

Social Work
at Edinburgh

Study at one of the
UK's leading **Social
Work** departments
and prepare for
exciting careers.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
School of Social and
Political Science

Welcome to the School of Social and Political Science

The School of Social and Political Science is one of the leading schools of social science in the UK and we pride ourselves on our innovative teaching, lively community of staff and students, and pursuit of academic excellence.

Our research is world class and it informs and shapes our teaching. As one of our students, you will enjoy a challenging, rich and rewarding learning environment, as well as the opportunity to engage in the most current debates from the start of your studies.

The School of Social and Political Science brings together specialists in a wide range of disciplines and is also home to many research centres and groups.

Our school is a vibrant and intellectually stimulating place to study, which will provide you with an education enriched with insights from across the social and political sciences and beyond.

Why Edinburgh?

World-class reputation

The University of Edinburgh is one of the world's leading universities. We are consistently ranked amongst the 50 best universities in the world, which allows us to attract some of the brightest academics and students. This means that you will learn from and amongst the very best in teaching and research.

Invest in your future

Choose to study at Edinburgh and you'll be investing in an education that will help you build a successful future. We support students to develop a broad range of skills, grow in confidence and learn more about themselves.

As a result, employers regard Edinburgh as an excellent training ground for high-flyers and value our graduates for their intellectual ability and the attributes they're able to develop while studying with us.

Focused on practice

Social Work at Edinburgh is deeply rooted in practice. This is reflected in the many contributions made by practitioners and service users to the content of our programme, and our practice-based training. As one of our students, you will also benefit from our extensive experience researching, advising and consulting on best practice in social work.

Professionally accredited

Our programme will prepare you for professional practice. It will provide you with the skills and knowledge to improve the lives of those who use social services once you start practising. Our degree programme is approved by the Scottish Social Services Council, the regulatory body for social work in Scotland.

A supportive environment

Student support is embedded within the School and you will have a named contact to guide you through university life. There are also a number of student peer-learning opportunities in place to ensure you always feel supported.

What is Social Work and who is it for?

Social workers work within a whole range of settings, including local communities, hospitals, care homes and third-sector services. They support people dealing with many different issues arising from, for example, poverty and deprivation, family relationships, mental health issues, drugs, or alcohol usage. The issues facing individuals are multi-layered; often, social workers can make a difference.

They arrange care for adults with disabilities, work with health workers in hospitals and the community, assist courts in dealing with people who commit offences, and offer advice and guidance to victims of crime. Social workers are employed by local authorities or with agencies commissioned by local authorities to work with specific, specialised areas of practice. In recent years, third-sector organisations have been driving forces in social work practices; many social workers have been part of this.

Social work is a job for creative, practical and resourceful individuals who really enjoy working with people. Social workers have to combine ingenuity and optimism with honesty and realism in the face of the demanding situations that some service users experience. It is social workers who represent society's response to the challenges of families under stress, long-term illness, mental illness, and other serious problems.

The BSc (Hons) in Social Work is offered only as a single honours degree.

What you'll typically study

The BSc in Social Work comprises two years of foundation studies in the social sciences followed by two years of professional education and training.

Across the first two years, students take five courses in Social Work plus courses in other 'outside' subjects. The Social Work courses cover the history of social work and its place in society; sociological and political perspectives on social issues; the legal frameworks within which social work services are based; the use of creative approaches to social work intervention and an introduction to working and relating with others. The flexibility of choosing 'outside' courses alongside these foundational social work courses gives students an opportunity to follow areas of personal interest and build their wider knowledge base for social work practice, as social work draws from theories across different disciplines. In years 3 and 4 of the degree, the courses focus explicitly on theory, knowledge, skills and values for social work practice.

Throughout the programme, guest lecturers from our partner agencies contribute expertise from the perspectives of practitioners and service managers, and these contributions are joined by those of people that have used social work services.

As they begin their studies, all students are required to register with the Scottish Social Services Council and to join the Disclosure Scotland - Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme. These are some of the conditions of entry to the degree programme.

BSc (Hons) in Social Work

YEAR 1

- Social Work: Making A Difference
- Creative Social Work and the Arts
- Politics of the Welfare State
- Social Policy and Society
- Two semester-long courses in outside subjects of your choice

YEAR 2

- Human Rights and Social Justice: Social Work and the Law
- Working and Relating: Developing Your People Skills
- From Research into Practice: Landmarks in Social Work Research
- Three semester-long courses in outside subjects of your choice

YEAR 3

- Understanding Care and Control in Social Work
- Social Work with Individuals and Families
- Working with Self and Others: Skills Theories and Methods
- Professional Practice in Social Work 1
- Social Work in Communities

YEAR 4

- Social Work Dissertation
- Working with Risk, Trust and Complexity
- Professional Practice in Social Work 2

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this booklet at the time of going to press. However, it will not form part of a contract between the University and a student or applicant and must be read in conjunction with the individual degree specifications, which can be found at www.drps.ed.ac.uk

Summary of Social Work courses

Social Work: Making A Difference introduces students to notions, definitions and insights about social work practice from within the profession, discussing how they compare with public understanding (and prejudices) of the social worker's role and tasks.

