

MPhil Environmental Planning and Development

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading
Relevant QAA subject benchmarking group(s):	Town and Country Planning
Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences	Programme length: 24 months
For students entering in 2003	Date of specification: August 2003
Programme Director: A.J. Doak	
Board of Studies: Postgraduate Courses in REP	
Professional Accreditation: RTPI and RICS	

Summary of programme aims

The aim of this degree is to prepare graduates for a career in town and country planning where they may be required to research and prepare policies and plans; negotiate and regulate development schemes; undertake community consultations; and present reports to committees and at public enquiries.

Transferable skills

The Royal Town Planning Institute and the Construction Industry Council have identified a number of generic transferable and intellectual skills that all students are expected to have developed by the end of their professionally accredited programme of study. In following this programme, students will have had the opportunity to enhance their skills relating to communication (both written and oral), information handling, numeracy, problem-solving, team working, leadership and use of information technology.

The MPhil Environmental Planning and Development programme is designed to ensure that students progressively develop these transferable skills throughout their studies, in parallel, and integrated, with acquiring the specialist planning knowledge, understanding and skills.

Programme structure and content

The MPhil Environmental Planning and Development is designed within a 360 credit modular structure with a combination of 10-credit and 20-credit modules and a 80-credit, 20,000 word dissertation. This credit weighting reflects the current educational requirements of the Royal Town Planning Institute, which seeks to cover a wide range of knowledge areas, skill competencies and value perspectives over a minimum two year period of post-graduate study. This means that the credit weighting for both the MPhil and Advanced Diploma courses in Environmental Planning and Development are higher than the general University scheme and derogation has been approved.

The first year of the course lasts up to the Summer examination period and students are required to take modules in this period totalling 150 credits. Students are required to study three core modules during the first term; Planning Theory, Real Estate Economics and Urban Design. Two of these early modules provide introductory material at Year 3 undergraduate (H) level, which is acceptable practice in professionally accredited post-graduate planning courses. In addition they begin work on Planning Methods and Management and Planning Projects 1. In the second term of Year 1 students are required to take three more taught modules (British Planning System, Real Estate Development, and Environment and Sustainability) and to complete the modules in Planning Methods and Management and Planning Projects 1. Preparatory work on Dissertation 2 is also undertaken during the Spring and Summer Terms and through the Research Methods module. During the first week of the Summer Term students attend a European Field Trip and this is followed, later in the term, by a formal examination period (for the four modules that are examined).

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The second year of the MPhil begins with three core modules (Planning for Places, Strategic Planning, and Planning Projects 2) and students undertake their first of two 10-credit option modules (or a single 20-credit option). The Spring Term completes the taught elements with modules in Economic Development in Practice and Environmental Policy and Politics and the second 10-credit option module. Dissertation 2 runs throughout the year and continues after the Summer Term exam period (where three more papers are sat). The second European field week and associated comparative project work completes the European Planning module and the dissertations are finalised for September submission.

The table below sets out the full module list.

Mod Code	Module (Core Modules Shaded)	Credits	Level	Term
ECMFRE	Real Estate Economics	20	M	A
RE3PT	Planning Theory	10	H	A
RE3IUD	Introduction to Urban Design	10	H	A
REMP1	Planning Projects 1	20	M	A/S
REMPMM	Planning Methods and Management	20	M	S
REMF07	Real Estate Development	20	M	S
REMBPS	The British Planning System	20	M	S
RE3ES	Environment and Sustainability	10	M	S
REMF11	Research Methods	20	M	S
	Field Trip (First Week of Summer Term) Assessed in European Planning Module			
	Year 1 Exams (Middle of Summer Term)			
REMSPL	Strategic Planning	10	M	A
REMPFP	Planning for Places	20	M	A
REMP2	Planning Projects 2	20	M	A
REMEPP	Environmental Policy and Politics	20	M	S
ECMEDP	Economic Development in Practice	20	M	S
REMNAR	Natural Resources and the British Planning System	10	M	A
REMRGN	Regeneration	10	M	A
ECMEUE	European Urban and Regional Economics	20	M	A/S
ECMIRM	International Real Estate Markets	20	M	A/S
REMCPP	Countryside Planning & Policy	10	M	S
REMPE	Property and Environment	10	M	S
REMPHT	Planning and High Technology	10	M	S
	Year 2 Field Trip (First Week of Summer Term) Assessed in European Planning			
	Year 2 Exams (Middle of Summer Term)			
REMEUP	European Planning	20	M	S
REMPD2	Dissertation 2 (20,000 words in length)	80	M	A/S/S
	Final Exam Board (Middle of Autumn Term)			

