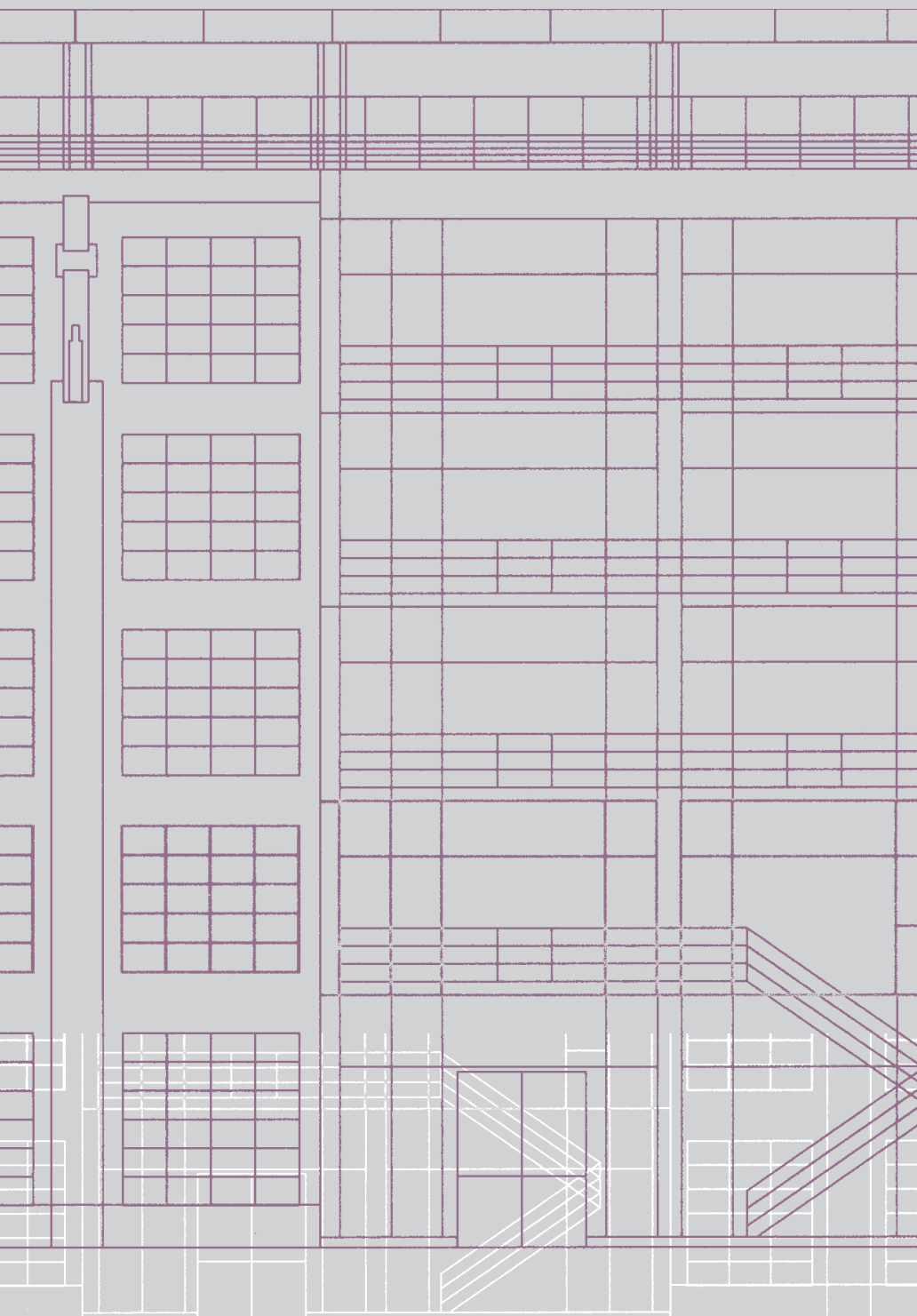


# Criteria for the Accreditation of Degree Courses in Urban Planning/ Spatial Planning

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**ASAP**

Validation Organisation  
for Study Programmes  
in Architecture and Planning

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# 1 Guidelines

## 1.1 Introduction

In this manual, ASAP sets out the subject-specific criteria for accreditation of degree courses in the field of spatial planning, in addition to the interdisciplinary standards of the Interstate Treaty on the organisation of a joint accreditation system, the German Accreditation Council and the accreditation agencies, including ACQUIN, ASIIN and ZEVA. The courses of study in urban and spatial planning, urban planning, urban design and spatial planning are summarised below using the term urban planning/ spatial planning. The professional criteria are linked to ASAP's professional criteria for the accreditation of study courses in architecture, interior architecture and landscape architecture. It is of particular importance that representatives of the profession and the institutions of higher education have come together at the Validation Organisation for Study Programmes in Architecture and Planning ASAP to set up and develop a system for quality assurance and quality enhancement of the various study programmes.

In view of the diversity in the education in the field of urban planning/ spatial planning, this manual aims to provide a reference framework for accreditation that ensures compatibility of both national and international study programmes as well as promote their individual and regional characteristics.

The manual is intended as a basis for assessment and is addressed at the peers in accreditation and evaluation procedures as a guideline for accreditation agencies and university policies. It serves as a source of information for students and staff at institutions of higher education and is a point of orientation for professional institutes that are in charge of professional validation (membership in a professional institute for planners, protection of professional titles).

