University of Sheffield

Programme Specification

This specification provides a summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

The content of our courses is reviewed annually to make sure it's up-to-date and relevant. Individual modules are occasionally updated or withdrawn. This is in response to discoveries through our world-leading research; funding changes; professional accreditation requirements; student or employer feedback; outcomes of reviews; and variations in staff or student numbers. In the event of any change we will inform students and take reasonable steps to minimise disruption.

Programme Details

1. Programme title	Urban Planning		
2. Award type	Master of Planning		
3. Programme details	**FHEQ Level:** 7	**Mode of Study:** Full time Full time	**Duration:** 4 years 5 years (Foundation)
4. Faculty	Faculty of Social Sciences		
5. School	**Owning:** School of Geography and Planning		
6. Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Institute of Town Planners, India (ITPI)		
7. HECoS code *Select between one and three codes from the HECoS vocabulary.*	**Code:** 100197 **Percentage:** 50	**Code:** 100594 **Percentage:** 50	**Code:** **Percentage:**
Programme code (internal use)	GPLU012 (Full time) GPLU014 (Foundation)		

9. Programme aims

The programme aims to:	
A1	Provide high quality teaching that is informed and invigorated by the research and scholarship of its staff and alert to the benefits of student-centred learning that fosters the development of transferable analytical and communicative skills.
A2	Develop a broad understanding of global urban challenges linked to the detailed and critical knowledge of contemporary issues in planning and development required to address them.
A3	Build knowledge of the history and complexities of urban issues and critical understanding of different ways of theorising, knowing and researching spatial change.
A4	Equip students with the knowledge and skills required to generate integrated, well substantiated responses to spatial development challenges.
A5	Support students in developing intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and independent judgement.
A6	Prepare graduates for planning, development and other urban professional practice by offering a programme which meets accreditation requirements, and provides teaching informed by professional experience.
A7	Progressively develop competencies for making constructive and ethically appropriate interventions in the urban environment.
A8	Develop and enhance the techniques and skills needed for graduate employability underpinned by a commitment to self-improvement through reflection, ongoing skills development and work related learning.
A9	Model and promote an appreciation of equality, diversity and inclusion in course practices and content.
A10	Provide a supportive environment for students and to include them in shaping and managing an effective programme and their learning opportunities.
A11	Enable students to maximise their potential in all aspects of their course.

10. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding (K) On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:	
K1	The historical, institutional, legal, and political contexts informing spatial development, and their influence on planning ideas and practices.
K2	A critical approach to planning that highlights the political processes necessary to achieve social change and environmental justice through the analysis of power, race, gender, marginalisation, equity and all forms of exclusion.
K3	The influence of diverse knowledge and activities on built and natural environment change, and the roles of various stakeholders, including planners, in achieving public interest outcomes.

K4	The multiple scales of activity shaping spatial development from the local to the global, the processes of connection and mobility across them and how these shape patterns of change.
K5	The principles, objectives and methodologies employed in planning and development interventions, including policy development, spatial analysis, urban design and financial appraisal.
K6	Core debates and theoretical approaches in planning and urban scholarship, including arguments for and against planned intervention to shape economic, social and environmental outcomes.
K7	Understanding of the roles, purposes and practices of planners and how their work intersects and interacts with other professional and built environment stakeholder groups including diverse publics.
K8	The moral and ethical dimensions of urban research and the work of urban professionals and the importance of recognising the rights and responsibilities of diverse stakeholder groups.
K9	The importance of democratic involvement and public engagement in planning, demonstrated by respect for diversity, empowerment of marginalized groups, and promotion of equal opportunities.
K10	The complex environmental challenges facing urban areas and the global imperative to tackle the climate and nature emergencies and ensure environmental justice.
K11	Governance and the need for interdisciplinary collaboration to effectively integrate infrastructure, services, environment, and economic agendas for successful place-making.
Skills and other attributes (S) *When considering the skills and attributes developed in this programme, please refer to the Sheffield Graduate attributes (SGAs). SGAs can be found here* On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:	
S1	Identify, synthesise and critically review disciplinary knowledge in relation to a range of planning and development issues.
S2	Apply concepts and methods to evaluate and interpret urban change, including the ethical and social justice implications of planning and development interventions.
S3	Understand and use development valuation methods, assessing their implications for built environment outcomes, including opportunities for generating added value for communities.
S4	Analyse policy, including plans and strategies for development, and demonstrate how they can be written to promote appropriate change at a variety of scales.
S5	Evaluate and apply urban design principles and processes for creating high quality places and enhancing the public realm for the benefit of all in society.
S6	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.
S7	Represent urban information and arguments to a range of audiences using appropriate written, oral, visual, graphical and GIS media, methods, and technologies.

