PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	**MSc Sustainable Cities** (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	PG Dip Sustainable Cities PG Cert Sustainable Cities
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home school/other teaching departments	School of Social Sciences
Location of delivery	Central London, online
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2 years) September
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	N/A
QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England	Geography
Birkbeck Course Code	TMSSCTIP_C (in-person) TMSSCTMX_C (flexible) TMSSCTON_C (online)
HECoS Code	100666
Start date of programme	Autumn 2023-24
Date of programme approval	November 2022
Date of last programme amendment approval	April 2025
Valid for academic entry year	**2025-26**
Programme Director	Dr Mara Nogueira
Date of last revision to document	17/04/2025

Admissions requirements

A second class honours degree (2:2 or above) in a related area, or relevant experience combined with an adequate academic background (subject to interview).

We welcome applicants without traditional entry qualifications as we base decisions on our own assessment of qualifications, knowledge and previous work experience. We may waive formal entry requirements based on judgement of academic potential.

Course aims

The impacts of climate change on cities are a critical challenge in the 21st Century affecting the ways of living and livelihoods of more than half the population in the planet. Floods, draughts, energy crisis, inadequate housing and food insecurity are now part of the everyday life of urban citizens. Such impacts are, however, unevenly distributed across geographies and social demographics – such as race, class, religion and gender – that mediate the experience of environmental risk in cities. This programme offers an evening study degree that combines social and environmental just approaches to understanding and responding to the climate crisis in highly unequal cities. The programme core modules are taught by faculty who are research active in areas of political ecology, climate change, environmental sustainability, urban inequality, critical geography, food security and urban governance. This interdisciplinary programme brings together the unique expertise of staff members in Birkbeck's Geography cluster working on human geography, environmental studies, GIS and development to discuss how both environmental and social concerns must inform a strategy towards a more sustainable urban future.

Course structure

Students will be required to take the programme's core module, Urban Sustainability, which they must pass. In this module they will explore different theoretical approaches in urban sustainability, apply those conceptual tools to distinct challenges engendered by the intersection of climate change and urbanisation, and learn about the limitations and strengths of adaptative solutions, environmental policies and initiatives. Students will also be required to take a compulsory module running in the second term entitled Living with Climate change.

To complete the programme, students will be required to take two optional modules chosen from a closed list of options tailored around the programme's learning objectives.

Students will also be taking an uncredited compulsory module on Research Methods that runs throughout the three terms. This module prepares students for their final core module, Dissertation, which they are also required to take and pass.

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
Full-time – 1 year					
7	SSGE126S7	Urban Sustainability	30	Core	1
7	SSGE111S7	Living with Climate Change	30	Compulsory	2
7	SSGE083Z7	Research Methods	0	Compulsory	1-3
7		Option from programme list below	30	Option	1, 2 or 3
7		Option from programme list below	30	Option	1, 2 or 3
7	SSGE106D7	Dissertation	60	Core	3
Part-time - 2 years					
Year 1					
7	SSGE126S7	Urban Sustainability	30	Core	1
7	SSGE111S7	Living with Climate Change	30	Compulsory	2
7		Option from programme list below	30	Option	3
Year 2					
7		Option from programme list below	30	Option	1 or 2
7	SSGE083Z7	Research Methods	0	Compulsory	1-3
7	SSGE106D7	Dissertation	60	Core	3

Core: Module must be taken and passed by student
Compulsory: Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)
Option: Student can choose to take this module

The programme list of option modules will change from year to year depending on available modules. Students may opt to take an option outside the programme list from any module available across college, but this must be approved by the Programme Director.

The list below is indicative of the option modules that will be offered:

SSGE127S7 Critical Infrastructures for Sustainability – London Thames Fieldtrip *(in-person only)*
SSGE025S7 Environmental Science for Environmental Management
SSGE113S7 Introduction to Geographic Data Science
SSGE010S7 Climate Change: Science and Mitigation*
FDDV002S7 Gender and Development
SSGE110S7 Sustainable Business Practice*
SSGE116S7 Environmental Observation by Remote Sensing
SSGE011S7 Environment and Policy*
SSGE112S7 Energy and Climate Change*
SSGE103S7 Global Nature Conservation
SSGE006S6 Race, Environment and International Development
SSGE117S7 GeoAI for Social and Urban Applications

Note: options marked with an asterisk (*) are expected to be taught using hyflex classroom technology in 2025/6 and so will be available both in-person and online. Students who are studying the programme on a fully online route will have access to a more restricted set of options.

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the learning outcomes (below) of the course. As a student, we expect you to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your

learning, engaging with all of the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists, information about how and when you will be assessed.

Your learning for this course will be organised around the activities outlined below:

Teaching on this course is a combination of lectures (pre-recorded) and seminars. Lectures are designed to provide you with an outline or overview of the topic, to engage you with the material and direct you to other resources. They are a springboard for your own learning. Seminars are group sessions where you will be asked to contribute to discussion or group work around the topic, with material set in advance for which you need to prepare. This programme also includes the option of a fieldtrip module where you will learn through practice by visiting key sites of interest with the guidance of experts.

How we will assess you

The course will use a variety of assessment methods. Assessment is used to enhance your learning rather than simply to test it. We use a variety of assessment methods. For most of the modules associated with this course, your assessment will mainly be through essays and online examinations (usually completed at home or in a workspace in college), but may also involve short written exercises, quizzes and multiple-choice questionnaires, practical assessments, case studies, learning journals, or problems to solve.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

'Learning outcomes' indicate what you should be able to know or do at the end of your course. Providing them helps you to understand what your teachers will expect and also the learning requirements upon which you will be assessed.

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Describe key vulnerabilities and risks of environmental and climate change for urban areas in distinct geographies
- Describe how racialized, gendered and classed inequalities affect the exposure of different urban populations to environmental risk
- Demonstrate a critical knowledge of the historical and geographical trajectories of urban environmental risk and its connection with wider political, social and cultural dynamics
- Develop a critical knowledge of different theoretical approaches to urban sustainability and how the concept has evolved historically and geographically
- Demonstrate detailed knowledge of different contemporary approaches to urban sustainability from different policy, market and community-led perspectives
- Explain how access to environmental resources and infrastructures as well as urban natures shape urban living in unequal ways
- Explain how urban sustainability relates to housing, food production and consumption, waste management, water infrastructures and other key features of urban living
- Demonstrate a critical knowledge of the importance of incorporating a combined social and environmental approach, attuned to complex social and geographical difference, for building a more sustainable urban future
- Acquire detailed knowledge of different case studies to understand the distinct and contested ways in which urban sustainability is understood, measured and practiced across multiple geographies

- Demonstrate skills of analysis and critique that can be transferred to further study in the social sciences and humanities

Careers and further study

You will find Sustainable Cities graduates in the following kinds of roles:

- jobs in central and local government, consultancy firms, NGOs, urban planning, civil service and international organisations;
- research positions in universities and other public and private research bodies;
- teaching in higher, further, and secondary education;
- community organising and activism

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on the [careers pages of our website](#).

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including who to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services.](#) This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.