Urban planning and spatial planning have a tradition of more than 50 years as independent courses of study in German-speaking countries. The education aims at a comprehensive interdisciplinary profession in which knowledge and skills from technical, socio-scientific, natural science, legal and design disciplines are taught. Graduates are capable of shaping the spatial and social environment with the appropriate planning procedures. The objective is to facilitate sustainable development that is focused on the common good. Besides municipal and government institutions, private stakeholders and stakeholders in the realm of civil society are increasingly involved in shaping the spatial and functional development of the environment. Urban and spatial planners work in public administration, private planning practices, in site and project development, in associations and in politics, as well as in science and research.

Planning tasks vary against the backdrop of their respective social context. In order to meet the current challenges – such as globalisation, climate change and demographic changes – skills and competences that go beyond technical and academic qualifications are required: analytical, communicative and social competences and timely recognition of social changes as well as the balancing of often divergent demands on a space.

## 1.2 Conformity with national and international standards

The education for urban planning/ spatial planning occupies a special position within the educational landscape, as the profession is regulated by the German federal state law relating to architects and is shaped by international standards. For urban planning/ spatial planning these are:

- national:
  - German Higher Education Framework Act (Hochschulrahmengesetz)
  - Interstate Treaty on the organisation of a joint accreditation system to ensure the quality of teaching and learning at German higher education institutions (Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty) in force since 1 January 2018
  - Recommendations on the education-related registration requirements for urban planning of the Federal Chamber of German Architects of 13 July 2016
  - Recommendations on the education-related issues for registration requirements for architects, landscape architects, interior architects and urban planners for applicants from dual and distance degree courses; resolution by the board of the Federal Chamber of German Architects of 24 February 2021
- Europe-wide:
  - Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 7 November 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, amended by Directive 2013/55/EU, last amended by Commission Delegated Decision 2020/548 on 23 January 2020
  - International Agreement and Declaration by the National Institutes and Associations of Professional Town Planners within the European Economic Community (ECTP-CEU Charter, 1985, 1986)
  - Statement on European Planning Education (AESOP, 1995)
- Worldwide:
  - UNESCO/UIA Charter for Architectural Education (2011/2017) and the Accord on Recommended International Standards of Professionalism in Architectural Practice (2014).

Internationalisation has repercussions on institutions of higher education and influences discussion about study objectives and course content. Mutual recognition of qualifications and training across former national jurisdictions was regulated by the Lisbon Convention (Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region 11 April 1997) and adopted into German law on 16 May 2007.

Whilst the European and international standards for architecture training do not apply to urban planners/ spatial planners, ASAP considers the complex profession of urban planning/ spatial planning to need obligatory full-time education comprising study programmes and requirements, as described for the training of architects in the Professional Recognition Directive (2005/36/EU last amended by Directive 2013/55/EU) as well as in the globally valid UNESCO/UIA Charter for Architectural Education (2011) and in the UIA Accord on Recommended International Standards of Professionalism in Architectural Practice (2014).

Increased internationality and job mobility necessitates that graduates of urban planning/ spatial planning are educated to respect, analyse and safeguard different cultural backgrounds and to assume social responsibility. They must learn to observe legal and procedural framework conditions and respond to local contexts and the local identity of current and prospective areas of work.

### **1.3 Mutual recognition of educational credits and degrees**

#### **Educational and examination credits**

Educational and examination achievements are to be recognised equally for modules completed in national and international institutions of higher education, e.g. in case of a transfer between institutions of higher education or a change of degree course, in accordance with the guidelines of the Lisbon Convention, the Federal State Higher Education Law and, where applicable, the recognition regulation of the institutions of higher education. Recognition may only be refused if there are substantial differences (the principle of recognition as the norm and the duty to give reason when refusing recognition). A flexible interpretation of different module sizes with the respective educational credits should be possible. Project-based studies should, as a rule, represent a comparable amount of credits, irrespective of the institution of higher education's different specialisations.

#### **Final degree**

Irrespective of their different specialisations, the institutions of higher education should recognise the six-semester Bachelor's degree courses for the admission to Master's degree courses that were accredited at other institutions of higher education in accordance with the standards listed in Section 1.2 without alignment conditions. Since there are consecutive degree courses structured into 6+4, 7+3 and 8+2, the institutions of higher education are requested to make recognition as transparent and flexible as possible for students wanting to transfer between these modules, and if necessary, develop standards for this.

### **1.4 Profile creation at institutions of higher education**

The division into Bachelor's and Master's courses of study is particularly suited to help institutions of higher education to develop individual profiles by placing spe-

cial emphasis on specific aspects within the training of urban planners/ spatial planners. This promotes diversity in the thus created fields of activity and work in urban planning/spatial planning. However, a profile must ensure a comprehensive education in the core competences, and the degree course must have a comparable title.

## **2 General Educational Objectives**

### **2.1 Orientation in the professional field**

Courses of study in urban planning/ spatial planning generally prepare students for professional practice and scientific work in public and private employment or as self-employed professionals. The general objective pursued by urban planning/ spatial planning is the development and organisation of our environment with due consideration of all relevant public and private issues, making it both sustainable for the future while meeting the current requirements of the population and securing public acceptance. This acceptance depends not only on the quality of a space but increasingly also on the quality of the process, and primarily the possibilities for participation.

In addition to economic and cultural determinants, urban planning/ spatial planning are defined by guiding principles. The guiding principles consider the current societal, economic, environmental and social requirements and are reflected in complex legal regulations.

Urban planning/ spatial planning is a long-term, continuous and process-led activity that covers a wide range of scales, ranging from properties and neighbourhoods to the supranational level, while urban and regional levels continue to be the main areas of work. Planners work in various fields of urban planning (urban development, urban design, land use planning, urban regeneration and urban renewal) as well as in regional development and spatial planning and other fields. These include environmental planning, technical planning (transport and infrastructure), economic promotion, project development and project and process management, in addition to participation, moderation and mediation in planning procedures.

