Master of Studies in Interdisciplinary Design for the Built Environment (IDBE)
For 800 years, the University of Cambridge has fostered leadership, ideas and innovations that have benefited and transformed societies. The University now has a critical role to play to help the world respond to a singular challenge: how to provide for as many as nine billion people by 2050 within a finite envelope of land, water and natural resources, whilst adapting to a warmer, less predictable climate.

The University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) brings together business, government and academia to find solutions to critical sustainability challenges.

Capitalising on the world-class, multi-disciplinary strengths of the University of Cambridge, CISL deepens leaders’ insight and understanding through its executive programmes; builds deep, strategic engagement with leadership companies; and creates opportunities for collaborative inquiry and action through its Business and Policy Leaders Groups.

**Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership: an overview**

- **Building leadership capacity**
  - Executive Education and Graduate Programmes

- **Embedding sustainability in organisations**
  - Strategic Engagement Customised Programmes and Advisory Services

- **Collective action for greater impact**
  - Business and Policy Leaders Groups

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Our Research and Thought Leadership
Leadership in a complex world

Leaders today are making decisions in a world which is more volatile, complex and uncertain than ever before. Many organisations are recognising the need to respond to and, where possible, inform the changing context in which they operate.

At the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, we focus on building the capacity to effectively tackle the world’s most critical social and environmental challenges. For nearly 30 years, we have worked with business, government and finance leaders to address these challenges. We operate within the 800-year old University of Cambridge, providing world-class research and teaching that business can apply to solving today’s problems.

The interdisciplinary nature of the built environment requires leaders from across individual disciplines to drive change by inspiring others to work together to develop projects that contribute to sustainable and inclusive societies. Through the Master of Studies in Interdisciplinary Design for the Built Environment (IDBE), we develop leaders who can: understand the key challenges facing the industry and society; use their communication and team working skills to enable positive collaboration; and utilise their design skills to help shape desirable, resilient and future-fit projects.
Master of Studies in Interdisciplinary Design for the Built Environment (IDBE)

The IDBE is the longest running part-time Master’s course at the University of Cambridge. Unique in many ways, it is structured around emerging trends, opportunities and challenges within the built environment such as: sustainability and resilience, health, energy, efficiency, conservation and heritage, stakeholder engagement, and political and regulatory landscapes.

The programme has been designed to help develop the professional skills and confidence needed to participate in, and lead interdisciplinary design teams in order to tackle and address these challenges and opportunities.

The IDBE is offered by the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) in association with the Departments of Architecture and Engineering making it truly interdisciplinary.

IDBE exceeded all of my expectations from an academic and personal perspective. My appreciation of the breadth and complexity of the built environment profession grew enormously. The course offers a valuable opportunity to take a step back from the pressures of project delivery and explore the importance of relationships and collaboration, the enablers and the obstacles. Students are exposed to an array of leading industry figures and we are constantly engaging in stimulating discussion both in and away from the classes and studios with guest lecturers, fellow students, supervisors and members of the wider University community.

Helene Gosden, Senior Engineer, Arup
Who is it for?

IDBE is designed for those involved in the commissioning, design, construction and management of projects in the built environment. It attracts highly motivated students from a range of professions across the built environment including (but not limited to) architects, engineers, landscape architects, planners, property developers and consultants, who wish to develop their understanding of the global challenges and opportunities facing the sector. The course equips professionals to lead interdisciplinary teams through strategic decision-making, inventive problem-solving and evidence-based design.

Outcomes and impact

By completing the Master’s, students will understand the development of the built environment and the key contemporary challenges facing the industry and profession. As well as developing skills in effective collaboration, communication, teamwork and leadership, they also expand their network of cross-disciplinary, international and like-minded professionals from previous IDBE cohorts.

Graduates of IDBE become part of the CISL Network of nearly 8,000 senior leaders, executives and sustainability professionals from around the world. Many of CISL’s relationships are multi-year engagements where we support different teams and divisions across major organisations. In this way, real impact is achieved by embedding sustainability into the decisions and operations of key functions.

