

Mental Health Officer Award:
East of Scotland Partnership



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

School of Social and Political Science

Social Work

Programme Handbook

Post Graduate Certificate in Advanced Social Work Studies: Mental Health Officer Award

2025-26

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Programme Co-ordinator:

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Welcome

We would like to welcome you to the Post Graduate Certificate in Advanced Social Work Studies - Mental Health Officer Award. We hope that your experience of this programme will be enjoyable, intellectually stimulating and productive. This programme is a collaboration between the University of Edinburgh and twelve local authorities, which together comprise the East MHO Partnership: Angus, Stirling, Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Fife, City of Dundee, Perth and Kinross, City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian and Scottish Borders.

The information in this handbook is for the guidance of students, practice assessors, partnership members, tutors and contributors. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that it is accurate, the Programme Team retain the right to make necessary changes consistent with the University's regulations.

The Programme Team will observe the stipulations contained in the University's Degree Examination Regulations and the recommendations contained in the relevant University Code of Practice published in the University Calendar. In the event of any conflict between anything contained in this Handbook or the Codes of Practice and Regulations for the Post Graduate Certificate published in the University Calendar, the Calendar shall have precedence.

The Programme has a policy of equal opportunity. Everyone who is eligible to join it, whatever their gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, race, colour, ethnic origins or disability, will receive equal treatment. The curriculum aims to reflect through the structure, procedure and content of the Programme, racial, ethnic and cultural diversity and to promote equality.

Dr Sumeet Jain, Dr Pearse McCusker and George Gourlay

The School of Social and Political Science

The MHO Award operates within the Graduate School of Social and Political Science and as a student you are encouraged, as far as you can and find helpful, to participate in its activities. The School of Social and Political Science is one of the leading schools of social science in the UK. We provide an outstanding educational environment for our students and support the highest-quality research, tackling some of the world's greatest challenges. It hosts students from each of the School's subject areas and centres (African Studies, Canadian Studies, Global Public Health, Politics and International Relations, Science, Technology and Innovation Studies, Social Anthropology, Social Policy, Social Work, Sociology, South Asian Studies), as well as visitors from universities in other countries.

The School observes the stipulations contained in the University's Assessment Regulations and the recommendations contained in relevant University Codes of Practice, including the Code of Practice for Students - Dealing with Personal Harassment, the University's Disability Statement, the Guidelines on Disclosure of Information about Students, and the Student Complaints Procedures. In addition, social work students should make themselves aware of the provisions of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Code of Practice.

Role of this Handbook

This Handbook will help you make the most of your time at the University of Edinburgh. Please read it carefully, and in conjunction with the Taught Masters handbook [SPS PGT Student Handbook 2025-26](#) which includes information about taught degree programmes, pastoral support and facilities.

You may also wish to consult the University's Taught Assessment Regulations [UoE Taught Assessment Regulations Academic Year 2025-26](#)

The Handbook does not supersede the University Regulations, nor the formal requirements for each degree as set out in the University's Postgraduate Study Programme in the University Calendar nor the Terms and Conditions of Admission set out in the Postgraduate Prospectus. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this Handbook was correct at the time of going to press, but the Handbook does not form part of any contract between the University and a student.

Management of COVID-19

While restrictions for COVID-19 have been lifted, students are advised to keep up to date with current policy, including on-campus safety measures. Please refer to: [UoE Covid Updates](#).

Introduction and Background

The Programme's primary aim is to provide the Mental Health Officer (MHO) qualification which will be set at Postgraduate Certificate level. The academic elements of the Programme will be structured across a number of courses and set at SCQF level 11 (postgraduate level).

Under Section 32(2) of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, local authorities have a statutory duty to appoint MHOs to undertake mandatory MHO responsibilities enshrined in legislation: mainly the 2003 and 2015 MH Acts but also the Adults with Incapacity Act 2000 and the Criminal Proceedings Act 1995, and how these intersect with the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007.

From 2009 the Scottish Government directed that the MHO Award should be set at SCQF level 11 (Appendix 3) and should be delivered in partnership between universities and local authorities. The Scottish Government determined that three MHO Programmes would be delivered across Scotland. For our purposes this has meant a geographical catchment area covering, broadly speaking, the East of Scotland, comprising 13 local authorities.

The Post Graduate Certificate in Advanced Social Work Studies - Mental Health Officer Award (PGCert MHO Award) is awarded by the University. The management and running of the PGCert MHO Award is shared between the University and local authority members via a Programme Partnership Group (PPG).