A central goal for the definition of the objectives for courses of study is to set the educational targets within a specific professional field, placing special emphasis on areas that can be meaningfully integrated into the overall spectrum of urban planning/ spatial planning. The following must be clearly outlined:

- what targets a course of study pursues regarding the employability and personal development of students
- what the profile of the degree course is within the field of urban planning/ spatial planning
- whether and how it differs from similar degree courses at other institutions of higher education and
- whether specific thematic and/or spatial specialisations are planned (e.g. international focus, emphasis on a specific scale of planning or specialist subjects).

## 2.2 General competence and quality goals

One requirement for sustainable urban planning/ spatial planning is the collective need to balance different interests in society. Consequently, planning becomes a tool for policies that seek social compatibility and low conflict in spatial development. Identifying, evaluating, communicating and weighing the different interests is thus a necessary competence for those working in urban/spatial planning, in addition to the necessary technical knowledge and skills. The course of study must qualify and prepare students for these tasks.

The ability to weigh up issues requires a comprehensive knowledge of the mechanisms of social reality, particularly the skill to apply this knowledge in the framework of scientific and technical developments, and the ability to translate it into appropriate planning perspectives in the context of economic, environmental, social and cultural parameters. Therefore, the basic methods of urban planning/ spatial planning comprise:

- the cognitive analysis of spatial correlations and problems which has both a scientific-theoretical and cognitive-reflective basis
- the conception and design of problem-solving proposals which require rational-constructive inter-connecting and creative skills based on scientific methods and
- the ability to communicate with a diverse range of stakeholders across the social and political realm.

In the process, target-oriented and development-oriented connections between the concept elements are established and adapted to the different spatial planning levels.

Students of urban planning/ spatial planning must be taught to:

- grasp complex existing spatial conditions regarding environmental, economic, social, architectural and cultural as well as technical matters, to analyse and assess them according to established professional criteria and to evaluate them in view of their development potential
- recognise problems and competing land use requirements of all stakeholders, including inherent contradictions and to convey them in a comprehensible manner which is appropriate for the target group, to apply participation and moderation methods in a meaningful way, to deduce sustainable and strategic solutions
- prepare problem- and target-oriented planning decisions and, after consideration of all relevant issues, develop creative spatial concepts in a high urban design quality
- recognise interdisciplinary correlations and the limits of one's own professional competence, specifically involve other disciplines (e.g. experts) and manage problems in a structured, self-directed and cooperative manner in interdisciplinary teams using scientific methods
- apply formal and informal procedures for the implementation and realisation of spatial concepts in a confident, structuring and coordinating manner, be open to new tasks and challenges, to integrate

them into planning practice and to continue learning with a view to the ever-changing tasks arising in urban planning/ spatial planning.

The criteria for these competence profiles are subject to change and must be developed to face future challenges in society. They are to be developed according to the level of qualification (see Section 4 – Study Programmes and Degrees) and the individual profile of the courses of study in urban planning/ spatial planning.

## 3 Course Content

### 3.1 Skills and abilities

Urban planning/ spatial planning has different reference levels, which require an interdisciplinary approach. Only after consideration of the linkages between them can holistic planning statements be made. This applies to the spatial, sectoral, instrumental, methodological and procedural levels, among others. Rapid orientation in a continuously changing professional field requires a broad basic scientific education as well as a course of study that concentrates on the core tasks of spatial planning and urban design.

The course of study must impart knowledge and skills that enable students to work on a wide range of subject-specific tasks by applying scientific methodological knowledge. Cooperation with other planners and teamwork as well as a convincing presentation of work to external agencies should be taught.

In particular, skills are to be trained that lead to a competent and task-related assessment of the living, working and environmental conditions in a given area. The application of appropriate tools for the realisation of plans and programmes, participation in the implementation of plans and the involvement of those affected by the planning process and, not least, the development of spatial planning solutions and design concepts should be integral to the course structure.

### 3.2 Spatial and instrumental levels of activity

Urban planning/ spatial planning comprises a wide spectrum of spatial coordination of overall planning, ranging from local planning (e.g. urban masterplans, urban design concepts, preparatory and binding urban land use plans, urban development concepts), regional and federal state planning to spatial planning at national and international level. The combination of various content-related aspects and different planning levels results in an extremely wide variety of practical planning work. Therefore, one of the main goals of teaching is to ensure that students at an institution of higher education become acquainted with this complex field of activities. This diversity, coupled with the students' different abilities and interests, in addition to the requirements of the job market, makes the setting of different specialisations both pragmatic and necessary.

However, the diversity of the potential fields of activity in urban planning/ spatial planning – even in the sub-sectors shown – is not a basis for a one-sided profile development of Bachelor's or Master's courses of study. The following table shows spatial and instrumental

levels of activity and procedures to illustrate the basic orientation within the professional fields. They are only roughly classified here as they overlap in myriad ways and are difficult to define exactly. For example, urban planning is clearly anchored between spatial levels, ranging from buildings and groups of buildings to mu-

nicipalities or cities, while spatial planning is concerned with larger spatial contexts and spheres of activity. Furthermore, urban planning/ spatial planning at the various levels is increasingly conceived as integrative, holistic work that also comprises contributions from other experts.

