MSc Urban and Rural Planning (Joint Distance Learning)

Summary Guide 2017
Hello and welcome to the MSc Urban and Rural Planning and also the Joint Distance Learning Consortium (JDLC). This is a course that is led and managed by UWE Bristol, but supported by five universities, providing you with unparalleled access to resources and an opportunity to learn with staff and students across the UK and beyond.

If you chose to join us you will, through your distance learning activities and related activities, be linked to all five universities in the consortium at different times. You will also be linked to a ‘home’ university.

As a student, you will therefore be attached to either the University of the West of England (UWE) Bristol, Leeds Beckett University, The University of Dundee or London South Bank University (you will also be working with the Open University at different points in your studies, but this is not a local study centre location for this programme). If you are a UK student, you will be attached to your closest centre, or you can elect to be attached to the location of your choice. If you are an international student, you will be attached to UWE Bristol. This local centre approach provides you with a local tutor and support services. You will also be supported remotely by UWE Bristol wherever you are in the world with online student resources and support.

As a student, you are administered by UWE Bristol, and you will graduate from UWE too. All of your non-academic student support is therefore provided by UWE. This includes your interactive online virtual learning environment (Blackboard), and your ‘portal’, called MyUWE. Further contact is enabled through a range of ICT solutions, and the course has a Facebook page to facilitate more informal sharing of information, ideas, questions, and for social networking.

Course Director

For more information please do get in touch directly with me. I hope you will chose to study with us and take advantage of our unique offer.

Adam Sheppard
Senior Lecturer and JDLC Course Director
Department of Geography and Environmental Management
University of the West of England (UWE)
Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane,
BRISTOL, BS16 1QY, United Kingdom

tel. +44 (0)117 3283070
email: adam.sheppard@uwe.ac.uk
MSc Urban and Rural Planning (Joint Distance Learning)

The Joint Distance Learning consortium’s MSc Urban and Rural Planning provides a route to becoming a chartered town planner through distance learning. It is suitable for students anywhere in the world who do not want, or are not able, to complete a part-time or full-time college-based course.

The programme’s guiding principle is:

"Access for all to a quality Town and Country Planning education".

It is fully recognised by the Royal Town Planning Institute and is the only course of its kind in the world. The programme follows a calendar year, with each course starting in January.

The programme has been running since 1985 and is managed and delivered by four RTPI recognised Planning Schools (UWE Bristol, Dundee University, London South Bank University and Leeds Beckett University), together with the Open University who provide both an access routeway for students who do not qualify for direct entry, and a range of options to select from in your final year to study alongside your dissertation.

The programme is very flexible and open to all. The standard MSc is 3 years for students with i) a cognate degree; or ii) a non-cognate degree and one year of planning experience. For other students the duration of study will vary between 3 and 7 years depending upon practice experience, academic background, and, for those who pursue the Open University (OU) non-graduate routeway, available time to study.

Successful completion of the programme leads to a Royal Town Planning Institute recognised MSc Urban and Rural Planning, awarded by the University of the West of England, Bristol. Completion of a structured programme of planning experience followed by the RTPI’s Assessment of Professional Competence leads to full RTPI membership.

Why study this course particularly and what can the programme offer me?

The programme represents a unique approach to professional planning education. It offers unparalleled flexibility in terms of how and when you study and at which pace, as well as some choice over the subjects included. It provides tutorial and Web-based support to your studies.

Although designed in part as a route to the planning profession and the professional qualification of the internationally recognised Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), the programme will also be of interest and great value to others wishing to learn more about urban and rural planning for personal or related professional reasons.

Does the programme have the same status as other recognised Planning masters degrees?

Yes it does. The programme, together with the RTPI’s own Assessment of Professional Competence process, provides the basis for election to Membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute, which carries with it the right to use the internationally recognised designation MRTPI and the title 'Chartered Town Planner'. Further information can be found on the Institute’s web site:

http://www.rtpi.org.uk/join_the_rtpi/how_to_become_a_member/
How is the programme organised?

