



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Social Work

School of Social and Political Science

Master of Social Work

2025-27

Year 2

Programme Handbook

Programme Director: Dr Robin Sen

External Examiners:

- Dr. Eavan Brady, Trinity College, The University of Dublin

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Message from the Head of Social Work

I would like to welcome you back to the Master of Social Work Programme at the University of Edinburgh. The subject of social work has been taught at the university for over one hundred years, and you are following in the footsteps of many notable individuals who have shaped practice, policy and research in Scotland, and in other parts of the UK and internationally (<http://www.socialwork.ed.ac.uk/centenary>).

We want your time with us to be both enjoyable and stimulating, and look forward to the continued opportunities to engage with you about a wide range of issues that pose challenges for society, communities and individuals locally and globally.

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.

Throughout your time on the programme you will continue to have the opportunity to be taught by some of the leading social work academics in their field, and to work with practitioners making a real difference in the lives of the people and communities they work with. We also have a range of additional activities to extend and enhance your learning, and we hope that you will continue to join us in these activities as time permits.

I look forward to meeting with you all regularly in the time ahead.

Best wishes,

Steve Kirkwood, PhD
Head of the Social Work Subject Area

Welcome from the MSW Programme Director

Welcome to the second year of the Master of Social Work programme at the University of Edinburgh. I hope you find your second year of the programme both enjoyable and productive.

This handbook introduces you to all aspects of the Programme including its structure, design and assessment procedures within the overall context of the University's academic systems. Each course within the programme has a separate course handbook, which provides more detailed information.

Much of the information contained within this handbook is for your reference and I would suggest that you have a look through it so as you know where you might find more detailed information should you need it. I would particularly urge you to check out the relevant sections before you embark upon any written work. Coming to terms with academic expectations and conventions from the earliest point will prove invaluable as you proceed through the programme.

As Programme Director for the Master of Social Work degree, my role is to co-ordinate and manage all aspects of the programme. I look forward to working with you throughout the final year of your programme.

Robin Sen
Lecturer
MSW Programme Director
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The University of Edinburgh
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We currently offer two routes to qualifying as a social worker, a four-year undergraduate Bachelor of Science (BSc) and a two-year postgraduate Master of Social Work (MSW). The MSW is taught (with some slight differences around a research component) alongside the final (professional) two years of the BSc. This adds diversity and richness to the experience of both cohorts. The MSW offers students who already hold a first degree, a qualification in social work and eligibility for registration as a social worker with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). It complies with the requirements for Social Work Training in Scotland but also equips students to work across the UK and in many countries in the world.

The University of Edinburgh is a world-renowned research-intensive academic institution. A broad social scientific orientation informs the social work programmes and is reflected in the wide-ranging research profile of the teaching staff, the majority of whom are engaged in research. We also have a growing community of research students at MPhil and PhD level. Both the MSW and BSc programmes benefit from this culture of research and from staff being able to draw upon current research insights in their teaching.

Our approach to social work is a critical one. Social work has always, as its name suggests, been concerned with 'the social' and with social explanations for problems faced by individuals, families, communities and society as a whole. C. Wright Mills, writing in 1959, made an important distinction between 'personal troubles' and 'public issues', arguing that problems we often think of as personal (for example, unemployment or criminalisation) are actually public issues which are encountered in the private sphere. Social work should be about understanding individual problems in their wider social context.

Our aim in educating social workers is to encourage them to develop the kind of critical thinking skills that will equip them to meet the demands of a rapidly changing profession and world. In that sense students should not expect to be taught how to use particular practice tools and procedures (these are likely to have changed by the time of graduation and moreover, different employers have very different ways of working, even within broadly similar fields of practice). Policies and procedures can be easily learnt and this is best done in practice situations. What we would hope to do in the University environment is to help students develop an identity as a social worker and the ability to think like a social worker, so that they might take this identity and these critical thinking skills into the range of settings they will go on to work within.

Teaching, Research and Practice

As social scientists, we are committed to teaching, to research and many other kinds of practical engagement with the world and strive towards international standards of excellence in each of these areas.

