

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Science in Social Work**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2011**

The aims of the Masters Degree in Social Work are:

- To further develop a sound and extensive knowledge and skills base for the generic practice of professional social work;
- to enhance the research literacy of students including training in research techniques;
- to enable students to acquire the advanced knowledge and skills to identify and implement effective solutions to complex social problems;
- to foster the capacity for independent learning at an advanced level which is essential to continuing professional development;
- to equip students with key communications and IT skills relevant for generic social work;
- to deliver teaching within a flexible and progressive structure which will enable students to acquire advanced knowledge, understanding and appropriate skills relevant to individual practice specialisms;
- to develop professional competence in working with diversity and providing ethnically-sensitive patterns of service;
- to work in partnership with the Programme Stakeholders to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the programme for the needs of social work at a higher level;
- to produce social workers who are professionally and academically able, reflective, analytically critical, effective, fit for professional practice, purpose and award, and who will endeavour to achieve positive outcomes for service users.

The Masters programme is full-time and runs over two years. The programme meets the Department of Health requirements of 200 days of learning in practice settings and at least 200 days (or 1200 hours) in structured academic study. The curriculum is based around a core of mandatory units which meet the requirements for social work training specified by the Department of Health and the General Social Care Council. The first year of the Masters offers a generic foundation. In the second year, students are provided the opportunity to study an area of social work in greater depth. Academic courses run concurrently with the professional practice placement in years 1 and 2.

Students are required to register with the GSCC on commencement of the programme and to abide by the GSCC's Code of Practice for Social Care Workers. Any breaches of the Code are a serious matter and may lead to termination of the student's registration and cancellation of their registration with the GSCC. On successful completion of this programme, students will be eligible for professional registration with the GSCC, which is necessary for employment in professional social work.

Further information

[Learning outcomes](#)

[Teaching, learning and assessment](#)

[Details of the programme structure\(s\)](#)

[Progression and award requirements](#)

[Student support and guidance](#)

[Admission requirements](#)

[Further learning and career opportunities](#)

[Indicators of quality and standards](#)

[List of programmes, with details of awards, degree titles, accreditation and teaching arrangements](#)

This document provides a summary of the main features of the programme(s), and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, the College Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, programmes and the availability of

individual courses are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific programme. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning in the programme are closely informed by the active research of staff. Specialist practitioners and practice tutors provide opportunities for students in social work placements and in College to develop their skills and to apply social work theories and methods to specialist practice areas. In general terms, the programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding

- sociology, psychology, social policy and law and their application to social work practice;
- the contribution and application of social research to social work theories and practice;
- the range of statutory, voluntary and private welfare organisations within social work agencies and in health, housing and educational environments;
- the range of theories and methods needed for effective social work practice;
- the social and individual origins of a typical range of problems presented to social care agencies;
- values and ethics relevant to social work practice;
- the significance of inequalities and difference in working with organisations and social service users;
- the significance of cultural diversity and anti discriminatory practice in working with organisations and social service users;
- the acquisition, through study and critical engagement, of a knowledge of the field to a level appropriate for that of an MSc degree.

Skills and other attributes

- advanced level skills in practice methods: demonstrates competency over a broad range of generic social work functions and roles and has also achieved a higher level of competency and knowledge in selected option;
- effective decision making and problem solving skills and is able to apply these to a range of social care settings and with service users from different social, ethnic, economic and religious backgrounds;*
- good verbal and written presentation skills – is able to organise complex information in a clear and concise manner in a format appropriate for the purpose;*
- an advanced level of analytical and theoretical sophistication – demonstrates capacity for abstracting, synthesising and applying knowledge;*
- skills in assessment, planning, reporting and evaluation;
- the capacity to work autonomously and effectively within the structure and function of the social care agency and is effective in team working, negotiation and collaboration;*
- investigative skills, including literature and database searches and is able to analyse the impact of social policies on all systems – client, staff and agency;*
- research skills needed to plan and execute a project on a defined topic, and is able to present a coherent, reasoned argument in an oral presentation or an extended piece of written work;*
- a standard of proficiency in relation to information technology that is commensurate with advanced level study (including spreadsheets, databases, word processing, e-mail, and the world wide web);*
- a standard of practice that demonstrates understanding of and commitment to the moral and ethical issues involved in social work research and professional practice;
- the ability to undertake independent, critical thinking and to enhance professional development through reflective learning and practice;*
- effective time management and organisational skills.*
- adapt his/her own social work practice to the needs of specified groups e.g. the disabled, the aged, children, persons living with HIV/AIDS, victims of abuse and violence.

* transferable skills

Personal attributes and social skills

In addition, the programme fosters the development of a range of personal attributes that are important in the wider world, and that strengthen the abilities to engage in continuing professional development and to contribute to the wider community. These include:

- self-awareness and the willingness to attempt to correct any adverse influences;
- empathy and insight;
- creativity and enterprise;
- self-motivation;
- awareness of responsibility as a local, national and international citizen;
- confidence and competence in working with diversity;
- flexibility and adaptability;
- confidence (in deploying the appropriate specialist skills as required in the field of study);
- well-developed professional attitudes (see GSCC (2002) Code of Practice for Social Care Workers);
- the capacity for critical thinking and practice.

