Thinking About a Career in Social Work?  
Talk to the Open University about Our Unique Work-Based  
BA (Hons) Degree in Social Work

Frequently Asked Questions: 2022 admissions

Questions about Qualifications and Entrance Criteria

1. Who can apply to study the OU Northern Ireland social work degree?
   This degree is an employment-based sponsored programme. This means that the
   social work degree is restricted to applicants who are employed as social care
   workers. Your employer must be a Designated or Associate Practice Learning
   Provider for social work placements (DPLP/APLP). If your employer is not a DPLP
   or APLP they should contact the Northern Ireland Social Care Council for further
   information. Applicants cannot apply directly to the Open University and require
   sponsorship by an employer. Please note there are a limited number of places on
   the degree, and this is a competitive process. Even if you meet the entry
   requirements, there are usually more applicants than there are available places on
   the course.

2. What are the entrance criteria to study social work at the Open University?
   The Open University have essential criteria that prospective students must meet to
   apply for the Social Work degree.
   - UCAS tariff threshold of 96 points or equivalent, OR successful completion of
     OU module K101/K102 An Introduction to Health and Social Care
   - GCSE Grade C or above in English and Maths or equivalencies
   - Successful performance at interview
   - Sponsorship by a social work/social care employer
   - Access NI Enhanced Disclosure Check as a Student Social Worker
   - You may need to evidence medical fitness to practice
   - Completion of Declaration of suitability
   - Successful registration as a Student Social Worker with the Northern Ireland
     Social Care Council

   Click here to access a helpful tool to help you check whether your qualifications meet
   the 96 UCAS points.

3. How do I apply?
   Entry to the degree must be through your employer, as you cannot apply direct to
   the Open University. Applicants will complete an application form and undertake an
   interview as part of the application process. Further details about the admissions
   process are available from your employer. Your employer needs to meet certain
   criteria to ensure they can fulfil the functions of sponsorship. Employers can find
   further information in the Employer Handbook (click here for link to handbook)
   which explains how to implement the degree into a work setting. Employers will
   have criteria and a selection process for staff interested in applying to the degree.
4. When do applications open and what is the deadline to apply?
Applicants do not apply directly to the Open University. The timeline for applications being processed is arranged by employers in collaboration with the university. The recruitment process for the social work degree takes place between January-June each year for the degree which starts in October. The first step involves your employer undertaking a selection process to nominate staff members to apply to the degree. You should speak to your employer in January to find out their internal closing date for staff nominations, as it is your employer who sets this first deadline.

5. Is there an age limit for applicants?
No. We encourage all ages to apply for the programme.

6. Can I apply if I work part-time or volunteer in social care?
You need to speak with your employer about their criteria for sponsoring staff to undertake the social work degree. Please note that placements in year 2 and 3 require full-time attendance.

7. What certificates do I need?
Applicants need to provide proof of completed qualifications to demonstrate how they meet the academic entry criteria. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure qualifications are recorded accurately on the application form, and that they can provide original certificates to evidence attainment of qualification at interview.

Please ensure that any missing certificates are ordered at point of application from awarding bodies and well in advance of interview. These can be obtained by contacting your school or the relevant examining body, who will hold a record of your qualifications.

If your certificates are issued in a name different to that which you currently use, you must submit evidence of your former name (e.g., marriage certificate, deed poll document).

You will be required to produce these at interview. **Failure to bring certificates to the interview will result in your application not being accepted.**

8. I have completed other OU modules – do they count towards credit for the degree?
Credit Transfer for Social Work is extremely limited because it is a professional programme. Restrictions such as time limits and credit applicability apply.

If an applicant already holds a qualification at HE level in a similar subject, they may be exempt from K102. Credit transfer still needs to be applied for. Only previous study which is five years or less will be considered.

If you have previously completed K113, credit migration may be considered as part of the registration process.

Please click [here](#) to access the self-assessment tool on the Credit Transfer website to see if a Credit Transfer application would be appropriate.

**Please note there is a deadline for applications for credit transfer.**
Questions about the (Hons) Degree in Social Work

9. How long does it take to complete the Open University Social Work Degree Programme?
The Social Work Degree has 6 modules (360 credits) to be completed. Most students complete 2 modules per year (120 credits) and will therefore complete the programme in 3 years.

