



Subject Benchmark Statement

Landscape Architecture

April 2024



Contents

About this Statement	1
How can I use this document?.....	1
Relationship to legislation	1
Additional sector reference points.....	2
1 Context and purposes of a Landscape Architecture degree	3
The professional body context.....	4
Key points in relation to the cross-cutting themes	6
Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).....	6
Accessibility	7
Sustainability.....	7
Employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship education	7
2 Distinctive features of Landscape Architecture courses	9
Professional accreditation	9
Course design.....	10
Progression.....	10
Alternative routes	11
Flexibility	11
Partnerships.....	11
Apprenticeships	12
Monitoring and review	12
3 Content, structure and delivery	14
Core areas common to all Landscape Architecture courses	14
Teaching and learning	15
Assessment	15
4 Benchmark standards	17
Introduction	17
Threshold level.....	17
5 List of references and further resources	22
6 Membership of the Advisory Group	24

About this Statement

This document is a QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Landscape Architecture that defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. Subject Benchmark Statements are an established part of the quality assurance arrangements in UK higher education, but not a regulatory requirement. They are sector-owned reference points, developed and written by academics and practitioners on behalf of their subject. Subject Benchmark Statements also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular subject or area. Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as an expert quality body on behalf of the higher education sector. A summary of the Statement is also available on the QAA website.

Key changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement include:

- a revised structure for the Statement, which includes the introduction of cross-cutting themes of:
 - equality, diversity and inclusion
 - accessibility and the needs of disabled students
 - education for sustainable development
 - employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education
- a comprehensive review updating the context and purposes, including course design and content, in order to inform and underpin the revised benchmark standards.

How can I use this document?

Subject Benchmark Statements are not intended to prescribe any particular approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Rather, they provide a framework, agreed by the subject community, that forms the basis on which those responsible for curriculum design, approval and update can reflect upon a course and its component modules. This allows for flexibility and innovation in course design while providing a broadly accepted external reference point for that discipline.

They may also be used as a reference point by external examiners in considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with those of other higher education providers. They also support professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with the academic standards expected of students.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses in Landscape Architecture
- a prospective student thinking about undertaking a course in Landscape Architecture
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of Landscape Architecture graduates.

Relationship to legislation

The responsibility for academic standards lies with the higher education provider which awards the degree. Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them by their relevant funding and regulatory bodies. This Statement does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements.

The status of the Statement will differ depending on the educational jurisdictions of the UK. In England, Subject Benchmark Statements are not sector-recognised standards as set out under the Office for Students' [regulatory framework](#). However, they are specified as a key reference point, as appropriate, for academic standards in Wales under the [Quality Assessment Framework for Wales](#) and in Scotland as part of the [Quality Enhancement Framework](#). Subject Benchmark Statements are part of the current quality arrangements in Northern Ireland. Because the Statement describes outcomes and attributes expected at the threshold standard of achievement in a UK-wide context, many higher education providers will use them as an enhancement tool for course design and approval, and for subsequent monitoring and review, in addition to helping demonstrate the security of academic standards.

Additional sector reference points

Higher education providers are likely to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by PSRBs and industry or employer expectations. QAA has also published [Advice and Guidance](#) to support the [Quality Code for Higher Education](#), which will be helpful when using this Statement - for example, in [course design](#), [learning and teaching](#), [external expertise](#) and [monitoring and evaluation](#).

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in [QAA's Glossary](#). Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Statement where appropriate.

1 Context and purposes of a Landscape Architecture degree

1.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement aims to clarify the scope and standards of degree courses in Landscape Architecture.

1.2 Landscape Architecture is both a well-established professional activity and an academic subject. As an academic subject it is underpinned by research and scholarship in a wide range of areas that draw on the arts and humanities, the physical, natural, environmental and social sciences, and the use of analogue and digital representation to analyse and communicate ideas.

1.3 Research and scholarship inform teaching and learning, seeking to understand what landscape means, how it is formed over time, what factors have shaped, and continue to shape, it, how it is used by people, and what measures can be taken to conserve, restore and manage existing landscapes, and to create sustainable, resilient, adaptable and inclusive landscapes for future generations.

1.4 Landscape Architecture is concerned with the assessment, planning, design, management and conservation of landscapes of all types and at all scales, including urban, rural and peri-urban. The discipline also contributes to policy making, often through the Landscape Institute (LI) as a statutory consultee on national policy.