[Back to top](#)

Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning take place in both academic and practice settings. A range of teaching methods are employed, including lectures, seminars, workshops, group work, individual and group tutorials, guided independent research, guided independent study, observations, case discussions, practice presentations, supervised fieldwork and practice supervision.

Assessment of knowledge and understanding is by formal examinations, coursework exercises, reports, essays, case studies, oral presentations and the dissertation. Assessment on placement is through direct observation, written assignments, case summaries, a case study and a practice placement report. Social work skills and competencies are also assessed in practice placements. Full details of the assessments for individual courses can be obtained from the Health and Social Care Department www.rhul.ac.uk/Health-and-SocialCare/.

[Back to top](#)

Details of the programme structure(s) All courses are compulsory, that is they must be passed before progression on to the next stage of the programme. A full list of courses for the current academic year can be obtained from Department www.rhul.ac.uk/Health-and-SocialCare/.

Stage one:

Students must take:	<u>% of programme</u>
HC5017 Law for Social Work (0.5 unit)	0.0625
HC5020 Social Work Theory and Practice (0.5 unit))	0.0625
HC5022 Social Work and Society (0.5 unit))	0.0625
HC5018 Lifespan Psychology (0.5 unit))	0.0625
HC5006 Practice Learning I & 100 day placement (2 units)	0.25
HC5515 Research Methods (linked to Dissertation)	

In their first year, all students are required to satisfactorily complete an information technology skills programme offered through the College's Computer Centre, in order to ensure that they meet the GSCC requirements. This is organised directly by the student. Exemptions will be given to those who already possess this qualification.

Stage two:

Students must take:	<u>% of programme</u>
HC5516 Dissertation (1 unit)	0.125
HC5007 Practice Learning II & 100 day Practice Placement (2 units)	0.25
HC 5510/5511/5512 Critical Social Work Specialist Practice option (1 unit)	0.125

[Back to top](#)

Progression and award requirements

In order to progress to the second year of the programme and qualify for the award of the MSc, students must pass with a mark of at least 50% for all written components and achieve a Pass level in the first year

placement. Students are required to pass all courses in years 1 and 2, and both placements to be awarded the **MSc in Social Work**.

A Pass with Distinction may be awarded if an overall average is obtained of at least 70.00% with no component less than 50% over the two years. A Distinction will not normally be awarded if a student has undertaken a resit of any element.

A Pass with Merit may be awarded to candidates who have achieved an overall average mark of not less than 60.00% with a Pass (minimum 50%) in each course unit/taught element

Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work – A student who fails to pass his/her dissertation, but reaches a 50% pass mark in all other work, in both years, can be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work.

Graduate Diploma in Social Work – A student who passes both of their practice placements satisfactorily but who fails to achieve a mark of 50% or above in all components, but nevertheless reaches a mark of at least 40% in all other work can be awarded a Graduate Diploma in Social Work. At the end of the first year, students may pursue the Graduate Diploma only if they have reached the mark of 40% in all first year components and have passed their placement satisfactorily. There is no requirement to undertake the second year academic option course or the dissertation for such students.

Fail marks cannot be condoned for the MSc and Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work.

N.B. The Masters in Social Work, and both the Postgraduate and the Graduate Diploma are GSCC recognised professional social work qualifications.

Consequences of failure of placement

Students must pass their first and second social care placements as part of their award of MSc in Social Work.

If a student is awarded a referral for a first or second social care placement they will be required to undertake a further period of placement days which will be recommended by their Practice Assessor and will be confirmed by the Examination Sub-Board. A referred placement must be successfully completed before a student can progress into the second year of the Programme.

If a student fails the first placement, no second attempt will be allowed and the student will not be eligible for the MSc in Social Work. The student will not be permitted to proceed to the 2nd year of the MSc course.

If a student fails the second placement, no second attempt will be allowed and the student will not be eligible for the MSc in Social Work.

Non-Social Work Awards

MSc in Social Studies

This can be granted to students who have passed at 50%+ all taught components of the Programme, or have condonable fails, and the dissertation, but have failed to complete the second placement successfully.

Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies:

This can be granted to students who have passed all taught components of the Programme at 50%+, or have condonable fails, but have failed to complete the second placement successfully.

Graduate Diploma in Social Studies:

This can be granted to students who have failed to achieve a mark of 50% or above in all components, but nevertheless reached a mark of at least 40% in all components of the Programme, but have failed to complete the second placement successfully.

Failure marks in the region 40-49% in courses which do not constitute more than 25% of the final assessment, may be condoned for the MSc and Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies.

