

University of Bath – BSc Social Work & Applied Social Studies guidance notes for candidates

These guidance notes have been written to ensure that you have an opportunity to prepare for your interview for selection for professional social work training. In the notes there are suggestions about the kind of information gathering, reading or reflection that might be helpful.

There are five selection criteria, as follows.

1. Academic ability and potential

In addition to having appropriate academic qualifications, you are expected to be equipped with study skills, to be literate, numerate and prepared for assessment by coursework and by examination. At interview you will be asked about your preparation and readiness for University studies. The social work degree programme at the University of Bath is full-time and requires commitment and hard work.

2. Potential for using learning experiences

At the interview we seek to identify your potential for using the learning experiences provided on the programme. The social work degree programme applies adult learning techniques. This style of learning encourages self-exploration and personal development and uses techniques such as small group exercises, role play and group projects. You need to be open to change and challenge and be willing to contribute to other people's learning by sharing experiences and valuing the contributions of others. You also need to be prepared to take responsibility for your own learning. Instead of being told what to do, you will be expected to find out what the course expectations are, to make choices where appropriate and to identify your own learning needs. There is scope for some negotiation of learning needs in the practice learning setting [placements] providing the expectations of the University, Social Work England and the placement setting are met.

Before coming for your interview, you may find it helpful to think through your past experiences of learning – both formal and informal. Your previous education may have been of the kind where the teacher occupied the authority role, founded on the premise that some people were "clever" and others "stupid" in a fixed, unchanging mould. It is important to recognise that adult learning is founded on a different premise, one which values life experience and which encourages individual self-

esteem and development. You will need to overcome any negative experiences or misconceptions in order not to be blocked by anxiety. By valuing your own achievements, you can start the learning process.

3. Strong motivation based on a realistic understanding of the demands of the course

You should think about why you want to become a professional social worker. Does your motivation spring from past experience of needing and receiving help or from the experience of a close friend or relative? If so, is the situation sufficiently resolved that it will not be a distraction, competing with the course for time and energy? If you have experienced significant loss or trauma in the past, have the issues been worked through?

If you obtain a place on the course, you will need to manage your time and workload during the three years of full-time study. In addition to coursework deadlines you have to manage the demands of block placements that may, for some students, entail daily travel of 50 miles or more. Good organisational skills are essential; we will ask you about your abilities in this area at interview. The course can also be financially demanding. For details of changes to funding for social work degrees please see the Social Work Bursaries website at <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/825.aspx>. Information will also be provided at the Interview Day.

We do not assume that all candidates will have extensive relevant experience, but we do expect you to demonstrate a broad understanding of what social work is, based not only on your own experiences but also on reading and reflection.

Before attending your interview, think about your motivation for training as a social worker, your time and workload management skills, and any questions you may have about the course. For information on social work training in general, contact:

Social Work England
1 North Bank
Blonk Street
Sheffield, S3 8JY
Tel: +44 (0)808 196 2274
enquiries@socialworkengland.org.uk

4. Relevant experience and use made of it

Knowledge, skills and values

We expect you to have reflected upon your prior experience that has developed your understanding and ability to help others. Relevant experience comes from a variety of sources, including personal experience of life. There is no formal minimum requirement concerning periods of paid or voluntary work or placements in social work or related areas. However, you are expected to have sufficient experience (supplemented by reading) to demonstrate a realistic understanding of social work and the training requirements. You must also be committed to developing your abilities to practice social work in ways that are neither discriminatory nor oppressive and to abide by **Social Work England's (SWE) Professional Standards**. Copies of the Professional Standards can be obtained via the web link:

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/standards/professional-standards/>

All social workers in England must be registered with Social Work England (SWE). Social work students do NOT have to register with SWE (but do have to adhere to the Professional Standards as outlined above). Students will be eligible to APPLY to register with SWE upon successful completion of the degree programme. However, it is important to note that successful completion of the degree does NOT guarantee successful registration with SWE. Social workers in England must adhere to Social Work England (SWE) Professional Standards. These standards set out what a social worker should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their training so that they are able to register with SWE. A link to the Professional Standards is included below for your information:

https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/1640/1227_socialworkengland_standards_prof_standards_final-aw.pdf

The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) outlines what is expected from social work students and qualified social workers at different levels of career development and experience. In relation to prospective social work students, the PCF states:

"By the point of entry to social work qualifying programmes, prospective students/candidates should demonstrate awareness of social context for social work practice, awareness of self, ability to develop rapport and potential to develop relevant knowledge, skills and values through professional training".

Personal attributes

Candidates need particular personal qualities in order to demonstrate suitability for social work. These include being able to function in situations of stress, identifying strategies for coping with the pressures of social work, forming and sustaining

relationships, and using appropriate interpersonal skills. If you have personal experience of unhappy or traumatic events, you may be well suited to social work but you should have overcome these sufficiently to undertake a course that closely examines issues that are potentially disturbing. For example, social work training requires that you take course units that address such issues as child abuse and child protection. Some course materials and placement experiences are likely to be upsetting for all students but may be seriously traumatising for those who find memories of unhappiness or abuse mirrored or revived. As a candidate you are asked to assess honestly your own readiness and suitability to undertake social work.

