

# THE ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE

## Policy Statement on Initial Planning Education

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 As the definitive professional organisation in its field in the UK and with members in over 90 countries around the world, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has long sought to promote high quality planning education. Over the years, its extensive experience of professional education has helped deliver high standards of planning teaching and research in many universities, both in the UK and internationally. In this context, the RTPI has always recognised the importance of keeping its education policies under regular review. The Institute has thus strengthened and refined its educational guidance over many years, especially since the external context for UK higher education began to change markedly from the early 1980s.
- 1.2 The last fundamental review of the Institute's policies, practices and requirements relating to the education, training and qualification of planners was completed in 2003, when the RTPI Education Commission reported. This new Policy Statement is intended for the providers of planning education and for those involved in the monitoring, development and evaluation of that provision. It is designed to connect the strategic principles for planning education mapped out by the Commission with the most relevant operational experience of educational delivery, built-up over many years and last articulated in the 2001 revisions to the previous Education Policy Statement. It is acknowledged that this represents a significant amount of change and that the processes of implementing the changes will not always be straightforward. The Institute, therefore, accepts that this Statement will need to be reviewed regularly in the light of experience.
- 1.3 In recent years, there has been a continuous expansion of the constituent fields of planning. A new diversity of practices has emerged which now includes regeneration, community planning, transport planning, urban design, strategic planning, environmental planning and many more.
- 1.4 In its *New Vision for Planning*, the RTPI defined its basic discipline as spatial planning, which it has sought to encapsulate in the corporate identity of '*making of place and mediation of space*'. Reflecting this new confidence in the disciplinary field, the RTPI Education Commission proposed that, as an essential organising idea, planning education should seek to promote critical thinking about space and place as the basis for action or intervention.
- 1.5 This concept as a basis for planning education is not intended to be static, in the sense that it closes debate about what planning is. On the contrary, it can and should adapt to changes in the operating context of planning. The concept contains four basic elements:
  - **Critical thinking:** planning is both an art and a science, but also more than the sum of those; it is about achieving outcomes, not just operating a set of procedures; and achieving those outcomes involves processes which are qualitative as well as quantitative, and informal as well as formal.

- **Space:** planning deals with spatial relationships, and competing claims to spaces; and it deals with how sectoral and spatial relationships affect each other. In so doing it has real effects on how economies and their infrastructures function; on how communities achieve cohesion and social inclusion; on environmental capacity and ecological impact; and on cultural identity.
- **Place:** planning focuses on the outcomes that determine the quality, form and identity of places which people experience, whether they stay there or are just passing through.
- **Action or intervention:** so planning is a process of deliberation that focuses on what could and should be done, and thus a process concerned with ethics and values as well as facts. It is an active process (although it recognises that sometimes the best course is no action), which requires management skills appropriate to securing results. And it requires sensitivity to the time dimension of decisions – how time affects decision-making, how it affects differentially the interests of the parties involved, and how decisions inevitably trade off present and future. Planners themselves need to be able to make good quality decisions, often based on imperfect information, and to help shape decision-making processes in contexts where others will make the ultimate decision.

1.6 Spatial planning is thus much more than the operation of any statutory land-use system, or the broader historical concepts of town and country, or urban and regional planning, although it certainly embraces all of these. Specifically, it does not regard planning as a purely governmental activity whose legitimacy depends wholly on statute or regulation, nor does it have any in-built economic or social or environmental privilege. Instead, it considers planning as an activity that is necessary and inevitable within any society with aspirations beyond subsistence and which, because of its richness and complexity, calls for people with expertise to facilitate it.

1.7 The RTPI Education Commission recommended that partnership agreements be established to manage relations between the Institute and universities or other organisations providing initial planning education. Although the term '*planning school*' is used hereafter to refer to all such institutions, it is fully recognised that planning education can be delivered through a variety of organisational arrangements, not of all which might be located in a single university. This Policy Statement should, therefore, be read alongside the RTPI's companion Policy Statement on partnership agreements, which sets out how such agreements are intended to cover relationships between the Institute and the 'effective planning school'.

