The University Of Sheffield.

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

Programme Details

1. Programme title	Landscape Architecture
2. Programme code	LSCU116
3. QAA FHEQ level	L4-7
4. Faculty	Social Sciences
5. Department	Landscape Architecture
6. Other departments providing credit bearing modules for the programme	None
7. Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	Landscape Institute
8. Date of production/revision	February 2022

Awards	Type of award	Duration
9. Final award	Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) (600 credits)	5 years
10. Intermediate awards	Exit awards BA / BSc	3 years

Programme Codes

11. JACS code(s) *Select between one and three codes from the HESA website.*	K310		
12. HECoS code(s) *Select between one and three codes from the HECoS vocabulary.*	100124		

Programme Delivery

13. Mode of study	Full-time
14. Mode of delivery	Blended learning

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Landscape Architecture embraces all aspects of the science, planning, design, creation and management of landscape, in both urban and rural environments, 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 aesthetically pleasing, 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. It is, therefore, a rich and diverse subject which is both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in nature, and which draws on the traditions of both the arts and sciences. The evolution of the Master of Landscape Architecture from the Diplomas in Landscape Architecture and Landscape Management reflects this diversity of purpose and in particular the broader meaning which is now attached to landscape architecture – not only as a design based subject, but also one which addresses management, planning and science. Similarly, the profession seeks graduates who may have pursued a relatively 'generalist' education, as well as those who have specialised to a greater degree in one of these constituent areas.

The University of Sheffield established one of the earliest Landscape programmes in the country in the late 1960s and is now at the forefront of Landscape education in the country, with an international reputation. It has the most diverse range of programmes in Landscape Architecture in the UK and the largest student body, with its undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes together accommodating some 380 students. It also has a reputation for excellence in both teaching and research.

The MLA consists of four years' study and a year in practice. Students must choose one of two pathways through years two and three of the programme: Landscape Planning or Landscape Ecology. The year in practice is taken after the first three years' study. Students then complete their fourth and final year of study. Completion of an accredited course is one of the routes required to allow membership of the Landscape Institute as an associate member. After graduation from the programme, successful completion of a further period of mentored practice under the Landscape Institute's Pathway to Chartership leads to full membership of the Institute and use of the title Chartered Landscape Architect.

The programme leads to many diverse employment opportunities - in private practice, in the public sector and in non-governmental organisations such as Groundwork Trusts. Work ranges from urban design schemes in city centres and working with communities on the design and improvement of urban green space, to preparing environmental impact assessments for different forms of new development and undertaking landscape character assessments for local government districts, to give just a few examples.

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

16. Programme aims

MLA Landscape Architecture aims to:	
A1	To provide a programme which is relevant to professional practice and which meets professional accreditation requirements.

A2	To provide a broad environmental education by enabling students to study Landscape Architecture and to develop specialist knowledge and skills in Landscape Planning or Landscape Ecology together with an awareness of their relationships with wider national and global contexts.
A3	To encourage progressive development of a range of knowledge and skills relevant to levels 4-6 and the later final year stage (level 7) of the professionally accredited programme.
A4	To support students with developing their employability by: ● Providing opportunities for students to obtain experience of professional practice, by contact with practitioners on the programme, and involvement in projects that simulate professional work. ● Supporting students to progressively develop their own employability skills. ● Incorporating a student-led year in practice in the programme. ● Building on the year in practice to consolidate and develop professional skills.
A5	To provide a curriculum that: ● Introduces students to the breadth of Landscape Architecture, including landscape design, planning and management. ● Develops students' sensitivity to the needs of people and communities, and awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability. ● Helps students to develop skills and abilities in both creative thinking and visual communication, and in independent inquiry, analysis and written/verbal communication. ● Develops students' knowledge, understanding and skills and, in particular, emphasises: holistic knowledge and solutions; creativity and imagination; and the progressive development of distinctive skills though choices in landscape design, landscape planning and landscape management.
A6	To encourage active learning through practical projects involving both independent study and the achievement of collective goals through teamwork.
A7	To incorporate a diversity of assessment methods designed to test a wide range of competencies and skills.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

