Help Make Better Places.
What we offer

We offer the complete environment in which to further your passion for making better places!

Environment

The development of our towns and cities can have devastating environmental consequences such as the destruction of natural habitats for wildlife. Urban planners work to help protect the environment from harmful over-development.

Learning resources

The University's library system includes two main libraries and several branch libraries throughout the campus. Students can access more than one million volumes in print as well as journals, newspapers and other archive material. Students also enjoy access to online resources including e-books, the leading planning and urban studies journals, electronic mapping and statistical data.

Our libraries are housed in impressive, purpose-built buildings with flexible study space and access to the latest information technology. The Information Commons is open 24/7 every day of the year and provides students with a stunning collaborative environment and access to print and online resources.

We are the top RTPI accredited planning school in the UK.
What we offer

A vibrant planning community
Established in 1965, we are one of the world’s oldest dedicated planning schools. Our students are at the heart of a vibrant academic community. They contribute to the decision-making and running of the Department through our staff-student committee, evaluation processes, and involvement in organised events. Our staff are easily accessible and we have an excellent staff-student ratio. The result is a genuinely friendly academic environment, where staff and students are on first name terms.

The students run a successful society – PlanningSoc – which organises a packed calendar of events, some with a serious purpose, and others more for fun, including the legendary Planning Pub Quiz!

Dedicated facilities
Urban Studies and Planning students at Sheffield enjoy exclusive access to their own study space, including high spec networked computers with the latest specialist design and mapping software. Our purpose-designed building has flexible working space, printing facilities, a cafe area where students and staff meet and relax, and seminar rooms. Lectures are typically in adjacent buildings on the University’s convenient city campus.

We also provide free access to specialist computer software such as SPSS, SketchUp and ArcGIS. We provide free access to a high speed wireless and wired network, and all other University services are covered in course fees.

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What do urban planners do?

Design
We all have views on the buildings we like and those we don’t. Urban planners work with architects and developers to ensure that new buildings and public spaces are as well-designed as they can be.

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Undergraduate Brochure
Rewarding excellence
Our students develop a true passion for making better places. Some even go the extra mile, by volunteering to help community groups with planning problems they may be facing, or undertaking study visits during their vacations. We offer prizes to support our students and also to reward the high standard of their work. The JR James travel award, Ian Masser prize and RTPI Book Prize are just some of the ways that we give something back to our best students.

Shaping the future
We have a close working relationship with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), and our MPlan Urban Studies and Planning course is fully accredited by the RTPI, offering exemption from the RTPI’s entrance exams. Our graduates have comprised a significant proportion of the RTPI’s ‘outstanding achievers’ in recent years. As a graduate of Urban Studies and Planning, you’ll become a member of our alumni network, which organises get-togethers and helps you keep in touch with your former lecturers and coursemates as well as network within the profession.

National Student Survey (NSS)
As a Department, we are dedicated to excellence in every area of academic life. In teaching we are consistently ranked very highly on the list of the best planning schools in the UK. See the insert in the back of this booklet for the recent NSS results.

Research – the UK’s top planning school
In the last Research Excellence Framework (REF) conducted in 2014, the Department was ranked as the UK’s top RTPI accredited planning school in terms of quality of research by our staff. Most of our research was classed as ‘world leading’, or ‘internationally excellent’ with ‘outstanding impacts’. What this means is that you’ll be taught by people that are at the very forefront of their respective field and you’ll be exposed to cutting edge ideas and theories in the world of urban studies and planning.

International Status
Being the UK’s top ranked planning school means that we have an important role to play in planning education and research worldwide. The Department is home to one of the world’s leading planning journals (Planning Theory and Practice), and our academic staff regularly speak at major international conferences and as invited speakers of local, regional and national governments. We maintain close links with other high-calibre international planning schools, and regularly invite international planning scholars to the Department to give seminars. In short, we have a global outlook and a global reputation.

