

# **Programme Specification: Postgraduate Certificate / Diploma / MA in Landscape Architecture**

**Date of Publication to Students: September 2010**

**NOTE:** This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detail on the specific learning outcomes, indicative content and the teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found (1) at <http://www.bcu.ac.uk/biad>, (2) in the Module Specifications and (3) in the Student Handbook.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked within independent review processes undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency.

<b>Awarding Institution / Body:</b>	<b>Birmingham City University</b>
<b>Teaching Institution:</b>	<b>BIAD</b>
<b>Interim Awards and Final Award:</b>	<b>Postgraduate Certificate/Postgraduate Diploma/MA in Landscape Architecture</b>
<b>Programme Title:</b>	<b>Postgraduate Diploma + MA Landscape Architecture</b>
<b>Main fields of Study:</b>	<b>Professionally accredited Landscape Architecture</b>
<b>Modes of Study:</b>	<b>Full-Time and Part-Time</b>
<b>Language of Study:</b>	<b>English</b>
<b>UCAS Code:</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>JACS Code:</b>	

## **Professional Status of the programme (if applicable):**

The Postgraduate Diploma is accredited by the chartered professional body for Landscape Architecture in the UK – the Landscape Institute (L.I.).

Successful completion of the Postgraduate Diploma (but not the Graduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate) enables students to apply for 'Licentiate' membership of the Landscape Institute.

This leads to the 'Pathways to Chartership' process and full chartered membership of the L.I.

**Relevant subject benchmark statements and other external reference points used to inform programme outcomes:**

The QAA published the revised undergraduate Subject Benchmark Statement for Landscape Architecture in June 2007. Masters level Benchmarking Statements have yet to be definitively produced by the QAA for Landscape Architecture.

The QAA has produced a document in September 2009 – ‘Master’s Degree Characteristics’ which seeks to give ‘*a framework that higher education providers can use in describing the nature of the Master’s degrees they offer*’. Within this document it identifies the characteristics of three categories of Master’s degrees. The third of these is referred to as the ‘Professional/practice Masters’ and it is this type that is used as the basis for this Programme Specification.

This Programme Specification is, therefore, aligned with the above QAA Master’s Degree document in respect of the following points contained therein:

- Programme characteristics
- Programme purposes
- Intended entrants
- Relation to further study or employment
- Characteristics of graduates

Given the integrated nature of the professional education of Landscape Architects and the fact that the Diploma is in many respects, a continuation and development of undergraduate study, many of the key skills and understandings identified in the June 2007 Subject Benchmarks are also to be found in and are characteristics of this Programme Specification.

In addition to this, the Landscape Institute (L.I.) also produces the document ‘Course Accreditation – Guidance Notes for Schools’ (2005). This defines both the processes required for ongoing monitoring and renewal of accreditation and also the Course characteristics and content which the L.I. requires for professional programmes in Landscape Architecture. This Programme Specification is fully consistent with all of these L.I. requirements.

The European professional body for Landscape Architecture (EFLA) has also produced similar guidance and, via the Le Notre project of the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools (ECLAS), is involved in the ongoing ‘Bologna Process’. This Programme Specification is consistent with current developments within this process.

## **Programme philosophy and aims**

The Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and MA in Landscape Architecture are situated explicitly in relation to the objectives of educating students to meet the current and future design challenges of the profession and the development of student's critical study of the discipline of Landscape Architecture. Whilst the Course fulfils the appropriate professional and technical competences required by the L.I. for membership, the focus on the critical practice of design both gives the Course its distinctiveness and allows it to draw on the lengthy practice and research base in design teaching found in the Course Team (both in-house and visitors). All are seen as being contributors to the creation of a successful designed environment.

Design, therefore, as an iterative, integrative and cyclical process and practice is the central platform upon which the course operates with an emphasis on the development of independent creative and critical judgement tested in the studio context through a Course Structure that has, at its core, Major Design Project. This is supported by, and strongly integrated with, Modules which enable students to focus on various aspects of professional practice, the relationship between theory and practice in landscape architecture, sustainable landscape planning and the synthesis of design ambitions and their pragmatic realisation.

