

Module Specification

Module Summary Information

1	Module Title	Thesis Design Project
2	Module Credits	60
3	Module Level	7
4	Module Code	LAN7345

5	Module Overview
<p>The Programme Specification for the MA Landscape Architecture identifies the following for the Programme in terms of 'Core Values';</p> <p>'ensuring that the opportunities presented by a changing world are responded to with confidence and innovation, based on an understanding of how natural systems and manufactured technologies can be brought together to symbiotically shape future environments across the range of scales from micro to macro. This range of 'scales' at which it operates is one of the main distinguishing features of Landscape Architectural practice and one of its greatest challenges in terms of professional education. The Programme at BCU will.....explicitly reflect and address this within its Modules. This range of scales and loci also determines the nature of interventions that Landscape Architects undertake from policy and guidance formation through site specific design proposals to technical resolution and the 'clients' that they engage with from corporate and governmental to 'end users'. The structure and content of the Programme is designed to both identify and understand these elements discretely (within Modules) and to reconcile them synthetically (in the Thesis Design Project)'.</p> <p>Design Orientated Research</p> <p>The Thesis Design Project is, thus, a comprehensive and wide ranging Project which is designed to be consistent with the Programme Specification, enable you to demonstrate the standards identified in the Master's level QAA Benchmark Statement as well as engage with the growing international debate around the need to develop new approaches to spatial design, driven by the recognition that the socio-economic benefits of adopting holistic, artistic, ecological and conceptual approaches to master planning and regeneration are becoming increasingly evident and are regarded as essential if we are to respond to the challenges of natural resource shortage ("peak oil", water, etc.), climate change adaptation and mitigation, unprecedented urban growth, Health and Well-being and a changing economy.</p> <p>The importance of radically changing the scope of design practice is reflected in much recent research and practice investigating and documenting pioneering approaches to regional design, in particular from the work being carried out in the Netherlands and the recent EU calls for research exploring the potential of this approach to create resilient towns and cities. The significance of the 'landscape' dimension in all of this is reflected by the fact that more than 39 countries have signed or ratified the European Landscape Convention and UNESCO are considering devising a global landscape convention.</p> <p>Regional research and exploration gives a broader perspective to design, a way of working that requires an awareness of issues such as ecology, hydrology and flooding, topography, the renewal of transport systems, short circuit economies (reliance on local goods and services), climate-neutral infrastructure for sustainable waste, water, energy and transport management, governance, finance as well as understanding how to foster greater equity and social cohesion and mitigate negative environmental impacts.</p>	

Design practiced at this macro-scale, as at any other scale, is about art and science, nature and culture, ideas and form. Multidisciplinary, fluid in scale and focus, it is often coordinated by landscape architects because of their geographic sensibility, knowledge of space and form and keen aesthetic and artistic awareness. As this excerpt from the agenda of the Board of Government Advisors to the Netherlands Government makes clear, it also involves talking about beauty, and having daring and vision.

What is remarkable about this shift in practice is that the landscape is seen not as the bits left in between the buildings, developments, highways and town centres but as the context upon and within which these dynamic processes take place.

Key to the Thesis Design Project is the need to adopt the city and environment approach first developed in the Netherlands. The emphasis is on a concept of the quality of life that is far broader than usually recognized in the typical 'Planning' process. The quality of the environmental infrastructure is taken very seriously as the starting point, rather than the end point of the process. Although it is a more complex, expensive and difficult process of urban reconstruction, your brief is to provide a strategic vision that will be compelling enough to raise aspirations for quality environments, persuade decision makers including governments, key funding institutions, stakeholders and communities of the value of repairing the city in such a radical, holistic way. The project is set in the context of climate adaptation and mitigation, a reduction in reliance on cars and road transport,, the conservation and improving the quality of water, the need to improve public health, the growing demand for locally produced food and the need to provide local employment.

Exploratory Cartography and Concrete Realization

The problem often encountered with a strategic vision is to understand how to connect it to real places, to understand how ideas can be interpreted into physical, materiality effectively to guide to visual, spatial development in the long term. It is this synthesizing process and the ability to connect the macro and micro scales; the vision and the end-users, the conceptual and the technical that forms the key purpose of the Thesis Design project within the Programme. The temptation is assume the spatial implications are self-evident in, for example, in the Wales Spatial Plan, the Black Country Spatial Plan or the Big City Plan for Birmingham City Council – these aren't actually spatial plans, but policy aspirations. The danger with this approach is that it can lead to piecemeal, ad hoc development with the bigger spatial picture being lost.

A key tool to help make spatial concerns explicit and act as a vehicle for engaging various stakeholders is a strategic diagram – a visual, conceptual expression of the ideas and ambitions.

6	Indicative Content
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Problem Formulation, Project Definition And Developmental Concepts

The Thesis Design Project Module is a design based narrative which for the purpose of this module is differentiated into a number of interlinked stages.

Stage 1

The process starts at the strategic or geographical scale and, to help bring all of your ideas and research together, it requires a design driver using concept, structure, or a vision. At masters level study the design idea is underpinned by research, which in turn informs a design based rationale which can be articulated through a spatial/ conceptual diagram. This communicates a series of ambitions or aspirations for the area you are studying.

Stage 2

This will set the scene for the second stage of the Thesis Design Project which is the development of a Masterplan, establish the parameters for further visual, physical, social and cultural research, and help define the rationale for the kind of project you propose. Supported by your research, brief and conceptual ideas, the diagram operates as an infographic will explain the thinking behind your specific proposal.

As the spatial implications of your ideas for the site, brief and concept become clearer, the diagram can become more specific, setting a less abstract framework that is more closely fitted to the landscape to help create the Masterplan at an appropriate scale along with supporting information. This stage of the process is about synthesis of the design proposal that is developed as an evolving design process that reveals the experiential, experimental three-dimensional aspects of the changing landscape which can be expressed through typical scales such as 1 : 5000, 1 : 2500 and 1 : 1250

Stage 3

The Masterplan evolves further design development with an emphasis on focusing further on site – specific design at scales to move from systems scale designs to the more human scale designs, 1:500, 1:200 and smaller scales which enable there to be an exploration of using materials to create a new sense of place e.g. using planting, lighting, built form and the technical resolution of these to facilitate communication of the process using professional conventions.

7 Module Learning Outcomes	
On successful completion of the module, students will be able to:	
1	Demonstrate ability to identify a location and undertake appropriate research leading to a Project Concept and a Design Brief, for a comprehensive Design Project reflecting the key themes and objectives of the Thesis Design Module.
2	Demonstrate ability to develop from the research and the Design Brief, a Masterplan (at 1:1250 scale) and supporting graphic information (explaining both design process and project proposals).
3	Demonstrate ability to further develop and refine, from the 1:1250 Masterplan, detailed proposals (at 1:500; 1:200 scales and smaller scales) for appropriate elements of the Masterplan, which demonstrate the ability to resolve spatial, technical and material design challenges.
4	Demonstrate ability to realise and communicate all stages of the design process to a professional audience using written and graphic media.

8 Module Assessment			
Learning Outcome			
	Coursework	Exam	In-Person
1-4	x		

9 Breakdown Learning and Teaching Activities	
Learning Activities	Hours
Scheduled Learning (SL) includes lectures, practical classes and workshops, peer group learning, Graduate+, as specified in timetable	180
Directed Learning (DL) includes placements, work-based learning, external visits, on-line activity, Graduate+, peer learning, as directed on VLE	300
Private Study (PS) includes preparation for exams	120
Notional Study Hours:	600