



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 Individual modules are occasionally updated or withdrawn.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 Design and Planning		
2. Award type	Master of Science		
3. Programme details	FHEQ Level: 7	Mode of Study: Full time	Duration: 1 year
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)		
7. HECoS code <i>Select between one and three codes from the HECoS vocabulary.</i>	Code: 100197 Percentage: 34	Code: 100199 Percentage: 33	Code: 100594 Percentage: 33
<i>Programme code (internal use)</i>	GPLT008		

9. Programme aims

The programme aims to:	
A1	Provide students with an understanding of the interdisciplinary challenges faced in managing and developing urban areas, and the skills necessary to engage with these challenges.
A2	Develop students' critical understanding of the nature of development, design and planning and their practice in a variety of global contexts, including their administrative and institutional frameworks.
A3	Develop students' critical skills in understanding the different contexts and environments relevant to the practice of planning, property development and urban design, including the political and economic environments in which practitioners work.
A4	Provide students with research skills, the ability to analyse and synthesise knowledge and an understanding of the role of research in design, development and planning practice.
A5	Develop professional and policy making skills needed to analyse complex design, development and planning problems, recommend appropriate courses of action, take decisions and communicate effectively to diverse audiences.
A6	Develop design skills required to analyse complex urban problems and develop effective physical designs which account for the diverse interests affected by physical development, recognising the importance of communicating design to these interests.
A7	Develop through specialised studies, a deeper knowledge of a selected aspect or aspects of planning, property and urban design and their implications.
A8	Develop in students a wide range of transferable skills, including reflective learning, that will enable them to successfully engage with a variety of work environments

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 economic, social, historic, architectural and environmental factors that shape places and an ability to identify the links between these factors and develop the ability to apply theory to design practice with a detailed understanding of the complexity of creating spaces across different social, economic, environmental, and political layers.
K2	The political basis for urban interventions and their surrounding administrative and institutional frameworks across urban design and planning.
K3	The theoretical and conceptual justifications for planning, property, and design intervention, the role and ethical obligations of the professional within this field and an awareness of the interdisciplinary dimensions to this work.
K4	The diverse interests that are affected by urban interventions, and the ways in which they interact, with a view to enhancing participation in planning, property and design processes.

K5	Key aspects of property development processes and the broader economic contexts in which such processes sit and develop critical understanding of cutting-edge technological innovations, methods and design theories relating to urban environments.
K6	Plans and policies and the techniques, methodologies and forms of research which inform policy and plan making.
K7	Briefs and critical appraisal techniques, production of design portfolios and how to prepare appropriate responses to these, taking into consideration the physical and social context and factors such as sustainability and budget.
K8	Specialised areas of planning, property and urban design.
K9	Research into a particular urban problem and understanding how to transfer this knowledge into a design/planning proposition.
Skills and other attributes (S) <i>When considering the skills and attributes developed in this programme, please refer to the Sheffield Graduate attributes (SGAs). SGAs can be found here</i> On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:	
S1	Analyse and evaluate the economic, social, historic, physical and environmental factors which shape places and to identify the links between these factors.
S2	Make links between theoretical positions and planning/development problems and to demonstrate how theory may inform planning and design practice.
S3	Formulate policy responses to defined problems in a creative manner through the use of different sources of information and the employment of different techniques.
S4	Produce, demonstrate, and reflect on coherent and responsive urban designs that integrate knowledge of: the social, political, economic and professional context that influences the production of the built environment.
S5	Analyse and recommend viable strategies for development which take account of financial and economic factors.
S6	Communicate analyses, recommendations, designs, plans, and decisions through the development of written, oral and graphic skills and professional design portfolios.
S7	Demonstrate effective skills in teamwork, including team leadership as well as the ability of the student to gain knowledge for themselves, critically assess this knowledge and relate this knowledge to practical actions.
S8	Undertake research in a specialist area of planning, property and urban design and an ability to relate specialist knowledge to the wider context in which it sits.
S9	Identify a research problem or problems, develop a research strategy and associated theoretical programme and develop a project such as a dissertation, independently defining and critically appraising their ideas in relation to a specific urban design project and its participatory approach.

