

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION**

for the award of

**MSc Spatial Planning**

**Managed by the Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment**

**delivered by the School of the Built Environment**

<b>Date approved:</b>	May 2021
<b>Applies to students commencing study in:</b>	September 2021

**RECORD OF UPDATES**

<b>Date amended*</b>	<b>Nature of amendment**</b>	<b>Reason for amendment**</b>

## SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

<b>Awarding body:</b>	Oxford Brookes University
<b>Teaching institution and location:</b>	Oxford Brookes University, Headington Campus
<b>Language of study:</b>	English
<b>Final award/s:</b>	MSc Spatial Planning
<b>Programme title:</b>	Spatial Planning
<b>Interim exit awards and award titles available:</b>	PG Diploma in Planning Studies PG Certificate in Planning Studies
<b>Brookes course code:</b>	MSC-SPP/PL63
<b>UCAS code:</b>	
<b>JACS code:</b>	K490
<b>HECoS code:</b>	100199
<b>Mode of delivery:</b> (Mode of study is given in brackets)	Face to face/on-campus (full-time) Face to face/on-campus (part-time) Distance learning (part-time)
<b>Duration of study:</b>	Full-time: 12 months (Sep start); 17 months (Jan start) Part-time: 24 months (Sep start); 29 months (Jan start) Distance learning: 24 months (Sep start); 29 months (Jan start) Five years maximum duration
<b>Subject benchmark statement/s which apply to the programme:</b>	There is not a relevant postgraduate subject benchmark statement applying to the programme. However, the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement Town and Country Planning (October 2019) has been used as a reference point: <a href="https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/subject-benchmark-statement-town-and-country-planning.pdf?sfvrsn=e7f3c881_4">https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/subject-benchmark-statement-town-and-country-planning.pdf?sfvrsn=e7f3c881_4</a>
<b>Professional accreditation attached to the programme:</b>	The MSc Spatial Planning is accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). It provides exemption from the educational requirements for membership of the RTPI. Accreditation is being sought from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) for the MSc Spatial Planning to provide exemption from the educational requirements for membership of the RICS.
<b>Apprenticeship Standard:</b>	Not applicable
<b>University Regulations:</b>	The programme conforms to the University Regulations for the year of entry as published/archived at: <a href="http://www.brookes.ac.uk/regulations/">http://www.brookes.ac.uk/regulations/</a>

## SECTION 2: WHY STUDY THIS PROGRAMME?

Spatial Planning involves the management of space and the shaping of property development outcomes. Working across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, spatial planners are involved in decisions about how land should and shouldn't be used and developed; decisions that have far-reaching consequences for us all. With the challenges that our settlements and societies currently face – from climate change and environmental degradation to the widening of social inequalities, housing unaffordability and economic uncertainty – spatial planning has never been more important. The MSc Spatial Planning at Oxford Brookes is a varied and interdisciplinary programme that has been designed

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to respond to these and other key contemporary societal challenges. Developed in collaboration with leading industry practitioners, it equips students with the wide-ranging knowledge, skills and values that they need to enter and succeed in the planning profession.

### **Who is the programme for?**

The MSc Spatial Planning is primarily targeted to individuals seeking to develop a career in planning in the public, private, or not-for-profit sectors. However, the knowledge and skills developed in the programme are varied and highly transferable; many of our graduates go on to work in related fields such as design, property development or housing, or outside the built environment sector. Entry to the programme does not require previous study in any particular subject area. New starters tend to be graduates with undergraduate degrees in related disciplines such as geography, architecture or politics; early-career or mid-career built environment practitioners looking to upskill and/or pursue membership of a professional institute; or those with unrelated degrees but a desire to positively shape their built and natural environment.