1.5 The knowledge and vision of landscape practitioners can transform the places in which we work and live by creating inspiring places, regenerating and revitalising urban areas and neglected landscapes. For example, in cities, where many people lack access to outdoor space, public squares and local parks, the work of landscape practitioners can help to shape local identity and character, play a role in bringing people together, and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. Well designed, accessible green spaces can create a shared sense of identity and belonging, significantly improving our mental and physical health and overall quality of life. Practitioners might also contribute to the design and management of interventions on larger projects, often over long timeframes, in the wider landscape. They include national infrastructure projects such as new transport corridors or new green energy sites, on and offshore wind farms, and solar arrays. Further examples span the identification, design and mitigation of mineral extraction or waste disposal sites. Many such projects are likely to be in, or have a potential impact on, protected landscapes and are also likely to include landscape character assessment which is an important and growing area of work. As the 2019 Landscape Review of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) observes:

It is becoming more diverse. More urban. Much busier. New forms of farming, carbon emissions, the sprawl of housing, new technology and social shifts have changed the relationship between people and the countryside, and left nature and our climate in crisis. ([DEFRA Landscape review Final Report, 2019](#))

1.6 As a place-focused discipline, Landscape Architecture aims to understand the relationship between human and natural systems, both in a physical and social context. As a result, the theoretical and practical basis of Landscape Architecture is underpinned extensively by natural and social sciences, culture and history, including, broadly, a sensitivity to:

- natural systems, including understanding and working in alignment with physical conditions of geology, water and air, in relation to ecology

- cultural identity and heritage, including understanding of public perception, as well as social and political forces for change
- global-local decision-making which appreciates the relationship between immediate physical and social conditions of a specific place, and is influenced by global political, economic, social and physical factors. Examples include ideas such as 'circular economy', 'biodiversity net gain' and 'community empowerment'.

1.7 Landscape Architecture is the profession best positioned to lead the implementation of the principles that underpin national green infrastructure initiatives, which support the greening of our towns and cities and connections with the surrounding landscape to create:

- nature-rich beautiful places
- active and healthy places
- thriving and prospering places
- improved water management
- resilient and climate positive places.

1.8 The profession is also well placed to contribute to policy aimed at the designation and management of protected landscapes, and the assessment of proposals in or near to them, at local, national and international levels.

The professional body context

1.9 The subject is represented by two professional bodies: at international level by the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) and at national level in the UK by the Landscape Institute (LI).

The Landscape Institute

1.10 The LI is the royal chartered body for the landscape profession. It is the professional body for those working in Landscape Architecture in the UK, including landscape designers, landscape planners, landscape managers, landscape ecologists, landscape scientists and urban designers.

1.11 All members of the LI are expected to follow its [Professional Code of Practice](#) (LI December 2021). The [Competency Framework](#) also requires all members to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice under the 'Professional Competency' of 'Professional judgement, ethics and values'. That code is also aligned with the [IFLA Global Ethical Principles](#), to ensure and promote global ethical practice, public confidence in the landscape profession, and environmental well-being.

1.12 The LI works with higher education providers across the UK to maintain the highest standards in landscape education by accrediting a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses (see section 2). In its December 2022 report [Skills for Greener Places, the](#) Institute listed the core activities of the wider profession as '...the planning, design, build, management, and conservation of spaces. ...and research, education and policy'.

1.13 This iteration of the Statement includes important new cross-cutting themes on:

- equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- accessibility
- education for sustainability
- employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education.

1.14 These themes are complementary to each other and to the wider context and purpose of this Subject Benchmark Statement for Landscape Architecture courses.

1.15 The LI report [Skills for Greener Places](#) identified five principal challenges for the sector. A number of these touch on EDI, including workforce diversity, gender pay gaps and limited entry routes, with the LI working in these areas to improve recruitment in the workplace and in education. Regardless of the nuanced differences between courses, the Competency Framework covers all four of the cross-cutting themes for a number of competencies, including:

- **Equality and Diversity:** all LI members are required to demonstrate they contribute to the delivery of landscape services in a way which demonstrates support for equality and diversity, and are able to identify discriminatory behaviour and deal with it in the appropriate way.
- **Inclusivity:** all LI members are required to contribute to providing landscapes that are convenient and enjoyable to use by everyone and comply with legal requirements and policies.
- **Accessibility:** under the competency of 'Inclusive environments', requiring LI members to demonstrate an understanding of the principles and processes that deliver accessible and inclusive environments and the related legal requirements.
- **Sustainability:** Climate and Resilience: competencies define the unique nature of the profession and require individuals to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of sustainability to landscapes and places and the challenges of climate and other changing conditions. Individuals further contribute to embedding sustainability into landscape projects and building resilience.

1.16 Employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education are not specifically addressed by the [Competency Framework](#) but are implicit in several competencies which would inform an individual's position and appreciation of employment, including types and scale of practice and business, team management, ethical considerations, client relationships, employment contracts and professional indemnity.

1.17 In addition to these thematic areas, all members of the LI are expected to follow the [Professional Code of Practice](#) (LI December 2021). The Competency Framework also requires all members to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice under the Professional Competency category for professional judgement, ethics and values. That code is also aligned with the [IFLA Global Ethical Principles](#) to ensure and promote global ethical practice, public confidence in the landscape profession, and environmental well-being.

1.18 The LI has taken two other significant steps to embed awareness of and to promote EDI in the wider profession:

- In April 2022, the LI, along with the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), signed a Memorandum of Understanding: Creating a More Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Built Environment Sector, aiming to '...effect a meaningful and tangible improvement in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) standards across the built environment'. And in July 2022, the group published a 45-point action plan expanding on the key areas of the MoU.
- In November 2022, the LI signed a joint declaration with the Association of Professional Landscapers (APL), the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) and the Society of Garden Designers (SGD) to work towards a more diverse

and inclusive industry through the sharing of work and good practice and commit to better EDI outcomes in the landscape, horticulture and arboriculture sectors.

