

Programme Specification

A Programme Specification provides a concise summary of the main features of a programme and its intended learning outcomes. It is intended to be used by prospective students, current students, academic staff and potential employers.

Programme Title:	
MSc Social Work	
Programme (AOS) Code(s):	MC3SWK1
UCAS Code:	N/A
Name of Final Award:	Master of Science, MSc
Level of Qualification:	Level 7
Regime of Delivery:	Attendance
Mode(s) of Delivery:	Full Time
Typical Length of Study (Years):	2 years
Professional Body Recognition / Accreditation (including specific requirements where applicable):	Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

Brief Description of the Programme

This award is for students who wish to gain a Master's degree in social work and thus be eligible to apply for registration with the social work regulator the Health and Care Professions Council. The course is aimed at high-calibre candidates who possess the correct balance of academic ability, analytical and practical skills, and relevant personal qualities such as maturity, resilience and empathy needed to be a professional social worker.

Social work in the current context is a challenging yet rewarding profession which operates in an environment where professionals from a range of professions work together to work with some of the most vulnerable groups in society whether children and families, adults or vulnerable groups. Social workers aim to empower vulnerable people to not only meet their basic needs but to be able to participate fully in the community and society that they belong to.

Consequently, this programme is aimed at developing future social workers who have the knowledge, skills and values required to practice in a challenging environment. Students will be helped to appreciate the complexity and uncertainty of the social work profession through classroom teaching and practice learning through placement. The programme is therefore designed to provide students a good theoretical basis and the basic skills and values required to practice social work. Students are then required to undertake placements in Year 1 and Year 2 where their knowledge, skills and values are further developed to help them be adequately prepared to enter the world of social work. Students will also be required to evidence meeting the Knowledge and Skills Statements either for Children and Families or Adults depending on the nature of their placement. Students will also be required to evidence meeting the Knowledge and Skills Statements either for Children and Families or Adults depending on the nature of their placement.

The programme is delivered by academic staff all of whom have vast experience in social work practice, social work practitioners and service users so students have a well-rounded training.

The programme is designed to help students develop both personally and professionally. The programme is developed to meet the expectations of the profession via the Standards for Education and Training of the Health and Care Professions Council, the QAA Benchmarking Statements for Social Work, the Professional Capabilities Framework and the Knowledge and Skills Statements.

Programme Aims

1	Develop in students a critical awareness of the complex social, legal, economic, political and cultural context of which social work which will equip students to deal with complex issues systematically and creatively, in a variety of settings within the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors.
2	Develop in students the ability to critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship as well as become critically reflexive practitioners who can undertake independent research and are capable of synthesising information and using this to make sound judgements in the absence of complete data which can then inform professional practice.
3	Develop in students the ability to exercise personal initiative and responsibility as well as an ability to identify ethical and value dilemmas in practice and a commitment to uphold the professional standards of conduct, performance and ethics.
4	Provide a sound knowledge of the theoretical foundations that underpin contemporary social work practice in different settings and organisations.
5	Facilitate anti-oppressive practice that works with the inherent strengths of diverse individuals, families, groups and communities along with an understanding of social justice and the capability to challenge injustice.
6	Instil confidence and competence in students when working in interdisciplinary, inter-professional and multi-agency contexts.
7	Produce critically self-aware and reflexive practitioners who are capable and can demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems and are able to act autonomously when assessing, analysing and evaluating complex and unpredictable human situations.

Programme Learning Outcomes

The Bucks Graduate Attributes focus on the development of innovative leaders in professional and creative capacities, who are equipped to operate in the 21st Century labour market and make a positive impact as global citizens. The attributes are developed through the programme.

ID	Learning Outcome
On successful completion of the programme a graduate will be able to:	
Graduate Attribute: Knowledge and its application (K)	
K1	Demonstrate systematic knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and new insights about social work service delivery contexts. Including the social processes that lead to marginalisation, isolation and exclusion.