### **What makes the programme distinctive?**

Designed with the needs of employers in mind, the MSc Spatial Planning at Oxford Brookes is an innovative and professionally accredited programme with a reputation for producing high-calibre built environment practitioners. Drawing on the strengths of both the core teaching team and the wider School of the Built Environment, the programme centres on the role of spatial planning in tackling the key challenges that our built and natural environments face in the coming decades. With a focus on employability and a teaching team that includes experienced professionals and high-profile researchers, the programme curriculum is at the cutting edge of practice. It develops an international perspective on the field of spatial planning and provides flexibility for students to develop specialist expertise that complements their interests and ambitions. There are certain features of the programme that make it particularly distinctive. These include:

- *Its interdisciplinary setting and curriculum.* The MSc Spatial Planning is housed in the Oxford Brookes Faculty of Technology Design and Environment; a large and multi-disciplinary Faculty that offers courses and produces research across the full spectrum of built environment disciplines. Students in the MSc Spatial Planning therefore form part of a large and diverse community of built environment academics, practitioners and students. This richness and diversity feeds directly into our curriculum through the exposure of Spatial Planning students to staff and students from other disciplines and the opportunity our students have to specialise in a related discipline or field: all MSc Spatial Planning students complete a 30 credit module in one of four specialist areas (Urban Design, Environmental Impact Assessment, Infrastructure Planning and Sustainable Development, or Urban Regeneration and Historic Conservation).
- *A teaching team blending rich academic and industry experience.* A collaborative approach to learning and teaching is adopted in the MSc Spatial Planning programme. Across all modules, the contribution of our own multi-disciplinary [teaching team](#) is integrated with input from experienced spatial planning practitioners. A rich and varied learning experience is therefore facilitated through the combination of a robust academic framing with insights and case studies from practice. The academic teaching team also includes leading researchers in the field, with their research experience shaping and informing learning and teaching materials. The team currently has particular research strengths in the interplay of spatial planning with issues of regeneration, economic development, urban design, health and the environment.
- *The supportive learning environment.* Whether studying full-time, part-time or through distance learning, our MSc Spatial Planning students get to know one another well and many will establish strong professional relationships with their classmates. The development of a sense of cohort identity and collegiality begins in the course induction and is then maintained and regularly built upon through group assignments, site visits, online discussion forums and tutorials, and an international field trip, as well as through attendance at seminars, lectures and other events hosted in the School. Students also have access to the programme's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which provides them with 24/7 online access to a range of resources to support their studies. This includes information about their course curriculum and teaching staff, as well as about the support services

available to them while they are studying at Brookes: from careers and wellbeing services, to academic skills development and library resources. As lecturers, we also seek to build a supportive learning environment and develop positive relationships with our student cohorts. Student feedback suggests that this is working very well: one of the things that graduates say they really like about the MSc Spatial Planning is how enthusiastic, encouraging and approachable the lecturers are.

- *Its orientation to the future.* As well as dealing with contemporary challenges and approaches in spatial planning, and equipping students with the knowledge and skills that they need to succeed in professional practice today, the MSc Spatial Planning prepares them for future challenges and opportunities and encourages them to become positive drivers of change within their profession.
- *A focus on skills development.* The MSc Spatial Planning programme offers a rich mix of theoretical learning and practical skills development. Students develop sophisticated skills for professional practice through various exercises and assessments that simulate real-world situations in areas such as stakeholder engagement, plan-making, development management, planning inquiries and design. The strong focus on skills development in the programme enhances the employability of graduates and their ability to progress in practice.
- *The flexible study options.* As discussed further in the next section, the programme can be studied in full-time, part-time or distance learning study modes, with students also able to commence their studies in either September or January each year.
- *Its local setting and global outlook.* Oxford and Oxfordshire provide a fascinating 'living laboratory' for a spatial planning programme. There are few places in the world where the need for effective spatial planning is more apparent: Oxford and Oxfordshire are key contributors to the UK's economy, boast a wealth of historic, natural and architectural assets, and attract large numbers of tourists from across the world. Yet the city and its wider region – in part because of their economic success and numerous assets – face major challenges and pressures relating to environmental protection and constraint, social inequality and deprivation, transport, and housing unaffordability. Across the MSc Spatial Planning programme, key questions about the management of change in Oxfordshire are brought into the classroom through the use of scenario-based exercises and assessments, case studies and guest lectures – providing an unrivalled local setting in which to study the role and importance of spatial planning. At the same time, the teaching team has a wealth of experience outside Oxford and the UK, and the programme curriculum is firmly global in outlook. An international perspective is developed in our students through exposure to diverse ideas and case studies from around the world, an international field trip, and the opportunity to specialise in planning challenges and approaches in low and middle income countries. In addition, all international students are able to focus on their home country (rather than England) in certain assessment tasks, if they wish.

