Social Work MA Degree Programme Specification

Academic Entry Year:	2026/2027
Degree Awarding Body:	The University of Bradford
Main Location:	City Campus
Subject Benchmark:	Social Work (Quality Assurance Agency 2019)
Qualifications Framework:	HE Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies (FHEQ: QAA 2014)
Target Degree Award:	Master of Arts (MA) in Social Work [FHEQ Level 7]
Intermediate/exit Awards:	Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) in Social Care [FHEQ Level 7] or Postgraduate Certificate (PGC) in Social Care [FHEQ Level 7]
Programme Admissions:	UK and international students
Programme start date:	September
Programme Mode of Study:	2 years full-time with pre-registration placement

The professional status of social workers in England is conferred by Social Work England (SWE). This programme is approved by SWE as a qualifying education and training course. Successful graduates can be eligible to register with Social Work England as a qualified social worker.

Please note: The University has a set of terms and conditions for all students accepting an offer to study on a course here at Bradford. This is called the Student Contract. This document sets out the Terms and Conditions which apply when an offer of a place on a programme of study at the University of Bradford is accepted. View our Student Contract for further details. Information about this programme and its modules has been published in advance of the academic year to which it applies. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate at the time of publication, but changes may occur given the interval between publishing and commencement of teaching. Any change which impacts the terms and conditions of an applicant's offer will be communicated to them.

Recent changes

1. **April 2024:** Annual changes for 2024/25 academic year
2. **July 2025:** Annual Changes for 2025/26 Academic Year, change to semester for Modules SOW7006-B and SOW7009-B and including changes to academic regulations
3. **October 2025:** Confirmed variance to regulations and minor reformatting to improve accessibility.
4. **April 2026:** Corrected all module codes and made links inline.
5. **November 2026**: Late publication with minor amends

Introduction

The aim of our MA programme in Social Work is to provide students with a professional work qualification at Master level if they already hold a first degree. The programme therefore offers both academic and professional outcomes. Academic outcomes available are the Postgraduate

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Certificate in Social Care, Postgraduate Diploma in Social Care and Masters in Social Work. The professional status of social worker is conferred by **Social Work England** and successful graduates of the MA Social Work award alone are eligible to register with the Social Work England as a qualified social worker.

We offer a well-established programme with a national reputation for producing high calibre workers. A large proportion of our students are in employment within three months of graduation, and many go on to become leaders within the field of social care. Our programme is designed, managed and delivered by a Programme Management Board that includes practice placement agencies, students, lecturers and practitioners.

Stakeholder involvement ensures that our programme maintains a dynamic, outward- looking approach towards social work education with a clear focus on the needs of People with lived experience. The following groups and organisations play an active part in the life of the programme:

- **Employers**: We have long standing, productive working relationships with local and voluntary organisations.
- **People with lived experience**: The involvement of people with lived experience of social work is vital to the life of our programme and is an area we are committed to expanding. People with lived experience of social work are employed as module teachers and guest speakers; are involved in local action-based research; co-run local and national conferences; and provide advice on programme design, delivery and assessment.
- **Students**: We seek feedback on every aspect of the programme including placement provision; module content and teaching; programme management and design.
- **Lecturers**: The majority of lecturers are qualified social workers with substantial practice experience. We work within a strong team ethos that ensures all lecturers are involved in the management and running of the programme.
- **Practitioners**: Social Work Practitioners are involved in: teaching and assessment of practice placements; teaching within the academic setting; monitoring placement standards and interviewing programme applicants.

Programme Aims

The programme is intended to:

A1. Develop the ability to understand and manage the professional role and responsibilities of social work within legal and policy frameworks.

A2. Develop a critical ability to consider relevant issues from different perspectives including life stage development, social and societal influences and political, economic and cultural aspects.

A3. Develop effective skills in professional practice including assessment, decision- making and risk management with individuals, families, carers, groups and communities.

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A4. Develop knowledge and skills to engage and communicate with People with lived experience, carers, professionals and communities effectively.

A5. Develop the confidence to challenge and address inequalities by applying principles of social justice, human rights and upholding social work values.

A6. Develop the skills of critical reflection and analysis as part of ongoing personal and professional development.

