



Subject Benchmark Statement

Housing Studies

March 2022



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About this Statement

This document is a QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Housing Studies that defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. Subject Benchmark Statements also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular subject or area. Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector. A summary of the Statement is also available on the QAA website.

UK housing policy and practice has been increasingly devolved to institutions across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland since 1999, with scope for divergence in key dimensions of law and practice. This Statement has been prepared by an Advisory Board with representation from all four nations of the UK in order to ensure it takes account of nation-to-nation differences while ensuring the Statement is applicable UK-wide. The Statement takes account of professional accreditation of courses (for example by the Chartered Institute of Housing) but has been designed to be distinct from specifications for membership of professional bodies.

Key changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement include:

- a revised structure for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Housing Studies which includes the introduction of cross-cutting themes of:
 - equality, diversity and inclusion
 - education for sustainable development
 - employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education
- a comprehensive review updating the context and purposes of Housing Studies, including course design and content in order to inform and underpin the revised benchmark standards.

How can I use this document?

Subject Benchmark Statements are often used by higher education providers in the design and development of new courses in the relevant subject, as they provide a framework for specifying intended learning outcomes in an academic or vocational discipline. They are also used as a reference point when reviewing or revalidating degree courses. They may be used by external examiners in considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with other higher education providers. They also provide professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with the academic standards expected of students.

Subject Benchmark Statements provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with a course but are not intended to represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they allow for flexibility and innovation in course design within a framework agreed by the subject community.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses in Housing Studies
- a prospective student thinking about undertaking a course in Housing Studies
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of Housing Studies graduates.

Relationship to legislation

The responsibility for academic standards lies with the higher education provider who awards the degree. Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them by their relevant funding and regulatory bodies. This Statement does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements.

The regulatory status of the Statement will differ with regard to the educational jurisdictions of the UK. In England, Subject Benchmark Statements are not sector-recognised standards as set out under the Office for Students' [regulatory framework](#). However, they are specified as a key reference point, as appropriate, for academic standards in Wales under [Quality Assessment Framework for Wales](#) and in Scotland as part of the [Quality Enhancement Framework](#). Subject Benchmark Statements are part of the current quality requirements in Northern Ireland. Because the Statement describes outcomes and attributes expected at the threshold standard of achievement in a UK-wide context, many higher education providers will use them as an enhancement tool for course design and approval, and for subsequent monitoring and review, in addition to helping demonstrate the security of academic standards.

Additional sector reference points

Higher education providers are likely to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by PSRBs and industry or employer expectations. QAA has also published [Advice and Guidance](#) to support the [Quality Code which will be helpful](#) when using this Statement, for example, in [course design](#), [learning and teaching](#), [external expertise](#) and [monitoring and evaluation](#).

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in [QAA's Glossary](#). Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Statement where appropriate.

1 Context and purposes of a Housing Studies degree

Context

1.1 Housing studies became established as an interdisciplinary field in the early 1980s and has evolved to comprehensively embrace the multidimensional and international nature of housing and the residential environment in relation to the wider social, environmental and economic contexts.

1.2 Housing studies is a field of study, the starting point of which is a person or household's fundamental need for a home within which they can live well and flourish. Housing studies links the notions of home, residential buildings and neighbourhoods, and the many activities, institutions and stakeholders involved in the provision of housing and housing-related services. Housing studies is concerned with the production, consumption and exchange of housing in the market and social sectors, all in relation to the adequacy, affordability and security of housing for all citizens. Understanding the lived experience of housing includes the notions of housing rights, housing exclusion and homelessness as well as the importance of housing as an individual and/or community asset and its potential as a financial investment and store of wealth. The intersections between housing, health, well-being and social care are primary concerns of housing studies, as are understanding the social, economic, legal, physical and other processes involved in the provision of housing and the production, consumption and exchange of dwellings.

1.3 Housing studies necessarily draws on a range of academic disciplines, including sociology, social policy, economics, politics, law, health (including public and environmental health), geography, town and country planning, surveying, construction, architecture, architectural technology, and management. The aim of a housing studies education is to provide graduates with the skills, knowledge and ethical values which enable an analysis of people and their homes in the context of (or in relation to) social need, social, cultural and economic developments and public policy frameworks. Housing studies knowledge is developed and interpreted in an environment of constant change. The boundaries of housing studies are, therefore, broad and flexible. As an academic subject, it draws upon a range of theoretical influences, for example recognising the benefits of psychologically informed learning, and applies these to practical situations. It offers students transferable skills appropriate to a range of employment opportunities associated with people, their homes and communities, and their related needs for care and support within these homes and communities.

1.4 Housing studies recognises that students may engage with courses for different reasons, at different points in their life course and employment trajectories. While all bring invaluable life experience to their studies, and many bring expertise from the disciplines and professions linked to housing studies, courses support students to identify their particular learning needs and strengths, and to broaden and deepen their interdisciplinary understanding of the nature of housing and home in the global context. Housing studies education has a strong vocational component which prepares graduates for a wide range of housing-sector and related careers. This Statement provides a context within which requirements can be delivered by those courses with or seeking professional accreditation, for example by the Chartered Institute of Housing: [CIH specification for chartered membership/course validation](#).

Purposes of a Housing Studies degree

1.5 This Subject Benchmark Statement recognises the academic, vocational and professional dimensions of housing studies and the ways in which these important facets interact. Housing Studies degree and postgraduate courses and modules provide students

with opportunities for research and informed scholarly learning, as well as vocational and professional development. Housing Studies courses facilitate the combination of these pathways to enable students to optimise their learning experience, employment prospects and citizenship potential.

1.6 The Statement explicitly sets out the nature and academic standards of bachelor's degrees with honours and master's degrees carrying this subject in their title or containing Housing Studies as a significant part of their course content, for the subject community of housing studies. The Statement also informs foundation degrees in Housing Studies and modules within other degree courses (for example urban studies, geography, planning, health, social work and social care) which have a substantial housing or homelessness content. The guidance establishes generic academic standards for housing studies and provides a point of reference for course development. The Statement will also be valuable for external examiners, and for internal and external academic reviewers in verifying and comparing academic standards.

1.7 The Statement contains information about housing studies for professional bodies and other awarding agencies who have an interest in accrediting and reviewing Housing Studies courses. The Housing Studies Statement particularly recognises the important role of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) as a leading professional body which influences the learning outcomes of professionally accredited housing courses. Academics from the housing studies subject community throughout the UK have worked collaboratively in the production and subsequent review and revision of this Statement, in partnership with CIH representing housing sector employers. The content of the Statement is informed by requirements for professional accreditation but has evolved quite distinctly from the professional specification in order to capture the rich diversity of housing studies, as informed by a thriving international research and scholarship community, as well as professional practice and citizens' lived experiences.

