

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	Landscape Studies
2	Programme Code	LSCT124
3	JACS Code	K310
4	Level of Study	Postgraduate
5a	Final Qualification	MA
5b	Position in the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications	Masters
6	Intermediate Qualification(s)	Not applicable
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Social Sciences
9	Department	Landscape Architecture
10	Other Department(s) involved in teaching the programme	Not applicable
11	Mode(s) of Attendance	Full-time
12	Duration of the Programme	1 year
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	None
14	Date of production/revision	February 2022

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Landscape Architecture is a contemporary academic and professional practice discipline, embracing all aspects of the planning, design, and management of outdoor environments, both urban and rural, and at all scales, from the smallest garden to the greatest wilderness. It may be concerned with creating new landscapes, or with sustaining existing ones. The emphasis is on promoting landscapes that are culturally rich, functionally appropriate and ecologically healthy, while at the same time being able to accommodate the diverse and changing needs of society within an overall context of sustainability and environmental change. Landscape Architecture is, therefore, a complex and diverse field of practice and theory, which is both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in nature, and which draws on the traditions and the innovations of both the arts and sciences.

The University of Sheffield established one of the earliest national Landscape programmes in the late 1960s and is now at the forefront of Landscape education with an international reputation. It has the most diverse range of programmes in Landscape Architecture in the UK, with an energetic academic staff known for innovating in their fields, and a large and active student body, with undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes together accommodating some 380 students, who together form a learning community with outstanding reputation.

The **MA in Landscape Studies** is a one year postgraduate degree programme offering opportunities for students from a variety of backgrounds, to gain a grounding in a wide range of state of the art skills and knowledge in Landscape Architecture and to undertake a research investigation of a landscape topic in greater detail. The programme is designed for those wishing to develop their knowledge of Landscape Architecture, without needing a professional qualification. Graduates often go on to develop a career in landscape related industry or to pursue further research study. The programme does **not** provide a full professional training in Landscape Architecture and is **not accredited** by the Landscape Institute. The programme is, however, linked to the second year of the professionally accredited two year MA in Landscape Architecture (see separate programme specification).

Further information is available at the Departmental web site: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/landscape>.

16. Programme aims

The overall teaching and learning aims of the Department of Landscape Architecture, which also reflect the mission and aims of the University of Sheffield, include:

1. to provide a range of courses at the forefront of international landscape architecture in addressing environmental, ecological, cultural, social and ethical issues in a strongly integrated and interdisciplinary manner.
2. to not only meet the evolving needs of the landscape profession, nationally and internationally, but to inspire and lead change in the profession.
3. to deliver courses in ways that support excellence in student achievement and satisfaction, especially through innovative and enthusiastic research- and student-led teaching and learning.

More specifically the **MA in Landscape Studies** has the following aims:

4. to provide a curriculum that:
 - Progressively develops students' knowledge, understanding and skills in landscape architecture and, in particular, emphasises theoretically informed practices; inventiveness and imagination.
 - Develops students' sensitivity to the needs of people and communities, and ethical and practical awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability.
 - Ensures students develop skills and abilities in both creative practice and visual communication and in independent research, analysis and written/verbal communication.
 - Supports opportunities to pursue specialist interests and research of the student's choosing, which may be related to the research and professional interests of academic staff.
 - Embeds critical reflection.
5. to encourage active learning through live practical projects that simulate professional work involving both independent study and the achievement of collective goals through teamwork.
6. to deliver a curriculum with a diversity of assessment methods designed to test a wide range of competencies and skills.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding - Students who have successfully completed the MA in Landscape Studies will have developed the following areas of knowledge and understanding:

K1	A grounding in knowledge and understanding of innovative methods, media, and tools for the practice of contemporary landscape architecture.
K2	Knowledge and understanding of landscape architecture theories, histories and practices, the philosophies that underpin them and their historical development and contemporary practice: including perspectives in culture and arts, society and ethics, ecology and vegetation, topography, water and construction studies, at an introductory level.
K3	Knowledge and understanding, at an introductory level: of the nature, characteristics, performance, ecological and physical processes of the landscape, and the technical, and material elements of design employed in the change, creation and management of landscapes.
K4	An understanding of the range of landscape architecture research methods in the contrasting areas of science, social science and humanities, and more specialist knowledge of a chosen research specialism.