The International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA)

1.19 IFLA is an international federation representing landscape architects across the world. The federation does not accredit courses, but it supports the advancement of professional education worldwide and sets the broad standards under which individual countries produce their guidance and requirements for accreditation. The [IFLA/UNESCO Charter for Landscape Architectural Education](#) defines Landscape Architecture in the following statement:

Landscape Architects plan, design and manage natural and built environments, applying aesthetic and scientific principles to address ecological sustainability, quality and health of landscapes, collective memory, heritage and culture, and territorial justice. By leading and coordinating other disciplines, landscape architects deal with the interactions between natural and cultural ecosystems, such as adaptation and mitigation related to climate change and the stability of ecosystems, socio-economic improvements, and community health and welfare to create places that anticipate social and economic well-being.

Key points in relation to the cross-cutting themes

1.20 It is important to note that higher education providers are already responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation, including these cross-cutting themes. They will also have sector-related performance targets to address issues around, among other things, recruitment, disability, pastoral and academic support, and employability.

1.21 The benchmark standards in section 4 set out the subject knowledge, understanding and skills required of graduates. These are wide-ranging but also specific and often technical. Although they will include reference to some of the cross-cutting themes, it is helpful to set out the main expectations in respect of these four areas here.

1.22 Courses can facilitate the response to all cross-cutting themes with theory and practice, in projects and design briefs that:

- consider a diversity of demographics and their experiences of landscape
- empower learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations
- are set in a teaching context which fosters a nurturing, welcoming and supportive environment promoting an atmosphere of interaction, knowledge exchange, peer learning and mutual respect.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

1.23 It is important that courses in Landscape Architecture strive to have an inclusive academic curricula and pedagogy which, according to [Advance HE](#), '...covers multiple perspectives, theoretical standpoints and contributions by people from multiple cultures and backgrounds'. This includes the promotion of widening participation; recognising, respecting and integrating those with protected characteristics, and adopting a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment.

1.24 In addition, students of Landscape Architecture have the opportunity to develop their EDI literacy in the context of the discipline and to engage with an inclusive academic curricula and pedagogy, which offers and facilitates appreciative inquiry and encourages and challenges them to:

- encourage the exploration of themes of equality, diversity, inclusivity and cultural relativity
- recognise and embrace multiple perspectives, theoretical standpoints and contributions by people from multiple cultures and backgrounds
- acknowledge, question and deconstruct ideologies and practices based on privilege
- recognise, reflect on, and, where appropriate, challenge their own position, biases and self-interests.

Accessibility

1.25 In so far as accessibility can be considered separately from EDI, courses should consider how they ensure they facilitate access through inclusive and equitable design across all elements of delivery, both:

- physically to resources and facilities, including field work
- academically where alternative forms of teaching, learning, assessment and feedback might be appropriate.

Sustainability

1.26 Course content will play a key role in ensuring students are aware of the determining factors that are critical to education for sustainability, including opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of:

- sustainability values and actions which transform society and regenerative futures, as illustrated by the [UN Sustainability Goals](#)
- 'systems thinking' with a focus on biodiversity, natural systems, natural capital and the ecosystems, goods and services that flow from these assets, and our interaction with them at a range of scales
- climate change, the causes and effects and the identification of opportunities for mitigation, adaptation and the building of resilience
- the context of international, national and local legislation, and historic, extant and emerging policy at a range of levels and across a range of subjects
- design for adaptation, resilience and regeneration of communities and landscapes
- case studies and best practice, illustrating sustainability across a range of scales and types of development; including, where possible, the exploration of live projects and living scenarios that deal with uncertainty and envision sustainable futures
- materiality in relation to the main palettes of materials they might specify, including the extraction of raw materials and disposal of waste.

Employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship education

1.27 Courses might support the development of attributes and competencies to help students lead a rewarding, self-determined professional life, well placed to add social, cultural, environmental, ecological and economic value to society through their careers.

In particular, courses might provide opportunities for students to:

- engage with professional networks and bodies
- explore and develop an appreciation of and ability to apply industry standards and to be innovative in communicating ideas
- practice within ethical and legal frameworks
- maintain a programme of continuous professional development.

2 Distinctive features of Landscape Architecture courses

2.1 Section 1 defined the context and purpose of the subject area; it also outlined the breadth of practice and identified many of the specialisms in which practitioners might be employed. Courses in Landscape Architecture are distinctive in that the UK is a signatory to the [European Landscape Convention](#) (ELC) which defines Landscape as ‘an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors’.

2.2 As a signatory, the UK government is obliged to facilitate training in the subject; Article 6 of the ELC requires contracting parties (governments) to undertake to implement specific measures at national level, including:

- training for specialists in landscape appraisal and operations
- multidisciplinary training courses in landscape policy, protection, management and planning, for professionals in the private and public sectors, and for associations concerned
- school and higher education courses which, in the relevant subject areas, address the values attaching to landscapes and the issues raised by their protection, management and planning.

