

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

1. Awarding institution/body	University of Worcester
2. Teaching institution	University of Worcester
3. Programme accredited by	General Social Care Council
4. Final award	MA
5. Programme title	Master of Arts Social Work
6. Pathways available	N/A
7. Mode and/or site of delivery	Standard taught programme
8. Mode of attendance	Full-time
9. UCAS Code	L508
10. Subject Benchmark statement	Social Work and Social Policy (QAA, January 2008) NOS and NIS for social work
11. Date of Programme Specification preparation	February 07 (Document revised January 2011)

12. Educational aims of the programme

1. To facilitate the education of student social workers to enable admission to the General Social Care Council register of Social Workers and to demonstrate achievement of competence in the National Occupational Standards for social work.
2. To enable students to practice social work in a principled and reflective manner in accordance with the accepted values and principles of the profession, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of ethical issues and professional dilemmas in accountable practice.
3. To enable students to promote the distinctive skills and qualities of social work within interprofessional working contexts.
4. To enable students to critically evaluate and apply a breadth of theoretical underpinnings relevant to contemporary social work.
5. To enable students to deal with complex issues systematically and creatively, articulating their justification of particular approaches and advocating and networking in a skilled manner.
6. To nurture critical skills in appraising current research, recognising underlining methodologies of research and the influence of research outcomes on evidence-informed practice.
7. To enable students to be accountable practitioners able to critically analyse agency policy and agency culture, recognise its contextualisation within political ideologies and organisational drivers and be able to articulate for change where appropriate.
8. To enable students to develop into reflective and reflexive practitioners able to contribute significantly to the provision of social work and committed to continuing lifelong learning and professional development.

13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

Students completing the course will be able to:

1. Demonstrate competence in the National Occupational Standards
2. Identify, critically evaluate and inform practice with value perspectives which combat discrimination and empower those who are disadvantaged, recognising the particular claims of those of different gender, belief, social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
3. Critically appraise the intellectual traditions and perspectives of welfare philosophy and principles, recognising their influence on law, policy and practice.
4. Critically analyse the contested and evolving nature of social problems and develop a repertoire of theoretical frameworks, models and methods applicable to situations and contexts.
5. Develop and apply skills of critical appraisal, decision-making and selection in responses and interventions in complex circumstances.
6. Develop communication skills and therapeutic support skills for use in relationship work and groupwork contexts.
7. Practice in a manner which has service user consultation, empowerment and partnership working at its core.
8. Demonstrate an understanding of, and commitment to, interprofessional working practice.
9. Demonstrate the skills of a competent practitioner drawing on theoretical frameworks to guide in assessing, decision making and problem solving, monitoring and reviewing.
10. Demonstrate the ability to select and utilize a range of research methodologies and epistemologies in order both to develop and enhance social and theoretical perspectives and to promote reflexive practice.
11. Demonstrate self direction and originality in learning and develop skills of reflective and reflexive practice, making use of academic and primary sources of knowledge and information.
12. Contribute to organisational culture, keep critically informed about new directives and support lifelong learning practice in the workplace.
13. Appreciate and critically appraise the distinctive contribution of social work to welfare and its role within the modernising agenda.

Learning and Teaching Strategy:

The programme will meet all the relevant requirements of the QAA for Higher Education, the Department of Health (Requirements for Social Work Training, 2002) and the General Social Care Council to ensure the admission of successful students to the GSCC register of Social Work. The course is structured to sequence academic and practice learning and to integrate the learning of theory and practice. This follows the D of H requirement to spend at least 200 days gaining required experience and learning in practice settings and 200 days or 1,200 hours in structured academic learning under the direction of an educator.

The programme promotes the autonomous learner both at University and into the profession: a. as a student, nurturing skills of critical appraisal and reflection, drawing on a broad knowledge base of social theory and research,

b. as a developing practitioner, recognising the value of complex debate and evidence-informed practice in responding to challenging needs and practice dilemmas.

