

Programme Specifications

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARCHITECTURE & URBAN STUDIES (MAUS)

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	Department of Architecture
3	Accreditation details	None
4	Name of final award	Master of Philosophy
5	Programme title	Architecture & Urban Studies
6	JACS code(s)	K100, K110
7	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	None
8	Qualifications framework level	7 (Masters)
9	Date specification produced	June 2015

Teaching provision and facilities

The core teaching staff consists of two University Teaching Officers, with specialist input from a range of visiting academics and professionals.

The MPhil is taught at the recently refurbished and extended Department of Architecture's premises at 1 Scroope Terrace. There is a Board Room and a Classroom for seminars and conferences, a research library attached to the Faculty library. There is also provision for experimental testing, with the Department's equipment.

Educational aims of the programme

The MPhil in Architecture & Urban Studies is dedicated to a research-based analysis of the relationship between architecture and urban environment. The course is composed of two basic streams: one focuses on sustainability and environmental design from a more technical point of view; the other emphasises the socio-political and cultural context of architecture and cities with an approach rooted in the humanities and social sciences. Students may participate in both streams and are actively encouraged to explore issues across these basic disciplinary boundaries, but are expected to pursue research with a focus on one stream or the other. Although based on a rigorous and wide ranging series of lectures and seminars, given partly in-house but with the participation of speakers from practice, the essence of the course is a research agenda that is developed by individual students. This has proved very attractive over the years to applicants from a variety of backgrounds ranging from architecture and engineering, anthropology to philosophy, and from mathematics to physics. The multi-disciplinary nature of the course and the exchange of expertise encouraged between students of a variety of backgrounds, and national origins, make the MPhil a unique forum in which to explore some of the most pressing problems of our time. Throughout the course student work gets reviewed by lecturers and professors with ample time for discussion of individual students' work. The programme also benefits from a close relationship with the MPhil in Architecture and Urban Design.

Programme outcomes

The programme positively encourages students to acquire knowledge and develop and apply research skills in the following areas:

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| A. Knowledge and understanding of:
(i) Sustainability and environmental design |
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1. the role of environmental design in architecture and urban planning;
2. the history of environmental design and technology;
3. the building physics associated with environmental design (ie principles of heat transfer, light, air movement, acoustics, energy demand and supply, etc.);
4. modelling of building performance;
5. monitoring and surveying of buildings;
6. occupant perception, health and comfort.

(ii) Socio-politics and culture of architecture and the city

1. the role of architecture and the built environment in political, social and cultural representation and contestation
2. current debates in urban studies with an emphasis on the role of informality, conflict and post- and neo-colonialism in global urbanism
3. underlying theories in the humanities and social sciences that influence research on cities
4. the modern history of urban planning in its political dimensions
5. qualitative visual research methodologies including mapping and site observation

Teaching and learning methods and strategies

These learning outcomes are mostly delivered through group lectures and seminars, supported by individual supervisions. (i) 4-5 and (ii) 5 are introduced in special training sessions (workshops and lectures). Throughout the programme individual supervision is provided regularly to assist, direct and monitor progress.

Assessment

Demonstration of the knowledge base is tested through a combination of presentations and essays. Assessed coursework takes the form of 3 submitted essays and 1 dissertation. Students are asked to present their work regularly at reviews but these are not marked.

B. Intellectual skills:

1. to reason critically and analytically;
2. to apply techniques and knowledge appropriately;
3. to identify and solve problems;
4. to demonstrate independence of mind.

Teaching and learning methods and strategies

Intellectual skills are developed throughout the teaching programme outlined above, and in the supervision context. The workshops and design exercises present the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired in a specific context. Individual research activities, oral presentations and written essays encourage students to identify and solve problems, and are supported by regular feedback, particularly through specialist supervisions, but also through interaction from other students, including from other graduate programmes, the MPhil in Architecture and Urban Design in particular. Together these are designed to aid the students embarking on their independent dissertation/ design thesis research programme.

Assessment

All the assessment methods, whether continual assessment through seminar contributions, submitted essays, seminar papers, or the dissertation, place a great emphasis on the student's ability to demonstrate his/her intellectual skills (1-4).

C. Research skills:

1. to identify key knowledge gaps and research questions;
2. to retrieve, assess and identify information from a wide range of sources;
3. to plan, develop and apply research methods;
4. to apply key techniques and analytical skills to a new context;
5. to report clearly, accurately and eloquently on findings.

Teaching and learning methods and strategies

Students receive specific guidance and general seminars on research methods, the use of libraries, and writing techniques. An initial selective bibliography is provided at the start of the course, which is supplemented by guidance on further reading in the seminars and supervisions. Guidelines on coursework essays and dissertations are given in general terms and more specifically in supervisions. Research methods, techniques and analytical skills are developed through the workshops and coursework.

