

# Postgraduate Diploma and MA in Social Work

## Information for enquirers in Scotland

January 2025 entry

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# Section A: Structure and content

The postgraduate programme consists of two stages. All students must study the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work initially to be awarded the professional qualification in Social Work. Students then may consider studying towards the optional MA in Social Work.

## 1) Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work

Website: [E85 | Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work | Open University](#)

Modules: **K832: Developing social work practice + K833: Advancing social work practice**

A Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work, which is a qualifying award to apply for entry to the SSSC register as a Social Worker. 120 academic credits studied over 17 months, including two practice learning placements (80 days & 90 days).

## 2) MA in Social Work

Website: [F80 | MA in Social Work | Open University](#)

Module: **K805: Advancing professional practice**

A Masters project/dissertation module, which will enable students to extend their skills in research and analysis, following completion of K832 & K833. 60 academic credits studied over 9 months. This will involve a small-scale research project, which will normally be relevant to setting in which the student is located and have the potential to benefit the development of practice within that area.



\*Students who pass both K832 & K833 will be eligible to apply for registration with SSSC as a Social Worker

### 3) Time to complete

The presentation pattern will allow students to complete the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work within 18 months from the start of K832, and the MA in Social Work within 30 months.

The maximum time allowed for completion is 5 years for the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work and 9 years for the MA in Social Work.

### 4) Module content

Relevant teaching has been integrated into **K832: Developing social work practice** and **K833: Advancing social work practice** to provide a thematic approach to exploring law; digital and information literacy; values and ethics; safeguarding practices; theories and approaches in social work intervention; and research methods and evidence-based practice. There are study pathways in each of the practice-related modules, so that students can study relevant learning guides alongside their placement, to support their practice learning with particular service user groups.

#### ***K832: Developing social work practice (60 credits)***

**Start date:** late January

**End date:** early September

**Practice-based learning:** 80-day placement (attendance pattern 4 to 4.5 days/week for 20 weeks)

**Module details:** [K832 | Developing Social Work Practice | Open University](#)

**Content:**

- Foundations for social work practice
- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Social divisions and diversity
- Human growth and development
- Social work practice with children and families OR Social work practice with adults  
(students will take both pathways, one on K832 and one on K833)

**Teaching, learning and assessment:**

- Supported by two OU tutors; a module tutor and a practice tutor
- Residential weekend
- Three face-to-face workshops
- A range of online collaborative activities and discussion seminars
- Online self-directed learning, accessible 24/7
- Two tutor-marked assignments and an end-of-module assignment related to practice learning

#### ***K833: Advancing social work practice (60 credits)***

**Start date:** early October

**End date:** late May/early June

**Practice-based learning:** 90-day placement (attendance pattern 4 to 4.5 days/week for 23 weeks)

**Module details:** [K833 | Advancing Social Work Practice | Open University](#)

**Content:**

- Research-based practice
- Social work practice with children and families OR Social work practice with adults  
(students will take both pathways, one on K832 and one on K833)
- Mental health
- Professional development

**Teaching, learning and assessment:**

- Supported by two OU tutors, a module tutor and a practice tutor
- Three face-to-face workshops
- A range of online collaborative activities and discussion seminars

- Online self-directed learning, accessible 24/7
- Two tutor-marked assignments and an end-of-module assignment related to practice learning

### ***K805: Advancing Professional Practice (60 credits)***

**Start date:** early October

**End date:** late May/early June

**Practice-based learning:** N/A

**Details:** *K805: Advancing professional practice*

For more details, please refer to the module web-page:

[K805 | Advancing professional practice | Open University Course](#)

## Section B: Programme requirements

### 5) Entry requirements

#### ***a) Academic qualifications***

Applicants should hold a degree in a relevant health/societal/psychology or other cognate discipline such as:

- Health and Social Care
- Nursing
- Occupational Therapy
- Psychology
- Sociology/Social Studies
- Law/Legal studies
- Teaching/Education

Holders of other degrees may be considered, depending on the content of their degree, completion of other relevant qualifications, work/volunteer experience etc. Potential applicants in this position should email [R11-SHSW@open.ac.uk](mailto:R11-SHSW@open.ac.uk) providing dates and full details of the content of their degree (such as an academic transcript) and any other relevant information/qualifications and we will then be able to advise further.

Also, candidates must either provide evidence of meeting the SSSC numeracy requirement (equivalent to a minimum SCQF level 5 Core Skills Numeracy at Grade C. Core Skills level 5 numeracy is a component of National 5: Applications of Mathematics and National 5: Mathematics) or pass an OU numeracy test.

