

Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

Basic Course Information		
1.	Awarding Institution:	Nottingham Trent University
2.	School/Campus:	Social Sciences / City
3.	Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study:	MA Social Work, Full Time
4.	Normal Duration:	Two years
5.	UCAS Code:	L508

6.	Overview and general educational aims of the course
	<p>Choosing to train as a social worker is a positive step towards a rewarding and challenging career. Social work can be both demanding and complex and requires skilled and knowledgeable professionals who have a strong belief in human rights and social justice. Social work is also rewarding because you are contributing to improving the lives of children, adults, families and communities. When you are training you need to feel that you are in safe hands where you will be supported to learn and to try out different ideas before you are given the responsibility of working alone.</p> <p>Nottingham Trent University has a strong history and great expertise in educating social work students at qualifying and post-qualifying levels and we are proud to supply high calibre graduates for the jobs market. The MA Social Work is an intense and demanding course delivered over 2 years that provides you with a balanced academic and practice-based qualification that meets the professional standards of the regulatory body. The course has been approved by the regulator, which means that once you successfully complete the award you will be eligible to apply to register as a qualified social worker.</p> <p>You will spend a substantial period of time on placements where you will acquire the knowledge and skills for working with a variety of service users and other professionals. These are substantial periods of time (80 working days in year one and 90 working days in year two) in which you operate as a student under the guidance of a qualified practice educator. NTU is part of an East Midlands wide teaching partnership called the "D2N2 Academy of Social Work Excellence". This is a cooperative fusion of local employers, educators and service-user organisations that not only formalise the active learning community that you are part of but also acts to improve the standards of pre and post qualification social workers. It means you are in close contact with those people who are most likely to employ you from day one, with their input into your training from the very start and the obvious opportunities that will bring you in terms of your career.</p> <p>You must be assessed as being ready for direct practice before you embark on the first placement. In the university, you will learn about why people need to use social work services, how to deliver a professional service, the underpinning knowledge about child and adult development and the legislative background that enables social workers to assess and intervene. You will learn about different assessment frameworks and models of intervention and begin to examine evidence for why it might be better practice to follow one approach rather than another. The two placements provide the opportunity to put your theoretical knowledge into practice and start seeing what a difference social work can make to people's lives. At the end of the course you will be able to produce a specialist dissertation that</p>

demonstrates your research skills and expertise in a field of interest that furthers understanding of social work practice.

You will receive personal learning support in the forms of personal tutors, specialist Learning Advisers and research supervisors, who will meet with you at various points throughout the course.

The aims of the course are to:

1. enable you to study at master's level (QAA - level 7) to become qualified social workers, eligible for registration with the regulating body.
2. produce highly skilled, intellectually agile social work students who are ready to enter the complex and demanding field of social work.
3. produce thoughtful, compassionate, caring individuals who have a thorough understanding of the value base of social work but who are still able to challenge others and make difficult decisions in complex situations.
4. develop your leadership and management qualities in preparation for leading teams and collaborating with inter-professional services.
5. enhance your research mindedness, ability to practice from an evidence informed standpoint and ability to conduct robust research
6. your ability to create and deliver new evidence-based knowledge through extensive exploration and research into the social care sector.

Learning accredited at level 7 will allow you 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;
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- 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;
- a conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline;
 - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

(QAA 2010)

7. **Course outcomes**

Course outcomes describe what you should know and be able to do by the end of your course if you take advantage of the opportunities for learning that we provide.

Knowledge and understanding

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. apply and critically evaluate social work ethical principles and values and their implications for professional practice with a range of service user groups;
2. apply and critically evaluate the knowledge base relating to the nature and causation of social problems that require a social work response;

3. apply and critique the application to social work of research, theory, and knowledge from its core disciplines;
4. critically analyse social and economic processes and their implications in a diverse society for people needing social work services and a professional social work response which challenges discrimination and oppression and leads to increased personal reflexive capacity;
5. demonstrate analytical knowledge of the range of theories and models for social work assessment and interventions, the methods derived from them and their application with individuals and families who have complex needs;
6. demonstrate analytical knowledge of the legal and policy contexts of social work practice and the ability to autonomously relate legislation and policy to practice situations;
7. critically reflect upon the implications of being accountable to the professional body, the social work agency and service users, continually reflecting on your practice to enhance service delivery and your own professional standing;
8. compose a research dissertation demonstrating advanced research skills and the ability to synthesise, analyse and report on research findings which furthers knowledge in the field and promotes improved outcomes for service users.

