

SOCIAL WORKER DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

Information for employers

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1. INTRODUCTION

Our Social Worker Degree Apprenticeship (SWDA) supports employers to develop their support workers towards registration as a social worker with Social Work England (SWE). More information on the programme can be found on the [OU Social Worker Degree Apprenticeship webpage](#).

Based on some frequently asked questions, this document sets out some key information for our employer partners supporting apprentices on this programme. This information is correct at the time of publishing and this document will be reviewed regularly. Please contact your local Staff Tutor or your Apprenticeship Programme Delivery Manager with any queries.

2. PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The SWDA is delivered in partnership between the OU and your organisation. The programme is suitable for new and existing social care support staff who are responsible for delivering direct services and who have the potential to take on greater challenges and responsibilities as qualified social workers.

The programme has start dates in October and February each year. Comprising six 60-credit modules, the apprenticeship will take 3-4 years to complete depending on the start date.

The programme supports the development of social work apprentices across a wide range of settings, including services for adults, children and families, and mental health.

The curriculum is underpinned by the following standards and frameworks:

- [Social Work England Education and Training Standards](#)
- [The Professional Capabilities Framework \(PCF\)](#)
- [Social Work Degree Apprenticeship \(SWDA\) Standard](#)

Once qualified, all social workers need to demonstrate that they can practice according to the [Social Work England Professional Standards](#) and, in local authority contexts, the Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) for [children and families](#) and/or [adults](#).

The theory elements of the programme are delivered by the OU using our innovative tutor-supported distance learning delivery model. Tutor supported online learning is accessible 24/7 and provides consistently high-quality training for staff through online learning, tutorials, written assignments and wider reading, regardless of location.

Practice learning modules provide apprentices opportunities to apply and evidence their academic knowledge to social work duties. Further information is contained within the [practice learning section](#).

3. PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

OCTOBER START

Year 1										Year 2										Year 3														
O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Stage 1 KXY102 (60 credits) <i>Introducing Health and Social Care</i>										Stage 2 KXY271 (60 Credits) <i>Social Work Law</i>										EPA Gateway	Stage 3 KXY324 (60 credits) <i>End Point Assesment Module</i>													
					Stage 1 KXY113 (60 credits) <i>Foundations for Social Work Practice</i>										Stage 2 KXY216 (60 credits) <i>Applied Social Work Practice</i>											Stage 3 KXY315 (60 credits) <i>Critical social work practice</i>								

FEBRUARY START

Year 1										Year 2										Year 3																						
F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Stage 1 KXY102 (60 credits) <i>Introducing Health and Social Care</i>					Stage 2 KXY271 (60 Credits) <i>Social Work Law</i>															EPA Gateway	Stage 3 KXY324 (60 credits) <i>End Point Assesment Module</i>																					
Stage 1 KXY113 (60 credits) <i>Foundations for Social Work Practice</i>										Stage 2 KXY216 (60 credits) <i>Applied Social Work Practice</i>											Stage 3 KXY315 (60 credits) <i>Critical social work practice</i>																					

Key

	Academic Module
	Practice Module
	End Point Assessment

4. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The apprenticeship is available for those who work in suitable roles for 30 hours or more per week.

All SWDA applicants must:

- Have GCSE grade 9–4/A*–C/Functional/Key Skills Level 2 in English and mathematics, or a certified equivalent.
- Demonstrate IT competence through self-declaration.
- Demonstrate the potential to study at undergraduate level.
- Achieve an International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) score of 7 if English is not their first language.
- Have an enhanced DBS with lists check (i.e. checks against all registers including both children and vulnerable adults) dated within one year prior to starting the programme.
- Complete an application pack consisting of:
 - Application form.
 - Declaration of Suitability for Social Work form.
 - Equal Opportunities form.
- Take part in an interview and selection process.

All entry checks will occur upon application to the SWDA, prior to commencing study. Applicants must have successfully completed the required qualifications prior to applying to the programme and be able to evidence this with certification. The OU cannot accept applications if qualifications are still in progress or if results are pending.

