

## **PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION**

### **PROGRAMME SUMMARY**

Programme Title: **MSc in Real Estate (distance-taught)**

Awarding Institution: **The University of Reading**

Teaching Institution: **The College of Estate Management**

Relevant QAA Subject Benchmarking Group: **Building & Surveying**

Faculty of **Science**

For students entering Year 1 in **September 2011**

Programme Director: **Gordon Fogg**

Board of Studies: **CEM PG B of S**

Accreditation: **RICS**

Programme length: **30 months**

Date of specification: **August 2011**

### **Summary of Programme aims**

The Programme provides a combination of academic skills and advanced professional skills commensurate with the Masters level award. It provides the opportunity to attain these skills to those who cannot, or choose not to, give up their full-time career status. As such it enhances on-going career prospects. This is achieved in a structured programme that still provides flexibility to the student.

The MSc in Real Estate is designed to provide students with:

- An advanced academic understanding of real estate market processes,
- An appropriate knowledge of core real estate disciplines (with a particular emphasis on economics, finance and investment),
- An opportunity to enhance their professional real estate skills,
- Experience and expertise in academic research on real estate issues.

### **Transferable skills**

The University's Strategy for Teaching and Learning has identified a number of generic transferable skills which all students are expected to develop during their degree programme. By the end of this Programme, students will have developed their skills relating to communication, information handling, numeracy, problem-solving and use of information technology. Oral presentation skills and team working will be encouraged within the limited parameters of the face-to-face elements of the distance-taught programme. These transferable skills are developed in tandem with the specific subject skills of the Programme.

## Programme Structure and Content

The MSc in Real Estate for External Students is a two-and-a-half year distance-taught programme originally based on the full-time internal MSc in Real Estate. There are, however, some module differences, partly reflecting the fact that, originally, it was not available to UK-based students. Also, in recent years both the full-time Programme and its distance-taught cousin have evolved creating a divergence between the two programmes.

The thirty-month Programme is divided into five semesters. It is designed within a 180 credit modular structure. All students are required to take six compulsory taught modules and two further modules from a set of four electives. Each of the six compulsory taught modules constitutes 20 credits (approximately 200 study hours). Each of the elective modules currently carries 10 credits each. However for 2012/13 these will be enlarged to 15 credits. This is to bring the number of Level 7 credits up to 150 for the Programme to meet current QAA prescriptions. The consequences for students starting in September 2011 or before and then progressing on to Semester 4 in 2013 will be that they will have completed 190 credits. Subsequent cohorts will revert to 180 credits as the two Level 6 modules in Semester 1 will each be reduced from 20 to 15 credits starting in September 2012.

The research component of the Programme (*Research Methods* plus *Dissertation*) constitutes one-third of the credits available in the programme (60 credits: approx. 600 study hours). It will be undertaken in three phases; a taught module on *Research Methods* in Semester 3, a dissertation planning phase in Semester 4, and an execution phase in Semester 5.

<b><u>Part 1</u></b>	<b><u>Credits*</u></b>		<b><u>FHEQ Level</u></b>
	<b><u>2011/12</u></b>	<b><u>2012/13</u></b>	
<b>Semester 1</b>			
Economics	20	15	6
Valuation	20	15	6
<b>Semester 2</b>			
Real Estate Economics	20	20	7
Development Appraisal and Funding	20	20	7
<b><u>Part 2</u></b>			
<b>Semester 3</b>			
Finance and Investment	20	20	7
Research Methods	20	20	7
<b>Semester 4 (Options)</b>			
<i>TWO from:</i>			
Marketing	10	15	7
Portfolio Analysis	10	15	7
Corporate Real Estate	10	15	7
The Economics of Sustainability	10	15	7

## **Part 3**

### **Semester 5**

Dissertation	40	40	7
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[\* The dates indicate years in which the modules are studied and not cohort entry dates. Hence those entering in 2011 and progressing normally through the course will complete 80 modules in Part 1, 70 in Part 2 and 40 in Part 3.]

Students can pursue a slower track approach by opting to take only one module in some or all semesters. In the event of deferrals or necessary retakes, such slow track students may be constrained by the maximum course length of six years.

### **Part-time/Modular arrangements**

As stated above, students have the flexibility of attempting either one or two modules per semester. In that sense, a *part-time* option is open to the fully employed students who typically undertake the Programme.

### **Progression requirements**

Progression is subject to the relevant regulations but is based on a pass mark of 50. The minimum course duration is two and a half years (five semesters).

**[For details refer to the *Assessment, progression and award regulations* available on the *Virtual Learning Environment*.]**

For those retaking modules or postponing their course, it should be noted that there is a six year maximum course duration.

### **Summary of teaching and assessment**

The Programme is distance-taught and, as such the variety of pedagogic and assessment methods is limited. However, when student numbers are sufficient, there are two two-to-three day residential courses in each year. These intensive days offer the opportunity for group work and student presentations as well as more conventional lectures (including guest speakers) and seminars.

The material and assessment in the first two modules is designed to be of undergraduate *honours* level (level 6) to bring students up to speed in the core areas of *Economics* and *Valuation*. All the other modules are delivered and assessed at Masters level (level 7) with emphasis upon independent research, critical evaluation and analysis.

The course-work is typically made up of two substantial assignments for each taught module. They are designed to test the students' understanding of a significant proportion of the syllabus content that is prescribed in a *programme of studies*. Formal two to three hour examinations are held at the end of Semesters 1 to 4 and the Dissertation, submitted at the end of Semester 5, is double marked and subject to External Examiner review.

### **Admission requirements**

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained:

A good (normally at least upper second class) undergraduate degree in any cognate or non-cognate discipline. Equivalent professional qualifications and extensive experience are taken into consideration.

Admissions is overseen by the College's Admissions Committee in liaison with the Course Leader.

### **Support for students and their learning**

By agreement, the University support for students and their learning may be made available to its distance-taught students. Such support may include library, IT and careers support. However, most support is provided independently by the College of Estate Management.

The College has now adopted the *Moodle* software package as a means of delivering courses on-line. This *Virtual Learning Environment* has been developed as a means of providing course content and information to students. It is also used to expand the interaction between students and tutors as well as students and their colleagues. The *Gateway to Learning* portal on the VLE sites provides access to thousands of property related texts, including University 5 of Reading research materials. Students can also access hyperlinks to *Athens*, iSurv, EGi and *Amazon* academic booksellers. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by the Programme Director and Programme Administrator. In addition we have a *Special Needs* advisor.

### **Career prospects**

Nearly 100% of Programme students to date have been employed during their studies and have been seeking the award to further career prospects. Graduates have furthered career prospects within governmental Valuation Offices (Jamaica and Mauritius) and within academic departments (University of the West Indies) as well as in international property practices in Hong Kong, Singapore, Spain and Canada.

### **Opportunities for study abroad or for placements**

The international locations of the one-week residential course are intended to change each year. This ensures that all students are obliged to spend at least one, and often two, weeks studying abroad.

### **Programme Outcomes**

The Programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge, understanding and analytical techniques in the following areas.

## ***Knowledge and Understanding***

### **A. Knowledge and understanding of;**

- 1) The economic framework of real estate markets
- 2) The theoretical and practical problems of real estate valuation and appraisal
- 3) Data management and data analysis techniques
- 4) Principles of corporate finance relevant to real estate investment
- 5) Research techniques & their application to real estate problems

#### OPTIONS

- 6) The role of real estate in corporate asset management
- 7) Planning & layout considerations in development decisions
- 8) Principles of marketing in a real estate context

### **Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

Acquisition of knowledge of 1-5 in the core modules of the Programme is promoted through distance education resources including customised text material, core textbooks, video material, CDs, web-based material and communication channels. These are complemented and supplemented by intensive lecture, guest lecture, seminar and team project work in face -to-face sessions.

Knowledge of 6-8 are developed in similar ways for students choosing the relevant options. In the dissertation module, self directed learning and problem solving combined with supervisor consultation further embraces knowledge and understanding of aspects of 1-8.

#### **Assessment**

Students are required to complete extensive pieces of coursework in core and optional modules and are examined in each of them, with the exception of the conventionally assessed dissertation module.

## **Skills and other attributes**

### **B. Intellectual skills – ability to:**

1. Integrate theory and practice.
2. Collect and synthesise information from a variety of sources.
3. Analyse and interpret.
4. Think logically and critically.
5. Define, solve and advise on problems.
6. Select and apply appropriate quantitative techniques of analysis and appraisal.
7. Plan, execute and write a report to a client brief.
8. Adapt and apply knowledge and skills in a changing professional environment and to other contexts.

### **Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

These skills are developed through prescribed reading, coursework and detailed feedback. The reading includes core texts, papers and relevant web-based material. Coursework varies across the modules but collectively covers skills 1-8. Feedback includes direct coursework comment, e-mailed advice and web-based answer guides. Web-based discussion between tutors and students is also facilitated.

The dissertation process further embraces intellectual skills 1-6.

### **Assessment**

Intellectual skills are assessed through coursework essays, problems, reports and appraisals and through unseen examination and dissertation production.

### **C. Practical skills; – ability to:**

1. Locate info sources, assemble and present info in a variety of contexts.
2. Collect, record, analyse and present statistical material
3. Adopt appraisal techniques for real estate and other assets.
4. Use quantitative techniques
5. Write clear report standard English.

### **Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

Skills 1-2 are mainly developed through the Dissertation Module. Detailed guidelines are provided and explained in seminar sessions.

Skills 3-5 are variously developed in coursework within the taught modules and 4-5 are extended through the dissertation process.

### **Assessment**

Relevant assessment of these skills is undertaken mainly through module coursework. Skills 3-5 are also assessed through unseen examination.

**D. Transferable skills: –**

1. **Communication skills**
2. **IT skills**
3. **Literacy**
4. **Numeracy**
5. **Problem-solving skills**
6. **Time management skills**
7. **Autonomous learning**
8. **Research skills**
9. **Business awareness**
10. **Sustainability awareness**

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

**Communication skills:** whereas oral communication is limited by the medium of the Programme, written communication is central to the success of students in the Programme.

**IT skills:** All MSc students are expected to have access to PCs, e-mail and the internet. The Programme is supported by the open areas of the College web-site, but more importantly, by the dedicated course-specific *Moodle* site. There are many discussion forums established on the MSc Moodle site with plans to encourage their regular use.

The course text on the *Finance and Investment* module includes an accompanying CD.

Students are given the option of submitting their course material by e-mail. This necessitates familiarity with Word for text and Excel for graphical inserts. The College web-site has continued to expand and students are encouraged to access both feedback on coursework, and on-line power-point presentations. Support and advice on IT aspects of the course is available to students.

**Literacy and Numeracy:** These not only relate to desirable minimum requirements for the Programme but are skills that are encouraged and developed through assignment tasks and tutor feedback on style as well as content. Assessment requirements include a mixture of essays, calculation, formal valuations, reports, graphical presentations as well as dissertation writing. Guidance on the nature of these formats is provided throughout the course.

**Problem-solving skills:** These are particularly encouraged in the Valuation, Finance & Investment and Development modules.

**Time management skills:** This is developed through the planning of timetables for reading, assignment work, exam revision and dissertation research). Students are given extensive advice on these skills in their Course Handbook and the Dissertation Guidelines booklet. Their programme of study, prescribed in each set of course materials provides a framework in which they can organise necessary study tasks.

**D. Transferable skills**  
(cont)

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

**Autonomous Learning** is naturally developed throughout the Programme but is of particular importance in the dissertation process.

**Research skills:** These are taught directly in the proposed *Research Methods* module. Face-to-face teaching time will continue to be allocated to them in the annual residential seminar week as part of the preparation of second year students for the dissertation. First year students will also be introduced to basic research methods in these seminars.

**Business Awareness** is engendered in Finance & Investment and Marketing particularly.

**Sustainability Awareness** is objectively delivered in the new *Economics of Sustainability* module.

**Assessment**

All these skills are indirectly assessed throughout the programme.

*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 expect 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 Student Handbook and on the VLE.