Accreditation

The Master’s is accredited by the Institution of Structural Engineers, the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Institution of Highway Engineers and the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation as meeting the requirements for further learning and by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors under their project management pathway.
Course components:

• Six individual week-long residential workshops in Cambridge, three in the first year and three in the second year.
• Online modules delivered via a virtual learning environment.
• Two individual essay assignments during the first year.
• A group research assignment around an area of mutual relevance in the first year.
• An individual research dissertation in year two.

The six residential weeks are structured around a number of key themes and in line with emerging trends, opportunities and challenges within the built environment. Recent topics have included technical innovations such as building information modelling (BIM) and low carbon energy and materials as well as political and regulatory changes. We cover the important issues that touch professionals working in the complex socio-technical system of the daily built environment.

Between the residential weeks, students take part in group projects, e-learning and individual research assignments. It is estimated that over the course of the Master’s, students will need to set aside 4-6 hours per week. This is an average across the whole programme for a typical student, and variations in individual approaches to scheduling and learning can result in weeks where the workload may be heavier or lighter. Students are provided with all substantive tasks and deadlines at the start of the programme, so they can plan in advance in order to help spread the work evenly across the two years.

“IDBE is an incredible, powerful and transformative course. Learning from professionals from a variety of backgrounds was invaluable. In addition, combining real-life experiences, meaningful projects and a networking environment provided me with an edge in a highly competitive industry.”

Seun Adekunbi, Infrastructure Management Consultant
Individually tailored learning

Each individual is supported in developing their full potential in a specific field of interest. Since there are no written exams, it is entirely up to students which themes and topics they choose to study in more depth, store for later use in their career, or just enjoy for the purpose of expanding their general knowledge. Research areas include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Sustainability and resilience
- Policy and regulation
- Innovation and technology
- Design and design practice
- Infrastructure and transportation
- Retrofit and conservation
- Urbanism and urban design

“IDBE has challenged me to extend beyond my own field and knowledge. The valuable experiences are indeed motivated by each and every aspiring member within the team.”

Keith Goh, Architect
Faculty

The programme is delivered by a faculty of academic and industry tutors, professionals and practitioners. Directors of Studies and dissertation supervisors are drawn from key departments within the University of Cambridge and offer expert academic support for your individual written assignments. Students participate in lectures as well as dedicated ‘supervisions’ (the Cambridge word for tutorials).

Regular contributors include:

Allan McRobie
Reader in Engineering,
Department of Engineering

Adrian Campbell
Associate Director,
Founder and Director, changebuilding

Dr Jennifer Schooling
Director of the Centre for Smart Infrastructure,
Department of Engineering

Professor Alan Short
Professor of Architecture,
Department of Architecture

Dr Elisabete Silva
Senior Lecturer in Spatial Planning,
Department of Land Economy
Virtual learning

Virtual learning is an important part of the programme experience, providing opportunities for students to learn from each other as they engage with the latest thinking, applied to critical built environment issues.

These include:

- virtual tutorials and supervisions to support the assignments and dissertation process
- content-based e-modules
- working through preparatory documents, including prescribed readings, videos and audios, in advance of each workshop.

“We have sponsored almost 50 students to do IDBE over the 20 years of the course, many of whom are now in senior leadership positions. We value the broadening of thinking that the course demands of students, leading to an increased confidence in questioning and leading design decisions in the professional arena.”

Deb Thomas, Former Director, Arup
Applications

Acceptance on to the course is by application and selection only. For 2019 entry, the fee is £10,308 per year (£20,616 in total) for Home/EU and overseas students. The course cost includes membership of a Cambridge College but excludes accommodation and subsistence costs.

Entry requirements:

• at least a 2.1 honours degree from a UK university or an equivalent standard from an overseas institution

• a minimum of three years’ post-qualification professional experience in the built environment

• good ability in written and spoken English language to the required University standard.

Residential dates for the 2019 intake:
8-14 September 2019
8-14 December 2019
15-21 March 2020
(Workshop 4, 5 and 6 tbc)
Find out more
For further information about IDBE and the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership:

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