Details on obtaining replacement educational certificates is available at the [Gov replacement exam certificate website](#). Details of the level 2 qualifications accepted by the ESFA can be found on the 'Level_3_Apprenticeships' tab of the [Gov website English and maths requirements in apprenticeship standards at level 2 and above](#) document.

If your staff do not currently meet the entry requirements, our free OpenLearn courses can help prepare your employees to achieve Functional Skills in maths and English. Assessment will need to be organised separately by your organisation with a local provider.

- [Everyday English for Health and Social Care and Education Support 1](#)
- [Everyday English for Health and Social Care and Education Support 2](#)
- [Everyday maths for Health and Social Care and Education Support 1](#)
- [Everyday maths for Health and Social Care and Education Support 2](#)

5. RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Recruitment and selection are conducted jointly with the employer together with The Open University and will include a formal application with written statement, written test and interview with service user involvement.

The SWDA is an employer-led combined academic and work-based qualification. Employers should carry out an internal sift or expression of interest process to select candidates to put forward. Agency led interviews are then carried out, with the support of your Staff Tutor.

The OU admissions team will provide full guidance notes to support the process from start to finish.

6. SUPPORT

There is a shared responsibility for the support of Social Worker Degree Apprentices between the OU and your organisation. There are a number of key staff who will be involved in your apprenticeship. Here is an overview of their roles and what they do.

6.1 Roles and responsibilities at the OU

- **Staff Tutor** – The Staff Tutor manages the OU Practice Tutors and will be the main point of contact for the Agency.
- **Practice Tutor** – Liaises with agency coordinators, practice educators, workplace supervisors and apprentices to agree a work plan and to monitor progress.
- **Academic Tutor** – Facilitates learning within the knowledge materials at each stage of the qualification through personalised tuition, delivery of tutorials, marking of assignments and detailed feedback.
- **Relationship Account Manager** – Works with employers to scope the best apprenticeship solutions to meet organisational need and advises where employers can maximise government funding against the skills development identified. Representing the whole University, the Relationship Manager will also explore other learning solutions outside of apprenticeships as required.
- **Apprenticeship Programme Delivery Manager (APDM)** – The APDM ensures compliance with ESFA requirements and will provide regular management information on all the apprenticeship programmes delivered by the OU.

In addition, The Open University provides the following support for apprentices:

- Access to the Student Support team, with a dedicated apprenticeships advice line.
- Disability and accessibility support (27,237 people with disabilities studied with The Open University in 2018/19).
- Access to an online library, containing a world-class collection of high-quality academic and professional resources.

6.2 Roles and responsibilities at the Agency

- **Agency Coordinator** – The main point of contact for the OU and is responsible for arranging placements.
- **Line Manager** – Will manage the apprentice in the workplace when not on placement.

- **Practice Educator** – Responsible for the teaching and assessment associated with practice learning on the programme.
- **Workplace supervisor** – If the practice assessor/educator does not work in the practice setting.
- **Mentor** – Provides informal support and guidance to the apprentice.

7. OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING

A core principle underpinning the apprenticeship standard is '20% off-the-job training' which is calculated over the duration of the programme. Off-the-job training is a statutory requirement for an English apprenticeship.

ESFA guidance defines this as training received by the apprentice, during the apprentice's normal working hours, for the purpose of achieving the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the approved apprenticeship referenced in the apprenticeship agreement. Normal working hours means the hours for which the apprentice would normally be paid, excluding overtime.

It is not on-the-job training which is training received by the apprentice for the sole purpose of enabling the apprentice to perform the work for which they have been employed. This means training that does not specifically link to the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship.

Off-the-job training must deliver new skills that are directly relevant to the apprenticeship. It can include the following:

- The teaching of theory (for example, lectures, role playing, simulation exercises and online learning).
- Practical training, shadowing, mentoring, industry visits, and participation in competitions.
- Learning support and time spent writing assessments/assignments.

