



Design Cities

Module Descriptor

Module Code:	LSA7DEC
Version:	V1.00
Status:	Final
Date:	23/04/2025

Summary Module Details

Module details

Module Title: Design Cities

Module Leader: David Knight

Module Mode: Full time face to face

Semester/Term: 1

Level: 7

Credits: 20

Learning Hours: 200

Contact & Study Hours

Directed Study Time: 50 hrs (25%)

Self-directed Study Time: 150 hrs (75%)

Assessment Type

Portfolio: 100%

Module Summary

How was this built environment produced? How should it be produced?

This first-year module examines how the built environment, particularly in Greater London, is created and transformed. It introduces students to the various structures, systems, power dynamics, practices, and influences that shape cities. The module highlights the aesthetic, typological, and morphological outcomes of different development processes, linking political and economic factors to architectural and urban forms. It emphasizes that architects are just one of many contributors to the built environment, bringing in practitioners and activists from other fields to provide broader context.

Students will use architectural skills like drawing and mapping to explore these concepts visually and tangibly. The module covers three general models of development:

- private (developer and private-sector-led),
- public (local authority and state-led), and
- other (alternative, radical, and activist).

Design Cities

Working in groups, students will study and test spatial strategies from these perspectives and create individual design proposals, fostering a comprehensive understanding of urban development.

This module assesses both individual work and group work.

Taken on which Programmes

MArch Designing Architecture (C)

Core (C) or Elective (E)

Pre-requisites

All modules on the programme must be completed and passed in the sequence outlined within the programme structure section of the programme specification except where progression has been approved by the Board of Examiners due to mitigating circumstances.

Module Aims

- The module aims to support masters level students as emerging professionals to develop research and analysis skills to construct a mature reading of the city, a borough, neighbourhood and constituent architecture.
- Develop the use of self- initiated drawing, compositional and analysis to develop a reading and critique of the city, and of how the built environment is and might be made.
- Students will understand what has gone before and how strategic decision-making now will impact future development in the particular context of climate emergency.
- Working with client bodies and key decision- makers, information and data on the urgent needs and pressures across relevant issues such as infrastructure, economy, topography, history and communities are gathered, and used to develop spatial strategies and analyses.
- The module offers ways to enhance design skills to specifically address the transition from research and analysis of complex contexts towards creating spatial propositions, with an emphasis on how to design for the health, safety and wellbeing of London's citizens and visitors.

Module Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module students are expected, through the study of a nominated London borough, to be able to:

- LO1. Analyse the physical, social and economic context of the city, demonstrating knowledge of the theories of urban design and the ways in which architects can contribute to the planning of communities
- LO2. Describe how urban design and development has influenced the built environment of the borough
- LO3. Identify – with particular reference to social, environmental and economic factors – ways in which current planning policy and development control legislation influences the development of design propositions
- LO4. Illustrate ways in which buildings can relate to their local context, including history, scale, use and connections

Indicative Module Content

The module will be structured around weekly workshops with two reviews across the eleven week period and one portfolio hand-in. Each workshop will introduce a new perspective on London's built environment: 'public', 'private' and 'other'; the relations between these themes will help us to discuss, analyse and propose how the city is made and remade, and to develop our own positions in relation to this.

Each workshop will be a full day starting with a talk and setting of a design exercise and then the undertaking of that exercise, guided by tutors, to be presented and 'handed in' at the end of the day, in draft form.

Working in groups, students will construct a document that synthesises multiple themes and perspectives, recording the physical manifestation of change in the area, including the role of city-scaled infrastructure, planning policy, economic change and development, cultural shifts and expectations, conservation and urban morphology. Arising from this, students will then develop individual propositions from a critical position on the work of the group.

Students will be expected to consider, communicate and appraise the role of the architect / urban designer in a complex, plural and dynamic situation, developing an understanding of urban design within the professional and legislative context, considering the influence of economics, and the morphology and typologies of a particular part of London.

Design Cities

The module will consider the relation between process and architectural typology, urban form, infrastructure and the planning of transport, public space, urban ecologies and the anticipated impact of climate change on resilience and adaptation of the urban fabric.

Overview of Summative Assessment

Module learning outcomes	Assessment	Word count or equivalent	Weighting
LO1, LO2, LO4	Assessment 1 Portfolio: Group Mapping Project	N/A	50%
LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4	Assessment 2 Portfolio: Individual Design Project	N/A	50%

Module Pass Mark (as a weighted average of all assessments): 50%

Key Module Learning Resources

Core Sources and Texts

Indicative bibliographies for each module can be found in Module Booklets.

Module tools

Students will work in tutor groups to undertake a series of both group-oriented and individual one-day research and design challenges, attend lectures/workshops, round table reviews and produce a module portfolio submission.