



Module Specification

Planning Fundamentals 1

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Part 1: Information

Module title: Planning Fundamentals 1

Module code: UBLLAR-15-1

Level: Level 4

For implementation from: 2026-27

UWE credit rating: 15

ECTS credit rating: 7.5

College: College of Arts, Technology and Environment

School: CATE School of Architecture and Environment

Partner institutions: None

Field: Architecture and the Built Environment

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: This foundational module introduces students to the core principles, structures, and actors of the UK planning system. It begins by exploring the historical evolution of planning, examining how and why planning emerged as a response to urbanisation, industrialisation, and environmental concerns. Students will gain insight into the rationale behind planning as a tool for managing land use, promoting sustainable development, and balancing competing interests in the built and natural environment.

Through lectures, seminars, workshops, and site visits, students will critically engage with the planning system's role in shaping places and communities. The module highlights the interrelationships between policy, governance, and practice, and encourages students to reflect on the values and assumptions underpinning planning decisions.

Features: Not applicable

Educational aims: This module aims to:

Introduce the purpose and evolution of planning - Equip students with a foundational understanding of the role of planning in shaping the built and natural environment, including its historical development and rationale in the UK context.

Develop knowledge of the UK planning system - Explore the structure, principles, and key components of national and local planning frameworks, including statutory processes, policy instruments, and legislative underpinnings.

Foster critical awareness of planning actors and processes - Examine the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of stakeholders within the planning system, highlighting issues of power, participation, and governance.

Connect planning theory to practice - Enable students to observe and reflect on real-world planning processes through fieldwork and case-based learning, bridging conceptual understanding with practical application.

Explore planning's relationship with the built and natural environment - Investigate how planning influences urban design, infrastructure, housing, sustainability, and environmental resilience, with attention to contemporary challenges and debates.

Encourage global and comparative perspectives - Introduce students to international planning systems to broaden their understanding of planning approaches and draw lessons for UK practice.

Support the development of analytical and digital skills - Prepare students to engage with spatial data, policy analysis, and digital tools through a summative Digital Planning Portfolio that synthesizes learning across the module.

Outline syllabus: Week 1: Introduction to Planning

What is planning and why does it matter?

Historical origins of planning in the UK

The rationale for planning: public interest, market failure, and spatial justice

Week 2: Evolution of the UK Planning System

Key milestones in UK planning history

Post-war planning and the rise of statutory systems

Planning reforms and contemporary challenges

Week 3: Principles and Components of the UK Planning System (MO1)

Overview of the planning system structure

National and local planning frameworks

Key legislation and policy documents (e.g., NPPF, Local Plans)

Week 4: Plan-Making and Development Control (MO1 & MO3)

The Local Plan

Development management and planning applications

Material considerations and decision-making

Week 5: Actors in the Planning System (MO3)

Roles of planners, developers, elected members, and communities

Statutory consultees and non-governmental actors

Power dynamics and stakeholder engagement

Week 6: Planning and the Built Environment (MO2)

Urban design principles and spatial planning

Housing, infrastructure, and transport

Week 7: Planning and the Natural Environment (MO2)

Environmental planning and sustainability

Green infrastructure and biodiversity

Climate change and resilience in planning

Week 8: Planning in Practice – Site Visit / Fieldwork

Guided visit to a local planning authority or development site

Observation and reflection on planning processes in action

Week 9: Planning Challenges and Contemporary Debates (MO2)

Planning for equity and social justice

Planning under austerity and deregulation

Debates around housing crisis, green belt, and urban sprawl

Week 10: Integrating Learning – Assessment Workshop

Week 11: Learning from Other Contexts – International Planning Systems

Comparative overview of planning systems in selected countries (e.g., Netherlands, USA, China)

Key similarities and differences with the UK system

Lessons for UK planning from global practices

Week 12: Review and Reflection

Recap of key concepts and learning outcomes

Preparing for assessment submission

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: This module is designed to support students in developing a foundational understanding of the UK planning system through a blend of scheduled learning, guided activities, and independent study.

The total study time for this module is 150 hours, distributed as follows:

Contact time: 36 hour

Independent study: 114 hours

Scheduled learning will include:

Interactive Lectures: Delivered weekly and supported by the module website, lectures will introduce key concepts, frameworks, and case studies. These sessions will be designed to encourage active engagement through discussion prompts, short activities, and Q&A.

Seminars and workshops: These sessions will provide opportunities for students to apply their learning through group discussions, scenario-based exercises, and critical reflection. Activities will be aligned with weekly themes and learning outcomes.

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

MO1 Articulate and evaluate the key principles and statutory components of the UK planning system, by demonstrating comprehensive understanding of the planning system's evolution, legal frameworks, and policy instruments.

MO2 Critically analyze the role of the planning system in shaping the built and natural environment by examining how planning policies and practices shape urban form and environmental sustainability.

MO3 Examine and interpret the roles, relationships, and power dynamics among actors in plan-making and development control decisions, with attention to stakeholder engagement and governance.

Hours to be allocated: 150

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 114 hours

Face-to-face learning = 36 hours

Reading list: The reading list for this module can be accessed at [readinglists.uwe.ac.uk](https://rl.talis.com/3/uwe/lists/B866CC62-FEFC-D366-ADE1-77E03D7DBA98.html?lang=en-GB&login=1) via the following link <https://rl.talis.com/3/uwe/lists/B866CC62-FEFC-D366-ADE1-77E03D7DBA98.html?lang=en-GB&login=1>

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: The summative strategy is an Individual written Manifesto focussed on student developing “The Future of Planning: A Personal Vision” (1,500–2,000 words) with optional visual elements (e.g., diagrams, maps, illustrations).

Assessment rationale:

This assessment encourages students to reflect critically on the principles, actors, and impacts of the UK planning system, and to articulate a personal, values-driven vision for its future. It aligns with all three module outcomes by requiring students to:

Demonstrate understanding of planning principles and structures;
Critically evaluate planning's role in shaping environments;
Reflect on the roles and relationships of planning actors.

Resit strategy is same as the first sit.

Formative feedback takes place during the module and considers the development of the professional planner and nurtures a critical and reflective mindset.

Formative feedback will consist of:

Discussion between peers within the lectures, tutorials and other scheduled sessions;
Comments on coursework drafts by the teaching team;
Use of interactive online tools (e.g. Menti) for students to post ideas/questions relating to taught content/coursework;
Use of marking rubric both at the start to manage expectations of what 'good' looks like as well as facilitating students to use the rubric to evaluate their own drafts.

Assessment tasks:

Written Assignment (First Sit)

Description: Coursework is a personal manifesto (1500-2000 words) that outlines vision for the future of planning in the UK. The manifesto should focus on one core element explored in the module (e.g., plan-making, development control, environmental planning, spatial justice, housing, etc.).

Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Written Assignment (Resit)

Description: Coursework is a personal manifesto (1500-2000 words) that outlines vision for the future of planning in the UK. The manifesto should focus on one core element explored in the module (e.g., plan-making, development control, environmental planning, spatial justice, housing, etc.).

Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Part 5: Contributes towards

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study:

Urban Planning [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2026-27