

Social Work MA

The MA Social Work enables those with a BA degree to obtain the new professional qualification in Social Work, as well as a Masters degree. The University of Birmingham is the oldest running social work education programme in the country and we are proud of our history. Over 4,500 students from 150 countries worldwide choose to study here at Birmingham, and we now boast one of the largest and most vibrant international student communities in the UK. **The MA Social Work welcomes applications from international students.**

[Download a copy of the MA Social Work course brochure \(PDF\) \(/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/course-brochures/2014/ma-social-work-dec2014.pdf\)](#)

Take a look at the **[collaboration map \(/schools/social-policy/international/collaboration-map.aspx\)](#)** in our **[international section \(/schools/social-policy/international/index.aspx\)](#)** and find out what it is like to be an international student living and studying in Birmingham, as well as the global reach of the School.



You can also find out **[why our students love living and studying in Birmingham \(/undergraduate/birmingham/mybham/index.aspx\)](#)**.

[Study here and find out why the University of Birmingham was awarded The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2013-14 \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx\)](#)

Course fact file

Type of Course: Taught

Study Options: Full time

Duration: 2 years full-time

Places Available: 55

Applications in 2013: 425

Start date: September

Related courses

[Social Policy MA/PGDip/PGCert \(/postgraduate/courses/taught/social-policy/social-policy.aspx\)](#)

[Social Work BA \(/undergraduate/courses/social-policy/social-work.aspx\)](#)

Contact

Got a question? **[Find your answers here \(http://bham.hobsons.co.uk/ask.aspx?cid=1223&did=24\)](#)**

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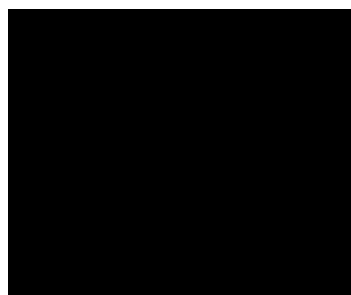
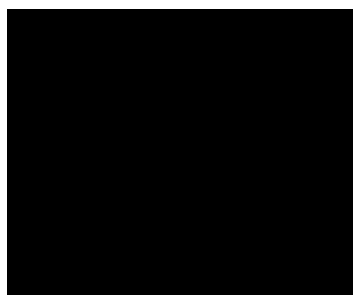
[School of Social Policy \(/schools/social-policy/index.aspx\)](#)

[Institute of Applied Social Studies \(IASS\) \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/index.aspx\)](#)

Details

This programme enables those with a BA degree to obtain the new professional qualification in Social Work, as well as a Masters degree. You join students on the new undergraduate route for Social Work for Year 3; your academic work is assessed at the higher M level, which includes a dissertation. You undertake two assessed social work placements in line with government requirements of 200 days of practice over the two years of the programme (changing to 170 days for entrants in 2013). International students undertake the same placements as UK students and obtain a detailed understanding of the operation of the English social work system.

The MA follows an exciting programme. Committed to social justice, anti-oppressive practice and relationship based social work and drawing upon a number of disciplines informing social work practice, it includes the study of social work values, knowledge, law, theories, methods and skills. Additional teaching offers students the opportunity to focus on particular areas of interest and exciting new projects, such as the **[International Exchange Project \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/social-work/international-exchange-project.aspx\)](#)**, and the award-winning **[Survivor Arts Project \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/social-work/survivor-arts.aspx\)](#)**, allow students to move beyond the core curriculum and explore different ways of seeing the world and more creative ways of working. Watch the following video diary of our first exchange visit to Rotterdam, and a film of our award-winning Survivor Arts Project.



Year 1

In Year 1 you will have the opportunity to develop core academic knowledge and skills and will study **four** academic modules:

- Law for professional practice
- Social identity, citizenship and social work practice
- Social Work skills, values and approaches
- Together with a theory and methods module linked to your first professional practice learning placement of **70 days**, and an associated academic assignment

The social work regulatory body, the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the College of Social Work requires that before our students go out onto placement that they have the basic skills needed to work with a wide variety of people and talk to service users with understanding and respect. As part of this skills development you will be required to undertake a Practice Orientation period with a local organisation. During this period you will be oriented to core processes of referral, assessment, multi disciplinary working - including engagement with service users. During this period you will be assessed on your professional behaviour. You will also undertake Readiness for Practice Learning Interviews, role plays carried out with service users and carers. This way we ensure that students meet the basic standard before they go out into the 'real world'.



