

Royal Holloway, University of London
Course specification for a postgraduate award
MSc Social Work (1395)

Section 1 – Introduction to your course

This course specification is a formal document, which provides a summary of the main features of your course and the learning outcomes that you might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if you take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, and in various handbooks, all of which you will be able to access online. Alternatively, further information on the College's academic regulations and policies can be found [here](#). Further information on the College's Admissions Policy can be found [here](#).

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 British Association of Social Work (BASW)) and the professional standards set by Social Work England.

While Royal Holloway keeps all the information made available under review, courses and the availability of individual modules, especially optional modules are necessarily subject to change at any time, and you are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect your decision to follow a specific course. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform you as soon as is practicable of any significant changes which might affect your studies.

The following is brief description for some of the most important terminology for understanding the content of this document:

Degree course – May also be referred to as 'degree programme' or simply 'programme', these terms refer to the qualification you will be awarded upon successful completion of your studies.

Module – May also be referred to as 'course', this refers to the individual units you will study each year to complete your degree course. Undergraduate degrees at Royal Holloway comprise a combination of modules in multiples of 15 credits to the value of 120 credits per year. On some degree courses a certain number of optional modules must be passed for a particular degree title.

Section 2 – Course details			
Date of specification update	December 2020	Location of study	Central London Campus
Course award and title	MSc Social Work	Level of study	Postgraduate
Course code	1395	Year of entry	2020/21
Awarding body	Royal Holloway, University of London		
Department/ School	Social Work/ School of Law and Social Sciences	Other departments or schools involved in teaching the course	
Mode(s) of attendance	Full-time	Duration of the course	Two years (104 weeks) full-time
Accrediting Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirement(s)	MSc Social Work is approved by the Social Work England and satisfies its professional requirements for registration as a social worker.	For queries on admissions:	study@royalholloway.ac.uk .
Link to Coursefinder for further information:	https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/postgraduate/social-work/social-work/		

Section 3 – Degree course structure				
3.1 Mandatory module information				
The following table summarises the mandatory modules which students must take in each year of study				
Module code	Module title	Credits	FHEQ level	Module status (see section 6)
Stage 1				
SW5000	Practice Learning 1	0	7	MNC
SW5001	Human Behaviour in the Social Environment	20	7	MNC
SW5002	Social Policy for Social Workers	20	7	MNC
SW5003	Theories and Knowledge for Social Work Practice	20	7	MNC
SW5004	Law for Social Workers	20	7	MNC
Stage 2				
SW5005	Practice Learning 2	0	7	MNC
SW5006	Critical Social Work	30	7	MNC
SW5007	Research Methods and Dissertation	60	7	MNC
SW5008	Understanding and Working in Organisations	10	7	MNC
<p>This table sets out the most important information for the mandatory modules on your degree course. These modules are central to achieving your learning outcomes, so they are compulsory, and all students on your degree course will be required to take them. You will be automatically registered for these modules. Mandatory modules fall into two categories: 'condonable' or 'non-condonable'.</p> <p>In the case of mandatory 'non-condonable' (MNC) modules, you must pass the module to successfully graduate with a particular degree title, or before you can proceed to the next year of your course where studying part-time. In the case of mandatory 'condonable' (MC) modules, these must be taken but you can still progress or graduate even if you do not pass them (see Academic Regulations on condonable fails). Please note that although Royal Holloway will keep changes to a minimum, changes to your degree course may be made where reasonable and necessary due to unexpected events. For example, where requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies have changed and course requirements must change accordingly, or where changes are deemed necessary on the basis of student feedback and/or the advice of external advisors, to enhance academic provision.</p>				

3.2 Optional modules

There are no optional modules on this degree course.

3.3 Optional module requirements

N/A

Section 4 - Progressing through each year of your degree course

For further information on the progression and award requirements for your degree, please refer to Royal Holloway's [Academic Regulations](#).

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in summative or formative coursework assignments. Please note that if you hold a Tier 4 (General) Student Visa and you choose to leave (or are required to leave because of non - progression) or complete early (before the course end date stated on your CAS), then this will be reported to UKVI.

In order to progress from the 1st stage of the degree course to the 2nd stage students must pass all taught modules 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 modules 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 course a student must achieve an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%.

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 Social Work England requirements for professional social work registration.

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/education-training/students-and-graduates/>

Students who are awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work by Royal Holloway are eligible to register with Social Work England.

Consequences of failure of placement

Students must pass both Practice Learning 1 and Practice Learning 2 (placements) 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 2nd 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 2nd 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 modules may be condoned for non-social work awards. These are subject to maximums as listed below.

Award	Maximum number of credits to be condoned
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 Social Work England 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 modules which do not constitute more than 20 credits towards of the final assessment.

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%.

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%.

The award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies does not confer eligibility to apply for admission to the Social Work England 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 modules 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 award of a Postgraduate Certificate in Social Studies does not confer eligibility to apply for admission to the Social Work England register.

An aegrotat award does not confer eligibility to apply for admission to the Social Work England register.

Section 5 – Educational aims of the course

The aims of this course are to provide:

- 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 Social Work England professional standards.

