Course Specification

Course Summary Information		
1	**Course Title**	MSc Social Work
2	**Course Code**	PT1235
3	**Awarding Institution**	Birmingham City University
4	**Teaching Institution(s)** (if different from point 3)	
5	**Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation** (if applicable)	Social Work England

6	**Course Description**
	We have over 50 years' experience in training people to become social workers in the super-diverse city of Birmingham. If you already have a degree and want to become a professional social worker, successful completion of this course will enable you to work with children and adults in a range of social work settings to bring about positive change in their lives. You'll also be eligible go apply for registration with the regulator, Social Work England, to obtain the protected title of 'Social Worker'. Being a social worker requires commitment and tenacity to make a positive impact on people's lives. Social Work could be the career for you if you enjoy working with people, challenging discrimination and oppression, and promoting human rights and wellbeing. Social Workers work in diverse areas of practice, to enable both early and crisis intervention. These areas involve safeguarding, disability services, adoption and fostering, and adult social care to name but a few. You would work directly with people to support their needs and promote choice and independence. Social work is challenging and often emotional, but also a very rewarding career with a variety of routes and specialisms, as well as opportunities for progression, open to you once you qualify. What's covered in the course? You will experience a mixture of student-centred academic learning on campus and practice-based learning in a service delivery setting within the community, reflecting the nature of social work as both an academic and practical discipline. Academic learning will include a mix of face-to-face and online lectures, workshops and seminars, complemented by online resources and independent study. In addition to practitioners and academics from other relevant disciplines, your lecturers and tutors will include experienced social work academics, current practitioners, and service users and carers who are 'experts by experience'. Together they will assist you to develop the knowledge, skills, values and professional capabilities you need for effective social work practice in the challenging world today. By bringing together these elements, you will learn to identify and navigate the complexities of social work to promote and protect wellbeing within a diverse community. Approximately half the course involves direct practice experience through professional (practice based) placements. These are provided by our practice partners in both the first and second year of the course. On placement you will be supported by a team that includes a dedicated and qualified practice educator who will always be a registered social worker. Our practice partners include Local Authorities and the private, independent, and voluntary sector agencies.

	Recent changes to our course plan mean that you will experience a range of assessment methods in addition to written assignments, such as role plays and presentations.

7	Course Awards		
7a	**Name of Final Award**	**Level**	**Credits Awarded**
	MSc Social Work	Level 7	180
7b	**Exit Awards and Credits Awarded**		
	Professional Qualification (Social Work) Exit Award		
	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work	Level 7	120
	Exit awards without Professional Qualification		
	Master of Sciences in Social Studies*	Level 7	180
	Post graduate Diploma in Social Studies*	Level 7	120
	Postgraduate Certificate in Social Studies*	Level 7	60

*None of the awards titled Social Studies will confer eligibility to apply for registration with the regulator and use the legally protected title “Social Worker”.

1) Students who have achieved 120 credits at Level 7 through passing all modules, including professional practice requirements, but do not successfully complete the Dissertation module, are eligible for the award of PgDip in Social Work and able to apply for registration with the regulator (SWE)
2) Students who have achieved 180 credits through passing of all modules, but have not passed the professional requirement of the final placement element are eligible for the exit award of MSc in Social Studies
3) Students who have achieved 120 through the passing of core modules, but have not passed a professional requirement of Skills or Placement module, are eligible for the exit award of PGDip in Social Studies
4) Students who have achieved 60 credits through passing core modules are eligible for the exit award of PG Cert in Social Studies.

8	Variation from the University Regulations
	This course has approved variations to the University’s Academic Regulations. These can be accessed via the student contract page: https://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/student-contract

9	Delivery Patterns		
Mode(s) of Study	**Location(s) of Study**	**Duration of Study**	**Code(s)**
Full time	City South	2 years	PT1235

10	Entry Requirements
	The admission requirements for this course are stated on the course page of the BCU website at https://www.bcu.ac.uk or may be found by searching for the course entry profile located on the UCAS website.

11	Course Aims
	The course aims to develop professionally curious and research minded social workers that are work ready, equipped with the foundational skills required to engage in effective social work practice and to uphold the standards and expectation of the profession by the regulator, Social Work England.
	The course aims to provide the learning opportunities required to develop skilled, confident, critical, reflective and self-motivated professionals, who are able to continue their professional development to maintain their competence for registration.

