

The Open University Social Work Degree
Guidance for Staff and Line Managers
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust

March 2021

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Introduction

The Open University (OU) BA Hons Degree in Social Work is a Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) approved 3-year part-time training programme that offers social care staff the opportunity to attain a professional qualification while continuing in their employment.

The Department of Health (DoH) funds and supports **two** applicants per Trust for 2021, potential applicants are nominated by Service Managers (8B) using selection criteria (pages 5 and 6). This guidance is for those staff applying for a DoH funded place and managers supporting those staff. In making a final selection at least one applicant will come from Adult Services.






Please read **ALL** sections.

Overview of process for potential candidates

(Full details Pages 5–8)

Information on the BSc Social Work is available at the following link

<http://wels.open.ac.uk/overview/school-health-wellbeing-and-social-care/professional-programme-social-work/ou-social-work-ireland>

- Check you meet OU entry requirements (p7).

- Discuss you proposed interest in the course with your Line Manager.

- Complete '**Request for Nomination**' form (Appendix 1) - to go to your Service Manager via your Line Manager. Your application must be endorsed by the Service Manager 8B.

- Trust will shortlist and carry out interviews. (p8).

- 2 Trust candidates are selected to progress to OU interview (p8). At least one of the two candidate will work in adult social care.

- 3 Trust candidates are held on a 6-month waiting list.

Application time-line for potential candidates

March	Mar-April	May	June	Sept
<p>Potential candidates and Line Managers agree that the candidate can complete Appendix 1- Request for Nomination Form. The Service Manager will consider whether the request can be supported by the Service.</p>	<p>Applications will be shortlisted and Trust interviews will take place to select 2 final nominees.</p>	<p>Submit OU application by the 7TH May.</p> <p>OU Interview and Selection process 24th-27th May.</p>	<p>Recruitment completed by OU and places confirmed with Trusts.</p>	<p>Students commence study.</p>
<p>Nominations sent to L&D Team by Service Manager.</p>	<p>Mid- April Trust send 2 nominated staff names to OU and hold a waiting list of up to 3 people for 6 months.</p>			
	<p>2 successful nominees complete formal OU applications.</p> <p>Access NI completed by successful and waiting list candidates.</p>	<p>Candidates need to have all certs/ evidence of qualifications available for OU interviews.</p>		

Section 1 - Selection Criteria, entry requirements and process

Step 1: Meeting the Trust Selection Criteria

Staff must meet ALL the following criteria to be considered as eligible:-

- A Belfast HSCT social care employee, working a minimum of 26 hours per week. This is necessary to meet the course requirements. Part-time employees may be required to work full-time during the Year 2 (85days) and Year 3 (100days) placements. The OU and employer will respond and work flexibly with the circumstances of each student. See Appendix 2 for definition of Social Care Worker.
- Presently work in a social care position within Belfast Trust and have at least 2 years paid employment experience at the time of application delivering direct social care services within BHSCT.
- Hold a current full driving licence which is valid for use in the UK and have access to a car. This criteria will be waived in the case of applicants whose disability prohibits driving but who have access to a form of transport approved by the Trust which will permit them to carry out the duties of Student Social Worker/Social Worker.
- Have permission from their Line Manager and Service Manager (8B or equivalent) to undertake these studies over at least a three year period.
- Can meet the required assessment and training days.
- Undertake study in own time outside of working hours. The recommended study for a 60 Credit course is 16–18 hours a week which will be required from the individual outside of working hours as they continue to fulfil their job role responsibilities. Study time has not been funded. OU usually requires students to attend teaching on Saturdays.
- Register as social work student with NISCC prior to commencing the course.
- When participating on the course remain at current post banding - on successful completion of the course staff will be required to apply for posts as a Band 5 newly qualified AYE Social Worker irrespective of any previous banding.
- Demonstrate that they meet OU entry requirements.

Step 2: Meeting the OU Admission Criteria

All applicants must meet the following OU admission criteria:-

- Be able to provide full evidence (have all certificates) that they have the UCAS threshold of 96 tariff points **. If an applicant's qualifications do not meet the UCAS threshold, then OU will accept the successful completion of the module K101 or K102 as evidence of academic ability.

and

- Have GCSE grade 9–4/A*–C/Functional/Key Skills Level 2 in **English and Mathematics**, or a certified equivalent.