The first two years of study consist of a series of modules which allow the students to develop a comprehensive understanding of urban and rural planning encompassing urban design, plan making and policy, planning law and decision making, planning and place histories, the development process, finance, implementation and delivery, stakeholder participation and politics, and ICT. The third year of study allows students to specialise in an area of personal interest through a selected Open University delivered options module, and the UWE dissertation module.

For those who pursue Open University (OU) study prior to joining the core MSc programme, the OU courses fulfil the important functions of introducing students with limited experience in higher education to study at this level, as well as to study by distance learning.

Years 1 and 2 are each equivalent in workload to a 'full 60 credit' course. The 60 credits in year 3 are made up by a 30-credit Dissertation and the 30-credit OU option module. Each year is studied in sequence, building progressively on material already covered and increasing in academic difficulty.

The course takes approximately 3 years to study, which is longer than a part-time programme which would typically take 2-2.5 years; however, the JDLC programme is specifically designed to be manageable above and beyond a full work and/or family life. The programme is therefore manageable for students in most personal and professional circumstances.

How are the course materials delivered?

The course materials are delivered through an online virtual learning environment called "Blackboard". This is also used for student announcements and links to other published resources. Blackboard is also the host for the range of other methods, beyond written content, that are involved in the student learning experience, including podcasts, video casts, and online forums and formative assessment engagement. You will thus need to have access to the Internet to obtain the materials and to study the course.
Is the MSc programme appropriate for non-UK students?

Yes. We recruit from all over the world and the course content and approach is designed to allow students from anywhere in the world to study in a manner appropriate to their own circumstances and requirements. We support international students through a variety of ICT solutions and, in addition to the online material, interaction can be facilitated through telephone conferencing, Skype, email, social media etc. The module content is designed to be appropriate to your learning and development regardless of where you are based, and the assessments and formative exercises are designed to enable you to answer them having regard to your own context.
How is the programme organised?

There are 60 credits of study in each of years 1 and 2. Students are expected to spend around 15 hours per week studying, giving a total study time of 600 hours per year. It should be noted that this will include time spent working on the coursework and directed self-study. There is considerable diversity in subject matter within each course reflecting the range of material necessary to be covered in a recognised urban and rural planning course.

Your own personal pathway will be dependent upon whether you require Open University study prior to commencing with the MSc. The basic programme model is as follows:

Note: OU Courses need to be chosen from a list of ‘approved’ courses

As far as possible the electronic course material, together with supplementary resources, are self-contained. In practice it is not possible to cover everything in this way and additional reading and directed self-study is indicated where appropriate and supported with a range of ICT solutions.
So how does it work if I am a non-graduate?

We recognise that people have varied backgrounds. Some of these would often exclude study for a post-graduate level qualification in other institutions. This programme is specifically designed to be an open access course. This is something we are proud of and believe strongly in; it means that whatever your background, there will be a personal pathway that you can follow that will allow you to secure an MSc Town and Country Planning.

If you are a non-graduate you will normally be required to pursue some study with the Open University before actually starting on the MSc. This will consist of up to 240 credits, depending upon your academic and professional background. If you require all 240 credits, you will study a foundation level module followed by some second and third level modules. You will chose these from a list of JDL consortium approved modules. Some qualifications and experience will enable some of these 240 credits to be accepted as ‘accredited learning’. For students requiring the full OU credit amount, an alternative is to complete a Diploma of Higher Education in Environmental Studies, which has the advantage of giving you a further qualification on your journey to the full MSc: [http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/qualifications/w46#course-details](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/qualifications/w46#course-details)

If you are following this pathway it will involve registration with the OU as an 'undergraduate student'. Your precise pathway can be discussed with the Programme Director, Adam Sheppard.

Non-graduates may not progress on to years 2 and 3 of the MSc before they have obtained their necessary OU courses, but it is possible to overlap completion of OU study with year 1 of the MSc. Study duration will range from 4 to 7 years in total if you are a non-graduate; the latter still being comparable to a contact based part-time degree and master’s route. If you are a non-graduate, more information about your options can be found in the appendix of this guide.
What if I am a graduate?