Professional accreditation

2.3 The LI offers the opportunity of professional body accreditation for a range of landscape-related programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, leading ultimately to the professional titles of Chartered Landscape Architect or Chartered Landscape Professional.

2.4 As part of its accreditation process, the Landscape Institute [requires courses to meet a number of criteria](#). These relate to:

- staffing, expertise and resources
- a clear focus on landscape skills and expertise which deliver skills, knowledge and understanding as a foundation for entering the profession
- generic skills to underpin professional life and learning and a foundation for progression to the workplace
- a commitment to working with LI and the profession.

2.5 Each course will determine its own individual identity and focus within the broad spectrum of subject matters embraced by Landscape Architecture. Accredited courses are required to map their courses against the [LI Competency Framework](#) to demonstrate where relevant knowledge requirements are addressed. Some may be focused on design, while others focus on planning, management or ecology; each course will map against the competencies deemed appropriate.

2.6 For higher education providers wanting to develop a course for accreditation, and for prospective students wishing to study an LI-accredited degree, the level and number of credits required are set out in the [Procedures and Guidelines for Higher Education Accreditation](#).

2.7 The LI website offers a [summary of courses with professional accreditation](#), which includes an indication of the minimum duration for accreditation purposes and the academic

level of each qualification. There are also a number of courses in Landscape Architecture and cognate areas which are not accredited by the Landscape Institute.

2.8 Meeting the standards described in this Statement does not automatically mean that courses will be eligible for professional accreditation. Those designing courses and wishing to pursue accreditation are advised to consult with the LI, as well as using this Statement.

2.9 Decisions on eligibility for professional accreditation, including the length of courses and any associated qualification period for eligibility for membership of the LI and subsequent progression to chartership, will be managed by the LI and are not within the remit of this Statement.

Course design

2.10 All providers have their own framework for the design and approval of courses. These will usually include prescribed amounts of credit and occasionally the inclusion of specific content, such as employability and career planning, professional practice and placement elements. They will also require some level of industry and external practitioner and external academic consultation. For Landscape Architecture programmes, course design might:

- be collaborative in nature and involve different voices, for example, students, academics and practitioners, external examiners and the LI (where professional accreditation is desired)
- reflect industry needs, employability and current contextual and global debates, and contain a substantial portion of practical design modules taught in appropriate studio environments
- ensure a range of scales and types of projects are explored
- ensure projects cover all stages from inception through concept to detail design resolution, and the professional and administrative areas of project specification, billing and project management
- where possible, use live projects and sites as the basis for student learning
- where possible, use the experience of practitioners in the delivery of the subject.

Progression

2.11 Over the course of a degree with honours (FHEQ Level 6; FQHEIS Level 10) a Landscape Architecture student will progress from one level of study to the next, in line with the regulations and processes for each institution. It is expected that each level would see the attainment of knowledge, expertise and experience that builds towards the final achievement of meeting all the threshold-level subject-specific and generic skills listed in this Statement. This will usually include successful completion and the award of credits for the full range of learning and assessment, including any practical components. Upon graduation from an undergraduate degree, it would be expected that a student who had achieved a second-class degree or higher would be capable of, and equipped for, undertaking postgraduate study in Landscape Architecture or a related discipline. Entry requirements to postgraduate courses are, however, determined by individual providers.

2.12 Undergraduates studying Landscape Architecture courses as part of a combined or joint degree with other subjects will achieve core elements of the specific and generic skills outlined in this Statement and will add others according to the topics covered in the other subject(s) of their degree. Additionally, they may explore the overlap between different disciplines, creating further opportunities for interdisciplinary study.

2.13 In a standard undergraduate honours degree course in Landscape Architecture, students may exit earlier and be eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education, a Diploma of Higher Education, or other awards depending upon the level of study achieved. At providers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the standard duration of a full-time undergraduate course is three years. Scottish bachelor's degrees with honours are typically designed to include four years of study, which relates to the structure of Scottish primary and secondary education. Students following part-time routes accumulate academic credit in proportion to the intensity of their study, and their total study time and credit value would be the equivalent of the three or four-year degree.

2.14 For many students, an undergraduate honours degree in Landscape Architecture will form part of the underpinning route of their progression to the master's degree. Some courses may require a year in practice prior to progression to Level 7 (FHEQ) or Level 11 (FQHEIS).

2.15 Eligibility to commence the [Pathway to Chartership](#) - the formal professional qualification route for Landscape Architects, requires an (LI accredited) master's degree of at least 180 credits at Level 7.

2.16 Upon graduating from an LI-accredited master's programme, students are automatically eligible for [Associate Membership of LI](#).

Alternative routes

2.17 Some institutions may offer a four-year integrated undergraduate degree, Levels 3 to 6 inclusive (FHEQ 480CAT or FQHEIS Levels 7 to 10 with 120 CAT at each level).

2.18 For students who have completed an undergraduate degree in a subject other than Landscape Architecture, many universities also offer a conversion route of, typically, one year's study to develop the required skill set before progressing onto the master's stage.