## How can the programme be studied?

The MSc Spatial Planning is a highly flexible programme. It is available as a one year full-time programme, or in part-time or distance learning study modes (normally taken over two years, but extendable up to a maximum of five years).

All students have the option of entering (starting) their programme in either September or January.

Modules are taken on-campus (i.e. face-to-face in a classroom) in full-time and part-time study modes, while distance learners use the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Once a student has enrolled in the programme under one study mode (e.g. part-time), the programme should be completed in that mode. Changes to a student's mode of study (e.g. from full-time to part-time) would need University approval.

The full MSc Spatial Planning programme comprises the same six modules for all students, regardless of their study mode: three 30 credit compulsory modules; one 30 credit specialisation module; a Research Methods module (10 credits) and a Dissertation (50 credits). In selecting their specialisation module, students will be able to choose from the following four specialist pathways: Urban Design; Environmental Impact Assessment; Infrastructure Planning and Sustainable Development; and Urban Regeneration and Historic Conservation.<sup>1</sup> These specialist pathways are each linked to areas of particular strength within the wider School of the Built Environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: The Urban Regeneration and Historic Conservation specialisation option will not run in September 2021 and will be available only from 2022 onwards

For individuals not wishing to complete the full MSc, the PG Certificate (2 x 30 credit modules) and PG Diploma (4 x 30 credit modules) awards are available (see Section 4.2).

## **SECTION 3: PROGRAMME LEARNING OUTCOMES**

On successful completion of the programme, graduates will demonstrate the following Brookes Attributes:

### **3.1 ACADEMIC LITERACY**

1. Explain the legal, governance and professional contexts in and through which planning systems operate
2. Recognise key concepts, processes, techniques and tools in the field of spatial planning and their relationships with spatial planning outcomes in different contexts and at different scales
3. Discuss the role of spatial planning in balancing social, environmental, political and economic objectives, the relationship between spatial planning intervention and development viability, and the contribution that spatial planning can make in tackling climate change and social injustice
4. Implement specialised knowledge and skills to develop visionary and integrative policies and plans in pursuit of appropriate social, economic and environmental outcomes

### **3.2 RESEARCH LITERACY**

5. Identify, synthesise, and critically evaluate complex information and ideas from diverse sources in the context of spatial planning theory and practice
6. Design and undertake a major piece of independent research in the field of spatial planning, and communicate the purpose, context, methodology and methods, results, and implications of the findings

### **3.3 CRITICAL SELF-AWARENESS AND PERSONAL LITERACY**

7. Work effectively both independently and in collaboration with others, including in political and multi-disciplinary contexts
8. Reflect critically on one's own perspectives and competencies, including in relation to professional codes and expectations, and engage proactively in continuous professional development by identifying and evaluating options for future learning and development
9. Communicate effectively with diverse stakeholders
10. Apply sophisticated negotiation, mediation and advocacy skills in pursuit of appropriate spatial planning outcomes

### **3.4 DIGITAL AND INFORMATION LITERACY**

11. Appraise and apply a variety of approaches and technologies for the effective collection, synthesis, analysis and communication of information and ideas

### **3.5 ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP**

12. Employ a range of conceptual, analytical and practical techniques in order to identify, involve and respect diverse stakeholders through inclusive spatial planning processes and actions
13. Pursue outcomes that are socially and environmentally sustainable through the application of appropriate knowledge and skills to spatial planning actions

## **SECTION 4: CURRICULUM CONTENT & STRUCTURE**

### **4.1 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS:**

#### **TABLE 4.1: MSC SPATIAL PLANNING PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS**

Code	Module Title	Credits	Level	Status	Coursework: Exam ratio
PLAN7016	Planning Frameworks: Law, Policy and Professional Practice	30	7	Compulsory	100% coursework
PLAN7017	Planning for Sustainable Futures: Environment, Health and Society	30	7	Compulsory	100% coursework
PLAN7018	Place Making	30	7	Compulsory	100% coursework
PLAN7020	Research Methods	10	7	Compulsory	100% coursework
PLAN7021	Dissertation	50	7	Compulsory	100% coursework
<b>Plus one of the following Optional modules</b>					
URBD7016	Contemporary Approaches to Urban Design	30	7	Optional	100% coursework
EIAM7001	Effective and Proportionate Environmental Impact Assessment	30	7	Optional	100% coursework
PMAN7017	Sustainable Development	30	7	Optional	100% coursework
PLAN7019	Urban Regeneration and Historic Conservation (not available in September 2021) <sup>2</sup>	30	7	Optional	100% coursework

#### 4.2 PROGRESSION AND AWARD REQUIREMENTS

##### MSc Spatial Planning

All modules in the MSc Spatial Planning programme are at Level 7. Students may enter the programme either at the start of Semester 1 (September) or Semester 2 (January). They must complete the five compulsory modules (see Table 4.1), as well as one optional specialisation module from the specified range. On successful completion of the three compulsory 30 credit modules, plus one optional specialisation module and the Research Methods module, students may progress to undertake a dissertation (50 credits) to complete their MSc.

Full-time students complete two 30 credit modules per semester, plus Research Methods (10 credits), which runs across Semesters 1 and 2. Part-time and distance learning students complete one 30 credit module per semester, plus Research Methods in their final year.

The MSc Spatial Planning is accredited by the RTPI and provides exemption from the educational requirements for RTPI membership. Accreditation is also being sought from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) for the MSc Spatial Planning to provide exemption from the educational requirements for membership of the RICS.

##### PG Diploma in Planning Studies

The Postgraduate Diploma in Planning Studies award is also available, for which students must successfully complete the three compulsory 30 credit modules (*Planning Frameworks: Law, Policy and Professional Practice*, *Planning for Sustainable Futures: Environment, Health and Society* and *Place Making*), as well as one 30 credit optional module. This gives a total of 120 Level 7 credits.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Planning Studies does not carry professional accreditation status.

##### PG Certificate in Planning Studies

<sup>2</sup> Note: The Urban Regeneration and Historic Conservation specialisation option will not run in September 2021 and will be available only from 2022 onwards.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Planning Studies requires successful completion of two of the three 30 credit compulsory modules (i.e. two out of *Planning Frameworks: Law, Policy and Professional Practice*, *Planning for Sustainable Futures: Environment, Health and Society* or *Place Making*). This gives a total of 60 Level 7 credits.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Planning Studies does not carry professional accreditation status.

#### **4.3 PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

The MSc Spatial Planning is accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). It provides exemption from the educational requirements for membership of the RTPI.

The MSc Spatial Planning programme has been mapped against the knowledge, skills and experience required by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) under the 'Planning and Development' pathway. Accreditation is being sought from the RICS for the MSc Spatial Planning to provide exemption from the educational requirements for membership of the RICS.

### **SECTION 5: TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT**

Overall, the MSc Spatial Planning programme and its embedded Programme Learning Outcomes (outlined in Section 3) have been designed to facilitate student learning through the development of the five core Graduate Attributes that all postgraduate programmes are mapped against at Oxford Brookes University: Academic Literacy; Research Literacy; Critical Self-awareness and Personal Literacy; Digital and Information Literacy; and Active Citizenship. Within this framework, a variety of teaching and learning approaches are used to deliver a theoretically informed but practice-focused programme that equips students with the knowledge and skills they need to enter and succeed in professional practice.

#### **What types of learning activities are students involved in?**

The MSc Spatial Planning programme will typically involve students in the following types of learning activities:

- *Lectures* provide students with an introduction to key concepts, debates, issues, techniques and tools in relation to spatial planning theory and practice. Delivered both by academic staff members and industry practitioners, lectures expose students to a wide variety of topics, ideas, projects and perspectives. Lectures are simultaneously delivered face-to-face in classrooms and online for distance learners. Recordings are made available through the Virtual Learning Environment.
- *Seminars and online discussion forums* provide the opportunity for students to deepen and apply their knowledge of spatial planning theory and practice through small group discussions, debates and presentations. By promoting the informal exchange of ideas and experiences among staff and students, these activities encourage critical self-awareness and reflexivity. Seminars and discussion forums are typically linked to lecture material and/or the content of specified readings. Where practicable, seminars will be simultaneously conducted face-to-face in classrooms and online for distance learners. Online discussion forums, tutorials and other activities may be substituted for seminars for distance learners in certain circumstances.
- *Presentations* facilitate the development of core communication skills for professional practice. As a built environment practitioner, it is essential that you are able to clearly communicate your ideas and perspectives to other people from diverse backgrounds. Conducted both face-to-face in classrooms and online, presentations are a feature of several modules in the MSc Spatial Planning.
- *Workshops and design studios* provide students with the opportunity to develop practical and professional skills through participation in various exercises and activities that simulate real-world situations and scenarios in spatial planning practice (e.g. development management decision-making, planning inquiries, site appraisals and design processes). By engaging them in a process of learning by doing, these activities all promote reflexive practice and help ensure that students are work-ready on graduation. The various workshops and design studios in the MSc Spatial Planning programme are all linked to specific lecture content and/or assessment tasks. Some will be simultaneously conducted online and in classrooms. For others, however, there will be separate sessions for on-campus students and distance learners.

- *Working within the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)* is a key aspect of the MSc Spatial Planning programme for all students. The VLE is used to support learning in a variety of ways. It is used within modules to share teaching and learning materials such as lecture recordings and reading lists, to host discussion forums, make announcements and provide assessment feedback.
- *An Induction* in the week prior to the start of semester (September or January) provides new starters with an introduction to the programme and the English planning system. The induction consists of a series of live talks and group activities, as well as a package of online information and learning resources. It is not compulsory to attend the induction activities or access the online resources, and the induction does not provide essential knowledge not covered elsewhere in the programme. However, the induction does serve as a useful resource to orient you to your course and subject area, as well as providing the opportunity to meet both your teaching team and classmates.

### **What does the coursework involve?**

The assessment strategy for the MSc Spatial Planning programme combines academic rigour with real-world relevance. In order to develop and assess the wide-ranging skills and knowledge needed in professional planning practice, a variety of assessment methods is used. These include essays and other written tasks; presentations; scenario-based exercises involving such things as plan-making and design; participation in planning practice simulations; reflective work; and the production of a research dissertation. In line with the Oxford Brookes Assessment and Feedback Policy, assessment tasks have been designed at a programme level in order to achieve a high level of variety and complementarity. In order to promote deeper learning, there are no examinations in the programme, with all modules assessed entirely through coursework.

Students are provided with information about their current performance, as well as opportunities for potential improvement, through both formative and summative feedback from teaching staff. The programme team regard assessing and providing feedback on coursework as a continuous process. As such, there are opportunities for students to obtain formative feedback on their work in all compulsory modules. Meanwhile, the emphasis in summative feedback is on helping students identify both their strengths and positive achievements, as well as areas for improvement. Students in the programme are in various ways encouraged to engage in dialogue with teaching staff in relation to assessment tasks, with certain modules also including opportunities for students to obtain feedback on their work from experienced practitioners, as well as their classmates. Outside of specific modules, further support on assessment is available to students through their Academic Advisor and the Oxford Brookes [Centre for Academic Development](#).

### **What will my workload be like in a typical week?**

As a full-time student, during the semester, you will have one weekly teaching day for each of the two 30 credit compulsory modules. This teaching day will typically consist of four hours of teaching time split variously between lectures, discussions, seminars, presentations and workshops. In addition to this, you will have 1-2 hour Research Methods sessions in certain weeks. Outside the module contact hours, you will be expected to undertake independent learning, including in relation to coursework assignments. This independent study might include, for example, reading and research, writing, the review of online material, and group meetings.

Part-time and distance learning students will have one weekly teaching day for the compulsory 30 credit module in which they are enrolled each semester. This teaching day will typically consist of four hours of teaching time split variously between lectures, discussions, seminars, presentations and workshops. In their second year, in addition, they will have 1-2 hour Research Methods sessions in certain weeks. Distance learners will enrol in the same modules as part-time students. They will have the opportunity to participate in 'real-time' in the scheduled lectures, seminars, discussions and workshops taking place on campus. However, sessions will also be recorded, wherever possible, and made available online for those distance learners who wish to engage with them at the times and pace that suit them. For distance learners not participating synchronously in modules, there will therefore be a greater element of self-directed learning and less face-to-face contact with peers. Recognising this, weekly drop-in tutorial times are scheduled specifically for distance learning students.

## **SECTION 6: ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAMME**

*Updated May 2021*

## **6.1 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

The MSc Spatial Planning programme attracts students from a wide and varied range of disciplinary backgrounds, including geography, environmental sciences, architecture and design, economics and politics. We also encourage applications from those already in employment (in planning or related fields) and seeking to further their professional development. A diversity of interests and skills is welcomed in this interdisciplinary programme.

The programme is open to applicants who hold a first class or upper second class honours degree or equivalent. We will also consider applications from candidates with lower second class honours degrees where relevant planning and development experience can be demonstrated. Applications will also be considered from those who have no first degree but can demonstrate three or more years of professional experience in planning and have completed the Oxford Brookes Qualifying Certificate in Spatial Planning Studies.

Where applicants have a language other than English as their mother tongue, a minimum IELTS score of 6.5 is necessary, or other appropriate evidence of English language skills, both oral and written, that meets the [University's and Programme's requirements](#).

## **6.2 DBS AND OTHER PRE-COURSE CHECKS REQUIRED**

Not applicable.

## **SECTION 7: PREPARATION FOR EMPLOYMENT**

The MSc Spatial Planning programme has been designed in collaboration with professional institutes and industry practitioners in order to ensure that it responds to the requirements and expectations of potential employers. Most graduates from the programme will go on to become planning practitioners working in public and/or private sector planning practice, but a significant number do move into related fields such as design, property development or housing. While the programme is therefore primarily targeted to individuals seeking to develop a career in planning, either in the UK or internationally, the curriculum and teaching team are interdisciplinary and the knowledge and skills developed by students are highly transferable across both disciplinary and institutional boundaries.

Students in the programme are exposed to a rich mix of real-world examples and situations through guest lectures, case studies and various scenario-based exercises and assessment tasks. What this means is that our graduates are 'work-ready' and well-prepared to make a positive contribution within their profession. The types and standards of assessment in the programme are regularly monitored and reviewed by our two external examiners, one of whom is a senior planning practitioner. There is further industry input into the programme through the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Partnership Board, which comprises several experienced planning practitioners, as well as representatives from academia and the RTPI.

The programme also provides a range of opportunities for professional networking. In addition to interacting in class with their teaching staff and guest contributors from industry, students will often establish professional relationships with their classmates – many of whom are already in employment in planning or related areas. Full-time, part-time and distance learning students will have the opportunity to meet one another in numerous ways: at induction sessions; through group coursework assignments and online discussion forums; as well as in seminars, workshops, field trips and site visits. Our students also have the opportunity to develop both their academic and professional networks through attendance at the many lectures, research seminars and professional events hosted by the School, including those run in association with the RTPI.

More broadly, the School of the Built Environment has a well-established relationship with the Oxford Brookes University [Careers Centre](#). Together, they organise a major built environment careers fair each autumn, where students can approach a wide range of planning, construction and real estate organisations. Students in the MSc Spatial Planning programme are also encouraged to use the various facilities offered independently by the Careers Centre, including CV builders and interview simulators.