University of the Built Environment
EST. 1919

Patron: His Majesty King Charles III

Horizons, 60 Queen's Road, Reading, RG1 4BS
ube.ac.uk | +44(0)118 921 4696 | enquiries@ube.ac.uk

# Planning Theory and Systems Thinking

## Module Descriptor

| | |
|---|---|
| Module Code: | PLN7PTS |
| Version: | V1.00 |
| Status: | Final |
| Date: | 16/07/2025 |

# Summary Module Details

## Module details

**Module Title:** Planning Theory and Systems Thinking

**Module Leader:** TBC

**Module Mode:** Supported online learning

**Semester:** Autumn (UK)

**Level:** 7

**Credits:** 10

**Learning Hours:** 100

## Contact & Study Hours

**Directed Study Time:** 30 hrs (30%)

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

**Assessment Study Time:** 35 hrs (25%)

## Assessment Type

**Coursework:** 100%

# Module Summary

This module explores the evolution of urban planning thought and integrates systems thinking as a key framework for understanding the interconnectedness and complexity of urban environments. By the end of the module, students will have a deep understanding of the theoretical foundations of urban planning and the ability to apply systems thinking to address contemporary challenges, such as sustainability, equity, and resilience.

## Taken on which Programmes

MSc Urban Planning (C)

**Core (C) or Elective (E)**

# Module Aims

By the end of the module, students will be able to:

- Critically engage with planning theories, such as rational, advocacy, and communicative planning, and examine how these theories shape decision-making in dynamic and interconnected urban systems.
- Explore urban planning as part of a broader system of systems, linking social, economic, political, and environmental dimensions.
- Understand the value of holistic, integrated approaches to planning, incorporating feedback loops, interdependencies, and unintended consequences into planning processes.

# Module Learning Outcomes

LO1. Understand the historical evolution of urban planning theory and its relevance to contemporary planning practices.

LO2. Critically engage with key theoretical frameworks, such as systems thinking, rational planning, and communicative planning.

LO3. Evaluate the interconnections and interdependencies within urban systems and the implications for planning decisions.

LO4. Apply systems thinking to analyse planning challenges, identify feedback loops, and anticipate unintended consequences.

LO5. Develop holistic planning approaches that address the complexity of urban systems while promoting equity, sustainability, and resilience.

# Indicative Module Content

## Module topics

The module is divided into **six key themes**:

- Foundations of Urban Planning Theory and Systems Thinking
- Rational Planning
- Advocacy, Equity, and Inclusive Systems
- Communicative Planning and Collaborative Systems
- Critical Theories and Complex Urban Systems
- The role of systems thinking in addressing contemporary planning challenges such as climate change, urban resilience, and sustainability.

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 |
|---|---|---|---|
| LO1, LO2 | **Assessment 1**<br>Coursework | 1,500 | 60% |
| LO3, LO4, LO5 | **Assessment 2**<br>Coursework | 1,000 | 40% |

**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.