



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
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The Wales Framework for the Social Work Degree

Supplementary guidance to the Rules



Contact details

Social Care Wales
South Gate House
Wood Street
Cardiff
CF10 1EW

Tel: 0300 3033 444

Email: info@socialcare.wales

Twitter: [@SocialCareWales](https://twitter.com/SocialCareWales)

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Other formats:

This document is also available in Welsh. Copies of this document are available in large print or other formats, if required.

1. Introduction and purpose

- 1.1. We want to make sure social workers are educated in Wales to a high and consistent standard. *The Framework for the Degree in Social Work in Wales* sets out the rules against which we regulate the professional qualification. This aims to make sure qualifying social workers have the knowledge and skills necessary to practise safely and effectively, and to contribute to public protection.
- 1.2. *The Framework for the Degree in Social Work* (the Rules) is the main document for setting out the conditions for approval of a programme. This guidance builds upon the Rules and has two purposes:
 - to provide further explanation of the Rules
 - to make sure all social work students successfully completing the social work degree in Wales have shown they meet the minimum requirements of competence as described in the Rules.

2. Structure of the document

- 2.1. *The Framework for the Degree in Social Work* includes the Rules and a Schedule to the Rules. The Schedule is made up of seven elements that describe the conditions for approval. This guidance follows the same format as the Schedule and must be read alongside it.
- 2.2. We use the terms 'you must' and 'you should' in the following ways:
 - 'you must' is a required response to meet the conditions for approval
 - 'you should' is a recommended response to enable you to meet the conditions for approval.
- 2.3 We have set out the structure of qualifying social work training and stages of development in appendix 1 of this document.

3. Partnership working

- 3.1. Paragraph 1 of the Schedule sets out the requirements for programmes to be developed, managed and provided by a partnership between employers of social workers and a Higher Education Institution (HEI). These partnerships may include social work employers from the statutory, private or third sectors, but must include at least one local authority.

Partnerships must be confirmed by a signed agreement, which sets out the roles and responsibilities of each partner and the resources being committed. The director of social services must sign the partnership agreement on behalf of a local authority.

- 3.2 Programmes must also involve people with care and support needs, and carers in the development, management and provision of the programme.

4. Resource provision

4.1. Paragraph 2 of the Schedule relates to the resources the HEI must put into the programme. Some of these resources are secured through the partnership agreement(s) with employers.

In this paragraph, resources refer to:

- the people involved in the development, management and provision of the programme
- the physical resources, such as library services and the teaching environment
- the financial resources available to the programme.

4.2. Under Paragraph 2(1)(a), a university must make sure it has enough qualified and experienced registered social workers contributing to its qualifying programme. This refers to both academic and practice teaching elements. The footnote notes that programmes must make sure they have access to personnel with the appropriate expertise to provide all aspects of the qualifying programme.

4.3 Approved programmes must indicate the professional expertise of staff contributing to the programme, a majority of whom should be qualified and experienced social workers. As part of their continuing professional development, staff are expected to have opportunities to carry out relevant learning and development activities to help them stay up-to-date with contemporary social work practice.

5. Selection of students for the degree programme

5.1. Under Paragraph 3(1)(b), the higher education institution must carry out an assessment of the applicants. The institution must be satisfied the applicant has enough experience of social care that they can “demonstrate the values and basic skills that correspond to those generally expected of social workers”.

The footnote to this requirement specifies that they must carry out at least 360 hours’ practice in a paid or voluntary capacity, apart from in occasional and exceptional circumstances where the applicant can show they have gained the experience in other ways. For example, as a person with lived experience of social work or care and support. In such cases, the applicant must be able to show how their experience has informed their understanding of people’s social care needs and experience of care and support services.

The applicants should complete the necessary number of hours of practical experience by the interview.

5.2. Paragraph 3(1)(d) relates to the applicants’ communication and number skills. The applicants must have a minimum of Level 2 as described by the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales (CQFW). This can be demonstrated by GCSE grade A* to C or other measures.

The CQFW has guidance about equivalence, and you can find it at [Welsh Government | Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#).