1.8 New educational providers who are not covered by partnership arrangements may still seek individual RTPI accreditation of what are referred to below as spatial, specialist or combined planning programmes. On approval, such providers should normally aim to achieve partnership status within five years.

## 2. Main elements of initial planning education

2.1 Those who successfully complete the three main elements of initial planning education can apply to become Chartered Town Planners.

- 2.2 Two of these elements require academic study. The third element of initial planning education, known as the '*Assessment of Professional Competence*' (APC) requires a period of structured experience in the workplace, culminating in a formal process of assessment. A separate RTPI document explains the requirements of the APC and the responsibilities it places on planning schools. This Policy Statement therefore concentrates on the first two elements of initial education, termed '*spatial planning education*' and '*specialist planning education*'.
- 2.3 **Spatial planning education** should be designed to provide a broad understanding of the main principles relevant to the making of place and the mediation of space, in particular sustainability, and of alternative ways in which such principles can be applied in practice. Emphasis should be placed on the integration of relevant knowledge, skills and values so as to produce rounded appreciation of how spatial planning can significantly enhance people's lives by improving the quality of place and organisation of space.
- 2.4 In curriculum design, planning schools should give thorough consideration to how the learning outcomes specified for spatial planning education in Section 6 might best be achieved in a manner consistent with their own educational philosophies. In particular, curriculum design should avoid simplistic or shallow coverage of too wide a range of topics and should instead promote integrated understanding of relevant knowledge, skills and values and of their application in practice. Programmes that seek to provide this element of planning education are henceforth referred to as '**spatial planning programmes**'.
- 2.5 **Specialist planning education** should be designed to explore ideas, perspectives and debates to a considerable degree of depth in one distinct area of planning. The purpose of this is both to ensure that the breadth offered by a spatial planning programme is complemented by a period of in-depth study, and also to provide an opportunity to begin the process of specialisation. For some, this initial opportunity to specialise may subsequently be developed to a much higher level through professional experience, further in-depth study or lifelong learning. Although the RTPI would not wish to restrict what might qualify as a specialism, 'regeneration', 'environmental management', 'urban design', 'transport planning' and 'planning research' are examples of the *scale* expected. Again, in curriculum design, emphasis should be placed on the achievement of relevant learning outcomes, which in this case are indicated in Section 7. Programmes that seek to provide this element of planning education are henceforth referred to as '**specialist planning programmes**'.
- 2.6 Programmes that provide both the spatial and specialist element of planning education are henceforth referred to as '**combined planning programmes**'. The RTPI believes that a healthy planning educational sector will be characterised by a rich diversity of provision, with a range of spatial, specialist and combined programmes on offer to potential students.
- 2.7 Such richness should help create a variety of opportunities to study planning at undergraduate or graduate levels, and on a full-time, part-time or distance learning basis or indeed on a mixed-mode basis involving some full-time and some part-time study. For the sake of simplicity, appropriate periods of study are expressed below as full-time equivalents, with the presumption implicitly made that part-time programmes will normally require at least half as much time again at undergraduate level and at least twice as much time at postgraduate level. In the interests of promoting equality, the RTPI is keen to broaden access to the

profession and welcomes the development of alternative delivery mechanisms to full-time education, including part-time, mixed-mode, in-service and blocked time courses along with distance learning and other forms of flexible provision.

### **3 Course form, length and mode of study**

- 3.1 Reflecting the Bologna Declaration, the RTPI wishes to promote a clear separation between 'first cycle' undergraduate programmes and 'second cycle' graduate programmes. Shared teaching between undergraduate and graduate students should occur only where justified by common outcome levels.

#### Undergraduate Programmes

- 3.2 Students wishing to fulfil the RTPI's requirements for initial planning education must complete both its spatial and specialist elements (see Section 2). A four-year combined planning programme is required at undergraduate level to cover both these elements together. Students may alternatively choose to take an accredited three-year undergraduate programme covering only the spatial element of initial planning education but, in order to become Chartered Town Planners, they must subsequently complete an accredited specialist planning programme at graduate level which, if desired, could be taken at another planning school. This can be taken either before or, if part-time, alongside the practice experience period of the APC, although it should be noted that an additional period of practice will be required after completion of the whole accredited programme.