Characteristics of a Housing Studies degree

1.8 Housing Studies degrees may be delivered at bachelor or master's levels, and progression to doctoral studies may be articulated by some higher education providers. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses are interdisciplinary in nature but for practical purposes are likely to be located alongside related subjects (such as sociology, social policy, economics, politics, law, health (including public and environmental health), geography, town and country planning, surveying, construction, architecture, architectural technology, and management) depending on the academic structures of individual higher education providers. Modules may be specific to Housing Studies courses or shared with related subjects as part of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary course provision. Courses may be completed through full or part-time study and may be delivered on campus, at a distance or by blended learning. Flexibility to meet the diverse needs of Housing Studies students is encouraged.

1.9 The Statement provides a framework for developing and delivering Housing Studies bachelor's and master's/postgraduate diploma degree courses (including any linked courses such as foundation degrees and degree top-ups). It does not differentiate between modes of study, nor does it specify how learning outcomes are achieved; rather, it contains both indicative and suggestive guidance. A housing studies curriculum is designed to reflect the spirit of this Statement. While learning, teaching and assessment strategies are determined by individual degree-awarding bodies, this Statement also provides advice specific to the subject area. The Statement recognises that courses across the UK may adopt a variety of approaches and structures to meet national qualification and credit frameworks, drawing on the benchmark standards section of this Statement.

1.10 As noted above, elements of Housing Studies courses reflect global, national and devolved governance structures and these will be reflected in courses across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. While the CIH is a UK/international institution, courses will need to take appropriate account of differences in governance, law and policy across the UK and in the different housing bodies operating in the devolved nations.

1.11 This Statement includes important new sections on equality, diversity and inclusion, education for sustainability, and employability and enterprise education. These three themes are complementary to each other and to the wider context and purpose of housing studies and their principles apply throughout this Statement and throughout Housing Studies courses.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

1.12 Housing Studies courses acknowledge and promote the spirit and the letter of the 2010 Equality Act with respect to all protected characteristics and mutual respect across groups with diverse life experiences.

1.13 Housing studies is a subject of social justice. Therefore, its teaching and learning practice will have at its heart an inclusive curriculum that recognises the plurality of contemporary learners' experiences and characteristics, for example, recognising that learners may have experienced housing precarity themselves. Our curriculum uniquely engages with a multitude of policy-making networks, collaborative and intersectional spaces, within which students are encouraged to challenge decision making across both policy and practice.

1.14 We focus on the co-production of knowledge within collaborative learning spaces, recognising the potential link between content studied and lived experience of students. As such, we aim to facilitate psychologically informed learning environments, which facilitate mutual respect and nurture belonging. This ensures that the delivery of teaching reflects the plurality of students' learning requirements, with a focus on a diverse and mixed set of learning mechanisms to enable interactivity to welcome all learning approaches.

1.15 Our Housing Studies graduates of the future will develop the self-reflection and confidence to engage strategically, collaboratively and critically with varied stakeholders across policy, practice and different academic disciplines. Students will have been supported to develop their own confidence in challenging decision making by all stakeholders, bringing housing-specific expertise to these interactions.

1.16 Inclusive housing studies knowledge embraces an understanding of ideas, processes and concepts which inform the following themes:

- a right to housing
- housing disadvantage and social justice
- multiple housing needs
- differential access to - and experience of - housing for different groups
- the role of housing in amplifying or mediating social harm
- the intersectional nature of housing inequalities and experiences, for example including, 'race', ethnicity, gender, gender identity, disability, age, religious beliefs, and practices
- acknowledgment of class-based discrimination and tenure-based stigma
- awareness of challenges facing the most vulnerable groups, including displaced migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and groups with no recourse to public funds.

1.17 Consideration of knowledge through an inclusivity lens can be informed by questions such as:

- how are rights to housing understood, interpreted and applied?
- how do rights to housing correspond to other rights such as citizenship rights?
- to what extent - and in what ways - can the presence of protected characteristics (and social inequality) lead to unequal experiences of housing, or unequal treatment by housing 'services'?
- by what processes does housing disadvantage (including homelessness, overcrowding, unhealthy, inaccessible, insecure or otherwise unsafe housing) occur?
- to what extent are housing inequalities systemic?
- what steps can be taken to ensure equality of access to housing?
- to what extent do housing inequalities cause other inequities?
- how can the design, governance and management of housing be more inclusive?
- what steps can be taken to gather and respond to the voices of excluded groups?
- to what extent do policies and practices work to discriminate against certain groups?
- what strategies can be used to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are considered in the planning, location, design/build, governance, allocation and management of housing?
- to what extent do policy, practice and theoretical ideas (represented in policy documents, good practice, textbooks and journal articles) reinforce power and privilege with respect to protected characteristics (and social inequality). What alternative voices and perspectives exist?

1.18 Inclusive learning experiences for Housing Studies students would include:

- an opportunity to learn about what housing disadvantage (including homelessness, overcrowding, unhealthy, inaccessible, insecure or otherwise unsafe housing) feels like and the consequences of this
- an opportunity to appreciate the role of housing in promoting and protecting well-being, safety and neighbourliness
- having respect for a wide range of views, beliefs and opinions in relation to housing while being sensitive to exclusionary practices and microaggressions
- learning activities which elicit experiences and value the opinions of all learners
- sensitivity to the diverse housing experiences of all learners - the words, scenarios and examples which learners and educators use to describe housing disadvantage and the people experiencing housing disadvantage carries significant weight.

1.19 Inclusive behaviours for Housing Studies students and graduates can be identified as:

- valuing diversity
- treating people equally and with impartiality
- confidently challenging unacceptable and discriminatory behaviour
- communicating clearly and through a range of communication channels with a diverse customer base
- continuously reflecting on assumptions and behaviours, and challenging unconscious bias (including self-challenging)
- tackling inequality and disadvantage through impacting policy and practice
- working in an interdisciplinary way, across boundaries
- keeping an open mind and not making assumptions

- being aware that services may be 'hard to access', rather than customers being 'hard to reach'.

Sustainability

1.20 In adopting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), housing studies embraces the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sustainable Development is an aspirational ongoing process of addressing social, environmental and economic concerns to create a better world. Education for Sustainable Development is the process of creating curriculum structures and subject-relevant content to support and enact sustainable development. The housing studies community values the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2019) statement, as cited in the [Education for Sustainable Development Guidance](#) (Advance HE and QAA, 2021, p8):

'ESD empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity. It is about lifelong learning and is an integral part of quality education. ESD is holistic and transformational education which addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment. It achieves its purpose by transforming society.'

