



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	Professional Landscape Architecture (MAPLA)
2. Programme code	ALAT014
3. QAA FHEQ level	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, March 2026

Awards	Type of award	Duration
9. Final award	Masters	1 year
10. Intermediate awards	Exit award: Diploma	

Programme Codes

11. JACS code(s) <i>Select between one and three codes from the HESA website.</i>	K310		
12. HECoS code(s) <i>Select between one and three codes from the HECoS vocabulary.</i>	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 MAPLA 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 MAPLA provides a route to professional accreditation as an alternative to our 5 year Integrated Masters of Landscape Architecture (LSCU116). It is suitable for students who have an appropriate Bachelors’ qualification, and who have satisfactorily completed nine months or more in professional practice (the ‘Year in Practice’). Completion of the MAPLA is 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

The MAPLA aims to:	
A1	To provide a programme which is relevant to professional practice and which meets professional accreditation requirements.
A2	To encourage further development of the range of knowledge and skills required by a landscape architect, for example by building on the Year in Practice, providing contact with practitioners on the programme, and conducting projects that simulate professional work.

A3	To provide a curriculum that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 further development of distinctive skills through choices in landscape design, landscape planning and landscape management. • Allows opportunities to pursue specialist research on a topic of the student's choosing, which may be related to the research and professional interests of academic staff (MAPLA only not Diploma).
A4	To encourage active learning through practical projects involving both independent study and the achievement of collective goals through teamwork.
A5	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, A2,
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.	A3
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.	A3
K4	Advanced knowledge and understanding of the principles and practice of landscape planning, landscape ecology and ecological design and their role in landscape practice.	A3
K5	Advanced knowledge and understanding of the social aspects of design, the importance of users and techniques for involving them in design processes.	A3
K6	Advanced knowledge and understanding of particular areas of landscape work that are of special interest to the student, either in art and design, landscape planning or green space management.	A3
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, A2, A4

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.	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5
K9	Advanced knowledge and understanding of investigative methods and specialist technical expertise and their relevance to solving landscape challenges.	A3
K10	Basic knowledge and understanding of the range of research philosophies and methodologies relevant to landscape research in the contrasting areas of science, social science and humanities.	A3
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.	A3, A4
S2	An advanced ability to manipulate landscape elements through design, planning and management, including exploration and critical evaluation of alternative ideas.	A3
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.	A3, A5
S4	An advanced ability to appreciate the different qualities of landscape solutions and to both give and receive design criticism.	A3, A4
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.	A3, A5
S6	An ability to identify a suitable landscape topic for individual research, formulate a research proposal, develop an appropriate research strategy and implement this to complete a research dissertation (MA).	A3
S7	An advanced ability to use a range of relevant computer software, including computer aided design and image manipulation and graphic presentation packages.	A1, A2, A3
S8	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, A2, A3, A5
S9	Advanced abilities in self-management, time and task management and personal reflection.	A1, A2, A3, A4
S10	An advanced ability to relate to and work with other people including group/team work skills.	A1, A2, A3, A4

S11	An advanced ability to work independently to gather and analyse information and to identify solutions to problems.	A1, A2, A3, A4
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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- S11). 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 Landscape 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 select their own site, define a set of challenges and their approach (for example 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, K10, S6 and S11) and in development of other transferable skills (S7 – S11). Team work skills (S10) for example are introduced through group work 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 (MAPLA only- not Diploma) (K10, S6 and S11) are developed through a series of **workshops** and through completion of the final dissertation. This is supported by individual tutorials with the research supervisor.

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 (S7 – S11). Submissions for these projects include illustrations of concepts and solutions, portfolios, 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 research 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, S5).

In general the **transferable skills** that are developed through the programme (S7 – S11) 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.

20. Programme structure and student development

The MAPLA is a modularised programme comprising one year of study. It builds on the Department's BA/BSc programmes in Landscape Architecture, or equivalent qualifications from other institutions. Before beginning the MAPLA, students will have completed a period of at least nine months of professional experience (the Year in Practice).

The MAPLA includes 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 Landscape 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 professional component of the programme. Level 7 provides flexibility through module choice and Final Landscape Project focus to select either a generalist programme, or to specialise in one of landscape design, planning or management. Students may choose to exit with a Diploma after completing the Final Landscape Project.

Finally the MAPLA also includes a 60 credit dissertation module allowing students to carry out a sustained research inquiry on a topic of their choice (MAPLA only- not Diploma). Students may link this to their Final Landscape Project or choose a fresh topic.

Students with an undergraduate degree in Landscape Architecture and experience in professional practice can explore more specialist knowledge and practice of landscape architecture through the MAPLA programme.

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. Students prepare for the second semester Final Landscape Project 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 chosen focus of their final 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, e.g. on engineering and detailed planting. 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.

Students enhance their distinctive specialist profiles further through the process of selecting and researching a landscape architectural topic and presenting their findings through a dissertation (MAPLA only- not Diploma). Students are encouraged to link their dissertations to their Final Landscape Project through 'Enquiry by Design'.

An important influence on student development during the final year of the MAPLA 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/>.

Entry to the Master of Landscape Architecture programme is open to those students who have previously completed an Landscape Institute accredited undergraduate course in Landscape Architecture (either at the University of Sheffield or through an equivalent Landscape Architecture programme at another institution). Additionally, students would have usually completed at least nine months of work experience in landscape practice. Those achieving a 2i degree or higher will automatically be eligible to enter the MAPLA programme (dependent on student numbers). Those achieving a 2.2 degree will be interviewed and a portfolio of work reviewed to assess the development of their landscape architectural skills.

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

Students may expect to spend around £250 in printing and materials during the 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 <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid>.