**Please check your eligibility at this site <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator>

(Other qualifications may be acceptable. If candidates have relevant UK academic qualifications which fall outside this list it is essential to provide evidence of a certified equivalent numeracy component).

and

- Demonstrate IT competence through self-declaration and manager endorsement.
- Achieve an International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) score of 7 if English is not your first language.
- Have an Enhanced Disclosure Access NI Check (which checks against all registers). This will be completed following selection by the Trust.
- Complete a health check. If, in exceptional circumstances, there are serious doubts about a candidate's fitness to practice on health grounds, the University's doctor may ask him/her to undergo a medical examination. This examination will be at the candidate's own expense.

Any queries re certificates or qualifications should be directed to Open University admissions.

Successful applicants who are proceeding to Open University for interview must have certificates/evidence of qualifications.

Step 3: Gaining sponsorship within your programme of care to progress to Trust interview

- Consider your potential to commit to these studies and discuss this with your Line Manager.
- Complete the Nomination for Interview Request Form. Appendix 1.
- The Service Manager will consider workforce needs/gaps in service/financial viability of releasing staff when deciding if the application progresses to interview.
- The Trust will only shortlist/ interview applicants who have been endorsed by the Service Manager.
- Where a candidate is nominated for interview, their Directorate will be required to confirm they can provide an 85 day placement in year 2 that meets placement standards***. This is new and additional to any existing Social Work Student placements provided in their Directorate. This usually is in the candidate's work site. The service will also be required to provide an onsite supervisor for the candidate during year 2 (in addition to usual on site provision)

If the candidate's work site cannot meet placement standards then the Directorate must ensure they can secure a new placement site for year 2 before nominating. This is additional to any existing Social Work Student placements provided in their Division.

**** Standards for practice learning must include a significant period of supervised, assessed practice in a social work setting using real-life experiences. Assessed practice must include face to face work with individuals and families and participation in the full range of associated professional activities expected of a practising social worker. It should also include work with groups and communities.*

Where a candidate is nominated for interview, their directorate will be required to confirm they can release the candidate for to the equivalent to a full time 100 day placement in Year 3 when they are required to complete a placement outside of their 'normal' work setting.

Step 4: Attend Trust Interview

- Once nominated by your Service Manager the request **Appendix 1 'Request for Nomination Form'** will be forwarded to the Social Work and Social Care Learning and Development Team.
- Shortlisting will include
 - Checking that applicants meet the required essential criteria. This includes years of service and university academic criteria.
 - Assessment of the applicants 600 word statement.
- Following shortlisting applicants will be invited to a selection interview.
- 2 Successful candidates will be invited to proceed with their application to OU and provide certification of qualifications.
- There will be a reserve list of candidates held for 6 months. Each yearly application process will be time bound, i.e. reserve list of applicants cannot be carried forward to the next year's OU programme.

Candidates who progress to application and those on a waiting list must complete an enhanced disclosure check at this point through the Human Resources Department. Those who do not may forfeit their place.

Step 5: Complete OU application pack - successful nominees

Successful nominees must submit the following to Ireland-Social-Work@open.ac.uk

This involves completing:-

- Application form.
- Medical Fitness to Practice Form (signed by Line Manager/on occasions an OH assessment).
- Declaration of Suitability for Social Work Form (signed by Line Manager).
- Equal Opportunities form/Hesa form.
- Copies of their educational certificates.

It is the candidate's responsibility to complete these forms and submit within the timeframe supplied by the OU. Those who do not may forfeit their offer of a place.

Step 6: Attend OU Selection Day

- On receipt of application OU will shortlist and successful candidates will be invited to attend an OU selection day.
- OU will inform you of the selection day outcome.
- You should inform your Line Manager, Head of Service and Learning and Development Team of that outcome and confirm you are accepting the offer.
- Successful candidates will be advised on how to register for the programme.
- You will then be required to register as a social work student with the NISCC.
- Successful candidates commence course in September.