Assessment

Skills 1, 2 and 3 are primarily assessed through the dissertation, but also rehearsed in the other coursework. Skill 4 is a skill that is particularly relevant to and thus assessed in the main dissertation. Skill 5 is a general skill, which is initially assessed in the essays (written), and seminar papers (oral) and finally in the dissertation.

D. Transferable skills:

1. to communicate concepts effectively orally and in writing;
2. to manage time and structure work;
3. to work effectively with others;
4. to work independently;
5. to retrieve information efficiently;
6. to assimilate and assess existing knowledge and ideas.

Teaching and learning methods and strategies

The course requires regular written and oral presentations (skill 1), and feedback is provided in the form of examiners' reports or reviewers' feedback respectively. Skill 2 is learnt and guidance is provided through supervisions – the course is intense and demands effective time management. Skill 3 is developed in group activities including workshop exercises. Skill 4 is developed from the beginning when individual research foci are outlined and discussed with the supervisor, particularly for the essays and dissertation. Skills 5 and 6 are learned particularly at the early stages of the development of research avenues, and are required at numerous stages and in presentations made throughout the course.

Assessment

Effective communication of research findings and design concepts are an important criterion in all areas of the students' work, and assessed at all stages. Skills 2 and 3 are not formally assessed but tend to be reflected in the general quality of the coursework. Skills 4-6 are assessed explicitly as part of the essays and dissertations.

Programme structure

The MPhil in Architecture & Urban Studies is offered full time (10 months). Entry qualifications are established in general terms by the University and also include specific assessment of previous experience, research interests, written and design work (where available). Candidates should have the equivalent of at least a high 2:1 at an undergraduate honours degree level in architecture, or a relevant subject in the humanities and social sciences, engineering or related subject (e.g. design, physics, mathematics, etc.). The course is currently configured as a series of lectures and seminars, combined with training workshops and lectures. The lecture themes include:

1. Socio-Politics of Architecture and the City
2. Sustainable Architecture and Urban Design and Planning
3. On the nature of urban conflicts
4. The Open City
5. Resilience Modelling and Policy
6. Urban Cinematic
7. Urban Peripheries
8. Research themes

Each student is appointed a supervisor who they see one hour every fortnight, or more frequently, throughout the year. Students attend research methods and writing seminars in the Department. Students may choose to attend units on the MPhil in Sustainable Engineering (Department of Engineering), and the MPhil in Screen and Media Cultures with whom we have reciprocal arrangements. They are also encouraged to attend the City Seminar and the Martin Centre lunchtime seminars, as well as ARCSOC student society lectures, and other Graduate School events and PhD Colloquia. Furthermore, lectures, classes and case studies in 2nd and 3rd year are available for the students, and course directors advise and recommend attendance where remedial teaching is beneficial or as appropriate.

The course also provides an opportunity for students to expand upon their own experiences by pursuing research in their areas of interest. The course structure includes two core seminars in the first term, which provide the fundamental skills and research methods required by students to pursue independent study. In the second term, students take specialised modules in their interest areas. In the final term, students write a dissertation under the close supervision of a member of the Faculty. The dissertation offers students an opportunity to fully explore a subject of their own choice and to produce a piece of meaningful research based on critical analysis of data collected throughout the course.

Students are assessed through 4 pieces of work: three essays and the dissertation. Each of the three essays is of 3,000 to 5,000 words in length and together account for 50% of the course mark. The dissertation (up to 20,000 words) is submitted at the end of July and accounts for the remaining 50% of the course mark.

Indicators of Quality

The Department was ranked first for Architecture by the Guardian's 2015 University Guide. The University ensures high standards of teaching and learning in the following ways:

- The completion of Annual Quality Updates by each Faculty and Department, to enable central overview of provision and assist in dissemination of good practice.
- Scrutiny of the reports of External Examiners for all teaching programmes.

- Encouraging student engagement at both the local level, through involvement in Faculty and Departmental Committees, and at a central level by participation in the Postgraduate Teaching Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).
- Holding reflective, centrally-coordinated, Learning and Teaching Reviews for all teaching institutions every six years to explore provision and suggest constructive courses of action.
- Mentoring, appraisal, and peer review of staff, and encouraging staff participation in personal development programmes.

Graduate Employability and career destinations

The Careers Service maintains links with relevant employers and takes into account employer needs and opinions in the services which it provides for students. The Careers Service also allocates a Careers Adviser to each College, Faculty and Department to act as a point of contact.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academic year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the Reporter. The relevant faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academic year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/camdata/archive.html