Two crucial aspects of the Course are its 'International Studio' – a series of lectures and tutorial workshops delivered by a range of renowned landscape practitioners and educators from the UK and overseas who contribute to the learning experience of students and the underpinning of teaching and learning with staff research.

The design, structure and assessment of the course reflect the process of developing thinking and practice as a designer. The course does not replicate professional practice, but rather prepares students by challenging, broadening and deepening the basis on which they think about design.

Design practice entails the continual development of ability to make informed judgements and decisions based on a cycle of learning to frame fruitful questions that generate research, analysis and speculative design propositions. Through testing these in turn produce more precise questions and knowledge leading to deeper levels of understanding and so the cycle repeats itself until resolution is reached

Inevitably this process is as much informed by learning to judge and decide when a proposition is inappropriate or insufficient to its agenda of questions. Thus the Course aims to provide a supportive learning environment for this risk-taking that enables students to develop their creative and critical judgement of their own explorations of the process and ensures that assessment reflects this.

To this end all learning is aided by a parallel cycle of evaluation and feedback of a formative nature throughout each Module and of a summative nature on completion and assessment of the Module.

### **The aims of the programme are to:**

- To provide a challenging and stimulating framework within which students can consolidate and take forward to a high level of design excellence, the learning from their undergraduate and/or Graduate Diploma study as well as developing the knowledge and skills needed to equip them for practice and for further study and professional development. This is achieved through a programme of integrated,

personalised and precisely focused study.

- To fulfil the responsibility for completing, via the accredited Diploma in Landscape Architecture, the professional studies recognised by the Landscape Institute, which, together with the requisite period of professional practice ('Pathways to Chartership'), will allow access for chartered membership of the Landscape Institute.
- To enable students to further develop and deepen their theoretical and practical understanding of landscape design by engaging students in independent study and systematic enquiry within the discipline at the required advanced level and to enable them to draw useful and meaningful experiences from this process.
- To give students the confidence and enthusiasm to work within and take on the challenges of an expanding and increasingly diverse profession.
- To engage students with the current research in the discipline currently being undertaken within the School of Architecture.
- To offer students the opportunity to pursue their academic and professional study of the discipline by means of undertaking a Master's degree by Dissertation. This will be an independent, sustained and rigorous research and/or design study.

**Intended learning outcomes and the means by which they are achieved and demonstrated:**

**Learning Outcomes<sup>1</sup>**

Knowledge and understanding of:

1. Design theories and processes and their application to design proposals in space and time, including research and reflective analysis.
2. Environmental systems, natural processes, hard and soft technologies and their application and deployment in design proposals to achieve environmentally responsible and visually appropriate solutions in complex spatial and temporal situations.
3. The histories, practices and cultural context of landscape design, the analysis and use of precedents in design practice.
4. The properties of construction and planting materials and their use in design proposals.

Subject – specific and generic skills that provide an ability to:

5. Analyse, reflect on and synthesise information in order to generate creative and robust design solutions.
6. The use of diverse thinking in exploring and formulating design solutions.
7. Generate 2 and 3 – dimensional form by a variety of manual and digital techniques as a tool for the exploration and presentation of design proposals.
8. Apply critical judgement to both their own and others designs and articulate reasoned evaluations leading to improved design proposals.
9. 9. Develop and communicate design proposals in a variety of media and forms to a diverse audience.

**Learning, teaching, and assessment methods used**

- Knowledge and understanding are acquired through formal lectures, student-led seminars, project work group tutorials, individual tutorials, student presentations, desk critiques, demonstrations, workshops and study tours.
- Students are encouraged to work visually and spatially in conjunction with their conceptual ideas in their own work. They are expected to use the same kind of analysis to explain the cultural context, significance and meaning of certain iconic landscapes.
- The design studios, the theoretical and contextual Modules and the technological Modules in the course provide a range of projects, strategies and approaches to design, whilst investigating the cultural, social, professional context of the discipline, its technology, history and theory. This provides an informed and critical basis from which students can select their Thesis Design Project in the Diploma and form the basis of their MA Dissertation. A sustained piece of independent

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<sup>1</sup> Guidance on the specification of learning outcomes is available from the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching.

research and design in a specialist area, the Thesis Design Project has a clearly defined structure and framework setting out educational objectives, expectations assessment criteria and timetable for assessment. During the Thesis Design Project, regular Review Tutorials are conducted to monitor progress and inform students of performance via formative assessment, prior to final summative assessment of the complete Project.

- Invited tutors from related disciplines and within the profession bring different perspectives and experiences for students to consider in both lecture series and design projects and, in particular, the 'International Studio'.
- Research for presentations and seminars encourages students to capitalise on and apply their previous knowledge and experience to the field of landscape design and to learn from each other.
- Understanding the complexity and ambiguity of the design process encourages students to become more aware of their own values and beliefs. Design process projects require them to construct their own conceptual framework to guide their design decisions. As part of this process, students are expected to demonstrate their line of inquiry, decisions and judgements made, to justify the appropriateness of such decisions and the implications in their design work. They are required to show the design logic, (visually, spatially, conceptually) in an interpretative sense, to explain how and why their designs look like they do, at any stage in the process.
- Technology (hard and soft) is not taught as 'how to do it' but as technical solutions clearly set within a conceptual and design framework.
- All assessments are a key learning opportunity and are utilised positively and specifically to improve as well as assess students' performance.
- The use of critiques, review tutorials and post design analysis requires students to be constantly reflective and self-critical and gives them increasing confidence to appraise and judge their own work.
- Feedback and debriefing sessions encourage this critical reflection of the learning experience for each Module and the Course as a whole, from the student's point of view.
- Development of Research skills is seen as key at this level. The Thesis Design Project is in itself a significant research project requiring investigation, analysis and application as well as discipline and time management for students who may also be working full time.
- Research skills and independent learning are also assessed in most studio units as part of the design process, in construction and 'soft' technology, in professional and legislative study and in papers on landscape theory. In preparation for the MA Dissertation, explicit Research Methods are covered in Module LAN7334, resulting in the submission of an MA Dissertation Proposal defining the enquiry topic, methods, structure, etc.
- The presentation of student's ideas visually with verbal or diagrammatic explanations of the significance/meaning or conclusions of the work encourages analytical capabilities.
- Visual communication is an essential part of teaching and learning in design. Students are encouraged to use the graphic conventions of the profession as a starting point, rather than an end point. A wide range of computer facilities are available at BIAD (although this is not always convenient for part time students). Assessment of a range of communication skills is common to all design modules

and skill development is enhanced through individual tutorials and desk crits.

- Familiarity with the translation of three-dimensional designs into two-dimensional drawings, the procedures and expectations of professional communication and practice of implementation are developed through design studios, construction notebooks, lecture series and the production of working drawings.
- Assessment of most modules requires some sort of presentation, which across the Course provides a comprehensive approach to communication skills. In terms of teaching this is supported in individual and group tutorials as well as demonstrations, lectures and exercises embedded within individual design units. The sustained Major Design Project provides the opportunity for students to develop methods of communication through the preparation of an individual professional exhibition covering the wide range of graphic material typically required in professional practice.

**Programme structure and requirements, levels, modules, credits and awards**

**AWARD – MA      180 Credits**

**LAN 7338** MA Thesis

60 Credits

**AWARD - PG DIPLOMA    120 Credits**

**LAN 7334**  
Research  
Meth/  
Des Thesis  
15 Credits

**LAN 7335**  
Thesis  
Design 1  
15 Credits

**LAN 7336**  
Thesis  
Design 2  
15 Credits

**LAN 7337**  
Thesis  
Design  
Tech

**AWARD – PG CERTIFICATE    60 Credits**

**LAN 7330**  
Prof.  
Practice

15 Credits

**LAN 7331**  
Critical  
(R)urbanism

15 Credits

**LAN 7332**  
Critical  
Design

15 Credits

**LAN 7333**  
Intl  
Studio

15 Credits

**POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE / DIPLOMA + MA**



**ENTER COURSE WITH BA (HONS) LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
OR  
GRADUATE DIPLOMA (OR EQUIVALENT) LANDSCAPE**



## Support for Learning including Personal Development Planning (PDP)

Students are encouraged to identify and, with guidance, to reflect on their own learning needs and are offered the following support as appropriate to meet those needs:

Training to become a landscape architect is a long process and without establishing targets along the way it can be a daunting prospect. PDP is a structured and supported process undertaken over a number of years to enabling critical reflection upon learning, performance and achievement and facilitating planning for personal, educational and professional development. It complements structured and self directed activities as part of the course, building upon the learning objectives of module briefs to give an overview of studies.

### **PDP within the Course**

It should perhaps be noted here that all students of the Course have previously undertaken significant higher education study and many (probably a majority) will have worked in a variety of professional contexts prior to joining the Course. Furthermore the professionally-accredited nature of the Course means that the application of learning to the workplace is a fundamental aspect of the entire Course.

One of the defining characteristics of the cohorts on the Course is the diversity deriving from the above. The PDP process is seen as being a means where the various issues consequent on this diversity e.g. mature, self-reflective students who are nevertheless starting a very new area of study; skilled BA Landscape students who may, as yet, have little practical experience of working practice, can be addressed both as part of formal learning activities and in a more informal manner.

There is thus a somewhat different emphasis for PDP in the Course than, for example in undergraduate Courses.

The Course Team have identified the following PDP Aims as being appropriate for the diverse range of students on the Course

### **Aims**

- To bring a clearer focus to learning for students new to the discipline.
- Use personal motivation to achieve career goals.
- Develop skills in self-management.
- Greater personal independence and self-confidence as a learner in a new discipline.
- More awareness of how to apply learning to new problems and contexts.
- Greater awareness of the professional and policy context in which landscape design skills are deployed.
- Reflective, strategic, analytical and creative thinking skills that strengthen academic performance.

In addition, the stated aim of the Course to develop the 'Critical Practitioner', has given rise to the need to consider the following issues within the PDP process

- Lifetime goals

- Work location
- Personal values
- Work/life balance
- What is success?
- Personal sacrifice

#### **What will the PDP Process entail?**

- The Learning Diary: Personal records of learning and achievement
- CV and personal statement towards career planning
- University transcript of academic performance

Students take ownership of this file. It forms the basis of discussions with the course team/tutor during the annual PDP session. Action points and key issues will be used to prompt further research, training and development opportunities. Achievements will be monitored from session to session.

#### **Criteria for admission**

Candidates must satisfy the general admission requirements of the programme.

The current admission requirements can be found under the 'Entry Requirements' tab of the web page for this course.

#### **Methods for evaluation and enhancement of quality and standards including listening and responding to views of students**

##### **Student Issues**

The main objective is to ensure fitness for purpose and considerable emphasis on student feedback is taken by the Course Team in responding to issues. Individual student feedback is received via standardised Feedback forms for all Modules. Further student feedback is received from Students' Year Representatives at termly Course Boards of Studies.

Both of these forms of feedback and the Course's responses by way of the annual Action Plan are detailed in the Annual Course Report (ACR).

##### **External Scrutiny**

Both 'Academic' and 'Practitioner' External Examiners are appointed. They interview ALL final year graduating students (Major Design Project Modules), receive copies of ALL MA Dissertations and see representative samples of work for all other modules in the Course.

Professional standards are maintained by annual visits from the L.I. Accreditation Review Group (ARG). The ARG review work in a similar way to the External Examiners and also

meet with a representative group of students and the Course Team and Head of School.

They also make interim visit to the Course during the year to observe teaching and review sessions.

Reports from both Externals and the ARG are responded to formally and matters raised are discussed in the ACR's Action Plan

Students of the Course also undertake the National Student Satisfaction Survey