10. What is expected of me on the degree?
Undertaking the degree will usually mean studying between 16-32 hours per week, depending on how many modules you are studying, plus work-based learning. It is mandatory that you are available for practice placements and submit assignments when they are due.

All students undertaking social work training in Northern Ireland are required to register with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) before they commence their training. NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice describe the standards of professional conduct and practice required of social workers and social work students. Click here for more information about the standards.

11. How is the degree assessed?
The programme is academic and practice based. Students must pass both elements. Each module on the programme is assessed in a variety of ways and these include, assignments, observations of skills and practice by both Tutors and Practice Teachers. Students on the NI Degree Programme are assessed against the Key Roles and National Occupational Standards, that specify the skills, knowledge and performance criteria, (learning outcomes), to be achieved throughout a social worker’s career.

12. What support will I receive while undertaking the degree?
Students are allocated specific Module Tutors for each module. Students also have a Practice Tutor when on placement in Year 2 (K216) and Year 3 (K315) alongside a placement practice teacher and supervisor. Practice Tutors will visit students on placement on at least three occasions to support and quality assure the learning experience.

Students will also have access to the Student Support Team (SST), available via phone, email, or Webchat, 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

13. Can I continue working while I study for this degree?
As our degree is an employment-based programme our students work as social care workers while studying. This is a distance learning programme, so you study in your own time. Students also attend a combination of online and face-to-face skills workshops which are normally delivered at weekends or evenings. This allows for flexible learning around work and family commitments.
OU BA (Hons) in Social Work – 3 year pathway (360 credits)

**Level 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- K102 – Introduction to Health and Social Care (60 credits)
- K113 – Foundations for Social Work Practice (60 credits) including 10 days verified practice

**Level 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- K271 – Social Work Law (60 credits)
- K216 – Applied Social Work Practice (60 credits) including 85 day PLO

**Level 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *One optional module (60 credits):* K314 – Approaches to Mental Health; K332 – Young Lives, Parenting and Families; K318 – Leading, Managing and Caring; K323 – Investigating Health and Social Care
- K315 – Critical Social Work Practice (60 credits) including 100 day PLO

**Practice Learning**

Throughout their time on the Degree in Social Work Programme, students will be required to undertake 10 work experience days at level 1, 85 days at level 2 and 100 days at level 3. Practice learning for level 1 and 2 typically take place in students own workplaces. The level 2 placement will be in students own team/workbase if it can offer sufficient learning opportunities and meet practice learning requirements and standards. In Level 3 students undertake practice learning placement in an external team or organisation.

**15. Can I choose where I go on placement?**

No, placements are allocated according to availability by the regional allocation system and with due regard to each student's learning needs. Placements are offered across all settings and programmes of care, including the five Health and Social Care Trusts, Voluntary Agencies, Department of Justice, (including Probation Board NI and Youth Justice) and the Education Authority.

Students are allocated to suitable placements throughout the course of the Degree in Social work and will be notified of these at the relevant time. **They cover a wide geographical area and students will need to be prepared to travel to their placement destination.** Students should also be aware that not all placements follow a Monday-Friday, 9-5pm work pattern.
Questions about other options to social work

16. I am interested, but unsure about a career in social work, what should I do?

It can be challenging to make decisions about your future career and many people are not totally clear about what social workers do and what kind of work that they are involved in. However, there are great options available for you to learn more about the profession.

The Open University offers a FREE course, An Introduction to Social Work that introduces you to the social work role, key ideas, values, and the skills needed for social work practice. Click here to access the course.

You can also learn more about a career in social work from the NI Social Care Council website.

17. What other health and social care courses can I study at OU?

The Open University provides a range of health and social care degrees, diplomas, and certificates. You can find information about them here.

For example, you could study a Certificate in Higher Education in Social Care (T39), or K102 and K113 as individual modules. A lot of students complete the Certificate, and it is a good opportunity for them to test their academic ability first. This is also a great way to introduce yourself to the Open University. Having the Certificate does not guarantee direct entry onto the social work degree, as all entry and sponsorship criteria need to be met. However, if you are successful in getting a place on the social work programme, you may be able to use the Certificate as credit towards the degree.

For further information about the BA (Hons) Degree in Social work: Contact Us | Open University Tel: 02890 323722