The Programme Team

Academic Staff		
Dr Sumeet Jain	Programme Director/ Senior Lecturer in Social Work	SJain@ed.ac.uk
Dr Pearse McCusker	Programme Director/ Senior Lecturer in Social Work	Pearse.McCusker@ed.ac.uk
George Gourlay	MHO Programme Co-ordinator	George.Gourlay@ed.ac.uk
Dr Steve Kirkwood	Head of Subject	S.Kirkwood@ed.ac.uk
Professor John Devaney	Centenary Chair of Social Work / Head of School, Social and Political Science	J.Devaney@ed.ac.uk
Administrative and Student Support Staff		
James Wills	Course Administrator	Pgtaught.sps@ed.ac.uk
Will Rennie	Student Advisor	student.sps@ed.ac.uk

Communication

LEARN

All coursework is submitted via LEARN, and online lectures, groupwork, readings, course handouts, updates, announcements and other course-specific information will be facilitated and posted there. The Programme Team may use other online platforms to support learning where required. It is important that you regularly check the Learn system in order to keep up to date with your courses: [UoE LEARN Course Page](#)

It is each student's responsibility to inform the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) if they have a change of name/address. [The Scottish Social Services Council](#)

Fitness to Practise

This Programme of study is accredited by the SSSC and as it leads to a professional qualification, students are obliged to abide by the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers (referred to as the Codes): [The Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice](#)

The social work profession and the SSSC expect that students on programmes of study leading to professional social work qualifications meet the standards of character, conduct and competence necessary for them to do their job safely, and in ways which instil public confidence about the profession and professional standards: [The Scottish Social Services Council - Fitness to Practise](#)

An individual's fitness to practise may be impaired by one or more of the following:

- misconduct
- deficient professional practise
- a health issue
- a decision about them by another specified regulatory body
- a criminal conviction
- any matter deemed relevant to the student's suitability to continue studying towards a professional social work qualification

The University of Edinburgh has regulations in place to ensure that any concerns about a student's fitness to practise are dealt with in a timely and fair manner: [UoE Arts, Humanities & Soc-Science taught student conduct & fitness to Practise procedures](#)

The standards against which a student will be assessed are the relevant Codes. Within the School of Social and Political Science, the Fitness to Practise contact to whom any concerns may be initially addressed is Dr Steve Kirkwood, who can be contacted at: s.kirkwood@ed.ac.uk

Students must be aware that it is an individual's responsibility to ensure that the University is aware of any matter which may call into question an individual's fitness to practise, either before commencing a programme of study, or when on the programme, such as:

- A deterioration in physical and/or mental health
- Being charged with or found guilty of any criminal matter

- Involvement by statutory services in relation to a safeguarding issue relating to a child or adult.

Such matters should be raised with your programme director in the first instance, and as soon as possible.

Information about a fitness to practise concern may be shared with practice learning agencies, practice teachers, assessors, employers and SSSC if required, and further guidance on this is available in the College Fitness to Practise Procedure document and Privacy Notice. ([UoE Arts, Humanities & Soc-Science taught student conduct & fitness to practise procedures](#))

If a matter is referred to the School about any student, the student will be informed and the matter will ordinarily be considered within 28 working days. If an initial concern is deemed a Fitness to Practise issue, it will be considered by the Fitness to Practise contact in conjunction with the Head of School. There are a series of outcomes:

- a) Find that there is no impairment to fitness to practise and dismiss the case.
- b) Find that there has been an impairment to fitness to practise, but that the student has taken action to address the impairment and no further action is required. The student will be issued with a warning and advised of the consequences of any further similar behaviour.
- c) Find that there is an impairment to fitness to practise, and permit the student to continue, subject to review, under certain conditions – for example additional mentoring by an appropriate member of staff, compliance with a requirement to engage with remedial learning or assessment, or addressing health concerns
- d) Refer the student to the College Fitness to Practise Panel who have a fuller range of outcomes at their disposal.

The outcome of any deliberation between the Fitness to Practise contact and the Head of School will be communicated to the student in writing.

Programme Dates

Please note that in order to meet the SSSC requirements in relation to notional student hours, the days in-between Course 1 and 2 and between 2 and 3 are essential components of the programme. They will provide flexible study leave, the opportunity for reflection on learning and action in relation to any perceived gaps in learning and will also allow for necessary preparation for the next course. These periods will also serve as 'back up' days in the light of any absence through sickness.

It is also suggested that students take a minimum of five days annual leave during these two periods but that, in light of the required number of days learning, students will not be able to take annual leave at any other time over the period of this programme.

STUDENT INDUCTION DAYS

Date	2025	Format
Tuesday	14th October	In-person 9am – 5pm
Wednesday	15th October	Online

PRACTICE ASSESSOR TRAINING

Date	2025	Teaching format – In-person or Online
Wednesday	22nd October	In-person 9am - 5pm
Thursday	23rd October	Online 930am - 1230pm

COURSE 1: MENTAL DISTRESS: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES (10 CREDITS)

Date	2025	Teaching format – In-person or Online
Monday	17th November	In-person (9am – 5pm for all in-person days)
Tuesday	18th November	In-person
Wednesday	19th November	In-person
Thursday	20th November	In-person
Friday to Thurs	21st November to 11th December	Independent study and assignment preparation
Thursday	11th December	Essay submission

COURSE 2. MENTAL HEALTH LAW: MHO ROLE IN CONTEXT (20 CREDITS)

Date	2026	Teaching format – In-person or Online
Monday	5th January	In-person
Tuesday	6th January	In-person
Wednesday	7th January	In-person
Thursday	8th January	In-person
Friday	9th January	Online
Monday	12th January	In-person
Tuesday	13th January	Law Exam - Online
Wednesday	14th January	Skills Workshop – In-person
Thursday	15th January	Start of practice period - 37 days
Friday	6th March	Last day of practice period Submission of Placement Report
Monday	16th March	Critical analysis essay submission

