



Module Specification

Planning Theory

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Part 1: Information

Module title: Planning Theory

Module code: UBLLCH-15-2

Level: Level 5

For implementation from: 2027-28

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 module introduces students to the intellectual foundations of town and country planning, with a strong emphasis on developing clear, logical, and critical thinking skills. Through a structured exploration of planning theory, normative concepts, and philosophical debates, students will engage with the evolving purposes and ethical underpinnings of planning practice in the UK and beyond.

Features: Not applicable

Educational aims: This module aims to:

- Develop students' capacity for clear and critical thinking

Equip students with foundational skills in logical reasoning and argument analysis, enabling them to evaluate planning debates with intellectual rigour.

- Foster a deep understanding of planning theory and its evolution

Introduce students to key theoretical developments, controversies, and influences that have shaped planning practice over the past six decades.

- Encourage critical engagement with normative concepts and ethical reasoning

Support students in analysing the meaning and implications of concepts such as sustainable development, aesthetic quality, and the public interest, and in reflecting on the ethical dimensions of planning.

- Introduce philosophical perspectives relevant to planning practice

Provide students with a grounding in moral and political philosophy to help them understand and critique the ideological foundations of planning systems and decisions.

- Strengthen communication and academic skills

Enable students to express ideas clearly and coherently through structured discussion, written essays, and evidence-based argumentation, preparing them for professional and academic contexts.

Outline syllabus: Through a structured exploration of planning theory, normative concepts, and philosophical debates, students will engage with the evolving purposes and ethical underpinnings of planning practice in the UK and beyond.

The module is divided into three interconnected parts:

- Part One examines the development of planning theory over the past 60 years, tracing key shifts in emphasis from physical to social planning, the rise and critique of rational systems approaches, the influence of political ideologies, and the emergence of collaborative, environmental, and design-led paradigms.

- Part Two explores the core aims of planning—economic development, sustainability, aesthetic quality, and the public interest—alongside procedural goals such as democratic decision-making and professional ethics. Students will critically analyse the meaning and implications of these normative concepts.

- Part Three introduces broader moral and political philosophical frameworks that shape ethical and political debates in planning. This includes utilitarianism, theories of justice, and competing political ideologies such as social democracy and free-market liberalism, contextualised within post-war British planning history.

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: Scheduled learning will be split between lectures and associated, hands-on workshops. Lectures will be used to provide the background theories, concepts and examples from research and practice. The workshops will encourage both group and individual reflection on the key themes being discussed.

Students will be asked to undertake some preparatory work to help support and underpin these workshop sessions, including elements of reading and personal research. Some of these references will be taken from the reading strategy but, given the dynamic nature of the subject matter and the broad nature of the students' research, additional and bespoke sources will also need to be found.

Independent learning includes hours engaged with essential reading to support the lecture sessions and the reading that will be needed to underpin the workshops.

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

MO1 Critically evaluate arguments and concepts in town planning, demonstrating the ability to analyse the logic of planning arguments, and interpreting key normative concepts such as sustainable development, public interest, and aesthetic quality.

MO2 Articulate and justify the aims and ethical foundations of town planning by reflecting on the broader moral and political philosophical positions that underpin planning debates and professional judgement.

MO3 Communicate ideas clearly through structured, evidence-based written/verbal work that demonstrates critical understanding of the development of planning knowledge .

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/E7A9841D-BE42-BD1C-81DE-C10F387DDCCD.html?lang=en-GB&login=1) via the following link <https://rl.talis.com/3/uwe/lists/E7A9841D-BE42-BD1C-81DE-C10F387DDCCD.html?lang=en-GB&login=1>

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: Summative assignment consists of:

An individual presentation as part of a group debate (10 mins) plus critical log book. The debate emphasises the importance of making clear and articulate arguments. Debates will be done in groups but students will be assessed on their individual performance.

The Critical Logbook (2000 words) is part of formative learning that facilitates students to demonstrate: engagement with the module throughout the year, a complete grasp of the material covered and the mastering of a range of communication and academic skills.

Rationale:

The debate format encourages students to explore contested planning topics, articulate well-reasoned arguments, and respond dynamically to opposing viewpoints. While the debate is conducted in groups to foster collaboration and peer learning, each student is assessed on their individual contribution, clarity of expression, and ability to present evidence-based reasoning. This format reflects real-world planning contexts, where professionals must defend proposals, negotiate

with stakeholders, and communicate persuasively in public forums.

The logbook serves as a reflective and analytical record of the student's engagement with the module across its duration. It enables students to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of key concepts, theories, and case studies, while also showcasing the development of academic and professional skills. Through structured entries, students are encouraged to synthesise learning, critique planning practices, and evaluate their own progress. The logbook supports deeper learning by promoting self-awareness, intellectual curiosity, and the ability to connect theory with practice.

Resit brief is same as that for 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:

Portfolio (First Sit)

Description: An individual presentation as part of a group debate (10 mins) plus critical log book (2000 words).

Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Portfolio (Resit)

Description: An individual presentation as part of a group debate (10 mins) plus critical log book (2000 words).

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

Architecture and Planning [Frenchay] BA (Hons) 2026-27

Architecture and Planning {Foundation}[Frenchay] BA (Hons) 2025-26