We use the LEARN platform to support our teaching. All coursework is submitted via LEARN, and many courses may post readings, course handouts, updates, announcements and other course-specific information there. It is important that you regularly check the Learn system in order to keep up to date with your courses. There is, as you will likely already know, a MSW Programme Hub Class of 2025-2027 on LEARN. Please look out for general information and communication regarding the MSW Programme on this site.

We strive to maintain open and accessible communication with all students. Much of this is undertaken via email and students should regularly check their University email addresses both during University based periods and also whilst based in social work service delivery settings (Please note that we do not send emails to your personal email address). Information and announcements on individual courses will also be found on Learn.

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.

As a qualifying social work programme, the MSW programme is governed by competence standards related to the social work profession - for students these are primarily the Standards in Social Work Education, mandatory requirements which all qualifying social work programmes must ensure are met by social work students. These standards were developed by the social work regulator, the SSSC, which also reviews how they are met on the programme. As social work's core competences include different types of human interaction, academic assessments on the programme include mandatory group presentation tasks or require interactional elements such as observed role play. All social work students are expected to take part in these activities. If there are exceptional circumstances which could affect your participation in these they should be discussed prior to the task with the course organiser and Programme Director to explore what additional support can be offered to allow you to meet these requirements.

Please note that every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this handbook was correct at the time of going to press. However, the School retains the right to make any necessary changes consistent with the University's regulations. In the event of any conflict between anything contained in this handbook or the Codes of Practice and the Postgraduate Regulations published in the University Calendar, the Calendar shall have precedence. Please see Appendix 1 for further information and advice.

The Programme Team

Social Work Staff

The staff group is made up of lecturers, tutors, teaching fellows, practice learning organiser and secretaries. Sessional teachers and tutors also contribute to teaching as do staff from other subject areas. In addition to their general social work background, teaching staff have specialist knowledge in particular areas of policy and practice; for example, work with children and families, older people, mental health, and criminal justice.

Practitioners and managers from the statutory, voluntary and independent social work agencies in the South-East of Scotland contribute to our teaching, drawing on their substantial specialist knowledge in ways which complement the expertise within the University.

A brief outline of the teaching and research interests of staff members is available on the Social Work website: <https://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/social-work>

Please note that the Postgraduate Teaching Office is responsible for all course assessment submissions within the School of Social and Political Science.

Please see the Course Handbooks for information about submissions and course assessment.

Communications

Notifying SSSC of Change of Address/ Personal Details

It is each student's responsibility to inform the Scottish Social Services Council if they have a change of name/address: <http://www.sssc.uk.com/>

Semester Dates

MSW Year 2

Semester 1*

Monday 14 September 2026 to Friday 18 December 2026

Semester 2*

Monday 4 January 2027 to Friday 21 May 2027

Placement Dates

Monday 2 November 2026 to Tuesday 6 April 2027
(please consult Practice Learning Handbook for more details)

Holiday: 20 December 2026 to 3 January 2027

*See course handbooks on LEARN HUB for more information on the course and assessment submission dates.

***Please note:** Academic year dates for the Master of Social Work Programme may differ from the University of Edinburgh Academic year dates. See course handbooks for each course dates.

More information on university calendar can be found [here](#)

Programme Structure

The MSW runs over two years and involves students gaining 180 Scottish Masters credit points during each year of study.

The programme consists of the courses outlined below. It is structured in order to introduce students to social work in a staged way. The first two courses (Social Work in Communities and Social Work with Individuals and Families) introduces social work's broad welfare role. Understanding Care and Control introduces the tensions and decision-making requirements around voluntary and compulsory interventions while Working with Risk, Trust and Complexity, delivered in Year Two, addresses some of the more complex areas of social work practice around, for instance, child or adult protection. The Working with Self and Others course highlights the central importance of 'self' and what students bring from their personal to their professional lives. It also teaches effective communication skills and social work methods and provides opportunities for practising the application of such skills and methods prior to starting placement. Doing Social Work Research introduces research ideas and principles that will be further developed in the Dissertation.