5.3 Under Paragraph 3(1)(e), the institution must be satisfied that the applicant can communicate effectively in written and spoken English or Welsh. If an applicant’s first language is neither Welsh nor English, the university must be satisfied that the applicant is fluent in either language. The university and its partners will need to decide how to test this.

Suitable evidence could be that the applicant has recently:

- achieved an acceptable score in an English language test such as International English Language Test System. In such cases, the applicant should achieve an overall score of 7.0 with no sub-score of less than 6.5
- successfully completed another higher education qualification that was taught and examined in English or Welsh.

5.4. With regard to a student's registration with us, under Paragraph 3(3)(d), the HEI must let students know that they have to register and be satisfied the student is registered. The HEI must make sure the student knows they need to be registered at the start of the programme.

If there's a delay in a student being registered, the HEI:

- should let the local authority hosting the student know, so a decision can be taken about the student's participation in the programme
- must let us know if a student is due to start a period of practice learning within 14 days and is not registered.

6. Required policies and procedures

6.1. The policies and procedures needed for approval are described in Paragraph 4 of the Schedule. The HEI should make sure students on the programme can access them all.

7. Learning and assessment criteria

7.1. This section relates to Paragraphs 5 and 6 of the Schedule and is a key element of making sure all social work students successfully completing the social work degree in Wales have demonstrated they meet the minimum requirements of competence as described in the Rules.

7.2. Each programme will need to demonstrate to us how it has incorporated the supplementary guidance into its degree. We will consider the arrangements for the learning and assessment of students as part of our quality assurance of social work degree programmes.

7.3. As a vocational and academic degree leading to a professional qualification, there can be no artificial division between the development of knowledge and skills – one must inform the other. This guidance on learning and assessment provides a structure for standardising the learning outcomes as learners progress through the social work degree, and upon which programmes can base their curriculum for academic and practice development.

7.4. As the social work degree is an integrated academic and professional award leading to professional regulation, to pass the degree, students must:

- pass all the assessed parts of their academic work
- successfully complete each academic level of learning before moving on to the next
- successfully complete each practice learning element of the programme before moving on to the next
- pass at least 1,400 hours of assessed practice learning
- provide evidence of competence against the six Key Roles of Social Work and the 20 National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Social Work

- demonstrate a growing understanding, analysis and application of the *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care*
 - demonstrate they are able to use ICT methods and techniques to support their learning and practice, as defined by the relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Social Work (see appendix 2).
- 7.5. Students must have a period of practice learning in each year of study while on the programme, unless we have agreed otherwise.
- 7.6. Students will need to show their development over the course of the social work degree towards the six key roles and the 20 NOS. Appendix 1 sets out the broad structure for the social work qualifying programme and the stages of development expected of social work students. Individual programmes will develop their detailed arrangements for learning and assessment as part of their application for approval.
- 7.7. This structure draws from the *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care*, the National Occupational Standards for Social Work and the Quality Assurance Agency Benchmark Statements for Social Work. Each of the 20 NOS has associated performance criteria, which explain what the standard means and the signs of competence. While each performance criteria does not need to be evidenced, they should be used to inform judgements about competence against the standard.
- 7.8. All forms of teaching, learning and assessment, whether college or agency based, must combine theory and practice. The programme will develop the overall assessment methods but they can, for instance, draw upon:
- direct observation of practice
 - reflective accounts, diaries or logs
 - assignments
 - significant incident analyses
 - presentations
 - other practice or agency-based products
 - examinations
 - online tests.
- 7.9. Practice education in each period of practice learning must be assessed by a registered and experienced social worker who is, or is training to be, a qualified practice educator.
- 7.10. Programmes need a system for ensuring the quality of practice education. Although appointed by local authorities, practice educators make judgements and recommendations upon which exam boards make decisions about awards. Programme partnerships will need to be satisfied that the practice of the practice educator is of suitable standard.
- Universities, as the awarding body, must make sure a system is in place to monitor and ensure the quality of practice education. Programmes may consider the Practice Assessment Panel is the most appropriate body to hold this responsibility.
- 7.11. If the designated practice educator is not managing the student on-site day to day, the person who is responsible for doing so must be given appropriate preparation and enough time to prepare for the role. The programme partners will need to agree the nature of the preparation and must make sure, as a minimum, the person is familiar with the requirements of the programme, their role and responsibilities, and how their involvement contributes to the

student's development.