K2	Critically discuss and evaluate the significance of legal and legislative frameworks, ethical and policy issues and their impact on social work practice
K3	Demonstrate in-depth systematic knowledge and critical understanding of social work theory including sociological, psychological and relevant research techniques applicable to social research and judiciously evaluate this evidence for best practice in a multi-agency and inter professional setting
K4	Integrate and analyse in-depth knowledge on the nature of social work practice across the range of settings. Including a critical understanding of social processes that lead to marginalisation
K5	Interpret, synthesise and apply theoretical analyses of social structures, social sciences, the law, research evidence and social work theory to practice
Graduate Attribute: Creativity (C)	
C1	Critically appraise and evaluate social research and methodologies and argue alternative approaches using Communication and Information Technology (C & IT)
C2	Systematically gather, synthesise and evaluate information in an innovative fashion using knowledge from the forefront of the profession and apply to problem solving and decision making processes.
C3	Integrate theoretical perspectives and best evidence from research and show originality in intervention with individuals, families, communities and organisations.
C4	Demonstrate an ability to be creative and adaptable and to learn from their experiences via conscious reflection on experience
Graduate Attribute: Social and ethical awareness and responsibility (S)	
S1	Discuss in depth and critically evaluate the moral concept of rights, responsibility and freedom, authority and power inherent in social work practice with a deep understanding of the impact of changing demography's and shifting populations including the historical, comparative and global perspectives
S2	Use knowledge of ethical principles and professional values in practice within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession through use of skills like effective advocacy, negotiation and mediation
S3	Demonstrate mastery in articulating the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice and be able to practise in an anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive manner
S4	Analytically review their practice with a view to quality assuring it by using skills of reflection in action and reflection on action
S5	Commitment to and active promotion of social justice, economic well-being and the Human Rights of service users and carers
Graduate Attribute: Leadership and self-development (L)	
L1	Take personal responsibility and practice as an autonomous professional, exercising their own initiative and professional judgement by developing skills in problem-solving, supporting the development of others, time- management and communication
L2	Critically apply different approaches and methods of intervention in working independently with individuals, families and communities
L3	Demonstrate mastery in critically evaluating and applying skills in personal and professional development including reflection on behaviour, personal and professional boundaries, managing change, stress, conflict and challenge, and taking responsibility for continuous learning.

L4	Demonstrate autonomy and initiative in the context of inter professional working and organisational requirements and can act with self-direction in planning and implementing tasks at a professional level
L5	Maintain consistently high standards when making complex decisions in unpredictable professional situations and also maintain professional behaviour in communicating ideas issues and conclusions clearly through effective communication and in time management and self-management skills

Programme Structure

Programmes are structured in stages. The number of stages will vary depending on the mode (e.g. full-time, part-time), duration and location of study which will be detailed in the Programme Handbook.

Modules are set at a specific academic level and listed as either core (compulsory) or optional. The level indicates the relative academic difficulty which will increase through the programme. Passing modules will reward you with academic credit. The amount of credits will depend on the complexity of the module and the level of effort required, which is measured in 'notional learning hours'.

Our [Academic Advice webpages](#) provide more information on the structure of taught awards offered by the University.

Level Seven

Code	Module Title	Credit	Core / Option	Compensable (Normally Yes)
SW720	Sociology, Psychology and Social Policy	10	C	No
SW721	Putting the Law into Practice	10	C	No
SW722	Preparation for Intervention with Service Users	15	C	No
SW724	Practice Learning 1	15	C	No
SW725	Inter Professional Practice	15	C	No
SW726	Practice Learning 2	30	C	No
SW727	Developing Social Work Skills for Practice	10	C	No
SW728	Research Methods for Social Work	15	C	No
PF747	Dissertation	60	C	No
SW016	Advanced Skills for Professional Development MSc 15a	0	C	N/A
SW012	Advanced Skills for Professional Development MSc 15b	0	C	N/A

NB SW011 and SW012 are used for administrative purposes and tracking of the Skills Development days attendance only.

