Planning Concepts, Context, and Governance

Module Descriptor

Module Code:	PLN7PCG
Version:	V4.00
Status:	Final
Date:	16/07/2025

Summary Module Details

Module details

Module Title: Planning Concepts, Context, and Governance

Module Leader: Laird Ryan

Module Mode: Supported online learning

Semester: Autumn (UK)

Level: 7

Credits: 20

Learning Hours: 200

Contact & Study Hours

Directed Study Time: 60 hrs (30%)

Self-directed Study Time: 70 hrs (35%)

Assessment Study Time: 70 hrs (35%)

Assessment Type

Coursework: 100%

Module Summary

This module requires students to develop and embed an understanding and insight into the origins, status, and objectives of planning in the UK and internationally, along with the formal mechanisms and thought processes that drive it forward at a time of constant change. Students will be asked to consider the importance of sustainable development as a strategic aim of planning, and how this is interpreted in different ways by the range of stakeholders in different countries who engage in the planning system.

Taken on which Programmes

MSc Urban Planning (C)

Core (C) or Elective (E)

Module Aims

This module aims to offer students a critical understanding of:

- The historical, legal and institutional structures that frame, inform and support the making of plans and taking of decisions within the UK planning systems;

- The political and ethical nature of spatial planning and how planners work effectively within democratic decision-making structures;

- How planning systems internationally have evolved and continue to evolve, as a means of designing, delivering and maintaining a sustainable built environment; and

- The responsibilities and rights exercised in the planning process by government, the private and community sectors in translating strategy and policy into sustainable outcomes.

Module Learning Outcomes

LO1. Systematically and critically appraise the history of planning and theoretical principles behind the process of urbanisation and their impact upon the formation and evolution of the built environment.

LO2. Demonstrate a detailed and critical knowledge of strategic planning in England and in the UK's devolved administrations.

LO3. Articulate and critically analyse examples of different forms and types of spatial strategies in terms of plans, policies and implementation at different spatial levels in different jurisdictions for their sustainability.

LO4. Comprehend the contribution that planning can make to the built and natural environment and in particular the implications of climate change for spatial planning.

Indicative Module Content

Module topics

- **The UK Planning Frameworks**

The matrix of laws, regulations and guidance that underpin the planning systems in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- **Key Issues in the History and Evolution of Urban Planning**

The roots of urbanisation, urban systems and the evolution of town planning from early times to the present day, with a particular focus on the British Isles. It will introduce issues such as strategic planning, placemaking, inner city decay and regeneration and past and current challenges to urban containment including the Green and Grey Belts.

- **Stakeholders in the Planning Process**

An analytical overview of how key institutions, organisations and individuals, notably central and local government, the Planning Inspectorate and the corresponding body in Scotland, the chartered professions, the third sector and members of local communities play a statutory or influential role in policy making and decision taking. Consideration will also be given to how differing perspectives on the democratic context.

- **Planning as a Catalyst for Development and Resilience**

A consideration of how a planning system gives added value to policy and practice for housing, transport, enterprise, public services and other key users of land in the context of urban challenges such as climate change.

- **Sustainability as a Cross-Cutting Theme in Planning**

A critical exploration of how sustainable development, as a concept and a tangible outcome, is central to all aspects and levels of the planning process, drawing on case study examples from the UK and other countries in terms of how the planning system can build resilience to challenges such as flood risk and urban heat.

This content will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect the legal, moral and financial changes in professional standards and practice.

Overview of Summative Assessment

Module learning outcomes	Assessment	Word count or equivalent	Weighting
LO2, LO3	**Assessment 1** Coursework (e.g. essay)	2,000	40%
LO1, LO4	**Assessment 2** Coursework (e.g. annotated, illustrated diagram)	3,000 maximum, including images	60%

Module Pass Mark (each element is to be passed separately): 50%

Key Module Learning Resources

Core Sources and Texts

The core reading resources within each module will be provided via the specific Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) module pages and within the e-Library. Additional reference material and supplementary resources to support your studies are available through the University of the Built Environment e-Library.

Module tools

Students will have access to study materials, dedicated academic support, student forums, and learning activities via an online learning platform (VLE).

The module page on the VLE is broken down into structured study weeks to help students plan their time, with each week containing a mixture of reading, case studies, videos/recordings and interactive activities to go through. Online webinars/seminars led by the Module Leader can be attended in real time and provide opportunities to consolidate knowledge, ask questions, discuss topics and work through learning activities together. These sessions are recorded to support students who cannot attend and to enable students to recap the session and work through it at their own pace. Module forums on the VLE provide further opportunities to discuss topics with other students, complete collaborative work and get extra help from the module team.

Professional online resources

The e-Library provides access to trusted, quality online resources, selected by subject specialists, to support students' study. This includes journals, industry publications, magazines, academic books and a dissertation/work-based library. For a list of the key industry specific and education resources available please visit [the VLE e-Library](#).

Other relevant resources

Access is also provided to further information sources that include the British Library and Open University UK catalogues, as well as providing a monthly current awareness service entitled, ***Knowledge Foundations*** - a compendium of news, research and resources relating to the educational sector and the Built Environment.

The module resource list is available on the module VLE page and is updated regularly to ensure materials are relevant and current.