If you are a graduate then there are three possible pathway options depending upon your circumstances:

1. If you have a cognate degree 2.2 or higher (Geography, Architecture, Surveying, Environmental Science etc) then you are able to access the MSc directly without further study or gaining of practical experience; or

2. If you have a non-cognate degree 2.2 or higher PLUS at least one year of planning-related work experience then you are able to access the MSc directly without further study or gaining of practical experience; or

3. If you have a non-cognate degree and do not have at least one year of planning-related work experience then you can study the Open University ‘Environment’ module (DST206) as a ‘cognate conversion’, after which you can start the MSc

Entry pathways:
What does the programme content consist of?

Very briefly:

**Year 1** (PG Certificate exit opportunity) - focuses on contexts, principles and procedures and covers the practices by which planning seeks to manage the built and natural environment. The year includes consideration of the history of place making, planning policy, plans and framework, regulatory approaches to managing development, national, regional and sub-regional spatial planning approaches, infrastructure planning, and the fundamentals of urban design.

**Year 2** (PG Diploma exit opportunity) - further develops learning from the first year, including the mechanisms, methods, processes and objectives of spatial planning approaches. A consideration of the process of development and the actors who participate within are key elements of this year, alongside theories and discourses concerning implementation, delivery, and management. This year also includes an exploration of research techniques and includes an integrated planning project.

**Year 3** (MSc) - seeks to provide a specialist focus on ideas, perspectives and debates that set the context for planning and enable students to develop a substantial and genuine expertise in a specific field, which they may pursue throughout their careers through future programmes of life long learning. The main mechanism for this is the production of a 14,000 word dissertation; it is also informed through the selection of an OU Masters level module. This year is extremely flexible, allowing you to study in considerable depth an area of planning that you’re particularly interested in or feel would be helpful to your career aspirations.

Module descriptors:

**Year 1**

- **Context and Law** – This module explores planning history to provide a context for further study, before moving into a consideration of the regulatory framework in place today for the management of the built and natural environment.
- **Local planning** – This modules looks at planning at the local and community level, considering plan making, policy, and community participation and engagement with planning
- **Strategic Planning** – Moving up in scale, this module looks at planning in a strategic context, considering sub-regional, regional and national planning activity. This module includes a focus upon strategic infrastructure matters.
- **Urban and sustainable design principles** – The focus of this module is urban design and the creation of high quality places and spaces.

**Year 2**

- **International Planning** – This module looks at supranational planning, looking at the European and international scales of planning activity.
- **Implementation and Delivery** – Planning must consider implementation and this module looks at the development process, finance and effective management strategies.
- **Research techniques** – This is a research methodologies based module focused upon philosophies, approaches and techniques which are considered in an applied manner.
- **Integrated Planning Project** – Bringing all of the prior study together, this module asks students to undertake a project which is based around the creation of a deliverable neighbourhood scale plan.
Year 3

- **Open University Specialism option module** – Students have a choice of modules from which to select which will contribute towards the chosen RTPI specialism for this programme. The specialisms that the module choice will lead towards are Environmental Decision-making, Social Policy, or Management, Decision making and leadership.

- **Dissertation** – An individual piece of research which contributes to the RTPI specialism for this module.

Each module is made ‘live’ for a fixed period of time and the modules are designed to be studied in sequence.
**Do I have to complete the programme of courses in any particular order?**

Each year of study must be taken in sequence by all students. Your chosen OU option module can be taken between study on years 2 and 3, or at the same time as work on the Dissertation, or after your dissertation (though this latter option will delay your graduation until the OU module is completed).

**How much time is required for attendance at the Universities?**

There is no compulsory attendance with this programme, it is designed to be entirely flexible and, if desired, studied in its entirety remotely. Notwithstanding this, and particularly for the UK students, a number of opportunities are available to attend a local study centre. You are also able to access a local study centre at your own convenience, and tutors may be available for meetings in person where practical. In your final year, you will be working closely with a dissertation tutor; again, a physical meeting with this person is not compulsory and the use of ICT ensures that international students are effectively supported, but it is certainly encouraged and for UK based students it is strongly recommended that you meet with your tutor at key points in the development of your work.
How do I become a student on the MSc programme?