Learning and Teaching Activities

Please see the [Academic Advice pages](#) for a description of learning and teaching activities that are recognised by the University. Detailed information on this specific programme is outlined below:

Taught sessions will be used to maximise students' prior experience and learning. A main theme of the teaching and learning is the integration of theory to practice. Lectures and seminars used to impart knowledge will be supported by workshops and more experiential methods where knowledge gained will be used to underpin practice experiences. The emphasis in the first year of the programme is on preparation for practice and the acquisition of an appreciation of the context in which social work operates including sociological, psychological and social policy context. Students also begin to develop a critical ethical awareness of self as well as personal learning skills including participating in class discussions and listening to others with respect. During this year students' move from simple acceptance of professional values to a demonstrable commitment to them through their overt behaviour as well as resolving conflicts between competing values.

The final year builds on this foundation and introduces the legal and legislative context; research methods and theories. Students are also expected to show a professional commitment to ethical practice on a daily basis. This is evidenced in their first practice learning placement which is in the first year of their studies where students will be placed in a private, voluntary or charitable agency. The final year placement is required to give students experience of being involved in statutory legal interventions. Final year students also complete an extended piece of independent work in their dissertation.

The acquisition and development of the required knowledge and skills laid down by the social work regulator the Health and Care Professions Council will be combined with the ability to transfer these elements to new practice situations. The transferability of skills form the underlying rationale in this generic programme in relation to all areas of social work practice.

The overall assessment strategy has been designed to complement learning in practice with learning within the University. Thus, academic modules are fully integrated with practice learning to consolidate learning on placement.

The teaching and learning strategies used to promote integrated learning are through a combination of lectures, presentations, discussions, experiential workshops and seminars which are all inextricably linked with the practice experience. We are able to draw upon a wide range of practice placements to enable students to demonstrate competence and capability to Health and Care Professions Council standards and meet all domains of the British Association of Social Work Professional Capabilities Framework.

Furthermore, the learning and teaching mechanisms by which the learning outcomes of the MSc Social Work programme are achieved are designed to be consistent with the values of the profession for which the students are being prepared. Students are encouraged to reflect and draw on their own experiences and to view tutors as facilitators to their learning which encourages students to become active in their own learning.

Teaching and learning sessions are conducted through a mix of workshops, discussion, experiential experiences, case-studies, simulations, group work, presentations, tutorials by external experts / internal specialists and guided independent study. The course blends academic and practice learning in an effort to integrate theory and practice. There is an emphasis on interaction, dialogue and debate and in this students are encouraged to make full use of our Virtual Learning Environment ' Blackboard', which is the main vehicle by which information is conveyed to students be it assessment guidance, update information, discussion boards and/or lectures notes.

Practice Learning is an important part of the programme and constitutes approximately half of the programme. More detailed information around Practice Learning is available in the Practice Curriculum document.

Additional Course Costs

There are costs associated with all studies, additional to the tuition fee, which require consideration, when planning and budgeting for expenditure. Costs are indicative and for the total length of the course shown unless otherwise stated and will increase with inflation; depending on the programme they may include equipment, printing, project materials, study trips, placement activities, DBS and/or other security checks.

Students are expected to cover travel costs to and from their placement site.
All course material is available electronically via Blackboard and students would not be expected to print material.
An approximate cost of £250 would be required for printing placement portfolios.
Optional membership of the British Association of Social Workers approx. £ 45.

Contact Hours

1 unit of credit is the equivalent of 10 notional learning hours. Full time undergraduate students study 120 credits (1200 hours) and full-time postgraduate students study 180 credits (1800 hours) per year or 'stage' of the course.

Course Stage	Scheduled Activities (Hours)	Guided Independent Study (Hours)	Placement / Study Abroad / Work Based Learning (Hours)
Year One	310.5	155	509.5
Year Two	146.5	790	714

Assessment Methods

The [Assessment and Examination webpages](#) provide further information on how assignments are marked and moderated, including a description of assessment activities. These also include further information about how feedback on assessed work is provided to students, including our commitment to ensure this is provided to students within 15 working days (the 'three-week turnaround').