- Thursday 12th March 2025 1st Assessment Panel (Placement Reports)
- Wednesday 18th March 2nd Assessment Panel (Placement Reports)
- Friday 20th March Progression Exam Board (Placement Reports)

COURSE 3: CRIMINAL PROCEDURES: MHO ROLE IN CONTEXT (10 CREDITS)

Date	2026	Teaching format – In-person or Online
Monday	23rd March	In-person
Tuesday	24th March	In-person
Wednesday	25th March	In-person
Thursday	26th March	In-person
Friday to Tuesday	27th March 7th April	Independent study and assignment preparation (Easter weekend Fri 3rd – Mon 6th)
Tuesday	7th April	Essay Submission

COURSE 4: CAPACITY LAW: MHO ROLE IN CONTEXT (20 CREDITS)

Date	2026	Teaching format – In-person or Online
Wednesday	8th April	In-person
Thursday	9th April	In-person
Friday	10th April	Online
Monday	13th April	In-person
Tuesday	14th April	In-person
Wednesday	15th April	In-person
Thursday	16th April	Law Exam (online)
Friday	17th April	Practice Period Begins (32 days)
Monday	1st June	Last day of Practice + Placement Report submission
Tuesday	9th June	Critical analysis of practice essay submission

- Wednesday 10th June 2026 1st Assessment Panel (Placement Reports)
- Wednesday 17th June 2nd Assessment Panel (Placement Reports)
- Thursday 25th June Board of Examiners and Awarding Board
- September 2026 date TBC Board of Examiners / Awarding Board –

Practice Assessor ‘Drop-In’ Sessions

Date	2026		Format
Wednesday	4th February	9.30 - 10.30am	Online
Wednesday	29th April	9.30 - 10.30am	Online

Programme Structure

The content of the PGCert MHO Award is matched against the SSSC Standards Framework with each course reflecting the interconnectedness of the four Learning Foci (Standards and Practice Competencies, MHO Award, SSSC 2006: Appendix 2). The driver for each course is the registered social worker role developed in the core context of MHO work and subsequently into other legislative and policy contexts.

Programme Structure and Features

The PGCert MHO Award consists of four units (60 credits in total), the achievement of which leads to eligibility to be accredited to the MHO role by local authority employers. All courses must be passed:

Course 1	Mental Distress: Critical Perspectives	10 Credits
Course 2	Mental Health Law: MHO Role In Context Includes assessed practice component	20 CREDITS
Course 3	Criminal Procedures: MHO Role In Context	10 CREDITS
Course 4	Capacity Law: MHO Role In Context Includes assessed practice component	20 CREDITS

(See course handbooks for details, including content and structure of each course)

The Curriculum

The curriculum is based on the MHO Standards and Practice competencies and 4 Learning Foci (Appendix 2).

The SCQF requirements of a 60 credit Level 11 Programme mean a minimum learning effort of 600 hours. This Programme has split in equal share the taught/assessment learning effort time with the practice components, i.e., at least 300 hours of practice and 300 hours of taught/assessment component.

Courses 1 and 3 will be based on taught/seminar/online/workshops and assessed by one essay in each.

Courses 2 and 4 will have an enhanced taught component and will have one practice component in each: 37 days in Course 2 and 32 days in Course 4. Assessment is based on a law exam, the student's critical analysis of practice essay (see course handbooks for details) and the final placement report. **Students must achieve a pass in the practice learning component of Course 2 before they can be permitted to advance to Course 3.**

N.B: attendance at all days of the programme is mandatory.

The Learning Team

The learning team will comprise the student, the programme team (including student services) and practice assessor. This learning team approach will integrate programme teaching, directed and independent learning and incorporate practice supervision and assessment.

The Programme team

The Programme Director and Programme Co-ordinators will co-ordinate the content and delivery of the Programme, including setting and marking academic assignments. They will provide academic advice and guidance regarding the requirements of the Courses and a Level 11 Postgraduate programme. As indicated, the Student Advisor and other School and University Student Support Services will provide relevant advice and support regarding pastoral issues, including when health and wellbeing issues impact on learning and progression.

The Practice Assessor

The Practice Assessor will be an experienced and practising MHO. The Practice Assessor will manage the co-ordination function of a student's overall practice learning experience. The Practice Assessor has responsibility for accessing relevant learning opportunities for the student and has the frontline responsibility of assessing the student's practice within the practice elements of Courses 2 and 4.

The Practice Assessor and student will share the completion of a Report at the end of Courses 2 and 4, which will clearly identify and evidence that the student has successfully met the MHO Award Standards and practice competencies as detailed in the Course Handbooks.

The Practice Assessor will also be required to read the student's Critical Analysis of Practice essays to verify that they are accurate representations of practice undertaken during the practice periods.