Year 1	Course Code	Credits Awarded
Social Work in Communities (PG)	SCWR11039	20
Social Work with Individuals and Families (PG)	SCWR11038	20
Working with Self and Others: Skills Theories & Methods (PG)	SCWR11037	20
Understanding Care and Control (PG)	SCWR11033	20
Doing Social Work Research (PG)	SCWR10027	20
Professional Social Work Practice 1 (PG) 70 days	SCWR11036	80

Year 2	Course Code	Credits Awarded
Working with Risk, Trust & Complexity (PG)	SCWR11034	40
Professional Social Work Practice 2 (PG) 100 days	SCWR11035	80
MSW Dissertation (PG)	SCWR11009	60

Half of the programme consists of practice placements (Professional Social Work Practice 1 & 2), which are offered in a range of settings, reflecting the diversity of the social work profession. We try and arrange placements, as far as possible within the constraints of what agencies offer as placement opportunities, to meet the individual learning needs of students. It is in placement where you will learn about the day-to-day realities of social work practice in a way that cannot happen in a university setting. The role of university teaching is to give you the ideas, the background knowledge and the critical thinking skills to make best use of your practice experience.

We seek to make links between theory and practice in our teaching. To that end we utilise an Enquiry and Action Learning (EAL) model where students visit communities and engage with practitioners around case study material in order to develop an understanding of social

work practice that is grounded in both academic and practical knowledge. You will be given an introduction to the EAL method in the early stages of the programme.

Further details of the courses can be found in each of the course handbooks available on LEARN.

Overview of Assessment

Students must complete all the required assessments. Each course is assessed separately and must be passed separately in order to meet the requirements for registration with the SSSC.

Towards the end of the first year of the programme the Examination Board will consider each student's academic and practice progress. The Board will decide whether or not students may proceed to the final year of their programme. Only very exceptionally (and with the agreement of the external examiners) will a student who fails part of the academic work following a re-submission be allowed to proceed to the final year. Students who fail or do not complete the first year's assessed practice (Professional Social Work Practice¹) will not be able to progress to the final year.

Providing Past Assessments to Students on a Course

Course organisers in the social work team take different approaches to providing previous example assessments, and there are valid reasons for these variations in practice.

Some organisers may choose not to provide example assessments for academic or practical reasons. Assessments may change significantly from year to year to reflect updated content, current research, or different teaching priorities, meaning past examples may be misleading. In some cases, sharing examples could narrow students' focus toward predicting questions rather than engaging broadly and deeply with the course material. Organisers may want to encourage originality and independent thinking rather than model responses. There may also be concerns about the availability of suitable examples, or restrictions linked to assessment security and question reuse.

In some other courses, sample assessments are offered to help students understand the format, level of difficulty, and types of skills or knowledge they may be expected to demonstrate. They can reduce uncertainty, support preparation, and give students a clearer sense of how learning outcomes may be assessed. This may be especially helpful in courses with unfamiliar assessment styles for students.

While practices on the provision of prior assessments may differ, the intention is generally the same: to support student learning and ensure assessments remain fair, rigorous, and aligned with course objectives. In all cases you will be provided with the criteria against which a particular assessment will be graded in advance of submitting it. Should you have questions about the assessment before submitting, you should contact the Course Organiser to discuss further.

Grading Process and Queries

Each assessment is graded and then a sample of assignments are moderated internally – the moderator is most often, but not always, the Course Organiser. On social work courses a number of staff members may be marking assessments. The moderator looks at all fails, borderline fails and a sample of grades in other grade bands (i.e., A, B, C, D) across all

markers to ensure they are satisfied the marks are defensible, the feedback clear, and, where there is more than one person marking the assessments, the grading is consistent between markers,. Once marks are released to students, a sample of work from each course is sent to the External Examiner of the programme for their comments and review. If a student is unclear on their feedback they should approach the marker(s) for clarification of the comments – a marker's name should be noted at the end of feedback, if it is not please approach the Course Organiser who will be able to clarify. If a student wishes to raise questions about the grading of their assessment they should approach the Course Organiser for that course. Please note that, as per [University regulations](#), marks can only be adjusted if there has been a procedural error in the marking process, and not because a student disputes the academic judgement of the marker.

Unsatisfactory academic progress

When students have been unable to pass all courses within the current year they will not be permitted to progress to the following year.

