

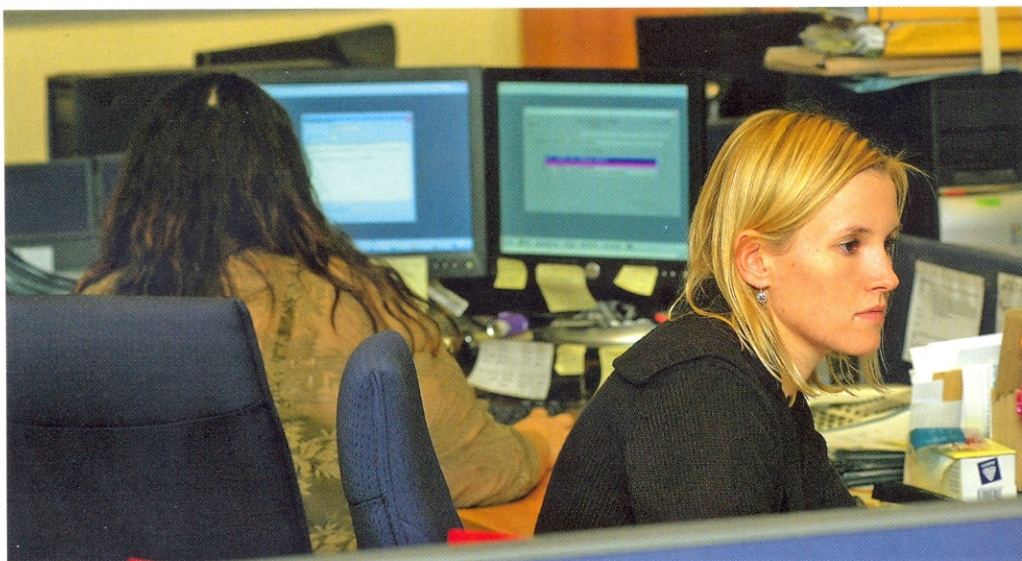
## AWARD FOR EMPLOYER COMMITMENT TO LIFELONG LEARNING

Planning Inspectorate

As a major employer of chartered town planners and an RTPI Learning Partner, the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) takes a serious approach to training needs. Its learning and development strategy covers all employed staff, including inspectors and administrators, and provides the basis for an annual learning and development plan identifying corporate and individual training needs.

The strategy aims to maintain and enhance the inspectorate's pool of skills, knowledge and experience to provide a workforce that continues to respond to changes, identify areas where skills and knowledge are likely to be insufficient in the future and pick out the most efficient and economic ways of meeting training needs. The costed and prioritised annual training plan aligns learning and development objectives with overall business goals.

Corporate training focuses on skills development



Planning Inspectorate: staff benefit from training that combines individual and corporate needs

## AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PLANNING EDUCATION

A New Planning School for the West of Scotland

An important city-region previously bereft of planning education following earlier course closures is now benefiting from an intensive fast-track entry route to professional qualification for well-motivated, high-quality postgraduate students. The creation of an entirely new planning school at the University of Glasgow's department of urban studies combines an international dimension with local practice engagement.

In September 2006, the university launched an MSc programme in real estate, planning and regeneration. The five courses are designed to surmount barriers between these sectors by creating a common learning base, promoting transferable skills across professional boundaries and enabling students to seek dual RTPI and RICS accreditation if they wish. Three courses are accredited by the RTPI, which found the quality of



University of Glasgow: field trips are part of package to deliver knowledge to postgraduates

## AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN PLANNING EDUCATION

George Weeks: Designing Places

The unprepossessing wasteland around an unloved 1960s university building in Glasgow has provided the inspiration for a project that highlights the pool of talent among planning students. George Weeks, an MSc student in city planning and real estate development at the University of Glasgow, has produced an insightful analysis based on a wide-ranging study of urban design ideas and literature.

The illustrative piece of work submitted for this new award comes from an assignment on Designing Places. The course requires students to undertake an analysis and appraisal of a space or place and make recommendations for its improvement as a "people place". It is a course requirement that students communicate their appraisal and recommendations graphically.

George's study of the Adam Smith Building and its environs highlights problems resulting from



Adam Smith Building: student project draws on urban design theory to improve rundown space



to deal with legislative, procedural and technological changes in areas such as design, enforcement, minerals and renewable energy. For example, inspectors need to be comfortable and informed when dealing with design language and concepts in casework. To this end, a tailored programme of design training was launched in 2008 in conjunction with the University of the West of England (UWE) and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment to enhance the inspectorate's 27 design champions' understanding of the issues.

At the other end of the scale, individuals and their managers identify skills, knowledge, training and other needs and opportunities following discussions about performance and development as part of personal development plans. The inspectorate has a specific continuing professional development budget as a distinct part of its overall training budget.

Newly-appointed planning inspectors undergo three in-house courses, delivered mainly by experienced inspectors, PINS staff and external

speakers, allowing recruits to progress through initial training within about a year. During this period, inspectors' decisions are read and marked as they move up the scale of competence. Guidance and feedback from senior inspector trainers is a valued aspect of the training and new inspectors are also usually assigned an experienced mentor.