#### ***b) Relevant recent experience***

Candidates' experience will be considered individually on application, but we would normally expect a **minimum** of one year's experience - either paid or voluntary - in a setting such as a local authority or a health or social care provider in the private, voluntary or independent sector. The combination of an applicants' academic and vocational record will be considered together with a proven record of experience of engaging directly with Service Users in a professional setting. The practice experience is to ensure students have experience of the sorts of organisational settings and supportive relationship that social work or social care involve.

Previous experience needs to have provided:

- regular engagement with service users or their carers and an understanding of their situation
- an appreciation of rules and guidance that show the way organisations expect their staff to behave and work with people
- expectations about the standards and codes that we need to consider when working with vulnerable people.

### c) References

If your employer is considering sponsoring you, please either provide their contact details (or ask them to contact us) so we can discuss the programme, selection process, and sponsor requirements with them. This usually involves them paying your fees, organising your placements and supporting you throughout the programme.

If you are making an Independent application, you will still be required to obtain a line manager's/supervisor's reference from a social care setting (which takes the form of a supportive statement) asking them to provide their opinion on your personal qualities and suitability to undertake training as a social worker.

All candidates must also provide a suitable 2<sup>nd</sup> reference from someone they have known in a work capacity within the last two years (e.g. another senior member of staff in their employing organisation or previous employing organisation). If candidates have been in education rather than employed work, in exceptional circumstances we can accept a reference from their education institution/tutor.

### d) In addition, candidates must:

- Complete an OU application form, including personal statement
- Demonstrate their ability to understand and communicate in written and spoken English
- Demonstrate they have appropriate personal and intellectual qualities to train as a social worker
- Be part of a selection process, including a face-to-face interview (see Section C below)
- Register as a student social worker with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) which includes a check under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme
- Be willing to undertake the compulsory pre-module reflective practice activities (RPA) during summer 2024.

## 6) Practice Learning Requirements (placements) for the programme

There is a requirement for students to successfully complete a portfolio of Reflective Practice Activities (the RPA), equivalent to 30 days practice, *prior* to the module start. This is scheduled for summer 2024. These activities should take place within their work setting and include verification of their work by a supervisor/line manager. Students are responsible for ensuring that they can undertake the pre-module reflective practice activities (RPA) within their work setting. Following the start of the module in late-January 2025, students will also be required to undertake a further 10 days of practice experience activities in their own workplace as Preparation for Practice. This will also require verification of their work by a supervisor/line manager.

Successful applicants will be provided with full details and guidance of how to complete this compulsory piece of work.

***Students must be prepared to commit to their practice learning placements full time from March-August 2025 (K832) and November 2025-April 2026 (K833). Sponsored students will have commitment from their employer to support their placements. We advise Independent students to have a break from paid employment whilst undertaking their placement as it is important to focus their time and energy on the demanding combination of their studies and placement requirements. Students need to consider how they can be released from their substantive post in order to undertake the placements.***

For Independent students, the University will find appropriate placements for both modules, ensuring that students have experience working in different sectors and with different service user groups. There is considerable pressure on the availability of placements, so a choice will not always be possible although we will endeavour to meet the student's preferences where we can. Some travel to placements should be expected as placement providers are located across a wide geographical area.

Students will ordinarily need to give up their substantive employment for the duration of the placements. It should be assumed that these placements will not be in your substantive role. The K833 placement will offer a contrast to

the placement that you undertake in K832 as outlined by the SSSC framework. This means that it will likely be in a different setting/organisation with a different group of service users and carers.

## 7) Fees & funding

### a) Module Fees

*The fee information provided here is valid for modules starting before 31 July 2025.*

**K832: Developing social work practice (60 credits) - £4335**

**K833: Advancing social work practice (60 credits) - £4335**

**K805: Advancing Professional Practice (60 credits) - £3905**

*Please note that fees noted are valid until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025 and generally will increase annually.*

Information about paying your fees can be found at: [Postgraduate Fees and Funding | Open University](#)

***NB: Please note that Postgraduate Social Work qualification fees have not been eligible for funding support from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) in the past.***

***SAAS (<http://www.saas.gov.uk/>) intend to make some support available to Postgraduate Social Work students from the 24/25 Academic Year. We will share further information as it becomes available.***

When thinking about how much the course will cost, it's important to bear in mind the following:

- Students will need their own computer and internet access.
- There may be additional costs associated with travel to tutorials.
- There will be travel costs to and from placements. There are placements for some independent students which do not pay placement related travel costs.
- K832 involves attending a residential weekend, for which there will be additional costs, such as travel to and from the venue (usually Milton Keynes).