We work in partnership with Birmingham City Council, who provide the majority of the placements, and a range of voluntary and private sector organisations. We also have a few placements with some neighbouring local authorities. However, we cannot guarantee any placements outside Birmingham itself and so students who live outside Birmingham will be required to travel. The placements on offer are challenging and also very rewarding. Some of the areas of social work covered on placement are:

- Family support and prevention
- Domestic violence
- Refugee and asylum
- Special educational needs
- Fostering
- Child Protection
- Disabilities
- Substance misuse

Students should be aware that placements in particular areas of interest are not guaranteed. However, all placements are quality assured, meet required HCPC and College of Social Work standards and provide a wide range of learning opportunities which are transferable to any setting, and have international relevance.

Year 2

In Year 2 you will undertake a further **100 days of professional practice learning** which, in line with HCPC requirements, will be with a different service user group in a different agency setting. All students will have the opportunity during at least one of their practice placements to undertake some statutory duties.

In conjunction with this you will again have the opportunity to reflect upon your learning in preparation for and within practice. Students will undertake learning in relation to work with both children and families and adults and communities and this will be incorporated within a framework which encourages students to adopt a 'think family' approach to social work. Teaching and learning will concentrate on cross-cutting issues for practice around risk and protection, whole-family approaches, collaborative working, and strengths based approaches.



Also in this final year you will develop, conduct and write-up in the form of a dissertation, an individual piece of literature and/or empirical based research in an area of social work you are particularly interested in.

Why study this course

The University of Birmingham has been providing social work education since 1908 and recently celebrated **100 years of social work education** ([/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/IASS/100-years-of-social-work.pdf](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/IASS/100-years-of-social-work.pdf)). As the oldest running social work education programme in the country, we are proud of our history and we are committed to continuing our work to raise professional social work standards and promote good practice.

The Institute has developed a reputation for delivering high quality teaching and learning which enables students to become critically reflective, research informed practitioners.



Fees and funding

Fees for 2015-2016:

Home and EU (full time) code 5934: £4,815

NHS Bursaries:

NHSBSA have now confirmed that a limited number of bursaries will still be available to eligible 'home' students starting on the social work programme in the 2013 academic year for the MA Social Work (over both 1st and 2nd years). For the latest information regarding the NHSBSA bursary, please go to www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students (<http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students>).

You can download a copy of the '[Reforming social work bursary information pack](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reforming-social-work-bursary-information-packs)' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reforming-social-work-bursary-information-packs>) and a copy of the '[Reforming the Social Work Bursary consultation outcome](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-reforming-social-work-bursary)' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-reforming-social-work-bursary>) from the Department of Health website

Learn more about [fees and funding](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.aspx) ([/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.aspx](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.aspx))

Scholarships may be available.

Entry requirements

The entry requirement is an upper second-class (2.1) degree classification or higher (an undergraduate degree in a relevant discipline is preferred) and a **minimum** of 3 months or 60 days related social care experience (related personal experience will be considered but only alongside practice-based experience). Equivalence is reviewed for international students. Applicants with a 2:2 degree classification may be considered, on a case-by-case basis, if they have further related postgraduate study. We also require GCSE Mathematics and English at grade C or an equivalent level two numeracy and literacy qualification.

If your qualifications differ from those listed here, please contact the the Central Admissions Contact Team, admissions@bham.ac.uk (<mailto:admissions@bham.ac.uk>), +44(0)121 415 8900 or +44(0)121 414 5488.

Applicants must confirm prior to interview/offer decision making that they have the ability to use basic IT facilities, including word processing, internet browsing and the use of mail, and be asked to specify how these skills have been obtained.

Please note that work experience is not considered in lieu of meeting the academic entry requirements. You will be required to meet the practice element in addition to meeting the academic criteria.

Transfer applicants - we do not consider applicants who have studied, or are studying, social work elsewhere. We do however consider, on a case-by-case basis, if there is a valid reason for doing so, applications for entry into the first year of our programme from applicants wishing to withdraw from their current programme of study. For applicants wishing to do this, we would require a reference from a tutor on the programme where they are currently or have previously studied social work.

