

## PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Science Degree in Social Work**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2013**.

The overall aim of the programme is to produce social work practitioners who are able to demonstrate an ability to be critically reflective practitioners and who are able to integrate the specific subject knowledge, values and skills in analytical ways to promote and safeguard individual and collective well-being with a range of user groups in complex situations. On successful completion of the programme students will be able to demonstrate qualifying level capabilities in line with the Professional Capabilities Framework (established by the College of Social Work (TCSW)) and the Standards of Proficiency set out by the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC).

In particular the programme aims to provide teaching and learning opportunities that support the development of outcomes at Level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) including:

- knowledge and understanding of diversity and applying anti-oppressive principles in practice,
- an understanding of the value base of social work and the application of ethical principles to guide practice,
- abilities in critical reflection and analysis of relevant theory, research, policy, and law to inform the rationale for professional decision-making,
- an understanding of appropriate methods of practice, theoretical perspectives and research evidence to apply in their work with individuals, families and communities,
- an understanding of complex social problems and be able to integrate this into work with vulnerable people and communities.
- intervention skills for direct practice to promote independence and prevent harm, neglect and abuse,
- an understanding of working in organisational contexts including, collaborative working and inter-professional practice,
- skills in research and critical use of literature and research evidence,
- a commitment to promote rights, justice and economic well-being, and
- a professional identity to take responsibility for their own conduct in accordance with the standards set by the HCPC.

The Department of Social Work will work in partnership with the Social Work Course Board, which consists of Service Users, Employers and Students, the aim of the board is to oversee the overall quality and content of the programme, as well as to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the programme for the needs of social work.

The Masters programme is full-time and runs over two years (104 weeks). The programme meets The College of Social Work (TCSW) requirements and provides 200 days of practice learning which will include:

30 days for development of practice skills

70 days first placement

100 days last placement

The 30 days for the development of practice skills are spread across several courses as follows:-

Practice Learning 1 – 15.5 days which includes developing interviewing skills, direct work with service users, exploring communication skills, practicing intervention approaches and developing writing skills such as recording and report writing;

Human Behaviour in the Social Environment – 3 days focusing on child observation and presentation skills;

Practice Learning 2 – 12 days which includes developing skills in systemic family work, applying critical reflection to practice skills;

Critical Social Work – 3 days exploring skills relating to working with other professionals, working with resistant service users, working with service users who have specific issues/ problems such as substance use or domestic violence;

The Induction programme at the beginning of the course has been allocated half a day to cover recognising professionalism.

The programme is designed and delivered to high professional standards in social work knowledge, values and practice and in line with entry and qualifying levels of the Professional Capabilities Framework.

The curriculum is designed to meet the requirements for social work training specified by The College of Social Work (Professional Capability Framework and Curriculum Guides), and the HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Social Work as well as meeting the relevant descriptors of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and the QAA's Master's Degree Characteristics. The first year of the Masters offers a generic foundation. In the second year, students are provided the opportunity to consolidate learning from year 1, further develop critical reflection skills, develop research skills, and consider social work practice with one service user group. Academic courses run concurrently with the professional practice placement in years 1 and 2.

The Programme provides 180 credits at Master's level of study.

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 the Department Of Social Work Handbook 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 provided by the programme are closely informed by the active research of staff, specialist practitioners (including social work service and training managers), service users and carers, practice educators, and practice tutors.