- 3.3 Accordingly, at undergraduate level, RTPI accreditation may be given for:

1. **Combined planning programmes** of at least **four academic years** in length (or part-time or mixed-mode equivalent) leading either to a Masters' level degree or equivalent (if not precluded by any relevant national framework for higher education qualifications), or to a Bachelors' degree at Honours level or equivalent. At least one-half of this time shall be devoted to the 'spatial planning' element, with at least one-quarter allowed for the 'specialist' element<sup>1</sup>. The latter shall normally include a significant element of individual investigative work, leading to the submission of a dissertation, major project or equivalent.
2. **Spatial planning programmes** of at least **three academic years** in length (or part-time or mixed-mode equivalent) leading to a Bachelors' degree at Honours level or equivalent<sup>2</sup>.

#### Graduate Programmes

- 3.4 Students wishing to fulfil the RTPI's requirements for initial planning education must complete both its spatial and specialist elements (see Section 2). A combined planning programme of at least one calendar year is required at graduate level to cover both these elements together. Alternatively, students may choose to complete each element separately in programmes that last at least one academic year each. In addition, students who have previously graduated from a

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<sup>1</sup> These proportions are intended to allow for some 'non-planning' electives to be taken, with the overall balance of the different components being a matter for the planning school to decide.

<sup>2</sup> Such a programme would not by itself meet the academic requirements for Membership and must be coupled with an accredited specialist component.

three-year undergraduate spatial planning programme may wish to take a specialist planning programme of at least one academic year at graduate level to complete their initial planning education.

3.5 Accordingly, at graduate level, RTPI accreditation may be given for:

1. **Combined planning programmes** of at least **one calendar year** in length (or part-time or mixed-mode equivalent) leading to a Masters' level degree or equivalent. At least one-half of this time shall be devoted to the 'spatial planning' element, with at least one-quarter allowed for the 'specialist' element<sup>2</sup>. The latter shall normally involve a significant element of individual investigative work, leading to the submission of a dissertation, major project or equivalent. For the avoidance of doubt, one calendar year shall be interpreted as the minimum equivalence of twelve months full-time intensive study, during which period students shall be engaged in supervised learning for no less than 45 weeks.
2. **Spatial planning programmes** of at least **one academic year** in length (or part-time or mixed-mode equivalent) leading to a Masters' level degree or equivalent<sup>2</sup>.
3. **Specialist planning programmes** of at least **one academic year** in length (or part-time or mixed-mode equivalent) leading to a Masters' level degree or equivalent. Such programmes shall normally involve a significant element of individual investigative work, leading to the submission of a dissertation, major project or equivalent<sup>2</sup>.

#### Experience Requirement

3.6 In addition to completing an accredited academic qualification, those wishing to apply to become Chartered Town Planners will also need to satisfy the practical experience requirement leading to an Assessment of Professional Competence. It would be expected that relevant, structured planning experience gained, for example, as part of a sandwich year placement, or alongside a part-time course, or during a year's break between the initial spatial planning course and the specialist element, would normally be eligible to be counted as part of the practical experience requirement.

#### Dual Professional Routes

3.7 There is an increasing emphasis on cross-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary working in both public and private sectors. The RTPI welcomes education programmes that seek to facilitate the development of expertise in related professions as well as planning. It will support linked inter-professional education schemes (e.g., the dual routes in Architecture and Planning) where the development of expertise in planning is coherent, and the overall duration of the planning element of such programmes is equivalent to that of a freestanding planning programme. Guidance on how such programmes might fulfil the Institute's requirements for areas of specialism is given in Section 7.6.

#### **4. The Effective Planning School**

4.1 The qualities required of each candidate seeking RTPI membership include a breadth and depth of knowledge about spatial planning and an ability to apply that knowledge to practice. Such qualities are most likely to be formed where there is both a flourishing academic community within the planning subject area (and allied areas) and a supportive institutional context within which initial planning education can flourish. Therefore, the Institute expects 'Effective Planning Schools' to form the basis for both the partnership arrangements and for new accreditation requests, with a demonstration of the qualities indicated below. Where one or more of these qualities is absent, the planning school will be expected to explain how alternative arrangements or mitigating circumstances compensate for these.

