



QUALITY RECOGNITION **AESOP**

**Master's Programme in Spatial Planning (SING)
Department of Architecture
University of Palermo
Italy**

EVALUATION REPORT

After an in-depth examination of its academic curriculum and teaching pedagogy, the Master's in Spatial Planning (SING), delivered at the Department of Architecture, University of Palermo, Italy, has been conferred the AESOP Certificate of Quality.

The programme 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.

General information

The Master's in Spatial Planning (SING), delivered at the University of Palermo is a 2-year study programme (120 credits) offered in Italy.

Quality in Planning Education

It brings together the following aspects of quality in planning education:

Key Characteristics of the Planning Programme

- The MSc in Spatial Planning is the only study programme in planning delivered exclusively in English in Southern Italy. The major focus is on the Global South



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planning praxis, including the Mediterranean context. To specify, the curriculum is informed by a Southern planning perspective, especially when engaging with the complex realities of the Sicilian context, including its regional government and spatial planning.

- Core global challenges such as climate change, inequality, migration, and urbanisation are embedded in the programme, with planning studio teaching providing students with opportunities to consider how these issues intersect.
- Building on its distinctive Mediterranean context, the programme addresses issues such as shrinking cities, inner urban area and urban peripheries. The programme also embeds interdisciplinary modules that address contemporary themes such as energy transitions and sustainable mobility.
- The programme fosters a global perspective, including encouraging students to draw on their diverse backgrounds and requiring them to develop work on international topics in urban planning, resulting in case studies that are drawn the Global North and the Global South, with particular emphasis on urban experiences in Africa and Latin America. For some students this international exposure is further enhanced through participation in international and Italian ERASMUS programmes, further exposing them to a range of perspectives.
- Studio teaching embeds workshops that allow students to engage with a range of professionals and citizen groups. These workshops can also be attended by students not directly enrolled on the course, giving engaged students opportunities to further enhance their learning.
- A mandatory 150-hour internship with a public authority is embedded in the programme, supported by a preparatory course, and allowing students to develop core practical skills. The experiences gained through the internship can also provide an effective foundation for developing the Master thesis, reinforcing the theory-practice links developed elsewhere in the programme.





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Principles of Pedagogy

- **Learning by doing and critical reflection** is one of the educational approaches used in the study program to help students **apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts**. This method emphasizes hands-on experience, active participation, and reflective thinking to bridge the gap between theory and practice.
- **Experiential learning through thematic workshops**. The workshop is intended as a practical experimentation in urban and/or territorial contexts. The workshops aim to link theories and methods within planning tasks. Through the workshops, students are engaged with multiple and global perspectives on urban and territorial transformations, as well as issues of participation and sense of place.
- **Group learning and seminar reviews**. Students **work in pairs** and **groups** (3-4 members) in courses that offer a large spectrum of case studies to analyse. **Thematic working groups** are also used to exchange knowledge and for collaborative problem solving. The **student-led seminars** aim is to initiate mutual exchange and collective/active learning.
- **Comparative approaches** are used in the courses to draw on case studies from different geographical areas than their countries of origin. This approach is used to develop a critical analysis of challenges and solutions that can be addressed globally.

Showcase Practices

- **Horizontal integration of courses within each academic year** is facilitated through continuous dialogue between the co-ordinators of different modules and studios. This includes making intentional links between theoretical courses and practical studios. This dialogue encompasses overall goals, syllabi and case



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- studies – for example, sharing one case study across a range of courses - and ensures that students benefit from a systematic, integrated approach to learning.
- The programme embeds a **service-learning approach** where the students are involved in workshop-based courses (studios) and work closely with communities and institutions. The approach combines ‘learning by doing’ with critical reflection, allowing students to apply theory to real-world scenarios. In addition to academic learning, the service-learning approach helps to identify communities’ needs and develop professional and civic responsibility.

The AESOP Certificate of Quality and this Evaluation Report are valid for a period of six years (2025-2031).

14 October 2025

Tijana Dabovic
Chair
AESOP
Excellence in Education Board

Giancarlo Cotella
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QUALITY
RECOGNITION
AESOP

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

Master's Programme in Spatial Planning (SING)

offered by the

University of Palermo
Italy

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 (2025-2031).

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