		Links to Aim(s)
K1	Advanced knowledge and understanding of the principles, processes, media, and tools necessary for the practice of landscape architecture.	A1, A3, A4, A5
K2	Advanced knowledge and understanding of landscape theories and histories, including design approaches and practices, the philosophies that underpin them and their historical development and modern practice.	A5
K3	Advanced knowledge and understanding of the nature, characteristics and performance of the inorganic and organic elements and processes employed in the creation of landscapes and of their implications for future maintenance and management.	A2, A5

K4	Advanced knowledge and understanding of the principles and practice of landscape planning, design and management, and/or landscape ecology and ecological design, and their role in landscape practice, depending on options chosen.	A2, A5
K5	Advanced knowledge and understanding of the social aspects of design, the importance of users and techniques for involving them in design processes.	A5
K6	Advanced knowledge and understanding of particular areas of landscape work that are of special interest to the student.	A5
K7	Advanced knowledge and understanding of the nature of landscape professional practice, including working in practice, landscape and environmental law and contracts and specifications.	A1, A4, A6
K8	Advanced knowledge and understanding of the standards of professionalism required in producing and presenting a major design, planning or management proposal to a complex brief, and which meets exacting criteria in both concept and detail.	A4, A5, A6
K9	Advanced knowledge and understanding of investigative methods and specialist technical expertise and their relevance to solving landscape challenges.	A5
Skills and other attributes On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:		
S1	An advanced ability to create proposals for different kinds of landscapes in an innovative and integrated manner which is responsive to people, place and nature.	A5, A6
S2	An advanced ability to manipulate landscape elements through design, planning and management, including exploration and critical evaluation of alternative ideas.	A5
S3	An advanced ability to employ a range of visual, verbal and written media, including digital and non-digital communication methods, to both develop and express landscape architectural ideas.	A5, A7
S4	An advanced ability to appreciate the different qualities of landscape solutions and to both give and receive design criticism.	A5, A6
S5	An ability to carry out in practice a range of relevant techniques including site survey and analysis, social surveys, preparing briefs, assessing the environmental effects of development and assessing the character of landscapes.	A5, A7
S6	An advanced ability to use a range of relevant computer software, including computer aided design and image manipulation and graphic presentation packages.	A1, A3, A4, A5
S7	An advanced 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, theories, findings, conclusions and proposals.	A1, A4, A5, A7

S8	Advanced abilities in self-management, time and task management and personal reflection.	A1, A4, A5, A6
S9	An advanced ability to relate to and work with other people including group/team work skills.	A6
S10	An advanced ability to work independently to gather and analyse information and to identify solutions to problems.	A1, A4, A5, A6

18. Learning and teaching methods

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 – K5, K7), 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 (K6 – K9) and to integrate this with the development of subject specific and transferable skills (S1- S5, S6 - S10). 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, e.g. for wind or solar energy generation 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 practitioners, and to gain inspiration from experience of what can be achieved.

The **landscape studio** is a vital part of the programme. Here students tackle a range of complex practical projects based on real world problems requiring design, planning and management solutions. Support and guidance is provided through **small group studio tutorials**, and **reviews** in which students present their work, within the student group, for critical appraisal by tutors and also by their peers. In the final **special project** students integrate the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired throughout the programme and demonstrate their readiness to enter the profession. This project requires students to find their own site, define a set of challenges and their approach (planning, design, management) in relation to that site, develop their own brief and implement their proposals, from site survey and analysis and user investigations, through concepts and strategies, to an appropriate level of resolution. The project culminates with an exhibition of the students' work and presentation to both internal and external examiners.