1. Clear planning focus – the Statement of Educational Philosophy in Section 5 of this policy sets out the distinctive contribution the school makes to planning education. The school will need to demonstrate how its programmes promote critical thinking about space and place as the basis for action or intervention and how its students are prepared for entry into the profession.
2. Institutional support – support for initial planning programmes will be demonstrated by appropriate arrangements for management, monitoring and review of these programmes. Consultation with key stakeholders and partners (including students and practitioners), staff development policies and active relationships with planning practice will need to be demonstrated, as will the school's ability to deliver its programmes through capacity building, leadership and management.

It is acknowledged that initial planning education can be taught in multi-disciplinary departments and schools, and that this can yield clear academic and learning benefits to students in such environments. Clear leadership of the school's planning programmes is expected within an appropriate academic, budgetary and organisational framework.

3. Achievements – the school should demonstrate achievement in the quality of its research, teaching and links with practice and explain how these elements relate to each other; this may be in the breadth of planning knowledge, the depth of knowledge or the application of knowledge to practice. Such achievements will be expected to include references to both institutional and external and/or peer reports and inspections.
4. Stakeholder involvement – the school should have links with planning practice and with other allied professions working in the planning field; it should provide an academic basis upon which the Institute's New Vision for Planning can be explored and provide the stimulus and learning opportunities for students to secure the skills required to deliver that Vision.
5. Professional involvement – schools are expected to be concerned about and involved with the profession. It is expected that a significant proportion of staff (full or part-time) should normally be RTPI Members and that this would normally include the Head of School and Course/Programme Director/Leader. Where this is not the case (e.g. outside the UK and Ireland), staff are encouraged to consider applying for membership. Otherwise, the Institute would wish to explore what alternative professional

qualifications might be considered appropriate and the ways in which local RTPI members might contribute to initial planning education. Schools will also be expected to invest in a relationship with the local branch of the RTPI (where this exists), to encourage and facilitate active involvement of its students in local affairs, to assist in preparing students for membership and to provide guidance about career paths towards and beyond membership.

6. External Examiners – normally at least one External Examiner will be expected to be an RTPI member. There are advantages in having both an academic and a practitioner examiner if institutional arrangements allow. It is acknowledged that an “External Examiner” system may not operate in all countries and that final responsibility for the evaluation of students may rest within the university (often with the Head of School). In such situations, an independent, informed and external view of student effort and quality, as well as an overview of the programmes, is important and should be achieved in some other way. Suggestions as to how this might be done will be welcomed. One example might be to involve a local RTPI member in this task, provided that clear and agreed criteria concerned with quality control over assessment methods and student effort and output are established; such criteria would need to be agreed by the Institute or partnership board.
7. Resources – evidence will be sought to demonstrate that the school is adequately resourced to deliver initial planning education. The partnership boards will wish to be aware of resource issues and resource needs and, in doing so, will consider the following types of indicators:
  - *Academic staff:* numbers and staff/student ratios should be commensurate with the programmes being delivered and take account of the importance of skill development and project work in planning education
  - *Support staff:* research, support and technical staff can all assist effective delivery of programmes in terms of document management, IT support, GIS and skill development
  - *Learning resources/support:* equipment, study facilities, IT availability, library facilities and access to both broad and specialist planning material through intranet or internet
  - *Accommodation:* the type of accommodation should reflect the requirements of the programmes (for example for project work, design teaching, IT based learning, standard lecture, seminar or tutorial space or private study).
8. Equality and diversity – the school should demonstrate how it is seeking to achieve diversity of student intake and how the programmes are designed to reflect the diversity within communities.