The following assessment activities are used on this programme:

- Essays
- Portfolios
- Exam

Assessment of all modules is via assignments that test whether the learning outcomes have been learnt. These ensure that the theoretical concepts are understood and have been related to practice. A variety of strategies are employed to test learning including portfolio, essay, group and individual presentation, project, case study, exam, skills demonstration and portfolio. Students will be required to research and evidence topics before applying it to practice. Skills modules learning and teaching will occur throughout the course in the dedicated skills development sessions and also whilst on placement. This is supported by presentations, courtroom skills, and

simulations where service user and carers work with us to design and present realistic practice scenarios and the development of practice learning portfolios. There are a number of formative assessment opportunities for students to receive feed-back on their development before submitting summative work.

Students are required to attend 30 days of skills development and produce satisfactory portfolios by the end of the programme in order to achieve their award. These days are as follows:

- 15 days within SW727 Developing Social Work Skills for Practice
- 15 days in the Advanced Skills for Professional Development programme

Students who have not attended the 30 days of skills development by the end of the course will not be able to achieve the award.

Readiness for Practice

Students will not be permitted to progress to the first Practice Learning Placement unless they have achieved a pass in the following modules:

SW722 Preparation for Intervention with Service Users

SW727 Developing Social Work Skills for Practice

Standard reassessment opportunities for the above modules will apply but must be completed prior to commencement of the first Practice Learning Placement.

Students must also have undergone an Occupational Health Assessment and achieved clearance, alongside satisfying DBS checks (an admissions requirement).

80% minimum attendance is required within the programme and is monitored in line with the Attendance and Engagement Policy.

Classification

Calculation of final award:	Level 7 – 100%
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For full details of assessment regulations for all taught programmes please refer to our [Results webpages](#). These include the criteria for degree classification.

Admissions Requirements

Please see the [Application webpages](#) for more information on how to apply, including a statement on how we support students from a variety of backgrounds. Please also see our [general entry requirements](#) for taught programmes. Applicants who do not meet our published entry requirements are encouraged to contact our admissions team for further advice and guidance.

Typical applicant profile and any programme-specific entry requirements

To gain entry candidates must:

- Satisfy disclosure and barring service checks which includes criminal conviction checks
- Satisfy health checks by self-declaration, and
- Hold a minimum of GCSE Grade C (key skills 2 or equivalent) in Maths
- Hold a minimum of GCSE Grade C (key skills 2 or equivalent) in English
- Hold an undergraduate degree 2:1 or above (2:2 will be considered if the holder has significant practice experience)

These criteria are assessed during a four-stage recruitment process: 1) Screening of personal statement; 2) Social work written test 3) Group interview, and 4) Individual interview. The

recruitment strategies used have been mapped against The British Association of Social Workers Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) at entry level. Candidates must show through interview how their life experiences to date have equipped them for the challenge of studying to be a social worker and make clear what they have learnt from these experiences. They must be proficient in English language (overseas applicants need to meet IELTS 7.0 or equivalent as required by the professional body) and be proficient in basic IT skills.

The exception to this is where students have achieved a Post Graduate Diploma (PGDip) in Social Work (within the last 5 years) at Bucks New University that gives them a qualification that enables them to access the HCPC register for Social Work. In this instance, the PGDip will be taken as advanced standing against the Masters in Social Work and their marks achieved in the PGDip to be used in calculating their MSc award. Students in this position will then need only complete the 60-credit Dissertation module to achieve the Masters in Social Work.

Do applicants required a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check?

Yes

Opportunities for students on successful completion of the programme

When a student completes this award they will receive a professional qualification which will make them eligible to apply for registration with the Health and Care Professions Council to become a qualified social worker in the UK. This award will equip students with the necessary skills, knowledge and aptitudes that employer's value such as team working skills, high level communication skills, problem-solving skills as well as analytic and evaluative skills. The expertise of the staff group together with services users, carers and employers combine to produce independent critical thinkers skilled in working with some of the most vulnerable people in society. The qualification is also recognised in many other countries and thus can lead to employment internationally.