Skills, qualities and attributes

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. demonstrate the ability to engage and communicate effectively (both orally and in writing) with professionals and service users responding to diverse needs and competing interests in a range of settings;
2. gather, synthesise, analyse and record relevant information to inform social work assessments and interventions;
3. demonstrate the ability to make complex evidence and value based decisions in order to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence and prevent harm, neglect and abuse; and address discrimination and oppression;
4. present an evidence and value based professional opinion by communicating this clearly accurately and precisely to individuals and groups in a range of situations;
5. demonstrate an independent and reflective approach to the delivery and evaluation of social work services and the capacity to find creative and novel solutions to practice dilemmas;
6. demonstrate the ability to independently and collaboratively reflect on and learn from your social work practice resolving conflicts between personal and professional standards and values in order to establish and develop a professional evidence base;
7. demonstrate the ability to work to a consistently high-level within the changing contexts that shape social work practice including multi-agency and inter-professional settings and incorporate new knowledge and practices;
8. take responsibility for your own safety, wellbeing and continuous learning and development through independent study, supervision, mentoring and relevant training in order to contribute to the professional evidence base;
9. contribute to the development of the social work profession through leadership, supporting others' learning and generating new knowledge through research and evaluation;

10. to take an active lead with professional colleagues and service users in collective learning and practice situations as appropriate to social work tasks and your level of responsibility.

8. **Learning and teaching methods**

This is a demanding full time course run over two years. The course is modular which means subjects are studied and assessed separately. It is incremental so that over time the subjects fit together and your knowledge and skills build up as you progress.

You will be taught by academics with a background in social work or health, who are professionally qualified and maintain registration through continuous professional practice or development. The course leader and module leaders are registered as professional social workers with the regulatory body. The D2N2 partnership is a very active body and many of the staff have direct links of practice via this collaboration.

Staff members also hold or be working towards nationally recognised teaching qualifications. Nottingham Trent University recognises the value of lecturers being skilled in imparting knowledge and guiding your learning. Staff benefit from on-going peer observation and participate in regular learning and teaching events. All academic staff hold or are working towards accreditation with the Higher Education Academy.

In the classroom, you will be exposed to a range of teaching and learning activities. These include "traditional" lectures and innovative and sometimes radical learning styles. You will work independently as well as in large and small groups. Service users and carers, colleagues from other disciplines and working practitioners provide guidance on the content of the course as well as specialised input to the teaching and assessment of learning.

The social work course includes 200 days of practice learning, most of which are in a practice placement setting (approximately half of your time in total of this course is on placement). While you are on placement you will be undertaking tasks to develop your social work skills. You will have regular supervision to ensure you are working to the level the agency requires. Your learning will be guided and assessed by a Practice Educator. Practice Educators have to pass an assessment of their ability to enable others to learn before they can take a student, this is either at Stage 1 (for PP1) or Stage 2 (for PP2). All Practice Educators for final placements (PP2) will be qualified social workers.

9. **Assessment methods**

The range of assignments is designed to reflect the type of work you will undertake in practice. All assessments are electronic submissions and will be in English.

- **Essays** - these enable you to demonstrate, in your own time, your ability to focus on a particular problem and to explore its parameters in a balanced fashion. You are expected to cite and reference according to the Harvard system (guidance will be given). A variety of word lengths are included to enable you to demonstrate ability to provide shorter and longer justifications for your arguments.
- **Reports** - these reflect the professional requirement for you to produce concise, logical, structured reports.
- **Interview Techniques** –you are expected to develop skills in conversing with and ascertaining information from service users, their

family and networks and other professionals. These skills can be assessed in simulated and recorded interviews.