Under regulation 67 of the university's Taught Assessment Regulations the university may exclude students who do not meet the criteria for progression on their programme. This will include:

- Where students have failed to complete and pass all courses within the usual two opportunities permitted
- Where students have failed to complete and pass each practice learning opportunity within the usual two opportunities permitted
- Where students have failed to complete and pass a practice learning opportunity and the practice review panel does not recommend a further opportunity to undertake an assessed placement

Student social workers may also be referred under the College Fitness to Practise policy if there are concerns about their progress and continuance to study.

Re-submission of Assignments

Subject to confirmation from the Board of Examiners, students are entitled to re-submit a failed academic piece of work. Where a piece of work is re-submitted as a second sit the first submission mark will be recorded, it is the original mark which is counted towards the year average. A new title will normally be set for re-submissions. There are no re- submissions for the Masters Dissertation.

Details of the assessments can be found on LEARN.

Progression to Final Year and Masters Dissertation

In order to progress to the final year of the programme all courses in year one must be passed.

To be eligible to proceed to the dissertation, students must achieve an overall credit weighted grade of not less than 50% in the first year of their MSW programme and pass all first year courses. Students who do not achieve this average but who pass all other components of the programme may be eligible for the award of the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work awarded by the University.

In the first year of the Programme, students identify their chosen dissertation topic and begin work on a review of literature. An Outline Research Proposal is submitted in year 1, semester 2. A literature review is submitted on the first day of Semester 1, Year 2. Students who fail to submit a literature review at this time will not be eligible to proceed with the dissertation (and hence to the MSW). Successful achievement of an award in year two of the programme will be determined by passes in all courses.

Master of Social Work Award

Students must pass all courses and achieve a mark of no less than 50% for the dissertation to be eligible for the Master of Social Work degree award.

At the end of the second year, the Examination Board will consider each student's academic and practice progress during that year. Students who have reached a satisfactory standard in their academic work and in their practice (i.e. Professional Social Work Practice 2) will be recommended for either the Master of Social Work Degree or the Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (i.e. without the dissertation component). Both qualifications render students eligible for registration with the SSSC as a qualified Social Worker.

Details of the assessments can be found on the course LEARN sites.

MSW with Merit or Distinction

The MSW is 'unclassified', which means that no formal mark or grade is attached to overall performance on graduation. However, it is possible for the MSW to be passed 'with merit' and 'with distinction'. To achieve a **merit**, a student must be awarded at least 60% for the Dissertation, and must pass all other courses with an average of at least 60%. Borderline marks (58.00 – 59.99) for both the Dissertation and coursework average elements are considered for merits by the Board of Examiners. To achieve a **distinction**, a student must be awarded at least 70% for the Dissertation, and must pass all other courses with an average of at least 70%. Borderline marks (68.00 – 69.99) for both the Dissertation and coursework average elements are considered for distinctions by the Board of Examiners.

General Postgraduate Certificate / PG Diploma in Applied Social Sciences

While we expect all students to pass with a Master's degree, there are rare situations when students do not meet the criteria for Master's Degree.

In cases where students pass at least 40 credits with a mark of at least 40%; and attain an average of at least 40% for the 60 credits, such students are awarded a general PG Certificate.

A Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Social Sciences is awarded in situations where students have gained 120 credits made up from the Social Work courses listed as part of the MSW programme (i.e. with at least 80 credits with a mark of at least 40%; and attain an average of at least 40% for the 120 credits of study), but without the Professional Social Work Practice 2 component. Please note that this PG Diploma in Applied Social Sciences does not allow the holder to register and practise as a social worker.

Ordinarily, students complete all course work and exit with a Masters in Social Work. However, in rare circumstances some students may not be able to complete their final placement (for example, the lockdown restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020) and may decide to exit early. An MSc in Applied Social Science is awarded in situations where students who have 120 or more credits in the first year of the programme and who are unable to complete the second placement, however then complete a 60-credit Dissertation – MSc in Applied Social Science.

Please note that this MSc in Applied Social Science does not allow the holder to register and practise as a social worker.