1.21 Education for Sustainable Development not only concerns environmental issues, but also focuses on the connections between economic, social and environmental factors. It is an educational change agenda grounded in transformative learning and critical pedagogy. ESD can be understood as a lens that permits us to look critically at how the world is and to envision how it might be and equips us to deliver that vision. Housing studies seeks to embed competencies that link to sustainable development, to create and pursue visions of a better world. The ESD agenda matches closely to the wider context and purposes of housing studies and also reflects the subject's ambitions for equality, diversity and inclusion, and for employability and entrepreneurship.

Developing sustainable development knowledge in housing studies

Figure 1: The UN Sustainable Development Goals



1.22 The United Nations Member States in September 2015 set out 17 ambitious goals with specific targets to be met by 2030. In line with these SDGs, Housing Studies courses should be focused towards addressing social, economic and environmental concerns to create a better world.

1.23 The importance of quality, accessible housing is emphasised across several of the SDGs. For example, UN SDG 11 represents a specific goal for sustainable cities and

communities which integrates housing into the sustainable development debate. Many housing studies issues are directly relevant to SDG 11, which seeks to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Within this, target 11.1 is to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing (United Nations, 2015). The housing sector can also contribute to meeting the other 16 SDGs and their associated targets by 2030. For example, affordable housing is key for development and social equality (SDG1 No Poverty). SDG3 Good Health and Well-Being acknowledges how the quality of housing directly affects individual health and well-being, and the role of housing in fostering healthier lifestyles and places/communities. SDG5 Gender Equality recognises that gender-based inequalities can limit women's access to secure and durable housing, and asset ownership. The sustainability of future housing in terms of energy independence and effective use of energy is outlined in SDG7 Affordable and Clean Energy, including the retrofitting of existing housing stock. The expectation is that Housing Studies courses have sufficient sustainability content to ensure that students are aware and confident in discussing sustainability issues in the context of housing.

Developing sustainable development competencies

1.24 Education for Sustainable Development develops the competencies required to act on, question or interpret sustainability knowledge for housing studies. The eight UNESCO key competencies for sustainability (Figure 2) are aimed at all learners of all ages worldwide and can be adopted and adapted within higher education through alignment with appropriate learning outcomes.

Figure 2: Key competencies for sustainability in housing studies education
(Adapted from UNESCO's key competencies for sustainability)

| | Competency | A Housing Studies student who displays this competency can: | |
|---|--------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Housing Studies knowledge and knowledge of SDGs | Systems thinking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise and understand relationships analyse complex systems consider how housing systems are embedded within different domains and scales deal with uncertainty | Ways of thinking |
| | Anticipatory (future thinking) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand and evaluate multiple outcomes create their own visions for the future of housing apply the precautionary principle assess the consequences of actions in housing policy and practice deal with risks and changes | |
| | Critical thinking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> question norms, practices and opinions reflect on one's own values, perceptions and actions take a position in the sustainable development discourse in relation to housing studies | |
| | Strategic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and implement innovative actions that further sustainable development and housing at the local level and further afield | Ways of practicing |
| | Collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> learn from others (including peers and others inside and outside of their institution) | |

| | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--|---------------|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand and respect the needs, perspectives and actions of others • deal with conflicts in a group • facilitate collaborative and participatory problem solving | |
| | Integrated problem-solving | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply different problem-solving frameworks to complex sustainable development and housing studies problems • develop viable, inclusive and equitable solutions to housing and sustainability challenges • utilise approaches competencies to solve problems | |
| | Self-awareness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect on their own values, perceptions and actions • reflect on their own role in the local community and global society as a future housing professional • continually evaluate and further motivate their actions • deal with their feelings and desires | Ways of being |
| | Normative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions • negotiate sustainable development values, principles, goals and targets, in a housing studies context where conflicts of interest and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions often exist | |

1.25 Course and module-level learning outcomes for ESD should interconnect subject-specific knowledge and skills in relation to housing studies, sustainability competencies and the 17 UN SDGs. The expectation is that courses progressively develop the UNESCO competencies and that assessment demonstrates achievement of these competencies. QAA [provides guidance](#) on how this can be achieved in practice.

Developing learning environments to promote sustainable development

1.26 ESD requires a learning environment in which:

- interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary learning approaches are facilitated
- learning is inclusive and accessible for all
- policies support synoptic assessment
- extra and co-curricular opportunities are provided and recognised
- learning spaces, including the campus and outdoor environments, are fully utilised to provide alternative locations to develop and express the competencies of ESD.

1.27 Teaching, learning and assessment should take advantage of the learning opportunities afforded by the campus and the local community, as well as online environments. The use of the campus and community as a 'living laboratory', can offer valuable and authentic learning experiences in housing studies. The expectation is that course provision in housing studies uses a variety of learning environments and opportunities to develop sustainability understanding and competencies.

1.28 To promote sustainable development within housing studies, the agenda should be meaningfully embedded in the design of the curriculum at course and module levels. This in turn requires learning environments fit for purpose to support Housing Studies students to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to develop values and take actions to transition society towards sustainable futures and to sustain communities and link housing to health and education.

1.29 The incorporation of ESD should be manifested in module content, learning and teaching approaches, structure and delivery, and assessment. Inclusive and interdisciplinary learning approaches are encouraged in which extra and co-curricular opportunities are provided and recognised. Case studies, project-based research and educational visits to communities where symptoms of unsustainability manifest or similar approaches can add value to learning and assessment.

1.30 ESD content should focus on the integrity of physical environments, social justice and economic development. A range of economic, environmental and social changes are taking place in housing studies, and literature and resources increasingly include diverse voices and perspectives from under-represented communities. Ideas and perspectives from other disciplines can promote a meaningful multidisciplinary experience to support developing sustainability competencies and meeting the aims of the 17 UN SDGs. Physical and virtual learning spaces within campuses and outdoor environments provide locations to develop and express ESD competencies and digital platforms can also be integral to the interactive learning environment. The housing studies subject area should be able to develop and strengthen learning environments to promote sustainable development.