Workshops and practical sessions play an important role in introducing and developing specific skills including 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 (S7). They also play an important part in teaching landscape principles and practice (S1 – S5), in exploring research philosophies, methodologies and skills (K9 and S10) and in development of other transferable skills (S6 – S9). Team work skills (S9) for example are introduced through a groupwork linked to 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.

19. Assessment and feedback 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 module aims and learning outcomes.
- Test the progressive development of knowledge and skills.
- Ensure that feedback on assessment is an integral part of student learning.
- Expose students to a diversity of assessment methods, thereby providing opportunities for development of a broad range of skills and abilities.
- Provide clear assessment criteria for individual modules so that students have a good idea of what they must do to achieve high standards.

Projects are a key part of the programme and allow students to demonstrate achievement in relation to their knowledge and understanding of landscape theory, process and practice, including manipulation of landscape elements through design, planning and management (K1 to K4), as well as the skills they have developed, both those specific to landscape architecture (S1 to S5) and those transferable to other areas of work (S6 – S10). Submissions for these projects include illustrations of concepts and solutions, portfolios, files showing development of ideas, observational journals of construction details and plant material, models, computer generated materials, and verbal presentations at review sessions.

Written assignments are used to test knowledge and understanding in areas relating to: landscape professional practice, and landscape principles and approaches (K7, K9).

Project reports, including both written reports and graphic presentation of analysis and solutions, are used in developing knowledge, understanding and skills relevant to landscape design, planning and management (K5, K6 and S5).

In general the **transferable skills** that are developed through the programme (S6 – S10) are not directly assessed but are rather an integral part of the work carried out in completing individual units. Completion of both design projects and project reports, for example, requires demonstration of all the transferable skills listed. Some projects also require group work skills and/or independent research.

Formative feedback is an integral part of the studio teaching system. Students routinely receive formative feedback at multiple stages of project development: during workshops, during tutorials when students discuss their work in progress with staff, and during critical reviews when students present completed drafts of their project submissions for review by staff and other students. Students are encouraged to play an active part in the giving and receiving of feedback by interrogating their own and others' work and by framing specific questions for discussion in tutorial sessions. Student submissions are also periodically displayed in end of project exhibitions, which allow students to experience a wide range of responses to the brief and to understand where their own work sits within that range.

Personalised written summative feedback is provided for students at the end of every module.

Students are expected to have a personal tutorial with their personal tutor once per semester. This provides an opportunity for them to self-evaluate their progress on the programme so far and to reflect on their achievements and areas for improvement.

20. Programme structure and student development

The MLA is a modularised programme comprising four years of study. Students complete three years of study equivalent to our BA/BSc programmes in Landscape Architecture. They are then required to undertake a period of at least nine months of professional experience during the Year in Practice. On satisfactory completion of this Year in Practice they undertake their final year of study.

The first three years provide a sound knowledge base reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of

Landscape Architecture, including insights into a range of contributing disciplines from science, social science, arts and humanities. Students gain particular knowledge of three key areas of landscape architecture – design, planning and management – which provide a basis for module choices in the final fourth year of study. They also have the opportunity to select one of two pathways through years two and three, allowing them to specialise in either Landscape Planning or Landscape Ecology. During the Year in Practice, students engage on live projects which provide opportunities to gain greater confidence in transferable skills, contribute to real-world projects, improve skills in specialist design software, and enhance their portfolio.

The MLA programme structure is modular, consisting of a total of 600 credits.

At Level 4 students take six core 20 credit modules. Through Levels 5 and 6 students have the opportunity to choose between two different specialist pathways: Landscape Planning or Landscape Ecology. At Level 5 students take 100 credits in core modules and 20 in their chosen specialism. Level 5 also includes a residential field trip, subsidised by the Department, which gives students the opportunity to experience a range of outstanding landscape projects at first hand. At Level 6 students take 80 credits in core modules and 40 in their chosen specialism. Students then have the option to exit from the MLA and claim an award of a BA or BSc depending on their chosen specialism.