A great place to stay
Sheffield is a great laboratory for studying urban issues, as well as being a vibrant, green and safe city. All first year students accepting a firm offer are guaranteed accommodation in one of the University’s award-winning purpose-built student villages. These offer the highest standards of accommodation, either in the city centre or the leafy suburbs 15 minutes to the west of the University. The student villages are a community in themselves, offering a great atmosphere to study and make friends for life.

We are with you when you need us
As a student at Sheffield, you’ll find all the support you need for a successful and happy time at University. All students are allocated a year tutor, who can turn to for guidance on matters that affect their studies.

The University has a superb Student Services team, offering advice and help on matters as diverse as finance, study skills, personal safety, academic regulations, coping with a disability or dyslexia, and careers advice. The University’s counselling service and multi-faith chaplaincy can provide pastoral support and spiritual guidance in more difficult times.

Our international students benefit from additional English language support, tailored to the needs of our courses in Urban Studies and Planning, and a dedicated international tutor. The University will also provide support with visa issues and other matters that affect your studies at Sheffield.
What our students say

“The whole experience has been amazing; it’s such a good place. The student community is great. It’s surprising how comfortable and at home you can feel in such a short space of time.”

Stacey Clark

“I’m positive that coming to this university and particularly this Department has put me in a better position for my career than other planning graduates in the UK.”

Laura Elias

“Studying at the University of Sheffield’s USP Department has enabled me to work on international projects due to its worldwide reputation.”

Andrew Ford-Marsden

“The course was varied and engaging, and I left feeling prepared to commence my career in planning.”

Justine Entezari

“The thing that drew me to planning at Sheffield was the enthusiasm of the staff, they were clearly fascinated by what they taught”

Rob Moore

“The extra-curricular opportunities in the department made my university experience more rounded and enjoyable. It meant I got shortlisted for awards at the Activities Awards and won the ADH Crook prize for my contribution to social justice in planning, improving my post graduation employability.”

Hannah Smith
Getting Out

You’ll foster your learning through getting out of the classroom and through making use of the world around you. You’ll do this in various ways and at various times during your course to learn about planning, both in the UK and internationally.

Site visits

Urban Studies and Planning is fundamentally about ‘making better places’, so site visits and a focus on getting to know and understand real places is core to our teaching philosophy. Our site visits tie into particular modules but a student can expect that at Level 1 they will focus on a neighbourhood in the city of Sheffield in their planning project, such as Kelham Island, a fascinating area with a strong industrial history but now the site of new apartment style housing and some persistent planning challenges.

Using observation, mapping, walking and surveying students find Sheffield a great urban laboratory for thinking about the problems and opportunities of an area and the possible planning responses. At Level 2, students work ‘on site’ in different modules focusing on analysing spaces such as the Cultural Industries Quarter in Sheffield, and using site visits to areas such as Neepsend to learn about the intricacies of the development process. Students have the opportunity to undertake a live planning project at Level 4 in which a local area action plan (AAP) is developed from the ground up, focusing on an area of Sheffield. Students’ ideas are communicated to stakeholders outside of academia, and the project prepares students for practice, enabling them to consolidate all the knowledge and skills they have gained thus far.

Communities

Cities have been called humankind’s greatest invention, because society can achieve more when we live together in strong communities. Urban planners support local communities by involving people in the decisions that matter to them and the places where they live.

What do urban planners do?

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Getting Out

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Social Justice
Where we live can have a huge impact on our chances in life. Planners work to address imbalances in society by ensuring that the benefits of new development are enjoyed by the many, not just the few.

Field Trips
We use field trips to compare and engage with the places that are different to Sheffield, but where many of the same urban theories and ideas around planning can be examined. You’re given the opportunity to explore the urban environment in depth, with walking tours focusing on design, spatial structure and architecture. You’ll be encouraged to apply your knowledge to your understanding of how things work in this context and to reflect on how this may differ from things at home.