Off-the-job training does not include:

- Training to acquire knowledge, skills and behaviours that are not required in the apprenticeship standard.
- Progress reviews or on-programme assessment required for an apprenticeship standard.
- Training which takes place outside the apprentice's normal working hours.

Off-the-job training can include training that is delivered at the apprentice's normal place of work. It can also include regular day release, block release and special training days/workshops.

8. RECOGNISED PRIOR LEARNING AND CREDIT TRANSFER

If an applicant has previously studied elsewhere and their studies were completed at the same academic level as The Open University modules, we may be able to award credit transfer towards the programme. For previous study, completed up to 5 years ago, the maximum amount of credit transfer into the SWDA is 120 credits.

Find out more on our [credit transfer website](#).

9. PRACTICE LEARNING

Apprentices must undertake two substantive periods of assessed work-based learning, arranged by the employer and including assessment by a practitioner in the role of practice educator.

There must be differentiation between the setting and/or client group experienced in the two placements, one of which is 70 days long and the other 100 days. Your Staff Tutor can provide advice about ways in which you can achieve a contrast in placements.

All practice learning will be assessed in accordance with the [Professional Capabilities Framework \(PCF\)](#).

9.1 Readiness to Practice

Foundations for social work Practice (KXY113)

It is a requirement that learners on all courses leading to a degree in social work in England demonstrate that they are prepared for their practice learning.

In year 1, KXY113 apprentices must complete a structured programme of 20 practice skills days, preparing them for their first assessed practice learning opportunity in year 2. This module includes a minimum 10-day period of supervised practice learning in a social care setting and attendance at seven workshops, three of which are face-to-face and four online.

Assessment is via eight tutor-marked assignments; three computer marked assignments and satisfactory completion of the 10-day practice learning period.

9.2 Practice Placements

Applied social work practice (KXY216)

The first of two practice-based modules include 70-days of assessed practice learning under the supervision of a Practice Educator. Timing of this placement would take place between February to July. Apprentices must also attend seven obligatory workshops, of which five are face-to-face.

Assessment for this module is via three tutor-marked assignments, an end of module project and satisfactory completion of the 70-day practice placement.

Critical social work practice (KXY315)

The second practice-based module includes 100-days of assessed practice learning under the supervision of a Practice Educator. Timing of this placement would take place between October to April. Apprentices must also attend a further seven workshops, of which five are face-to-face.

Assessment is via five tutor-marked assignments, an end of module project and satisfactory completion of the 100-day practice placement.

9.3 The Practice Portfolio

The Practice Portfolio records evidence of application of knowledge and demonstration of the skills, values and behaviours required to meet the apprenticeship standard. Apprentices and their workplace practice educators are supported in practice by an OU Practice Tutor to ensure the apprentices achieve the full range of practice learning requirements.

9.4 Practice learning supervision

The Practice Educator will be responsible for the teaching and assessment tasks associated with practice learning on the programme. Agencies are responsible for appointing practice educators. Guidance about who can become a practice educator is detailed in the [BASW England Practice Educator Professional Standards for social work](#).

In some circumstances there may not be a suitable Practice Educator working in the practice setting. In these instances, an Off-site Practice Educator can be brought in to undertake the formal requirements of supervision, teaching and assessment. In this instance, a workplace supervisor is designated to undertake day-to-day support and supervision of the apprentice.

The Workplace Supervisor will be responsible for day-to-day supervision of the apprentice in circumstances where the practice assessor/educator is not working in the practice setting of the apprentice. This may be the apprentice's line manager, or someone else with whom they work in the practice setting.

For the module *Critical social work practice* (KXY315), the workplace supervisor should be a registered social worker in a post requiring Social Work England (SWE) registration.

10.ASSESSMENT

10.1 Theory assessment

Your apprentices' theory work will be assessed by the OU through a combination of Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs), interactive Computer-Marked Assignments (iCMAs) and End-of-Module Assessments (EMAs).