## 5. The Statement of Educational Philosophy

- 5.1 The RTPI believes that institutions offering initial professional planning education should have the freedom to develop and justify their own approaches in line with their adopted philosophy; their refinement of the learning outcomes sought; and a clear idea of the type of planner that the course will help to develop.
- 5.2 Each planning school is therefore expected to articulate the distinctive contribution it seeks to make to planning education in relation to an audit both of significant debates and issues in planning theory and practice and of its own experience of planning education. This '*Statement of Educational Philosophy*' may be formulated in relation to either a single programme or a group of programmes. It should be drafted as a paper that fully explains and justifies the educational approach taken in the particular programmes(s) in relation to a critical evaluation of past, present and likely future directions in planning theory and practice. A copy of the paper should be lodged with the RTPI.
- 5.3 Alongside the RTPI's Policy Statement on Initial Planning Education, a school's Statement of Education Philosophy will provide the most important influence on detailed course content and design. It should naturally lead to the articulation of the aims and objectives for the particular programme(s) and in doing so, will help schools determine the particular aspects of knowledge that need to be covered within the programme(s).
- 5.4 From time to time, partnership boards will wish to engage in substantive debate on a school's Statement of Educational Philosophy so as to be confident that the school holds a clear vision of the contribution that particular programmes(s) are intended to make to the immediate needs and future direction of the planning profession.
- 5.5 Statements of Education Philosophy should include reference to relationships between:
- The spatial planning and specialist elements of planning education
  - Teaching content and research strengths in the school
  - Teaching content and practice relationships established by the school
  - The planning profession and other relevant professions
  - The school's own strategic plan, mission or vision and that of the institution of which it is a constituent member.
- 5.6 Statements of Educational Philosophy should normally emerge from a process of debate and discussion amongst all those involved in the delivery of a particular programme(s), including the student body, and should reflect, to a substantial extent, shared thinking and ownership. They should be subject to regular review and re-statement, as experience accumulates, staff change and planning practice and theory develop.

## 6. Spatial planning education

- 6.1 Recognising the contingent and dynamic nature of planning knowledge, the RTPI does not specify a detailed or prescribed curriculum for spatial planning education. Instead, it expects planning schools to develop their own ideas and initiatives in constructing programmes that enable students to acquire necessary knowledge, skills and awareness of values. This requires the structure, content and objectives of individual programmes to be clear and well worked out.
- 6.2 In this context, the RTPI firmly believes that schools should keep their educational delivery under regular review, reflect continuously on its relevance and effectiveness and be prepared to engage in frequent debate with their student body and partnership board on their chosen curriculum design, as explained and justified within their Statement of Educational Philosophy.
- 6.3 The Institute particularly wishes to encourage innovative and imaginative approaches to planning education that promote explicit integration of knowledge, skills and values and that seek to challenge compartmentalised thinking in planning. To achieve this, spatial planning programmes should avoid superficial treatment of too wide a range of material and aim instead to facilitate integrated understanding of broad matters of principle that reveal and connect:
- Social science as an analytical framework
  - The interplay between land use and transportation
  - Design and the realisation of place
  - Economic issues relating to development
  - Environmental challenges
  - Legal and institutional frameworks<sup>3</sup>.
- 6.4 In doing this it should be remembered that initial planning education represents the first stage in what should be a life-long programme of development and acquisition of knowledge and skills. Thus, it is about providing a platform of understanding of the broad principles that govern planning operations, rather than about meeting an ever widening set of specific requirements.
- 6.5 Beyond this, the RTPI believes that any further curricular expectations are best specified as indicative learning outcomes rather than as precise input requirements. These indicative outcomes are intended to highlight and, wherever possible, integrate essential aspects of planning knowledge, skills and value awareness. It is for planning schools to determine the importance of these learning outcomes and decide how they are best achieved within the context of their own educational philosophies.

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<sup>3</sup> It must be emphasised that the need to relate spatial planning to legal and institutional frameworks does not necessarily require a grounding in or specific reference to any of the British systems. Accreditation from the RTPI need not and should not carry connotations of educating for practice only in Britain or Ireland.