- 7.12. Paragraph 5 (2)(d) of the Schedule to the Rules states all students must carry out one practice learning opportunity of at least 560 hours in a local social services authority. It must include experience of statutory social services' functions, including safeguarding.

The use and provision of statutory processes is a clear learning need for all social work students. Approved programmes must make sure all students gain experience of working in a statutory framework provided by a local authority practice learning opportunity.

While other agencies may carry out statutory functions, the local authority experience is essential to help the student develop:

- experience of working in a statutory framework and the use and provision of statutory processes and functions
- greater resilience by being exposed to the range of responsibilities that are specific to local authority work
- increased employability.

8. Quality assurance

- 8.1. The main purpose of regulation of training is to protect the public by assuring them that all practising social workers will have completed an approved programme of training that meets defined standards of competence. Regulation also assures social work students that the training they receive meets professional standards that are consistent with other approved programmes and represents an investment in their professional development.
- 8.2. The legal framework for social care in Wales aims to ensure the best possible outcomes for those who need care and support, by giving them a strong voice and real control over the services they receive. So it is essential the professional qualifications for social workers and others are designed appropriately.

We will exercise our regulatory function by:

- setting Rules for the approval and quality assurance of social work courses at qualifying and post-qualifying levels
- considering applications for approval
- carrying out annual monitoring of approved programmes to make sure they continue to:
 - meet published standards
 - use systems for evaluation and scrutiny, and continue to develop and focus on improvement
 - continue to hold learner and partner confidence
- carry out thematic reviews, when a specific aspect of social work education is considered across programme providers to share good practice and consider what lessons can be learnt
- carrying out periodic reviews – they are comprehensive reviews of programmes to make sure they continue to meet the requirements for approval
- having a process for removing approval if standards are consistently not met.

- 8.3 Part III of the Rules and Paragraph 7 of the Schedule describe the regulatory relationship between the programme and us.

Appendix 1 – Structure for the social work degree

Stages of Development	Content	How assessed	Exit Award
General Notes	Programme content is informed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Subject Benchmark Statements for Social Work¹ • The National Occupational Standards for Social Work² • The Code of Professional Practice for Social Care³ 	All assessment must reflect the programme as an integrated academic and professional award. Assessment will therefore draw on evidence of the integration of skills and knowledge with relevant conceptual understanding and demonstration of competence.	Students who complete part but not all the professional programme need alternative exit awards to recognise their achievement.
Introduction and Foundation Phase	At this level students focus on awareness raising, skills and knowledge acquisition and become familiar with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the broad legislative and policy framework for social services and well-being in Wales • the key skill areas required of social work professionals • the impact of social work practice upon people in need of care and support and carers • the organisation and structure of services aiming to promote social care and well-being • research relevant to their practice placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative and summative assessment of academic and practice learning in both college and practice settings which will include skills workshops. Through this assessment students should be able to demonstrate understanding of and developing competence in the 6 key roles of social work and the twenty National Occupational Standards. • Completion of the assessment tasks for each module of the programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate in HE • Diploma in HE, or • Post Grad Certificate in HE
Applying Knowledge, Skills and Values in Social Work Practice	At this level students focus on the development of a conceptual understanding of practice skills and experience and its application in professional practice. They will cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the five areas of Subject Knowledge and Understanding⁴ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Work theory - Values and Ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessed practice learning of at least 700 hours over no more than two PLOs. • Student analysis and evaluation of their application of the Code of Professional Practice for Social Care through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - their approach to professional and academic development - assessed work 	

1. [Subject Benchmark Statement – Social Work, Quality Assurance Agency](#)