Students who have successfully completed the MA in Landscape Studies will have developed the following subject specific and transferable skills:

Subject specific skills

S1	An ability to carry out at a basic level a range of relevant landscape architectural methods in design, planning and management including contextual studies, survey and analysis, conceptual and strategic design, planning, and implementation.
S2	An ability to create landscape architectural proposals for different kinds of environments in an integrated manner which is responsive to people, place and nature.

S3	An ability to appreciate the different qualities of landscape architectural proposals and to both give and receive criticism on these proposals.
S4	An ability to employ a range of visual, verbal and written media, including digital and non-digital communication methods, to both develop and convey landscape architectural ideas.
S5	An ability to identify a pertinent landscape topic for individual research, formulate a research proposal, develop an appropriate research strategy and implement this to complete a research dissertation.
Transferable skills	
S8	An ability to work independently to gather and analyse information and to identify and propose solutions to problems.
S9	An ability to communicate effectively using visual, verbal, and written skills in a variety of media and to employ these skills effectively to present, exchange and review ideas.
S10	An ability to use at a basic level a range of computer software, including computer aided design and image manipulation and graphic presentation packages.
S11	Abilities in self-management, time and task management, and meeting deadlines.
S12	Abilities in personal and critical reflection.
S13	An ability to relate to and work with other people including group/team work skills.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

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

The course employs a wide and innovative range of teaching and learning methods and assessment which are frequently updated and appropriate to the development of landscape architectural knowledge and skills including:

Studio

The studio is the physical location where project work takes place as well as the shared culture embedded in the project process itself. Belonging to a studio whether by year group or small team of peers stimulates the informal sharing of ideas both within formal contact time and outside of programmed sessions (see below). In addition the studio environment aims to simulate the office of a landscape architecture practice.

Fieldwork

Field work (studying landscapes out of doors): takes place in a variety of forms associated with projects including: project site survey, mapping, analysis and investigations, live work implementing landscapes, social survey, case study and field trip, and on-site lectures.

Workshop

Studio workshops and demonstrations are normally a significant part of projects, (but may also form part of lecture 'theory' courses', see below) through which methods and media are introduced and then practised in focussed sessions with outcomes normally formatively evaluated and shared by tutors and peers, in half and full day events.

Reviews

In addition to workshops and fieldwork a key part of the teaching method for projects is in the form of interim presentation of work with formative critical peer and tutor review. Such shared critique events guide further development and support the completion of project stages in a timely manner. In addition the reviews assist in the development of students' ability to review their own work in a critical, reflective manner.

Tutorials

Tutorials are normally individual or small groups and engaged as part of the project when more focussed specific issues for each individual need to be explored alongside review, workshops, fieldwork and seminars. These are documented by students in their theory journal. Tutorials are held also as part of research methods modules.

Projects also assess and integrate learning from and are supported by:

Lectures

Lectures are an efficient way to provide condensed contextual studies, theory and knowledge accompanied by inspirational images using a variety of media, to large groups. Lectures are sometimes developed further in

workshops. Both landscape research modules employ lectures.

Research methods course do not use a project approach but in addition to lectures use:

Seminars

Tutor, PhD and student peer led seminars support focussed debate to critically explore literature, lecture material (above) and contemporary social, environmental, ethical and cultural issues and their relation to landscape architecture. Linked to the research work of the department they are regularly updated enabling topical and challenging issues to be discussed.