Graduation

The **SSPS graduation ceremony** is normally in late November. This is arranged by Student Administration, while the Student Development Office also arranges a drinks reception afterwards. For more information, please see our Graduations page:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/graduations>

Higher Education Achievement Record

Students graduating from the University will receive a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). This provides detailed information about your learning and achievements which will be of use to future employers, among others. We would like to make sure that your HEAR records all relevant work you have done while at Edinburgh, specifically:

- Academic prizes and awards
- Students' Union or Sports Union representative or office bearer (minimum duration: one semester)
- Class, programme, subject area or School representative (minimum duration: one semester; attending training is required)
- Sports Union Sports Clubs – Official positions

Teaching takes place mainly on the central campus. Social Work teaching and administrative staff are based on the first and second floors of 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.

Programme Requirements

Registration and PVG Scheme

It is a condition of entry and continuation on the programme that students are registered with the SSSC. Students removed from the register as a result of their misconduct will not be able to achieve the professional qualification in social work.

As part of their registration, students will be required to apply to become a PVG Scheme member under the provisions of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme is administered by Disclosure Scotland and under the Scheme, Disclosure Scotland will draw on details of criminal records, information about a person's inclusion on children's or adults' lists and other relevant information held by a local police force or Government Body. Becoming a member of the PVG Scheme enables a successful applicant to work with vulnerable groups.

Candidates should note that convictions which otherwise might have been considered 'spent' will come up in police checks. Further information about Disclosure Scotland can be found at <http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/>

The University has a responsibility to inform the SSSC of any changes to student circumstances. Where a student is absent from the programme due to health, failure or other reasons then their registration as a student social worker with the SSSC will be discontinued until continued progression on the programme is confirmed. At this point students will then need to re-apply for registration with the SSSC.

The SSSC also requires that social work students meet the minimum level of credit level in literacy and numeracy and the European Driving Licence level in Information Technology. While some universities might insist on these requirements in order to be accepted onto a social work programme, we appreciate that some otherwise strong candidates may not meet these requirements at the point of entry to the programme. Therefore we offer classes to ensure that those who do not currently meet these requirements are offered the opportunity to do so over the course of their first year of study. We will check qualifications (including the equivalency of international qualifications) and let those students who need to undertake additional classes know of the arrangements made for them to do so.

Attendance

The Postgraduate Social Work degree is a full time, professional training programme and it is expected that students attend all aspects of the course. There is an 80% attendance requirement across the programme, stipulated by the SSSC which regulates social workers, and university social work education, in Scotland. This means students are required to attend a minimum of 80% of the teaching inputs. Attendance is monitored across all teaching inputs (e.g., lectures, tutorials, workshops). Where a student's attendance falls below 80%, the student adviser and programme director will meet with the student in the first instance to discuss the issues around attendance and any supports that may be needed. Students who fail to meet the attendance requirement may put their progression on the programme at risk. As such it is essential students contact the relevant person (e.g., Course Organiser, Tutor, Academic Supervisor or Student Adviser) if there are any concerns about attendance, for example if you are unable to attend a tutorial due to illness. If you are unsure who to contact please contact the Programme Director/ Cohort Lead. Medical certificates are required for absences of over seven days (or five working

days). If a student misses substantial parts of any component of the programme, this will be regarded as a serious matter that will need to be discussed with the programme director.

Assessed Preparation for Direct Practice

The Framework for Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE) states that Providers must:

‘Make sure that all students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting’.

In order to progress to Professional Social Work Practice 2 students are required to have passed all first year courses and have ongoing SSSC and PVG registration.

Change of Address/ Name

It is each student’s responsibility to inform Student Services immediately of any change of address/name. All student contact information is held by Student Services.

It is each student’s responsibility to inform the Scottish Social Services Council if they have a change of name/address: <http://www.sssc.uk.com/>

Individual Learning Plan

The SSSC framework for Social Work Education in Scotland requires that each student develops an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) that will provide a guide for their programme of study and contribute to the continuation of professional development. Final year students should have commenced their ILP in the previous year and should continue to develop it through their second year.

Details of this requirement can be found at:

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/01/16202/17019

Practice Placements

Professional Social Work Practice 2 (Assessed Practice Learning in Service Delivery Settings)

In each year of the programme students undertake a period of assessed practice learning in a service delivery setting. The second placement is 100 (Professional Social Work Practice 2). This period is spent in service delivery settings and supervised by appropriately qualified practitioners, most of whom are accredited by their agencies and already hold the Practice Learning Award, or are working towards completing the Practice Learning qualification.

