in underpinning different approaches, purposes and methods of planning.
K3	A critical approach to planning which foregrounds politics, urban inequality, the realities of urban conflict, goals of social and environment justice, processes of public participation and an appreciation for diversity within urban contexts.

K4	How diverse knowledges and activities shape change in natural, social, economic, developmental and political environments, 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, purposes and methods of planning interventions and policies.
K7	Core debates, theoretical approaches, and critiques of planning scholarship.
K8	An understanding of key concepts and debates about the natural, social, economic, developmental, and political environments as they pertain to planning.
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 planning 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 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.

Skills and other attributes:	
S1	Identify, synthesise and critically review disciplinary knowledge in relation to a range of planning issues.
S2	Apply 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 planning 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 action 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

<p>Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:</p> <p>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 four years of study to add value to the student's learning experience. 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</p>
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some examinations. At Levels 2 and 3 these teaching techniques are supplemented by an increased emphasis on small group learning, seminars and project work to foster deeper understandings 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. Level 3 offers students an overview of key concerns shaping the planning profession, including plan-making, planning law, sustainability as well as housing and inequality. Level 3 concludes with an individual dissertation in which the student's research, analysis and problem-solving skills are further developed. At Level 4 the focus shifts to preparing students for work, by emphasising professional practice engagement, through the major TRP466 Participatory Planning (a project model in which students collate and analyse public perspectives on a planning topic), and TRP468 Critical Perspectives in Planning, in which external professionals speak about their work contexts. The choice of specialist study option modules provides students with tailored skills and an ability to think creatively and in terms of up to date debates and interventions.

More generally, the following teaching and learning methods are employed, which relate particularly to the specific learning outcomes as indicated, but which will also contribute to the development of other 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. They contribute primarily to the development of knowledge (K1-K15).
- 2. Seminars**, are an important part of some lecture courses. 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) and allowing the student to develop their 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 different 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 interaction 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 (K3, K11, K12, K13, S2, S3, S6 and S7).
- 5. Group Work** forms an important part of the teaching and learning experience for students, and group working skills are highly valued by employers (S7). Some group work is formative, contributing to individual assessments, in other cases group assessments 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 planning issues, scholarship and practice (K1-15) and to improve their research skills and self-management skills (S1-S9, but particularly S5).
- 7. Specialised studies** are key to the programme. They are taught in smaller groups and enhance the student's knowledge of planning by the acquisition of deeper understanding of planning issues (K9).
- 8. Placements** on the programme. Students are supported in identifying short voluntary placements to experience planning in practice, to test their team work and professional skills and widen their learning about planning challenges. Students have the option of applying for and, if successful, undertaking a full year's placement with a planning organisation (K4, K6, K9, K12, S3, S7, S8, S9)

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 described above.

At Level 1 there is an emphasis on a variety of coursework formats as well as some formal examinations in order to impart and assess basic knowledge. Students are given feedback during the course of modules.

At Levels 2 and 3 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. Assessed coursework may take a variety of forms, but includes essays, reports, presentations, posters, visual material and financial appraisals. Level 3 concludes with an individual dissertation which enables them to practice the management and presentation of an independent piece of research. In order to progress to Level

4, a student normally must achieve at least an equivalent to a lower second class undergraduate degree.

At Level 4 the focus shifts to specialist study, policy prescription and professional working. At Level 4 the focus shifts to preparing students for work, by emphasising professional practice engagement, through the major TRP466 Participatory Planning (a project model in which students collate and analyse public perspectives on a planning topic), and TRP468 Critical Perspectives in Planning, in which external professionals speak about their work contexts. The choice of specialist study option modules provides students with tailored skills and an ability to think creatively and in terms of up to date debates and interventions.