A Disabled Person's Guide to Becoming a Health Professional

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) have produced a document called 'A Disabled Person's Guide to Becoming a Health Professional' for people with a disability or long-term health condition. You can obtain a copy of this on the [HCPC website \(http://www.hcpc-uk.org.uk/publications/index.asp?id=111#publicationSearchResults\)](http://www.hcpc-uk.org.uk/publications/index.asp?id=111#publicationSearchResults)

[Find out more about the University of Birmingham's Code of Practice on Admissions \(/Documents/university/legal/admission-students.pdf\)](#)

Learn more about [entry requirements \(/postgraduate/requirements-pgt/index.aspx\)](#)

Additional information:

1. Applicants must show, in the appropriate section of the application form, that they meet or intend to meet, all of the academic criteria.
2. Their ability to meet the academic criteria should be confirmed in their academic reference.
3. In addition to this, applicants must provide details, within their personal statement, of their related personal or social care experience and the influence this has had on their commitment to and understanding of, social work. A subsequent practice reference will be required if an offer is made.
4. Their personal statement should also provide evidence of their ability to write in a clear, coherent and accessible style.
5. Shortlisted applicants may be required to read a short academic text and complete a written exam on their understanding of general issues related to social work.
6. Applicants completing this test may then be invited back for an interview. In some instances some applicants will attend the interview before the written exam.
7. Selected applicants will be required to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and Declaration of Suitability for Social Work form before registration on the programme.
8. Where an applicant has disclosed a criminal offence, they will be asked to provide further details on this offence in a letter to the department.
9. A satisfactory social care practice reference will also be required.
10. All students will be required to sign the [Fitness to Practise Code of Conduct \(/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/IASS/social-work/code-of-conduct-pg.pdf\)](#) on entry.
11. Please note that work experience is not considered in lieu of meeting the academic entry requirements. You will be required to meet the practice element in addition to meeting the academic criteria.
12. **Transfer applicants:** we do not consider applicants who have studied, or are studying, social work elsewhere. We do, however, consider, on a case-by-case basis, if there is a valid reason for doing so, applications for entry into the first year of our programme from applicants wishing to withdraw from their current programme of study. For applicants wishing to do this, we would require a reference from a tutor on the programme where they are currently, or have previously studied social work.

HCPC and TCSW Guidance documents

Applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the:

- [HCPC Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students \(http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10002D1BGuidanceonconductandethicsforstudents.pdf\)](http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10002D1BGuidanceonconductandethicsforstudents.pdf)
- [HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics \(http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003B6EStandardsofconduct,performanceandethics.pdf\)](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003B6EStandardsofconduct,performanceandethics.pdf)
- [Professional Capabilities Framework \(PCF\) for Social Workers held by the College of Social Work \(http://www.tcsw.org.uk/ProfessionalCapabilitiesFramework/\)](http://www.tcsw.org.uk/ProfessionalCapabilitiesFramework/)

International students:

We have been welcoming international students at the University of Birmingham since its inception in 1900 and now boast one of the largest and most vibrant international student communities in the UK. [Listen to what some of our international students in the School say about studying at Birmingham \(/schools/social-policy/international/students.aspx\)](#).

We accept a range of qualifications - our country pages show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

You can satisfy our English language requirements in two ways:

- by holding an [English language qualification \(/postgraduate/requirements-pgt/international/index.aspx\)](#) to the right level (IELTs: 7.0 with no less than 6.5 in any band).
- by taking and successfully completing one of our [English courses for international students \(/postgraduate/requirements-pgt/international/english-courses.aspx\)](#)

How to apply

Applicants for this programme should apply via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and not via the University. Please apply online at www.ucas.ac.uk/apply (<http://www.ucas.ac.uk/apply>) or request an application form from UCAS (Tel: +44 (0)870 1122200 or email: app.req@ucas.ac.uk (<mailto:app.req@ucas.ac.uk>)). The UCAS code for this programme is L502.