Worcester University's teaching and learning strategy has the following aims and objectives:

Aims

- To provide an academically rewarding, personally fulfilling experience for students.
- To further our reputation for excellent inclusive higher education, in order to meet the diverse needs of students, employers and society in the Twenty First Century.

Objectives

1. To create a teaching and learning experience which is thoroughly modern, research and practice informed, for the benefit of students, staff, practitioners and society.
2. To build on existing academic strengths through innovative and flexible course development.
3. To contribute to the creation of a skilled workforce by producing highly employable, entrepreneurial and professional alumni.
4. To maintain a high level of academic and personal support for all students which takes full account of the diverse and changing nature of the student body.
5. To ensure that e-learning is educationally integrated and dynamic.

See: <http://www.worc.ac.uk/aqu/658.htm>

1. Academic learning and teaching

The teaching and learning programme is comprised of a combination of 4 academic modules, two practice modules, and an advanced independent study (3 modules). The programme focuses on learning and teaching a combination of knowledge, values and skills. The four academic modules provide the theoretical basis of the programme, and the workshops focus on the main skills, although the teaching of knowledge, skills and values is integrated through all taught components of the course. The GSCC also requires students to demonstrate competency in IT , (see below).

A range of methods will be used to promote student development , responsibility and autonomy in learning:

* Formal lectures, seminars and workshops (see additional information for content details).

* Students will be requested to undertake **personal learning plans**, drawing on their knowledge of theories of learning and their ability to critically self-appraise to identify, monitor and regularly review their learning needs. Students will take responsibility for sharing the PLPs and negotiating support and developmental needs identified in these with their personal tutors. Key skills, fitness to practice and social work skills will be central to the process of PLPs.

*In addition, there will be a range of other methods of self-directed study during the course, including directed background reading and study, electronic self assessment exercises, preparation of case studies, presentations and workshop deliveries. The advanced independent study allows students to demonstrate independent learning as they undertake a piece of welfare-related research suited to

their professional welfare interest. As noted above, there is a GSCC requirement to demonstrate IT competency which can be achieved through previous certificated learning or a portfolio route utilising materials produced throughout the programme.

Breadth of knowledge and critical debate – The programme is designed to develop learning of:

- root theoretical perspectives (social theory, political ideologies and ethical philosophies) ,
- applied theoretical perspectives (anti-discriminatory and empowerment practice, social policy, sociological and psychological theories and approaches),
- specific frameworks for social work methods and approaches (models of risk assessments, care management processes, casework and groupwork),
- innovative theoretical models drawn from a range of professional care disciplines.

The range of learning and teaching methods are designed to enable students:

- to deal with complex issues critically and creatively
- to develop research skills
- to develop the ownership both of academic learning and professional practice transferred into continued professional development and commitments to lifelong learning.

Research skills, reflexivity and evidence informed practice – students are introduced to research skills, methodology, epistemology and ethics from the commencement of the course, and this research focus runs through the programme to develop skills of evidence-informed critical appraisal and debate to enhance academic learning and inform practice. Students are expected to demonstrate skills of reflexivity in their responses to research. The principle of evidence informed practice is emphasized throughout the programme and focussed on both in group debate and summative assessment work. This facilitates the student ability to deal with complex issues critically and creatively with an awareness of current research and debate, and an ability to apply theoretical perspectives to practice.

Inter-professional learning is promoted both through the interprofessional nature of the teaching team and the academic modules' distinct focus on social work theory within the broader context of welfare theory and approaches. Practitioners and guest speakers involved in teaching and workshop delivery will represent the breadth of interprofessional welfare both to strengthen the programme's commitment to the interprofessional Modernising Agenda and to promote interprofessional practice approaches for students as they prepare to undertake their practice experience.

2. Practice learning and teaching (see additional information for specific details of practice placements).

Practice learning is designed on the basis of GSCC and DOH recommendations, and the QAA for practice learning. It reflects the ongoing consultation with regional stakeholders (Social work, Herefordshire and Worcestershire) and the Skills for Care, West Midlands.