At Level 1, you’ll be taken to Edinburgh to examine urban development through a historical lens as well as understanding current challenges facing the city and the Scottish approach to planning. At Level 2 you’ll have the fantastic opportunity to work in a more hands-on way with the European Urban Field Class. This module is comprised of a series of lecture sessions on topics ranging from transportation to urban policy, field class work in the chosen urban area, and a four day city visit. Previous students have visited France and the Netherlands. All field trips are fully funded by the Department.

Help make better places.
You’ll have the fantastic opportunity to apply for the University’s Study Abroad Programme. Study Abroad is a competitive scheme, and we aim to support your interest through providing help and a tailored service for application. You’ll have the option to a range of agreed one year exchanges with Universities who offer comparable quality planning education (such as Illinois, USA, and Queensland, Australia) but also Universities who teach excellent urban studies or geography programmes.

Alternatively, in Level 4 you’ll have the opportunity to take part in a spring semester European Exchange programme in France, Italy or Denmark. Unlike the study abroad scheme, the European Exchange programme is not competitive and is open to all students who are interested. You’ll also be given a monthly grant by the EU to help with living costs.

Katie Milnes studying in Australia:

“I am currently a second year Masters of Urban Studies and Planning Student, carrying out a Study Abroad Year at Griffith University Gold Coast Campus and I love it! It was a massive jump to move to the other side of the world away from friends and family, but it was definitely a leap worth taking.

“Australia is beautiful, the people are so friendly and the University is amazing... only in Australia can you finish a lecture and 15 minutes later be sunbathing on the beach and swimming in the sea. Since arriving Australia, I have made so many lifelong friends from all around the world and experienced so many unique things. Study Abroad is an opportunity you cannot miss out on. What the University of Sheffield have to offer is unique and the support given throughout the process and once abroad is amazing! I would highly recommend this once in a lifetime opportunity to any prospective student”.

95% of our graduates find jobs in profession after they graduate.
Alumni

Our Alumni will help support your career.

You’ll have access to our illustrious alumni. Many former students have gone on to great things, which include former President of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Colin Haylock, Gareth Capner, owner of the largest independent planning consultancy in the UK and Simon Marsh MBE, Head of Planning Policy at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Recent graduate Alison Wright won the RTPI Award for Young Planner of the year.

Many of our alumni are still actively involved with the Department by supporting the career development of our current students. Many offer work placements, return to the Department to give talks to current students and are members of our Liaison Board. Some provide seminars in partnership with us on cutting edge planning related topics and work with us to arrange a student exchange programmes.

We also have a graduate LinkedIn network where you can speak with former graduates and we regularly post jobs onto the network.

Colin Haylock, former graduate, Director of Haylock Planning and Design and former president of the Royal Town Planning Institute visits students at the Department.

Laura Elias is a graduate of the MPlan course and is now working for CBRE Ltd in London. CBRE are commercial property consultants advising more clients than any other commercial property adviser in the UK. They work with occupiers, investors and developers of office, industrial and logistic, residential, retail and hotel property.

“I chose Sheffield because the Department is the top rated planning school in the UK and the University also has such high ratings. Following my application I came to an open day and found that Sheffield was a great city.

“The course uses a lot of skills; no two modules are the same and it broadened my skills and knowledge.”

Laura Elias

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What do urban planners do?

International Development

Urban planners work to progress development across the globe. They contribute to improving infrastructure, providing economic opportunities for emerging business, developing housing for the poor and protecting the environment. Alleviating poverty in the global south is a key concern for planners and urban development practitioners.
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Economy
The growth of the national economy depends on having enough land for factories, shops and offices. Urban planners help to decide the best locations for these things.

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"People told me the jump from school to University was massive as there might be hundreds of people on your course but coming here I found it was an easy transition. The reason being is that you do get that contact time and you can always see your tutors.

"The inclusion of placement into the degree means I was combining both learning and practical experience and bringing those together you understand why you are learning what you are learning.