Section 2 - Useful Information

Commitment

Individuals who are selected will be required to provide assurance that they are fully committed to 3 years unbroken study to undertake the Degree. Applicants will be required to continue to work in their substantive post while undertaking significant study (16-18 hours weekly) in their own time. Under this arrangement there will be significant financial and resource investment and commitment required from the individual staff member and the Trust. Once qualified, staff should be committed to work in the Belfast HSCT for a minimum of 2 years.

Part-time staff

Part-time staff should consider and discuss with their Line Manager how they would manage the year 2 and 3 placement requirements which are usually full-time (80 and 100 days). **There would be no possibility of completing these 2 placements on a part-time basis due to course requirements.** delete

Banding

While completing the course you will remain at your current banding and in your current post. On successful completion of the course staff will be able to apply for posts as a Band 5 newly qualified AYE Social Worker irrespective of any previous banding.

Interview Panel Decisions

The Trust's internal selection panel and the panel's decision will be final.

Medical Fitness to Practice Declaration

This form is completed by successful candidates and signed by Line Managers on application to the OU course. Staff/Line Managers may request an Occupational Health assessment if it will inform the selection process.

Declaration of Suitability for Social Work Form

This form is completed by successful candidates and signed by Line Managers on application to the OU course.

Enhanced Disclosure NI Check

It is essential that you complete an Enhanced Disclosure Access NI check if successfully selected to progress following Trust interview or if you are a reserve candidate. Candidates are required to provide evidence of this at their OU interview. This is completed through the Trust HR Department and until there is evidence of a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure Access NI check, registration on the OU programme will be conditional. Candidates will not be able to commence the programme until this is provided.

If any offences are revealed a risk assessment will be undertaken by the OU. The candidate should provide full details and a reflective statement to OU on their Declaration of Suitability Form. The candidate and the Trust may be asked for additional information. A decision about the applicant's suitability for training will be taken by OU and the Trust will be informed whether the student can proceed to registration.

Registration with Northern Ireland Social Care Council as a Social Work Student

Applicants offered a place by the OU are required to register as a Social Work student with NISCC prior to commencing study.

Easement or Study Leave

There is no easement or study leave available during the 3 year OU course other than the allocated number of study days during placements in years 2 and 3.

Candidates will continue to work in their workplace for the duration of the programme and undertake study in their own time outside of working hours. The recommended study time for this course is 16–18 hours a week which will be required from the individual outside of working hours as they continue to fulfil their job role responsibilities.

Study leave is attached to the 2 placement periods as follows:-

Year 2 - there are 7 study days during placement

Year 3 - there are 8 study days during placement

Placements

This is a 3-year programme and staff will undertake 2 placements during their 3-year programme.

Year 1: There is no placement, however, module K113 requires 10 days' work experience which should take place in the student's normal workplace. The OU will provide the student with specific activities to complete during the practice experience days. The student will be expected to make appropriate arrangements, as soon as possible after the module starts, to undertake these activities with the permission of their Line Manager.

The Line Manager will act as practice verifier to sign off the completion of these 10 days and should be either a qualified Social Worker or someone who holds an equivalent qualification, for instance a Nurse or registered Manager. The verifier is endorsing that the student has undertaken the required period of preparation for practice, has had the opportunity to shadow a qualified Social Worker, and has had a conversation with a service user. The verifier will also be asked to confirm that the student has behaved in a professional way and that their conduct and attitude towards service users and others is appropriate to begin the process.

Year 2: Candidates complete an 85 day placement within their own programme setting, usually their work setting. The placement must be able to provide learning opportunities that will meet course requirements, if not the programme of care is required to ensure alternative learning opportunities are available to the candidate. The candidate's work-site must provide an On-site Supervisor and the Learning and Development Team will provide a Practice Teacher.

Please note that occasionally there may be a student who needs to undertake both placements outside their usual workplace setting to obtain sufficient opportunities to demonstrate their ability to meet the Key Roles and the National Occupational Standards for Social Work in Northern Ireland at the required level. In year 2 there are 7 study days during placement.