The practice component of the course provides a dynamic opportunity for students to integrate academic knowledge, theory and research with practice learning and experience. This develops the philosophy of action learning promoted in the academic component of the programme. A range of welfare experiences are provided with vulnerable groups of children and/ or adults, in statutory, voluntary and private contexts of welfare work. The DOH guidelines of providing two experiences of assessed practice learning in contrasting welfare contexts involving statutory duty and responses to risk are respected.

The practice learning team will endeavour to match students' particular interests in providing practice experience. All practice experiences will allow students to practise the key roles of social work (NOS) and to learn about statutory responses to risk. Consequently, if a placement is offered in a non-statutory welfare context it will be overseen by statutory social work to ensure breadth of the learning experience. Placements are made in conjunction with SW Training Teams in the region of Worcestershire and Herefordshire in planned consultation with Skills for Care, W. Midlands to ensure regional agendas are respected and practice learning co-ordinated across the region. They are audited by the University

The University holds responsibility to ensure the placement provider knows their responsibility for:

- the provision of learning opportunities
- their role, where appropriate, in the assessment of students
- the health and safety of students.

Prior to placements, the University must ensure the students are made aware of their responsibilities and rights.

(QAA, Placement learning 2007, see additional information).

The practice learning team is comprised of course tutors, a practice co-ordinator, practice assessors and workplace supervisors. All placements are co-ordinated by the practice learning team and quality assured to ensure they provide the appropriate learning opportunities to allow students to demonstrate competence.

The first placement focuses on a selection of NOS featuring communication, assessment and networking skills and the second placement provides challenging learning about a range of methods and approaches in complex interventions and interprofessional contexts of work. All the NOS should be covered in practice by the end of placement two.

The practice experience is formally assessed by an accredited practice teacher. The experience of assessed practice is an assurance of the quality of qualifying social workers (see GSCC guidance, "Fitness to Practice"). Practice is assessed in relation to the National Occupational Standards for Social Work and the National Induction Standards for Social Work.

The student will be expected to participate in reflective learning during the course of each placement, demonstrated by formal assignment work, the compilation of a practice portfolio, and participation in regular supervision and groupwork support sessions. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning needs and demonstrate skills of critical self appraisal. The portfolio is presented to the Practice Assessment Panel for a final decision of whether the placement has been passed or failed.

The portfolio to be adopted for the MA programme forms part of the harmonised portfolio promoted by Skills for Care, West Midlands. The harmonised approach creates evenness and quality assurance in assessing student work.

It is acknowledged that while the practice experience of the programme is rewarding and dynamic, it is also challenging for the student. Consequently, there is a high level of support provided by the course tutor, practice assessor, workplace supervisor and practice co-ordinator. The student has initial, mid-way and end of placement training team meetings to ensure the well-being of the student, as well as the quality of learning. The study recall days also allow the students to find group support as students share experiences of practice learning. On placement, the student will be a member of the social work or welfare team and participate in team meetings, and opportunities for joint working. Many students find invaluable support also in this context of team learning.

The practice learning experience is supported both by the extended independent study and directed study components of the programme.

14. Assessment Strategy

a. Academic assessment

The assessment strategies adopted in the MA in Social Work reflect the aims of the course and the descriptors for Masters Level Study (QAA 2001) and are designed to integrate with student learning and acquired knowledge, both in academic modules and practice learning. The assessment strategies are designed to develop advanced skills and knowledge, provide evidence of the students' progress and achievement throughout the course and prepare the students for lifelong learning. Both formal (summative) and informal, developmental, (formative) approaches will be used. In order to develop the skills of advanced study identified within the course aims, students will experience a variety of assessment strategies. These include essays, reflective essays, presentations and critical reviews. The opportunity for students to demonstrate independence in a sustained piece of work is provided in the completion of the Advanced Independent Study.