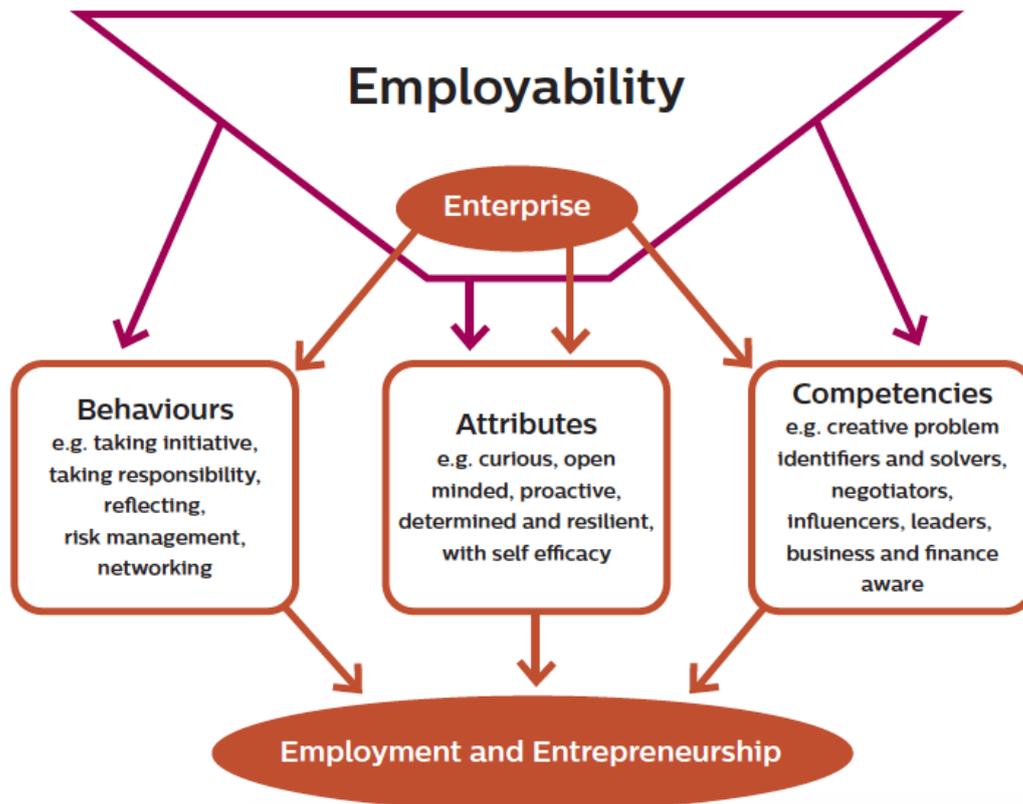
Employability and enterprise education

1.31 Housing studies is a vocational subject which offers students transferable skills appropriate to a range of employment opportunities. It develops key employability attributes which embrace entrepreneurship in its widest sense, including innovation, creativity, enterprise and social entrepreneurship. These skills and attributes can be employed by graduates across the housing sector and at different points of their career trajectories.

1.32 Employability and entrepreneurship education in housing studies supports behaviours, attributes and competencies that are likely to have a significant impact on the individual student in terms of successful careers in housing-related fields. These careers may be in the public, private or third sectors, within hybrid organisations or in self-employed work such as consultancy or freelance work. In addition, employability and entrepreneurship education within housing studies prepares students for changing environments and enables them to make sound professional judgements in situations of uncertainty and ambiguity. Enhanced impact is provided through work placements and work-related activities that build links between the academic learning environment and external organisations. Learning reflects the interdisciplinary nature of housing education, and the inter-professional nature of housing practice.

1.33 Beyond the sphere of employment, entrepreneurship education in housing studies provides competencies that help students lead a rewarding, self-determined professional life in housing-related fields. Students engage with issues of ethics, diversity and sustainability, meaning that graduates are well placed to add social, cultural and economic capital to local communities and to wider society throughout their careers.

Figure 3: Relationship of entrepreneurship, enterprise and employability
(QAA 2018, [Enterprise and entrepreneurship education](#), p10)



1.34 Housing Studies graduates will be equipped with transferable skills that can be applied in the current housing employment context, but also in emerging jobs applying new technologies as they are developed and invented. They will have well-developed self-management skills and be able to motivate themselves and others. They will be able to identify housing-related problems, take responsibility for formulating ideas and implement decisions to address those problems. They will be equipped to manage risk and identify the boundaries of their own professional capability and judgement.

1.35 Graduates will have a well-developed knowledge of different aspects of housing, including policy, development, finance, management, research, sustainability, and equality and diversity issues. They will critically reflect on their own knowledge and skills, particularly in fast-evolving aspects of housing delivery such as digital technology. As reflective practitioners, they will be responsible for their own learning, and be able to organise their own professional development. They will have knowledge of areas closely aligned to housing, such as health, social services and the criminal justice system, and will be able to identify and transfer good practice to their own field of work. Housing Studies graduates understand the individual, social and environmental impact of their own work, and their own civic and social responsibilities. They will in the course of their employment be sensitive to cultures, customs and beliefs, and to ethical and environmental issues. They will be aware of the impact of their work on themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. Housing Studies graduates working in a range of employment positions will be mindful of professional ethics and standards, particularly in relation to issues of equality and diversity in their relationship with colleagues and customers or service users. They will be resilient in their professional housing work, and resourceful in dealing with a rapidly changing housing environment. They will take a creative, questioning approach to housing issues, and be able to pivot and adapt successfully to changing situations.

2 Distinctive features of a Housing Studies degree

Design

2.1 Housing studies as an academic discipline is interdisciplinary, the starting point of which is a household's fundamental need for a home within which they can live well and flourish. It also focuses on functional knowledge; knowledge that can be applied in practice. These contexts are core to the design of courses within this subject. Students of Housing Studies explore a broad range of topics related to housing and housing practice, with a clear focus on skills development as well as content knowledge. The design of courses therefore includes both clear areas related to learning disciplinary knowledge and the development of skills that are pertinent to becoming a housing professional and otherwise contributing to the housing sector.

2.2 As courses are often accredited by the CIH, the skills and professional elements follow CIH regulations and guidance. Students learn about the application of the [CIH Professional Standards Framework](#), and the values and behaviours outlined in this standard are woven into the course design. Key to these behaviours and values are being inclusive and ethical, and having integrity. There is therefore a three-fold design to housing studies course development, integrating learning about behaviours and values, development of skills, and attainment of knowledge.

2.3 Key to this three-fold approach to curriculum is engagement with external stakeholders and being responsive to changes in the policy and practice landscape. A focus on engaging with speakers and events beyond the higher education provider as part of the students' learning journey can facilitate understanding the application of knowledge within a real-life context as well as building skills around relationship building and understanding career development.

2.4 Housing studies necessarily draws on a range of academic disciplines, including sociology, social policy, economics, politics, law, geography, health (including public and environmental health), town and country planning, surveying, construction, architecture, architectural technology, and management. As emphasised in section 1 of this Statement, the aim of a housing studies education is to provide graduates with the skills, knowledge and ethical values that enable an analysis of people and their homes in the context of (or in relation to) social need, social, cultural and economic change and public policy frameworks.

