



**UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH**

COURSE SPECIFICATION

MSc Social Work

COURSE SPECIFICATION

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| Course Title | MSc Social Work |
| Final Award | MSc |
| Exit Awards | <i>PGDip Applied Social Studies, PGCert Applied Social Studies</i> |
| Course Code / UCAS code (if applicable) | <i>P2081FTC</i> |
| Mode of study | <i>Full time</i> |
| Mode of delivery | <i>Campus (and placement agencies)</i> |
| Normal length of course | <i>Two years, including placement in each year</i> |
| Cohort(s) to which this course specification applies | September 2025 onwards |
| Awarding Body | University of Portsmouth |
| Teaching Institution | University of Portsmouth |
| Faculty | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences |
| School/Department/Subject Group | School of Education, Languages and Linguistics |
| School/Department/Subject Group webpage | SELL |
| Course webpage including entry criteria | https://www.port.ac.uk/study/courses/msc-social-work |
| Professional and/or Statutory Regulatory Body accreditations | https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/ |
| Quality Assurance Agency Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level | <i>Level 7</i> |

This course specification provides a summary of the main features of the course, identifies the aims and learning outcomes of the course, the teaching, learning and assessment methods used by teaching staff, and the reference points used to inform the curriculum.

This information is therefore useful to potential students to help them choose the right course of study, to current students on the course and to staff teaching and administering the course.

Further detailed information on the individual modules within the course may be found in the relevant module descriptors and the Course Handbook provided to students on enrolment.

Please refer to the [Course and Module Catalogue](#) for further information on the course structure and modules.

Educational aims of the course

The course aims to prepare graduates through a combination of academic study at Level 7 and compulsory practice placements for eligibility to apply to register as a social worker with Social Work England.

In general, the course aims to:

- Provide an opportunity for students to achieve a professional qualification in social work.*
- Provide a stimulating study environment which will equip students to make evidence informed decisions and assessments which integrate practice and academic elements.*
- Enable students to develop and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of social work settings and agencies.*
- Ensure students have adequate opportunities to develop practice skills and to demonstrate the requirements of the Social Work England Professional Standards (2019) and BASW Professional Capability Framework (2018), grounded within the theories and subject indicators identified in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Subject Benchmarking Standards (SBS).*
- Provide the opportunity for students to gain experience in working with and applying social work theories and methods in at least two distinctive service user areas during their compulsory placements.*
- Ensure that students have knowledge and skills in the specific areas of inclusion and inter-professional practice.*
- Equip students to identify, understand and take action to tackle all areas of discrimination and oppression impacting on service users and carers, marginalised groups and social workers.*
- Equip graduates with the necessary transferable skills to ensure that they can adhere to continuous professional development standards and contribute to the development of the profession.*
- Provide the intellectual engagement necessary to ensure that on successfully completing the course students will be able to make a significant contribution to the agencies and the services users/carers with whom they work.*
- Enable students to synthesise theory and practice and develop analytical and critical perspectives on social work.*
- Create reflective practitioners with a clear value and ethical base.*
- Provide students with an integrated curriculum which ensures that they can engage in high standards of practice.*
- Ensure that students have the graduate and employability skills necessary to work in the current practice environment.*
- Prepare students to be eligible to apply for registration with Social Work England at the point of qualification.*

Course Learning Outcomes and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies

The [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#) sets out a national framework of qualification levels, and the associated standards of achievement are found in their [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) document.