Overview: Spatial and instrumental levels of activity in professional fields of spatial planning														
Spatial levels	Instrumental levels							Core fields of activity						
	Informal			Formal										
Union of nations / Europe	Development concepts	Conceptual framework	Urban design concepts	Design / Consulting	ESDP	SD Plan / SD Pro	Preparatory land use plan	Local development plan, urban development contract / project and development plan / statutes	Art. 34 German Building Code	Spatial planning	Federal state planning	Regional planning	Urban design/urban planning	
Nation					SpPolGI									StDevPro
Federal state														
Region														
City / Municipality / Community														
City / District														
Neighbourhood														
Groups of buildings, buildings and environs														

- Key to abbreviations:  
 ESDP - European Spatial Development Programme  
 SD - Spatial Development  
 StDevPI - State Development Plan  
 StDevPro- State Development Programme  
 SpPolGI - Spatial policy guidelines

### 3.3 Core content of courses of study

The following exemplary subjects and groups of subjects have an interdisciplinary correlation. For accreditation, a degree course in urban planning/ spatial planning must contain elements of the following groups of subjects:

- (a) Principles of urban planning/ spatial planning, including principles of technical subjects
- (b) Conceptions, procedures and tools of urban planning/ spatial planning
- (c) Methodology of urban planning/ spatial planning and associated disciplines
- (d) Project-based studies on integrated courses taught at institutions of higher education
- (e) Further subject-specific specialisations.

The following exemplary subjects are fundamental requirements. However, they may be modified or supplemented, if this is justified by a degree course's special profile. For each accreditation, their emphasis and significance must be weighed up individually and evaluated in view of the defined required skills of future graduates. That is, the institution of higher education must determine the profile of a course of study and its associated characteristic skills. Thus, the listed subjects do not represent a conclusive catalogue of a profile or subjects that must be worked through in a course of study.

#### Note on (a) Principles of urban planning/ spatial planning, including principles of technical subjects

- History of urban planning/ spatial planning
- Land use and location structure, infrastructure systems
- Urban realm and townscape, building design
- Theory of planning
- Local and regional spatial planning law
- Politics and administrative sciences
- Urban and regional economics
- Urban and regional sociology
- Urban ecology, open space and landscape
- Sustainability
- Climate-friendly spatial development
- Mobility and transport
- Digital transformation (geo-information systems and data management).

#### Note on (b) Conceptions, procedures and instruments of urban planning/ spatial planning

- European spatial development, spatial planning, federal state planning and regional planning
- Formal and informal planning instruments and procedures
- Urban development, district planning, neighbourhood planning and village planning
- Urban design
- Land use planning (preparatory land use plan, local development plan)
- Land regulation and land management
- Urban regeneration and urban redevelopment
- Participation and decision-making procedures

- Project finance and funding instruments
- Sectoral planning and specialist planning.

#### Note on (c) Methodology and techniques of urban planning/ spatial planning

- Planning methodology (planning and design)
- Survey and analysis techniques
- Analysis, evaluation and prognosis techniques
- Qualitative and quantitative methods of spatial research
- Illustration and visualisation techniques and digitalisation
- Scientific work methods
- Communication and moderation techniques
- Methods of interdisciplinarity and collaborative co-operation
- Procedure and process control methods, project management.

#### Note on (d) Project-based studies

Intensive and interdisciplinary project-based studies provide the best teaching and learning approach for testing the previously acquired knowledge on real planning projects at an early stage, and for learning about cooperative, team-based work in interdisciplinary contexts. Students can practise target- and resource-oriented work and gain communicative skills and transformative knowledge in project-based studies through different teaching formats.

Project-based studies are generally implemented in student projects and in design studios, which also open up various opportunities for cooperating with professional practice and with other courses of study. The teaching of trans- and interdisciplinarity, where various different professional fields are inherently linked, requires a specific form of training which can be achieved in student projects. Their relevance to problems, practice, processes and actions should lend them special meaning within the curriculum. They require self-motivated and self-directed work ('learning by research') and are particularly suited to team work.

Project-based studies offer opportunities to practise co-operation, co-ordination, role-play, conflict resolution, project steering and consensus building. Above all, they embrace working on complex planning issues with different stakeholders and involved parties at different planning levels. In the student projects and design studios, which focus more on spatial design concepts, urban planning/ spatial planning concepts are devised using creative and scientific methods, baseline studies and analyses. Design studios serve to teach design skills in particular and to develop urban concepts.

#### Note on (e) Further subject-specific specialisations

The development of profiles at institutions of higher education is to give the courses of study a special focus with a plausible relevance to the core subjects. The specialisation may lie either in the differentiation of the above subjects or in offering supplementary subjects. Examples of this are landscape architecture, regional management and environmental planning. Furthermore, it is possible to set specialisations with regard to

the spatial context under consideration, e.g. planning in other countries and global regions.

Priorities apply equally to the Bachelor's programme and the Master's programme.

### 3.4 Excursions

Excursions forge an essential connection to professional practice. Hence, they are a necessary and indispensable component in both the Bachelor's and the Master's degree courses. Depending on their educational content, excursions should last one or several days.

## 4 Study Programmes and Degrees

A course of study in urban planning/ spatial planning generally consists of an undergraduate Bachelor's and a Master's course that builds on it. The courses of study are structured in two consecutive stages with a Bachelor's and a Master's degree, in accordance with the German Higher Education Framework Act (15 January 2019) (Hochschulrahmengesetz). Due to the complexity and interdisciplinarity of the profession and the related teaching content, these qualifications can, as a rule, only be obtained after ten semesters (with 300 ECTS). The '6 + 4 semester Bachelor's / Master's system' has proven to be a particularly viable study programme as it allows for adequate further qualification and specialisation in the Master's programme. Alternatively, an eight-semester Bachelor's course of study can be offered, where the subsequent Master's course provides a short specialisation or postgraduate training.