At Buckinghamshire New University we place great importance on employability and in equipping students with transferable skills and knowledge that prepare them for a career in social work but which are also useful for a range of other related employment opportunities. Once qualified, our students have gone on to practice in a range of settings including local authorities, hospitals, voluntary services for drug and alcohol users or youth justice services. Students have also gone on to work with agencies like the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). There is a wide range of career options for suitably qualified people. Students can also change the group they work with as their career progresses as this is a generic course which equips students with skills that are transferrable across service user groups.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Previous study, professional and / or vocational experiences may be recognised as the equivalent learning experience and permit exemption from studying certain modules. Please refer to our [Credit Accumulation webpages](#) for further guidance.

Student Support

During the course of their studies, students will be supported in the following ways:

- At the start of their studies all students will receive a full **induction** to the programme which will include introduction to the staff responsible for delivering the course, and access to library and IT facilities
- The **Programme Handbook** will outline the exact nature of the course and how it is structured, including the availability of option modules
- Each student will be allocated a **Personal Tutor** who will support their academic development, be able to advise and guide them with their studies and, where necessary, give advice on study options
- Students will be able to access our full range of **support services**, including the Learning Development Unit for skills and study support, the Library, the Careers and Employability Team, Student Finance Team, Accommodation and Counselling Services

Appendices

Quality Assurance

Awarding Body:	Buckinghamshire New University
Language of Study:	English
QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s):	Social Work (October 2016)
Assessment Regulations:	<i>Academic Assessment Regulations</i> , accessible via the Academic Advice webpages (https://bucks.ac.uk/students/academicadvice)
Does the Fitness to Practise procedure apply to this programme?	Yes
Ethics Sub-committee	Social Work
Date Published / Updated:	September 2019
Date programme re-approval required:	2024-25

Other awards available on programme (Exit Qualifications)

Please refer to the *Academic Qualifications Framework* for Exit Qualifications recognised by the University and credit and module requirements.

Students awarded a PGCert / PGDip in Social Studies will not be eligible for registration with the HCPC.

Name of Exit Qualification:	Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert)
Full name of Qualification and Award Title:	Postgraduate Certificate in Social Studies
Credits requirements:	60 Credits
Module requirements:	SW722 Preparation for Intervention with Service Users SW721 Putting the Law into Practice SW720 Sociology, Psychology and Social Policy SW724 Practice Learning 1 SW727 Developing Social Work Skills for Practice
Learning Outcome	
Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of social work theory including sociological, psychological and social policy perspectives.	
Demonstrate knowledge of the nature of social work practice	
Demonstrate mastery in application of skills required for social work practice in an anti-discriminatory manner.	
Critically discuss the legal and policy framework, values and ethics and their impact on social work practice	

Name of Exit Qualification:	Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)
Full name of Qualification and Award Title:	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies
Credits requirements:	120 Credits
Module requirements:	In addition to those required for the PGCert, the following modules will count towards achievement of this award: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SW725 Inter-Professional Practice • SW728 Research Methods for Social Work • SW726 Practice Learning 2
Learning Outcome	
Demonstrate initiative and knowledge of Inter-professional working and organisational requirements for social work.	
Analytically review their own practice through reflection in action and on action.	
Critically appraise and evaluate social research and methodology including ethical principles.	
Demonstrate knowledge and application of ethics and values in professional practice.	

Name of Exit Qualification:	Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)
Full name of Qualification and Award Title:	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work
Credits requirements:	120 Credits and completion of the 30-day Skills Development programme.
Module requirements:	120 credits at Level 7 excluding dissertation PF747
Learning Outcome	
Demonstrate initiative and knowledge of Inter-professional working and organisational requirements for social work.	
Analytically review their own practice through reflection in action and on action.	
Critically appraise and evaluate social research and methodology including ethical principles.	
Demonstrate knowledge and application of ethics and values in professional practice.	