Year 3: Candidates complete a 100 day placement that will be regionally allocated by the Northern Ireland Degree Partnership and must be released from their post for the 100 days. Placements are not guaranteed to take place within the candidates own organisation. Practice Teacher allocation is managed by the Learning and Development Team. In year 3 there are 8 study days during placement.

Practice Teacher: This is the person who takes on the teaching and assessment tasks associated with practice learning on the programme. In many circumstances where there is no suitable Practice Teacher working in the practice setting, an off-site Practice Teacher can be brought in to undertake the formal requirements of supervision, teaching and assessment. In these circumstances, an On-site Supervisor is designated to undertake day-to-day support and supervision of practice.

Agency Co-ordinator /Learning and Development Support

The Learning and Development Practice Learning Co-ordinator will act as a link person and agency co-ordinator should you have any queries during your course. The Trust Practice Learning Co-ordinator is the person in the Trust who co-ordinates the PLO in year 3, ensures you are provided with a suitable learning opportunity and represents the agency if there are difficulties with the PLO or the student's practice.

Money for Books/Equipment

There is no added funding available for books or equipment for candidates on the programme.

Student Incentive Scheme/Student Loan

OU students are **not** be eligible for the SIS as the DoH cover fees costs, teaching costs and PLO costs. OU students are **not** eligible for student loans.

Annual Leave

For the purpose of the OU SW Degree, annual leave can only be taken at a time that does not interfere or disrupt OU requirements.

Deferral

Deferrals are discouraged and only agreed in very exceptional circumstances. Any deferral will only be considered following prior agreement between the candidate, the Service Manager, the Service Manager Learning and Development Team and the OU.

Section 3 - Roles and Responsibilities

Main Responsibilities of Candidates:-

- Follow all processes and requirements of programme within required time-frames.
- Keep Line Managers and the Learning and Development Team up-to-date with progress and inform of any missed deadlines, and issues in relation to progression in the programme.
- Commit fully to complete the Degree in 3 years undertaking study, completing assessments and placements in full. Submit assignments/OU work to meet deadlines.
- Attend all required assessment and training days.
- Purchase own books as required.
- Undertake study in own time outside of working hours. The recommended study for a 60 Credit course is 16–18 hours a week which will be required from the individual outside of working hours as they continue to fulfil their job role responsibilities. There will be no study leave available.
- Register as Social Work students with NISCC prior to course commencement.
- Once qualified apply for Band 5 AYE Social Work posts in Belfast HSCT and be willing to commit to work in the Belfast HSCT for a minimum of 2 years.

Main Responsibilities of Trust:

- Select members of staff suitable for training through work-based and supported distance learning. This will involve recruiting, agreeing selection criteria and interviewing for most suitable candidates.
- Fund an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Provide two suitable placement opportunities ensuring requirement for contrast in PLOs where possible and opportunity to perform statutory social work duties.
- In year 2 support the candidate to complete an 85 day placement within their own setting – with the work-site providing a Practice Teacher (and on-site facilitator if required).
- In year 3 support the full-time release for the duration of placement for 100 days opportunity outside the candidate's work setting.
- Support students by giving release to attend practice learning workshops during placement.

- Identify a member of staff to make the year 3 practice learning arrangements and liaise with the programme. This would be known as the **Agency Co-ordinator** and will be the Learning and Development Practice Learning Co-ordinator.
- Provide Line Managers as a practice verifier (to verify 10 days of work experience in K113 in year 1).

Main Responsibilities of the Open University:

- Ensure that all social work students are appropriately selected for training.
- Provide study materials for students, and support materials for Tutors, Practice Teachers and workplace/On-site Supervisors.
- Provide module Tutors to teach, support and assess students through tutorials, assignments and personal contact.
- Provide a Programme Tutor to monitor students' progress, to monitor practice learning arrangements and liaise with agencies.
- Provide a Staff Tutor who will recommend Tutors for appointment and oversee their work.
- Organise and administer all the assessment and award procedures.

Appendix 1

Request for Nomination for Trust Interview

For OU SW Degree

Nomination for Interview Request Form – OU Degree

I am requesting to be considered for nomination for a Trust interview for a place on the Open University Social Work Degree for Social Care staff

PERSONAL DETAILS					
TITLE		FORENAME(S)		SURNAME	
CONTACT TELEPHONE NO			MOBILE NUMBER		
E-MAIL ADDRESS					
CURRENT EMPLOYMENT DETAILS					
JOB TITLE			BAND		
Line Manager			Service Manager		
DEPARTMENT					
LOCATION			Length of time in post.		