Programme Learning Outcomes

Graduates holding the FHEQ Level 7 Master of Arts degree in Social Work will be able to:

1. Conduct themselves according to social work values and principles.

2. Work in partnership with people with lived experience, taking into account their needs, views and rights within relevant legislation.

3. Demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge and a critical understanding of factors that shape identity.

4. Apply social work skills and methods in response to the diverse needs of people using critical evaluation of the available evidence.

5. Use initiative, judgement and authority to communicate, assess, engage and intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support and prevent harm, neglect and abuse.

6. Share and communicate oral and written information appropriately and within relevant timescales.

7. Manage their time and workload effectively with support through supervision.

8. Identify and apply in practice the principles of social justice, inclusion and equality.

9. Understand how legislation and guidance serves to advance or constrain people's rights.

10. Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making by being able to identify, distinguish, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence.

11. Engage with, inform and adapt to changing economic, social, political and organisational contexts.

12. Demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for their own conduct, safe practice and learning as a qualified social worker.

13. Recognise, reflect on and work with competing values and ethical dilemmas.

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14. Take into account and challenge discrimination and oppression on a personal and institutional level.

15. Operate effectively within multi-agency and inter-professional partnerships and settings within diverse organisations and contribute to the development of appropriate culturally sensitive services and organisations.

Holders of the FHEQ Level 7 Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma in Social Care awards will display many of these outcomes but not all as they will not be qualified social workers.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

The University of Bradford's proven skills in teaching rest upon a commitment to clear learning outcomes, a structured system of progression, imaginative assessments and the provision of safe, stimulating learning environments. Our lecturers have a variety of specialist practice, academic and research skills as well as a commitment to providing high-quality teaching and learning.

Our programme is built around Social Work England's requirements for practice placements, coupled with a clear system of curriculum development as students' progress through the stages of the programme. Across years 1 and 2 of the programme, students are required to attend at 30 skills days, delivered by people who use social work services, practitioners, students, and the academic team. Other forms of assessment include essays and case analyses; individual and group presentations and exercises; and oral viva voce examinations.

All assessments test skills in critical analysis and reflective practice in the integration of the practice and theory of social work. Prior to starting each placement students will be assessed on their readiness for direct social work practice and suitability for social work education and training; the student must pass this non-credit bearing 'Readiness for Direct Social Work Practice' module to proceed to placement.

Students will undertake two assessed practice placements: the first placement in year one and the final placement in year two. The placements will be with different people with lived experience groups and with a minimum of one placement that will allow students to undertake statutory interventions. These placements, along with the 30 skills days preparation and the teaching and learning strategies outlined, will enable students to critically analyse and reflect on their practice and learning and to progress through their programme.

Students will be expected to pass their placement at the required level. Both components of the Practice Learning I module must be passed in order to proceed to Practice learning II. Teaching on the Practice Learning modules must be undertaken in tandem with the placement element.

Programme Structure

Year 1 Curriculum
Year 1 provides students with knowledge and understanding of the context of social work practice and equips them with the required practice skills to undertake their first social work placement. Students study 120 credits in the first year.

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The academic work provides an understanding of historical perspectives and contemporary issues within social work; social policy underpinning social work practice; values and ethics; communication skills; skills in assessment, planning, intervention and evaluation; social work theories and methods and the law in relation to social work practice.

Towards the end of Year 1, students will be assessed in terms of their readiness for direct practice. Passing the assessment of readiness for direct practice is a requirement to proceed to the placements. The first social work placement takes place at the end of Year 1.

Year 2 Curriculum

Year 2 builds upon this foundation and focuses upon the development of specialist skills with particular people with lived experience groups. At this stage there is an emphasis on the importance of autonomous learning and the acquisition of evidence-based practice. Students study 60 credits in the second year.

Students' academic work provides an understanding of social work skills in relation to mental health, childcare, disability and work with older people skills; multidisciplinary and interagency work; research and evaluation; and reflective practice. The second practice placement takes place during Year 2 of the programme.