- 6.6 As these learning outcomes suggest, spatial planning requires knowledge of how relationships in place and space both change and develop over time and are open to positive influence by creative planning. This demands understanding of social, economic and environmental relationships within different political and cultural contexts. In practice, creative planners also need to be well equipped with diverse skills, some of which are particular to the planning task and some of which may be considered more generic or transferable in nature.
- 6.7 Since planning activity is necessarily fashioned within a particular set of social and professional values, it is essential that graduates are aware of how values affect planning decisions, and acquire the lifelong habit of reflecting upon their own values and the effect of these upon their own planning work.
- 6.8 As indicative learning outcomes, typical graduates from spatial planning programmes should be able to:
1. Generate visionary and imaginative responses to spatial planning challenges that are realistic and derive from substantial investigation and analysis of relevant data and other evidence.
  2. Articulate such responses through coherent and integrated strategies, plans or programmes that take account of relevant institutional frameworks and combine creative direction for the future with credible means of implementation.
  3. Demonstrate the ability to reach decisions or to make recommendations in which the significance of such strategies, plans or programmes is balanced with other relevant factors that ought to be taken into account.
  4. Demonstrate effective research and appraisal skills, evident in data sourcing, collection, investigation, quantitative and qualitative analysis, weighing evidence and reaching sound conclusions.
  5. Recognise the role in the planning process of such skills as negotiation, mediation, and advocacy and the importance of team-working, often with other professionals, in an inter-disciplinary context.
  6. Appreciate the importance of resource issues (especially human and financial resources) and organisational management processes and initiatives in helping to deliver effective spatial planning, together with the need for personal management skills and development, and knowing how and when to seek input from others.
  7. Recognise the political nature of decision-making in planning, and understand the need for all planners to develop the ability to work effectively within democratic decision-making structures, including the capacity to explain such 'process' matters clearly to a wide range of stakeholders.
  8. Appreciate the importance of time in the planning process, realising how the short-term and longer-term consequences of planning decisions may impact differentially on those affected.

9. Appreciate the importance and process of design in creating high quality places and enhancing the public realm for the benefit of all in society, and evaluate the effectiveness of alternative design approaches in achieving this.
10. Evaluate the case for and against spatial planning and particular forms of spatial planning and assess what can be learnt from past experiences of spatial planning in different socio-economic, cultural and political contexts.
11. Demonstrate understanding of the natural environment, its values to society, and its underpinning of economic development.
12. Debate the relationships between environmental processes and social, economic and political events, and appreciate the potential of planning to exert a positive influence on the changes that arise from these interactions.
13. Understand the relationship between market processes, built form, different development models and patterns of movement, evaluate the economic and financial implications of alternative development strategies and consider how best to generate and capture added value for both particular interests and the wider community.
14. Acknowledge that development decisions have differing impacts on different people, and develop the capacity to identify and explain these impacts so that they can be properly taken into account in planning decision-making.
15. Appreciate and respect diversity of cultures, views and ideologies, and understand how that respect can be applied in planning systems through the pursuit of equal opportunity, social inclusion and non-discrimination (on the grounds of wealth, gender, age, race, disability, religion and culture).
16. Acknowledge the values underlying interpretations of sustainability, and explore what sustainability implies about the role of planning in promoting social and economic development, while conserving environmental, social and cultural heritages for transmission to future generations.
17. Understand the concept of rights, including the balance between individual and collective rights, and the legal and practical implications of representing rights in planning decision frameworks.
18. Recognise the importance of stakeholder involvement and public participation in the planning process and of engaging and communicating with (by appropriate and varied means) a diverse range of interests, including local residents and community groups, business people, commercial developers, politicians and protest groups.
19. Appreciate the meaning of professionalism, including probity and adherence to independent informed judgement; the identification of clients and the duties owed to them; the concept of conflict of interests; and the importance of a commitment to lifelong learning to maintain and expand professional competence.

6.9 It must be emphasised that this indication of learning outcomes is intended not as a rigid checklist but as a helpful contribution to curriculum design. The critical test of a well-informed planner is the ability to interrelate knowledge, skills and value awareness in a range of practical and academic tasks and to understand how quality planning can make an essential and beneficial difference to people's lives. Partnership boards will thus be expected to keep under review the extent to which they consider the integration of these learning outcomes to be achieved and, where relevant, to make recommendations on how they might be delivered more effectively.

