



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

Policy Statement on Initial Planning Education

Revised 2012*

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**To note: replacement of Chapter 4 and amendment to 7.7 adopted by the RTPI, 2017*

POLICY STATEMENT ON INITIAL PLANNING EDUCATION

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- 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.

Chapter 2 – Main Elements of 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.

Chapter 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 four academic years** in length, or equivalent¹, 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’ element². 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 three academic years** in length, or equivalent, leading to a Bachelors’ degree at Honours level or equivalent³.

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 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’ element². 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,

¹ The inclusion of ‘or equivalent’ here is intended to support flexibility in course delivery by providing the opportunity for Planning Schools to deliver courses, which may be either compressed or extended so long as the relevant Accreditation Board or Partnership Board is satisfied that standards have not been compromised. Partnership Boards and Accreditation Boards are encouraged to take account of outputs, in terms of student learning, rather than inputs in terms of time spent studying.

² 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.

³ Such a programme would not by itself meet the academic requirements for Membership and must be coupled with an accredited specialist component.

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 equivalent².
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 equivalent².

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.

Chapter 4 – The Effective Planning School

4.1 The Royal Town Planning Institute expects accredited Planning Schools to be places where there is both a strong academic community within the planning subject and a supportive institutional context within which initial planning education can flourish. This is tested using five criteria.

1. Clear Planning Focus & Leadership –The School can 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. It is expected that a significant proportion of staff (full- or part-time) should be Chartered Town Planners (or Associate Members of the RTPI) and that this should ideally include the Head of School and Course/Programme Director/Leader. Where this is not the case, staff are encouraged to apply for membership. Each Planning School must provide a route to professional membership by providing at least one fully accredited planning pathway.

2. Clear Practice Focus – the School can demonstrate links with planning practice and with other allied professions working in the planning field. The ways in which local RTPI members might contribute to initial planning education should be fully explored.

3. Quality Assurance – normally at least one External Examiner will be expected to be a Chartered Town Planner. 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 and agreed with the Institute. The mandatory submission of the annual data return on registered students and graduates is a vital aspect of partnership, and failure to submit the data return by the Partnership Board meeting will result in a decision on effectiveness being deferred.

4. Institutional Support & Resources – evidence will be sought to demonstrate that the School is adequately resourced to deliver initial planning education including academic staff, support staff, learning resources, and accommodation.

5. Equality & Diversity – the School can demonstrate how it is seeking to achieve diversity of student intake and how the programmes are designed to reflect the diversity within communities.

4.2 The five criteria, with indicators to demonstrate full effectiveness, are set out as follows:

RTPI ‘Effective Planning School’ criteria	Indicators of effectiveness
1. Clear Planning Focus & Leadership	An up-to-date and clear Statement of Educational Philosophy focusing on the distinctive characteristics of the Planning School, signed by the Dean or equivalent.
	Those directing accredited courses, including the Heads of Planning Schools, are academics who have an active engagement in and understanding of planning policy and practice.
	The Head of the Planning School (discipline leader) should be a member of the executive of the academic governance unit of which the Planning

	School is part.
	There are members of academic staff who are Chartered Town Planners. Ideally, this should include the Head of School.
	Regular production and publication of planning research, and dissemination to the policy and practice community.
	Engagement and promotion of the profession and planning as a career e.g. careers fairs and outreach programmes.
	Mechanisms are in place to engage with and establish links between planning research and professional practice.
2. Clear Practice Focus	There is professional involvement of Chartered Town Planners in the teaching of modules, assignments and case studies.
	Students participate in a number of site visits and practical projects, integral to their studies.
	Students are supported in finding placements, internships or work experience.
	Mechanisms in place so graduates have a clear understanding of the practice and process of planning; and are prepared for the world of work.
	Clear links with RTPI Nations / English Regions (UK & Ireland), local practitioner networks and local government are in place.
	Practitioners are involved in the research activity of the planning school.
	Events or classes may be offered as CPD for the wider profession.
3. Quality Assurance	Provision of external examiner reports or similar. Recommendations and feedback are assessed and acted upon.
	Mandatory submission of annual Planning School data return to the RTPI by the date of the Partnership Board meeting.
	Internal student surveys undertaken or opportunities for student feedback made available. Results are assessed and acted upon.

	Meeting of current planning students. Opportunities for discussion on cross-section of student project work.
4. Institutional Support & Resources	There is a core recognisable planning team that forms the Planning School.
	University commitment to support the course(s) is evident and ongoing.
	Sufficient teaching and student space and sufficient library provision, research opportunities and online teaching as required.
5. Equality & Diversity	University policies ensure equal access to the course, e.g. widening participation schemes.
	Support to integrate international students is in place.
	The understanding and teaching of inclusive planning.
	Diversity in staffing.
	External recognitions / quality marks are sought.

Chapter 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 programme(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 programme(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.

Chapter 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 frameworks⁴.
- 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.
- 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.

⁴ 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.

- 6.7 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. Explain and demonstrate how spatial planning operates within the context of institutional and legal frameworks.
 2. Generate integrated and well substantiated responses to spatial planning challenges.
 3. Reflect on the arguments for and against spatial planning and particular theoretical approaches, and assess what can be learnt from experience of spatial planning in different contexts and spatial scales.
 4. Demonstrate how efficient resource management helps to deliver effective spatial planning.
 5. Explain the political and ethical nature of spatial planning and reflect on how planners work effectively within democratic decision-making structures.
 6. Explain the contribution that planning can make to the built and natural environment and in particular recognise the implications of climate change.
 7. Debate the concept of rights and the legal and practical implications of representing these rights in planning decision making process.
 8. Evaluate different development strategies and the practical application of development finance; assess the implications for generating added value for the community.
 9. Explain the principles of equality and equality of opportunity in relation to spatial planning in order to positively promote the involvement of different communities, and evaluate the importance and effectiveness of community engagement in the planning process.
 10. Evaluate the principles and processes of design for creating high quality places and enhancing the public realm for the benefit of all in society.
 11. Demonstrate effective research, analytical, evaluative and appraisal skills and the ability to reach appropriate, evidence based decisions.
 12. Recognise the role of communication skills in the planning process and the importance of working in an inter-disciplinary context, and be able to demonstrate negotiation, mediation, advocacy and leadership skills.
 13. Distinguish the characteristics of a professional, including the importance of upholding the highest standards of ethical behaviour and a commitment to lifelong learning and critical reflection so as to maintain and develop 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.

- 7.1 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, practical and ethical debate at the forefront of the area of the specialism in the context of spatial planning.
2. Evaluate the social, economic, environmental and political context for the area of specialism.
3. Evaluate the distinctive contribution of the specialism to the making of place and the mediation of space.
- ~~4. Demonstrate the relationship within a spatial planning context of the particular area of specialism to other specialist areas of expertise.~~
- ~~5. Demonstrate the type and quality of skills that would be expected of a graduate from this specialism undertaking the practice experience period of the APC.~~
6. Assess the contribution of the specialism to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

In addition, for specialist programmes **only**, up to four 'bespoke' learning outcomes reflecting the nature of the specialism are to be developed and agreed by the relevant Partnership Board / Dialogue Member.

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.

June 2012

(Changes to the Effective Planning School criteria in Chapter 4, and change to section 7.7., agreed by the RTPI in December 2017)