Central to this is the major Participatory Planning module (TRP466) which fosters multi-specialist collaborative working leading to a significant external engagement activity. This module, and TRP468 Critical Perspectives in Planning both draw on the expertise of external professionals to engage students in 'real-life' planning issues. TRP468 will run across the full academic year, providing a significant capstone ending to students' degree programme by holistically assessing students' abilities to consolidate and apply all prior learning in a major employability-oriented piece of work. Specialised study options also deepen students' specialist knowledge of planning and engage them with the theory and practice of planning. They are assessed by a variety of coursework methods such as presentations, reports and essays. In order to qualify for award of the MPlan, a student normally must achieve the equivalent of at least a lower second class standard over Levels 2, 3 and 4.

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 Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, 2014;
- The QAA 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 per Level.

The first year (Level 1) is an introductory year consisting of 100 credits of core (compulsory) modules and 20 credits of guided choice from relevant urban-related modules from a number of Departments.

The second year (Level 2) introduces more conceptual and theoretical aspects of urban studies and planning and consists of 120 credits of core modules.

At the end of the second year, the successful student will progress to Level 3, assuming that not less than 100 credits have been passed at Level 2.

In the third year (Level 3) students focus on the interaction between planning policy and practice with the concepts they have encountered in the programme as well as engagement with key issues in planning through modules on Plan-making, Sustainable Cities, Housing and Planning law. Core modules account for 80 credits while students undertake specialised studies through a 40 credit Dissertation, which includes both taught component and support from a supervisor in planning and undertaking an individual investigation.

At the end of the third year, the successful student can exit and graduate with a BA (Hons) Urban Studies and Planning. The programme holds partial professional accreditation by the Royal Town Planning Institute for students who wish to exit the MPLAN at the end of Level 3. Assuming that a satisfactory standard is attained after Level 3 (normally a weighted mean grade of 49.5 across Level 2 and at Level 3 modules combined), the

student may then continue to the MPlan in the fourth year.

The fourth year (Level 4), more than the first three years, focuses on professional issues and further develops students' specialised knowledge. 75 credits are taken up by core modules while 45 credits are allocated to specialised study. At the end of the fourth year, a student attaining a weighted mean grade of 49.5 across Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4 modules combined will be entitled to graduate with a degree of MPlan Urban Studies and Planning, which is fully accredited by the RTPi as a Combined Course.

Each level has a zero credit pass-fail 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. The Professional Skills modules are assessed on the basis of attendance as well as submissions of key items of skills-related work for formative feedback.

During the programme, students are encouraged to undertake work experience in a planning related organisation. This may consist of voluntary or paid experience; such experience is often undertaken during summer vacations and sometimes in other vacations or part time during term time. They are also encouraged to consider year long work experience opportunities.

Students are also offered the opportunity to spend the whole of the second year as a study abroad student in the USA, Hong Kong, Australia, or another approved Study Abroad university. 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. These arrangements are approved by the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Students registered for the MPlan Urban Studies and Planning programme may, up to the end of the second semester of their second year, apply to transfer to the BA (Hons) Urban Studies. For further information on the BA (Hons) Urban Studies, please refer to the separate specifications.

Please refer to the [Programme Regulations](#), [General University Regulations](#) and the [On-line Directory of Modules](#) for detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules.

21. Student development over the course of study

Level 1: Students are introduced to basic ideas and knowledge about development and planning and are enabled to develop their study skills.

A key aim of Level 1 is to allow new students to develop a strong knowledge base covering the basic planning-related contextual knowledge areas, which then will serve as a foundation on which the more advanced parts of the programme 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 team working 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 zero credit Professional Skills module (TRP112) introduces you to employability skills, including team-working and reflection.

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 programme.

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 environmental issues, will have enhanced research skills and will have experience of computing, team working and project work.

Level 2: Intellectual ideas that relate to development and planning are studied in depth.

There are two main aims at Level 2. First, learning at this level will deepen students' understanding of planning concepts and the theoretical debates that inform planning practice, including debates about the knowledge and stakeholders who inform planning practice. This is achieved through TRP234 (Urban Theory), TRP216 (Urban Analytics), TRP215 (Researching the City: Applied skills for practice and TRP224 (City Makers).

