



## **Module Specification**

### **Grassroots Planning**

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## Part 1: Information

**Module title:** Grassroots Planning

**Module code:** UBGMYN-15-M

**Level:** Level 7

**For implementation from:** 2023-24

**UWE credit rating:** 15

**ECTS credit rating:** 7.5

**Faculty:** Faculty of Environment & Technology

**Department:** FET Dept of Geography & Environmental Mgmt

**Partner institutions:** None

**Field:** Geography and Environmental Management

**Module type:** Module

**Pre-requisites:** None

**Excluded combinations:** None

**Co-requisites:** None

**Continuing professional development:** No

**Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements:** None

## Part 2: Description

**Overview:** Not applicable

**Features:** Not applicable

**Educational aims:** The module will provide an opportunity to identify, and develop practical experience, in creating some of the engagement tools that are used in contemporary practice today and well as critically analysing and assessing the legitimacy of different forms of 'grassroots' planning.

**Outline syllabus:** Planning in the UK was created with strong democratic governance, with democratic approval being embedded into the decision making processes associated with both plan-making and development management. While achieving representative democracy remains a key objective for government, effort has also been directed to generating greater levels of participative democracy within planning itself. The 1969 report 'People and Planning' outlined a strategy for encouraging greater openness and involvement across the system, principles that have been maintained and strengthened over the last forty years. Local planning authorities across the UK are characterised by the considerable effort that they now direct towards facilitating and documenting engagement activity, while developers are also encouraged (and increasingly required) to ensure that their development proposals are developed in collaboration with the community. Charity organisations (such as the National Trust) are also very active in forging links between the different communities they work with and the planning objectives they might have.

Developing and implementing a successful engagement strategy inevitably takes time and, in many cases, significant resource. Consequently, despite the many benefits that greater involvement can bring (such as delivering better schemes and possibly faster decisions), actions for encouraging greater inclusiveness are often at odds with measures to streamline and 'speed up' the planning system. For instance, despite the recent promotion of localism and introduction of statutory neighbourhood plans, equally recent measures to extend permitted development rights and to fast track major infrastructure projects have led to contrary accusations about 'local say' being challenged.

A variety of engagement techniques now exist, with these being applied in a variety of scenarios either independently or in combination. Although these tools are becoming increasingly sophisticated and innovative, a continuing challenge is for them to become appealing and accessible to all members of society. Targeting so-called hard to reach groups, such as the young, remains a key goal for those seeking to encourage collaboration.

In light of this context, the module focuses on the relationship between people and planning. It outlines why society (in the broadest sense) should become involved and

how plans and projects can be positively shaped in response to these interactions. In addition to presenting the case for planning, the module also identifies the actors, stakeholders and policy arenas that are, or should be, involved. The module identifies the type of attitude that different groups tend to have and how the planning system, through advocacy and effective negotiation, is intended to establish some common ground. As part of this, students will be asked to consider the role of the professional planner, including the role for professional ethics.

The concept of engaging with a 'community' is deconstructed, with the module exploring the debates about what a community is, and what its role should be in the planning system. Similarly, the module will also encourage academic debate and discussion around other important terms such as 'equality', 'neighbourhood', 'involvement', 'participation' and 'engagement'. It will raise questions about where decision should be taken, and questions of scale and democracy which relate to this. To do so, it will cover 'bottom up' planning, be it in legitimate forms of neighbourhood plans and civic engagement, and more radical approaches such as protest groups, self-builders and activist movements.

By way of a summary, the syllabus will cover the following themes:

The purpose and principles for effective participation, with emphasis given to defining and critically analysing key terms such as inclusion, citizenship, identity, diversity and equality.

The definition of different interest and policy groups and integrating these together through the planning process.

Changing institutional arrangements - governance, partnership working, power sharing, theory of collaborative planning, implications for how stakeholders will become involved.

Theories and debates concerning the definition and delineation of 'communities' and 'neighbourhoods'.

Developing the aims and objectives for an effective community/stakeholder and political engagement strategy.

Acquiring and critically reviewing information about a community and the stakeholders and actors it supports.

Strategies for involving 'hard to reach' groups.

Capacity building for effective involvement.

Acting upon, and documenting, engagement activity.

Skills for promoting effective engagement and involvement.

### **Part 3: Teaching and learning methods**

**Teaching and learning methods:** Scheduled learning includes lectures, seminars, workshops and demonstration master classes as well as local field work.

Independent learning includes essential and recommended reading (5.5 hours per week = 55 hours) and preparing for and completing assessment (4.5 hours per week = 45 hours).

Contact time: 36 hours

Assimilation and development of knowledge: 74 hours

Assessment: 40 hours

**Module Learning outcomes:** On successful completion of this module students will achieve the following learning outcomes.

**MO1** Understand different positions that communities and stakeholders can take in approaching planning matters, and how planning frames their actions as legitimate or illegitimate

**MO2** Analyse the political and ethical nature of planning, including how planners work effectively within democratic decision-making structures

**MO3** Critically evaluate the context provided by theory, policy and regulation concerning the definition and involvement of the community, and the securing of equality and openness, in contemporary planning practice

**MO4** Explain and assess the different methods and tools for involving the community, and their respective adequacy, including the skills that planners need, such as negotiation, to successfully use these methods

**MO5** Understand the issues surrounding planning as a 'top down' or 'bottom up' activity, and compare the relative merits and drawbacks of both approaches

**MO6** Identify the methods, and inherent difficulties, of collecting information about a community in terms of its history, composition, opinion and physical extent, reflecting on the implications of this for professional practice

**Hours to be allocated:** 150

**Contact hours:**

Independent study/self-guided study = 114 hours

Face-to-face learning = 36 hours

Total = 150

**Reading list:** The reading list for this module can be accessed at [readinglists.uwe.ac.uk](https://uwe.rl.talis.com/modules/ubgmyn-15-m.html) via the following link <https://uwe.rl.talis.com/modules/ubgmyn-15-m.html>

## **Part 4: Assessment**

**Assessment strategy:** Report (3500 words) - The module will be assessed by a single component of assessment that will take the form of a critical assessment of public involvement in planning. The output for this assessment will be a report, which will critique and analyse the chosen case on the basis of academic literature and tools and techniques for community planning. It will outline in detail the case study (contemporary or historic, UK or international), demonstrating an understanding of

both the demographics/socio-economic makeup of the area, and of the relevant policy context for planning and community involvement. It will critically analyse the case on the basis of the academic and theoretical literature covered in the module, but also consider how, in practical terms, the case either contributes to good practice, or could have been improved (or both). This will include consideration of the role planners can play in developing this best practice, and how they can develop their professional knowledge as reflexive practitioners by using theory to critique practice.

Resit Report - a similar brief to that described above, which may include some topic changes.

Designing out plagiarism: The module's assessment has been designed to minimise plagiarism. Individual responses will be needed to the report brief which will be discussed and agreed with teaching staff during the module.

Education for Sustainable Development: The module provides a significant contribution to the ESD on the basis that community engagement is a key goal for empowering and inspiring change towards more positive outcomes. Recognising the diversity of a community is a key goal for planners and designers.

### **Assessment tasks:**

#### **Report (First Sit)**

Description: Report (3500 words equivalent)

Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5, MO6

#### **Report (Resit)**

Description: Report (3500 words equivalent)

Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5, MO6

## **Part 5: Contributes towards**

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study:

Transport [Frenchay] MSc 2023-24

Urban Planning [Frenchay] MSc 2023-24

Transport [Frenchay] MSc 2023-24

Urban Planning {Apprenticeship-UWE} [Frenchay] MSc 2022-23

Urban Planning [Frenchay] MSc 2022-23