S8	Design, conduct and critically evaluate planning and urban research to understand the implications of new knowledge for the development of the discipline and professional practice.
S9	Utilise intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and independent judgement.
S10	Work independently and as part of a team deploying effective organisation, personal responsibility, and action planning skills to make appropriate, independent, evidence-based decisions.
S11	Describe skills, attributes, and experience, and critically reflect on professional development to foster lifelong learning skills.
S12	Relate to, work with, and learn from different people, recognising and being respectful of diverse perspectives and needs, taking account of social dynamics and power relations.

11. Learning and teaching methods *(this should include a summary of methods used throughout the programme, including any unique features)*

A variety of teaching and learning methods are employed to support your development through the programme. These provide a structured approach across the four years of study, designed to build your knowledge, skills and professional competence, preparing you to play a leading role in tackling some of the major urban challenges facing society.

In the first year (FHEQ Level 4) the focus is on developing your core knowledge and understanding of urban dynamics and the role of planning in shaping places. This is introduced through lectures and seminars supplemented by experiential learning delivered through field visits, workshops and project activities.

As you move through the programme there is an increased emphasis on collaborative learning through small group seminars and project-based assignments, fostering critical analysis of planning responses to complex, real-world urban issues. In the second year (FHEQ Level 5) there is a focus on developing and applying essential professional skills, including urban design, development finance, policy-making and geographical information systems.

Third year (FHEQ Level 6) gives you an overview of how all of this knowledge comes together in planning theory and practice. In the fourth year (FHEQ Level 7) the focus shifts to more specialist study and preparing you for professional practice. You will develop skills in public engagement and hear from a variety of professionals about the work they do. You will also be able to choose option modules and a capstone research project to deepen your knowledge and research skills in a specialist area of planning practice.

Teaching throughout the 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 a number of site visits and field trips.

The following teaching and learning methods are used throughout the programme:

1. **Lectures** are used to develop your fundamental knowledge. They provide the foundation on which more reflective teaching and learning is built up through seminars and self-directed study.

2. **Seminars** provide a smaller group format in which ideas, concepts and knowledge can be discussed and examined, deepening your understanding of a topic and allowing you to develop your communication and collaboration skills.

3. **Projects** allow you to examine an issue in depth, often incorporating fieldwork and collaborative learning, you will come into contact with real world challenges, people and places. Projects involve the synthesis of knowledge from different parts of the curriculum. In addition, they encourage you to develop problem solving and research skills, to improve your team working by practicing respectful interaction

with diverse people and to develop your skills in presenting evidence in different formats.

4. **Workshops** are an important part of some modules, especially those where you learn key professional and technical skills in planning, policy-making, design and development finance. These sessions are tutor-guided but allow you to do focused work on a specific topic or task, like learning new software or techniques.

5. Group Work forms an important part of the teaching and learning experience because group working skills are highly valued by employers. Some group work is formative, providing opportunities for you to learn together with other students in order to improve your individual understanding. In other cases group assessments are undertaken and are accompanied by peer review.

6. Individual research will deepen your knowledge of a particular area of planning theory and practice, improving your research and self-management skills.

7. Specialist studies are also key to the programme. In the final year a choice of option modules, taught in smaller groups, and a capstone research project will allow you to choose an area or issue to explore in more depth.

8. Placements on the programme. You will be supported to identify short voluntary placements to experience planning in practice, test your team work and professional skills and widen your learning. You will also have the option of applying for a full year's placement with a planning organisation.

12. Assessment and feedback methods *(this should include the range of types of methods used)*

A wide range of assessment methods are used across the programme to help you demonstrate the development of your knowledge and skills. There is an emphasis at every level on assignments that prepare you for the challenges you will face in the future as a planning or development professional. Throughout, you will be given feedback to help you improve your performance within individual modules and also across each semester.

In the first year there is an emphasis on developing your fundamental academic and professional writing skills as well as some formal examinations. This emphasis draws on your learning from formal classes, field visits and project activities to develop your core knowledge, assess your understanding and build core employability skills for real world challenges.