2.19 Integrated master's degrees (FHEQ 480 credits with at least 120 credits at Level 7; FQHEIS Level 11) may be available in the UK and comprise Levels 4 to 7 (8 to 11 FQHEIS) as a four-year full-time MA Landscape Architecture.

Flexibility

2.20 Higher education providers structure the courses they offer to support students' learning and attainment. Depending on the educational mission of the provider, this may include opportunities to engage in learning on campus, online, and/or through hybrid learning, arranged in terms, by semester, block, year-long or other formats. These may be offered in full and/or part-time modes of study, and credits may be accumulated through the completion of micro-credentials or short accredited learning.

2.21 Prospective students should be aware that funding arrangements for study (including eligibility for fee and maintenance funds) will vary depending on the duration, mode of study and the country in which they study, and are advised to speak to the appropriate funding body and the institution before committing to a programme.

Partnerships

2.22 As suggested in section 1, the profession is broad, allowing courses to vary in their focus. Some courses might be offered in conjunction with other subject areas, such as Planning, Urban Design or Ecology; some may pursue dual accreditation from LI and/or

other professional bodies such as the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) or Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

Apprenticeships

2.23 The Landscape Institute has sought to broaden pathways into the profession and improve accessibility and diversity within it. This includes the introduction of a Level 3 Landscape Technician qualification. While this is at sub-honours degree level and is not covered by this Statement, the Level 3 qualification is supported by the wider profession and may be considered as a possible entry level qualification for a Level 6 award.

2.24 Also approved for delivery is a Level 7 Chartered Landscape Professional apprenticeship. Higher education providers may require some undergraduate degree level content to be included in their delivery of the apprenticeship; in such cases course designers are encouraged to use this Statement.

Monitoring and review

Internal

2.25 Degree-awarding bodies, and their collaborative partnerships, routinely collect and analyse information and undertake periodic course review according to their own needs. Considering the student voice will form part of this. They draw on a range of external reference points, including this Statement, to ensure that their provision aligns with sector norms. Monitoring and evaluation are a periodic assessment of a course, conducted internally or by external independent evaluators. Evaluation uses information from both current and historic monitoring to develop an understanding of student achievement or inform future course planning.

Externality

2.26 Externality is an essential component of the quality assurance system in the UK. Providers will use external reviewers as part of periodic review to gain an external perspective on any proposed changes and ensure threshold standards are achieved and content is appropriate for the subject.

2.27 Courses delivered by higher education institutions usually undergo external examination following the [principles set out by QAA](#). These ensure that students and the public can be confident that the degrees being awarded are a reliable and consistent reflection of graduate attainment. Depending on the structure and duration of the course, that may include more than one visit per year and may involve more than one external examiner. Typically, external examiners will be asked to comment on the types, principles and purposes of assessments being offered to students. They will consider the types of modules on offer to students, the outcomes of a cohort and how these compare to similar provision offered within other UK higher education providers. External examiners are asked to produce a report each year and make recommendations for changes to modules and assessments (where appropriate). In Landscape Architecture, external examiners are drawn both from practice and academia. Subject Benchmark Statements, such as this one, can play an important role in supporting external examiners in advising on whether threshold standards are being met in a specific subject area.

Professional review

2.28 Where a course is professionally accredited, this is also subject to periodic review by the LI and an appointed Professional Review Group (PRG). These processes are managed

through a formal system of committees and panels. The PRG is made up of a panel of practitioners and academics whose CVs have first to be approved by the LI before they can join the PRG. The PRG is required to visit the course on a regular basis to meet staff and students and to produce a report for the LI. PRG members are also encouraged to contribute to guest lectures and witness presentations and critiques.

3 Content, structure and delivery

3.1 Students of Landscape Architecture employ a wide range of knowledge, understanding, skills and approaches, applied in iterative processes typically involving research, reflection, analysis, creativity and collaboration, to resolve problems and achieve positive outcomes for people, places and the planet.

Core areas common to all Landscape Architecture courses

3.2 For individual bachelor's degree courses, content will depend on the course focus, which may be a single subject (such as Landscape Architecture) or dual honours (such as Landscape Architecture with Planning). The breadth and depth of a graduate's knowledge will reflect the degree of specialism. Regardless of the focus, courses under the umbrella of Landscape Architecture are likely to address a number of common areas of content in addition to the areas identified in section 1. These are:

Context focused

- the global, regional and local context
- the social, cultural, economic and environmental context
- the legislative and planning policy context
- the historic and contemporary context
- the professional, legal and ethical context

System and process focused

- the physical and natural processes and anthropogenic changes that have shaped the landscape, and that continue to act upon it
- protected landscapes and reasons for designation
- green infrastructure - governance, planning, design and implementation
- the management and maintenance of landscapes
- the management, use and conservation of natural capital resources, and the ecosystems, goods and services that flow from them.