Course Organiser

Each course also has a course organiser who together with the Programme Co-ordinators/Director, manages and organises each course:

Course 1	Mental Distress: Critical Perspectives	Pearse McCusker
Course 2	Mental Health Law: MHO Role In Context	George Gourlay
Course 3	Criminal Procedures: MHO Role In Context	George Gourlay
Course 4	Capacity Law: MHO Role In Context	George Gourlay

Practice Components

As indicated, MHO students are required to undertake 37 and 32 days of assessed practice within Courses 2 and 4 respectively. Assessment will be based upon relevant, direct MHO practice set against the MHO Standards Framework and the respective learning foci for each unit. Course 2 requires practice and learning opportunities in relation to the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003/2015. Course 4 requires practice and learning opportunities in relation to the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 (see unit handbooks for details). Evidence to support assessment will comprise of direct MHO practice, observed practice, all relevant written work, feedback from colleagues and where appropriate service users and carers, the student's reflective journals and supervision discussions.

Students will be expected to undertake prescribed activities during the practice components as directed. Students will additionally be expected to take direction from their Practice Assessors in relation to undertaking relevant visits or observational opportunities. It is also expected that students will be self-directed in defining their learning needs, proactive in sourcing relevant learning opportunities and critically reflective within supervision. Students will be required to compile a short list of all practice undertaken during each practice component (workload summaries) to be included in the final placement report.

Working Agreement

Each student must prepare a Working Agreement (see Course handbooks for details) with her/his/their Practice Assessor. This should detail individual learning needs, mutual expectations and the plans for managing the practice period and accessing relevant MHO direct practice. The document should focus on demonstrating the learning foci appropriate to each relevant course, indicate where the student has gaps in knowledge or practice and how these might be met in relation to the Standards and Learning Foci. The Working Agreement also enables students to take action and evaluate their progress towards meeting specific learning foci and will be invaluable for the purpose of the student's completion of the critical analysis of practice essay at the end of Courses 2 and 4. Completed within 10 day working days of the start of the practice period, the Working Agreement should then be submitted to the relevant Programme Co-ordinator for feedback.

Reflective Learning Log

All students are required to keep a Reflective Log, in which they describe their learning experiences on the Programme. This should be regularly submitted to their Practice Assessor and will form a focus for supervision, discussion, evidence and assessment. It provides a means for the Practice Assessor to monitor the student's experience and develop evidence for meeting the learning foci. This tool can provide material for 'formative and summative assessment' by the Practice Assessor and a record of evidence for the student's contribution to the final placement report (guidance will be provided on reflective writing).

Direct Observation

At least two direct observations must be undertaken in each of Courses 2 and 4 (see Course handbooks for details) These observations, undertaken by the Practice Assessor will be of the student in direct MHO practice with a mental health service user who has given their agreement for such observation. In some instances, it may be appropriate for **one** of these direct observations to be of a related MHO activity e.g., ward round, case conference, MH tribunal, professional discussion etc. It is important that each session is planned with the student and that a substantial piece of work is undertaken for this purpose. The learning foci for the course should be referred to. The Practice Assessor will provide constructive feedback and supportive guidance to the student after each observation session and will follow this up with written feedback within a week. The record of each observed practice for each unit will be included in the final placement report.

Study Time

Within Courses 1 and 3 there is time built in for independent study. During the practice components of Courses 2 and 4 students are permitted to take one half day away from practice per week or one day every fortnight for study leave.

Recall Learning Days

There may be the opportunity for recall learning days during the periods of assessed practice as appropriate – further information will be provided where relevant.

Practice Activities

In each period of practice, students will be required to undertake specific activities which will contribute to the evidence necessary to meet all the relevant standards for Courses 2 and 4. The detail of these activities will be outlined prior to the start of the practice period.

Visits and Observations

Students will be expected to undertake several relevant visits during the periods of practice as directed by their Practice Assessor. Students should also take advantage of opportunities for observing and attending any relevant meeting/case conference or any other experience deemed appropriate by the Practice Assessor.

Problems in Practice

A process for addressing problems that arise in practice (for example, issues relating to the student's performance, PA/agency support or difficulties accessing appropriate learning opportunities) has been developed and is available on Learn.

Programme Specification

- 1) Awarding Institution: University of Edinburgh
- 2) Teaching Institution: University of Edinburgh
- 3) Programme accredited by: University of Edinburgh
- 4) Final Award: Post Graduate Certificate
- 5) Programme Title: **Post Graduate Certificate in Advanced Social Work Studies – PG Certificate Mental Health Officer Award**
- 6) UCAS Code: Relevant QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s): Social Policy and Social Work
- 7) Post-holder with overall responsibility for QA: Dr George Palattiyil
- 8) Date of production: January 2009
- 9) Educational aims of programme:

To equip students to identify, analyse and understand the issues for theory, policy and practice in relation to the role of the Advanced Social Work Studies - Mental Health Officer Award.

Programme Outcomes:

(a) Knowledge and understanding of:

- Evidence and research as they apply to mental health social work.
- Legislation and policy in relation to mental health.
- The concepts of risk, risk assessment and risk management as they inform good practice in relation to mental health.
- The ethical base which underpins good practice in relation to mental health.
- Research and evaluation theories, methods and approaches.

(b) Intellectual skills:

- The application of analytical, critical, philosophical and empirical methods to the study of professional practice in relation to mental health social work.
- Using and later structuring own research into this area and organising presentation of analysis and argument in response.