Accessibility

2.5 Housing studies learning environments and materials should be designed to be accessible for students with a wide range of learning and/or mobility needs and for students with lived experiences of structural inequalities which may have limited their prior learning opportunities as a result of their socioeconomic background or protected characteristics. Students with mobility needs, learning needs and lived experience of disadvantage should all be able to participate fully in Housing Studies courses. Where appropriate, students should benefit from particular adjustments and support services in line with national frameworks and institutional service provision. For example, adjustments may be made for those with sensory impairments or who live with dyslexia, dyspraxia or who are on the autism spectrum. In relation to physical accessibility, site visits may often be used as part of modules in order to facilitate learning. These should be arranged so that they are accessible to all students.

2.6 Accessibility of content in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion is also a key focus of Housing Studies courses. All students who study housing studies have lived experience of engaging with housing by the very nature of currently living somewhere and

having lived somewhere previously. Some students will have experienced housing-related issues that are included in the curriculum. This can be recognised within course design so that barriers to engaging with this content are not constructed, and so that students can recognise and share their experiences as part of the learning environment if they so wish. Recruitment to Housing Studies courses should be sufficiently flexible to allow for the flourishing of learners with limited prior academic experiences, but who are able to draw upon their experiences of working in or with the housing sector. This flexibility might include 'whole person' approaches to recruitment, liaison with feeder providers of Housing Studies courses and targeted learning support for non-traditional applicants in induction programmes to help with academic writing and critical thinking.

Progression

2.7 Over the course of a degree with honours (FHEQ Level 6; FQHEIS Level 10) a Housing Studies student will progress from one level of study to the next, in line with the regulations and processes for each institution. However, it is expected that each level would see the attainment of certain knowledge, expertise and experience which builds towards the final achievement of meeting all of the threshold-level subject-specific and generic skills listed in this Statement. Joint honours undergraduates will achieve elements of the specific and generic skills for the subject but will add others according to the subjects covered in a joint course.

2.8 In a standard three-year undergraduate honours degree course, students may exit earlier and be eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education, a Diploma of Higher Education, or an honours degree depending upon the levels of study completed to a satisfactory standard. Scottish bachelor's degrees with honours are typically designed to include four years of study, which relates to the structure of Scottish primary and secondary education. Upon graduation from an undergraduate degree, it would be expected that a student who had achieved a second-class degree or higher would be capable of, and equipped for, undertaking postgraduate study.

2.9 This Statement also recognises the distinctive nature of postgraduate taught courses in Housing Studies offered at master's level (FHEQ Level 7 and FQHEIS Level 11). For CIH-accredited programmes, completion of the Postgraduate Diploma usually meets criteria for Chartered Membership of the Institute. Students exiting earlier may be eligible for a Postgraduate Certificate of Education and courses can also offer continuation to completion of MSc. Learning objectives for Certificate/Diploma and master's modules are all achieved at Level 7/11 through greater depth of critical engagement with housing studies concepts and learning materials, in comparison to undergraduate courses and modules. Postgraduate courses may recruit learners from a wide range of undergraduate courses as well as those with equivalent qualifications and/or experience which equip them for professional study.

2.10 Widening access, foundation courses and housing apprenticeships play a core part in encouraging students to engage with housing studies. The CIH also provides a progression route, with students being able to join at Levels 4, 5 or 6, having completed courses at Levels 3, 4 and 5. In Scotland, progression is through [CIH courses](#) at Levels 2-5 (SCQF 5-8 equivalent). Full information on comparing qualification frameworks is available in the [QAA guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland](#).

2.11 Housing Studies courses incorporate mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and the progression route for Housing Studies postgraduate study is diverse. Students join from undergraduate and a wide range of allied/cognate undergraduate courses (such as those listed in paragraph 2.4) or as part of their professional development within their careers, including completion of CIH courses. Clear and supportively operated RPL

regulations are significant for access to undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. At postgraduate level, RPL and course regulations should not disadvantage those admitted with alternative/equivalent experience to formal higher education or whose experience is dated. Support should be available for all students, including those with diverse prior learning experience. Study skills packages and similar mechanisms can aid transition into higher-level learning, where appropriate. Study skills support may also cover how to improve assessments, guidance on regulations and options if students encounter difficulties with their studies.

2.12 Doctoral-level study related to housing studies is available across a range of disciplines, ensuring a diverse community of students studying housing-related issues. There is a strong early career research community through external networks such as the [Housing Studies Association](#) and the [Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence](#) that enables Housing Studies students to identify as early career researchers.

Flexibility

2.13 As highlighted in the Progression section above, the routes into and through Housing Studies courses are diverse. There is flexibility for students to complete both part-time and full-time study at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and strong networks with employers who see the courses as part of their employees' career development. Employability and career development of graduates is a significant component of Housing Studies courses as discussed in the Employability and enterprise education section above.

2.14 The flexibility of ways in which courses can be studied includes blended and digital learning. Related to the design of courses, delivery of courses also reflects practices within the housing sector in terms of digital engagement. As virtual working grows within the housing sector, the delivery of Housing Studies courses in a virtual format enables students to develop these skills for the workplace.

Partnership

2.15 In line with the professional orientation of the housing studies curriculum (Employability and enterprise education section), partnerships with housing organisations for work experience are a core part of the undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Chartered Membership of CIH accreditation requires prescribed work experience in a housing-related role, and partnerships exist between higher education institutions and employers to facilitate this. These partnerships often enable shared learning, for example through guest speakers, as well as engagement around students' professional development skills. Opportunities also exist for students to engage with employers while completing dissertations, research methods or reflective practice modules. It is anticipated that higher education providers facilitate employer groups which meet regularly to inform and support this partnership working. Partnership groups can include a wide range of housing sector organisations and stakeholders, besides sponsors of individual students. These partners are invited to comment on new curriculum design as well as new approaches to skills development.

Monitoring and review

2.16 A major feature of academic quality assurance and enhancement at a higher education institution is having in place monitoring and regular review processes for the courses it delivers. Degree-awarding bodies routinely collect and analyse information and undertake periodic course review according to their own needs. They will draw on a range of external reference points, including this Statement, to ensure that their provision aligns with sector norms. Monitoring and evaluation is a periodic assessment of a course, conducted internally or by external independent evaluators. Evaluation uses information from current

and historic monitoring to develop an understanding of student achievement and inform future course planning.

2.17 Externality is an essential component of the quality assurance system in the UK. Higher education providers will use external reviewers as part of periodic review to gain an external perspective on any proposed changes and ensure threshold standards are achieved and content is appropriate for the subject.

2.18 External examination currently in use across the UK higher education sector also helps to ensure consistency in the way academic standards are secured by degree-awarding bodies. Typically, external examiners will be asked to comment on the types, principles and purposes of assessments being offered to students. They will consider the types of modules on offer to students, the outcomes of a cohort and how these compare to similar provision offered within the UK. External examiners produce a report each year and make recommendations for changes to modules and assessments (where appropriate). Subject Benchmark Statements, such as this one, can play an important role in supporting external examiners in advising on whether threshold standards are being met in a specific subject area. Courses with professional and vocational outcomes may also require evaluation and accreditation from professional and regulatory bodies. These may be undertaken by site visits and via digital platforms.