From Research into Practice: Landmarks in Social Work Research uses selected examples of key bodies of social work research. For each area the major research questions, methods of approach and principal findings will be presented.

Social Policy and Society looks at social policy comparatively in a number of European countries, and examines the social dimension of the European Union. It enables a different view of social policy in the UK.

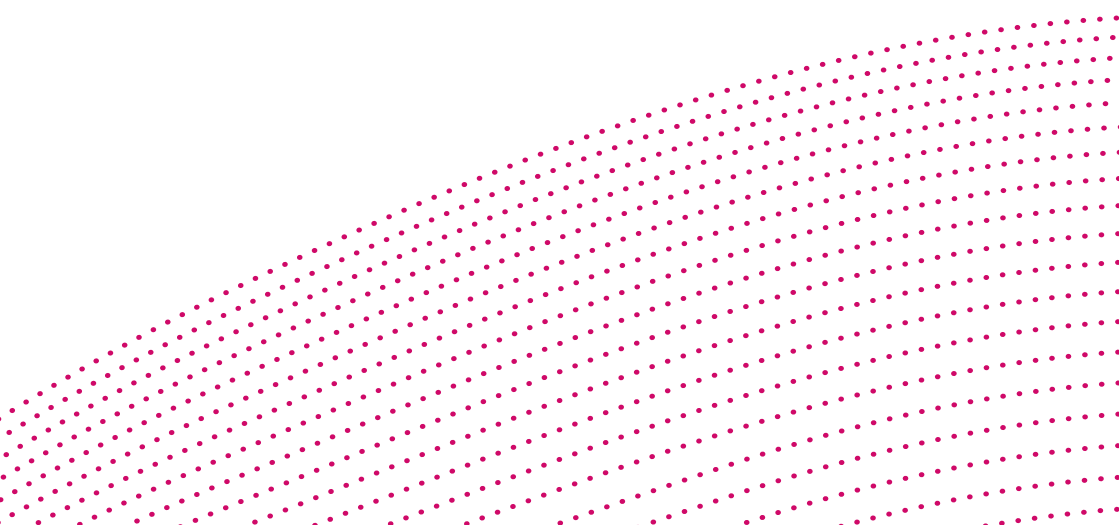
Politics of the Welfare State looks at the position of the welfare state in the UK in light of the dramatic economic events since 2008, including from an international perspective. The role of ideology, public opinion, political actors, interest groups and the media will be considered in understanding the recent direction of the British welfare state.

Working and Relating: Developing Your People Skills explores the theories that inform communication in the workplace. Students draw upon their voluntary or paid employment in social work and social care, or other related fields, to demonstrate their professional people skills.

Understanding Care and Control in Social Work explores ways to engage with others to bring about change in their lives. It discusses how intervention is complex and multi-layered.

Human Rights and Social Justice: social work and the law

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) describes social work as being based on 'principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities'. This course will consider what that means in relation to law and policy for social work. Social work operates within international human rights frameworks but also within national legal structures and local policy contexts. The course will explore the role of law and policy in social work practice, using specific examples from Scotland and internationally.



Social Work with Individuals and Families

introduces students to social work with families and their individual members. The focus is on social work's broader welfare role and includes themes of assessment, early intervention, prevention, resilience and capacity building.

Working with Self and Others: Skills

Theories and Methods provides an experiential vehicle for the enhancement of self-awareness, the learning and development of core communication skills, and the opportunity to learn and apply key social work methods of practice.

Social Work in Communities

Community is fundamental to social work practice. In this course we explore how communities shape people and people shape communities, examining factors which impact the health, wellbeing and self-determination of people and communities. We consider what community means to us and how community can be an agent for change, a target of change or the context of change.