The ten-semester Bachelor's / Master's course of study with 300 credits is, as a rule, a requirement to qualify for admission to upper-level civil service, preparatory service in urban planning in the German civil service (Städtebaureferendariat) and doctoral studies. A Bachelor's qualification with 180 or 240 credits enables admission to the higher civil service.

Accreditation attests the conformity of the course content and the curriculum with international standards (see ECTP-CEU Charter, Section 1.2, Appendices A, B, C). Bachelor's and Master's qualifications can be a requirement for membership in a professional institute and for carrying the professional title 'urban planner'. The professional institutes in each German federal state are governed by different regulations regarding this matter. The Bachelor's degree can be a requirement for joining a professional institute. However, only a course of study in urban planning/ spatial planning with 300 credits merits an internationally comparable course of study.

### 4.1 Bachelor's programme

#### 4.1.1 Professional profile

The professional profile of a Bachelor's degree in urban planning/ spatial planning gained after six semesters, and in rare cases seven semesters (180/210 credits), qualifies for a supervised post as a planning assistant in urban development planning and land use planning, regional and spatial planning as well as in some fields of

environmental planning, and to carry out any associated management tasks (e.g. project, neighbourhood or city management). The area of application is defined by the classic and new planning tasks in public administration at the municipal, regional and federal state levels and covers the appropriate fields of work in practices, institutions and construction and development companies related to planning. Self-directed and autonomous planning work is not the goal of a Bachelor's education, which requires further qualifications in practice or at an institution of higher education. The Bachelor's degree in urban planning/ spatial planning meets the admission criteria for Master's courses of study in urban planning/ spatial planning.

A Bachelor's degree gained after eight semesters with 240 credits, in combination with a practice period stipulated by federal state laws and, as appropriate, other further education measures, qualifies for registration on the list of urban planners in the relevant chamber of architects.

#### 4.1.2 Course structure

A Bachelor's degree course is an undergraduate course of study that leads to a first degree qualifying for the professional field. Against the backdrop of changing qualification requirements and competence profiles, it aims to teach fundamental specialised knowledge in various disciplines, methodological competences and key qualifications. Students with a Bachelor's degree are familiar with scientific methodology and are capable of applying methods and findings in specific fields of urban planning/ spatial planning in a problem- and target-oriented manner.

The course of study teaches principles of urban planning/ spatial planning as well as subject-related principles, methodical technical tools, knowledge of the multi-tiered spatial planning system and a comprehensive introduction to the complex field of activity of urban planning/ spatial planning. Applied technical knowledge and methodological knowledge and an overview of specialist contexts are taught in addition to the theory of planning and scientific principles. Student projects have special significance in the Bachelor's curriculum.

To enable students to complete their Bachelor's course of study in the allotted time, it is necessary to develop clear basic profiles for the content of the degree courses. Each course profile should be specifically geared towards one or several fields of activity, taking into account subject-specific issues. The Bachelor's programme should not be designed to anticipate areas of specialisation in the Master's programme.

For accreditation, the Bachelor's courses of study should teach practice-oriented professional and methodological knowledge as well as basic skills in the work spectrum of urban planners and spatial planners, including the required key competences (e.g. cognitive, social competences). Exercises in the form of seminars, particularly in relation to applying current information and planning techniques, are a basic component of the training.



### 4.1.3 Entrance criteria

The entrance requirements for a Bachelor's degree course are governed by the relevant German federal state law.

As a rule, Bachelor's programmes provide the opportunity to combine various courses of study and give great freedom of choice, also between different institutions of higher education.

The institutions of higher education may carry out aptitude assessments and aptitude tests prior to the acceptance on a Bachelor's course of study, in order to verify the aptitude of students for an academic course of study generally and for urban planning/ spatial planning in particular. The relevant regulations reside with the admitting institution of higher education.

## 4.2 Master's programme

### 4.2.1 Professional profile

The professional profile of a consecutive Master's course in urban planning/ spatial planning, in combination with a first degree course in urban planning/ spatial planning, generally meets the professional requirements for self-directed and autonomous work as well as a leading position in all fields and levels of work in spatial planning. The course of study qualifies students to work in urban planning/ spatial planning in a self-directed and responsible way, on a scientific basis and in consideration of design, technical, economic, environmental and conceptual aspects. The course of study prepares students to perform tasks in public administration, research and private sector construction and development companies as well as planning practices. Integrative, sustainable planning approaches carry particular weight. Depending on the duration and profile of the Master's degree course, these qualifications can be obtained with different thematic focusses and specialisations.

Master's courses of study that provide further education in subjects related to urban planning/ spatial planning generally pursue more specific educational objectives according to their orientation and conception, which, for example, place emphasis on management tasks associated with spatial planning or other specialised fields. They lead to educational constellations that do not necessarily meet the requirements of a full degree course in urban planning/ spatial planning but instead allow for other specialisations and professional orientations. In some cases, continuing Master's degree courses can lead to the same qualification as consecutive Master's degree courses.

### 4.2.2 Course structure

The Master's course of study in urban planning/ spatial planning builds on the knowledge of scientific principles, methodologies and specialist knowledge obtained in the Bachelor's course of study. It focuses on the complexity of specialist, sectoral and spatial planning and aims to integrate areas of specialisation and cross-linkages. The basic skills obtained in the Bachelor's course of study are extended in the Master's course of study

through in-depth specialisation across central areas of spatial planning and development.