In general terms, the programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes at level 7 of the FHEQ:

*Knowledge and understanding about:-*

- the centrality of relationships for people and the key concepts of attachment, separation, loss, change and resilience;
- the tasks required in professional social work – the responsibilities and accountabilities of qualified social workers;
- the range of statutory, voluntary and private welfare organisations within social work agencies and in health, housing and educational environment;
- the range of theories and social work approaches and evidence-based interventions needed for effective social work practice;
- theories of human growth, behaviour and development throughout the lifespan;
- the value base of social work and ethical principles relevant to social work practice;
- the significance of inequalities and diversity in working with organisations and service users;
- how an individual's identity is constructed by factors such as culture, economic status, family composition, life experiences and characteristics, and take account of these to understand their experiences, questioning assumptions where necessary; different forms of harm and their impact on

people, the promotion of well-being drawing on concepts of strength, resilience, vulnerability, risk and resistance, and the application of these to practice;

- the contribution of social policy, the organisation of social work, law and policy guidance, and their application to social work practice;
- the social and individual origins of a typical range of problems presented to social care agencies;
- the contribution and application of social research to social work theories and practice; and
- the principles of social justice, human rights, inclusion and equality.

#### *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 working with a particular user group;
- 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;\*
- sound and effective skills of critical reflection;\*
- 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 and an extended piece of written work;\*
- a standard of proficiency in relation to information technology that is commensurate with advanced level study;\*
- 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;\*
- ability to work effectively in partnerships with service users, carers and professionals and occupational groups;\*
- adapt his/her own social work practice to the needs of specified groups e.g. children and adults experiencing abuse and violence, older people, adults and children with mental health and substance misuse problems, refugees and asylum seekers, and people with disabilities.

\* Transferable skills

#### *Personal attributes and social skills*

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

- self-awareness, including recognising and managing the impact on people of the power invested in your role and the willingness to attempt to correct any adverse influences;
- respectful partnership work with service users and carers, eliciting and respecting their needs and views, and promoting their participation in decision-making wherever possible;
- the capacity for critical thinking and practice;
- 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); and
- well-developed professional attitudes – as set out in the HCPC Standards of Practice for Social Work.

- core statutory duties and policies that shape social work practice in a variety of settings.

## Teaching, learning and assessment

The programme content and delivery is informed by a problem based teaching and learning approach which supports active learning, critical reflection and analysis and transfer of theory, knowledge and skills, drawing on the current knowledge, values and ethics base, evidence informed practice and research.

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, understanding and skills is by formal examinations, coursework exercises, reports, essays, case studies, oral presentations and the dissertation. Assessment on placement is through direct observation of practice, case summaries, reflective commentaries, critical incident analyses and a practice placement portfolio. A student's ability to meet the requirements of the *Professional Capabilities Framework* (PCF) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2008) *Standards of Conduct, Performance & Ethics* will be assessed throughout the practice placements. See Department of Social Work website for course details: - <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/socialwork/prospectivestudents/home.aspx>

## Details of the programme structure(s)

Credits are indicated in brackets, and indicate proportional weighting towards the MSc classification grade.

### Stage one:

1st year courses	Credits
SW5000 Practice Learning 1	(0) Required for professional qualification
SW5001 Human Behaviour in the Social Environment	(20)
SW5002 Social Policy for Social Workers	(20)
SW5003 Theories and Knowledge for Social Work Practice	(20)
SW5004 Law for Social Workers	(20)

*All courses are compulsory and need to be passed before progressing to the next stage.*

### Stage two

#### 2nd year courses

SW5005 Practice Learning 2	(0) Required for professional qualification
SW5006 Critical Social Work	(30)
SW5007 Research Methods and Dissertation	(60)
SW5008 Understanding and Working in Organisations	(10)

In calculating final award average the marks for courses will be proportionate to the credits making up the award.

## Progression and award requirements

In line with the national post graduate taught credit framework students are required to complete 180 credits to achieve an MSc award.

In order to progress from the 1<sup>st</sup> stage to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage student must pass all taught courses and Practice Learning 1.

In order to achieve the award of the MSc in Social work students are required to pass all stage 1 and stage 2 courses and the practice learning placements. Students must pass with a mark of at least 50% for all taught

components and achieve a Pass level in both Practice Learning 1 and 2. To pass the programme a student must achieve an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The Masters degree with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The Masters degree with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

### **Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work**

A student who fails to pass the dissertation, but reaches a 50% pass mark in all other work (including Practice Learning 1 and 2) can be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work.