Students should note that it is not possible to offer individual choice of placements. Placements will be allocated by the University in order to provide students with a general learning experience. Placements are generally located in the City of Edinburgh, Mid, East and West Lothian, Fife and the Scottish Borders.

(Please see the Professional Social Work Practice 2 Course Handbook/LEARN site for further details)

Cessation of Practice

Please refer to the Professional Social Work Practice 2 course handbook for details.

Termination of Training

The grounds for termination of training are outlined in the Scottish Social Services Council Rules for Social Work Training 2003 as “behaviour that is confirmed as damaging or dangerous to service users, other students or programme providers, or creates unacceptable risk for themselves and others”.

Concerns about the student’s behaviour may be referred to the University Fitness to Practise Committee and University disciplinary procedures may be invoked.

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/taught-students/student-conduct/fitness-to-practise>

Where concerns about the student’s behaviour have been raised within the period of assessed practice, the agency should conduct an investigation under the appropriate provisions for the agency.

The Head of Subject will ensure that the student has access to information about the disciplinary process, student complaint procedures and appeals mechanisms.

Where termination of training is being considered, the Programme Director will notify the Head of Subject who will then advise the student in writing of the concerns raised and convene a meeting of the relevant parties to determine further action. If, following this meeting, termination of training is sought the Head of Subject will notify the student of this in writing.

In serious cases, the matter will be referred to the Authorised Officer (as defined in the University disciplinary procedures) and immediate suspension of studies may follow.

The university is required to share information with the SSSC relating to complaints and termination of training investigations and disclosures in terms of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. The programme is also required to notify the SSSC immediately in writing of any misconduct by a student that might call into question the student's registration with the Council, inform the student of that fact and co-operate with the Council proceedings undertaken in terms of the Council's Registration and Conduct Rules.

The SSSC may invoke procedures to terminate the student's registration which could result in the student's social work training being terminated.

SSSC Codes of Practice: <http://www.sssc.uk.com/about-the-sssc/codes-of-practice/what-are-the-codes-of-practice>

Implications of Authorised Interruption of Studies/Course Failure

Where a student has been granted authorised interruption of studies due to health, personal circumstances or failure:

- The University has a responsibility to inform the SSSC who may discontinue the student's registration as a student social worker until such point that continued progression on the programme is confirmed. At this point, the student would need to re-apply for registration with the SSSC;
- There can be no absolute guarantee that practice fees for repeated periods of practice will be funded by the SSSC.

Assessment and Coursework

Aims of Assessment

The assessment procedures are designed:

- To provide a pattern of continuous assessment during the programme;
- To allow students to demonstrate that they have achieved the levels of academic knowledge and practice learning competence necessary to qualify for the Master of Social Work degree or Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work;
- To provide for relevance, continuity, integration, depth and independent scrutiny;
- To ensure that standards of professional and public accountability are met through depth and range of independent study;
- To allow for the shared involvement in assessment by university staff, practice teachers, and external examiners;
- To provide regular feedback to students and staff on the progress of each student towards achieving the required level of competence;
- To develop and demonstrate the student's capacity for self-evaluation and commitment to continuing acquisition of knowledge and skill.

Overview of Assessment

Students must complete all the required assessments. Each course is assessed separately and must be passed separately in order to meet the requirements for registration with the SSSC.

Towards the end of first year, the Board of Examiners will consider each student's academic progress and practice report to confirm progression into the final year.

Details of the assessments can be found in the course handbooks.

The Board of Examiners meeting to award the Master of Social Work degree is held in June and September of each year.

Re-submission of Assignments

To meet the SSSC requirements that each course's learning outcomes must be passed, Social Work students are allowed re-sits of each academic assignment. Regulation 24:

Except for the most exceptional of circumstances, the mark of the first submission will be the one counted towards progression to Masters Dissertation. Any concession to this ruling would need to be approved at College level, based on the submission of relevant and timely submissions of Special Circumstances.