As with the academic learning, the practice learning is structured to be incremental, enabling the student to build towards the point where they can be assessed as competent to practice. To this end, each of the practice learning opportunities has a specified focus as indicated by the title and, in more detail, by the descriptor and

accompanying documentation.

b. Practice assessment

i Basis of assessment

The National Occupational Standards for Social Work (see additional information) and National Induction Standards form the basis for the assessment of competence in practice. The QAA benchmark statement for social work (see additional information) sets out, in outcome terms, the requirements for the achievement of an award at degree level. How these outcomes are assessed must reflect the DoH requirements for social work training which detail inputs in specific key areas (see additional information).

Although the practice experience (portfolio assessment) only requires the assessment status of pass or fail, the placement is accredited as an academic Masters level module hence assignments set at Masters level.

Practice assessors involved in the practice component of the Masters programme will hold the Practice Teaching Award and will assess to the regulations of social work training. They will be members of the Practice Development team in the region.

Assessment of practice is undertaken on the basis of:

- a. A portfolio of evidence – a reflective account of the placement with formal assignments providing demonstration of critical understanding, analysis and reflection on practice.
- b. Direct observations of practice
- c. Service user and carer appraisals.

ii Purpose of assessment

- To enable students to demonstrate achievement against the required standards and to confirm whether they have met all the standards before being awarded the masters degree in social work (see additional information).
- To establish, through the above process, whether students are suitable for admission to the GSCC register of social workers.
- To safeguard the professional standards of the programme by supporting the students to achieve competence to practice at the required standard.
- To enable students to receive feedback on their development and progression.

Attendance on placement is an assessable course requirement because of the participative nature of the learning and the expectation of commitment to a course leading to professional recognition. 100 days in each placement is mandatory and is formally accounted for by the practice assessor before the portfolio is submitted to the Practice Assessment Panel (see section on practice learning, additional information).

15. Programme structures and requirements

The programme offers the opportunity to achieve the award of Master of Arts in Social Work. The programme will meet all the relevant requirements of the DoH and the General Social Care Council to ensure the admission of successful students to the GSCC register of Social Work.

In order to gain the award of MA in Social Work, students must successfully complete nine modules validated within the postgraduate programme, including an Advanced Independent Study. They must successfully complete the two placements. The placements count as one academic module each. In addition students must meet the IT competence requirement.

To be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma, students must successfully complete six modules. For a Postgraduate Certificate, students must successfully complete the three mandatory modules only.

All study components of the course are mandatory. All absences must be accounted for and reported to the Programme Administrator in writing. Students must comply with the notification requirements of any organisation providing them with financial support. Attendance at an academic module which falls below 80% will be the subject of formal enquiry by the course team. Full attendance in practice is mandatory.

The course is available as a conventional **two-year full-time** university postgraduate route. The academic year comprises two semesters and the structure is as follows:

		<u>ACADEMIC LEARNING</u>	<u>PRACTICE LEARNING</u>
YEAR 1	Semester 1	Induction programme SOWK4001 SOWK4002 Workshop days	Workshop days
	Semester 2	Workshop days SOWK4003	SOWK4005 Placement
YEAR 2	Semester 1	SOWK4004 SOWK4007 Advanced independent study	Workshop days
	Semester 2	SOWK4007 Advanced independent study	SOWK4006 Placement

All academic modules will be delivered conventionally across a semester in sessions of three hours per week.

Students who are not showing the professional suitability to be professional social workers will be given support and guidance to transfer to alternative academic or vocational courses in this area of study. (See eligibility and fitness to practice statements).

16. QAA Academic Infrastructure

The Masters in Social Work is modular and part of the University of Worcester's (UW) Postgraduate Regulatory Framework (PRF).

The programme has been developed to reflect:

- a. the QAA Framework for HE Qualifications.
- b. the QAA Code of Practice on Placement Learning.
- c. the National Occupational Standards for Social Work.
- d. The national Induction Standards for Social Work.
- e. The Department of Health and GSCC regulations.

