



UCL

MSc Building and Urban Design in Development



Urban Design as a transdisciplinary practice; using collective and radical strategies to design and build resilient strategic responses to conflicting urban agendas.

Programme Director

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Other Members of Staff

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Graduate Teaching Assistant

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Core and Optional Modules

Transforming Local Areas: Urban Design for Development; Participatory Process: Building for Development; Building and Urban Design in Practice; Housing as Urbanism: Housing Policy and the Search for Scale; Housing Policies: Practical Dimensions and Alternative Options; Disaster Risk Reduction in Cities; Post Disaster Recovery: Policies, Practices and Alternatives; Critical Urbanism Studio I - Learning from Informality; Critical Urbanism Studio II - Investigative Design Strategies for Contested Spaces

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Overview An intensive 12 month programme that immerses students in the critical theory and practice of urban design. It is designed to recalibrate mainstream practices towards a new mode of inquiry and action, one that centres on the political relevance and social process of design towards transformative urbanisms that are fundamentally just and sustainable. It equips students with the practical and analytical skills needed to design holistic, place-based interventions that tackle conflicting agendas at different urban scales.



Unique to this programme is its desire to immerse students into the field of spatial thinking through critical theory and philosophical reflections. It debates and analyses the political economy and power dynamics at play, through the multiple lenses of social, cultural, economic, environmental and political drivers. In so doing, it allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which such acts reinforce or change engrained spatial issues. Students are encouraged to explore and identify actors, entry points and positive forms of power that can realise desired urban outcomes, where interdisciplinary thinking is promoted to bring about a socially sensitive urban designer.

Structure The course is delivered through a range of seminars, workshops, case studies and compulsory action research field work. Learning is delivered through reading, essay writing and interdisciplinary design project work. Students take three core compulsory modules (90 credits) providing the building blocks that cultivate interdisciplinary professionals who can engage holistically in building better urban futures; a choice of two optional modules (making up 30 credits) giving the opportunity to dive deeper into specific topics; and a dissertation report



(60 credits), where students can explore their own research interests.

- BENVGBU1 explores the theoretical and philosophical basis for a critical repositioning of design and architecture in urban planning and offers students the opportunity to tackle a live case study.
- BENVGBU2 encourages critical reflection on the relationship between people and design through the role and practices of participation and what this means for building new forms of agency, action and implementation approaches.
- BENVGBU3 is a studio-based module that enables students to connect the theory and put into practice methodologies and design research strategies to deliver their own urban design project.

Careers The course attracts students from a wide range of disciplines with a passion for urban issues. This diversity fosters a cooperative working environment and opportunity to negotiate creatively with others. Students form strong networks and collaborative working relationships that continue after the course has ended. Alumni report how the course has allowed them to explore new perspectives:

"It was an important year of professional and personal reflection, marking the moment that design became an ethical as well as technical pursuit".



"It exposed me to various discourses on urban development, new design methodologies and communication techniques [...] most importantly it included practical works to test this learning".

Students are exposed to skills in critical thinking, action research, spatial analysis, design research and creative practice and go on to work in various sectors including: Aid and Development Agencies; Community-led Organisations; Government; and Architecture/Urban Design firms. The course has also inspired graduates to form independent practices.

"We felt that there were fundamental issues with the practices of [...] development agencies and we wanted to create our own platform through which we could drive positive change".