Second, this level aims to extend students' knowledge of substantive planning processes and practices. This will be achieved predominantly through modules TRP210 (Urban Design and Place-Making) and TRP217 (Planning, Viability and Development). Additionally, TRP222 (Professional Skills) requires that you practice the basic skills needed to gain employment.

Towards the end of Level 2 students will be offered introductory guidance on the dissertations to be undertaken at Level 3 including what a dissertation is and suitable topic selection. TRP215 (Researching the City: Applied Skills for Practice) will also introduce students to key research methods suitable for their dissertations in Level 3.

At the end of Level 2 the successful student will have developed conceptual and theoretical understanding of planning issues, will have further developed their knowledge of planning practice, and will have enhanced planning research skills. Students will be strongly encouraged to undertake a period of work experience in a planning related organisation in the Summer vacation prior to beginning their third year.

Level 3: Provides students with opportunities to examine the interplay between intellectual concepts and ideas and the practice of planning.

At Level 3 students will continue to develop their planning knowledge through modules which illustrate how concepts and theories are applied to real planning problems and practices at different scales. TRP338, Plan-making and development, examines in detail how cities develop and progress their plans, meanwhile, TRP341 (Sustainable Cities) examines the interplay between aspirations for Cities and sites. In the second semester different perspectives about stakeholders' rights and control over the city development and changes processes are examined within the modules TRP342, Planning Law and TRP335, Housing and Urban Inequalities. Specialised knowledge is further developed through a 40-credit research module TRP337 Dissertation in Urban Studies and Planning, which allows students to build on earlier optional modules and to add to their research skills by examining a particular topic in greater depth.

At the end of Level 3 the successful student will be able to apply conceptual and theoretical understanding to real planning issues, will have further developed their knowledge of planning practice, will have enhanced their planning research skills, and will have deepened their specialised planning knowledge. Provided a satisfactory standard is achieved at Level 3 (see 20 above), the student may then continue to Level 4 of the MPlan Urban Studies and Planning.

Level 4: Advances the professional expertise of the student through theoretically informed planning activities and engagement with planning professionals and live projects.

Level 4 is the 'professional year'. Reflections on the processes and ethics of practice are considered within TRP475, Value, theory and ethics. Specialised study is developed through TRP466 (Participatory Planning) which provides students with an opportunity to experience 'real' planning challenges. Alongside this module, students further develop their knowledge of principles of planning systems, including general concepts of development planning and development control, as part of TRP468 Development Planning.

The Spring semester offers students a series of specialised study options. Students choose three 15-credit modules in consultation with a member of staff. At the end of the fourth year the successful student will be able to combine understanding of planning issues and practice, conceptual and creative thinking, subject-specific and generic skills and specialised planning knowledge to analyse planning problems, research the issues and develop appropriate and feasible solutions.

Upon completion of the year, provided a satisfactory standard is attained (see 20 above), a successful student will be awarded the degree of MPlan Urban Studies and Planning.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

All applications are treated individually but the normal entry requirement for admission to the programme is three 'A' Levels at grades ABB or the equivalent in other qualifications. In addition, GCSE grade C is required in Mathematics. No specific subjects are required at 'A' Level or equivalent, but it is often advantageous for applicants to have some background in a social science subject such as geography, economics, politics, sociology or business studies. 'A' Levels in Art & Design and Design & Technology are considered to be 'acceptable' for the purposes of this course.

The Department is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in the application process and wishes to ensure a diversity of students on its programmes. It therefore particularly welcomes applications from people from non-standard academic backgrounds, from people with relevant employment experience, 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 <http://www.shef.ac.uk/prospective/>.

23. Additional information

The programme is fully accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute,

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 the department is available on the department web site at www.sheffield.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.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid.