

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

for the award of

MA in Urban Design

Managed by the Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment

delivered by School of the Built Environment

Date approved:	November 2018
Applies to students commencing study in:	September 2019

RECORD OF UPDATES

Date amended*	Nature of amendment**	Reason for amendment**
30 November 2018	Restructuring of Modules into 30-credit parcels and content update	Response to current demands: efficiency and clarity of programme delivery in preparation for blended learning option

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Awarding body:	Oxford Brookes University
Teaching institution and location:	Oxford Brookes University, Headington Campus
Language of study:	English
Final award/s:	MA
Programme title:	Urban Design
Interim exit awards and award titles available:	PG Certificate in Urban Design PG Diploma in Urban Design
Brookes course code:	UD71
UCAS code:	P008085
JACS code:	K400
HECoS code:	100048
Mode of delivery:	Face to face/on-campus (full-time) Face to face/on-campus (part-time)
Duration of study:	Full-time – 1 year Part-time – 2 years
Subject benchmark statement/s which apply to the programme:	There are no subject benchmarks provided by QAA for postgraduate degrees in Urban Design. However this programme's aims and learning outcomes conform to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education for Specialised or Advanced Master's Degree https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/master's-degree-characteristics-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=6ca2f981_10
Professional accreditation attached to the programme:	Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) accreditation being sought, initial mapping of learning outcomes has received positive response from consultation < http://www.rtpi.org.uk/education-and-careers/find-a-course/accreditation/ > Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) accreditation being sought, initial mapping of learning outcomes has received positive response from consultation < https://www.rics.org/uk/upholding-professional-standards/standards-of-qualification/accreditation/ >
Apprenticeship Standard:	N.A.
University Regulations:	The programme conforms to the University Regulations for the year of entry as published/archived at: http://www.brookes.ac.uk/regulations/

SECTION 2: WHY STUDY THIS PROGRAMME?

The impact of global change is evident in rapidly growing cities, both in the global north and in the developing world. In the context of rapid urbanization, the professional task of designing and planning these cities covering the needs for housing, mobility networks, high quality public realm and energy efficiency is immense. It is one which the MA in Urban Design programme actively engages with. Currently there is strong demand for trained urban designers, planners and architects who can understand how the shaping of cities and the urban public realm can significantly contribute towards delivering the central tenets of social equity, environmental sustainability and economic opportunities for cities across the world.

To cover the andragogic needs of future practitioners and professionals, this programme employs a design approach to understanding UK towns and cities as well as a wide spectrum of international cities. Because the programme attracts an international cohort coming from a range of professions within the built environment, students have the opportunity to engage with urban design agendas relevant to places across the world; thus opening up a plethora of professional opportunities engaging in design, planning, architecture and many related fields. In this vein, Urban Design at Oxford Brookes University uses a methodology of applying theory and practice for understanding the complexity of creating places across the different morphological layers. Students are provided with a comprehensive yet flexible framework of study of: place making issues, the green and blue networks of the natural environment, public space networks, and blocks, plots and buildings. By using this framework, students are able to understand the time element in the development of place and the possibilities of change. This becomes the broad and comprehensive context from which students critically assess a site, testing appropriate design interventions. More importantly, they can logically understand and explain the 'impact' of these design and/or policy interventions.

Design studios provide the forum for problem-based learning where theory and practice modules come together for application to live projects and/or design sites. As noted above, current enrolment attracts international students from Global South as well as home students. Students are thus in constant dialogue concerning place making issues across a range of city scales in different parts of the world. This exposure to different urban scales undergoing a range of both contemporary and future issues provides the context for developing transferrable design methodologies relevant to other towns and cities undergoing common processes of urbanisation. Moreover, delivered both by academics and professionals in practice, this robust methodology of the design studio is applied to different cultural contexts, geographic conditions, urban scales and to specific problems and issues relating to the built environment both now and in the future.

Urban design teams require planners, architects and designers with practical, design-focused, problem solving skills. By grounding the programme's urban coverage through using problem-based learning, the needs of future professionals hoping to work in urban design practices or those seeking to join architectural firms bidding for international projects are met. Essential to practices in the built environment sector, this programme thus caters for a growing demand for planners and urban design trained architects who are focused on development, regeneration and sustainability.

This programme provides the student with:

- Robust yet flexible design methodology and theoretical framework: Applicable to a wide range of urban projects, issues, concerns and interests
- Rich student experience: Professionally and culturally diverse student cohort providing exposure to a global and international urban design perspectives
- Exciting employment opportunities by: Learning from professional practitioners who teach in the programme, Urban Design exhibition attracting employers including architecture firms, housing developers, academics, town planning etc.
- Accessibility and clarity of programme structure: Teaching is delivered two days a week for full time students over a year; one day for part time students over 2 years; 24hr online access to learning materials
- Currency on curriculum content: covering a full spectrum of cities of value to UK home students a strong international cohort and range of professionals

The Urban Design Teaching Team are from a diverse range of professions and cultural backgrounds. They share a passion for creating better places in cities and towns as well as engage in vibrant debates on urban futures. All modules are team taught so over the course of their studies, students meet the full team. The cohort engage in rich and vibrant discussions wherein student experiences and input are as valued as those of the faculty and the professional practitioners brought in to expose students to the current practice of urban design.

Underpinned by its strong research profile, this Degree Programme is delivered by the School of the Built Environment which has a reputation for constantly reinvigorating its programmes to meet current market demands. The following profile links to the Academic staff <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/be/research/research-groups/urban-design-research-group/> demonstrate the broad research profile of the school.

SECTION 3: PROGRAMME LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

3.1 ACADEMIC LITERACY

- Develop a critical understanding of the processes which shape the urban environment
- Synthesise theoretical perspectives for the creation of urban environments through design application across a range of projects working at different scales including overall site layout, patterns of land use, the selection of appropriate building typologies and for detailed intervention in the design of public spaces
- Employ a range of conceptual, analytical and practical techniques for delivering urban design projects to professional standards
- Develop professional skills for communicating complex urban issues and engaging with critical debates when presenting urban design propositions

3.2 RESEARCH LITERACY

- Evaluate and plan appropriate methods of research, analysis and appraisal for designing urban environments across a range of scales
- Synthesise data and field information to support design decisions
- Apply a range of research methods applicable to urban issues across a range of international cities and cultural contexts
- Act autonomously in designing and implementing a major piece of independent research in the field of urban design

3.3 CRITICAL SELF-AWARENESS AND PERSONAL LITERACY

- Recognise the importance of collaboration and teamwork in a multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural context
- Develop skills of negotiation and mediation through intensive group work for delivering large scale urban master-planning projects
- Illustrate flexible, innovative and informed approaches for resolving complex urban design issues
- Critically reflect on the relevance of the design practice and how the built environment ultimately affects the lives of people

3.4 DIGITAL AND INFORMATION LITERACY

- Use a range of media to gather spatial, environmental, economic and other relevant information required for major design projects
- Use and application of industry standard software for the visualization (2D and 3D), analysis, and assessment of design propositions
- Present and communicate specialist information for public engagement in order to test concepts and urban design propositions
- Develop a critical awareness of digital technologies and their appropriate use in communication as well as their strengths and limitations for gathering research data

3.5 ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

- By engaging in the practice of urban design for generating politically, environmentally and financially feasible proposals for creating better places which by nature involves people and society
- Implement reflective, problem-solving design approaches within multicultural and multidisciplinary group environment for addressing global urban concerns
- Engage in the dialogue of how urban design can achieve positive impacts on local communities and contribute towards equity, sustainability and social justice

These Programme Learning Outcomes are collectively achieved in the different modules as indicated in each of the Module Descriptors' Learning Outcomes. All the module descriptors for the MA in Urban Design are available in programme handbook

SECTION 4: CURRICULUM CONTENT & STRUCTURE

4.1 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS:

Code	Module Title	Credits	Level	Status	Coursework: Exam ratio
URBD 7016	Contemporary approaches to Urban Design	30	7	Compulsory	100% coursework
URBD 7017	Urban Design Masterplan to Public Realm	30	7	Compulsory	100% coursework
URBD 7018	International Urban Design Theories for Design and Planning	30	7	Compulsory	100% coursework
URBD 7019	Urban Design in Challenging Contexts	30	7	Compulsory	100% coursework
URBD 7009	Research methods in Design	10	7	Compulsory	100% coursework
URBD 7020	Design Dissertation or Major Project	50	7	Compulsory	100% coursework

4.2 PROGRESSION AND AWARD REQUIREMENTS

The programme offers three postgraduate awards:

- PG Certificate in UD: upon completion of any two 30 credit modules (60 credits in total)
- PG Diploma in UD: upon completion of all 4 x 30 credit modules (120 credits in total)
- MA in Urban Design: Upon completion of all 4 x 30 credit modules *plus* Research Methods and the Dissertation/Major Project (180 credits in total).

Please refer to the Module Structure Diagram provided at the end of this document

4.3 PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Accreditation of the MA in Urban Design programme is sought with both Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

SECTION 5: TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

The programme consists of 4 x 30 credit modules together with research methods and the dissertation:

1. Contemporary Approaches to Urban Design URBD7016

This module brings together theory and practice to support analytical development for use in problem-based learning design studios. The theoretical approaches establish a common intellectual and professional vocabulary across current socio-spatial, political, economic, environmental and ecological urban debates. Practice sessions develop skills and tools for critical analysis and design of: frameworks for site assessment, morphology, graphics for communicating, as well as economic costs of development. For use in the design of public realm, practice sessions cover Place-making strategies on streets to places, townscape (buildings, energy efficiency, sensory richness), and streetscape modelling.

2. Urban Design Masterplan to Public Realm URBD 7017

This design studio offers a live design site wherein the application of theory and practice can be tested. Skills, tools and critical analysis for designing across the range of morphological layers are covered in this 30 credit module. Theory and Practice are learned through application of design to produce professional quality masterplanning strategies.

The module is taught in two stages. In the initial masterplanning stage through employing clearly explained design rationales, students work in groups to produce design policy, site analysis, and site proposals at appropriate scales. Following on from this, students then work on the more detailed design of the public realm, wherein they develop individual projects based on their group masterplan. Here they produce site proposals at appropriate scales, 3D renderings, political and financial feasibility studies, sun angle analysis and individual design rationales. Students are supported in this work by a series of tutorials with academic staff and professionals in practice. In the Masterplanning stage, group tutorials are provided on a weekly basis wherein students are provided the opportunity to present their concepts and design development. Individual tutorials are provided for the public realm stage because each student now develops their detailed schemes on their own. However, these tutorials are open for all to participate in as the programme promotes peer learning and welcomes critical thinking inputs from the student cohort.

3. International Urban Theories for Design and Planning URBD 7018

This module equips participants with a broad understanding of the theory and practice needed for the design and planning of cities within a globalizing world. Tools for critical evaluation of contemporary and future urban problems are covered in lectures on the history and theory of urbanism as well as contemporary debates and developments. This module includes: environment and climate change, technological innovations, socio-economic movements, spatial and physical shifts and innovations. The use of cutting edge design software for critical analysis to include Green Matrix, Space Syntax, GIS, CityCad and others are analysed for their use on live case studies introduced by professional practitioners who collaborate on teaching this module.

4. Urban Design in Challenging Contexts URBD 7019

This module provides a vehicle for students to engage in future-proofing their urban design and planning practice. The aim of this module is to develop students' group and individual skills and knowledge of concepts, techniques and applications of urban design in challenging local and international contexts. The specific case studies used will vary from year to year to reflect developments in current concerns, and will include for example, dealing with high-density development, coding and briefing for local identity, community design involvement, designing for distinctiveness and applying good urban design in relation to climatic management. Students are presented by staff with a generic and contemporary issue to be addressed. Initially in weeks 1 to 5, students work in groups to refine the issue and define their own terms of reference and methods of working. The issues defined, and methods identified, are then carried forward for individual study in weeks 6 to 12 after which students produce an individual research report. Group and individual tutorials are likewise provided in the design studio module as indicated in URBD 7017.

5. Research Methods in Design URBD 7009

This module advances students' knowledge and understanding of research methods available to urban designers, planners and architects. It engages with a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods and provides a forum for debate about research as well as giving students the opportunity to gain practical research skills. General research strategies are complemented by a focus on urban design specific research techniques based on current practice. Through employing live case study research undertaken within the School, students' abilities to evaluate research and the role of research are developed.

6. Design Dissertation or Major Project

In the dissertation module students develop the ability to conduct either an independent research project/thesis, or a critical evaluation of a proposed scheme related to the urban context (within the realms of design, planning and architecture). There are multiple paths and formats for achieving the research output, including but not limited to:

- Critical analysis of a design and access statement and the subsequent production of design guidelines for a relevant project;
- Design-focused research project which may address alternatives to mainstream paths; ethical concerns; or a reflection of current processes (the output being a design presentation to a jury with supporting research evidence);
- Public consultation, that is 'inquiry by design' approach which begins with a student's design proposal to the cycle of public engagement with critical analysis to inform a second cycle of design (the output is a design presentation to a jury, public exhibition with supporting research evidence);
- Research thesis on themes in connection with the social sciences and design. Theoretically driven inquiry into the research problem (the output is in the format of a written thesis which support the development of design principles);
- Tutor related research themes – Working with the UD faculty on existing research undertaken by the school.

The course's teaching and learning methods are chosen to help develop the student's capacities as a reflective practitioner. They are therefore concerned both with the practice of urban design and with processes of reflection on this. We believe that the practice of Urban Design is best learned through project work which therefore forms the central emphasis of our teaching and learning strategy. Wherever possible, we introduce live projects, in Britain or overseas, where the learning experience is enriched through debate with the promoters and consumers of the urban design product. These design sites provide the thinking and learning laboratory for urban designers to understand how the development process operates in practice. Furthermore, in the process of designing places, the knowledge and learning experience within each of the compulsory 30 credit modules become transferable to an overall design methodology, bringing together theory and practice. And in the context of engaging with focused design problems, the design studio experience forms the core for addressing theoretical perspectives, critical debate and the application of practice and skills.

The ability to critically reflect on design practice requires that students develop both an understanding of why the built environment takes the form it does, as well as the frame of reference for criticising these forms. Students develop tools of understanding and critique through lectures, seminars and workshops, and through the writing of papers that are designed to develop the student's ability to construct reasoned and critical arguments about complex urban design topics.

We believe that tools of understanding and critique are best sharpened through debate. Thus we pay particular attention to engendering debate, not only between students and staff but also between the varied members of the student body and between students and guest practitioners. (To further develop this, the student's learning experience includes Field Studios and workshops, where staff and students work in groups with people from different disciplines, nationalities, genders and levels of work experience).

Debating provides opportunities for developing skills to turn disagreement and conflict into experiences of fruitful productivity.

Assessment

Modules are individually assessed by methods that may include design project work and presentations reports, essays, seminar presentations and workshop participation. In keeping with the course emphasis on practical applications of urban design, all the assessment is based on coursework. The assessment methods aim to test not only knowledge but also skills in communication, research, analysis, specification, and design.

Good urban design involves communicating interpretations of design relevant data to various interest groups and decision-makers. As such, the clear and accessible presentation and communication of such information is stressed throughout the course. Written, oral, and visual techniques are introduced and assessed in relation to how they support design thinking and critical analysis. The different modules offer flexibility and look at different modes of assessed coursework to accommodate the multiple ways students learn and communicate. These include and are not limited to the use of short films and videos, illustrated essays, reports, design posters and models, verbal presentations or a combination of formats.

Assessment and feedback are crucial elements in the cycle. We learn by appraising and evaluating our own performance and achievements. We also learn from the informed critical evaluations, experience and assessment of others. This helps to direct our knowledge and understanding and enhance our capabilities. Thus the programme's emphasis is on professional practice. Practitioners operate in a wide variety of agencies within the public, private and voluntary sector. The clear and effective communication of knowledge to different clients and interest groups is important. Accordingly, the need for clear and effective presentation of work throughout the course forms the key component in the assessment process.

SECTION 6: ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAMME

6.1 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- A first class or upper second class honours degree, or
- Possess an appropriate professional background and experience in urban design and the built environment.
- In the absence of a prior degree in a related field or prior experience in a related field a digital portfolio and / or an interview will be required.

Learning and applying visualisation techniques are required to develop an in depth understanding of the spatial elements of urban design. These skills include hand drawing, 2-dimensional drawing, an understanding of scale, mapping, and conventional use of plans, sections, elevations and perspectives. These visualisation techniques are used throughout the programme and it is recommended that applicants become familiar and comfortable with using both digital applications and / or hand drawing techniques prior to beginning the course. An Induction Pack will be provided to assist applicants in developing visualisation skills through self-taught exercises. These skills will be further developed during the course through use and application within the design studios and a degree of tutor supported guidance. Learning through application and peer support provided in group work is the most effective way to develop these skills.

and

- English as a mother tongue or IELTS 6.5 (paper/computer) or other appropriate evidence of English language skills, both oral and written, that meet University and programme requirements <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/international/applying-to-arriving/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>
- Due to the sequential design of the programme students seeking January entry will be required to demonstrate a basic experience of Urban Design

SECTION 7: PREPARATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

The MA in Urban Design actively prepares students for employment by:

- Engaging with a range of professional practitioners in the field of urban design from the onset of the course. Design studios are delivered in partnership with practicing urban designers as design tutors and project critics. Visiting speakers from the planning, architecture and urban design sectors are invited to give critical insight into practices and issues within urban design. The range of professionals invited open up the employment sector by exposing the students to current practice.
- Providing connections and employment opportunities through the professional presentation of the body of student work. The End of Year Exhibition is an opportunity for students to present the best of their work to potential employers keen to review design innovations and skills simulating the professional work environment within the design studios
- Working on live projects with the opportunity to develop thought provoking design and research portfolios
- Providing contacts in relation to dissertations

Graduates from the MA in Urban design are eligible to apply for membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute if certain additional modules are taken. They are likely to be employed in a professional capacity as urban designers as;

Urban designers in Local Government and National Government;

Urban Design Consultants in Planning, Architecture and Urban Design Consultancies, Surveying and Multi-professional development consultancies;

Researchers in Universities, Government Agencies and the Private Sector;

Freelance urban designers

Urban designers in private architectural practices working on international schemes

To further aid in the employability of our graduates the contents of the modules have been informed by the competencies required by both the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)