

MSc in Urban Sustainability

For students entering in 2007

Awarding Institution: The University of Reading
Teaching Institution: The University of Reading
Faculty of Science
Programme length: 12 months full-time, 24 months part-time
Date of specification: July 2006
Programme Director: Dr Steven Musson
Board of Studies: MSc in Urban Sustainability
Accreditation: Not applicable

Summary of programme aims

This programme aims to develop a broad understanding of urban sustainability that is informed by approaches from the human and physical sciences. It aims to prepare students for careers in urban planning, development and regeneration and to enable students already in employment in these areas to develop new and specialised skills. The programme can also be completed on a part-time (day release) basis over 24 months. It draws on research interests across the Department of Geography and incorporates cognate modules from across the University. The programme aims to provide training in a wide range of quantitative and qualitative research methods and enables students to generate their own understandings through a research-based dissertation.

Transferable skills

A range of transferable skills have been incorporated into the programme following consultation with employers and practitioners. These include research methods, report writing, presentation and oral communication, project management, strategic thinking, team working, leadership and information technology skills. The programme is designed to ensure that students develop these skills, through generic research training, specialised modules and a final dissertation.

Programme content

The MSc in Urban Sustainability is a 180 credit programme, of which 160 credits constitute compulsory modules and 20 credits are drawn from a wide-ranging list of optional modules. The aim is to offer a core programme that also enables students to choose their own individual learning paths.

The compulsory element of the programme comprises four core geography modules which are specific to the urban sustainability programme (40 credits). Two human and two physical geography modules draw on current research within the Geography Department and include contributions from at least ten members of academic staff. An existing ESRC-recognised research methods training programme is also compulsory (60 credits). This includes two research methods modules provided by the Institute of Education (EDMES1/2) and a subject-specific research methods training module (GGMGRP), which is shared with the MRes in Human Geography. A compulsory dissertation of 10-15,000 words is required (60 credits). In addition to these compulsory elements, 20 credits must be drawn from a list of ten optional modules, enabling students to tailor elements of the programme to their own learning

interests. Two existing H-Level modules within geography are included in this list, meaning that it is possible for students to complete the entire programme with credits gained from within geography.

Dissertation and research training modules (120 credits)

Compulsory modules (160 credits)

<i>Mod Code</i>	<i>Module Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
GGMUGP	Urban Governance and Planning (Prof R Potter and Dr S Musson)	10	M
GGMUE	Urban Environments (Dr M Shahgedanova and Dr K White)	10	M
GGMUEH	Urban Ecology, Hydrology and Hazards (Dr G Griffiths, Prof. P. Whitehead, Dr S Gurney)	10	M
GGMSUC	Sustainable Urban Communities (Dr S Bowlby and Dr S Lloyd-Evans)	10	M
EDMES2	Research/Transferable Skills for Social Sciences	10	M
EDMES1	Essentials of Research Methods for the Social Sciences	20	M
GGMGRP	Geographical Research	30	M
GGMDUS	Dissertation (10 – 15k words)	60	M
	Total compulsory credits	160	

Optional modules (Select 20 credits from list)

<i>Mod Code</i>	<i>Module Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
GGMO17	Sustainable Development (Geography)	10	H
GG339	Geographic Information Systems (Geography)	10	H
CEMIB9	Sustainable Design, Construction and Operation (College of Estate Management)	10	M
ECMREE	<i>Real Estate Economics (Business)</i>	20	M
PSMBC5	Ecological Aspects of Environmental Assessment (Plant Sciences)	10	M
REMB12	<i>Planning and environmental management (Real Estate and Planning)</i>	20	M
REMP07	<i>Property and environment (Real Estate and Planning)</i>	20	M
REMP08	Regeneration (Real Estate and Planning)	20	M
SSMREM	Remediation (SHES)	10	M
SSMWEM	Soils, Waste and Environmental Management (SHES)	10	M
	Total optional credits	20	

Part-time/Modular arrangements

The programme may be taken over 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time. The Research Methods Course (EDMES1/2) takes place on Thursday afternoon and early evening throughout the three terms. This course is modular and the modules run in alternating slots

from year to year thus giving part-time students the option of taking all the modules over two years in the afternoon or evening slot. The afternoon slot runs from 3.00pm.

Modules taught within the Geography Department will take place on Thursday mornings, the staff/student seminars at Thursday lunchtime and module workshops on Saturday mornings. Part time students would be expected to take 90 credits in each year of study, but will be required to complete the 60 credit dissertation in their SECOND YEAR of study.

Modules taught outside the Geography Department will take place as timetabled throughout the week. Sustainable Design, Construction and Operation (CEMIB9) runs in intensive modular form on 5 consecutive days in March and as such may not be appropriate for part-time students.

Progression requirements

Candidates must achieve an overall average mark of 50% or better in the taught modules in order to progress to do the Dissertation. Candidates not presenting a Dissertation may be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma if their performance in the taught modules is satisfactory (see below).

For Masters Degrees

To pass the MSc students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

For PG Diplomas

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more and have no mark below 40 will be awarded eligible for a Merit.

For PG Certificate

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 10 credits.

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

Mark Interpretation

70 – 100% Distinction

60 – 69% Merit

50 – 59% Good standard (Pass)

Failing categories:

40 – 49% Work below threshold standard

0 – 39% Unsatisfactory Work

Summary of teaching and assessment

Teaching is organised in modules that involve a range of lecture, seminar and practical-based learning approaches. Modules are assessed by a mixture of coursework and formal examination. Some modules are assessed wholly by coursework or by examination; details are given in the module descriptions. The final dissertation will be on a topic of the student's choosing but in a research area relevant to urban sustainability.

Admission requirements

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained a degree at the equivalent of UK 2.1 honours or better in geography, planning or a social or environmental science. However, well-motivated applicants with other degree backgrounds and students returning to higher education are strongly encouraged to apply. Students whose previous education was not in English will be required to provide evidence of their ability to study in English in line with University of Reading postgraduate entry requirements.

Admissions Tutor: Dr Steven Musson

Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories.

1. Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme.
2. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by the Programme Director, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union. Departmental support is provided through:
 - The course coordinator and the student's project supervisor
 - A detailed course handbook.
 - Departmental Postgraduate committee – on which students are represented.

Each student will have a supervisor with expertise in the subject area of the student's dissertation project. It is the responsibility of the *supervisor* to give guidance to the student through regular meetings. For full-time students we expect meetings between supervisor and Higher Degree students to take place fortnightly in term time, more frequently at critical stage of the work and less often in vacation periods when a supervision timetable must be agreed in advance. For part-time students meetings

normally take place monthly. It is the responsibility of the *student* to raise with the supervisor any difficulties or problems which occur in the course of the work and to submit coursework and progress reports as required by the course handbook.

Career prospects

It is anticipated that graduates from this programme will gain employment in the fields of urban planning, economic development, regeneration and environmental consultancy. The programme has been developed in consultation with leading employers in the south east region, including SEEDA, Reading Borough Council and the Thames Valley Economic Partnership. Graduates will have a range of specialised and transferable skills that will enhance career prospects in urban planning and regeneration with a particular focus on urban sustainability. Furthermore, students already in employment can opt to study part time as part of their career development in the field of urban planning, regeneration and sustainability.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

Not applicable

Educational aims of the programme

The main educational aim of the programme is to understand the holistic nature of urban sustainability. It examines the conceptual development of urban sustainability, at the interface of social, political, cultural and environmental and scientific approaches. The programme also aims to provide a wide range of transferable skills that are desirable to employers, through specialised training in a wide range of human and physical geography approaches that reflect staff research interests in the Department of Geography and through subject-specific research methods training. In addition, the programme aims to enable students to acquire a range of transferable skills desirable for careers in the field of urban sustainability and to provide training in the skills required to investigate a proposed research topic, to establish the extent of published knowledge in the field, understand and summarise that knowledge and be able to report formally, both orally and in writing.

Programme Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. Human and physical geography approaches to urban sustainability that reflect current staff research interests within the Department of Geography
2. The way in which the concept of urban sustainability cuts across such approaches and the intellectual and policy challenges this poses
3. The principles of research design and strategy, including an awareness of the strengths of different research methodologies
4. A range of case-studies in urban sustainability and other examples of principles in practice

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Teaching and learning is promoted through lectures and tutorials, seminars, field visits and guided reading. This includes modules on general & transferable skills; research methods and skills, research-led optional modules in geography and elsewhere in the University and the dissertation.

Assessment

Details of specific forms of assessment are contained within module descriptions. Across the programme, this includes:

1. Seminar presentations
2. Written essays
3. Exams
4. Final dissertation

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills – able to:

1. Critically engage with a range of contrasting approaches to urban sustainability
2. Reconcile human and physical geography research methodologies and data, including synthesising complex and varied information
3. Present and verify qualitative and quantitative arguments drawing on a range of information and data from academic sources and beyond
4. Identify interesting and feasible research questions and problems in the field of urban sustainability that are informed by academic research in the field
5. Critically assess existing research on a particular topic and assimilate it into self-led research

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Teaching of intellectual skills is primarily undertaken in optional and compulsory course modules. A range of methods are employed, including direct lecturing, guided reading, seminars and group discussion. In addition, research methods training contributes to the identification of research questions. These modules draw on research from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds and are taught in an informal, student-led environment. The dissertation represents a self-led learning opportunity for intellectual skills, particularly for points 4 and 5.

Assessment

In addition to dissertation research carried out with the support of a supervisor, formal assessment in this area includes coursework essays and examination answers. A range of other informal approaches are also employed, including seminars, presentations and class-based discussions.

C. Practical skills – able to:

1. Select and use research methods appropriate to different problems and data analysis challenges
2. Undertake practical work in the field using a range of human and physical geography research methods
3. Use a range of appropriate software packages to recording, analysing and represent data
4. Manage an individual research project
5. Participate in group practical activities work as part of a team and as a group leader
6. Communicate research findings to a range of audiences using appropriate methods

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Modules on general and transferable skills including EDMES1 and 2 are important to teaching and learning in this area. In particular, they deal with the selection of research methods and their application. Optional modules in geography and elsewhere are also relevant, particularly where they involve practical training in software techniques. Dissertation research with the support of a supervisor enables students to utilise these practical skills.

Assessment

Includes practical workshop sessions, group and individual presentations and the final dissertation.

D. Transferable skills – able to:

1. Manage an individual research project through planning to completion, including the selection of appropriate research techniques and the identification of strategic priorities within the project
2. Communicate ideas through the preparation of formal essays and reports
3. Disseminate the outcomes of research to a range of audiences using appropriate oral communication techniques
4. Work as part of a team on a range of practical and intellectual tasks
5. Use a range of specialised software packages including statistical analysis and GIS software in a research environment

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Modules on general and transferable skills including EDMES1 and 2 are important to teaching and learning in this area. In particular, they deal with the selection of research methods and their application. Optional modules in geography and elsewhere are also relevant, particularly where they involve practical training in software techniques. Dissertation research with the support of a supervisor enables students to utilise these practical skills.

Assessment

1. Seminar presentations and discussions
2. Coursework essays and reports
3. Final dissertation (GGM XX)

Please note - This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module description and in the programme handbook. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance processes or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.