

## Information for independent social work students

The Open University in Scotland has offered social work education since 1994. Until 2012 it was only possible for people who had the support and sponsorship of an employer to undertake social work training with the OU. The majority of OU social work students are supported and sponsored by an employer, but it is also possible for a limited number of people who do not have such support and sponsorship to become OU social work students.

### How does it work?

The OU social work degree for Scotland is made up of four stages (see the programme structure at the end of this document). Each stage comprises 120 academic credits and is made up of two discrete modules. Before you can be considered for admission to the professional social work programme you must successfully complete stages 1 and 2.

#### Stage 1

K101 - <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/k101>

DD102 - <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/dd102>

Many students do not study these modules because they have prior learning which can be used as credit transfer. For example an HNC, SVQ3 or other qualification might count. People who hold a degree need not study this stage either. In order to see if your non-degree level qualification will count towards the first stage of the degree please contact the OU Credit Transfer section <http://www.open.ac.uk/study/credit-transfer/>

#### Stage 2

KE206 - <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/ke206>

KYJ113 - <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/kyj113>

You must successfully complete these two stages, either through studying all four modules or through a combination of study, credit transfer or graduate entry, before you can apply for a place on the social work programme.

### What happens next?

Once you have completed these two stages the University will make contact with you. You will be asked whether you wish to be considered for the independent route. The University will then invite applications from this group of interested students.

Your application will include:

- A personal statement about why you want to study to become a social worker
- A line manager's reference confirming that your employer will release you for the two periods of practice learning
- Evidence of your previous and current study
- Information about your employment
- Evidence of your suitability (such as any criminal convictions)

You will then be invited to a selection interview. This will normally take place in June.

### **Why do you need an employer's support?**

This is needed because the second two stages of the social work degree include Practice Learning Opportunities. These are periods of either 80 or 100 days when you will have to be away from your current work as you will be on 'placement' as a student social worker.

### **What is a Practice Learning Opportunity (PLO)?**

PLOs are the two periods of assessed practice, one in stage 3 (K216) and the other in stage 4 (K315). These are times when you will have to be available for four days per week for approximately six months (Feb-July) to undertake social work practice supervised by a qualified Practice Educator. In exceptional circumstances a 3 day per week placement can be agreed although this requires an earlier PLO start date to accommodate the 100 days. PLOs are undertaken in a social work setting in a local authority or voluntary agency. One of these could be with your current employer.

### **Who arranges the PLO?**

The University will do this in conjunction with you. After the selection interview, and if you have been accepted onto the degree programme, you will be allocated a named contact at the Open University office in Edinburgh. It will be this person's responsibility to liaise with you about your PLOs. The University will do all it can to find appropriate PLOs for you taking into account your own learning needs and personal circumstances. Every effort is made to meet your needs in order to access available PLOs.

### **What funding is available to help me pay?**

There is limited financial support for independent social work students. If you are eligible for the Part Time Fee Grant (call our Student Recruitment & Fees Team on 0131 226 3851, option 1, for more information) this will help offset some of the costs of the module fees.

### **How can I find out more?**

If you are interested in pursuing this route to social work education you should contact the OU office in Scotland: [Scotland@open.ac.uk](mailto:Scotland@open.ac.uk) Even if you are a long way from completing stages 1 and 2 of the programme, it is a good idea to make contact. We can help you plan the best way for you to study the modules and the order in which they can be done. We also run open 'enquirer' events in the late spring where you would have the opportunity of speaking with social work staff.