The Course Learning Outcomes for this course are outlined in the tables below.

| A. Knowledge and understanding of: | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| LO number | Learning outcome | Learning and Teaching methods | Assessment methods |
| A1 | <i>Social work services and issues impacting on service users and carers within the national and international context</i> | <i>The course employs a wide range of learning and teaching methods, including lectures and seminars, but also group work (including with 'experts by experience', i.e. users of social work services involved in our teaching), workshops, creative activities, skills days, case studies, simulations and two formal placements (70 days and 100 days) that include a range of practice learning opportunities supported by practice educators and work-based supervisors, and self-directed learning supported by extensive use of Moodle. All of these learning and teaching activities are geared towards developing research informed social graduates eligible to apply for professional registration</i> | <i>Assessments take a number of forms, including essays, case studies, simulation exercises, and formative feedback exercises, presentations, placement portfolios, critical appraisal of research, and a dissertation, as well as evaluation of direct practice on placement</i> |
| A2 | <i>Social and political factors impacting on social services and the people it works with including: poverty, social exclusion/inclusion, housing disadvantage, discrimination, oppression and other social divisions</i> | | |
| A3 | <i>Historical and contemporary models of social work intervention and the legislative and organisational context (professional and inter-professional) within which social workers operate</i> | | |
| A4 | <i>Human growth and development, including the transitions and stresses experienced across the life course</i> | | |
| A5 | <i>The core values underpinning social work and the codes of ethics by which social work is bound</i> | | |

| B. Cognitive (Intellectual or Thinking) skills, able to: | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| LO number | Learning outcome | Learning and Teaching methods | Assessment methods |
| B1 | <i>Critically evaluate a range of problems faced by service users and carers and consider how contemporary social workers can work toward providing effective solutions</i> | <i>The course employs a wide range of learning and teaching methods, including lectures and seminars, but also group work (including with 'experts by experience', i.e. users of social work services involved in our teaching), workshops, creative activities, skills days, case studies, simulations and two formal placements (70 days and 100 days) that include a range of practice learning opportunities supported by practice educators and work-based supervisors, and self-directed learning supported by extensive use of Moodle. All of these learning and teaching activities are geared towards developing research informed social graduates eligible to apply for professional registration</i> | <i>Assessments take a number of forms, including essays, case studies, simulation exercises, and formative feedback exercises, presentations, placement portfolios, critical appraisal of research, and a dissertation, as well as evaluation of direct practice on placement</i> |
| B2 | <i>Develop a critical understanding of the key theoretical frameworks used to explain contemporary social work</i> | | |
| B3 | <i>Critically evaluate the range of roles in professional, inter-professional and multi-professional settings and intervene effectively to maximise the outcomes for those who use social work services</i> | | |
| B4 | <i>Implement and evaluate a range of research and data retrieval systems to enhance the evidence base of the student's practice</i> | | |
| B5 | <i>Identify and reflect upon key developments in contemporary social work and develop models of evidence informed practice, which meet the rapidly changing needs of service users and carers, the workforce, and employers</i> | | |

| C. Practical (Professional or Subject) skills, able to: | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| LO number | Learning outcome | Learning and Teaching methods | Assessment methods |
| C1 | <i>Evaluate, plan and implement a range of strategies to meet the needs of people using social work services developing relationships with service users/carers and professionals.</i> | <i>The course employs a wide range of learning and teaching methods, including lectures and seminars, but also group work (including with 'experts by experience', i.e. users of social work services involved in our teaching), workshops, creative activities, skills days, case studies, simulations and two formal placements (70 days and 100 days) that include a range of practice learning opportunities supported by practice educators and work-based supervisors, and self-directed learning supported by extensive use of Moodle. All of these learning and teaching activities are geared towards developing research informed social graduates eligible to apply for professional registration</i> | <i>Assessments take a number of forms, including essays, case studies, simulation exercises, and formative feedback exercises, presentations, placement portfolios, critical appraisal of research, and a dissertation, as well as evaluation of direct practice on placement</i> |
| C2 | <i>Undertake complex risk assessments and case analysis to deliver appropriate outcomes for services and the people who use them. In particular, to be competent in undertaking assessments within the framework of the Children Act 1989/2004, the Care Act 2014, the Mental Health Act 1983, Mental Capacity Act 2005 (and other relevant legislation and policy) at a level appropriate to their training</i> | | |
| C3 | <i>Participate as an effective member in a multi-professional and inter-professional team setting and across professional boundaries, demonstrating the ability to synthesise theory and apply to practice within the academic and practice related tasks set within the units</i> | | |
| C4 | <i>Critically evaluate social work as a profession within the framework of the Standards of Proficiency and the PCF in the empowerment of people who experience significant levels of disadvantage and marginalisation</i> | | |
| C5 | <i>Plan, implement and evaluate the importance of safeguarding and wellbeing to social work practice, demonstrating the ability to meet the criteria to be able to apply to be a registrant with the HCPC/Social Work England by successful completion of the programme and through a critical understanding of the importance of professional leadership</i> | | |