All students wishing to continue with the MLA programme must then do a Year in Practice: working in landscape practice for a minimum of 9 months.

Students must achieve a mean grade of not less than 49.5 at Level 6 in order to progress to the Year in Practice. Satisfactory completion of the Year in Practice as evidenced by a skills record and portfolio of the student's work allows students to progress to the final year of the programme (at Level 7).

At Level 7 of the MLA there is a mixture of core and optional modules. The choice of projects in the first semester lays a foundation for the complex, creative and advanced Final Special Project module in the second semester. This core module requires the application of a high level of knowledge and skills, and represents the culmination of the overall 'integrated' programme. Level 7 provides flexibility through module choice and Final Special Project focus to select either a generalist programme, or to specialise in one of landscape design, planning or management.

All levels and elements of the programme are accredited by the Landscape Institute.

Level 4 provides students with a broad introduction to Landscape Architecture and its history. The emphasis is on providing knowledge and understanding about landscape and the forces that shape it, about the nature of landscape architecture theory and practice and its social, economic and cultural context. It will introduce Landscape Planning and the key drivers that are responsible for shaping urban and rural environments. Students also begin to develop specific skills relevant to landscape practice including; graphic techniques, an appreciation of design process and Landscape Character Assessment. An introductory course in: communication, presentation and research has been designed to support students in making the transition to University level learning.

Modules will cover:

- The nature of landscape and the physical and environmental factors, which shape it.
- Landscape architecture as a discipline and the challenges that it seeks to address in planning, design and management.
- The basics of design including design theory, creativity and space making, drawing skills and techniques, use of plant material, use of computers, presentation of design material and the role of reviews, and the application of all of these in introductory design projects.
- Different landscape histories, enabling students to develop an understanding of different perspectives on the subject and the way that these may influence approaches to design practice.
- Principles of landscape planning, including ideas about diversity and distinctiveness in landscape character, the nature of landscape change and the role of different land uses and development activities in shaping the landscape.
- Developing effective learning skills which will include: group work, report writing and academic

referencing, accessing online digital resources, the role of the tutorial and digital technologies and communication.

Level 5 aims to enthuse students about new aspects of Landscape Architecture and to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across the spectrum of landscape design. Studio work encourages further development of design skills and the development of a more in-depth appreciation of the materials of landscape, organic and inorganic. Students have the choice between specialist Landscape Planning and Landscape Ecology modules, depending on whether they have chosen a Landscape Planning or Landscape Ecology pathway through Levels 5 and 6. The specialist Landscape Planning module explores the relationship between landscape, law and policy at a number of different levels: from European legal and policy frameworks down to individual development sites in urban, rural and peri-urban contexts. The specialist Landscape Ecology module aims to extend and deepen students' understanding of relevant ecological concepts and habitat survey techniques. An extended field trip gives the opportunity for students to evaluate examples of historic and contemporary Landscape Architecture and for each student to carry out their own independent research project.

Modules will cover:

- Creative and conceptual approaches to landscape design, focusing on different means of generating design ideas and furthering theoretical understanding.
- The social and the ecological principles underpinning good design. Students are introduced to the principles and practice of landscape ecology and ecological design, including material on the structure and functioning of key 'Biotopes' and to social and community aspects of design development.
- Introductions to the knowledge, understanding and skills relating to various aspects of landscape technology, notably plant material and planting design, and landscape construction.
- Extended field trip with an opportunity for students to carry out a personal research exercise focusing on analysis of a contemporary or historic landscape.

Either

- The relationship between landscape and law, policy and governance and decision making; **or**
- Methods and techniques related to the ecological surveying of different habitats and the identification of the distinctive flora and fauna and composition of different plant communities.

At **Level 6** the emphasis is on developing more advanced knowledge, understanding and skills across the full range of subject matter and on achieving integration of knowledge, understanding and skills, particularly through the medium of integrated design projects.