### b) Funding

***As noted above, SAAS intend to make some financial support available to Postgraduate Social Work students from the 24/25 Academic Year. We will share further information as it becomes available. There are a limited number of SSSC Bursaries available (see below) however there is no guarantee of any financial support for students. Candidates therefore need to consider how they can self-fund their studies, if they are not sponsored by an employer, able to access SAAS funding or be nominated and eligible for a SSSC Bursary.***

#### ***SSSC Bursary - limited quota available***

Postgraduate Bursaries are available for nominated and eligible students studying Postgraduate Social Work at The Open University. This is administered through the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Funding is limited and subject to an annual quota. Students must be nominated by the University, who will have been allocated a set number of funded places. Nominations are at the discretion of the University.

**N.B. There is no guarantee that a student will be nominated for a Bursary, as we anticipate more successful applicants to the programme than Bursary quota places.**

Once the OU selection process is complete, the University will provide successful Independent students with further information about the bursary nomination process. We will then send a list of our nominated students to the SSSC, and those students will be invited to apply. Nomination does not guarantee eligibility for funding. Students will be assessed for residence eligibility, previous funding received and if eligible, entitlement. If you have studied a Postgraduate course previously and received public funding for this within the previous year, this may also affect your eligibility.

Please note that the Bursary does not cover the full module fee, so a top-up will be required even if you are successful in your application.

### ***Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding Gateway***

Bursaries, Charities, Scholarships, and Trust Funds are alternative sources of funding for Postgraduate Students which may be available to you to help with the costs of your studies. At the 'Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding Gateway', students can explore sources of funding and find contact details of institutes and funding bodies that make awards (fees, maintenance, research costs) to postgraduate students. The 'Funding Database' feature at the website allows you tailor your search through key categories or keywords to help find potential funding support.

The Guide can be found at <https://www.postgraduate-funding.com/gateway>

All current students can register an account to access the Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding website using their Open University email address. Should you be a prospective student with a reservation in place but yet to receive your Open University email address then please contact us at [R11-SHSW@open.ac.uk](mailto:R11-SHSW@open.ac.uk) and we can provide you with the OU PIN number to register your own email.

### ***Additional funding information***

There's some useful information about scholarship, grants and bursaries on the following websites which may be a useful starting point:

- Postgraduatesearch.com: [How To Fund Your Postgraduate Course | Postgraduate Search](#)
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/funding-postgraduate-study/scholarships-and-bursaries>  
Depending on your circumstances then you may be eligible for further support financially with your studies with the Open University. You can find out more information at the link below in the 'Bursaries and other support' section: <https://www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding>
- Additionally, for K833 students, the Open University Students Educational Trust (Ouset) exists as a student charity to help students in financial hardships through the funds that they raise. Further information on the support, eligibility criteria and types of help they offer can be found at the link below: <https://www.oustudents.com/support-and-advice/ouset-welcome/>

### ***Open University Student Budget Account (OUSBA)***

OUSBA is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Open University and has been giving OU students financial access to OU modules and qualifications since 1998.

Further details can be found at: [Monthly Instalments | How to Pay | Open University](#)

## **Section C: Recruitment and selection process**

## 8) Selection process

There is a formal admissions selection process, requiring all applicants to:

- Complete an OU application form, which will include a personal statement, employment/voluntary experience, references, and a declaration of suitability for social work.
- Provide evidence they meet the academic entry requirements.
- Take part in the selection process, including an interview.

### *Independent students*

Due to the time required for the selection process and pre-module reflective practice activities, **recruitment begins in the April prior to the January intake.**

- Application packs will be available from March 2024.
- **Completed applications, including references and evidence of qualification(s), must be submitted by Friday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024**
- Shortlisting will take place in April 2024, and we anticipate that shortlisted candidates will be notified in early May 2024.
- We anticipate the interviews will be between the 16<sup>th</sup> May and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.
- We hope to notify successful candidates of their conditional offer of a place on the programme in early June 2024.
- There will be a Briefing session for the **Reflective Practice Activities** on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 6-7pm.

### *Sponsored students*

If you are considering applying for the programme as a sponsored student, you should first speak to your employer to find out whether they would be willing to support you to train as a social worker.

If they are not currently supporting students on the OU programme and would like to find out more about what's involved, they can contact the social work team directly by emailing [R11-SHSW@open.ac.uk](mailto:R11-SHSW@open.ac.uk)

We can arrange for a member of the OU Social Work team to contact your employer, to explain and discuss the programme in more detail and to ensure that they are able to provide practice learning opportunities that meet the requirements for Social Work students. The selection process and timescales will also be discussed with your employer and the application paperwork sent directly to them.

If your employer currently sponsors students on an OU Social Work programme, please ask them to contact their OU in Scotland link (or [R11-SHSW@open.ac.uk](mailto:R11-SHSW@open.ac.uk)) to discuss the selection process and timescales. We will also send the application paperwork directly to them.

## 9) Contact details

Web: [Contact Us | Open University](#)

Email: [R11-SHSW@open.ac.uk](mailto:R11-SHSW@open.ac.uk)