Information about the Special Circumstances procedure can be found at:
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/extensions-special-circumstances>

Where a student has to re-submit the assessment, details of re-submission will be communicated to the student after the Board of Examination. Failing either of the practice placements does **not** automatically lead to a repeat placement being offered. Please see the Course Handbook for Professional Social Work Practice 1 for further information on failed placements.

Programme Failure

A student whose course assignments, after permitted re-submissions, are not all of a pass standard will be deemed to have failed the programme. When the failure of a period of assessed practice (i.e. either Professional Social Work Practice 1 or 2) is confirmed by the Board then the student will be deemed to have failed the programme. Some students may be permitted by the Board of Examiners to undertake an additional period of assessed practice (i.e. to repeat Professional Social Work Practice 1 or 2). If after any permitted extensions or additional periods of assessed practice, the student's work is not of a pass standard, he/she will be deemed to have failed the programme.

Board of Examiner's Meeting and Graduation

The Board of Examiners meeting to determine eligibility to progress to second year of the programme and eligibility for the award of the Masters in Social Work degree and the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work meets in September of each year. Following the meeting first year students will be notified of their eligibility to progress to the second year and the dissertation and final year students will be notified of their final award. Those students deemed eligible for the award of the Master of Social Work degree or the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work can graduate at the winter graduations.

Presentation of Assignments

Students should adhere to the following advice on presentation:

- When using practice examples, be meticulous in changing names and addresses or using initials of users and agencies to preserve confidentiality;
- Provide an assignment cover sheet, which should include the assignment question, date of submission, student cohort, examination number and word count.
- Use 'Times New Roman' or similar (font size 12), leaving generous margins, and include page numbers;
- Make good use of sub-headings in order to indicate the structure and logic of the paper to the reader;
- Include a contents page in large assignments such as the dissertation and if helpful in structuring the work.
- Students are discouraged from using footnotes. Where they are used, the word count for all assignments must include the footnotes.
- Written work is required to be of a standard that is suitable for professional practice. It is expected that students with assessed learning support needs will have utilised all appropriate supports and resources prior to submission.

Some Reminders about Content

Students should include relevant theory, research findings, policy issues and legal context in all written work, including when discussing practice. Value issues should be fully explored. Analysis, as well as description, must be apparent.

Retention of Academic Material

Students are responsible for retaining a copy of all their academic and assessed practice related work. This could be contained within the student's Individual Learning Plan.

Referencing

In all written work students must:

- Cite references in the text of the essay itself to indicate a book, article or report from which information or ideas has been drawn. Where quoting an author directly, students should include page number(s);
- Provide a list of references at the end of the essay which should include all works referred to in the text.

There are many referencing systems and conventions, which often vary across different academic disciplines. **The social work programme requires that you use the author - date method (also known as the Harvard system). Please see the guide to Harvard referencing provided by the University of Edinburgh library which is available at the University of Edinburgh library.**

Students should not make direct contact with an External Examiner. Any relevant issues should be raised with the Programme Director.

Students have the right to view External Examiners' reports, with the exception of any confidential reports made directly, and separately, to the Head of College or the Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance. Schools are responsible for making External Examiner reports available to students on request.

Fitness to Practise

This Programme of study is accredited by the Scottish Social Services Council (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): <https://www.sssc.uk.com/the-scottish-social-services-council/sssc-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:

<https://www.sssc.uk.com/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: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/taught-students/student-conduct/fitness-to-practise>

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 to Dr Steve Kirkwood: s.kirkwood@ed.ac.uk

Students must be aware that it is an individual 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 personal tutor or 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 the Scottish Social Services Council if required, and further guidance on this is available in the College Fitness to Practise Procedure document and Privacy Notice. (<https://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/taught-students/student-conduct/fitness-to-practise>)

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.

SSSC Registration as a Newly Qualified Social Worker

The final awards, confirmed by the Board of Examiners' meeting, are usually sent to the SSSC by the end of July. This allows the SSSC to finalise students' registration as newly qualified social workers. Successful completion of the Programme leads to eligibility to be registered with the SSSC as a qualified Social Worker.

The Graduation ceremony for the Master of Social Work programme will take place in November 2026, and it will be at this point that students will have received their graduation certificate. Students though will be able to request an academic transcript in advance of

this. The academic transcript is the official record of your award, and further details are available here: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/order-documents/transcripts>

We will also supply a letter in mid-July 2026 confirming that you have obtained your degree so that you can share this with prospective employers.