If you wish to discuss personal issues that may affect your readiness for training or concerns about the course's content, please contact me. Discussions will be in strict confidence.

Before attending your interview, it is essential that you review your own experience so that, at interview, you can illustrate your answers with examples. If you have very limited experience of social work, you should try to supplement your reading with discussions with one or two people in social work about what their work entails. If there is enough time you might even arrange to undertake some paid or voluntary work in a social work or care setting. Many charities offer good training for their volunteers. If you identify unresolved personal issues or problems, you might also consider making use of a counselling service yourself.

5. Attitudes and values relevant to social work practice: Awareness of racism and equal opportunities

You will need to demonstrate a willingness to develop cultural sensitivity and a wish to develop anti-oppressive practice. You need to demonstrate acceptance of social work values, especially positive regard for people as individuals who have collective experiences based on race, gender, class, belief, disability, sexuality, age, or poverty. You will need to be willing to understand and learn about inequality caused by oppression, both of an individual and institutional kind. Experience of more than one culture and language will be regarded as a positive asset.

The Professional Standards for Social Workers in England (referred to above) are clear about the requirements for social workers to promote equal opportunities for service users and carers. Workers must demonstrate respect for diversity and different cultures and values and not condone any unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination by service users, carers or colleagues. Your interviewers will want to ensure that you are aware of this requirement and that you are willing to develop your practice in this way. Previous lack of experience in considering issues of racism and other forms of inequality will not prevent an applicant from gaining a place, but closed attitudes and unwillingness to accept these issues as central to social work and social care will.

Before attending your interview, you may find it helpful to read relevant articles in the press, professional journals or magazines such as Community Care (available on the internet at www.communitycare.co.uk). There is much relevant material on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website (at www.equalityhumanrights.com). A good introductory book is by Neil Thompson (2020) *Anti-discriminatory Practice* 7th Edition [published by Palgrave Macmillan]. Read about and think through current definitions of oppression, structural inequality and racism. Try to explore the basis of your own attitudes. Although you may not consider yourself to be personally prejudiced or patronising, you may not have thought about how inequality affects people's lives, by limiting choices and opportunities.

The selection process

The BSc in Social Work & Applied Social Studies is designed, taught and assessed by the University in collaboration with members of local social work agencies and service user organisations. This means that social workers, service users and carers participate in selection of candidates for training. On the day of your interview you will participate in a writing exercise based on the article sent to you in the interview pack. You will then be interviewed jointly by a member of the academic staff and one other person. This second interviewer will either be a practice representative of a social work agency or a member of a service user or carer organisation. Both interviewers will have read your writing exercise. You will be asked about each of the five areas described above and possibly about issues raised in your UCAS personal statement.

You will be notified through UCAS Track whether or not you have been successful. We aim to notify you within two weeks from the date of your interview. Unsuccessful candidates may apply for feedback from the interviewers should they wish to do so. If successful, your offer will be conditional on a satisfactory health check and on an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS, formerly the Criminal Records Bureau) that match with any convictions or cautions declared at the time of your interview (see below). Should you still have qualifications to take, the offer will also be conditional on your grades.

Declaration of suitability for social work

We ask you to complete and submit this online Declaration of Suitability for Social Work form before you attend your interview. The form will ask you to provide information on your health and any convictions.

Conduct and health checks

Social Work England (SWE) requires that universities carry out checks on candidates being considered for social work training. We ask all candidates to

complete a self declaration of their disciplinary record, conduct and health status. Our Occupational Health staff may subsequently request verification of your health declaration from your GP. There will be time within the interview for you to discuss any health issues that might have implications for your training, should you so wish. Otherwise, if you have any queries or concerns about this requirement, please feel free to contact me, as Admissions Tutor, in advance of your interview or upon receiving an offer of a place and a request for a health declaration.

Criminal convictions

If you have **any** criminal convictions, police cautions (including traffic offences such as speeding) or employer investigations or findings, these must be disclosed. As organisations employing social workers are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, any “spent” convictions must also be disclosed. It is not our intention to discriminate against candidates with a history of offending; many successful social work students have previous convictions. However, if an offence prevents agencies from offering placements to a candidate, the University cannot provide social work training. The law prohibits the employment of people with particular offences, for example offences which indicate that a person poses a risk to children (previously known as Schedule 1 offences), by social work agencies.

If you are unsuccessful at interview your Declaration of Suitability for Social Work form will not be kept on file and will be destroyed immediately. Prior to taking up a place on the course, social work students are required to obtain an updated Enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS, formerly the Criminal Records Bureau) and to pay any fee charged by the DBS. If this reveals criminal convictions that were not disclosed at the time of interview, the student’s social work training is terminated.

We hope these notes help you in preparing for your interview. If you have any further questions, there will be some time for questions on the day. We look forward to meeting you soon.

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December 2024