The Master's degree must guarantee that 300 ECTS credits have been achieved. Depending on the duration of the preceding Bachelor's course of study, the institution of higher education must offer opportunities to gain the 300 ECTS credits.

As a rule, the Master's course of study includes elective options and specialisations. The courses of study can place its focus on practice or research. Additional qualifications and individual focal points for mastering all tasks in the field of urban planning/ spatial planning should be made available.

Student projects have a special status in the Master's curriculum. They provide the teaching format for cross-disciplinary integrative work on both scientific and practical issues and a guarantee for the key competences of urban planners or spatial planners as experts for interdisciplinary work with individual special skills.

Master's courses of study in urban planning/ spatial planning should enable students to analyse complex problems of urban planning/ spatial planning, train their critical reflection on approaches to solutions and to impart the ability to think and work conceptually in all areas of spatial planning. Additionally, Master's programmes should teach or strengthen interdisciplinary, analytical methodical, conceptual-creative, communicative, social and personal competences. The key qualifications correspond in a particularly profound way to those listed in Section 3.

The Master's thesis is an independent academic paper. It should demonstrate that the degree course enables graduates to work on complex problems in the field of urban planning/ spatial planning independently and, if necessary, in a team using scientific methods within an appropriate time budget. As a rule, the Master's degree is a pre-requisite for any further academic qualification (PhD studies).

### 4.2.3 Entrance requirements

A general requirement for admission on a Master's degree course is a first university degree or a qualification from a state or state-recognised vocational academy and, in accordance with the provisions of the admitting institution of higher education, additional aptitude criteria, e.g. the grade point average from the previous Bachelor's course of study and/or the passing of an aptitude test. Institutions of higher education may conduct aptitude assessments and aptitude tests prior to the start of a Master's course of study in order to verify the aptitude of prospective candidates for an academic course of study in general and a course of study in urban planning/ spatial planning in particular. The relevant regulations reside with the admitting institution of higher education. Graduates with a diploma degree may be admitted to a Master's degree course.

Admission on a Master's course of study in urban planning/ spatial planning is, as a rule, also open to graduates holding a Bachelor's degree in a related spatial subject (e.g. architecture or geography). However, only the combination of a Bachelor's and a Master's degree course leads to a full qualification in the sense

of the above-mentioned criteria and to the professional qualification that will allow admission to a professional institute. The admission requirements must ensure that the qualification objectives of the institution of higher education can be reached.

#### **4.2.4 Continuing Master's degree courses**

Accreditation of continuing Master's degree courses is assessed according to the same criteria as Master's degree courses in consecutive degree courses. Continuing Master's degree courses may either lead to specialisation or in-depth studies and they also lead to a consecutive degree. Following on from a Bachelor's degree course with the appropriate content, they can also lead to registration on the planners' list at a German chamber of architecture.

### **4.3 Other study objectives**

#### **4.3.1 PhD study courses/ postgraduate study courses**

PhD study courses offer doctoral candidates an organised academic education. As a rule, entrance requirements are Master's degrees in accordance with the PhD regulations of the admitting institution of higher education. Other admission requirements are set by the institutions of higher education. The objective of broadening and deepening knowledge is a systematic understanding of the research discipline and comprehensive familiarity with sources connected to the subject. The submission of an academic paper is to make an individual contribution to research that expands the boundaries of knowledge and stands up to national and international peer review. PhD studies deepen and/or broaden the students' knowledge and skills with the aim of encouraging their versatile personal development whilst providing qualified and focussed training for young academics.

#### **4.3.2 Part-time degree courses, part-time degree courses for working students**

Part-time degree courses and part-time degree courses for working students are study programmes that are constituted in the curricula and are structured by examination regulations. They lead to an academic degree, although not in full-time study but characteristically in continuous and consistent training in supervised learning and self-directed studies and achieving verifiable academic achievements. The educational content and learning of competences must be equivalent to those taught in the corresponding full-time courses, the only difference being the duration.

#### **4.3.3 Dual degree courses**

Dual degree courses are characterised by companies and equivalent institutions serving as a second place of learning alongside the institution of higher education, and divide the curriculum into at least two places of learning. Their intended integration of content, organisation and contractual obligations is aimed at students achieving a specific qualification profile by linking theoretical and practical training. The dual degree courses

must be incorporated in the quality assurance of the institutions of higher education

The German Accreditation Council notes the following on its webpage (FAQ 16.2, see also: <https://www.ak-kreditierungsrat.de/de/fag>):

'The Accreditation Council has found that in practice mostly aspects relating to the integration of content lead to uncertainties and misunderstandings, both on the part of the higher education institutions submitting the application and on the part of the validation agencies carrying out the assessment. Some fundamental considerations can be extracted from previous decisions made by the Accreditation Council:

As a rule, the Accreditation Council bases its assessment on the degree course and not on the complementary practical work. This means that the integration of content must be set out in the curriculum. Training or working while studying in an area with an affinity to the subject of the degree course does not sufficiently justify the profile characteristic 'dual', even if parts of the professional work count towards the course of study without further transfers of credits or parts of the course of study count towards a training programme.

The integration of content must be systematic. Isolated points of contact with professional practice, for example in the context of a practice semester or the final project, do not justify the profile characteristic "dual". In the Accreditation Council's opinion, it follows that the curriculum of the dual degree course must differ, at least in its concrete requirements for students, from those of a complementary "conventional" full-time degree course.

The integration of content must be anchored in the degree course documents (e.g. module descriptions, study and examination regulations). Within the framework of quality control and quality assurance on the part of the institution of higher education, the integration of content can be bindingly demanded from the practice partners, for example through cooperation agreements.'

