

## Social Work

Sep 2018

This document covers the following areas:

- Routes to the degree
- Admission requirements
- Important facts to consider
- Applying to the degree in N.I.
- Department of Health Student Incentive Scheme
- Personal Statement & Interview

The degree in Social Work is the recognised professional qualification for all social workers throughout the UK, as well as Probation Officers and Education Welfare Officers in Northern Ireland and Criminal Justice Social Workers in Scotland.

This is an Honours Degree level qualification based on the “Northern Ireland Framework Specification”, which sets out the values, knowledge and practice requirements for the degree. Approximately half of the Degree course is assessed practice learning in the workplace.

### Routes to the Degree

In NI the Degree is available on a full-time and part-time basis.

- 3 Year Full-time Undergraduate Route
- 2 Year Relevant Graduate Accelerated Route

### Undergraduate Route - Full-time 3 Year Course

The 3 Year undergraduate route is available at the following three educational institutions:

- Ulster University, Magee, School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies  
Tel:028 71371371
- Queen's University of Belfast, School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work  
Tel:028 90975117
- Belfast Metropolitan College, Belfast, Tel:028 90265448

Students who chose to undertake the full-time Degree through Belfast Metropolitan College, (BMC) should note that year three of their Degree will be delivered at Ulster University, Magee. Year 1 and 2 will be delivered at BMC.

### **Full-time – 2 Year Relevant Graduate Route**

The Relevant Graduate Route (RGR) is a two year accelerated route for applicants who already hold a relevant honours degree. The RGR is only available at:

- Ulster University, Magee
- Queens University, Belfast

### **Admission Requirements for the Degree**

To be eligible for entry to the Degree, applicants must demonstrate that they have the potential to train to be a Social Worker at degree level - this means they must:

- Meet academic entry requirements set by their chosen university/institution.
- Pass a suitability for training to be a social worker interview
- Be suitable to be registered as a social work student with NISCC.

### **Academic Entry Criteria for the Degree**

Academic criteria for the Degree courses are set by the academic institutions and may vary accordingly. Applicants are advised to check with the admissions teams at each institution to confirm current entry requirements for the year they are applying to the Degree. Generally, requirements will be as follows:

### **3 Year Full-time Undergraduate Route**

- GCSE English and Maths (minimum grade C), or equivalent recognised by the university, Essential Skills, Level 2 (Application of Number) is not considered equivalent to GCSE Maths).
- 3 'A' Levels or other accepted equivalent qualifications e.g. HND, BTEC, Access, Open University, Irish Leaving Certificate, NVQ Level 4 Health & Social Care plus a supplementary exam will be considered by UU only.

### **2 Year Full-time Relevant Graduate Route**

- GCSE English and Maths (minimum grade C), or equivalent recognised by the university, Essential Skills, Level 2 (Application of Number) is not considered equivalent to GCSE Maths).
- A relevant Honours degree at 2:2 or above (HNC/HND qualifications do not meet this criteria)
- A degree (second class lower division or higher) will be deemed to be a 'relevant degree' where at least 33% of the course passed at Honours level comprises one or more of the following: Sociology, Psychology, Social Policy, Social Administration, Law, Teaching, Nursing, Community Work, Youth Work, Early Childhood Studies and other cognate subjects at the discretion of the course provider. (Graduates with a 'relevant' Honours degree can also apply to the 3 Year Undergraduate Route.)

### **Guidance for those with alternative qualifications**

Applicants with alternative qualifications should contact the Admissions Office of the university/college of their choice for further advice on what courses to undertake or to check if the qualifications they hold will be accepted as equivalent.

### **Points to consider**

#### **Driving licence (access to transport)**

Students are strongly advised to hold a current driving licence or have access to a form of transport to attend their practice learning placements. Students cannot be guaranteed a Practice Learning Placement close to their home or institution and may need to travel.

#### **Interview - Assessment of applicant's suitability to train to be a social worker**

As well as meeting academic entry requirements, all applicants being considered for a place on the Degree course in NI will be interviewed to assess their potential to train as a social worker at degree level. All applicants are therefore advised to have some relevant experience. This may include: life experience, voluntary work, paid work or a mixture of all three.

### **Mature Students**

Candidates with substantial experience in social care, or a related career, but holding alternative qualifications such as access courses are encouraged to apply if they meet the current entry criteria for the Degree. These students will need to demonstrate their potential to study at honours degree level and their applications will be considered on an individual basis.

### **Students with a Disability**

Increasing numbers of people with a disability are expressing an interest in the Degree. As social work is a demanding occupation and will require a range of physical abilities to undertake the role, it is advisable to discuss your prospective application with the academic institution.

All higher academic institutions have support services in place to help students with a disability take full advantage of higher education opportunities. Student support workers are employed to provide information on what is available for students with a disability including eligibility for funding from the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) or any other appropriate source of funding. More information about DSA can be obtained by logging on to [www.studentfinancenl.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancenl.co.uk).