12	Course Learning Outcomes
1	Demonstrate comprehensive and critical knowledge of theories, values, law, policy, research and knowledge from other disciplines necessary for holistic, skilled and person-centred approaches to social work practice.
2	Critically use evidence to make informed and justified decisions, showing initiative, creativity, autonomy, research mindedness and professional curiosity.
3	Apply ethical, anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory approaches to social work practice, therefore advancing human rights, equality and social justices.
4	Manage risk and uncertainty and complex and conflicting situations by drawing upon critical evaluation and relevant knowledge.
5	Evidence an ability and willingness to work in partnership with other professionals, organisations and people using social work services to achieve positive outcomes.
6	Demonstrate professionalism, accountability, and an ability for critical reflection necessary for social work practice.
7	Develop resilience and demonstrate strong independent study skills evidencing a commitment to continuous professional development
8	Critically appraise the political and cultural context of social work both nationally and globally.
9	Demonstrate professional capabilities and uphold professional social work standards.

13	Level Learning Outcomes
	This is a post graduate course that is assessed at Level 7 over two years. The Level 7 assessments are within the academic requirements of the course.

	The skills and practice elements of the course are assessed according to the criteria detailed in the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and as such are a professional requirement. Core Skills for Social Work Practice (Level 4): 'Readiness for Practice' https://www.basw.co.uk/professional-development/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf/the-pcf/readiness Practice Placement 1 (Level 5): 'End of First Placement' : https://www.basw.co.uk/professional-development/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf/the-pcf/first-placement Practice Placement 2 (Level 6): 'End of last placement/Completion': https://www.basw.co.uk/professional-development/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf/the-pcf/last-placement In order progress within the required Skills and Practice days, you must successfully complete Core Skills for Social Work Practice Module to demonstrate readiness for practice, in order to continue to the Practice Placement 1. You must then successfully complete Practice Placement 1, to be able to continue to the Practice Placement 2.
	Upon completion of PG certificate students will be able to Evaluate the importance of professionalism in working practice Analyse and appraise key social work theory.
	Upon completion PG diploma students will be able to Apply and demonstrate professional requirements in social work practice Apply understanding of complex aspects of social work practice and undertake analysis of the evidence base that underpins social work Critically appraise research methods, methodologies and their application to social work practice
	Upon completion of level 7 Master of Science students will be able to Apply and demonstrate professional requirements in social work practice Apply understanding of complex aspects of social work practice and undertake analysis of the evidence base that underpins social work Identify and critically review relevant literature/methodologies in relation to specific areas of social work practice
14	**Course Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy**
	This Overview aligns itself with Birmingham City University's Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) and '*I Am BCU*' values of: Creating opportunity, Thinking differently and Building community. A wide variety of Learning and Teaching approaches are used, as outlined below, to support formative learning and to assist you to achieve the learning outcomes in both the theoretical and practice-based elements of the course. The variety of methods used enables a diverse audience of learners to engage with diverse learning opportunities, whilst respecting individual learning styles and preferences. The purpose of the strategy is to give you a wide range of learning experiences, and exposure to new ways of learning whilst supporting reflection and development in addition to the experiences you already bring to the course. The teaching team comprises qualified and registered social workers and practice educators with a wide range of diverse educational and practice experiences. The team is supported by

	Experts by Experience, current practitioners and visiting lecturers and colleagues from other disciplines within the University. An active research group "*Social Work Education, Policy and Practice*" (SWEPP) undertakes new research and promotes research activity and research mindedness within the department. Team members are developing research careers through doctoral studies, informing and contributing to the learning and teaching culture within the department, college and faculty. The teaching team is also supported by a dedicated 'Placements team' that engages actively with practice partners in the region to ensure the provision of quality student placements offering relevant and current experiences of professional social work practice. This requires the team to appraise, monitor and 'quality assure' placements and also to provide training and support for practice educators. Both teaching and placement teams work closely with the Regional Social Work Teaching Partnership to develop and share best professional and educational practice across the West Midlands All learning within the Social Work course at BCU is mapped against professional requirements described in the 'Professional Capabilities Framework' (PCF) and in the Standards of the profession's regulator 'Social Work England' and is designed to engage and support you in diverse ways. **University based learning** A range of activities and opportunities encourages you to be an active participant in the learning process and to develop your full potential. Teaching methods used include: • Whole group lectures (Face to Face and Online) • e-learning materials and exercises via our online platform 'Moodle' • Small group workshops and tutorials • One-to-one and group tutorials • Targeted and incremental skills development exercises spread throughout each year of the course • Case Studies (Face to Face and Online) • Service user and carer experiential accounts (Face to Face and Online) • Presentations from qualified social workers and Practice Educators • Presentations from students • Presentations from other Professionals in the field of Health and Social Care • Written and verbal feedback (Formative feedback will be provided Face to Face and Online, with summative feedback mainly provided through electronic mediums) • Guided study days • Directed independent study • Independent and private study • Reflective exercises • Peer feedback • Use of video and DVD material (Face to Face and Online) • Role play and simulation • Debate (Face to Face and Online) • Student Group work projects (Face to Face and Online) • Quizzes University learning is a blend of theoretical and practical applications of the foundational and core concepts of Social Work. Interactive seminars and lectures, observation sessions and role plays will prepare students for practice placements and ultimately professional practice. Within these sessions, you will engage in debates, discussions, peer support and peer learning designed to promote a feeling of community and belonging, both to the University as well as to