17. Support for students

All students will have support from the course team and practice training team, as well as peer support provided through action learning sets and other opportunities for supportive groupwork. Students are contacted by their personal tutor each semester offering dedicated tutorial support, and the academic team operates an open door policy for all course students.

Module tutors provide on-going learning support and individual tutorials during the duration of a module. Supervisors are allocated on an individual basis and offer 6 hours of student support time for the advanced independent study.

Students with disabilities and particular support needs have access to additional support and advocacy at the University Disability and Dyslexia Support Unit. The core academic team has a strong commitment to ensuring equality of access and participation in the course.

A two week induction programme is provided for students at the commencement of year one and two to introduce the student experience, nurture learning and reflection and develop support networks with fellow students and tutors. Furthermore, library induction and information skills packages are available throughout the course. Advanced study skills are provided by the subject team and additional support can be provided by learning support services (Library, IT, and Media and Print). A Student Handbook and Practice Placement Handbook are provided to all students.

The MA Social Work is both an intellectually and emotionally demanding course. In the event of there being concerns about fitness for practice, the course team reserves the right to request that a student seek an Occupational Health appointment or use the University confidential Counselling Service. Where necessary, the course team will request that a student attends a Fitness to Practice Panel.

18. Admissions policy, criteria and procedures

Candidates who are able to study at Masters level and have the appropriate personal attributes, values and commitment to vocational training for professional social work are considered for the programme.

The admissions process includes the assessment of professional, personal and academic suitability to undertake social work training.

The admission requirements for the course are:

- Normally an honours degree at grade 2:2 or above
- Normally 6 months of relevant welfare experience*
- Evidence of a commitment to the values and professional practice of social work.

* Welfare experience can include any direct experience working with vulnerable groups or individuals in statutory, private and voluntary contexts. It can include experience in the broad context of welfare including health and education, as long as the breadth allows candidates to have an insight into the specific social work role.

Selection for a place is also conditional on applicants meeting a number of criteria laid down by the Department of Health:

- Evidence of ability in English and Mathematics which is normally the equivalent of grade C in the GCSE examination in English and Mathematics. Candidates can sit diagnostic testing Key Skills Level Two in Numeracy and Communication as an equivalent. However, test scores must be verified at 75% or above.
- Evidence of ability to understand and make use of written material and to communicate clearly and accurately in spoken and written English.
- An enhanced criminal conviction and programme occupational health checks
- Applicants should be aware that social work programmes are exempt from The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and therefore **all** offences and cautions must be declared. Failure to disclose could lead to withdrawal of an offer of a place on the course. At the point of disclosure, applicants may submit a written statement providing any specific information of the circumstances surrounding the offence.

* Overseas candidates are able to apply for the course but will not be able to access GSCC bursaries.

All applicants should demonstrate on the UCAS application form that they meet, or will meet, the above criteria.

All potential candidates for places will be invited to attend for interview selection. While admission criteria and processes are rigorous, they are conducted according to the principles of equal opportunities and the commitment of the profession to

attract a diverse workforce.

Candidates selected at interview may be given conditional offers if needing to obtain further qualifications or welfare experience. All candidates selected will be expected to undertake prescribed reading before commencing the course.

Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning

Students with relevant previous academic and vocational qualification at Higher Education level may be considered eligible for accreditation of prior learning. Credit will only be given where there is evidence of a close, explicit match between previous learning and the content of the modules. No credit may be given for the practice learning modules at any level or for part modules. Students seeking to transfer from another masters course in social work should contact the course leader for advice.