Progression requirements

Students must achieve a mark of 50% in each module of the course to be awarded the Masters Degree. Students will have the right to re-sit any module once, normally in early September after the June exam board. Students also have the right to resubmit a failed dissertation, normally within 12 months. Students would normally be required to pass any re-examination (in September) before progressing to the next year of the course. Students are able to continue to work on their dissertation if they fail modules that require re-examination in the September.

Summary of teaching and assessment

Teaching is organised in 20 or 10 credit modules each credit representing 10 hours of student effort. The relationship between class contact in the form of lecture, workshop, seminar, tutorial and student centred learning in the form of individual research and project/case study is varied across all modules and is set out in the individual module descriptors. All modules are designed to deliver M level outcomes although there are some undergraduate level technical modules within Term 1. Within each of these modules, the overall aim is for students to be able to understand the knowledge obtained and be critically aware of the theoretical and practical implications of the material. Students can choose at the end of the First Year to either undertake the MPhil routeway (with a Dissertation 2 and supporting Research Methods modules) or progress to Advanced Diploma level, without these research-orientated components.

Students will be assessed by a range of methods including formal examination papers and individual and group assignments including applied problem solving, essays, literature reviews, reports, presentations and projects. The formal examinations will take place in June of each year. Students will have the right to re-sit any module once. Normally examination and assignment re-sits will be in early September. Should it be necessary, dissertation re-submissions will be within one year.

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
70 – 100%	Distinction
60 – 69%	Merit
50 – 59%	Good standard (Pass)
<u>Failing categories:</u>	
40 – 49%	Work below threshold standard
0 – 39%	Unsatisfactory Work

For Masters Degree

To pass the Masters, students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall in modules worth 360 credits. The Royal Town Planning Institute (which provides professional accreditation of the course) requires evidence of student competence across all areas of the taught programme and this means students are required to pass all modules. This is different from the general University classification scheme for taught masters, and derogation has been approved for this.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall will be awarded eligible for a Merit.

For Advanced PG Diploma

To pass the Advanced Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more in modules worth 250 credits. The Advanced Diploma will not require the completion of the Research Methods or Dissertation modules.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more will be awarded eligible for a Merit.

Admission requirements

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained a good (normally upper second class honours) undergraduate degree in any cognate or non-cognate discipline.

Admissions Tutor: Joe Doak

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Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Year Tutors, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

The Department's Resource Centre contains a variety of information sources relevant to Planning-related courses. It has a wide-ranging reference collection of textbooks, journals, property company reports and planning documents, which complements the material held in the Main University Library. The Resource Centre also holds the *Barbour Index* microfiche files for *Planning* and *Property Management*, and a link to the on-line *ACOMPLINE* database provided by the Greater London Authority's Research Library.

Career prospects

Our students have been regularly employed by local authorities, government agencies and the largest and most prestigious firms of planning and property consultants including: RPS; Terence O'Rourke; Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners; Arups; WS Atkins; DTZ Debenham Thorpe, Drivers Jonas, and CB Hillier Parker. Reading graduates have progressed to senior positions in these and other organisations both in the UK and around the world.

Additionally graduates have found employment with development companies (for example, Slough Estates, Countryside Properties, Berkeley Homes), voluntary sector organisations and the private corporate sector. Traditionally our students have had little difficulty in securing employment and, even during the recession, the vast majority of our graduates had secured employment or were undertaking further study within three months of the end of their programme.

Opportunities for study abroad

The intensive nature of the two-year MPhil programme is not ideally tailored to study abroad, although MPhil students can undertake a SOCRATES-funded block of study during the latter part of the Summer Term of the Second Year. This would normally be linked to the student's dissertation topic. There is also, of course, the compulsory attendance at the two European Field Trips.