10.2 Practice-based assessment

E-Portfolio

The OU uses an e-portfolio system that acts as both a repository for apprenticeship specific work, and as a recording mechanism.

Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and Skills Audit

The Open University will help apprentices produce and maintain an ILP, tailored to their specific needs and career goals. The individual learning plan is a useful way for apprentices to collate and track information, including details of all their learning and relevant workplace training, and helps them plan their workload to complete tasks in line with their development goals. This is completed at the start of the apprenticeship.

At the same time as undertaking the ILP, apprentices are encouraged to undertake a Skills Audit in conjunction with their employer and/or practice tutor. This is an opportunity to review current skills in relation to the SWDA standard, and to provide early visibility of the knowledge, skills and behaviours the programme develops.

Skills Days

Practice skills workshops count towards the requirement for 30 practice skills days and – like placement days – are compulsory; they must be satisfactorily completed, in addition to placement days, before apprentices can pass the module. Please see the [Practice Learning section](#) for more information.

Reviews

There will be regular review meetings in each year of the apprenticeship. These meetings will include the apprentice, their line manager and/or apprenticeship mentor and the practice tutor. Meetings will take place while the apprentice is on their practice placement modules.

Progress updates

Each quarter, the APDM will provide a summary report outlining apprentice performance.

If required, meetings can be arranged with the APDM and the Staff Tutor to discuss the report and the progress of the apprentices and the programme in general.

10.3 End-Point Assessment (EPA)

The end-point assessment (EPA) determines whether apprentices have successfully demonstrated the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the [SWDA Standard's Assessment Plan on the Institute for Apprenticeships website](#). This is integrated in the final module of the SWDA.

11. FUNDING THE APPRENTICESHIP

Employers will need to register with the Apprenticeship Service to get funding to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment costs. [Create an account to manage apprenticeships on the Gov website](#).

11.1 Using your apprenticeship levy

Organisations operating in the UK with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million are required to invest in apprenticeships through the apprenticeship levy. The levy is charged at a rate of 0.5% of your organisation's annual pay bill. If your organisation pays the levy, you may utilise your levy payments to cover the cost of the Social Work Degree Apprenticeship.

11.2 Non-levy payers

Non-levy payers share the cost of training and assessing their apprentices with the government, known as co-investment. Your organisation will pay 5% towards the apprenticeship training costs and the government pays the remaining 95%. Employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy are required to reserve funding for the apprenticeship through the Apprenticeship Service.

11.3 Levy Transfer

Alternatively, levy paying organisations may transfer their levy funds to a non-levy paying organisation in a way that benefits them both.

Read more in our [levy transfer blog post](#) or read [further guidance for apprenticeship funding on the Gov website](#).

11.4 Incentives

There are currently government incentives to encourage employers to engage with apprenticeship. Further information can be found regarding [current funding incentives on the gov website](#).

11.5 Other costs to consider

Further costs that cannot be claimed through the apprenticeship levy and should be taken into consideration include:

- The apprentice's salary (the Social Work apprentice must be employed for a minimum of 30 hours a week for the duration of the apprenticeship).
- Backfill for the 20% off-the-job training time.
- Backfill for apprentices while they are completing Social Work placements.
- Travel expenses associated with attending face to face tutorials.
- The cost associated with appointing a qualified Practice Educator to assess the apprentices during placements.

11.6 Can my employees self-fund on the programme?

The Social Work Degree Apprenticeship cannot be self-funded. If you are interested in Social Work programmes which have the option for students to self-fund, you may wish to consider our non-apprenticeship routes:

- [BA \(Honours\) Social Work \(England\)](#)
- [Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work](#)
- [MA in Social Work](#)

11.7 How can I procure the SWDA for my organisation?

The OU is on many apprenticeship procurement frameworks, or you can contract directly. Please speak to your Relationship Account Manager to discuss options.