Related news and events

[Social Work students in succesful exchange trip to Nuremburg \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/news-and-events/2014/05/social-work-student-exchange-nuremburg.aspx\)](#)

[Birmingham Social Work Academy \(/research/impact/our/news/items/BirminghamSocialWorkAcademy.aspx\)](#)

[Birmingham student wins 'Children's Social Worker of the Year' \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/news-and-events/2013/12/birmingham-social-work-student-wins-childrens-social-worker-of-the-year-award.aspx\)](#)

[How to get a place on a social work degree course \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/news-and-events/2011/03/social-work-course.aspx\)](#)

[Lecturer recognised for exceptional work with Excellence in Teaching Award \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/news-and-events/2014/07/lecturer-recognised-for-exceptional-work-with-excellence-in-teaching-award.aspx\)](#)

[Social Work Academy launch \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/news-and-events/2011/10/social-work-academy.aspx\)](#)

[Social Work Education in your pocket \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/news-and-events/2013/06/social-work-education-in-your-pocket.aspx\)](#)

[Innovative teaching methods in social work education at Birmingham are praised in Guardian article \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/news-and-events/2013/10/innovative-teaching-methods-in-sw-education-praised-in-guardian-article.aspx\)](#)

[A day in the life of a hospice social worker \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/news-and-events/2013/06/day-in-the-life-of-hospice-social-worker.aspx\)](#)

Learning and teaching

Service user and carer involvement

On the MA Social Work, service users, carers and practitioners work alongside academics to create a dynamic environment, both within the department and during supervised practice. The department values highly the contribution service user and carer colleagues make, and feedback from students confirms just how important the user perspective is in helping them to develop greater insight into the role social work can play in people's lives.

Involving service users and carers in all aspects of admissions and the development and delivery of our social work qualifying programmes is a priority for us. We believe it offers students the opportunity to have a thorough grounding in service users' and carers' experiences and expectations from the very start of their social work training.

More information about [service user and carer involvement in social work education \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/social-work/service-user-carer-involvement.aspx\)](#)

[Meet some of our contributors \(/schools/social-policy/departments/applied-social-studies/social-work/service-users-carers.aspx\)](#)

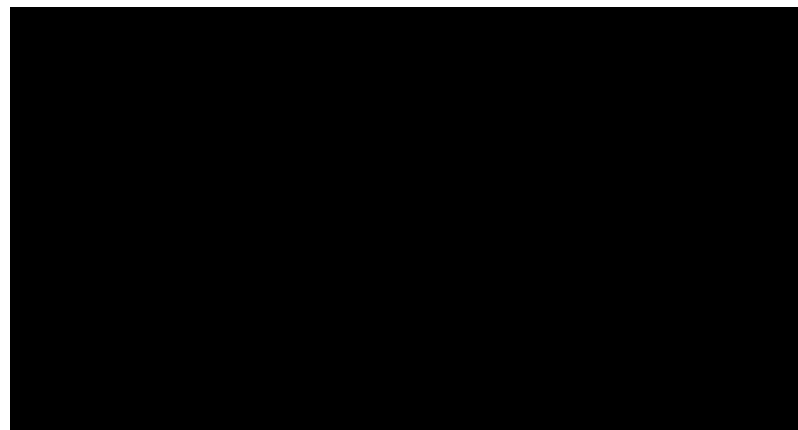
Practice placements

Due to its location and strong links with partner placement agencies, the University of Birmingham is able to provide a wide range of practice opportunities within statutory, voluntary and independent social care settings. The social work department is also fortunate to have a range of exciting new small student units and innovative practice projects and we regularly receive excellent feedback from students about these. The learning gained from these placements support and build on the learning taking place at the university.

Blended learning approach to teaching and assessment

Combining Facebook and enquiry-based blended learning to teach social media skills

The following short film outlines how Facebook and an enquiry-based blended learning design were used to help students develop professional social media skills, knowledge and approaches. The film also includes student feedback about their experiences of engaging with this learning design. As educators, we are aware that students who connect using Facebook during their studies can maintain these social networks once they leave University. They can also potentially use these social networks to discuss future work related issues. To enable students to learn about the potential and pitfalls of sharing, communicating and collaborating using social networks once in employment, this learning design was developed to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge required to use these tools professionally. This film provides an illustration of the commitment social work staff at the University of Birmingham have in continually striving to ensure their students are equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge necessary for their future roles.



The following video, **Innovation in Learning and Teaching**, demonstrates one of the innovative approaches used at the University of Birmingham to teach social work students. It explores an enquiry-based learning approach to teaching child protection processes. Whilst at University not all social work students will experience a child protection learning opportunity. Using a mixture of face-to-face teaching, technology-supported on-line enquiry-based activities and role play, students explain how they were able to develop the planning, recording, assessing and communication skills required to respond to a child protection referral.