### **Applying to the Degree in NI**

All applications for the full-time Degrees in NI (including Belfast Met and the Relevant Graduate Accelerated Route) are through the UCAS on-line system at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com). UCAS Customer

Service Unit will be able to assist with queries about the application process. Email: [enquiries@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ucas.ac.uk) UCAS opens the system for applications to the full-time courses in NI from September each year and closes the following January (normally around 15 January.)

Late UCAS applications UCAS will accept completed application forms until the following June (normally 30 June) but they will be stamped late and only forwarded to those courses that still have vacancies. Applicants considering making a late application are advised to contact the universities/institutions of their choice and ask if they are still considering applications. If places are still available, applications can be downloaded from the UCAS website at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) In practice, it is very unlikely that late applications will be considered for social work courses in NI.

### **Suitability for social work training in NI– Personal Statement & Interview**

The following process will then be applied to each applicant who has met the university/institution academic entry requirements.

**Stage 1: Suitability for training for social work** - 600-word personal statement (completed under exam conditions from Sept 2016)

### **Stage 2: Suitability for training for social work – interview**

The interview is a two stage process including; a case study and a formal interview. The process aims to assess if the applicant has the skills, qualities and understanding required to train to be a social worker at Degree level. Applicants are given time to review the case study prior to the interview and 2 out of the 6 questions will be about the case study. The interview provides the opportunity to highlight any practical/personal experience and knowledge they have about social work and applicants should aim to make links between their relevant experience and social work practice. Advice on preparing for interviews for the Degree in Social Work is available in the Degree Partnership section and Careers section.

#### **Points to consider for interview**

- What has motivated you to apply to train to be a social worker?
- Do you understand the role of Social Workers and social services?
- Can you demonstrate some basic social work skills?
- Have you the ability to be flexible and open to new ideas and attitudes?
- Are you able to respect and respond to different cultures and perspectives?
- How have you obtained these attributes, knowledge and understanding?
- How has your academic training to date prepared you for a career in social work?
- Read and understood the Degree Partnership guidance for social work interviews on the NISCC website

**Stage 3:** Offers/Confirmation of offer

**Stage 4:** Application to register as a student on the NISCC Social Care Register

### **Criminal Records Check**

All of those working in social care roles must have a criminal record check completed. Before students undertake their first Practice Learning Opportunity, they must have a criminal record check carried out. The universities/colleges will provide more information about this.

### **Education authority financial support for NI students**

All applicants should contact the student finance section of their local Education and Library Board for more information on what is available, and if they are eligible for financial support.

### **Department of Health (DOH) Degree in Social Work Student Incentive Scheme**

The DOH NI offers an Incentive Scheme to attract students domiciled in NI to study the Degree in Social Work in NI. The Incentive Scheme is designed to encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds to study social work and is available only to those who are residents and have obtained an approved Degree in Social Work place in NI.

More information on the current arrangements for the Incentive Scheme for the Degree in Social Work and how to apply can be obtained by contacting the DOH as follows:

Office of Social Services, Administration Office, DOH, Room C4, 22, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3SQ Tel: 028 9052 0517 Web: [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk), type in Degree in Social Work-Student Incentive Scheme for up to date information.

(Please note: The Incentive Scheme is currently under review by the DOH (NI).)

### **Useful checklist**

Before choosing Social Work, you should take time to think about the following questions and how you would answer them.

- Why do you want to become a Social Worker?
- Have you the right qualities to become a Social Worker? Are you resilient enough to manage the training and the challenges of the job?
- What relevant experience do you have? If not, how are you going to achieve this?
- Have you the required academic qualifications - if not, how are you going to obtain these before making an application to Social Work?

- 📌 Where are you considering training i.e. what college or university are you thinking of applying to and have you researched their Social Work programmes?
- 📌 What financial support are you eligible for and how do you obtain this?
- 📌 What do you know about registration with the NISCC?
- 📌 Have you checked out the NISCC website at [www.niscc.info](http://www.niscc.info)

### Golden Rules

- 📌 Your voluntary/work experience shows your commitment to social work. Begin as early as possible. A list of local relevant agencies is available from NISCC. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can give you a list of voluntary organisations in your area. It's best to use an organisation that offers training, supervision and ongoing support.
- 📌 Be aware of the different settings in which social workers work. Try to get experience in at least one of them.
- 📌 Life experience can also be counted as related if you have encountered personal problems such as abuse, family breakdown, addiction or disability and have managed to work through the situation.
- 📌 Essential personal qualities are:
  - Patience
  - Persistence
  - The ability to help people face different situations
  - Flexibility
  - The ability to manage stress
  - A sense of humour

You must be able to demonstrate that you have these.

For further advice and guidance, contact the Employability Advisers on campus. You can also access advice through **online chat**, email ([careers@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:careers@ulster.ac.uk)) or via telephone (028 9536 7066)  
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