Student Representation

Staff members at the University of Edinburgh work closely with student representatives. Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) coordinates student representation and provides training and support for student representatives across the University.

The role of student representatives ('Reps') is to listen to you to identify areas for improvement, suggest solutions, and ensure that your views inform strategic decisions within the subject area, School and University. The aim is to build a stronger academic community and improve your student life.

Schools share students' emails with their student representatives as a matter of course; any student wishing to opt out from this should tell the School's Teaching Office.

After the placement the Dissertation Supervisor will again incorporate the full role and responsibility of a Personal Tutor.

Agency Complaints Procedures

A large proportion of time on the course is spent in assessed practice in the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors. Occasionally issues may arise in practice, which cause students concern. Should this occur then procedures set out in the practice Working Agreement should be followed. Where concerns are of a serious nature or initial discussions fail to reach resolution then agency complaint procedures should be invoked.

SSSC's Complaints Policy

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

Appendix 1: SSSC Guidance on use of Social Media

Using social media

Many of us now use social networking and file sharing sites like Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. They're great for staying in touch and creating communities and for most people, joining in is trouble free and fun. But it can be easy to blur the lines between your personal voice and your professional life as a registered social service worker.

First of all, exactly what are "social media"?

It's really just a set of online tools for us to use to communicate and engage with people and includes things like:

- writing a blog or commenting on people's blogs
- micro-blogging e.g. Twitter
- a personal profile page on one of the social or business networking sites e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook
- product or service reviews on retailer sites, or customer review sites
- taking part in online votes and polls
- taking part in conversations on public and private web forums (message boards).

And while there are lots of benefits from taking part in social networking there are things that it's important to look out for and think about in your role as a professional social service worker.

Remember that as a registered worker you must work to the SSSC Code of Practice for Social Service Workers e.g. Code 5 says that you must "uphold public trust and confidence in social services whether you are in work or outside of work".

Both personally and professionally, you need to follow the same standards in online activities as you would in any aspect of your life. The same professional expectations and guidelines for interacting with people apply online as in the real world.

To friend or not to friend?

"Friending" or allowing a person who uses services or their carer to be your online friend or follower is not acceptable for a registered social service worker as it creates a personal relationship outside of your workplace. And it leaves both workers and people who use services open to allegations from comments they might post.

No comment!

Be responsible for the way you behave and for what you post and use common sense and judgement. As a social service worker you should always be respectful of the privacy and feelings of others. You should not use it for attack or abuse, to make malicious comments, to air concerns about issues at work or provide privileged and confidential details about work or individuals as this could be a breach of the SSSC Code of Practice.

How you behave online can have an impact on you professionally as well as personally. Anything that is posted online could leave you open to scrutiny from the public and people who use services and this could be viewed as misconduct.

Is private really that private?

Be aware that anyone can search for information about you online, just as they do for any service or product or to find out who was number 1 in the charts in 1999.

Privacy doesn't exist in the world of social media even though all social networking sites have "privacy settings". No matter how private we think we are, once you've put something out there, it's out there. That said; make the most of the privacy settings. Keep an eye out for updates from the host site as they continually change the settings which then get applied to everyone and you then have to choose to opt out.

The internet is not anonymous, nor does it forget. Everything written on the internet can be traced back to its author very easily and there is a permanent record.

Search engines are extremely sophisticated. Information is backed up often and posts in one forum can be replicated in others through reposts and references. Try Googling yourself to see how well protected your personal online presence really is!

Top Tips

1. Check your personal security settings. To keep your accounts private, choose settings that mean only the people on your "friends", followers or contacts lists can see your information, photos, videos and posts. And check that location tracking services are turned off unless you need it turned on.
2. Don't allow people who use services and their carers to be your online friends as it creates a personal relationship and it can leave you open to allegations regarding comments they may make online.
3. Avoid putting personal information up on your page e.g. where you work, your phone number etc.
4. Be responsible about what you post.
5. Find out about your "web shadow" – search for yourself online and see what comes up. You'll be surprised how much could be online even if you're not in the public eye.