Modules and awards

Table 1: MA Social Work Year 1 Core Modules (FHEQ Level 7)

Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Study Period
SOW7011-A	Ethics, Professionalism & Reflective Practice	10	Semester 1
SOW7012-A	Interviewing and Communication Skills	10	Semester 1
SOW7006-B	Law for Social Work	20	Semester 1
SOW7009-B	Social Work Theories and Methods	20	Semester 2
SOW7007-B	Social Work with Adults	20	Semester 2
SOW7008-B	Social Work with Children and Families	20	Semester 2
SOW7024-Z	Readiness for Direct Social Work Practice	0	Academic Year (1+2)
SOW7013-B	Practice Placement Learning I	20	Semester 3

Table 2: MA Social Work Year 2 Core Modules (FHEQ Level 7)

Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Study Period
SOW7022-B	Mental Distress Across the Life Course	20	Semester 1
SOW7001-B	Research Methods for Social Workers	20	Semester 1
SOW7014-B	Practice Placement Learning II	20	Non-Standard Year (2+3)

Students will be eligible for the Social Work England approved FHEQ Level 7 award of Degree of Master of Arts (MA in Social Work) if they have successfully completed at least 180 credits, including all placement elements, and achieved the award learning outcomes.

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Students will be eligible to exit with the FHEQ Level 7 award of Postgraduate Diploma if they have successfully completed at least 120 credits. Students will be eligible to exit with the FHEQ Level 7 award of Postgraduate Certificate if they have successfully completed 60 credits. **THE POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE OR DIPLOMA AWARDS DO NOT CONFER ELIGIBILITY TO REGISTER WITH SOCIAL WORK ENGLAND.**

Assessment, Continuation and Award Regulations

This programme follows the Assessment, Continuation and Award regulations published on the University's website for postgraduate courses (**Regulation 9**) with variance from the regulation as outlined below and documented in the Variance Register:

- **Variance from 3.1** - Students must pass SOW7013-D as a pre-requisite before being eligible to take SOW7014-D.
- **Variance from 5.2 and 5.3** - Students who fail the Placement component (001) of SOW7013-B Practice Learning 1 or SOW7014-B Practice Learning 2, will be required to undertake re-assessment with attendance in the following academic year.
- **Variance from 5.2 -** Students will be permitted only one reassessment opportunity at component 001 of SOW7013-B Practice Learning 1 or SOW7014-B Practice Learning 2.

Only the target award of MA in Social Work will provide eligibility to apply to the Social Work England to register as a qualified Social Worker in England.

Admission Requirements

We take into consideration a number of factors when assessing applications. It is not just about qualification and grades; we take the time to understand applicants' personal circumstances and make contextual decisions based on their potential to thrive at university and beyond.

Consideration of applications will be based on a combination of formal academic qualifications and other relevant experience. Applications are welcome from students with non-standard qualifications or with significant relevant experience. Students should talk to us if they do not fit the standard pattern of entry qualifications.

Disabled students' admissions are treated on the same grounds as all students. To discuss any specific needs or talk about reasonable adjustments you may require in confidence, students can **contact our Disability Service** online before you apply.

All students
The typical entry requirements for the programme are as follows:

Applicants are required to have substantial and relevant experience as a social care or health worker and to normally possess a relevant honours degree at 2:1 or higher or an honours degree and a postgraduate qualification which will provide them with current underpinning knowledge from psychology, sociology and social policy.

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Applicants' work experience must amount to the equivalent of at least 6 months full-time work and include experience obtained during the past two years and with vulnerable groups in Britain.

In addition, applicants should be able to demonstrate an adequate level of literacy and numeracy. This would normally be GCSE English, and Maths grade 4 (national grade C) or equivalent and must also possess beginner level IT skills.

Applicants will need to demonstrate a commitment to social work as a career and provide evidence that they can be entrusted to work with vulnerable children and adults. We will also take into consideration any factors which indicate applicants or students may be unsuitable to become a social worker. Examples include certain previous criminal convictions and episodes within their health record.

International students
This programme welcomes international applicants. We also welcome experience in social work overseas, either because applicants have lived there or because they have undertaken paid or voluntary work in another country.

This programme requires that all students have English language proficiency equivalent to **Minimum IELTS at 7.0.** Our website lists **equivalent scores in other English tests we accept**.

For information on what qualifications are equivalent to the UK and home entry requirements, visit the **International Entry Requirements by Country** page on our website.

If applicants do not meet the IELTS requirement, they can take a University of Bradford pre-sessional English course with our Language Centre.

Information in this document is for the contemporary recruitment cycle and was accurate at time of publication. The current tariff and accepted qualifications for entry onto the programme is published at the online course page: **https://www.bradford.ac.uk/courses/pg/social-work/**

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