(c) Professional/subject-specific/practical skills:

- Risk assessment, risk management and planned risk-taking.
- Managing the tensions within multi-disciplinary and interagency responsibilities.
- Maximising self-determination of those who use services within the parameters of professional and ethical practice.
- Using theories to inform practice in a professional context.

(d) Transferable skills:

- Critical analysis
- Research and presentation skills.
- Application of theoretical understanding to practical contexts
- Ability to understand conceptual and normative issues generated by practical issues.

Our Commitment to Combat Racism

In 2020, Scottish Universities made [a landmark commitment](#) to combatting racism in Scottish HEIs.

As Scottish universities providing social work education we support this commitment wholeheartedly. We believe that social work educators, researchers and students should seek to prioritise principles of equality, diversity and inclusion, and should be committed to addressing racism and discrimination within our institutions, within social work education and practice and within society more generally. Values and principles need to be lived and acted upon. With this in mind, we believe that social work education should reflect the vast diversity of the communities we serve, and that diverse voices should be elevated and intentionally integrated into social work education.

Student social workers should have a right to dignity and respect in all learning spaces, including their placement settings. This means that they should not experience direct or indirect discrimination including based on their race, religious beliefs, ethnicity, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation. This includes behaviours by other students, by people using services and by other professionals that students encounter during placement experiences.

Roles and Responsibilities within the MHO Programme

Programme Director and Co-ordinators

The delivery of the PGCert MHO Award will be shared between the University and the local authority members of the East Partnership, with the local authorities contributing to the secondment of the Co-ordinator(s) of the Programme. This arrangement will ensure the organisation, management, delivery and monitoring of the Programme, in conjunction with the Programme Partnership Group (PPG) and in accordance with the SSSC requirements for approved specialist awards and the Graduate School of Social and Political Science of the University of Edinburgh.

Programme Director

Each academic programme is organised by a designated person. The Programme Director is responsible to the Head of School for the conduct of the post graduate certificate programme.

Responsibilities of the Programme Director:

- Recommending to Head of School applicants for admission.
- The overall direction, conduct, governance, organisation assurance of quality and all matters delegated to her/him by the Head of School.
- Making necessary arrangements for student access to academic support, services and facilities.
- Registering students on the Student Record.
- Monitoring students' progress and providing any necessary advice on study skills etc. This may take place in formal/ informal meetings.
- Creating adequate opportunities for student feedback on the content, delivery and administration of the Programme and ensuring that this input is considered in any development or review of the programme.
- Management of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- Participation in marking and assessment.
- Contribute to Practice Assessor training as appropriate.
- Plan and organise the Assessment Panels and coordinate with Assessment Panel chair.
- Involvement and contribution to design, planning and delivery of the programme.
- Involvement in ongoing programme development and evaluation of Programme.
- Identify and liaise with appointed external examiner ensuring that a sample of each assessment is forwarded for scrutiny.
- Plan, organise and participate in the Examination Board (3 per programme).

- Liaison between University and Partnership.
- Be involved with QA procedures for University of Edinburgh and SSSC.
- Work closely with the Programme Coordinator(s) on all aspects of the programme organisation and delivery.
- Advise the Programme Coordinator of university procedure and regulations.

The role of Programme Director overlaps with the Co-ordinator role in that the Director will also attend and feedback to PPG meetings, promote the programme, administer examinations and related processes, oversee and co-ordinate Programme evaluations and quality assurance and curriculum development/reviews etc.

Responsibilities of the Programme Co-ordinator(s)

- Raise awareness of MHO Programme across the partnership.
- Provide and circulate Programme information to all partnership agencies.
- Offer advice and guidance to agencies about potential MHO students' readiness etc.
- Help agencies to identify Practice Assessors, assessment panel members and markers.
- Co-ordinate selection process and verification subgroup of Programme Partnership Group (PPG).
- Notify applicants of suitability for a place on the Programme and/or any additional work required.
- Organise study days for Practice Assessors and markers/readers.
- Provide ongoing support to the above.
- Communicate with relevant parties regarding the MHO programme.
- Provide support and guidance to students in relation to assessed practice.
- Assist with the coordination and identification of external specialist teaching inputs.
- Consult with agency colleagues to identify and organise materials for inclusion in the units.
- Involvement and contribution to design, planning and delivery of the programme.
- Contribute to programme delivery as appropriate.
- Plan and organise the Assessment Panels and coordinate with Assessment Panel chair.
- Be involved in the ongoing course development and evaluation.

- Be involved with QA procedures for University of Edinburgh and SSSC.
- Be involved with others in the design and development of course assessment.
- Participate in marking and assessment.
- Participate in Examination Board (3 per year).
- Liaise with Programme Director.
- Contribute to the running and development of the MHO Research Network.

Responsibilities of the Course Organiser

In conjunction with the Programme Co-ordinator(s)/Director:

- Co-ordinate the face-to-face/online teaching and learning activities of the respective course.
- As appropriate, organise external expert presentations and contributions to the taught element.
- Mark course work.
- Moderate marked assessment material.

Responsibilities of the Tutor

The tutor is part of the learning team and in conjunction with the coordinator/director he/she/they will:

- Be allocated to an MHO student.
- Offer support and guidance to students about academic and placement requirements of University and SCQF Level 11.
- Participate in Programme development days.
- Be responsible for the marking of assignments.
- Contribute to the Assessment Panel.