## **5 Professional Practice**

### **5.1 Course integrated practice periods**

Particularly on Bachelor's degree courses in urban planning/ spatial planning, periods of professional experience integrated into the course of study are a way to implement employability (qualifying for the profession) within the curriculum. If the institution of higher education requires such a practice period during the course of study, it must be integrated as a module in the course. All formal and subject-related requirements for modules thus apply. In view of the specifics of this form of teaching, the module descriptions or a separate document ('guidelines for professional practice periods') should regulate the following contents in a comprehensible manner:

- Institutions of higher education must clearly define the learning objectives of practical training and state how they relate to the curriculum.

- The content of the professional practical experience must be modularised. The workload is to be deduced from the regular weekly working hours in addition to the appropriate time for preparation and follow-up.
- Suitable periods of time must be kept free for the practice periods within the organisation of courses must allocate suitable time spaces (practice semesters or suitable periods during the inter-semester breaks) so that these periods can be completed without extending the duration of studies.
- Binding regulations on content, organisation and scope of the practice periods must be agreed with the places offering professional practice positions, e.g. in standardised contracts.
- Institutions of higher education must provide adequate staff resources for supervising the practice periods (students and places offering positions).
- The basis for awarding credits must be defined, i.e. what constitutes proof of a 'successfully completed module'. This should be in the form of written documentation.

Substituting obligatory practice periods with academic studies must be excluded.

## 5.2 Unintegrated practice periods

### 5.2.1 Preliminary work experience (Bachelor's)

As a rule, a supervised professional practice period in a planning practice or in a planning agency such as a municipal planning authority or a regional planning agency is recommended prior to starting the Bachelor's course of study. The practical training period serves to confirm an applicant's chosen field of study and provides valuable experience that will be of use during the course. It is not a part of the curriculum.

### 5.2.2 Preliminary work experience (Master's)

Institutions of higher education may, in consideration of the German higher education law, ask for preliminary work experience as an admission requirement to a Master's course of study. The preliminary work experience does not count towards the duration of studies. The institutions of higher education may stipulate in the admission conditions that proof of preliminary work experience can be submitted after the course has started. The practical training periods or professional work experience between Bachelor's and Master's courses of study do not compromise the consecutiveness of a Master's course.

Proof of at least one year's professional experience is required before admission on a continuing degree course.

### 5.2.3 Extra-curricular practice periods within the duration of studies

Study programmes can include practice periods outside the curriculum, as for instance in part-time degree courses. These periods extend the duration of studies.

### 5.2.4 Professional work experience after the completion of the course of study

In some federal states, the professional work experience required for registration, which is carried out in the period between the completion of the Bachelor's course of study and the beginning of the Master's course of study, may be partially recognised.

## 6 Research and Teaching

Due to the character and its immanent practice-orientation, the scientific education and the continuous development of urban planning/ spatial planning is closely related to spatial practice and the solution of social issues within their respective spatial contexts. In order to maintain a close connection to professional practice, it is necessary that teaching staff also engage in research as well as practising their profession with various specialisations, in addition to the project-based studies as a format of practice-oriented teaching and research. The corresponding regulations pertaining to the performance of duties is a matter for the German federal states. In particular, this should provide room and opportunities for specific forms of transdisciplinary and application-oriented research in cooperation with practice partners on issues of spatial transformation.

## 7 Staff Structure

The institution of higher education must provide sufficient support capacity for the degree courses offered. Proof of the qualification of the teaching staff and the modules taught by them as well as the quantitative capacity of the teaching loads must be provided. It must be tested in how far the qualifications of the teaching staff correspond to the respective profile of the degree course. This applies particularly to Master's degree courses with a special focus.

Project-based studies listed in Section 3.3 are central components in the curriculum of urban planning/ spatial planning and require thorough and transdisciplinary supervision by the teaching staff, who hold particular didactical skills. Group-dynamic learning processes, communicative competence and practical relevance are taught and trained in project-based studies. This unique selling point of the courses of study requires appropriately qualified teaching staff, for which proof must be given. The teaching formats for project-based studies and urban design involving interdisciplinary work in small groups implies a higher teaching load due to the supervision by teaching staff from different disciplines and a higher supervision load for small groups. Calculations for these teaching structures and teaching loads must be made transparent.

## 8 Infrastructure

Accreditation must evaluate whether the existing infrastructure is adequate and suitable for ensuring the educational objectives and the quality of courses of study. Particularly the technical equipment and accessibility to

collaborative working must be ensured. The Advisory Body for the Students in Urban Planning/ Spatial Planning (Beirat der Fachschaften der Stadt- und Raumplanung) has defined parameters for room requirements as well as software and hardware requirements for student work.

### **8.1 Students' workspaces**

It is essential for the quality of training that students of urban planning/ spatial planning have access to workspaces. These must be adequately equipped (including technical equipment) and, if possible, be individually accessible 24 hours a day; if possible, also outside the institution of higher education's regular opening hours. ASAP recommends the provision of individual, flexible studio workspaces for all students, in addition to workspaces for small groups and access to digital platforms suitable for group work.

### **8.2 Project spaces**

The central position of student projects is a unique feature of the degree course in urban planning/ spatial planning and implies particular space requirements. Efficient project work needs project groups to have a separate room for the duration of their work, which should be lockable and available outside the institution of higher education's opening hours. The floor area depends on the number of members of the relevant project group and should allow all members of the project to be present at the same time.