- **Case study analysis** - related to practice examples, this activity assesses your capacity to analyse extensive case study material, to apply theoretical frameworks to the material, and to summarise salient points.
- **Professional Practice and Placement Reports** - you must demonstrate an understanding of the parameters of practice and adherence to the profession's code of ethical conduct and practice. You will show incremental learning through both placements and be able to operate effectively with supervision by the time you finish your final placement. You will be able to apply your knowledge and skills in practice and make judgements based on evidence. Your Practice Educator will assess your practice and your Learning Adviser will assess your reflective written work.
- **Reflective log** – designed to ascertain the unfolding of your thoughts, experience and learning over a specific time period and develop critical thinking and appraisal that will central to safe, effective and enjoyable professional practice. These include verbal, written and video journals
- **Self-Assessment** - self-awareness is the key to self-development. Students will demonstrate they have the ability to critically reflect on their own performance and give others feedback on theirs.
- **Presentations (individual and group)** - these assess your ability (individually and collectively) to deliver arguments and information using a range of presentation skills.
- **Examinations (seen and unseen)** - these assess your ability to marshal clear and concise arguments, to operate effectively under pressure, and to recall significant information (such as Legal Knowledge).
- **Dissertation**- an exploration into a specialist social work topic of your choice related to social work practice. The research project assesses your capacity to conduct a detailed literature review and to undertake primary research. You will be expected to develop and carry out an appropriate methodology; critically analyse results and develop recommendations.

10. **Course structure and curriculum**

Masters level students are expected to have acquired the capacity to study effectively. There will be an initial intensive period of university-based study with some assessment before being able to progress onto the first placement. You will be expected to continue your learning whilst on placement through recall days and on-line activities. You are expected to study during university holiday periods and throughout placements. The outcome (your dissertation) will enhance understanding of that field of work and contribute towards new knowledge or understanding to inform social work practice. It is possible that you can develop your dissertation for peer review publication.

As a professional course, you will learn around the practical application of theories, models and concepts. These are spread over two years in the manner set out below. Please note that whilst you will be carefully assessed on your placement by your practice educator and through academic submissions, the two placement modules do not hold Masters level academic credits that go towards your final grade. They need to be passed in order for you to qualify and be registered as a social worker.

Year one:

A) Preparing for Professional Social Work Practice (30 masters level credits)

This module is underpinned by theories of reflection and adult learning. You will learn how to apply models of change, including changing oneself and helping others to grow. You will be encouraged to see yourself as a resource in social work practice as well as working inter-professionally. You will be working with a wide range of service users in terms of age, ability and status. You will need to develop appropriate communication skills and appreciate service user perspectives. You will begin to recognise and confront conflict and uncertainty and be prepared to have your value base challenged. You will be taught ethically sound practice including, health and safety, personal safety and about whistleblowing and safeguarding policies. You will develop skills of listening, reading, summarising and recording service user related information. You will also produce records and reports to agency standards. You will be introduced to relevant legislation and policy guiding social work service delivery.

B) Human Growth & Development - (30 masters level credits)

The aim of this module is to present a life course perspective to the study of human growth and development within a social work context. You will develop the knowledge to critically appraise and analyse the way individuals develop, influenced by psychological, physiological, social, economic, environmental and political factors. You will be introduced to competing theories and models for understanding child and adult development, ageing, disability, substance misuse, mental health and wellbeing. You will develop an appreciation of the diversity of human growth and development and good practice in promoting inclusion and equality utilising legislation and policy and agency procedures.

C) Practice Placement 1 (80 days).

The aim of this module is provide students with an opportunity to apply their learning from taught modules in a placement agency for 80 **days**. Students will reflect upon this experience in readiness for their statutory placement learning opportunity and further academic study in the second year of the course. This is an assessed placement but due to its practical nature does not have academic credits attached in the same way as the above modules.

You will also start your research module in year one, before finishing it in year two. More details will be found below.

Year two:

D) Theories, Methods and Models (30 masters level credits)

This module aims to provide you with a comprehensive understanding and knowledge base of critical elements of social work practice, in particular assessment and intervention strategies as they apply to the complicated lives of adults, children families and communities. Relevant theories, methods and models will be detailed and you will be encouraged to reflectively engage with these during interactive exercises and workshops. Within this module, students will select an optional (Adult or Children and Family) pathway within which to specialise. This personalises the final year whilst maintaining the holistic focus of the course

E) Law and Policy for Social Work (30 masters level credits)

Social work practice is underpinned by law and social policy to provide assessment and services. Children, families and organisations are affected by statutory duties and rights and the prevailing social and political climate. There are ethical and value-based dilemmas in practice that result from trying to protect and safeguard on one hand and enable autonomy and personal choice on the other. In this module you will examine the legal framework of practice in work with children and adults services. You will critically appraise social welfare policy in the UK and make international comparisons. You are encouraged to attend the Crown Court to witness its work and reflect on the roles and issues you encounter. You will also be working in one of NTUs mock courtrooms to provide a realistic experience.