| D. Transferrable (Graduate and Employability) skills, able to: | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| LO number | Learning outcome | Learning and Teaching methods | Assessment methods |
| D1 | <i>High level communication skills</i> | <i>The course employs a wide range of learning and teaching methods, including lectures and seminars, but also group work (including with 'experts by experience', i.e. users of social work services involved in our teaching), workshops, creative activities, skills days, case studies, simulations and two formal placements (70 days and 100 days) that include a range of practice learning opportunities supported by practice educators and work-based supervisors, and self-directed learning supported by extensive use of Moodle. All of these learning and teaching activities are geared towards developing research informed social graduates eligible to apply for professional registration</i> | <i>Assessments take a number of forms, including essays, case studies, simulation exercises, and formative feedback exercises, presentations, placement portfolios, critical appraisal of research, and a dissertation, as well as evaluation of direct practice on placement</i> |
| D2 | <i>To work independently and as part of a team and be a reflective practitioner</i> | | |
| D3 | <i>Manage time and meet deadlines</i> | | |
| D4 | <i>Demonstrate good ICT skills</i> | | |
| D5 | <i>Demonstrate the capacity to carry out research using a wide range of research tools, search strategies and methodologies</i> | | |

Academic Regulations

The current University of Portsmouth [Academic Regulations: Examination & Assessment Regulations](#) will apply to this course. Approved course exemptions can be found [here](#).

Support for Student Learning

The University of Portsmouth provides a comprehensive range of support services for students throughout their course, details of which are available at the [MyPort](#) student portal.

Evaluation and Enhancement of Standards and Quality in Learning and Teaching

The University of Portsmouth undertakes comprehensive monitoring, review and evaluation of courses within clearly assigned staff responsibilities. Student feedback is a key feature in these evaluations, as represented in our [Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice](#) where you can also find further information.

Reference Points

The course and outcomes have been developed taking account of:

- [University of Portsmouth Curriculum Framework Specification](#)
- [University of Portsmouth Vision](#)
- [Office for Students Conditions of Registration](#)
- [University of Portsmouth Code of Practice for Work-based and Placement Learning](#)
- [Quality Assurance Agency UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#)
- [Quality Assurance Agency Qualification Characteristic Statements](#)
- [Quality Assurance Agency Subject Benchmark Statement: for Social Work \(2016\)](#)
- [Quality Assurance Agency Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#)
- Requirements of Professional regulator: Social Work England
- Vocational and professional experience, scholarship and research expertise of the University of Portsmouth's academic members of staff

Changes to your course/modules

The University of Portsmouth has checked the information provided in this Course Specification and will endeavour to deliver this course in keeping with this Course Specification. However, changes to the course may sometimes be required arising from annual monitoring, student feedback, and the review and update of modules and courses.

Where this activity leads to significant changes to modules and courses there will be prior consultation with students and others, wherever possible, and the University of Portsmouth will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption to students.

It is also possible that the University of Portsmouth may not be able to offer a module or course for reasons outside of its control, for example, due to the absence of a member of staff or low student registration numbers. Where this is the case, the University of Portsmouth will endeavour to inform applicants and students as soon as possible, and where appropriate, will facilitate the transfer of affected students to another suitable course.

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