The video demonstrates the commitment of social work academics at Birmingham to remain at the cutting edge of innovation in learning and teaching in social work education.



Assessment methods

On both the BA and MA programmes, students learn about professional social work practice and develop their knowledge and skills through a teaching programme that promotes a variety of learning methods. These methods include: lectures; group work; case studies; skills development through role play and video; joint work with service user and carer colleagues; reading and research; interactive web-based study; other self-directed development and learning.

You can see an online study skills module at www.skills4uni.bham.ac.uk (<http://www.skills4uni.bham.ac.uk/>).

Assessment is through written assignments; group presentations; video assessments; examinations; portfolios; and research projects.

Related staff

[Dawn River \(/staff/profiles/social-policy/river-dawn.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/social-policy/river-dawn.aspx)

[Gary Hickman \(/staff/profiles/social-policy/hickman-gary.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/social-policy/hickman-gary.aspx)

Employability

This degree leads to an MA in Social Work with the Professional Qualification in Social Work approved by the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC). This is the qualification required to practice as a professional social worker. As well as equipping you with a professional qualification, gaining the MA allows you to progress on to post qualifying courses or to apply to continue with your academic studies at PhD level.



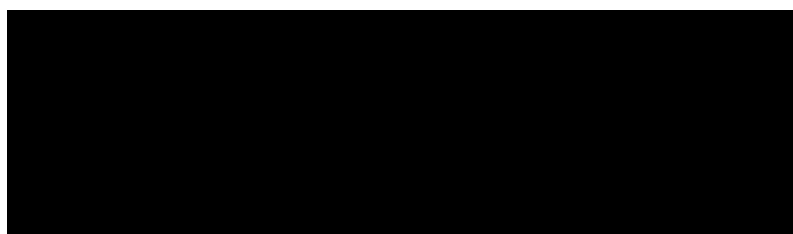
Whilst many of my friends who attended other universities are struggling to secure employment, I feel that I have greatly benefited from studying at Birmingham and that employers look upon University of Birmingham graduates more favourably as a result. Although the degree at Birmingham was tough, I certainly think it has increased my employment prospects considerably!"

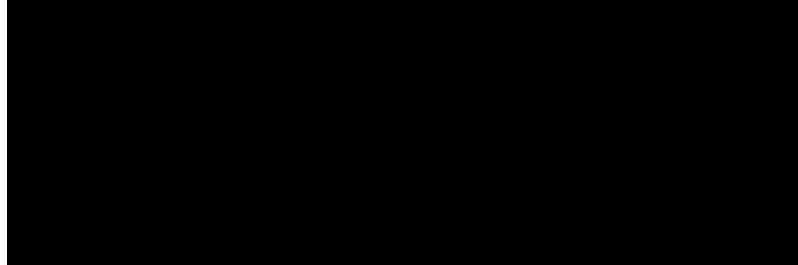
On successful completion of the MA Social Work, students are equipped to work in a wide range of areas. They have high employability and do not require any further qualifications in order to become a professional social worker. The specialist options built in to the Masters allows students to direct their knowledge and expertise to the area they would like to work in once they have completed, giving them a competitive advantage in the jobs market.

MA Social Work is one of the few Masters level courses that not only provides you with an academic qualification, but also a professional recognition that you are ready to pursue a career in social work.

Developing social work skills for employment

Effective communication skills are vitally important and employers expect Universities to teach these to social work students in preparation for their future professional roles. The following film demonstrates how, using an enquiry-based learning design, students at Birmingham are provided with a broad range of learning and teaching approaches to develop their knowledge around their discipline as well as learning team working, problem solving and critical thinking skills in a safe environment. What this distinctive approach also demonstrates is the commitment Birmingham has to ensure that social work students are as well prepared as possible for the reality of a 21st Century work environment.





So what makes a social worker in terms of knowledge, skills and attributes?

Here are three short video clips illustrating how Gary Hickman, our Director of Social Work Education and the Social Work staff group work very hard to ensure our programme enables students to develop the attributes of a Social Worker, alongside some very valuable transferrable skills for practical application in the workplace.

Gary also delivers sessions to all final year students, aimed at developing specific knowledge and skills around applying for social work posts. This specific input, together with the academic teaching and high quality practice learning, means that we develop social work graduates, whom we know employers find very attractive even when competing against social workers with several years post-qualifying experience.