In years two and three there is increased emphasis on coursework and project work to assist in the learning of new skills and techniques and to give you an experience of collaborative working practices. Assessed coursework takes a variety of forms, including essays but also reports, presentations, posters, plans, policy briefings, maps and spatial data analyses, design graphics and financial appraisals.

By fourth year, the focus shifts to public engagement, professional working and specialist study. Here too a variety of assessment methods are used, including essays but also reflective reports and policy analyses. A capstone research project allows you to develop a significant piece of independent research on a topic of your choosing.

APPENDIX: FOUNDATION YEAR CONTENT

9A. Programme aims

The programme aims to:	
A1	Provide students with subject based knowledge and skills of the required standard for a successful undergraduate career at the University of Sheffield.

A2	Develop students' familiarity with different methods of learning, teaching and assessment employed at the University of Sheffield.
A3	Build confidence in students' academic ability and develop understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses.
A4	Increase students' awareness of the opportunities as well as the challenges of studying as an undergraduate student throughout the University year.
A5	Develop students' ability to adapt knowledge and skills in new situations.

10A. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding (K) On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:	
K1	Knowledge and understanding of Academic English of a standard necessary for successful progression to Level 1 HE study.
K2	Knowledge and understanding of mathematics and descriptive statistics of a standard necessary for successful progression to Level 1 HE study.
K3	Subject knowledge and understanding sufficient for successful progression to Level 1 of intended degree.
K4	Knowledge and understanding of the opportunities as well as the demands placed on students by university style methods of learning, teaching and assessment.
K5	Knowledge of personal study strengths and weaknesses.
Skills and other attributes (S) *When considering the skills and attributes developed in this programme, please refer to the Sheffield Graduate attributes (SGAs). SGAs can be found here* On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:	
S1	Relevant skills in the acquisition, evaluation and use of subject-related information in different circumstances.
S2	Essential skills in oral and written communication.
S3	Problem-solving and presentation skills sufficient to develop and sustain a coherent line of argument.
S4	Ability to participate effectively in group work activities, both assessed and non-assessed.
S5	Ability to carry out small-scale independent study and research.
S6	Information literacy skills sufficient for effective study at Level 1.
S7	Reflective learning skills which promote self-awareness and appropriate responses to feedback.

11A. Learning and teaching methods *(this should include a summary of methods used throughout the programme, including any unique features and should be written with a student focus as this information will display to current students and applicants i.e. prospectus)*

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

1. **Lectures and seminars.** Most modules rely largely upon a mixed lecture/seminar format in order to impart essential subject knowledge, build confidence and encourage individual student participation. The latter is achieved through regular question and answer sessions and the use of small-group work to stimulate discussion on particular issues. The balance between tutor- and student-led discussions varies from subject area to subject area (K1-3, S1-4).
2. **Problem solving classes.** These are an integral part of the Mathematical Skills and Data Literacy modules, allowing students to develop their problem solving skills with individual support from tutors where necessary. The work carried out in these classes allows students to apply and practise their theoretical knowledge, as well as their examination technique, in a supportive environment (K2-3, S1, S3, S6).
3. **Independent study.** This is the most important part of the learning process for most Foundation Year students. Students will be expected to complete weekly independent study. All students take a core Extended Project module which specifically develops their independent study and research skills. Within this and the Academic Literacy and Communication Skills module, students are also encouraged to monitor and reflect on their learning and performance (K3-5, S1-7).
4. **Skills and subject-based tutorials.** These are provided as part of the core Extended Project and Academic Literacy and Communication Skills modules. All students are also assigned an academic tutor for the duration of their studies on the Foundation Year with whom they are encouraged to discuss their progress and degree choice (K3-5, S7).
5. **Group work.** Throughout the Foundation Year students are encouraged to work together and support one another both within and outside the classroom – sharing knowledge and experience in a creative way in order to develop support networks during their time on the Foundation Year which they can continue to draw upon in their future degree level studies. The Mathematical Skills and Data Literacy modules incorporate assessed groupwork (K4-5, S4, S7).
6. **On-line activities.** All Foundation Year modules make use of Blackboard courses to develop familiarity with the use and potential of virtual learning environments to enhance and structure learning, and as a tool for effective communication (K1-5, S2, S4, S7).
7. **Revision workshops**. All Foundation Year pathways incorporate an element of summative assessment by formal written examination and will include specific workshops to prepare students for this form of assessment. This is an area of assessment which mature students often find particularly challenging, but is also a key assessment tool used at level one and above on most degree pathways (K4, S2-3, S7).
8. **Lab classes.** Students will participate in Chemistry and Biology lab sessions, developing knowledge of protocols and good practice, undertaking experiments and recording and writing up results (K2-4, S1, S4, S6).