The module will comprise of two strands:

i) Legal and statutory responsibilities

It is essential for social workers to have excellent legal knowledge, including understanding of the relationship between agency procedures and legal rules, and the ability to think critically about the legal context of work with service users, carers and other professionals. Practitioners and managers in all settings must know when statutory powers and duties should be used to prevent, or protect people from, harm and how legal rules help ensure entitlements are met and rights promoted. They must be confident and skilful in order to take complex decisions informed by social work principles of equality, human rights and social justice. However, research consistently identifies deficits in legal knowledge, failure by agencies to fully meet their legal obligations, and anxiety about whether law supports or undermines social work values.

ii) Social policy

The social work profession is concerned to promote social justice and human well-being. Social workers have to provide various types of support and services for clients from a wide range of backgrounds. It is therefore important for social workers to understand contemporary social issues, welfare provisions and socio-economic factors contributing to the problems of their service users.

You will study social policy from the perspective of social work practice, which aims to introduce you to the concepts of justice, human needs and well-being, enrich your knowledge about available social services, and enhance your understanding of the impact of social policies on deprived groups.

In addition to the Theories, Methods and Models module, students in this module will also select an optional (Adult or Children and Family) pathway within which to specialise. This personalises the final year whilst maintaining the holistic focus of the course

F) Research in Social Work (60 masters level credits)

The aim of this module is to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the complex lives of service users, which will be assessed through the production of a dissertation. You will be provided with academic and practical support in carrying out an original research study on a specialist aspect of social work. Module teaching will focus on qualitative

and quantitative research methods. This will pull together and build upon learning from year one in relation to human growth and development, law and policy frameworks and assessment, methods and models and by the end of the module you should be able to demonstrate a sophisticated level of critical analysis underpinned by evidence and informed judgement. The module provides the opportunity to cement the link between research and practice by providing you with the opportunity to develop your skills as a research-minded practitioner. Research methods will be taught before the start of the placement enabling students to comply with ethical approval if an empirical study is chosen.

Students who do not submit a proposal on time, whose work does not meet the required standard and / or those who fail to complete the ethics process in a timely manner will be considered at the relevant exam board and may be determined to be unfinished. If this is the case, a student may be offered the opportunity to **only progress to Post Graduate Diploma level and not complete the full Masters of Art degree in Social Work.**

G) Practice Placement 2 (90 days)

The aim of this module is to build on and develop your skills for practice in readiness for employment as a qualified social worker. It will provide you with an opportunity to apply your learning from year one of the MA in a setting with statutory roles during a 100 day placement. Three recall days will occur during the placement to develop leadership and management skills at a Masters level.

All modules and placements are compulsory. There are no optional modules yet you will be able to follow your own interests within some of the learning and assessment opportunities. The Department of Social Work will routinely be running research seminars, conferences and supplementary learning events with practitioners and partner agencies that you will be encouraged to attend to extend your learning beyond the curriculum.

The two placements will normally be different to each other in their setting, service-user group, age range or practice ethos. The final placement will offer the opportunity to undertake formal assessment of risk and be a setting where statutory social work tasks take place. You will be expected to use legal frameworks to make decisions, work in a high-pressure environment and present outcomes of assessments in formal meetings.

All students are required to complete all elements of the programme including submission of the dissertation in order to be considered for the MA award. However, the Examination Board may consider exit awards where candidates have achieved academic credit but have not progressed as intended:

- **PGCert in Social Welfare** = 60 credits from any module bar Module F (dissertation). *(The candidate is **NOT** eligible for registration as a social worker with the regulatory body)*
- **PGDip in Social Welfare** = 120 credits from any module bar Module F (dissertation), but fail either placement. *(The candidate is **NOT** eligible for registration as a social worker with the regulatory body).*
- **MA in Social Welfare** = 180 credits from academic modules but fail either placement. *(The candidate is **NOT** eligible for registration as a social worker with the regulatory body).*
- **PGDip in Social Work** = 120 credits from any academic module bar Module F (dissertation) and pass both placements. *(The candidate **is***