	the profession. Practice Skills will be explored and applied in a safe and supportive environment, with both informal, formative and summative feedback provided to encourage critical thinking and reflection. As part of your post-graduate studies, you have the opportunity to exercise your professional curiosity and pursue an area of academic and professional interest by undertaking a research project and writing a dissertation. This uses and consolidates knowledge and skills acquired and practiced throughout the course and develops the necessary 'research mindedness' required of an effective social work practitioner. The successful completion of the dissertation represents the end of your academic journey at master's level and a significant milestone in your continuing professional development as a social worker. Social Work England requires that all registrants to the profession have successfully completed two hundred Practice Skills days. Thirty of these are undertaken within the University environment and across the modules over two years. Skills days are facilitated in a safe and supportive environment within the University and provide you with practical opportunities to develop and practice skills such as communication, critical thinking, reflection, 'assessment' and analysis, and emotional intelligence. Skills days are designated across the two years of the course and are used creatively to offer varied and challenging experiences for learning, including for example 'Resilience building' days, international exchange events, and theatre productions etc. Reflecting changes in social work practice brought about in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, a greater emphasis on technology-assisted learning and teaching and digital literacy has been embedded into the course. Online lectures, skills training, discussion forums and assessment methods, using our virtual learning environment and MS Teams, supports and complements face to face teaching. This post-graduate course places an emphasis on the academic discipline of Social Work and of Research supporting professional practice. You will learn about how knowledge derived from research is generated and used. You will learn about research methods in Year 1 and have the opportunity to design and undertake a research project in Year 2. The research modules on this award are cross faculty and interdisciplinary and enable you to study alongside students from other disciplines within the Faculty who are also undertaking professional training, reinforcing an awareness that qualified social workers mostly work in partnership with others and that they need to understand and respect both their own and others' roles responsibilities and contributions. **University based Assessments** A range of assessment methods are used throughout the course including: • Written assignments • Reflective Discussions • Practice observations • Oral examinations • Individual presentations • Observed performances in skills sessions • Research Projects (Dissertation) Assessments are designed to prepare you for practice and to ensure the meeting of the required capabilities and standards for social work; some mirror real world professional tasks. Assessment workshops and tutorials are available to you to support your learning and students with additional support requirements are afforded reasonable adjustments in line with their identified needs. Feedback is provided through formative tasks, tutorials and following the assessment of summative work, in the form of written electronic documents.

Students undertaking the Dissertation module engage in a small-scale 'primary' or 'secondary' research project. Each is allocated an experienced dissertation supervisor who supports and guides their studies through regular supervision. You also have access to supporting workshops throughout the Dissertation Module, as well as to comprehensive support through online materials provided by the Faculty and Department.

Practice Based (Placement) Learning

As stated, the regulator requires that social work students successfully complete two hundred days of Practice Skills Days. 170 Practice Skills days are undertaken within two social work practice placements. You are provided with two contrasting placements of 70 days and 100 days over two years and are supervised, supported and assessed by qualified Social Work Practice Educators throughout. Practice Educators work alongside colleagues to manage each placement, and to provide professional supervision, space for reflection, and constructive feedback. You are also supported by Practice Supervisors responsible for providing learning opportunities, line management, guidance and for your general wellbeing while on placement. A Practice Tutor from the University oversees placement processes and ensures that learning opportunities meet students' identified learning needs.

While on placement, you will engage in induction training and in social work practice, managing your own case load and undertaking work as directed under supervision. You will be afforded opportunities to observe and work in partnership with, and alongside, other professionals and service users, aiding your professional development. Learning and the assessment of learning will continue over the two placements aligned to the expectations outlined within the Professional Capabilities Framework, to ensure that at the end of the course, you are 'work ready'.

Practice Based (Placement) Assessment

Learning achieved on placements is assessed through the compilation and submission of portfolios of evidence completed by the student. This involves providing evidence of the achievement of identified 'professional capabilities' described within each of the nine domains of the Professional Capabilities Framework. This is achieved through:

- Written reflection
- Practice observations
- Evidence of feedback from others (such as service users and carers)
- Shadowing experienced social workers
- Practice supervision and practice reports
- Critical evaluation of case work

It is the student's responsibility to gather and provide relevant evidence, with the support and direction of the Practice Educator and Practice Supervisor. The Practice Educator's final report recommends whether the student should be considered to have Passed or Failed the placement and this recommendation is scrutinised by a portfolio assessment panel comprising academics, experienced practice educators and social work practitioners and managers.