Responsibilities of the Line Manager

A student's line manager is recognised as an integral part of their support system prior to and throughout the Programme. They are expected to:

- Help the student to identify their professional development needs through local Performance Review and Development mechanisms.
- Complete the reference form for student's application.
- Agree the provision of workload relief for the student whilst undertaking the programme.

Responsibilities of the Senior Manager

It also recognised that the support of the individual's senior manager is crucial to the student throughout the Programme. They are expected to:

- Complete the nomination form for the student application pack
- Complete a reference for student
- Ensure the student has operational support to undertake the Programme

Responsibilities of the Practice Assessor

The Practice Assessor is an experienced and practising MHO with knowledge, practice experience and understanding of current mental health legislation. The Practice Assessor functions as an agency assessor to the individual student throughout the Programme. He/she provides support, supervision, guidance and direction as well as frontline assessment. Students are accountable to their Practice Assessor and/or other designated agency MHOs for their MHO trainee practice during the Programme.

The specific duties of the Practice Assessor are:

- To help the student identify individual learning needs, in conjunction with the learning team.
- To ensure that the Working Agreement is completed by the student. The Practice Assessor is required to sign agreement to the working agreement.
- To liaise with the student and practice-based MHOs to gain access to and allocation of direct MHO casework.
- To supervise the student's practice in relation to these cases.
- To provide weekly supervision of the MHO student.
- Ensure that records of supervision sessions are recorded and kept by the student, noting areas discussed, MHO standards and practice competencies are addressed and relevant decisions made.
- To directly observe the student in carrying out MHO responsibilities with a service user on at least two occasions in both periods of assessed practice and provide verbal and written feedback to the student on each (see course handbooks for details).
- Along with the student, to provide a placement report for Courses 2 and 4, evidencing whether the student has demonstrated that he/she/they have successfully met the required MHO Standards for both Courses. The placement report will outline the source of cited evidence.
- To recommend whether the student has achieved a Pass or Fail grade for practice.
- To read the critical analyses of practice and confirm in writing to the programme coordinator/director that each essay is a realistic presentation of practice undertaken by the student.

- To attend Programme support workshops for Practice Assessors.
- To contribute to any actions plans required in relation to student performance.

Student Responsibilities

Whilst the Programme Director and Coordinators, Course Organisers, Tutors and Practice Assessors will endeavour to assist students throughout the Programme, **students must recognise their own specific responsibilities as follows:**

- Be pro-active and responsible adult learners.
- Attend all face-to-face taught days and participate in online directed teaching and learning days.
- Complete all the necessary Programme essays, assignments and assessments on time.
- Attend and participate in the practice component
- Prepare a Working Agreement in consultation with the learning team and send a copy to the relevant Programme Coordinator within 10 working days from the commencement of the practice period.
- Take part in weekly supervision and complete supervision records as directed by the Practice Assessor.
- Complete a reflective log in relation to direct MHO practice and other aspects of the MHO learning experience and regularly make this available to the Practice Assessor to use as assessment evidence.
- Undertake direct MHO practice as defined within the course descriptors.
- Undertake all practice activities as directed by the programme staff.
- Undertake all visits and observations as directed by the Practice Assessor.
- Arrange for service users' consent for all relevant Direct Observations during Courses 2 and 4.
- Compile a workload summary undertaken during the periods of assessed practice to be attached to the placement report.
- Along with the Practice Assessor, to provide a placement report for Courses 2 and 4, evidencing whether the student has demonstrated that he/she/they have successfully met the required MHO Standards for both courses. The placement report will outline the source of cited evidence.
- Be accountable for fitness to practise and conduct issues as detailed earlier in this handbook.

The Programme Partnership Group (PPG)

This group will be drawn from representatives including: the University; Programme Director; Programme Co-ordinator(s); member Local Authorities; service users; carers, Practice Assessors, and graduates of the MHO Programme.

The PPG will:

- Oversee the ongoing development of the MHO Programme and ensure it remains 'fit for purpose'.
- Ensure that the service user and carer perspectives are incorporated within the programme to enhance the quality and delivery of the training.
- Advise on matters associated with the Programme.
- Advise on ongoing programme development.
- Ensure appropriate links between the programme and partnership agencies.

Verification Panel

This group is made up of the Programme Director, Programme Coordinator(s) and representatives of the PPG. Following nomination of applicants from local authorities' selection process, this group checks eligibility, suitability, preparedness/capacity of applicants, offers feedback to applicants and agencies about development of personal learning plans, gaining relevant pre-programme experience and any issues for the induction phase of the Programme. The Verification Panel confirms applicants' eligibility to be accepted on to the programme and to progress to university application. It will also report to the PPG.

Assessment Panel

The Assessment Panel monitors practice learning reports and is made up of readers/markers who will be drawn from across the partnership and from within the HEI.

MHO Award Programme Requirements

The Post Graduate Certificate Advanced Social Work Studies - Mental Health Officer Award demands high levels of academic and professional rigour. The approach to teaching and learning will reflect the required academic level whilst also being rooted in professional practice. MHO students will be assessed against academic SCQF level 11 and also the MHO Standards and Practice competencies (2006) (Appendix 2) and will adhere to the methods of assessment as described by the SSSC Rules and Requirements for Specialist Courses (2005).