2.19 Housing Studies courses may be subject to internal institutional monitoring and review processes, external academic review, and external validation/re-validation by the CIH (if they are to be CIH accredited). Where accreditation is sought, this influences core aspects of content and skills that need to be delivered and determines any required engagement with CIH regarding changes to course content and delivery.

3 Content, structure and delivery

Content

3.1 Housing studies education draws upon the intellectual traditions of social science to underpin its interdisciplinary nature. Students gain an understanding of the nature and appropriate use of a range of conceptual and theoretical approaches, as well as diverse research strategies for the continuing development of the field. The list that follows represents the core knowledge and understanding of a typical Housing Studies course:

- the meanings of home and homelessness, the centrality of home to human well-being, understanding of the nature of housing and the construction of housing problems
- applying perspectives of equality, diversity and inclusion to understanding housing in relation to international, global, historical and contemporary contexts, including decolonisation of the curriculum
- understanding and applying sustainable development perspectives across housing studies in the context of climate change and the climate crisis
- awareness of interdisciplinary nature of sustainable housing as core to economic and social development.
- relationships between people and place in the residential context
- the history of housing policy and practice
- the role for policy and intervention in housing and understanding of policy analysis
- understanding of housing tenure and mechanisms of access to housing across tenures
- housing law and its implications for lived experience and professional practice, including housing rights of individuals and the rights of communities
- governance and regulation of housing, including critical engagement with outcomes and implications for people and communities; risk and resilience in governance and intervention
- the key principles of leadership and management within housing, and how these can be applied within housing organisations
- the politics of housing and how this influences housing, networked and multilevel governance, stakeholder involvement and lived experience
- economic and financial perspectives on housing, including interpretation of housing markets and interventions
- debates on housing inequality, poverty and disadvantage in access to housing, including in relation to critical perspectives on housing markets and housing interventions
- strategic planning for housing in the context of critical understanding of housing markets, governance and risk in housing interventions
- the importance of UK devolved and reserved governance matters for housing and policy making and debates on effectiveness of the policy process
- the importance of place and communities, including housing development, area regeneration and related social processes such as gentrification, resilience and sustainability
- the recognition of class-based discrimination in housing and tenure-related stigma

- place management and property management, to ensure safe and liveable communities for residents
- principles of effective and equitable housing practice and service delivery, including for example, lettings, repairs and maintenance services, assistance animals and companion pets
- the experience of homelessness, including complex needs/life experiences and practices in alleviating and preventing homelessness
- housing as a social determinant of health and well-being; housing as public health; environmental health and safety expertise for housing practice; health and placemaking in the context of public health emergencies
- sustainable approaches to housing construction and refurbishment/retrofitting
- contemporary housing practice in the social, market and third sectors, including the importance of digital developments and assistive technology; reflective practice and the sociology of housing management
- ethical perspectives on housing and reflective practice; housing as a profession and housing professionalism; collaborative practice and interprofessional working; risk and confidence in commissioning housing and support services
- the research process for housing, including quantitative and qualitative approaches, sources of data, research methods and approaches to analysis and reporting.

Teaching, learning and assessment

3.2 The desired outcomes of a bachelor's or master's level degree in Housing Studies are to produce independent learners who have a range of knowledge, resources and skills appropriate to their level of study, and who have the capacity for independent thought, critical awareness and appreciation of diversity in the analysis of housing issues as outlined in Content in section 3. Specific teaching, learning and assessment aims demonstrate a commitment to knowledge acquisition, conceptual understanding, reflection on performance, and the encouragement of lifelong learning.

3.3 A typical Housing Studies course has a teaching, learning and assessment strategy which makes the appropriateness of the methods used explicit and demonstrable in relation to the anticipated learning outcomes and skills being developed. Learning approaches are linked to the mode of delivery and the student profile. The strategy is expected to include a variety of approaches to teaching, learning and assessment which reflect and accommodate a diversity of learning styles and student needs. Where courses are professionally accredited, the learning and assessment strategy will include opportunities for work-based and/or work-related learning, both for students who are new to housing and also for those with some prior work experience in housing.

3.4 It is anticipated that the strategy emphasises a student-centred approach and incorporates mechanisms for review across teaching, learning and assessment approaches. Learning, teaching and assessment are expected to incorporate mechanisms to recognise students' prior knowledge and experience, and to clarify opportunities for exemption from elements of the course, where appropriate. Informed by internal and external good practice guidance, where appropriate, the strategy can be developed with advice, collaboration and inputs from professional colleagues in housing practice. In addition to meeting housing studies competencies, alignment of teaching, learning and assessment activities to embed learning across equality, diversity and inclusion themes and education for sustainable development is encouraged.

Teaching and learning

3.5 Teaching and learning contexts are continually evolving, particularly in relation to digital learning technologies. Housing Studies courses are likely to benefit from the continuing development of flexible, virtual, campus-based and blended learning environments, including fully online learning where appropriate. Online and campus-based environments can equally embrace self-directed learning and work-related learning (which draws on the experiences of those already working in housing and supports work-based learning for students who are new to housing). Embedding resilience in course learning and teaching approaches is likely to be a high priority in order to be able to adapt to future external events such as public health emergencies, structural change in the higher education and housing sectors, and the continuing shift to digital technology.

3.6 Housing Studies courses should be underpinned by clear information and guidance on expectations around requirements for the use of digital technology (and access to training if needed) as well as support to make best use of library facilities and related resources offered by the higher education provider. Recognition of, and support for, diverse prior experience of academic and digital learning underpins learning and teaching on Housing Studies courses. Institutions providing virtual and blended learning approaches should be aware of the 'digital divide' and make appropriate arrangements to support students engaged in these forms of course delivery. Where possible and appropriate, applicants may be directed to preparatory resources and support for digital learning in advance of enrolment.

3.7 Within both on-campus and online learning environments, it is expected that a range of teaching approaches are used to accommodate different learning styles and preferences, for example:

- lectures, which may be in real time or recorded
- seminars, tutorials or other small-group formats to facilitate student participation and dialogue with tutors and peers
- one-to-one working with supervisors
- directed self-study, reading and assessment preparation
- fieldtrips, site visits and virtual/online visits and practice-related sessions (with reasonable adjustments for disabled students, if required)
- problem-based learning, peer working and teamwork skills
- opportunities for negotiated learning and work-based/work-related learning which optimise employability and enterprise themes that are important for professional accreditation.