Please contact the Registry Admissions Office for further information or guidance
01905 855111

19.Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

- Evaluation of academic modules by students
- Evaluation of practice learning experience by students, practice assessors, workplace supervisors and tutors
- Student representation on appropriate committees and boards
- Peer review of academic teaching and internal moderation of academic assessment
- Peer review of practice assessment via the Practice Assessment Panel
- An accredited course of teacher training for new academic staff
- Accredited basic and advanced courses for practice assessors
- Agency–led Practice Assessor Development Group
- Regular review by academic course team meeting.
- Annual review of the quality of the course in accordance with the quality assurance processes of the University of Worcester and GSCC
- Annual external examiner reports
- Periodic review and revalidation by University of Worcester
- Service user involvement via Service Users and Carers Group.
- Evaluation of practice learning opportunities by Practice Learning Coordinator and agency colleagues
- Annual quality review of practice learning opportunities
- Audit of practice assessors competent at each level.
- QAA Code of Practice

20.Regulation of assessment

Requirements to pass modules

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which

are detailed in the module specifications.

- The minimum pass mark is 50% for each module.
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and in some modules, a pass mark in each item of assessment may be required.
- Some modules have attendance requirements
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

Submission of assessment items

- Students who submit course work late but within 5 days of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at 50% unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 5 days but within 14 days of the due date will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- Students who fail to submit an item of assessment lose their right to reassessment in that module, and will be required to retake the module, which will incur payment of the module fee.
- For full details of submission regulations see Postgraduate Regulatory Framework.

Retrieval of failure

- Students are entitled to resit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade, unless the failure was due to non-attendance or non-submission.
- Reassessment takes place during the following semester or during the summer reassessment period at the end of the academic year.
- If following reassessment the module has been passed, the module grade will be capped at 50%.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they will have one further and final reassessment opportunity.
- A student who fails 40 credits or more after exhausting all reassessment opportunities may be required to withdraw from the University.

Requirements for Awards

Award	Requirement
PG Cert	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at level 7
PG Dip	Passed a minimum of 120 credits at level 7
Masters (MA)	Passed a minimum of 180 credits at level 7 including a minimum of 40 credits from the Dissertation Complete the IT Competency requirement

The awards of PG Cert in Social Welfare Studies, PG Dip in Social Welfare Studies or Masters may be made with Merit or Distinction.

The title of Social Worker is only available to those students who successfully complete the whole programme. Students who exit the programme with PG Cert or

PG Dip will be awarded a PG Cert or PG Dip in Social Welfare Studies. The awards of PG Cert, PG Dip or Masters may be made with merit or distinction.

Students are required to take all the modules in the programme of study and be successful in the summative assessment requirements specified. The award of the MA Social Work will normally lead to admission to the register of social workers established and maintained by the General Social Care Council. As the course is intended to lead to professional registration, attendance for academic and practice components is an assessable requirement, and a poor record of attendance could prevent a student gaining the award.

To achieve the masters' degree, students must also demonstrate competence to the level of the ECDL or its equivalent.

Practice assignments will be assessed according to the academic measures outlined above. The practice experience will be assessed by an accredited practice assessor who will make a recommendation of pass or fail for adjudication by the Practice Assessment Panel.

21. Indicators of quality and standards

- External examiner reports
- Student evaluations
- Annual Evaluative reports
- Requirements met for QAA
- GSCC monitoring and annual reporting
- Skills for Care, W Midlands consultation
- Course committee monitoring
- Service user and carer consultation in programme design and delivery.
- In November 2005, the institution was audited by the Quality Assurance Agency. The audit confirmed confidence in the University's management of the quality of its academic programmes and the standards of its awards. The QAA particularly commended the University's supportive ethos and range of departmental and central services provided to students and staff in support of its mission to deliver an excellent inclusive higher education. The University will be audited next in 2011.
- In 2010 University of Worcester was one of the 13 HEIs out of 83 which fully met the GSCC National Requirements

22. Career Opportunities & Links with Employers

The title of Social Worker is now legally protected. Achievement of the MA Social Work will normally, subject to professional suitability, lead to admission to the register of social workers held by the GSCC and access to employment opportunities at professional level in a wide range of social work and social care settings. Post qualifying training opportunities will be accessible via employment. Postgraduate academic study opportunities will also be accessible.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module study guide and course handbook. The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.