Robust processes (overseen by the Head of the Social Work Department) are in place to support students' experiences on placement. A dedicated forum, Social Work Placement Evaluation Meeting (SWPEM) that meets regularly, monitors concerns as they arise, and manages decisions and recommendations as necessary.

Independent and Self-directed Learning

This course is a level 7 post-graduate course, and therefore requires you to engage in significant independent, self-directed learning. This is not only to meet the academic requirements of the

	master's qualification, but also to ensure that you are capable of engaging in continuing professional development once qualified and in practice. This will ensure that you use evidence to inform your practice and contribute to 'knowledge exchange activities' as professionals and leaders in your field. Independent learning is supported through guided study days in the timetable. You have access to materials on Moodle, various support services (e.g. the Academic Development Department and the Centre for Academic Excellence) within the University and also crucially to a comprehensive and current collection of printed and online resources carefully curated by the library in consultation with the teaching team. In line with the expectations of Social Work England's professional standards and the Professional Capabilities Framework, you are expected to take responsibility for your own learning, evidencing initiative, motivation and engagement. **Support for students** The University offers support in several areas, including academic development, mental health and well-being and in relation to disability related matters. You are encouraged to engage in services available to you and will be signposted to them, by teaching and placement tutors when appropriate. In addition to the comprehensive support services provided by the University, every student is allocated a personal tutor who will offer pastoral support to you, reviews your progress and signpost to services when and where necessary.

15	**Course Requirements**
15a	**Level 7:** ***In order to complete this course a student must successfully complete all the following CORE modules (totalling 180 credits):***

Academic Modules		
Module Code	**Module Name**	**Credit Value**
SOW7024	Ethics and Values in Social Work	20
SOW7025	Law and Social Policy for Social Work	20
SOW7026	Theories and Methods in Social Work	20
LBR7339	Research: Methods of Enquiry	20
SOW7027	Law and Safeguarding Practice	20
SOW7028	Enhancing Transformative Learning	20
LBR7337	Master's Project (Dissertation)	60
Professional Requirements: Practice Based Modules		
SOW7031	Core Skills for Social Work Practice (Level 4)	0
SOW7032	Practice Placement 1 (Level 5)	0
SOW7033	Practice Placement 2	0

	(Level 6)	

The Professional requirements are assessed at different levels and have been aligned to the requirement of the Professional Capabilities Framework at each level.

Prerequisite:

Successful completion of Core Skills in Social Work Practice is prerequisite to undertaking the First Placement.

Successful completion of the Practice Placement 1 is a prerequisite to undertaking Practice Placement 2.

15b	**Structure Diagram**

All Modules are core modules

Level 4
Level 5
Level 6
Level 7

Year 1

SEMESTER ONE	**SEMESTER TWO**
Ethics and Values for Social Work (20)	LBR7339 Research: Methods of Enquiry (20)
Core Skills for Social Work Practice (0 – Professional requirement)	Practice Placement 1 (0 – Professional requirement)
Law and Social Policy for Social Work (20)	
Theories and Methods in Social Work (20)	

Year 2

SEMESTER ONE	**SEMESTER TWO**
Law and Safeguarding Practice (20)	Enhancing Transformative Learning (20)
Practice Placement 2 (0 – professional requirement)	
LBR7337 Master Project (Dissertation)	

Progression / Continuation requirements:

- Core Skills for Social Work Practice is a prerequisite for Practice Placement 1
- Practice Placement 1 is a prerequisite for Practice Placement 2
- Students will not be permitted to trail more than 20 credits from year 1into year 2

16	Overall Student Workload and Balance of Assessment

Level 7

Workload

The outline below has been created for the whole of the course. For academic learning, this includes the 60-credit dissertation that has a significant emphasis on independent learning. The course is a full-time professional course; the hours of study and the timetable have been aligned to expect students to dedicate an average of 40 hours a week to their study.

Academic Learning

Activity	Number of Hours
Scheduled Learning	268
Directed Learning	225
Private Study	1307
Total Hours	1800

Balance of Assessment

Assessment Mode	Percentage
Coursework	58%
Exam	14%
In-Person	28%

Practice Based Learning (Professional Requirement)

Activity	Number of Hours
Scheduled Learning	124
Directed Learning	1239
Private Study	169
Total Hours	1532

Balance of Assessment

Assessment Mode	Percentage
Coursework	87%
Exam	0%
In-Person	13%