Independent and student-led Study

An important part of the process of learning to design is that students take control of the learning process through their own practice, and through critical reflection on their own work and others'. Suggestions and approaches led by the student cohort are incorporated into lectures, seminars, workshops and fieldwork (see above). Private and reflective study time also ensures each student follows up on their unique areas of interest and inspiration, but gives time also to address weaknesses.

This programme uses a wide range of teaching and learning methods to achieve the learning outcomes listed above. The acquisition of knowledge and understanding relevant to Landscape Architecture (K1 – K6 above), is achieved by **lectures** and **less formal presentations**, designed to convey essential information about key principles, theory and practice. These are supported by a series of **practical projects**, which are designed to reinforce knowledge and understanding (K1 – K6) and to integrate this with the development of subject specific and transferable skills (S1- S7, S8 - S12). This is achieved through a process of 'learning by doing'. Projects usually involve **site visits** to places in and around Sheffield to carry out surveys appropriate to the task. These visits might, for example, include an urban park or a city centre space to be redesigned in Sheffield, or an area of countryside outside the city proposed for development, perhaps as a wind farm or a new area of housing. In addition, **field trips** are built into the programme to allow students to see examples of landscape projects on the ground in a variety of situations. The visits are an invaluable way for students to learn about the realities of landscape architecture, to see the work of both contemporary and historical designers, and to gain inspiration from experience of what can be achieved.

The **landscape studio** is a vital part of the postgraduate programme. Here students tackle a range of increasingly complex practical projects based on real world problems requiring design, planning and management solutions. Support and guidance is provided through **individual studio tutorials**, conducted over the drawing board, together with **small group tutorials**, and "**reviews**", in which students present their work, within the student group, for critical appraisal by tutors and also by their peers. Skills are developed progressively, initially through simple projects in the first semester, becoming more complex in semester two.

Workshops and practical sessions play an important role in introducing and developing specific skills. They are particularly important in introducing and developing skills in the use of computer aided design, digital image manipulation and graphics packages which are an essential part of modern Landscape Architecture (S8). They also play an important part in teaching landscape principles and practice (S1 – S6), in exploring research philosophies, methodologies and skills (K7 and S6) and in development of other transferable skills (S7 – S12). Team work skills (S11) for example are introduced through groupwork within projects.

Independent study is critical to the successful completion of the programme and contributes to all learning outcomes. It has a central role in all the practical projects, even though some modules may also have a group work component. Students work independently, with the help of studio tutorials, to integrate material from lectures and workshops, to develop their own solutions to specific problems, and to work these up into graphic presentations or reports for submission and assessment.

Independent research skills are developed through a research methods unit, work on the initial research report, and through completion of the final MA dissertation. This is supported by individual tutorials with the research supervisor.

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

The emphasis in the programme is on assessment by means of the submission of project work. The overall aims of the Department's assessment strategy are to:

- Tailor assessment to the achievement of overall programme aims and learning outcomes as well as unit aims and learning outcomes.
- Test the progressive development of knowledge and skills.
- Ensure that feedback on assessment, and interim review is an integral part of student learning.
- Expose students to a diversity of media for assessment thereby providing opportunities for development of a broad range of skills and abilities.
- Provide clear and detailed assessment criteria for individual units so that students have a good idea of what they must do to achieve high standards.

Projects are assessed by portfolio normally incorporating visual, and written presentation sheets illustrating landscape architectural concepts and proposals, survey, reports, precedent study, and are normally associated with theory methods journal (see below). The project assessment tests K1-K4. Skills S1-S6 are normally tested with varying degrees of emphasis in each project assessment. Transferable skills S8-S12 are normally tested, and if group work involved: S13.

Written assignments are used to test knowledge and understanding in research modules. Research module assessments test K5, and aspects of K1 and K2. Skills S4-S7 are tested. Transferable skills S8 – S13 are also assessed.

The **Research Dissertation** is designed to test students' knowledge and understanding of research methodologies (K5) and skills and abilities in successfully carrying out an in-depth piece of independent research on a topic of their choosing.