Stakeholder focused

- the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary interface between the different areas of the profession, and between Landscape Architecture and other professions
- the range of users and uses of different types of landscape and the interactions between them, including potential tensions
- community participation and consultation

Delivery focused

- the identification and application of appropriate research methods and theories
- site survey and analysis
- environmental and landscape assessment (in various forms)
- site-specific problem solving, including site planning and design at a range of scales

- landscape masterplanning and masterplanning new communities
- strategic placemaking
- identification and specification of the various palettes of materials used in the profession
- contract administration and overseeing delivery of projects on the ground
- the ability to communicate proposals to a range of professional and lay audiences, by verbal, written and graphic means.

Teaching and learning

3.3 All courses will employ a range of teaching techniques to impart key knowledge and skills, and stimulate/inspire personal learning, including, as appropriate, lectures, seminars, design exercises and workshops, site visits, tutorials, design charettes and group working. Landscape Architecture is characterised by an emphasis on a studio-based, collective learning culture, which forms the context for the application of newly acquired knowledge and skills in a progressive and integrated way, through a series of problem-solving projects of differing scale and complexity.

3.4 Such projects simulate working practices in the workplace and allow students to apply and demonstrate the full range of what they have learnt. This may involve short-duration, small-scale responses to specific sites or problems, or might address large-scale strategic planning for new development and/or the assessment of the landscape and visual impacts of such change.

3.5 Courses will often use a cumulative and developmental approach, starting with a site survey, analysis, conceptual design response or problem solving, through the resolution of design and technical problems, the specification of both hard materials and vegetation and of management and maintenance proposals. Site or problem-based projects will often require students to demonstrate their ability to integrate their learning.

3.6 Projects generally involve individual and group tutorials, presentations to teaching staff, practitioners and/or peer groups and self-reflective and critical discussions undertaken informally by students working together, typified by the 'design studio' environment and approach. Some courses may offer the opportunity to work on collaborative projects, with other courses (for example, architecture or ecology or planning), or with practices on task-specific projects, for example the collation of baseline data or the generation of site-specific concepts.

3.7 Some courses may require students to undertake work placements, either as part of a module, as a requirement before progressing to the master's stage, or as part of an integrated master's, and most courses will offer visiting lectures or critique from practitioners, often making use of their alumni.

Assessment

3.8 The design and delivery of assessment aligns with the [QAA Guiding Principles](#) and takes account of the [Advice and Guidance document on Assessment](#) issued by QAA.

3.9 Students at all levels of their degree study will experience formative and summative assessment.

3.10 Formative assessment is assessment with a developmental purpose, designed to help students learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and how it can

be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment. Formative assessment does not always include the generation of marks or grades and will not count towards the final marks of the module/course/programme/award.

3.11 Summative assessment is used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in achieving the intended learning outcomes of a module or course. Assessment criteria are used to articulate this process and clearly identify the relationship between student performance and marks awarded. Typically, within summative assessment, the marks awarded count towards the final mark of the module/course/programme award.

3.12 Students of Landscape Architecture are likely to experience a variety of assessment methods in their degree course, including, but not exclusively:

- site design (or other problem-based) project portfolios
- practical work, including:
 - in the design studio and model-making workshops
 - in scientific and computer laboratories
 - in-the-field surveying and data gathering
- written work of varying lengths, responding to given assignment briefs, including:
 - essays, reports, briefing papers, articles, reflective learning journals, annotated bibliographies
- verbal and/or non-verbal presentations, including:
 - as an individual: debates, seminars, critiques, conference-style poster presentations
 - as part of a group: debates, seminars, critiques
- the creation of digital resources, including:
 - web pages, blogs, audio and video podcasts
- unseen, seen and multiple-choice examinations with a range of types of questions/tasks
- in their final year, students typically have the opportunity to carry out one (or more) extensive individual piece of self-led project work that will allow them to synthesise their full range of knowledge, understanding and skills. Such a project could be design and drawing-based in format, or a written research piece (such as a dissertation), or a combination of both approaches
- work-integrated assessments - where a placement might form part of a course.

3.13 Higher education providers will usually offer opportunities for the [recognition of prior learning](#) (RPL) (sometimes called accreditation of prior learning (APL)). This allows a student the opportunity to enter a course with credit for prior learning and achievement that may have occurred in a range of educational and training contexts and/or where learning is achieved outside education or training systems and is recognised for academic purposes. Limits and requirements around this are likely to vary across institutions.

3.14 Advancements in Generative AI technologies, which include the generation of imagery, text and other media, pose challenges to academic integrity and the design process. These technologies also bring the promise of transformation within disciplines, and a transformation at speed. Now more than ever, principles of openness, transparency and critical reflection are central, so that the use of these technologies can be effectively monitored, and a balanced approach taken between innovative practice and ethical use of technology within the discipline.

4 Benchmark standards

Introduction

4.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement sets out the minimum (or threshold) level of achievement that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Landscape Architecture. Demonstrating these standards over time will show that a student has achieved the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of graduates in Landscape Architecture.

4.2 Most students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards, and this Statement also describes typical end excellent standards. Criteria for achievement above threshold level will be in line with the higher education provider's marking schemes for undergraduate courses as set out in the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies and the Office for Students' [Sector Recognised Standards](#) that are in use in each of the nations of the UK.