3.8 Learning materials are expected to be accessible and to provide students with full and accurate documentation relating to their course of study. For each module, learning outcomes will be clearly specified and achievable, supported by an indication of relevant reading and other learning resources.

3.9 It is desirable that there is an opportunity for extended individual research or practice project work, which may be presented in the form of a research dissertation or practice report.

3.10 For course and module-level learning outcomes, housing-specific knowledge and skills may be integrated with sustainability competencies and the 17 UN SDGs (paragraph 1.20).

3.11 Teaching practices should provide opportunities to uncover alternative viewpoints, reflect on experiences, and address real-world challenges. Housing Studies courses should

take advantage of the learning opportunities afforded by diverse environments, including campuses, local communities and online environments. The campus, community and housing sector environments can be used as a living laboratory where students can learn about, for example, housing innovations, community development, health and well-being, local governance, business and economic development strategies, as well as leadership. Along with online and digital resources, this range of environments can offer authentic and transformational learning experiences. Digital technology is increasingly valuable as an inclusive framework for recording and replicating the living laboratory experience.

3.12 Course design should consider how courses in Housing Studies can extend recommended literature and resources to include a greater diversity of voices, particularly tenant voices and perspectives from under-represented communities. Careful consideration should be given to interpretation and reinterpretation of historical approaches to housing studies, and to the decolonisation of the curriculum. Learning experiences should transform the ways of thinking and practising about housing studies and enable students to become informed advocates of sustainable development. Courses should promote meaningful multi, inter and trans-disciplinary experiences that challenge students beyond the traditional conventions of housing studies and UK-centred housing practice through opportunities to develop collaborative and holistic approaches to developing sustainability competencies and meeting the aims of the 17 UN SDGs.

3.13 Housing Studies courses are increasingly likely to be delivered through blended learning. Digital teaching and learning can be used creatively, and deployed equitably, to provide a sustainable, inclusive and immersive student experience. Blended learning can use real-world problems and scenarios to encourage students to think creatively about a range of housing practices. Group-based work (including online group work) can help to develop collaborative competencies through meaningful discussions with peers and other stakeholders. Opportunities for critical reflection on personal perspectives and that of others should be promoted.

3.14 Housing studies education requires a learning environment in which:

- interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary learning approaches are facilitated
- learning is inclusive and accessible for all
- education for sustainable development underpins learning
- extra and co-curricular opportunities are provided and recognised
- learning spaces (including campus, outdoor and virtual environments) are fully utilised to provide alternative locations to develop and express the competencies of ESD
- policies support synoptic assessment, enabling students to make critical connections across modules and integrate their knowledge as they progress and develop.

Assessment

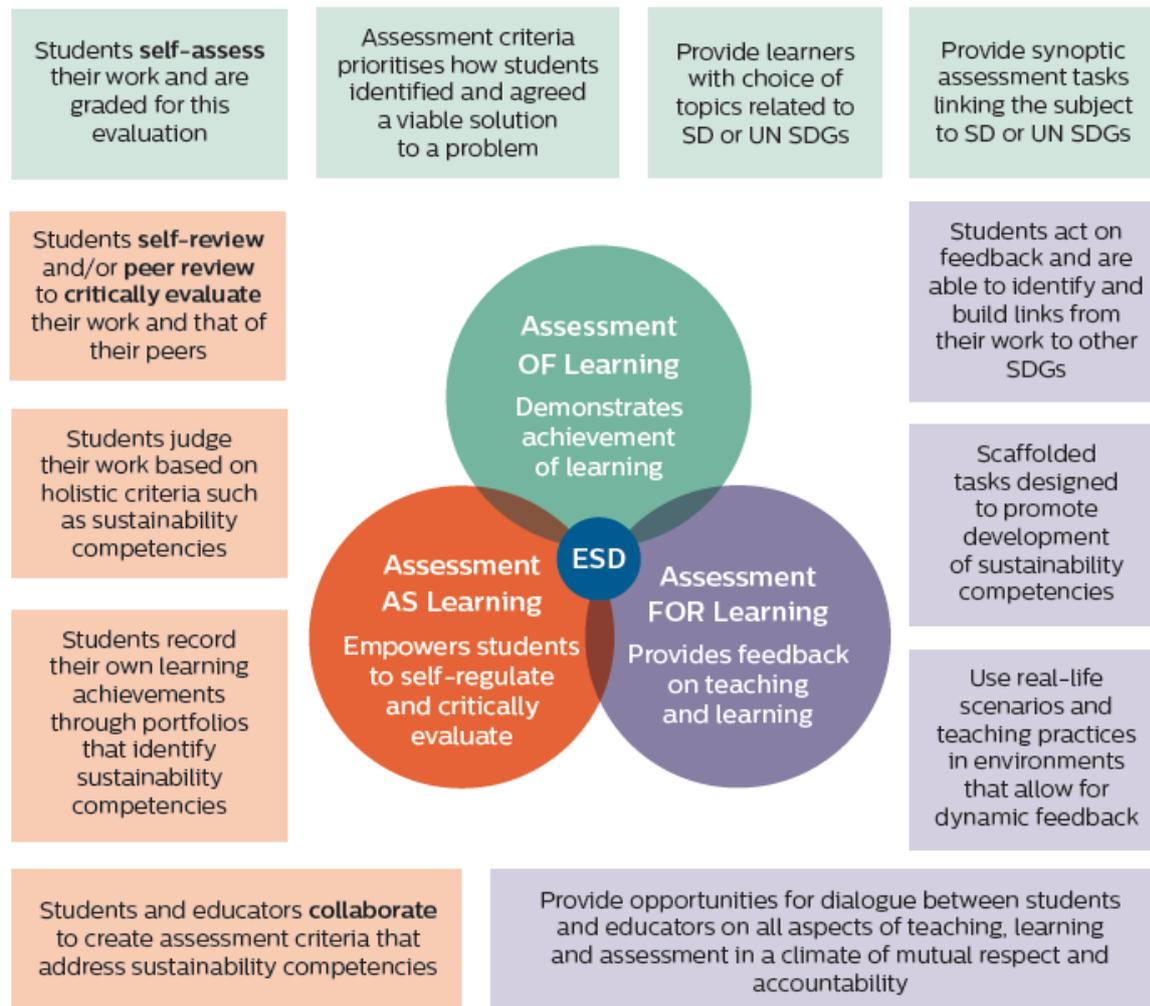
3.15 Housing studies educators are encouraged to think creatively about a wide range of teaching, learning and assessment practices. An assessment and feedback strategy supports learning and enables students to demonstrate their level of attainment and identify their progress. For each method of assessment, the aims, content requirements and marking criteria should be clearly defined and aligned, to reflect the diversity of knowledge and skills developed within the curriculum, the approaches to teaching and learning used, and the learning outcomes of the degree course.