In general, the **transferable skills** that are developed through the programme (S8 – S13) are not directly assessed but are rather an integral part of the work carried out in completing individual units. Completion of both landscape architectural projects and theory methods journal, for example, requires demonstration of all the transferable skills listed. Some projects require group work skills.

19. Reference points

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

External points of reference that have been used in developing the learning outcomes include the following documents:

The relevant requirements of the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), in particular;

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2014)

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

Subject Benchmark Statements Landscape Architecture (2019)

The Subject Benchmark Statement explains the nature and scope of landscape architecture as a subject and the diversity of programmes of study that are available. It sets out the knowledge, skills and understanding common to all programmes in landscape architecture, together with those that are specific to programmes in landscape design, landscape management and landscape science.

Internal points of reference that have influenced the learning outcomes are:

The individual research, expertise and professional interests of members of academic staff;

Student input to programme development through unit evaluation, end of programme reviews and discussion at year group meetings and staff/student consultative meetings;

The Mission Statement of the University of Sheffield as set out in the current University Strategic Plan

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/strategicplan> and referred to in the programme aims;

Learning and Teaching Strategy (2016-21)

https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.661828!/file/FinalStrategy.pdf

20. Programme structure and regulations

The **MA in Landscape Studies** is a modularised one year programme of study comprising of both core and optional modules.

In the first semester there is an emphasis on structured projects entailing individual and group work, which enable students to develop expertise in self-selected areas related to landscape design, planning and management. The students also engage in developing their research skills and familiarise themselves with the Language of Landscape. The choice of projects in the first semester lays a foundation for the complex, creative and advanced Final Landscape Project module in the second semester. The Final Landscape Project requires a choice about the level of generalism or specialism (for example planning, design, management for example). Students choose a studio linked to the supervisor's interests and related to a theme or types of intervention in a specific existing context. Tutorial support is provided throughout this project, and students gain experience in working with tutors and responding constructively to advice. Students also develop transferable skills related to research and communication skills as well as preparing for their dissertation. Finally, students undertake the MA Dissertation which is completed during the three months (July, August and September) of the summer. A potential exit route for students unable to undertake/complete the MA dissertation is a Postgraduate Diploma in Landscape Studies.

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

21. Student development over the course of study

The first semester of study provides an opportunity for students to explore specialised landscape architecture issues through the choice of 2 options amongst a suite of modules in advanced landscape design, planning and management. They are also introduced to research as a creative practice to prepare for the Final Landscape Project in the second semester. Tutorial support is provided throughout the Final Project, and students gain experience in working with tutors and responding constructively to advice. Finally, students undertake independent research through their dissertation. Therefore, the course builds progressively - providing a sound base of knowledge and experience to enable students to progress towards high standards of intellectual rigour.

An important influence on student development during study is the extent of joint teaching with both the 2nd Year of the MA in Landscape Architecture (a conversion degree for non-Landscape graduates) and final year MLA students, and the opportunity that this provides for working in teams with good honours graduates from a range of disciplines.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to the programme is available at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/prospective/>

Entry to the programme requires a good undergraduate degree or equivalent qualification in a relevant subject, including Landscape Architecture. People join the programme from many different backgrounds and many come from a variety of previous occupations. Relevant degree subjects include Fine Art, Geography, Archaeology, Architecture, and Environmental Science, Biology or Ecology, to name but a few. Motivation and enthusiasm are vitally important and for this reason we interview all UK candidates, and require portfolios from overseas students. For students whose first language is other than English, proof of a satisfactory standard in English is required. A score of 6.0 in IELTS, 550 in TOEFL (old system) or 213 TOEFL (new system) is the minimum standard although higher standards may be required depending upon background and previous qualifications.

23. Additional information

Students may take part in field trips during and at the end of the first year of the programme. Coach travel for project site visits is provided, but students will need to pay for independent travel e.g. by public transport, for additional and self directed site visits. Students may expect to spend around £250 in printing and materials during each year.

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.