



Subject Benchmark Statement: Town and Country Planning

The Basics

This summary is designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Town and Country Planning for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Subject Benchmark Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries, of subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); the requirements of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); and enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.



Why study a degree in Town and Country Planning?

Town and Country Planning provides an understanding of how built and natural environments can be developed in ways that meet societally defined goals, mediating between potentially conflicting demands for space and guide developments that contribute to the making and character of places. It plays an important role in delivering and safeguarding many of the aspirations that societies hold dear, including environmental sustainability, social equity, civic responsibility, cultural diversity and economic prosperity.

Courses are interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, aiming to provide graduates with the knowledge, skills and ethical values to undertake Planning and related policy tasks within evolving social, cultural, legal, economic, environmental, administrative and governance frameworks.

Town and Country Planning degree courses may be delivered as a standalone or joint honours undergraduate degree, an integrated master's degree, a standalone master's degree (acting as a conversion course for graduates of other disciplines), or more focused master's degrees which explore a particular specialism. Planning courses should ordinarily involve a balance between theoretical or conceptual learning and practical application of knowledge and skills.

Given that Town and Country Planning graduates will be practising Planning in societies with diverse populations, it is essential that courses are underpinned by an inclusive curriculum where students are attentive to the challenges and opportunities of creating equitable places.

Town and Country Planning courses typically exhibit some distinctive characteristics and features. These include:

- significant involvement of practitioners and stakeholders, including community groups, in the delivery of the curriculum
- the opportunity for students to secure practical experience in the workplace through short or extended placements
- inclusion of field visit activities at varying scales, ranging from local sites to international field visits
- opportunities for students to engage in 'live projects', sometimes working to external organisations in client-driven learning activities
- the assessment of student learning through a variety of different forms
- the delivery of specialist skills, including use of subject-specific software and technology.



What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Town and Country Planning?

Planning education emphasises place-based education as experienced through site visits and field study, which may be structured around local, national or international case studies. Typically, student learning is demonstrated through individual and groupwork contributions, reflecting professional work environments, which also incorporates assessment of individual knowledge, understanding and skills.

Courses allow Planning students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding across key themes, including the causes and processes of change in the environment, the practice of planning, debates in planning, key planning skills, and specialist skills and knowledge.



How are students assessed?

The assessment of Town and Country Planning courses includes a mix of methods that are accessible to all students, and typically include authentic assessment. Approaches include:

- essays and assignments
- design projects (which may be carried out over a prolonged period and developed in studio settings)
- examination through unseen and seen papers
- graphical presentations in a variety of formats
- online examinations, multiple-choice questions and electronic workbooks
- portfolios of work
- presentations
- reports
- role-play scenarios.



Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Town and Country Planning are outlined on **pages 24-26** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D in the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 28** of the full Statement.

Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

The [full Subject Benchmark Statement](#) is available on the QAA website.



Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector.

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