2. [National Occupational Standards for Social Work](#), Social Care Wales

3. [Code of Professional Practice for Social Care](#), Social Care Wales

4. Based upon the Subject Benchmark Statements for Social Work

Stages of Development	Content	How assessed	Exit Award
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People with care and support needs and carers with support needs - Nature of social work practice - The leadership, organisation and delivery of social work and social care services • The five Subject Specific Skills and other skills⁵ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem solving skills - Communication skills - Skills in working with others - Skills in personal and professional development - Use of technology and numerical skills⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practice learning - their conduct • Demonstration of an understanding of the six key roles of social work as defined by the NOS and the knowledge and skills required by them 	
Development and Confirmation of Competence in Social Work Practice	<p>At this level students will be developing and confirming their competence in social work practice and the application of subject knowledge and skills. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ability to apply the principles of Welsh social policy and the legislative framework into their practice • The ability to make appropriate use of research in decision making and professional judgement about practice and in the evaluation of outcomes • Students demonstrating professional judgement, intervention and critical reflection 	<p>College based learning and at least 560 hours of practice learning in one PLO. (The total number of practice learning hours over this and previous PLOs must be at least 1,400 hours)</p> <p>By the end of this level and on graduating (with an honour's degree) students must be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the National Occupational Standards for Social Work. • Demonstrate they have met the Subject Knowledge and Understanding requirements of the Benchmark Statements. • Demonstrate they have acquired and integrated the Subject Specific Skills and other skills described by the Benchmark Statements. • Integrate the Code of Professional Practice for Social Care and critically analyse their application in all aspects of their work. 	<p>Non-qualifying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree • PG Diploma, or • Masters

5. Ibid

6. See appendix 2

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the threshold standards all students must achieve. They are divided between knowledge and understanding and the associated subject specific and other skills

1. Knowledge and understanding

On graduating with an honour's degree in Social Work, students must be able to demonstrate:

1. a sound understanding of the five core areas of knowledge and understanding relevant to social work, as detailed in Section 5 (of the Benchmark Statements)⁷, including their application to practice and service delivery
2. an ability to use this knowledge and understanding in an integrated way, in specific practice contexts
3. an ability to use this knowledge and understanding to engage in effective relationships with service users and carers and relationships with other professionals and through supervision
4. appraisal of previous learning and experience and ability to incorporate this into their future learning and practice, including engagement with supervision
5. acknowledgement and understanding of the potential and limitations of Social Work as a practice-based discipline to effect individual and social change
6. an ability to use research and enquiry techniques with reflective awareness, to collect, analyse and interpret relevant information
7. a developed capacity for the critical evaluation of knowledge and evidence from a range of sources.

2. Subject-specific and other skills

On graduating with an honour's degree in Social Work, students must be able to demonstrate a developed capacity to:

1. apply creatively a repertoire of core skills as detailed in Section 5 (of the Benchmark Statements)⁸
2. communicate effectively with service users and carers, and with other professionals
3. integrate clear understanding of ethical issues and relevant codes or standards of ethics, conduct and practice with their interventions in specific situations
4. consistently exercise an appropriate level of autonomy and initiative in individual decision-making within the context of supervisory, collaborative, ethical and organisational requirements
5. embed skills of critical reflection on their performance and take responsibility for modifying action and learning in light of this, drawing on appropriate support mechanisms where necessary.

7. The five core areas of subject knowledge and understanding are described as:

- Social Work Theory
- Values and Ethics
- Service User and Carers
- The nature of social work practice
- Leadership, organisation, and delivery of social work services

8. The five core areas of skills qualifying social workers should acquire and integrate are:

- Problem solving skills
- Communication skills
- Skills in working with others
- Skills in personal and professional development
- Use of Information and communication technology

Appendix 2 – Subject Benchmark Statement – Social Work

Information and Communication Technology Requirements

Use of technology and numerical skills

The Subject Benchmark Statement requires graduates in social work to be able to use information and communication technology effectively and appropriately for:

1. professional communication, data storage and retrieval and information searching
2. accessing and assimilating information to inform working with people who use services
3. data analysis to enable effective use of research in practice
4. enhancing skills in problem-solving
5. applying numerical skills to financial and budgetary responsibilities
6. understanding the social impact of technology, including the constraints of confidentiality and an awareness of the impact of the 'digital divide'.