## **7 Areas of specialism**

7.1 The essential concern of planning with managing competing uses for space and creating places valued by people has generated a new diversity of practices including regeneration, urban design, community planning, transport planning, strategic planning, environmental planning and many more. No one planner can claim expertise across the increasingly varied range of planning activities. Yet, individual planners are expected to offer substantial and genuine expertise in specific fields of planning, upon which their careers and reputations develop. The Institute believes that this growing diversity of expertise is to be welcomed and encouraged by educational and membership processes that enable such varied fields of knowledge to be recognised, celebrated and indeed promoted.

7.2 In this context 'areas of specialism' are intended to enable graduates to offer some evidence of detailed expertise in a specialist planning field before applying to become Chartered Town Planners. Specifically 'areas of specialism' are intended to be:

- Either embedded within 'combined planning programmes' or delivered through bespoke 'specialist planning programmes'
- Explicitly marketed by the RTPI and planning schools to promote and more systematically differentiate the full range of accredited programmes, thus providing potential students with greater information and wider choice in planning education
- An encouragement for some planners to seek further qualifications in their original area of specialism, and for others to undertake subsequent specialist study to reflect the development of their careers in areas other than their original specialism.

7.3 The RTPI would wish to see the distinctive characteristics of each planning school reflected in their chosen area(s) of specialism and believes this is best achieved by upholding the freedom and flexibility of schools to innovate and develop their reputations for particular types of planning expertise as they see fit. Factors that planning schools may wish to consider in defining their areas of specialism might therefore include their own research strengths and staff expertise, their geographical and institutional location, their assessment of the needs of planning practice, and any advice or feedback received from employers and past students. As this would suggest, defined areas of specialism are likely to evolve over time, but this should take place through a carefully considered and explicit process, rather than as a result of short-term incremental reactions to unforeseen external changes.

- 7.4 While the RTPI therefore considers that planning schools are best left to define the *nature* of their own area(s) of specialism, it would wish them to do so at a *scale* of some substance, as previously indicated in Section 2. In this context, the provision of a series of short optional courses on topics, issues or spatial scales, for example, is unlikely by itself to meet the Institute's expectations of what might constitute an area of specialism. Again, while specialist in nature, such areas should be defined in broad enough terms to avoid the kind of transience attributable to such factors as the loss of one or two staff members or short-term fashionable shifts in planning theory or practice. Although the RTPI would not wish to restrict the number of specialisms that might be offered by any one school, where a school is small, it is likely to be constrained in the number of specialisms that it is able to support.
- 7.5 Beyond this guidance, the RTPI believes that the best way to ensure a healthy diversity of different areas of specialism across planning education is to encourage planning schools themselves to articulate, justify and defend their areas of expertise, upon which they wish their distinctive contributions to be clearly advertised to potential students. This process should enable schools to furnish their partnership boards with enough description and justification of their chosen areas of specialism and intended learning outcomes to enable approval rapidly to be given.
- 7.6 It would normally be expected that programmes offering dual professional accreditation would be able to satisfy at least some aspects of the other professional body's accreditation demands within the RTPI's requirements for a specialism. As this would suggest, such programmes are likely to be most successful where the areas of knowledge and skills of each professional body relate to and reinforce each other. Indeed, dual professional courses should readily be able to demonstrate the potential contribution to the area of planning expertise offered by the other discipline's particular claim to knowledge and skill.
- 7.7 Whereas specialist planning programmes will be predominantly devoted to their area of specialism, within combined planning ones at least one-quarter of the programme should be allowed for the 'specialist' element. As indicative learning outcomes, typical graduates from all such programmes should be able to:
1. Engage in theoretical and practical debate at the forefront of the area of specialism.
  2. Appreciate the social, economic, environmental and political context for the area of specialism.
  3. Evaluate the distinctive contribution potentially rendered by the area of specialism to the making of place and the mediation of space.
  4. Demonstrate mature understanding of the relationship within a multidisciplinary context of the particular area of specialism to other specialist areas of expertise.
  5. Offer potential employers the type and quality of initial skills that might reasonably be expected of a graduate from this specialism undertaking the practice experience period of the APC.

- 7.8 Partnership boards will be expected to keep under review the extent to which they consider these learning outcomes are being achieved and, where relevant, to make recommendations on how they might be delivered more effectively.

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