"I am positive that coming to this University and particularly, this Department, put me in a better position for employment than any other Planning graduates in the UK.”

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About the University

The University of Sheffield is one of the leading Russell Group universities in the UK.

This University has produced six Nobel Prize winners and many illustrious alumni have studied here, including astronaut Helen Sharman, comedian Eddie Izzard, classical soprano Elizabeth Watts and author Hilary Mantel. This is a large Russell Group University dating back to 1905, with 56 academic departments and some 24,000 students. There are two excellent libraries and a nationally renowned Students’ Union, containing shops, banking facilities, bars and places to eat.

There is every opportunity to make friends with like-minded people here – the Students’ Union has clubs and societies of all kinds for you to join and also runs a scheme where you can try new activities. The University of Sheffield has been previously named ‘University of the Year’ in the Times Higher Education awards. The University was rewarded for its many imaginative and innovative initiatives as well as exceptional performance in research, teaching, access and business performance. Moreover the Students Union consistently wins awards for being the best in the UK.

FAQs

How many places do you have on your course?

Recent changes to the Higher Education funding system in England mean that there is no pre-determined intake for our courses. The final numbers on the course will be a result of a combination of factors, including the level of places with supported finance made available through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), applicants’ exam results, and the capacity of the Department and University, bearing in mind our commitment to quality teaching and maintaining a high staff-student ratio. As a rough guide, each year we normally admit 60-70 students to our Urban Studies and Urban Studies & Planning courses combined. However, this changes every year for the reasons set out above.

What happens if I do not achieve the grades I expect to?

First, don’t panic! Second, get in contact with our Admissions Tutor, who will be able to advise further. It is sometimes the case that we can confirm places when an applicant only slightly misses out from meeting the conditions of their offer. Equivalent grades (e.g. ABC instead of BBB) can usually be taken into account (although this is at the University’s discretion and cannot be guaranteed). If you think there are circumstances that will affect your examinations, please see (www.shef.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/applying/disrupted) for more guidance.

I am concerned that I will not do well in my school exams because my studies have been disrupted.

We take circumstances where applicants’ studies have been disrupted into account. The earlier you can inform us about your own personal circumstances, the better. Our website (www.shef.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/applying/disrupted) contains more guidance.

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What do urban planners do?

Housing

Over half of all planning applications involve residential homes. Some parts of the country face a shortage of affordable housing. Urban planners need to decide what’s built, where.
About the University

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Infrastructure
Big decisions about transport and energy infrastructure need careful analysis and consideration. Urban planners ensure that local wishes are balanced with national needs.

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Here are some FAQs to help your decision making process.

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I am worried that I won’t get the help I need. Do you operate a system of ‘office hours’?

We do better than that. While some planning schools only allow students to consult their lecturers during defined office hours (sometimes only 1 hour per week), our students are encouraged to meet their lecturers at any time to discuss any issues they may be facing with their studies.

How important is my personal statement on my UCAS application?

It’s very important. We read every personal statement and use it to take a rounded view of all our applicants. In particular, if you are able to use your personal statement to demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment to urban studies and planning – e.g. by describing a planning issue local to you that has captured your imagination, or by recounting a period of work experience – this will stand in your favour.

Where to find us

If you have any questions, or would like to request further information, please contact us in one of the following ways:

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The University of Sheffield
Western Bank
Sheffield
S10 2TN
United Kingdom
T: +44 (0)114 222 6900
F: +44 (0)114 222 6947
E: usp@sheffield.ac.uk
Keeping in touch

You can find the Department on social media, which provide a means for past, present and potential students to keep track of Departmental work and news.

Our YouTube site has videos that illustrate students' views and student projects. www.youtube.com/c/USPSheffielduni

'Like' our facebook page and find out news about developments from the Department and view images of academics, students and their work www.facebook.com/USP Sheffield

Keep in touch with up-to-the-minute news from us and retweets from industry professionals @USP Sheffield

www.sheffield.ac.uk/usp