Section 6 – Course learning outcomes

In general terms, the courses provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes. (Categories – Knowledge and understanding (K), Skills and other attributes (S), and Transferable skills (*))

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the centrality of relationships for people and the key concepts of attachment, separation, loss, change and resilience; (K) • the tasks required in professional social work – the responsibilities and accountabilities of qualified social workers; (K) • the range of statutory, voluntary and private welfare organisations within social work agencies and in health, housing and educational environment;(K) • the range of theories and social work approaches and evidence-based interventions needed for effective social work practice; (K) • theories of human growth, behaviour and development throughout the lifespan;(K) • the value base of social work and ethical principles relevant to social work practice;(K) • the significance of inequalities and diversity in working with organisations and service users;(K) • 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;(K) • the contribution of sociology, social policy, the organisation of social work, law and policy guidance, and their application to social work practice;(K) • the social and individual origins of a typical range of problems presented to social care agencies;(K) • the contribution and application of social research to social work theories and practice; and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; (S) • 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;(S)* • sound and effective skills of critical reflection;(S)* • 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;(S)* • an advanced level of analytical and theoretical sophistication – demonstrates capacity for abstracting, synthesising and applying knowledge;(S)* • skills in assessment, planning, reporting and evaluation;(S) • 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;(S)* • investigative skills, including literature and database searches and is able to analyse the impact of social policies on all systems – client, staff and agency;(S)* • 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;(S)* • a standard of proficiency in relation to information technology that is commensurate with advanced level study;(S)* • a standard of practice that demonstrates understanding of and commitment to the moral and ethical issues involved in social work research and professional practice;(S) • the ability to undertake independent, critical thinking and to enhance professional development through reflective learning and practice;(S)* • effective time management and organisational skills;(S)* • ability to work effectively in partnerships with service users, carers and professionals an occupational groups;(S)* • 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
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- the principles of social justice, human rights, inclusion and equality.(K)

health and substance misuse problems, refugees and asylum seekers, and people with disabilities.(S)

- 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; (S)
- respectful partnership work with service users and carers, eliciting and respecting their needs and views, and promoting their participation in decision-making wherever possible; (S)
- the capacity for critical thinking and practice; (S)
- empathy and insight; (S)
- creativity and enterprise;
- self-motivation; (S)
- awareness of responsibility as a local, national and international citizen; (S)
- confidence and competence in working with diversity; (S)
- flexibility and adaptability; (S)
- confidence (in deploying the appropriate specialist skills as required in the field of study); (S)
- well-developed professional attitudes and ethics in practice – as set out in the Social Work England professional standards; (S) and
- core statutory duties and policies that shape social work practice in a variety of settings (S).

Section 7 - Teaching, learning and assessment

The course 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 Social Work England Professional standards (2020) will be assessed throughout the practice placements. See Department of Social Work website for course details: - <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/postgraduate/social-work/social-work/>

Teaching and learning provided by the course 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.

The course 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 modules 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 – up to 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 course 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 Social Work England's education and training standards (2020), the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), 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 different service user groups. Academic modules run concurrently with the professional practice placement in years 1 and 2.

Section 8 – Additional costs	
Travel to and from placements (NHS bursary contribution available). Payment for an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.	
These estimated costs relate to studying this particular degree course at Royal Holloway. General costs such as accommodation, food, books and other learning materials and printing etc., have not been included, but further information is available on our website .	

Section 9 – Indicators of quality and standards	
QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level	7
Your course is designed in accordance with the FHEQ to ensure your qualification is awarded on the basis of nationally established standards of achievement, for both outcomes and attainment. The qualification descriptors within the FHEQ set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications. The qualification descriptors contained in the FHEQ exemplify the outcomes and attributes expected of learning that results in the award of higher education qualifications. These outcomes represent the integration of various learning experiences resulting from designated and coherent programmes of study.	
QAA Characteristics Statement (Master’s Degrees) – September 2015	https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/supporting-resources
Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of courses in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.	
Appointment of External Examiners	
Royal Holloway will appoint External Examiners in accordance with the Regulations on the Conduct of Assessments. At least one such External Examiner will have the necessary qualifications, experience and professional registration to meet the requirements of the Social Work England register.	

Section 10 – Further information

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate when taking full advantage of the learning opportunities that are available. More detailed information on modules, including teaching and learning methods, and methods of assessment, can be found via the online [module catalogue](#). The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed regularly by the university, and may also be checked routinely by external agencies.

Your course will be reviewed regularly, both by the university as part of its cyclical quality enhancement processes, and/or by your department or school, who may wish to make improvements to the curriculum, or in response to resource planning. As such, your course may be revised during the course of your study at Royal Holloway. However, your department or school will take reasonable steps to consult with students via appropriate channels when considering changes. All continuing students will be routinely informed of any significant changes.

Section 11 – Intermediate exit awards (where available)

You may be eligible for an intermediate exit award if you complete part of the course as detailed in this document. Any additional criteria (e.g. mandatory modules, credit requirements) for intermediate awards is outlined in Section 4 above.

Section 12 - Associated award(s) with Banner Codes

MSc Social Work (1395)
MSc Social Studies (2281)

PG Diploma Social Work (1736)
PG Diploma Social Studies (2683)
PG Certificate Social Studies (2684)