Professional Practice in Social Work 1 & 2

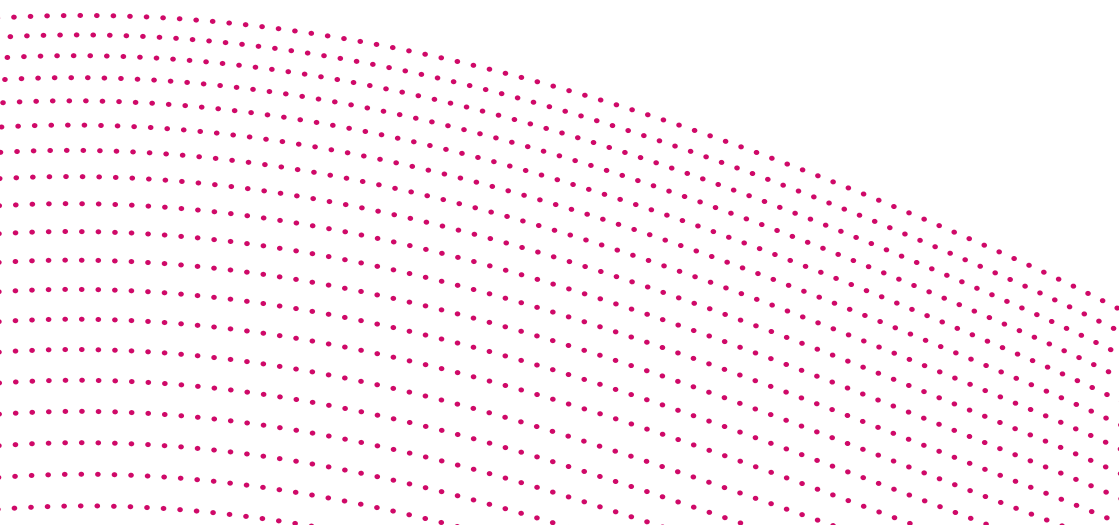
In years three and four students undertake supervised practice placements. Placements give hands-on experience of social work practice, and enable students to apply and evaluate their application of theory to practice, reflect on their personal and professional values, and develop their analytical and practical skills. This is an essential part of social work training.

Social Work Dissertation

Undertaken during years three and four, the dissertation allows students to study in depth a social work-related subject of their choice.

Working with Risk, Trust and Complexity

builds on previous teaching on the theory, skills and values of social work in its different contexts and takes it into the more complex areas of social work, in Scotland and beyond.



Teaching

In the first two years, Social Work is taught through lectures, tutorials and some small group exercises. Lecture classes are usually small enough to enable questions and class discussion.

Later in the programme an 'enquiry-and-action' small-group approach to learning is used to explore social work theory and practice

Throughout the programme, guests from our partner agencies contribute expertise from the perspectives of practitioners, service managers and service users. Essays are part of the assessment process throughout the programme. There are examinations in years 1 and 2. In years 3 and 4 we assess group presentations around practice-related themes in addition to essays. In third and fourth year, students are provided with two practice placements. Assessment is undertaken in line with social work standards in practice, in which students must demonstrate competency. The assessment process consists of student self-evaluation and an evaluation of competency by an accredited practice educator professional.

Professional accreditation

Our Social Work degree is accredited by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and successful completion leads to eligibility to be registered with the professional body as a qualified social worker.

Towards the end of second year, students are asked to consider their commitment to social work and to demonstrate that they have met the criteria to progress to the honours years.

Students who do not want to progress to the honours years, or who are not eligible to do so, may be able to transfer to another degree programme.

Careers

A degree in the social sciences provides the knowledge, analytical and communication skills that employers require. Our Careers Service will help you plan for the future and provide advice and guidance with the job application process.

Six months after graduating, over 95% of our students are in employment or postgraduate study.

Apart from social work practice, a degree in Social Work is a good preparation for employment in any field requiring the use of interpersonal skills to promote change. Social workers need to have well developed social and communication skills, and combine empathy with a commitment to constant improvement of methods and services.

Practice placements

Partner agencies provide practice placements for Edinburgh Social Work students, and their staff contribute to course planning and curriculum content.

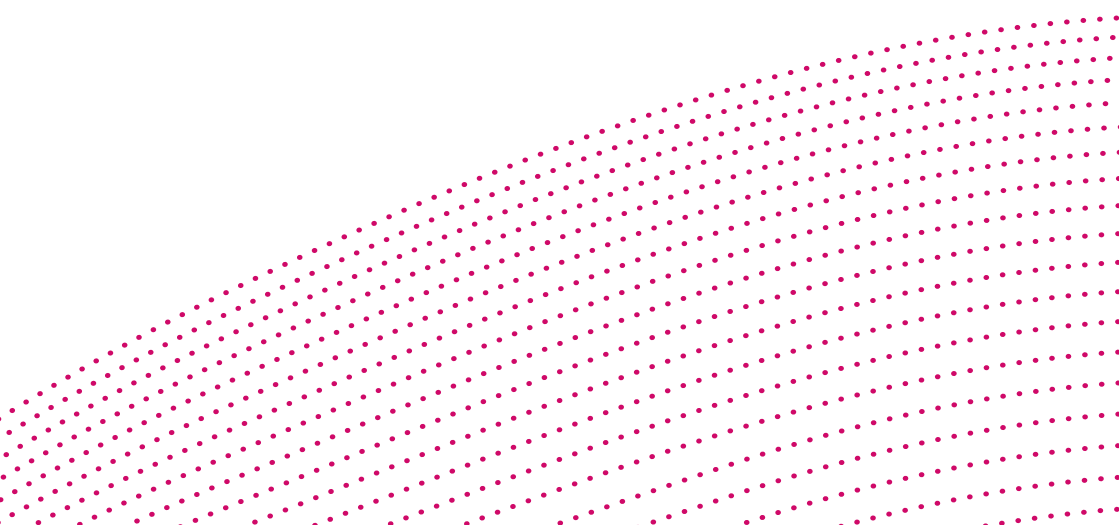
Placements provide students with the opportunity for direct supervised practice in an agency providing social work services and take place in a broad range of settings. You will also learn from a range of professionals in other fields as you begin to understand the importance of working together.