11. 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)*

A variety of teaching and learning methods are employed to support your development through the programme. These are carefully designed to build your knowledge, skills, ability to reflect on and grow your understanding and skills, and professional competence, preparing you for leadership roles in urban design and planning practice. The programme begins with a strong focus on building core knowledge in urban design, planning principles, and policy contexts, primarily through lectures and seminars. As you progress, increasing emphasis is placed on applying this knowledge through studio work, projects, and independent study. This progression enables you to develop specialist knowledge, critical thinking, and practical skills that are essential for professional practice.

Throughout the programme, you will engage with the following methods:

1. **Lectures** provide the foundation of core knowledge and ensure that students from a range of backgrounds develop a shared understanding of key planning and design concepts.
2. **Seminars** offer the opportunity to explore complex ideas and critical debates in small groups. They encourage discussion, develop your theoretical understanding, and support the development of communication and analytical skills.
3. **Projects** are central to your learning and are used throughout both semesters. They bring together economic, social, environmental and design dimensions and involve working with real-world contexts. Projects promote collaboration, independent research, decision-making and critical reflection.
4. **Workshops** focus on specific techniques and practical skills, such as place analysis, policy evaluation, and design decision-making. They support the application of knowledge in a hands-on, interactive setting.
5. **Group Work** is integrated into studio-based and project activities to help you develop essential team-working and interpersonal skills valued in planning and design professions.
6. **Independent Study** is an essential component of postgraduate learning and will deepen your knowledge of a particular area of planning theory and practice, improving your research and self-management skills particularly through self-directed research in your final design dissertation or traditional dissertation.
7. **Studio Work** forms a key part of core modules such as the Planning Place and Design Studio and the Masterplanning Studio. Studio-based learning supports the integration of skills and knowledge through iterative design, critical reviews, and one-to-one tutorials. This culminates in a design-led dissertation or equivalent dissertation project.
8. **Site Visits** are incorporated throughout the programme to provide direct engagement with real places, communities, and planning challenges. These visits offer valuable opportunities to observe and analyse urban environments, understand planning and design responses in context, and reflect on spatial and social dynamics.

The programme also includes opportunities to engage with planning and design professionals through guest lectures and collaborative activities. This ensures your learning remains relevant to current practice and supports your transition into the workplace.

12. 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)

A wide range of assessment methods are used across the programme to help you demonstrate the development of your knowledge, skills, reflective practice, and professional competencies. These are carefully structured to align with your progression through the course, from building core understanding to developing advanced specialist abilities. Assessment types include **essays, reports, oral presentations, graphic and visual work**, and **numerical data analysis**. These are designed not only to evaluate your academic understanding but also to reflect real-world planning and design practices. Graphic presentation is a key form of assessment in design-focused modules such as *Planning Place and Design Studio* and *Masterplanning Studio*, and it is also used in optional modules like *Extended Reality, Design and Placemaking* and the *Urban Design Dissertation*. Essays are used across the programme to assess critical thinking and communication, particularly in relation to planning mechanisms and policy contexts. Reports—both individual and group-based—allow you to apply your knowledge to real-world scenarios, developing your skills in analysis, teamwork, and decision-making. Oral presentations are another integral method, offering opportunities to communicate your ideas clearly to peers, staff and external professionals. You’ll also engage with quantitative methods through the presentation and interpretation of numerical data, supported by the development of relevant digital and computational skills. The programme culminates in either a *Dissertation* or an *Urban Design Dissertation*. Both enable you to conduct independent research and demonstrate specialist knowledge and analytical ability. While the Dissertation focuses on policy research through written work, the Urban Design Dissertation allows for both written and visual expression in tackling a design-based research problem.

In addition to formal assessment, you’ll receive regular feedback to support your academic and professional development. One-to-one academic tutorials and the use of personal development tools, such as the *MySkills* portfolio, help you reflect on your progress and build attributes valued by employers.

Version Number:	Purpose / Change:	Cohort affected: (academic year and level)	Date change approved:
1			June 2018
2			February 2020
3			March 2021
4			November 2021
5			December 2022
6			September 2024
7	Major Amendment inc Change of Award	26/27	October 2025