Aims and Objectives of the PGCert MHO Award

- To provide the knowledge, skills and competence required to undertake the role of the MHO.
- To provide the relevant training of MHOs to support the East Partnership local authorities' maintenance of the requisite number of qualified MHOs needed to fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
- To provide the opportunity for the development of academic study and specialist learning within mental health officer social work.

Entry Requirements

These entry requirements are drawn from the SSSC Standards Framework for the MHO Award, the SSSC Specialist Course Requirements and the University of Edinburgh Post- Graduate Admissions Policy.

Applicants should hold a first degree and/or a professional qualification in social work. Applicants who are professionally qualified but who do not hold a degree level qualification may ask for special consideration when applying.

Applicants must:

- Be nominated by their employing local authority, which will undertake to provide the student with support and appropriate learning opportunities.
- Hold a professional social work qualification recognised by the SSSC. If trained abroad a letter of comparability with the CQSW/DipSW/Honours Degree in Social Work or a letter of verification issued by SSSC (or one of the other registering Councils in the UK) will be required.
- Normally have 2 years post qualifying experience and be able to demonstrate that the applicant has improved and extended their level of competence since qualifying.
- Have identified the undertaking of the MHO Award as part of their personal learning plan within the Continuous Learning Framework, and/or within the agency's performance review process with their line manager.
- Satisfy the Programme provider that she/he has the capacity to achieve the MHO Standards, which require to be competently demonstrated for eligibility to be appointed as an MHO and to achieve the award at SCQF Level 11.

Registration Requirements

Professional registration (as a social worker) with the SSSC is a pre-requisite for registration as a student on the Programme. If for any reason a student's SSSC registration is not maintained, or is withdrawn, SSSC rules require that eligibility for this specialist award is also withdrawn and students would not therefore be allowed to complete the Programme. It is the student's responsibility to inform the Programme of any changes in their registration status (See Appendix 4).

Delivery

The PgCert MHO Award will take account of the geographical spread of students undertaking the Post Graduate Certificate. A range of e-learning delivery methods will be utilised. Online learning will be facilitated via Learn, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Whilst there will be considerable practical support and advice available, students will be expected to take responsibility for their own learning through independent study.

A core element of the Post Graduate Certificate (MHO Award) is assessed practice. Arrangements for the two periods of assessed practice will be managed, provided and assessed by the employing local authority.

Teaching Location

All classroom-based teaching will take place mainly on the central campus. Teaching and administrative staff are based in the Chrystal Macmillan Building, 15A George Square. These premises have access for individuals with mobility difficulties and lifts are situated at either end of the building. Students should discuss any access difficulties with their tutor.

Engagement and Attendance Monitoring

The University expects all students to attend all their university classes, lectures and tutorials etc., whether or not these are described as "compulsory" by the School. Students are expected to participate fully in the requirements of all courses, including submitting assignments, contributing to tutorials and workshops or laboratories, attending meetings with Personal Tutors and sitting examinations.

Attendance will be monitored by the School as part of our more general monitoring of student progress. Keeping attendance helps alert staff to any additional pastoral or academic support needs students might require. Staff can then provide advice, guidance or support in a timely and useful manner.

UK legislation relating to Points-Based Immigration requires all universities to monitor the attendance and engagement of their international students. Students on a Tier 4 visa must read Appendix 1 of this document.

Each School has a Coordinator of Adjustments. In SPS the Coordinator of Adjustments is Gillian MacDonald. With your agreement, your Learning Profile will be electronically circulated to the Coordinator of Adjustments, who then approves some or all of its recommendations and produces an Adjustment Schedule. This is then electronically circulated to those concerned with the administration of your courses (Course Organisers and Course Secretaries), your Personal Tutor, and yourself.

Note: Learning adjustments referring to the need for some students to occasionally submit coursework late does not, according to the Student Disability Service's guidelines, 'guarantee' an extension or waiver. Students should not assume an automatic right to extra time and should instead follow the extension or LPW procedures listed below. If a student is allowed extra time on an exam, this adjustment is coordinated between the Student Disability Service and the University's central Student Administration.

Assessment and Coursework

Assessment of Courses 1 and 3 will be in the form of essays, based on the students' ability to apply new and integrated knowledge from the taught part of the units to provided case example materials. The essay accounts for 100% of the Course mark. Assessment of Courses 2 and 4 include an open book law exam, the assessed practice learning and the student's critical analysis of practice essay (see below). Each component of assessment needs to be passed. See Taught Master's Handbook for guidance on resubmissions/special circumstances/extensions. [UoE Extensions and Special Circumstances Service](#)

Placement Report

It is the Practice Assessor's responsibility to make a recommendation of **pass/fail** against each standard, drawing upon the range of relevant evidence. The provision of written evidence, however, is shared equally between the Practice Assessor and the Student. The Assessment Panel will examine the placement report and confirm the recommendation to be endorsed by the exam board. The placement report does not contribute to the grade awarded for the PG Cert MHO Award (same applies to the law exam).