Failure marks cannot be condoned for the MSc in Social Work or the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work.

**Please refer to the link below for the HCPC requirements for professional social work registration.**

<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/standards/>

Students who are awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work by Royal Holloway are eligible to apply to the HCPC to register as a Social Worker.

### **Consequences of failure of placement**

Students must pass both Practice Learning 1 and Practice Learning 2 in order to be awarded an MSc in Social Work or a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work.

If a student is awarded a **fail for a first social work placement** the Practice Assessment Panel will consider:- requesting a 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion or offer a second attempt (placement), unless it is considered that Fitness to Practice issues need to be considered.

If a student **fails Practice Learning 1 after a second attempt** the student will not be eligible for the MSc in Social Work or the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work. The student will not be permitted to proceed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the MSc course.

If a student **fails Practice Learning 2**, the student will be given a further opportunity to undertake a placement subject to the agreement of the Practice Assessment Panel.

### **Non-Social Work Awards**

Failure marks cannot be condoned for the MSc in Social Work or the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work, however, failure marks in the region 40-49% in courses may be condoned for non-social work awards. These are subject to maximums as listed below.

<b>Award</b>	<b>Maximum number of credits to be condoned</b>
MSc in Social Studies	40
Postgraduate Diploma in social studies	40
Postgraduate Certificate in social studies	0

### **MSc in Social Studies**

The **MSc in Social Studies** can be awarded to students who have passed all taught components of the Programme with a mark of at least 50% in each, or have condonable fails, and have passed the dissertation, but have failed to complete the second placement successfully.

The Masters degree with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The Masters degree with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The award of an MSc in Social Studies does not confer eligibility to apply for admission to the HCPC Register.

### **Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies:**

The **Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies** may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%, with no mark in any taught element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. Failure marks in the region 40-49% are not usually condoned for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma, but if they are, such condoned fails would be in courses which do not constitute more than 20 credits towards of the final assessment. For this award students must have passed the SW5000 but may have failed SW5005.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. For this award students must have passed the SW5000 but may have failed SW5005.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. A Distinction will not normally be awarded if a student re-sits or re-takes any element of the programme. For this award students must have passed the SW5000 but may have failed SW5005.

The award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies does not confer eligibility to apply for admission to the HCPC Register.

### **Postgraduate Certificate in Social Studies:**

The **Postgraduate Certificate in Social Studies** may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of at least 50.00% for courses to the value of at least 60 credits, with no mark in any taught element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. Failure marks in the region 40-49% cannot normally be condoned for this award. The student must also have successfully completed SW5000.

The award of a Postgraduate Certificate in Social Studies does not confer eligibility to apply for admission to the HCPC Register.

An aegrotat award does not confer eligibility to apply for admission to the HCPC Register.

### **Appointment of Visiting Examiners**

Royal Holloway will appoint Visiting Examiners in accordance with the Regulations on the Conduct of Assessments (paras 18-22). At least one such Visiting Examiner will have the necessary qualifications, experience and professional registration to meet the requirements of the HCPC and will be from the relevant part of the HCPC Register.

### **Student support and guidance**

- Academic Tutor: All students are allocated an Academic Tutor who meets with them regularly throughout the programme, in groups and on an individual basis. The Academic Tutor's role is to advise on academic, practice, pastoral and welfare issues. Academic Tutors will also support students in undertaking personal development planning during their course of study.
- Placement Tutor: All students are allocated a Placement Tutor who supports their placement learning. The tutor visits the placement at the beginning of the placement to ensure the Practice Learning Agreement is completed and at the mid-point of the placement to ensure that the student is progressing satisfactorily.