### **8.3 Workshops and laboratories**

The availability of workshops, laboratories, computer pools and similar infrastructures must correspond to the teaching content and methods. It must be demonstrated that the course and examination achievements required of the students, which do not only require equipment regularly provided by the institution of higher education, can be reliably delivered as a part of the existing resources. Specifications for equipment, e.g. model making workshop or film and photography laboratories, are no longer appropriate due to the dynamic development of analysis, model making, simulation and visualisation technologies. Nevertheless, institutions of higher education must prove that students have access to the necessary resources to try out and apply techniques commonly used in professional practice. It is sensible to distinguish between workshops that are associated with specific subject-related teaching and workshops that are available to all students for self-directed and content-related work.

### **8.4 Media availability**

A library is an important teaching tool. In addition to a well-equipped reference and digital library with current literature as well as international books and journals in Open Access, it is important that the library is open as long as possible and that the students' workspaces are easily accessible.

### **8.5 IT equipment**

The availability of subject-specific hardware and software is essential for the efficient teaching of urban

planning/ spatial planning. The institution of higher education must provide an IT concept stating its available hard- and software in addition to the equipment the students are expected to provide and the software for the students' own devices that is available through the institution of higher education or provider licences. Accreditation is to evaluate whether the existing equipment corresponds to the course content and teaching methods and whether it meets the curricular requirements. This is to be verified, particularly for hard- and software in the high-end segment that is not available on acceptable terms for students and which must be provided by the institution of higher education. Alternatively, compatible and practice-oriented IT applications should be provided.

### **8.6 Spaces for communication and presentation**

A course of study in urban planning/ spatial planning requires spaces for public presentations and exhibition spaces for course work and degree projects. The availability of communication and presentation spaces depends on the course profile. It is an expression of the respective network building and creativity as well as teaching geared towards communication and interdisciplinarity. Information on the availability and actual utilisation of such spaces within the running of the courses must be provided.

## **9 Finances**

Evidence that the didactic and spatial targets can be met by the current budget must be provided.

## **10 Quality Assurance**

The formalised quality assurance of the entire institution of higher education's operations, by means of a comprehensive quality management system designed for longevity and sustainability, relies on the stipulations of the higher education law of the German federal states and the quality management regulations based on them. The quality management system is, as a rule, not part of accreditation. However, accreditation is to refer to its results, e.g. regular student surveys on the quality of teaching or to graduate surveys.

Additionally, some degree courses of urban planning/ spatial planning have adopted further informal methods of quality assurance and quality development, which are recommended by ASAP. These include:

- setting up a committee or an expert panel that discusses the results of teaching, practical relevance and development of the degree course on a regular basis
- the interaction of society and the profession through public presentations and discussions about the results of teaching, e.g. in local political committees, and
- interaction of the higher education landscape with politics, e.g. through active presentations and participation in the Institution of Higher Education's Day of National Urban Development Policy and other networking activities.

## Appendix/Documents

The following information, articles and directives are particularly referenced in this document:

### International

AESOP, Statement on European Planning Education (1995)

ECTP-CEU Charter: International Agreement and Declaration by the National Institutes and Associations of Professional Town Planners within the European Economic Community (1985), Appendices A, B, C (1986)

European Parliament: Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (Commission, 2002, 119, Annex V.7)

European Parliament: Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 November 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, amended by Directive 2013/55/EU, and last amended by Commission Delegated Decision 2020/548 of 23 January 2020

Royal Town Planning Institute (1991): Guidance note on initial professional education programmes in planning. The Accreditation Process

UNESCO/UIA Charter for Architectural Education, Redraft 2011, Revised Edition, 2017

UIA Accord on Recommended International Standards of Professionalism in Architectural Practice, September 2017

### National

Architektenkammer Nordrhein-Westfalen (2003): Leitfaden Stadtplaner-Ausbildung, Anforderungsprofil für Studiengänge, Düsseldorf

ASAP (2001): Fachliche Kriterien für die Akkreditierung neuer Studiengänge: Bachelor-/ Master-Weiterbildung, Berlin

Bundesanstalt für Arbeit/Kunzmann, K. R. (1994): Blätter zur Berufskunde. Diplom-Ingenieur/ Diplom-Ingenieurin Raumplanung, Bielefeld

David, Heinz (ed.) (1998): Ausbildung auf dem Gebiet der Stadt-, Regional- und Landes/Raumplanung in Deutschland, Hannover

Hochschulrahmengesetz (German Higher Education Framework Act) of 19 January 1999, (BGBl. I p 18) last amended 15 November 2019

Structural guidelines common to all German federal states for the Accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's courses of study of 4 February 2010

Interstate Treaty on the organisation of a joint accreditation system to ensure the quality of teaching and learning at German higher education institutions (Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty) of 1.-20 June 2017

Model Ordinance in accordance with Article 4 (1-4) Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty, resolution by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) of 7 December 2017

SLR: Leitfaden zur Stadtplanerausbildung (2003)

Statement by ASAP, ZEvA and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) on the duration of BA and MA study courses in architecture, 8 December 2003

## Members of the ASAP Expert Committee on Urban Planning/ Spatial Planning 2022

Spokesperson for the Expert Committee on Urban Planning/ Spatial Planning:

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Dipl.-Ing. Rainer Bohne

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Prof. Dr.-Ing. Gerhard Steinebach, DARL

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Akkreditierungsverbund für Studiengänge  
der Architektur und Planung  
Schrammstraße 8  
10715 Berlin  
Tel. 030 2787468-15, Fax 030 2787468-13  
Email: [info@asap-akkreditierung.de](mailto:info@asap-akkreditierung.de)  
[www.asap-akkreditierung.de](http://www.asap-akkreditierung.de)

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