Registration on the MSc Urban and Rural Planning begins with the completion of an application form online. For administration purposes the application is made to UWE Bristol and you will be registered as a Bristol student on behalf of the consortium. You will apply online via UWE website page for this programme.

Applications should ideally be made by the 1st December 2016 for the 2017 course which starts at the beginning of the calendar year.

Further verification or consideration of qualifications and experience may by necessary in the case of graduate entry. The University of the West of England, Bristol will manage your entry process once you have applied.

How much will it all cost?

The fee for 2017 year 1 for students commencing is £3150. The fee for year 2 will be of a similar order allowing possibly for inflation. The fee for year 3 will be similar again, but half of this paid directly to UWE, plus the fee for the OU module you chose – Please note, your UWE information will only advise of the fee to be paid direct to UWE.

Payment options

Programme fees can be paid each year, or through an instalments package. More information on this can be found on the UWE Bristol website: http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/feesandfunding/payingyourfees.aspx
If you have any questions, please get in touch. We look forward to welcoming you on to the programme!

Adam Sheppard  
Course Director  
tel. +44 (0)117 3283070  
email: adam.sheppard@uwe.ac.uk

MSc Urban and Rural Planning web Site Address - http://courses.uwe.ac.uk/K44062/2016
Appendix: Open University study

Non-graduate entry pathway

Non-graduates have 2 options:

1. For students requiring the full OU credit amount, one option is to complete a Diploma of Higher Education in Environmental Studies, which has the advantage of giving you a further qualification on your journey to the full MSc. ([http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/qualifications/w46#course-details](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/qualifications/w46#course-details))

2. Choose up to 240 credits (depending upon whether you have any valid planning experience) from an approved list of OU foundation, second and third level courses, one of which must be ‘Environment’ (DST206. The approved courses currently are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U116 Environment: journeys through a changing world</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DD102 An Introduction to the Social Sciences</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TU 100 My digital life (TU100)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TD223 International Development: Making sense of a changing World</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DST206 Environment (Compulsory non-graduate course)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DD209 Running the Economy</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DD205 Living in a globalised world</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M249 Practical modern statistics</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T213 Energy and Sustainability</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T217 Designing in action</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DU311 Earth in crisis: Environmental policy in an international context</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T317 Innovation: Designing for a sustainable future</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U316 The Environmental Web</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B628 Managing 1: Organisations and people (level 3)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B629 Managing 2: Marketing and finance (level 3)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B690 Managing 3: The integration challenge (level 3)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the above graduate courses, you can study 30 point modules taken from the masters programmes at the OU:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TD866</th>
<th>Environmental responsibility: ethics, policy and action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T891</td>
<td>Environmental decision-making: a systems approach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**How can I find out more about the Open University Courses?**

Further details of OU courses are available either direct from the Open University at Milton Keynes ([www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)), or from one of the 13 Open University regional centres, each of which should have a library of course material.

The Open University operates its own admission procedures and you should apply direct to the University. The masters course followed as part of year 3 usually has enrolment deadline of 1st October. Early applications are recommended, as Open University courses can be over-subscribed.

The courses on the non-graduate route usually have enrolment deadlines of 1st October, and occasionally also 1st April.

Through credit transfer arrangements OU modules studies can provide advanced standing with a range of Open University qualifications. As such it can represent a starting point for continuing professional development beyond your completion of the MSc.

Advice about Open University Courses and Registration can be obtained from the Courses and Qualifications website: [www.open.ac.uk/courses](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses), or directly from:

Dr Joe Smith (JDLC MSc lead)
Telephone: 01908 654613
E-mail: joe.smith@open.ac.uk

Or:

Student Registration and Enquiry Service
The Open University
PO Box 197
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6BJ
Tel: 0870 333 4340

Enquiries about Open University credit transfer should be addressed to:

Credit Transfer Centre
The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6ATel: 01908 653077