- Practice Educators: Students are allocated a Practice Educator who provides support and advise the student whilst on the practice placement and liaises with the student's Placements Tutor and Personal Advisor.
- Course co-ordinators, other tutors and dissertation supervisors provide a back-up system of academic, pastoral and welfare advice.
- All staff available and accessible through a dedicated office hours system and via email and phone.
- Detailed MSc in Social Work Course Handbook and Practice Learning Handbook.
- Shared Departmental computing facilities.
- All courses are supported by Moodle
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources in College libraries and computer centre.
- College Careers Service.
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Health Centre, Student Union, Chaplaincy and the Education Support Office for students with special needs.
- Students have representation on the department's Student- Staff Committee

## Admission requirements

Admission to the Masters programme requires a First or Upper Second Class Honours Degree in any subject, and 6 months full time or 12 months part time relevant employment or volunteering 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). Applicants are also required to have Mathematics and English at Key Skills level 2, equivalent to grade C in GCSE examinations. All applicants are interviewed individually, undertake a written test and also partake in a group discussion. Applicants must complete a health questionnaire, a criminal background check and meet HCPC Social Work entry requirements. Applicants with an unclean Disclosure and Barring Service check or who have health issues will be interviewed by the Admissions Tutor and Practice Learning and Development Manager to ascertain the applicants suitability to undertake the programme and placements. In addition partnership employer agencies will also be consulted as part of this process, with their views contributing to the final decision. Candidates will be informed of the outcome of these enquiries within three weeks

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. <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/international/programmesandapplying/englishlanguage requirements.aspx> 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.

## Overseas applicants

Overseas applicants must have reached an equivalent level and standard and have a qualification in English at the level specified in the College Postgraduate Prospectus. If the first language is not English students will be required to demonstrate their English language level through a recognised qualification – see website for information: - <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/studyhere/postgraduate/applying/entryrequirements.aspx> See also See website relating to overseas Admissions: - <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/studyhere/postgraduate/applying/home.aspx>

[Back to top](#)

## Further learning and career opportunities

As well as providing a firm foundation for postgraduate study and research (for example, post-qualifying courses in child care and adult social care; Prof Doc, 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.

A Careers Workshop is organized for 2<sup>nd</sup> year students with the aim of enhancing their knowledge and skills regarding seeking employment. Careers website: - [www.rhul.ac.uk/careers/](http://www.rhul.ac.uk/careers/)

### **Indicators of quality and standards**

This programme builds on the current successful MSc in Social Work programme. This revalidation has been undertaken in order to meet the new HCPC and College of Social Work requirements for professional social work education. The Department of Social Work also runs post-qualifying and doctorate programmes and has partnership arrangements with local authorities in London and South East England, as well as voluntary organisations. It is planned to maintain and further develop the robust partnership structures that exist with employer agencies and service user groups including the Department's Service Users and Carers Involvement Group. Feedback from students, partner agency representatives and the external examiners has formed an integral part of the successful management of the department's social work education programmes and it is proposed that these processes continue. Annually we will continue to submit quality assurance reports for the university, the HCPC and TCSW. Our PQ programmes have received endorsement by the TCSW. In the Spring of 2014 the MSc in Social Work will go through the HCPC approval process and the Department plans to seek TCSW endorsement for the programme at the same time. A number of staff in the Department are research active and contribute regularly to social work academic journals, publish books and present at conferences.

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.

### **List of programmes**

The programme is taught mainly 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 non-social work qualifications are awards of Royal Holloway New Bedford College. All social work programmes are approved by the HCPC and satisfy its professional requirements for registration as a social worker.

#### **Masters Degree programme in Social Work**

MSc Social Work (1395)

#### **Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (exit award only)**

PgDip Social Work (1736)

#### **Masters Degree programme in Social Studies (exit award only)**

MSc Social Studies (2281)

#### **Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies (exit award only)**

PgDip Social Studies (2683)

#### **Postgraduate Certificate in Social Studies (exit award only)**

PgCert in Social Studies (2684)