APPLICATION CRITERIA

The following are **ESSENTIAL** criteria which will initially be measured at shortlisting for nomination and may also be further explored during the interview/selection stage. You should therefore make it clear on the application form whether or not you meet these criteria. Failure to do so may result in you not being shortlisted for nomination.

Please indicate how you meet all this criteria:

- A Belfast HSCT Social Care employee.
- At least 2 years paid employment experience delivering direct Social Care Services in the Belfast Trust.
- Be a car driver.

- Can meet any required assessment and training days in the next 3 years commencing September.
- Undertake study in own time outside of working hours. The recommended study for a 60 Credit course is 16–18 hours a week which will be required from the individual outside of working hours as they continue to fulfil their job role responsibilities. Study time has not been funded. OU usually require students to attend teaching on Saturdays.

Qualifications

It is ESSENTIAL you can demonstrate meeting OU entry requirement

Have GCSE grade A*-C in English and Maths (or certified equivalent)

Please indicate how you meet this criteria:

Show evidence of 96 UCAS points (UCAS Calculator Link attached)

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator>

Or

Completed K101/2 in the last five years.

Please indicate how you meet this criteria:

Personal Statement: 600 words. This should address each of the following:

- Your motivation to apply for the Degree in Social Work.
- Your understanding of the social work role with reference to **one** of the following: family and child care, addictions, older people, mental health, homelessness or disability.
- The values you bring to social work training.

This statement is part of the shortlisting criteria. Written communication skills are part of the assessment.

Applicants must seek permission from their Line Manager and Service Manager (8B or equivalent) for approval to apply for this opportunity.

They must agree to:

- Support you to complete the first placement in year 2 within your workplace plus any extended learning opportunities that will enable you to meet the social work assessment requirements.
- Full-time release for the duration of the final practice learning placement in Year 3.

Please confirm you have sought permission from your Line Manager and service manager.

Provide the names of your Line Manager and Service Manager:

The **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** provides that reasonable adjustment is considered for individuals who have a disability.

Do you consider yourself to have a disability relevant to this application for three years consecutive study?

Yes No

If yes would you require any reasonable adjustments to be considered?

Yes No

If you have answered yes, please give brief details

Applicant Signature	
Line Manager Signature	
Date	
Service Manager Signature	If a signature is not possible within the time frame. Email confirmation will suffice.
Date	

This form must be sent to the Service Manager of your Programme of Care via your Line Manager.

Any provisional offer of a place on this course will be subject to Service Manager approval and acceptance by the Open University.

COMPLETED APPLICATIONS MUST BE EMAILED TO mandy.moore@belfasttrust.hscni.net BY NO LATER THAN 2.00PM ON FRIDAY 19TH MARCH 2021

Appendix 2

Definition of a Social Care Worker

What is a social care worker?

The Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 legislation defines a social care worker.

(2) “Social care worker” means a person (other than a person excepted by regulations) who—

- a) engages in relevant social work (referred to in this Part as a “social worker”);
- b) is employed at—
 - (i) a children's home;
 - (ii) a residential care home;
 - (iii) a nursing home;
 - (iv) a day care setting;
 - (v) a residential family centre;
- c) manages an establishment of a description mentioned in paragraph (b); or
- d) is supplied by a domiciliary care agency to provide personal care in their own homes for persons who by reason of illness, infirmity or disability are unable to provide it for themselves without assistance.

For the purposes of this application, Belfast Trust are defining social care workers as:

- employed at a children’s home/residential care/nursing/ home/supported living services/day care/residential family centre.
- a domiciliary care worker who provides personal care for persons who by reason of illness, infirmity or disability are unable to provide it for themselves without assistance.
- manages any of the above services.
- a social care worker working under direction to provide a range of support services. This may include a Social Care Co-ordinator, Care Management Assistant, Day Care Worker, Support Worker, Personal Advisors, Contact Worker

