

Social Work BA (Hons)

The programme focuses on the core skills and required academic learning relevant to achieving a professional qualification in Social Work. This requires students to engage in personal and professional development linked to both the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and the Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers, published by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

The programme analyses contemporary Social Work practice, particularly focusing upon the challenges faced in promoting social justice, anti-oppressive practice and anti-discriminatory practice in a landscape of conflicting political ideologies, public opinion and media discourse.

Students will be offered opportunities to understand the historical drivers of the UK welfare, health, social care, education and housing gaining an appreciation of their impact upon contemporary practice. Furthermore students will be presented with theories, models and methods of Social Work practice which link to psychological and sociological approaches to wider interventions with adults, children and families within UK communities.

The programme intends to support students on a professional journey towards an in-depth understanding of 21st Century UK society, the contemporary role of Social Work professionals and application of statutory duties through UK legislation and development of essential practice skills through placement opportunities.

Course Content

The programme will develop your understanding of provision in areas such as child protection, mental health, welfare provision and multi-agency working. You will be studying contemporary social issues which will assist in developing skills that are useful in managing risk with children, supporting families and working with vulnerable adults in need. A critical analysis of legislation, social policy, criminal justice, equality, emancipatory issues and effective professional practice will be supported by development of research skills, reflective approaches and tangible practice skill development.

The programme is designed to offer students a clear pathway with incremental steps focusing upon how individual professionals, organisations and government agencies are tasked with addressing societal problems through fair and equitable solutions.

Level 4 (First Year)

The first year of study is in some ways the most intense, as it seeks to establish all students on a consistent academic baseline of learning and understanding of core subjects. At level 4 you will cover, psychology, sociology, social policy, law, skills for practice, models and theories of Social Work practice and academic literacy. Whilst none of the grades at level 4 go towards your final degree classification, they serve as an indicator of academic achievement and areas for development, plus achievement and engagement at level 4 are used to 'rank' students for consideration for the Social Work bursary (see separate bursary material). Level 4 is taught mainly on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays in the autumn semester moving to Mondays and Thursdays in the spring and summer Semesters.

Level 5 (Second Year)

The second year of the programme offers opportunities to develop your level 4 academic and professional capabilities through engagement with group work, adult-orientated study, a focus on emancipatory and gender-based practice plus research focused study working towards a dissertation proposal. Most importantly students will have a 70 day mandatory work placement, based with a relevant service provider offering opportunities to engage with individuals in need, apply statutory and non-statutory interventions and begin to fully explore the need for professional roles within society. The placement experience will ensure that students have ample opportunities to test their developing professional skills, gain academic and professional feedback and engage in reflection on their own action, decision making and conceptualisation of the society/communities Social Work is carried out within.

Level 6 (Final Year)

The final year is one of consolidation of prior learning and ensuring students are ready for professional practice. The focus is mainly on the 100 day mandatory placement running from October through to March. Alongside this, students will be researching, developing and writing their final year dissertation with support from an allocated dissertation tutor. This can be a challenging year, as many students begin to realise that whilst graduation leads to achieving a professional qualification in Social Work, the personal and professional development as a certified practitioner continues into and throughout employment. Registration with the HCPC is mandatory for all active Social Workers and maintenance of the standards of proficiency is a key focus of onward practice expectations.

Course Modules 2017/18

Level 4

- Social Policy
- Law for Social Workers
- Social Work models and methods
- Skills for Practice
- Academic Literacy
- Understanding Human Behaviour 1 & 2

Level 5

- Emancipatory Social Work
- Gendering Social Work
- Social Work with adults
- Group work
- Research for Social Workers
- 70 Day Placement

Level 6

- Dissertation Workshop/Tutorials
- 100 Day Placement
- Managing the Professional Task

Methods of Learning

Clearly a range of teaching methods are used to meet the diverse needs of our student body. This will include face to face lecture sessions; which may include debates, presentations, classroom discussions and guided reading. Usually lecture sessions are scheduled for 2 hours of contact time each week.

Seminar sessions are also offered which are usually smaller groups meeting for shorter periods (30-45minutes) with the module lead to discuss material that may be accessed online or through reading which is focused upon enhancing student understanding of topics linked to module assessments and challenging social issues.

Group exercises are also utilised, this may be where students are allocated groups and tasked with researching a topic for presentation to the wider student module group or it may be focused group work where students in smaller groups are supported to discuss relevant professional issues supported by an academic tutor.

Self-directed learning is also a key component of Higher Education, as students are expected to be motivated to invest time and effort into reading around a taught topic and managing their own research needs linked to professional development and academic assessment tasks.

Assessment

Assessment is through essays, portfolios, group work presentation, exam, oral presentations and reflective work.

Reading List

Preparing for Social Work can be a daunting prospect, however a range of introduction to Social Work texts are available such as:

Davies M (2013) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Work (4th Edition)* Wiley-Blackwell, West Sussex

Dunk-West P (2013) *How to be a Social Worker – A Critical Guide for Students*. Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire

Hodgson D & Watts L (2017) *Key Concepts & Theory in Social Work*. Palgrave, London

Horner N (2012) *What is Social Work? (4th Edition)* Learning Matters, London

Parker J & Doel M (2013) *Professional Social Work* Learning Matters, London

Additionally it may be helpful to subscribe to Community Care Journal, this is an online publication that focuses upon contemporary practice, legislation and research in Social Work. Subscription is free and the publication offers daily e-mail links to topics of interest chosen at the point of subscription.

Career Opportunities

Clearly most graduates take up Social Work posts (following registration with the HCPC), however graduates have also been employed within other roles such as: housing, residential care homes, voluntary agencies and government agencies.

Prior Work Experience

As this is a programme which leads to a professional qualification in Social Work and the programme has been endorsed by the HCPC, there is an expectation that applicants will have gained some voluntary or paid work experience in a relevant field prior to application. This could be within domiciliary care, nursery work, counselling, health care work and family support. It is also expected that applicants have an understanding of the challenges of the Social Work role, are aware of the statutory legislation which underpins the work and can link prior experience to the broader aspects of Social Work.

If you are in any doubt about having suitable experience, please contact the Admissions Tutor for the Programme to discuss further. (This information can be accessed via the central University Admissions Team).

Entry Requirements

Applicants are expected to have the equivalent to 280 UCAS points and GCSEs in Maths & English at grade C or above (or equivalents). We welcome overseas applications and information regarding English language requirements can be found on our IELTS page.

Fees & Additional Costs

Our current tuition fee rate is £9,000 per academic year. With regard to additional costs, there is no Social Work uniform, however when on placement Students are expected to conform to established placement dress codes which may necessitate 'smart-casual' wear.

There is a Social Work Bursary available, however there is limited availability leading the University to be expected by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA) (who manage all bursaries) to rank students from the point of enrolment with regard to engagement, achievement and completion of assessment tasks. This ranked list is forwarded to the NHS BSA who then determine who receives a bursary. The bursary is primarily used by students to support the travel costs associated with their 70 and 100 day placements (therefore it is not payable to students until level 5).

Any one applying to join the programme at level 5 (i.e. individuals who wish to transfer to the University of Northampton) must have completed and passed level 4 at another Social Work programme at a UK University, but where they may have been allocated a bursary at the original University, the non-transferrable nature of bursaries means that usually a successful applicants in this route would NOT be eligible for e bursary via the University of Northampton.