<p><i>eligible for registration as a social worker with the regulatory body).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA in Social Work = 180 credits – all modules and both placements passed. This is the intended award and the <i>candidate is eligible for registration as a social worker with the regulatory body.</i>
<p>11. Admission to the course</p>
<p>Entry requirements.</p> <p>For current information regarding all entry requirements for this course, please see the 'Applying' tab on the NTU course information web page.</p>
<p>12. Support for learning</p>
<p>You will have access to module leaders and the programme team. You will be allocated your personal tutor for the whole time you are on the course (and they provide a reference for you when you leave). NTU has extensive student support services. For example there are services for mature students; people who need some writing support; those with dyslexia and other impairments; people who need counselling or mental health support. We also have financial advisers who will help with claims, bursaries and offer debt management advise. The course welcomes student diversity and encourages participation from all communities.</p>
<p>13. Graduate destinations/employability</p>
<p>NTU social work courses have consistently led the field in terms of employability. The MA in Social Work course is vocational and after graduation you will be able to work as a beginning social worker. The MA in Social Work is a generic qualification so you will be able to work with children and families or with vulnerable adults and older people. Many employers now offer an <i>Assessed and Supported Year in Employment</i> scheme where you will have a protected caseload and additional supervision and learning opportunities. We aim to produce the capable, confident social workers that employers want to recruit. The options will be rich and varied within the statutory sector as well as within independent, voluntary and private agencies.</p>
<p>14. Course standards and quality</p>
<p>The MA in Social Work has been validated by the NTU academic standards and quality assurance process informed by the <i>Quality Assurance Agency's</i> benchmark statements for social work and the Masters level degree characteristics. It has been approved by the current regulatory body as a recognised social work education programme.</p> <p>All students and staff will be actively contributing to the evaluation of the course. The Course Leader and the Stakeholder Board with the Quality Manager on behalf of the School of Social Sciences, will oversee and be accountable for this monitoring process. There are regular meetings for students to attend and input is sought on decisions and redevelopments. You will be expected and encouraged to evaluate modules through the 'Evasys' process and placements through the Quality Assurance Monitoring Placement ('QAMP') process. The course is evaluated as a whole in the final year using the "Post Graduate Taught Experience" (PTES) Questionnaire.</p>
<p>15. Assessment regulations</p>
<p>This course is subject to the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in Section 16 of the Quality Handbook). Any course specific assessment features are described below:</p>

In line with the regulators Standards of Education and Training, at least one of the external examiners appointed to the programme will be professionally registered as a social worker.

As a professional course it is vital that students pass all the modules and placements. The MA in Social Work and PGDip in Social Work are exempt from the Common Assessment Regulations provision for Postgraduate Taught Courses 8.8, 8.10, 10.5a and 10.6a that allow an exam board to compensate for failed assessments. All elements of assessment must therefore achieve a pass mark within each module and every module must be passed to achieve the awards of MA or PGDip in Social Work.

As placements are a precious resource, students will **NOT** be automatically allowed to retake a placement if the placement has been failed. All failures will be put to the Practice Assurance Committee who will make a recommendation as to whether the student will or will not be offered another placement.

Grading for Masters Courses are calculated using the Grade Based Assessment processes as set out by the university and which are clearly expressed in the [NTU Quality handbook](#). There are several categories of award you may achieve, which are set out below:

- *Distinction*
- *Commendation*
- *Pass*

Apart from the above exceptions (which will be updated as required by the professional regulator), assessment will be carried out according to the NTU common assessment regulations for taught post graduate courses: [PG Taught Masters Common Assessment Regulations](#)

16. Additional information

Collaborative partner(s):	None
Course referenced to national (QAA) Benchmark Statements:	Social Work (2010)
Course recognised by:	Health and Care Professions Council
Date this course specification approved:	1 September 2013, June 2018

Any additional information:

The MASW course is a proud member of the "D2N2 Academy of Social Work Excellence Teaching Partnership". This is a regional conglomeration of 14 partner agencies that include statutory, academic and independent sector social care providers. The aim of the partnership is to improve the quality of both pre- and post-registration social worker education.