Critical analysis essay

The critical analysis essay is marked and moderated by Programme staff. Their recommended mark is passed to the exam board for confirmation. The critical analysis essay constitutes 100% of the mark for Courses 2 and 4.

Open Book Law Exam

The Open Book Law Exams for units Courses 2 and 4 is graded pass or fail but, as with the placement report, it does not contribute to the grade awarded for the PG Cert MHO Award

Assessment Panels

The Assessment Panel is for placement reports and consists of readers/markers drawn from across the partnership (HEI and local authorities). The Assessment Panel will use standardised marking frameworks derived from the Learning Foci and MHO Award Standards and aligned with unit's learning outcomes. They will be double marked by both academic and practice readers with a potential discretionary third reader to resolve disagreements. The Assessment Panel is part of the university's examination procedure and as such, confidentiality for all relevant parties must be maintained. There will be Assessment Panels following Courses 2 and 4.

- **Students must pass the practice component of Course 2 to progress to Course 3.**

Submission of Coursework

Guidance on coursework submissions can be found in the Taught MSc Student Handbook. Support and guidance will also be given on this process by the course team.

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism

Students should ensure they read and understand the academic misconduct procedures: [UoE Academic Misconduct](#)

Please refer to the taught MSc Student Handbook for more information [SPS PGT Student Handbook 2022-23](#)

External Examiner

The External Examiner for PG Cert Advanced Professional Studies (Mental Health Officer Award) is Dr Jill Hemmington, University of Lancashire

Further information on External Examiners can be found at:
[UoE Information & Policy on External Examining](#)

Accreditation as a Mental Health Officer

Following the final Board of Examiners, the University of Edinburgh will issue successful students with a letter confirming their qualification: the Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Professional Studies - Mental Health Officer Award. An academic certificate is awarded at the point of graduation.

Agency approval as a Mental Health Officer

It is the student's employing authority's responsibility to determine who is approved to act as an MHO on its behalf. Each authority will determine its own MHO approval mechanism, which will be advised to their students directly.

In accordance with Section 32 of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and guidelines laid down by the Scottish Government, the local authority must satisfy itself as to the competence of the individual to carry out the functions of the MHO.

It is the local authority's responsibility to access written confirmation of the employee's qualification direct from the individual concerned.

SSSC Complaints Policy

A copy of the SSSC's Complaints Policy is available on the SSSC website at:
www.sssc.uk.com

Appendix 1: SSSC MHO Award standards and Practice competencies

The Standards can be found on the SSSC website:

[SSSC MHO Standards & Practice Competencies](#)

Appendix 2: Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

SCQF Level 11

General Information

In most cases, SCQF level 11 study reflects a specialised knowledge and understanding of areas, applications or levels of expertise in particular subject or professional areas. In some professional areas, SCQF level 11 study is linked to structures of continuing professional development.

Typically, holders of a SCQF level 11 qualification will be able to:

- Demonstrate a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice;
- Deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- Show a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- Demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- Demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- Continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and develop new skills to a high level;

Show a conceptual understanding that enables the student:

- to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline, and to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses
- to demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring: the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility; decision making in complex and unpredictable situations; and the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

Appendix 3: Registration Requirements

Registration

All candidates must be registered on the social worker section of the SSSC. Below is further detail of the professional registration requirements related to application for and achievement of this specialist award.

Professional Registration

The Standards and Practice Competences to achieve the Mental Health Officer Award SSSC (October 2007) states:

‘The primary purpose of the award is to train local-authority employed, qualified, registered social workers for appointment to the role of Mental Health Officer as defined in Section 32 of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and as qualified by the Direction of Scottish Ministers.’

Therefore:

1. Throughout the Programme students will be under an obligation to report **immediately** to the Programme Director and to their employer any information that may be relevant to continued SSSC registration. Where relevant, the University’s internal disciplinary procedure may also be invoked via a referral to the College’s Fitness to Practise Committee.
2. Where the Programme Director receives information from *any* source concerning the conduct of a student registered on the Post Graduate Certificate in Advanced Professional Studies (Mental Health Officer Award), such that, if established, this information might call into question the social worker’s eligibility for continued registration with the SSSC, the Programme Director will ensure that the basis of this information is investigated and the SSSC advised of the matter. Circumstances likely to trigger such an investigation would include an allegation that e.g. the student had committed a criminal offence; or had committed an act of academic or other form of dishonesty; or had conducted her/himself in a damaging or dangerous way towards self or others; etc.

The investigation will respect the student’s right to due process and will include an opportunity for the student to present her/his account and/or explanation of the circumstances being reported. As part of the investigation the Programme Director will require the student to provide her/him with a factual statement clarifying her/his account of the circumstances being reported. The matter may be referred to the College’s Fitness to Practise for investigation and consideration. Following such an investigation the Programme Director will send a factual report to the SSSC and to the employer, as relevant for their consideration, outlining the information received, the nature of the investigation undertaken and the results of that investigation.

3. Depending on the nature of the referral to the Programme Director, the student may be suspended from the course, pending the outcome of the SSSC’s review of her/his professional registration
4. Where, due to such a referral or for any other reason a student’s professional registration is withdrawn, s/he will no longer be eligible for the Post Graduate Certificate in Advanced (Mental Health Officer Award).