3.16 Students should have the opportunity to demonstrate their full range of abilities, through a mix of assessment methods that are equally accessible to students from varying

educational backgrounds and in different learning situations, as discussed in the section on equality, diversity and inclusion. It is expected that the means of assessment are documented and distributed to students, and published criteria are made available for all summative methods of assessment.

3.17 The assessment methods adopted for housing studies aim to measure achievement, both formatively and summatively, over the whole of the degree course, embracing assessment 'of' learning, 'for' learning' and 'as' learning as adopted for sustainable development education (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Assessment for, as and of learning



Source: Advance HE and QAA (2021) *Education for Sustainable Development Guidance*, p35, Figure 3.

3.18 The assessment strategy may incorporate opportunities for self-assessment, peer assessment and synoptic assessment across modules. Assessment approaches reflect progression within the course and allow for assessment of both skills and knowledge. Specific assessment tasks ensure that students are able to demonstrate achievement of at least the threshold standard. Education for sustainable development can be assessed in the formal housing studies curriculum, as well as extracurricular and co-curricular activities and in work-based learning. Authentic assessment instruments engage students and provide a way for them to showcase their learning and share it with interested stakeholders within the field of housing studies and beyond.

3.19 Assessment types vary by course, but Housing Studies students are likely to encounter the following:

- essays, written reports, policy briefs
- examinations, including online tests and exams
- oral presentations
- individual or group projects with outputs in oral or written forms
- reflective learning journals
- independent research and practice projects resulting in an extended research dissertation or practice report
- assessments focused on digital literacy (for example blogs, wikis or other tools)
- work-based and work-linked assessments which include building/offering work experience for those new to housing; and drawing on work experience for those already working in housing.

3.20 It is anticipated that a diverse range of assessment methods is employed to ensure demonstration of the suite of housing studies knowledge, skills and benchmark standards (with reasonable adjustments for disabled students, if required).

4 Benchmark standards

Introduction

4.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement sets out the minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Housing Studies. Demonstrating these standards over time will show that a student has achieved the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of graduates in Housing Studies. The standards apply in full to those students whose degree course contains a substantial component of housing studies as outlined in this Statement. They also inform courses where Housing Studies modules form a component of the curriculum.

4.2 The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 degrees](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours: 1st, 2:1, 2:2 and 3rd.

Threshold level (3rd class)

4.3 Bachelor's degrees in Housing Studies are awarded to students who meet the following threshold standard, demonstrating systematic understanding of:

- the critical role of housing as a key social determinant of the well-being of residents and communities
- the reasons for state intervention in the housing market, and the changing nature of the production, consumption and experience of housing
- the evolution and identification of housing problems, and developments in the policy and legal framework to address these problems
- how housing policy is formulated and implemented at local and national levels, and how housing policy interacts with wider public policy agendas
- different forms of housing organisations, the governance of these organisations and the challenges of governance
- different models of housing need, and development of systems which are responsive to the needs of diverse individuals and groups
- how housing organisations and professionals can work to address wider social inequalities at structural, institutional and individual levels
- comparative approaches to housing systems and policies across the UK and more widely, identifying and implementing learning and good practice as appropriate
- the benefits of involving residents in decision making, and how to engage seldom-heard individuals and groups who face barriers to participation
- the key principles of housing economics and finance
- the key principles of the business planning cycle, service management and service delivery
- the identification and application of appropriate research methods and methodologies in a housing context
- the identification of evidence-based solutions to housing issues
- the presentation of information, data and concepts to a range of audiences
- the key principles of leadership and management within housing, and how these can be applied within housing organisations
- different aspects of environmental sustainability including the impact of the climate crisis in the design, development, maintenance and management of housing

- the key principles of the renewal, refurbishment and regeneration of housing; the engagement of residents in these processes; and the achievement of equitable outcomes.
- the analysis of the factors leading to tenure-related stigma
- for accredited courses, ensure requirements of CIH [specification](#) are fully met.

Typical level (2:1 or 2:2)

4.4 Criteria for achievement above threshold level at 2:1 and 2:2 will be in line with the higher education provider's common or generic marking schemes for undergraduate courses.

Excellent level (1st class)

4.5 Criteria for excellent (1st class achievement) will be in line with the higher education provider's common or generic marking schemes for undergraduate courses.

Master's level degrees in Housing Studies

4.6 Master's level degrees in Housing Studies are awarded to students who demonstrate understanding of knowledge in the housing domain, as outlined in the undergraduate threshold, much of which is at the forefront of the academic field of study and professional practice. Study at master's level requires additional critical and conceptual understanding that enables students to:

- evaluate current research and advanced scholarship
- understand how knowledge is advanced through research
- identify the boundaries of knowledge
- create new insights in the field of study.

4.7 Higher level skills are developed and enhanced through self-directed academic and professional development, with master's level students expected to achieve according to the descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 7 on the FHEQ and SCQF Level 11 on the FQHEIS.

Transferable and generic skills

4.8 Undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Housing Studies are awarded to students who are able to:

- work independently, and with others, to identify complex problems and produce a synthesis of the state of knowledge on a particular subject or topic
- take personal responsibility for learning, demonstrate conceptual understanding, reach sound judgements and effectively communicate ideas to a range of audiences
- collaborate with others in assessed and non-assessed learning activities, including with colleagues from other disciplines, reflecting the inter-professional nature of housing practice
- demonstrate awareness of, and professional responsibility for, addressing issues of equality, diversity and inclusion
- use a variety of information and communications technology packages to assemble and evaluate information, including data, from a range of sources
- identify housing problems, including environmental and sustainability challenges, and formulate alternative solutions to these problems

- reflect on and manage their own learning and personal development, and ethical and professional practice
- consciously reflect on and utilise their learning to enhance employability and entrepreneurship as appropriate to their desired career path.

5 List of references and further resources

Advance HE and QAA (2021) Education for Sustainable Development Guidance
www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/education-for-sustainable-development

Chartered Institute of Housing (2016) A guide for organisations seeking validation for learning programmes meeting the CIH specification for Chartered Membership (CIHCM), Coventry: CIH
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UNESCO (2017) Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)
www.sdg4education2030.org/education-sustainable-development-goals-learning-objectives-unesco-2017

United Nations (2015) Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Geneva: United Nations, UNESCO Digital Library
<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

6 Membership of the Advisory Groups for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Housing Studies

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Housing Studies (2022)

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Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Housing Studies (2019)

The third edition, published in 2019, was revised by QAA to align the content with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education, published in 2018. Proposed revisions were checked and verified by one of the members of the Subject Benchmark Statement review group for Housing Studies from 2014.

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Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Housing Studies (2007)

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