PINS supports administrative staff in gaining planning qualifications and staff regularly attend Planning Summer School and the RTPI Planning Convention. It played a key role in setting up the Tomorrow's Planners initiative to address the lack of black and ethnic minority planners and has had six trainees to date. It also played an important part in the development of UWE's distance learning course in spatial planning and a number of inspectors are now taking modules.

Finally, over the past year, the inspectorate has rolled out a management and leadership development programme to middle and senior managers, focusing on its unique role and the challenges it faces as an organisation.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

"The high quality of entrants in this category reflects the way in which organisations are using a variety of programmes to help improve performance, prepare staff for change or increase staff retention rates. The award goes to the Planning Inspectorate for an impressive training and development programme shaped by bottom-up individual needs and analysis of top-down corporate knowledge gaps. The programme is costed and funded, leading to a richly varied menu of training opportunities that address every level. It includes innovative techniques such as 'champions' being trained to pass on their learning to others."

student work among the best ever seen on accreditation visits.

The programme recognises that established professional boundaries are breaking down. Students on all five courses follow a common path initially combining such areas as development economics, governance, sustainability, professional ethics and business management. The development economics project, for example, asks them to reconcile design and viability factors on a major city centre development.

The school has seen enthusiastic involvement from the region's professional, policy and business communities in programme design and development, dating back to extensive stakeholder discussions with public and private sector interests during the course design stage. Teaching input from up to 40 external practitioners a year is matched by a bespoke placement scheme giving every student a direct connection to a professional office.

Full-time, part-time and modular students receive equal treatment through a "conference

style" mode of delivery that promotes intensive engagement within each learning block in a manner compatible with family, work and other commitments. Each course is centred around an intensive period of formal teaching and learning timetabled in a block at some point between early October and June.

Lectures have an important role in covering core material, but they are certainly not the sole or even main form of teaching. Practical exercises, visiting speakers, seminar discussions, workshops and field visits all play a crucial role in delivery. The emphasis on continuous assessment reflects the programme's focus on active learning and independent thinking.

Entry standards are high, at upper second honours level, and the university has not benefited from the DCLG bursary scheme. That did not stop around 40 students signing up for the RTPI-accredited degrees by the start of the 2008-09 academic year. While most are from the UK, the programme has attracted entrants from Canada, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, China and Rwanda.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

"The department has worked hard with professionals to design courses for full-time, part-time and modular students that will equip them well for careers in planning, real estate and regeneration. It has reintroduced planning education to the west of Scotland with confidence and creativity, using the opportunity to produce a truly innovative programme. Its use of a core programme that leads to several specialist masters degrees is efficient as a business model and enlightened as a curriculum model. Glasgow has set a benchmark for delivering interdisciplinary masters level courses. It is an inspiring experiment that will be watched closely by its competitors."

poor sightlines, a lack of visual permeability and a lack of movement through the area. Given the large number of students and staff making use of this area, he argues that a reconfiguration of land uses and routes within the site would benefit many people and make the area more attractive.

Despite having no previous background in design, he demonstrated a high level of understanding and appreciation of the urban design literature. With no experience in graphic communication, he showed a high level of competence in communicating ideas, concepts and analysis, not least through a photographic tour and commentary.

His recommendations to set up a "movement grid" through the site, enhance the steps of the Adam Smith Building as a meeting place and create an urban square are well conceived and entirely appropriate. They enable the viewer to see the space in a different way. Although the option is not explored in this submission, his presentation of the work in draft highlighted the possibility of more development on part of the site to increase natural surveillance through greater potential activity.

The proposals assume that all permanent buildings will remain in situ on the site and are geared up to implementation in stages. Key elements include:

- A system of spine paths to increase coherence and ease movement for cyclists as well as pedestrians around the site.
- Installation of steps at the front of the Adam Smith Building providing a place for people to sit out and acting as a focus for recreational activities such as Parkour and skateboarding.
- A landscaped square on land currently used for car parking to make a central part of the available space identifiable, usable and attractive.

"George is bright, intellectually curious and keenly interested in the fields of planning, real estate development, design and environmental sustainability," says course co-ordinator Dr Steve Tiesdell. "In addition to this project, he has submitted a splendid dissertation that explores the subdivision of urban blocks as a means both of promoting urban vitality and of facilitating development."

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

"This category attracted a wide range of entries, demonstrating the quality and breadth of ability among planning students. The award went to George Weeks for his Designing Places entry, in which he skilfully analysed an area of the University of Glasgow that he had identified as a dysfunctional urban space. He cleverly intertwined theoretical ideas with detailed site appraisal to identify the key issues and recommend practical improvements."

The Awards for Planning Education and Lifelong Learning were judged by:

**Gill Taylor**, chief executive, Homes and Communities Academy

**Professor Chris Webster**, professor of urban planning, Cardiff University

**Jenny Poxon** MRTPI, head of planning delivery and conformity, Yorkshire and Humber Assembly