4.3 Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). That Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd class honours.

Threshold level

Subject knowledge, understanding and skills

4.4 Graduates in the field of Landscape Architecture achieving a threshold standard demonstrate subject knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas.

Intellectual - through which they can:

- analyse information, synthesising the outcomes to develop balanced arguments
- demonstrate decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
- apply critical thinking to develop an informed personal position as an aspiring landscape professional
- appreciate landscapes from the perspective of various stakeholders and integrate the needs of stakeholders into the proposals
- understand and allow for competing and alternative theories and priorities, to inform well-evidenced judgements and proposals
- evaluate alternative proposals using appropriate tools and techniques
- formulate and interpret project briefs, identifying appropriate aims and objectives for familiar and unfamiliar problems at a range of scales
- identify relevant theory, concepts, principles and techniques to generate appropriate policies, strategies, plans or practical interventions, at a range of spatial and temporal scales
- identify, research and apply knowledge to familiar and unfamiliar problems at a range of scales

- appreciate and reflect on the ecosystem context of landscape-related projects and be able to formulate proposals which include the conservation and equilibrium of that ecosystem
- demonstrate creativity and innovation in a sustainable context
- plan and execute research, evaluating the outcomes and drawing valid conclusions
- engage with secondary research sources, including the identification of appropriate supporting academic literature and reference sources in accordance with standard conventions
- understand where ethical, legal or data protection issues may arise
- understand the role and impact of intellectual property within creative design environments
- identify, analyse and critique appropriate examples of precedent study
- identify and specify appropriate hard materials and vegetation for a range of proposals
- understand the structural, performance and sustainability characteristics and the broad financial implications of material specification.

Analytical and data interpretation - through which they can:

- identify appropriate geomatic information, namely the acquisition, modelling and analysis of spatially referenced data
- identify and collate appropriate sources of evidence and make effective sample selection
- identify and apply the appropriate qualitative and/or quantitative techniques to the analysis of information
- demonstrate appropriate levels of precision in the identification, recording and critical analysis of data in the field, laboratory or collation from secondary sources
- prepare, process, interpret and present data, using appropriate techniques and software
- solve numerical problems using computer-based and other techniques
- identify, analyse and present financial information and use it in decision-making at a level appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposals.

Practical - through which they can:

- devise, plan and undertake desktop, field and studio investigations in a responsible, sensitive and safe manner
- understand and comply with rights of access and relevant health and safety requirements, including ethical considerations on research, working with people and in the environment
- demonstrate a clear and appropriate application of scale and proportion in the design or management of landscapes
- in design subject areas, apply a practical and effective understanding of physical model-making skills, hand-drawing and other graphic representational skills to present proposals to professional and lay audiences.

Self-management and professional development - through which they can:

- work effectively as an individual, using initiative, self-management, time and task management and personal reflection
- identify individual goals and responsibilities
- set realistic targets and perform in a manner appropriate to allocated roles and responsibilities
- reflect on and evaluate their own performance
- develop an adaptable and flexible approach to study and work
- develop effective time-management and organisational skills, including the planning and execution of workload
- demonstrate the competence, behaviour and attitude required in the profession and with reference to equity, diversity and inclusion
- recognise, respect and work within appropriate professional codes of conduct
- recognise and respect the moral, ethical, ecological and social issues related to the subject
- develop and display the generic skills required to acquire new competencies for employability, career progression and continuing professional development.

Digital literacy - through which they can:

- identify and apply hardware and software appropriate to the scale of work, to communicate proposals effectively to a range of audiences
- appropriately use the internet and social media, as a means of communication and a source of information.
- have an awareness of emerging technologies and effective and appropriate ways to implement them
- effectively apply suitable technology in an appropriate and legal way for the production of work at various stages of the survey, analysis and design processes; including, for example, but not exclusively:
 - computer aided drafting (CAD)
 - visualisation and image manipulation
 - digital model making
 - geographic information systems (GIS)
 - building information modelling (BIM)
 - computer-based processing, including, for example, National Building Specification
 - data processing
 - CAD/CAM/CNC for model making, 3D printing and laser cutting
 - artificial intelligence (AI), including generative text and images
 - spatial computing, for example augmented reality (AR) / virtual reality (VR)
 - drones, for example site mapping and plant species identification
 - smartphone applications, including, for example, plant identification and other applications for site surveys.

Communication - through which they can:

- identify and engage with the various and diverse stakeholders at appropriate stages of projects to test and inform research and proposals

- understand, select and apply approaches, tools and techniques appropriate to the audience and the material being communicated/presented
- ensure communications approaches and methods are inclusive and accessible to as diverse a range of people as possible, particularly where stakeholders include minority groups or those with diverse needs
- communicate clearly, concisely, confidently and appropriately to a range of audiences in written, verbal and graphical forms, including the use of physical and digital models and other digital and other visual media
- communicate accurately where possible and, where not (for example in the production of illustrative graphic communications) be clear on the limitations of these outputs
- explore and capitalise on emerging digital tools (such as AI) in the preparation of communication materials and presentation while ensuring the appropriateness and accuracy of the outputs generated.