Educational aims of the programme

The MPhil programme is a blend of academic rigour and applied practical analysis. The programme aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful careers in national and European planning and development agencies. It is accredited by the RTPI and also within the RTPI University/RICS partnership arrangement. The aims of the programme are to provide students with a structured but flexible learning framework and to ensure that the skill areas covered by the programme are applicable to a range of occupational and professional needs while relevant to other possible future career paths. The MPhil routeway places emphasis on the attainment of knowledge, skills and experiential learning in research. Although students on the Advanced Diploma are not expected to gain this depth, basic research skills and understanding of methods are covered.

Programme Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge, understanding, skills, qualities and other attributes in the following areas:

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. the nature, purposes and methods of planning;
2. traditions of thought in philosophy, science and social science;
3. planning methods;
4. the roles and relationships of the planner;
5. inter-relationships between the social, economic, political and environmental processes and the natural and built environment;
6. the development process and the 'economic' valuation of land and property;
7. law, procedure, organization and governance of planning practice;
8. comparative understanding of planning law and practice;
9. related areas of policy;
10. Specialised, in-depth, study of planning intervention and development processes and how these interact with the characteristics and dynamics of markets, the environment and place



Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Acquisition of knowledge of fields 1 – 9 is promoted across the programme through lectures, tutorials, seminars, practicals, workshops, case studies, role-play exercises, IT-based exercises, site visits, field trips, guest lectures, other project-based assignments, and through individual consultation with academic staff and year tutors.

Year 1 of the programme focuses on developing students' understanding of the general principles underpinning the specialised area of study in field 10.

Year 2 enables students to deepen their understanding of this specialist area utilising similar teaching and learning methods and strategies as above, but also through the preparation of a 20,000 word dissertation.

Details of how these areas of knowledge are covered is provided in a supplementary paper to this specification (Appendix 1).

Assessment

Many of the Modules in Years 1 and 2 are assessed through a combination of assignment (in the forms identified earlier) and formal examination. All the others (except Strategic Planning, which is assessed through a formal examination) are assessed through coursework assignments.

Skills and other attributes

<p>B. Intellectual skills – able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. define problems; 2. collect and investigate data, & undertake research; 3. undertake quantitative & qualitative analysis and appraisal; 4. assess aesthetic & design quality; 5. postulate & evaluate alternative futures; 6. weigh evidence, solve problems & make decisions. 	<p>Teaching/learning methods and strategies Practical projects, seminars, case studies and other exercises are the main but not the sole mechanisms for developing skills on the course. Appendix 1 lists those modules most relevant to specific skill areas. The skills areas are those specified in the current RTPI Educational Guidelines (RTPI, 2001) and those produced for the Construction Industry Council’s ‘Common Learning Outcomes’ (CIC, 1997).</p> <p><i>Assessment</i> Intellectual skills are assessed through a wide variety of approaches including essays, unseen examination papers, group projects, specialist exercises, presentations, tutorial & seminar papers, and reports.</p>
<p>C. Practical skills – able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. work collaboratively in a (multidisciplinary) group; 2. produce strategies, policies and plans; 3. manage change in the environment; and 4. communicate spatial and related planning information. 	<p>Teaching/learning methods and strategies See Appendix 1.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i> Skills 1 – 4 are primarily assessed through coursework, in the form of project submissions and final reports and through presentations. Skills 2, 3 and 4 are also assessed through unseen written examinations.</p>
<p>D. Transferable skills – able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. manage projects & resources; 2. manage people and provide leadership; 3. undertake creative thinking; 4. work with flexibility and adaptability; 5. communicate using written, oral, graphic media; 6. use information technology 	<p>Teaching/learning methods and strategies See Appendix 1.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i> Skills 1 – 4 are primarily assessed through coursework, in the form of project submissions and final reports and through presentations. Skills 3 and 5 are also assessed through unseen written examinations.</p>
<p><i>Please note:</i> This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably expect to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the study module guides and programme handbook.’</p>	