



*Master in Urban and Regional Planning*  
 Department of Urban and Regional Planning  
 Faculty of Landscape and Society  
 Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)

## EVALUATION REPORT

After an in-depth examination of its academic curriculum and teaching pedagogy, the Master in Urban and Regional Planning offered in the Faculty of Landscape and Society at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences has been conferred the AESOP Certificate of Quality.

The Master in Urban and Regional Planning Programme delivered at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences has been evaluated by two members of the AESOP Excellence in Education Board (EEB) appointed by the Chair. The EEB certifies that the above programme fulfils the Quality Recognition criteria.

## Quality in Planning Education

The five-year Master in Urban and Regional Planning delivered at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences is rooted in the Nordic land use planning tradition and focuses on spatial planning in the landscape, urban and regional contexts of Norway. This is also placed within the wider Nordic and international contexts. It equips graduates with the interdisciplinary knowledges, skills and attitudes needed for planning the sustainable interaction between society and environment. It brings together the following aspects of quality in planning education.

### Programme Curriculum and Identity

The programme curriculum offers three main progressions – scales, topics and ethics –, the development of which are clearly articulated through a coherent course structure:

- Rooted in landscape and land use planning and land consolidation alongside the Norwegian legislation and public administration, programme branches from compulsory knowledge



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related to project management, place making, local development to comprehensive land use planning, urban, landscape, regional and strategic planning.

- Progression of skills and competences related to procedural and substantive theories and methods in planning, but also to interdisciplinary collaboration. From the main focus on land use and spatial planning, the programme offers a large spectrum of optional courses around the following 5 tracks: Planning, landscape and public health; Global development and sustainability; Property development; Organisation, project management and finance; and Environment/climate/nature/management/ecology.
- Progression of professional and academic ethical considerations and engagement of planners in practice and in research: from the planner's role in mediating/communicating knowledge about the impacts of spatial interventions to key decision-makers to the planner's role in defending the ethical choices (related to sustainability, climate change, social justice and resilience) in a specific planning practice. The progression of professional ethics in is undertaken to consider the specific Nordic, but also agnostic/general market and regulative driving forces and planning system(s).
- International mobility, including recruiting international staff and students, is perceived as a significant mechanism for increased quality and competence in education, research, innovation and multicultural understanding. It fosters collaboration within leading international research and education environments and a variety of institutional measures are in place to support it.

### Quality Assurance

A formally constituted Programme Committee (consisting of the chair, two academic staff, one student and their deputy) provides a clear institutional mechanism for reviewing and maintaining the quality of the programme, whilst sharing responsibility for the programme amongst several staff members. The Committee is responsible for:

1. Responding to challenges raised by the University and Faculty strategies.
2. Improving the offer of courses in line with departmental strategies.
3. Highlighting academic issues.
4. Supporting the development of new and review of existing courses, as well as periodically revising the overall learning outcomes of the programme.

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An established pattern of annual meetings between the Programme's staff and students develops a shared understanding of the programme and its overall coherence, including where flexibility may need to be exercised in the of allocation of new courses. These provide a basis for constructive evaluation of the Programme through consideration of evaluation forms and the discussion of teaching and learning methods, including drawing in experts from other universities.

### Principles of Pedagogy

- Debates, problem-based learning, engagement in or exposure to Real-life transdisciplinary cases and hybrid urban design studios are all examples of active learning that are embedded in the curriculum. In particular, the latter brings together students with limited design experience from e.g. planning, real estate and public health, with students on design-based courses such as landscape architecture, to allow interdisciplinary learning within student teams.
- Six studio courses, ranging from typical design studios focusing on students' own skills and management of complex tasks, to planning workshops that incorporate interdisciplinary research and field trips, form the programme's core learning environments. Studios and different projects draw on real-world cases, giving students opportunity to engage directly with a real community and manage a process of balancing complex and competing interests.
- Different courses and pedagogies are in place for exploring different spatial scales (from community level to regional considerations), geographic areas (urban, rural, coastal and marine) and different contexts (local, Nordic, European, Global) as well as analysing the challenges and opportunities presented by the interrelations between scales.
- Interaction is promoted and facilitated among students, and between students, teachers, alumni, and guest lecturers, from practice and academia enrich courses with different perspectives on planning whilst sharpening the focus on the role of planners as social actors and agents for sustainability. In particular, the use of external examiners to examine student theses is worth highlighting, as is the use of assessments such as podcast development to promote interdisciplinary interaction amongst students, whilst encouraging them to draw on their diversity of experiences and backgrounds.
- A mixture of intensive, short blocks of teaching, and extensive semesters, where students study several modules in parallel are employed. In particular, the use of short blocks





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allows periods of fieldwork, interdisciplinary teaching and intensive active learning,  
without disrupting other course-based teaching.

The AESOP Certificate of Quality and this Evaluation Report are valid for a period of six years (2023-2029).

31 July 2023

**Daniel Galland**

*Chair*

AESOP

Excellence in Education Board

**Angelique Chettiparamb**

*AESOP Secretary General*

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**Christopher Maidment**

*Assessor*

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**Tijana Dabovic**

*Assessor*

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After a thorough examination of its academic curriculum and teaching pedagogies, the

**Master in Urban and Regional Planning**

offered by the

Faculty of Landscape and Society, Norwegian University of Life Sciences

has been highly distinguished with the

**AESOP CERTIFICATE OF QUALITY**

We certify that:

This programme fulfils the European quality standards of planning programmes according to the AESOP Charter, complemented by an effective internationalization of teaching and learning processes. The AESOP Certificate of Quality is valid for a period of six years (2023-2029).

31 July 2023

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