The Foundation Year is taught by subject specialist academic tutors within Lifelong Learning in the School of Education, augmented by Extended Project supervision by an academic in the student's destination school, in teaching spaces across campus which are as far as possible selected for their suitability for appropriate delivery methods.

As well as Blackboard, the Foundation Year makes extensive use of Encore, and numerous digitally mediated activities and interactions, both in and outside of face to face classroom sessions.

12A. Assessment and feedback methods *(this should include the range of types of methods used and should be written with a student focus as this information will display to current students and applicants i.e. prospectus)*

Assessment

The assessment on the Foundation Year is designed to provide experience of all key forms of assessment methods which students are likely to encounter at higher levels of study. Early exposure to these different assessment methods, alongside the opportunities provided through feedback and tutorial discussion to reflect on these experiences, helps build students' confidence in their ability to succeed, and to identify strategies for future success. Assessment on the Foundation Year is informed by Lifelong Learning academics' engagement with and contribution to research and academic literature in this specialist field.

The assessment methods employed are as follows:

1. *Essays, reports and written assignments*. All students will have to complete structured writing using the conventions appropriate to their discipline (e.g. reports, case studies, essays etc). Through this they will develop their skills in critical evaluation using secondary sources analysing information and presenting well-structured and persuasive arguments. They will also develop academic writing skills, including academic integrity and appropriate use of generative AI tools. Students demonstrate achievement of K1-4, S1-3, S5 and S7.

2. *Oral and/or poster presentations*. Individual and group presentations are assessed within the suite of core modules taken by all students. They provide an important opportunity for students to demonstrate to their peers their achievement of all learning outcomes.

3. *Reflexivity exercises*: these exercises can take various forms (e.g. learning journal, feedback action planning, critical reflection on individual extended essay/project) and are an important element of the Academic Literacy and Communication Skills (ALCS) and Extended Project modules. They provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of K1, K3-5, S1-3 and S7.

4. *Unseen examinations*: All students undertake at least one centrally timetabled invigilated unseen examination on the Foundation Year. In preparing for and sitting examinations, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of K1-3, S1-3 and S6.

5. *Extended project*. The core extended project module gives all students the opportunity to develop their independent research and communications skills, whilst further exploring subject matter relevant to their chosen degree programme in more depth. The successful completion of this module enables students to demonstrate achievement of all learning outcomes.

Feedback

Students receive both formative and summative feedback, all of which incorporate 'feed-forward', throughout their Foundation Year. Students are encouraged to become active participants in the feedback process, identifying how to respond to feedback, giving feedback to others, and recognising how to access additional support across the institution.

Summative feedback is usually provided through Turnitin, with a mix of annotations and summary feedback.

Written feedback is provided on coursework and assessments to highlight strengths, identify areas for improvement, and offer guidance for future work.

Formative feedback is provided face to face on developing work through tutorials on the Extended Project module, and through academic tutorials. Individual tutorials are also a timetabled part of ALCS, enabling students to receive personalised formative feedback on the ALCS and other assessments.

Various forms of instant feedback are also used in class through the use of question and answers as well as online tools to check and reinforce learning. The students are encouraged to ask questions and share opinions during sessions to maximise opportunities for feedback. Verbal feedback is also routinely given

during lectures, seminars and tutorials enabling students to discuss their progress and receive immediate clarification and support.

Together, these forms of feedback are intended to promote ongoing learning, academic confidence, and the development of subject-specific and transferable skills. We aim to tailor our feedback to our particular student cohort, mindful of their (usually) mature status and/or previous experiences of education.

Version Number:	**Purpose / Change:**	**Cohort affected: (academic year and level)**	**Date change approved:**
1			March 2018
2			February 2020
3			February 2022
4			March 2023
5	Programme Simplification	25/26 - Foundation 26/27 - All years	June 2025
6	Removal of replacement study abroad FCS561	25/26 - Foundation 26/27- Year 1	August 2025
7	Major Amendment	26/27 - Foundation 27/28- Year 1	September 2026

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