Students have the choice between specialist Landscape Planning and Landscape Ecology modules, depending on whether they have chosen a Landscape Planning or Landscape Ecology pathway through Levels 5 and 6.

Landscape Planning modules illustrate how techniques are applied to real landscape planning problems and practices. Students will gain specialist knowledge in landscape planning 'toolkits' including Landscape Character Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment. Landscape Ecology modules look in greater detail at green infrastructure and ecological master planning, habitat creation, restoration and management. The final integrated project, which focuses on an area of urban regeneration, provides an opportunity for students to develop skills in spatial planning and master planning and to apply and develop the range of knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout their studies to a single project site.

Modules will cover:

- Further development of knowledge and skills in the area of detailed design and materials, covering advanced planting design, and advanced aspects of landscape construction.
- Site planning for housing design.
- Integration of landscape architectural knowledge, understanding and skills developed during

current and previous years of study by means of a special integrating module, which in this case focuses on the context of an urban regeneration project which aims to allow students to demonstrate their readiness to enter the profession.

Either

- Development of further knowledge, understanding and skills in specialist areas of particular relevance to Landscape Planning, including:
- Landscape Planning tools (e.g. Environmental Impact Assessment, Landscape Character Assessment and visualisation techniques for Landscape Planning) together with skills in their practical application.
- Patterns and processes of urban development and their relationships with urban green space, urban regeneration and master planning; **or**
- Development of further knowledge, understanding and skills in specialist areas of particular relevance to Landscape Ecology, including, green infrastructure, ecological master planning and habitat creation and restoration.

During the **period of professional experience**, students gain varied insights into different types of landscape practice in private, public and voluntary sectors.

On commencement of **Level 7**, this is consolidated by completion of a research brief related to a practice-based issue, and tuition in aspects of professional practice. During this year the programme capitalises on students' professional experience and progresses rapidly to more complex and open-ended briefs supported by specialist workshops.

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. Towards the end of this semester, students prepare for the second semester by exploring specific landscape related topics and specific sites. The outcome of their research as creative practice enables students to develop a rationale and brief to underpin the decision making process for the Final Landscape Project.

In the second semester, students engage on the complex multi-stage Final Landscape Project within a specific studio that they choose linked with the supervisor's interests and related to a theme or types of intervention in a specific existing context. This includes selecting a site and working independently. Formative feedback and guidance are provided throughout the semester during tutorials and reviews. More detailed and specialist professional knowledge are delivered through other modules including workshops to inform the chosen design, planning and management practice. Formative feedback and guidance are provided throughout the semester during tutorials and reviews. More detailed and specialist professional knowledge are delivered through other modules including workshops to inform the chosen design, planning and management practice. Students produce sophisticated solutions which demonstrate their ability to address landscape problems, from broad concept to constructional detail, in an integrated way, and to present their proposals to a professional standard. Tutorial support is provided throughout this project, and students gain experience in working with tutors and responding constructively to advice.

The course therefore builds progressively a sound base of prior knowledge and experience to enable students to progress towards standards of intellectual rigour and professional competence which equip them for entry into the landscape profession.

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

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

21. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to programmes is available from the University's On-Line Prospectus at http://www.shef.ac.uk/courses/.

The Master of Landscape Architecture programme is suitable for applicants from a wide range of backgrounds. A mixture of science and arts based subjects, including subjects such as biology, geography and art, can be particularly useful but is not essential. The design content of the programme means that we ask applicants to demonstrate some evidence of their potential in this area, but academic ability is of equal importance.

22. Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statements
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2014)
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf

Landscape Architecture: elements and areas of practice An educational framework (January 2012)

University Vision
https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/vision

Learning and Teaching Strategy (2016-21)
https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.661828!/file/FinalStrategy.pdf

23. Additional information

During the programme there is a fieldtrip that lasts for approximately one week, which is a compulsory component of the course. The Department will cover transport costs from Sheffield and accommodation.

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 http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid.