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UNIVERSITY

# Course Specification

## MSc Urban and Rural Planning (Joint Distance Learning Consortium)

Course Code: MRURP

2026/27

# MSc Urban and Rural Planning (Joint Distance Learning Consortium) (MRURP)

## Applicant Facing Course Specification for 2026/27 Postgraduate Entrants

Confirmed at

### General Information

<b>Award</b>	Master of Science Urban and Rural Planning (JDLC)
<b>Contained Awards</b>	Postgraduate Diploma Urban and Rural Planning (JDLC) Postgraduate Certificate Urban and Rural Planning (JDLC)
<b>Awarding Body</b>	Leeds Beckett University
<b>Level of Qualification and Credits</b>	Level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, with 180 credit points at Level 7 of the Higher Education Credit Framework for England.
<b>Course Lengths and Standard Timescales</b>	Start dates will be notified to students via their offer letter. The length and mode of delivery of the course is confirmed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 36 months (part-time, distance learning)</li></ul>
<b>Part Time Study</b>	PT delivery is usually at half the intensity of the FT equivalent course, although there may be flexibility to increase your pace of study to shorten the overall course duration. Some modules may be delivered in a different sequence to that defined within this information set but the modules offered within each level are consistent. Please note that the work placement option is not generally available to PT students.
<b>Location(s) of Delivery</b>	Distance Learning
<b>Entry Requirements</b>	Admissions criteria are confirmed in your offer letter. Details of how the University recognises prior learning and supports credit transfer are located here: <a href="https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/student-information/course-information/recognition-of-prior-learning/">https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/student-information/course-information/recognition-of-prior-learning/</a> Admissions enquiries may be directed to: <a href="mailto:AdmissionsEnquiries@leedsbeckett.ac.uk">AdmissionsEnquiries@leedsbeckett.ac.uk</a> .

The following entry routeways exist for the MSc Urban and Rural Planning (JDLC):

- Cognate degree 2.2 or higher (Geography, Architecture, Surveying, Environmental Science etc)
- Non-cognate degree 2.2 or higher PLUS at least one year of professional planning-related work experience
- OU Diploma of Higher Education in Environmental Studies:  
<http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/qualifications/w46>
- Non-cognate degree 2.2 or higher PLUS up to 240 approved credits from the Open University

This programme is specifically designed to be an open access course. This means that whatever the background, there will be a personal pathway that can be followed to secure an MSc Urban and Rural Planning (JDLC). Entry requirements for:

### **Graduates**

If you have a relevant degree (such as Geography, Environmental Studies or Surveying) and/or a year or more of work or voluntary experience in Planning, you are eligible for the three year course and do not need to undertake any credits with the Open University.

If you have Planning experience, you should describe it in detail in your application.

If you do not have a relevant degree or Planning experience, you will first need to take the Open University Environment Course (DST206) before you are considered eligible for the MSc.

### **Non-graduates**

If you are a non-graduate you will normally be required to complete some study with the Open University before starting on the MSc. This will consist of up to 240 credits, depending upon your academic and professional background.

If you need to do all 240 credits, you will study a foundation level module followed by some second and third level modules. You will choose these from a list of modules that we have approved. An alternative is to complete a Diploma of Higher Education in Environmental Studies with the Open University, which has the advantage of giving you a further qualification on your journey to the full MSc.

If you have some relevant qualifications or experience, this may reduce the number of credits that you need to complete. In your application, you should describe in detail your professional experience and qualifications.

You are encouraged to contact the course leader to discuss what study you will need to do to complete the MSc.

### **Course Fees**

Course fees are confirmed in your offer letter. A breakdown of any additional costs is included on the online prospectus entry for this course.

Fees enquiries may be directed to [Fees@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:Fees@leedsbeckett.ac.uk).

Fees for the Open University are paid directly to them.

## **Policies, Standards and Regulations** ([www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/academicregulations](http://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/academicregulations))

There are no additional or non-standard regulations which relate to your course.

## **Professional Accreditation or Recognition Associated with the Course**

### **Professional Body**

Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

### **Accreditation/ Recognition Summary**

The Joint Distance Learning Consortium (JDLC) is accredited as an effective Planning School by annual visit of the RTPI Partnership Board. The JDLC has been running since 1985 as the only accredited distance learning Planning course in the UK, and managed and delivered by a consortium of Leeds Beckett University (awarding body and lead institution), London South Bank University and the Open University. Students on this accredited course are able to register as student members of the RTPI and can benefit from a range of practitioner activities, including attendance at conferences and seminars, regional branch events and Young Planners activities. The School awards annual Future Planners Bursaries to widen participation in its postgraduate planning provision and these are part-funded by the RTPI.

The MSc Urban and Rural Planning (JDLC), taken together with a minimum of two years structured and mentored relevant experience and the RTPI's Assessment of Professional Competence, can provide the basis for election to Chartered Membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute, which carries with it the right to use the designation MRTPI and the title 'Chartered Town Planner'. For other routes of how to become a Chartered Town Planner please follow the link to the RTPI web page:

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/membership/assessment-of-professional-competence/>

## **Timetable Information**

Timetables for Semester 1 will be made available to students during induction week via:

- i) The Student Portal (MyBeckett)
- ii) The Leeds Beckett app

Any difficulties relating to timetabled sessions may be discussed with your Course Administrator.

## **Key Contacts**

**Your Centre Leader**

Quintin Bradley

**Your Course Administrator**

Sue Szekely - [S.P.Szekely@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:S.P.Szekely@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

## Course Overview

### Aims

The MSc Urban and Rural Planning (JDLC) provides an education and, potentially, a pathway to become a chartered town planner through distance learning. It is suitable for students anywhere in the world who do not want, or are not able, to complete a part-time or full-time college-based course. The entry requirements include an option for students to study with the Open University prior to joining the full MSc programme. This means students are able to ultimately access the programme irrespective of their backgrounds at the point of initial contact, making this a truly accessible programme. The JDLC guiding principle is: "Access for all to a quality spatial planning education".

The programme is accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and is a unique programme by virtue of the partnership approach and delivery model. The MSc Urban and Rural Planning (JDLC) follows a calendar year, with each course starting in January and concluding in November. The programme includes two exit points; a PGCert after year 1 (60 credits) and a PGDip after year 2 (120 credits).

The course takes approximately 3 years to study, which is longer than a part-time programme which would typically take 2-2.5 years; however, the JDLC programme is specifically designed to be manageable above and beyond a full work and/or family life. The programme is therefore manageable for students in most personal and professional circumstances.

Although principally designed as a route to the planning profession and the professional qualification of the Royal Town Planning Institute, the programme will also be of interest to others wishing to know more about the planning system for reasons other than a professional qualification or a desire to be a town planner. The programme prepares students for work as planners in a wide range of jobs including local or central government and private practice. Graduates are also equipped to work outside the UK through the acquisition of international knowledge and skills. The programme is intended to be an international offer and the content and assessment models ensure relevance, validity and applicability anywhere in the world.

The aims of the programme are:

1. To provide a coherent programme of advanced postgraduate study in urban and rural planning, which is firmly underpinned by a wide range of research (including that carried out by staff in all partner universities who teach on the programme), consultancy, and links with practice;
2. Drawing upon an inspirational programme of learning, strongly linked to practice, to enable students from a range of disciplines and backgrounds to become effective, professionally-qualified planners;
3. To offer a flexible learning environment through effective ICT supported online distance learning, and the ability to take periods of 'time out';
4. To ensure the management of the programme is sensitive and responsive to the study needs of a range of individuals, including mature students in employment;

5. To provide an opportunity for students to study one of a range of specialised areas of planning, within a course built around core planning knowledge and skills; and
6. To encourage students to develop the capacity for advanced thought and action that is independent, critical, reflective and applicable in a range of international contexts.

## Course Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1	Develop creative and critically substantiated responses to problems and opportunities in planning and demonstrate a commitment to reflective practice, including upholding the highest ethical standards.
2	Demonstrate a critical awareness of the social, economic, political and regulatory nature of planning and evaluate development strategies and assess the challenges of planned interventions.
3	Demonstrate the critical ability to engage effectively with stakeholders, work in an interdisciplinary context and develop skills in advocacy, negotiation and partnership.
4	Critically evaluate the responses of planning to the challenges of sustainability and climate change and demonstrate creativity in planning sustainable interventions.
5	Critically evaluate the principles and processes of design in the creation of high quality places and apply planning skills in enhancing the public realm for the benefit of all in society.

## Teaching and Learning Activities

### Summary

The course is delivered entirely online. Students undertake self directed learning by completing a series of modules in sequence. Each module comprises of eight units of learning, over an eight-week period. At the end of the eight weeks, you complete an assignment.

This course will feature online learning for any taught sessions, with group tutorials as an opportunity to check on learning.

Each module employs a variety of teaching and learning activities to fulfil both the course and RTPI learning outcomes. Activities include:

- Written online learning materials which are used to introduce topics, and concepts and set boundaries of the subject area
- Pre-recorded lectures related to written online materials and expand on topics, ideas and concepts
- Signposting to further learning materials, including further reading (online accessible), audio and visual materials (including videos and podcasts) which support a deeper understanding of topics

- Group tutorials provide an opportunity to discuss, debate and reflect on ideas critically with lecturers and students. It encourages students to develop communications skills and allows students to think more deeply about longstanding views
- Individual tutorials which provide tailored support 1:1 with students on modules and assignments, and when required, other pastoral support.
- Opportunity to attend an international field trip to understand how planning and regeneration works on the ground.

Students are also encouraged to develop links with research and practice through journals, research publications, conferences and seminars with professional organisations such as the RTPi.

## Your Modules

This information is correct for students progressing through the programme within standard timescales. Option modules listed are indicative of a typical year. There may be some variance in the availability of option modules. Students who are required to undertake repeat study may be taught alternate modules which meet the overall course learning outcomes. Details of module delivery will be provided in your timetable.

## Level 7

### Compulsory modules

Module title	Credits	Semester/ teaching period
Contexts and Law (LBU)	15	1
Local Planning (LSBU)	15	1
International Planning (LSBU)	15	1
Integrated Planning Project (LBU)	15	1
Specialism Module (Open University)	30	1
Sustainable Urban Design Principles (LBU)	15	2
Strategic Planning for Infrastructure (LSBU)	15	2
Implementation and Delivery (LBU)	15	2
Research Techniques (LSBU)	15	2
Dissertation (All centres – coordinated by LBU)	30	2
Number of credits of compulsory modules		

### **Key:**

*LBU – Leeds Beckett University*

*LSBU – London Southbank University*

*Open University*

## Assessment Balance and Scheduled Learning and Teaching Activities

The assessment balance and overall workload associated with this course are calculated from core modules and typical option module choices undertaken by students on the course. They have been reviewed and

confirmed as representative by the Course Director but applicants should note that the specific option choices students make may influence both assessment and workload balance.

A standard module equates to 200 notional learning hours, which may be comprised of teaching, learning and assessment, any embedded placement activities and independent study. Modules may have more than one component of assessment.

### Assessment

On this course students will be assessed primarily through coursework with some portfolio work. There is a 30-credit point Dissertation module which includes the production of a 12,000 word dissertation. Modules are split between the Consortium's partner institutions as listed in the course structure.

### Workload

Overall Workload	
Teaching, Learning and Assessment	960 hours
Independent Study	840 hours
Placement	N/A