Interpersonal and teamwork - through which they can:

- contribute confidently and effectively to the identification and setting of group aims and objectives and allocations of roles within a group
- contribute constructively and sensitively to group discussions, demonstrating the ability to consider, appreciate, respect and evaluate the views of others, particularly those with diverse life experiences
- apply knowledge, critical thinking and understanding to address multidisciplinary problems and provide comprehensive, holistic solutions
- contribute effectively to the production of group outputs, including reports and presentations
- demonstrate the ability to lead a group in a range of projects
- demonstrate the ability to be led, as part of a group, within a range of projects
- demonstrate an awareness of the interdisciplinary nature and processes involved in community engagement and consultation exercises.

Typical standard

4.5 Graduates in the field of Landscape Architecture achieving typical standards that extend beyond threshold level demonstrate they have:

- achieved all their required course learning outcomes and consistently demonstrated advanced knowledge and understanding, cognitive, practical and transferable skills
- an understanding and application of the knowledge, understanding and skills listed above with more critical reflection, personal responsibility and autonomy
- demonstrated effective and appropriate application and execution of the knowledge, understanding and skills listed above, showing more insight, initiative, strong problem-solving ability and creativity in addressing their work.

Excellent standard

4.6 Graduates in the field of Landscape Architecture achieving an excellent standard that extends beyond typical level demonstrate they have:

- achieved all their required course learning outcomes and demonstrated strong knowledge and understanding, cognitive, practical and transferable skills
- an understanding and application of the knowledge, understanding and skills listed above with a higher level of originality, independent critical reflection, personal responsibility, autonomy and leadership and a clear professional and ethical awareness
- demonstrated effective, fluent and appropriate application and execution of the knowledge, understanding and skills listed above, showing higher levels of originality, insight, novel approaches, with exceptional initiative and problem-solving skills.

Master's degrees

4.7 A master's graduate in the field of Landscape Architecture achieving threshold standards will also demonstrate:

- a questioning and critical approach
- a capacity for critical reflection
- a capacity for independent thinking and action
- a higher level of originality, insight and critical reflection
- an ability to synthesise and integrate concepts and ideas and to relate them to practical contexts
- a good awareness and understanding of professional working, roles, responsibilities, ethics and values
- professionalism in undertaking assignments
- an understanding of the application of alternative methods of information retrieval, data collection and analysis.

5 List of references and further resources

QAA and Advance HE (2021) Education for Sustainable Development Guidance
www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/education-for-sustainable-development

Advance HE (2018) Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in the curriculum
www.advance-he.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-09/Assessing%20EDI%20in%20the%20Curriculum%20-%20Programme%20Standard.pdf

Choose Landscape (2023) Courses
www.chooselandscape.org/courses/

CIOB, ICE, RIBA, RICS, RTPI (2022) Memorandum of Understanding
<https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2022/04/mou-20220427-creating-diverse-equitable-inclusive-built-environment-sector.pdf>

Council of Europe Landscape Convention
www.coe.int/en/web/landscape

DEFRA (2019) Landscape Review Final Report
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf

International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) Global Ethical Principles
www.iflaworld.com/knowledge-hub-blog/global-ethical-principles

Landscape Institute (2021) Code of Practice
https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2022/06/12674_Landscape_Institute_Code_of_Practice_Dec_2021_v3.pdf

Landscape Institute (2022) Criteria for Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes
<https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2022/05/Landscape-Institute-Criteria-for-Accreditation-of-Higher-Education-Programmes-2022-23.pdf>

Landscape Institute (2022) Procedures and guidelines for higher education accreditation
<https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2022/05/Landscape-Institute-Procedures-and-Guidelines-for-Higher-Education-Accreditation-2022-23.pdf>

Landscape Institute (2022) Skills for Greener Places
www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/skills-for-greener-places/

Landscape Institute (2023) Associate Membership
www.landscapeinstitute.org/member-content/associate/

Landscape Institute Competency Framework
www.landscapeinstitute.org/education/introducing-the-new-entry-standards-and-competency-framework/

QAA The UK Quality Code for Higher Education
www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code

QAA (2018) Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education: Guidance for UK Higher Education Providers

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/enterprise-and-entrepreneurship-education

QAA (2018) Quality Code Advice and Guidance

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/advice-and-guidance

QAA (2019) Annex D: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 degrees in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/qualifications-frameworks

QAA (2021) Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Advice on Academic Credit Arrangements

www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/higher-education-credit-framework-for-england.pdf

QAA (2022) External Examining Principles

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/external-examining-principles

United Nations (2023) UN Sustainability Goals

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

6 Membership of the Advisory Group

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Landscape Architecture 2024

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Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Landscape Architecture (2019)

The fourth edition, published in 2019, was revised by QAA to align the content with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education, published in 2018. Proposed revisions were checked and verified by a member of the review group of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Landscape Architecture from 2015.

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Kenny Fraser	Edinburgh University
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Dai Lewis	EDP
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Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Landscape Architecture (2007)

Details below are as published in the Subject Benchmark Statement for Landscape Architecture (2007).

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