Practice placements take place in years three and four and are integrated into your degree as courses (Professional Practice in Social Work 1 and 2). We provide a range of practice learning opportunities for students within a range of settings, including local authority, commissioned and third-sector organisations. Practice placements are on a full-time basis (i.e., 9 to 5, Monday to Friday). To successfully complete their degree, students must be available for placement on a full-time basis.

Our guidance in relation to placement learning opportunities is that, by the end of their programme, students must be able to demonstrate that they are competent in working with both adults and children; so your placement will be in two contrasting settings. While on placement you are supervised and supported throughout by a practice educator appointed by the agency to provide you with supervision and assess your competency at the end of each placement, measured against the standards in social work education.

Assessments include the submission of a practice portfolio and a practice study. Service users also contribute to this assessment by giving feedback on their experience of working with you.

Throughout the placements, students are supported by the University through an academic supervisor in Social Work. Practice placements are 80 days in year three and 100 days in year four.



Getting ready for Edinburgh

If you'd like to get ahead with some background reading, we recommend the following books.

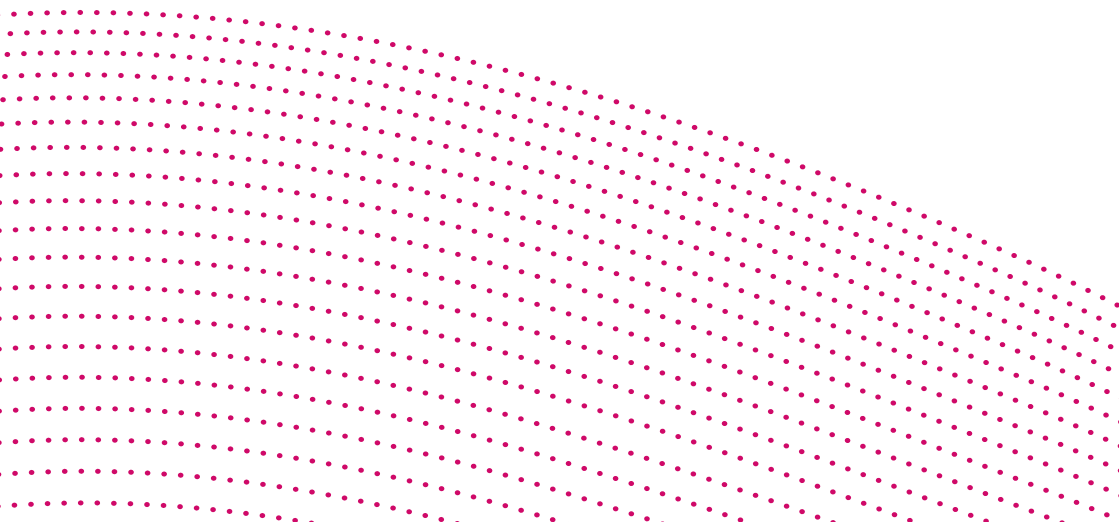
Cree, V.E. (2022) *Becoming a Social Worker*. 3rd Edn. London, Routledge

Cree, V.E. and Smith, M. (2018) *Social Work in a Changing Scotland*. London, Routledge.

Pierson, J. and Thomas, T. (2010) *Dictionary of Social Work: The Definitive A to Z of Social Work and Social Care*. Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Stephenson, O. (2013) *Reflections on Social Work: A Personal and Professional Memoir*. Buckingham, Hinton House Publishers.

Thompson, N. (2024). *Understanding Social Work: Preparing for Practice*. Bloomsbury Publishing.



Undergraduate degrees in **Social Work**

- BSc (Hons) in Social Work

For further information on entry requirements visit: [edin.ac/entry](https://www.ed.ac.uk/entry)

Read more about our programmes at: [edin.ac/ourdegrees](https://www.ed.ac.uk/ourdegrees)

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