[Back to top](#)

Student support and guidance

- Tutors: All students are allocated a personal advisor who meets with them regularly throughout the programme, in groups and on an individual basis. The tutor's role is to advise on academic, practice, pastoral and welfare issues.
- Practice assessors: help and advise the student whilst on the practice placement and liaise with the student's academic tutor when the student is based in College.
- Course co-ordinators, other tutors and dissertation supervisors provide a back-up system of academic, pastoral and welfare advice.
- All staff are available and accessible through dedicated office hours system.
- Detailed student handbook and course resources.
- Shared Departmental Common room.
- Shared Departmental reading room, with collection of articles and books supporting teaching and learning.
- Shared Departmental computing facilities.
- CCTV studio teaching facility
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources in College libraries and computer centre.
- College Careers Service.
- College Graduate School
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Health Centre, Student Union, Chaplaincy and the Education Support Unit for students with special needs.

[Back to top](#)

Admission requirements

Admission to the Masters programme normally requires a First or Second Class Honours Degree in any subject, and 6 months full time or 12 months part time social work experience. The Department has some flexibility in its admissions and offers policy and strongly encourages non-standard applicants (e.g. those with a lower class degree, substantial relevant professional experience or another professional qualification such as nursing or occupational therapy). However, all applicants are also required by the General Social Care Council to have Mathematics and English at Key Skills level 2 at least, normally equivalent to grade C in GCSE examinations, and no flexibility is possible in this regard. All applicants are interviewed individually. They must all undergo a Criminal Records Bureau Enhanced Disclosure, and provide a satisfactory health declaration, which may lead to a subsequent requirement for a doctor's report.

Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in English Language at an appropriate level. For further details please refer to the [Prospective Students](#) web page. It may also be helpful to contact the [Admissions Office](#) for specific guidance on the entrance requirements for particular programmes

Employment Sponsored Route

Employment sponsored students must be employed in a social care agency and have their employer's financial and work support.

Assessed preparation for direct practice learning - 'fitness for practice' is an essential GSCC requirement before a student may commence the placement component of the Programme. Applicants are required to make their own arrangements to shadow an experienced and qualified social worker, and complete a workbook (see **Assessed preparation for direct practice learning guidelines**). This **MUST** be done prior to joining the programme, and applicants are required to send the observed practice testimonial and the completed workbook to the Departmental Administrator by 30 June.

[Back to top](#)

Further learning and career opportunities

As well as providing a firm foundation for further postgraduate study and research (for example, post-qualifying courses in child care; MPhil/PhD study), this degree Programme will provide skills that are transferable to a wide variety of employment opportunities in social care. In recent years, our postgraduate students have found employment in a range of social care settings including work with families and children and older people, and in the fields of mental health and disability.

The placement co-ordinator organises annual careers fairs for students. Personal advisers provide a range of help including putting students in touch with the college careers service, and preparing for job applications and interviews. For more details on further learning and career opportunities please refer to the College [Careers Service](#).

[Back to top](#)

Indicators of quality and standards

Royal Holloway's position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive institutions was confirmed by the results of the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). The new scoring system for the RAE 2008 measures research quality in four categories, with the top score of 4* indicating quality that is world-leading and of the highest standards in terms of originality, significance and rigour. 60% of the College's research profile is rated as world-leading or internationally excellent outperforming the national average of 50%. The College is ranked 16th in the UK for research of 4* standard and 18th for 3* and 4* research. 45% of the Department's research profile is of 3* and 4* standard.

The General Social Care Council (GSCC) conducts annual and quinquennial reviews of the programme. In addition the College has annual quality assurance procedures and undertakes Periodic Departmental Reviews. In January 2010 a review was undertaken by the College and the GSCC. The review panel noted that the panel was able to verify that:

- the standards set are suitable to the named awards and that students are supported appropriately in achieving the required standards;
- the programmes are current and that measures are in place to ensure that they remain valid in light of developments in the discipline and in learning and teaching;
- the accredited social work programmes meet the specific requirements of the GSCC for Social Work Training.

[Back to top](#)

List of programmes

The programme is taught entirely by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London. The Master's degree programme leads to an award of the University of London. The Postgraduate Diploma and the Graduate Diploma and the non-social work qualifications are awards of Royal Holloway, University of London. All social work programmes are accredited by the General Social Care Council and satisfy its professional requirements for registration as a social worker. The QAA subject benchmark statement in Social Policy and Administration and Social Work describes the general features which one might expect from an Honours Degree programme in the subject, and can therefore be used as a point of reference when reading this document (see www.qaa.ac.uk). Further reference points on which this programme is based are 'The Requirements for Social Work Training' published by the Department of Health in June 2002 and the National Occupational Standards for Social Work (TOPSS 2002). The programme codes are given in parentheses.

Masters Degree programme in Social Work

MSc Social Work (L508)

Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (exit award only)

PgDip Social Work

Graduate Diploma in Social Work (exit award only)

GradDip Social Work

Masters Degree programme in Social Studies (exit award only)

MSc Social Studies

Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies (exit award only)

PgDip Social Studies

Graduate Diploma in Social Studies (exit award only)

GradDip Social Studies

[Back to top](#)