Independent Research Project

Module Descriptor

Summary Module Details

Module details

Module Title: Independent Research Project

Module Leader: Graeme Whitehall *(provisional)*

Module Mode: Supported online learning

Semester: Autumn (UK) and Spring (UK)

Level: 7

Credits: 40

Learning Hours: 400

Contact & Study Hours

Directed Study Time: 60 hrs (15%)

Self-directed Study Time: 140 hrs (35%)

Assessment Study Time: 200 hrs (50%)

Assessment Type

Coursework: 25%

Computer Marked Assessment: 0%

Self-directed Research Project: 75%

Portfolio: 0%

Module Summary

This module requires students to further develop their research skills within the context of the built environment and is a key part of their wider professional development.

It provides them with an opportunity to conduct a self-directed, independent research project that reflects the culmination of their studies in this programme. The topics selected are expected to reflect the current and critical issues that concern the discipline within the built environment. Students will be guided in their deliberation on these matters.'

For many students the development of a case study or design appraisal research, often emanating within their own workplace or arising from their professional activity, will be an appropriate approach to demonstrate research and expertise in a specific area. Students will be expected to produce a detailed proposal for their choice of research project prior to its commencement.

Taken on which Programmes

MSc Urban Planning (C)

Core (C) or Elective (E)

Module Aims

In relation to programme requirements, this module aims to offer students the opportunity to:

- Refine their knowledge and understanding of the role of research and their ability to both critically evaluate literature and select and critique appropriate research methodologies and techniques.

- Develop knowledge and understanding of a range of research tools and techniques, including primary research methodologies, in order to design and produce a viable research project proposal.

- Undertake a structured in-depth investigation and analysis by producing an original and authoritative body of work which integrates theoretical and practical considerations as a culmination of learning from the programme.

Module Learning Outcomes

LO1. To demonstrate a comprehensive ability to identify a research topic, design a research programme, its structure, and timescale in order to conduct a dissertation or work-based research project.

LO2. To critically appraise research concepts, methodologies, and their techniques.

LO3. To systematically select, synthesise and critique academic literature and relevant theoretical concepts and funnel toward the research topic at hand.

LO4. To collect, collate, and present primary data, and providing a critical analysis, evaluation, and reflection of it in reference to the presented secondary research data.

LO5. To work autonomously to conduct an independent research project (in the context of planning the built environment) and effectively articulate research findings and their significance in a structured and logical manner to an academic and/or professional audience.

Indicative Module Content

Module topics

- **Preparing a research proposal**

  Finding a topic, scoping a topic, development of research aim/question and objectives. An appreciation of the different types of project that can be undertaken, and which is most applicable for the chosen topic.

- **Research Skills**

  How to research, theory of research, report writing, research ethics, writing a dissertation, embedding critical thinking, research validity, reliability, generalisability and transferability.

- **Literature review**

  The research funnel, searching for literature, understanding research terminologies, mapping the trend of the research area, research catalogues. Applying critical thinking strategies to analysis and evaluation of the literature review.

- **Research methodology**

  Data Collection techniques: Case study research; Archival research and libraries of last resort; Questionnaire, survey & interview design; Action research, ethnographic and observational research; Data analysis: quantitative & qualitative analysis, statistical analysis, thematic analysis, triangulation. Applying critical thinking to the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology employed.

Independent Research Project

- **Production and submission of the research project**
  Submission of the research project and its structured format to suit the type of project undertaken. All project types will contain an introduction, literature review, methodology, thematic analysis, discussion and conclusion chapters.

This content will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect the legal, moral and financial changes in professional standards and practice.

Overview of Summative Assessment

Module learning outcomes	Assessment	Word count or equivalent	Weighting	Minimum assessment threshold
LO1, LO2, LO3	**Assessment 1** Coursework (e.g., research project proposal)	2,500	25%	50%
LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, LO5	**Assessment 2** Project (e.g., Dissertation, or Work-based Project, or Critical Case Study or Critical Design Appraisal)	10,000 or equivalent	75%	50%

Module Pass Mark (each element is to be passed separately): 50%

Key Module Learning Resources

Core Sources and Texts

The core reading resources within each module will be provided via the specific Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) module pages and within the e-Library. Additional reference material and supplementary resources to support your studies are available through the UCEM e-Library.

Module tools

Students will have access to study materials, dedicated academic support, student forums, and learning activities via an online learning platform (VLE).

The module page on the VLE is broken down into structured study weeks to help students plan their time, with each week containing a mixture of reading, case studies, videos/recordings and interactive activities to go through. Online webinars/seminars led by the Module Leader can be attended in real time and provide opportunities to consolidate knowledge, ask questions, discuss topics and work through learning activities together. These sessions are recorded to support students who cannot attend and to enable students to recap the session and work through it at their own pace. Module forums on the VLE provide further opportunities to discuss topics with other students, complete collaborative work and get extra help from the module team.

Professional online resources

The e-Library provides access to trusted, quality online resources, selected by subject specialists, to support students' study. This includes journals, industry publications, magazines, academic

books and a dissertation/work-based library. For a list of the key industry specific and education resources available please visit [the VLE e-Library](#).

Other relevant resources

Access is also provided to further information sources that include the British Library and Open University UK catalogues, as well as providing a monthly current awareness service entitled, *Knowledge Foundations* - a compendium of news, research and resources relating to the educational sector and the Built Environment.

The module resource list is available on the module website and is updated regularly to ensure materials are relevant and current.