

MA Social Work – Work Experience

Work Experience Prior to the Programme

We are seeking applications from people who are able to demonstrate a real interest in social work as a career, grounded in work experience in social care.

To be accepted on to the MA in Social Work you must have a minimum of one year's recent (normally within the last two years) full-time/full-time equivalent Social Work experience. We require a minimum of 6 months' experience at the point of application and a further 6 months at the point of entry to the course. This can be gained in a paid and/or voluntary capacity.

Generally, we welcome people with a range of backgrounds and experiences. In our experience, applicants make best use of the course when their professional background has been in a Social Work role or one that has equivalent responsibilities.

What is Social Work experience?

The following guidance is not intended to be comprehensive or definitive, since social work is a dynamic field that is constantly evolving with new areas of need, practice and agencies developing. The examples given below mainly relate to work in the UK, but we also welcome applicants with experience in social work overseas, either because you live there or because you have undertaken paid or voluntary work in another country.

We attach importance not only to the amount of social work experience that you have gained but crucially to the learning that you have gained from it and are able to bring to the course and your professional development.

We are looking for experience which demonstrates your interest in and commitment to social work combined with practical experience that you have gained in this field. The experience should include:

- Direct work with service users either through face-to-face work on an individual or group basis, or telephone work
- Working with people who need emotional and/or practical support or help
- Using a range of people skills, such as, listening, counselling and problem-solving
- Some understanding of the legal and policy framework in that area of practice
- Some understanding of the social work role with that service user group

Types of work which are relevant to social work

The work experience you have gained may be directly relevant to social work and/or partially relevant to social work. It is difficult to state categorically whether a particular type of experience is directly or partially relevant without knowing more about the agency setting and your role. However, the list below is intended as a guideline.

Directly relevant

Work, on paid or voluntary-basis, in a role that involves social work skills including: residential social work, day care, community work; counselling and advice work; youth work; being a foster carer; being a carer of a disabled or older person that has provided first-hand experience of social work or social services interventions; personal support of disabled or older people (not a family member); mental health nursing or mental health care assistant work; support work in high support housing projects or hostels; mentoring of young people or others through a formal project or agency; group work with service users including self-help groups; working in a women's refuge; advocacy work; and employment as a social work assistant.

Partially relevant

Nursing home experience (work that does not involve one-to-one personal care of individuals or key worker responsibilities e.g. health care assistant, auxiliary nurse); teaching experience in 'special needs' work; housing advice work; play group/nursery/crèche work; play scheme work; general nursing/nursing assistant work include district nursing; and teaching.

Partially relevant experience will count but may not be sufficient on its own. We are looking for people to have had some additional contrasting experience that is directly relevant to social work and who can show very clearly what they have learnt about social work practice through this experience. You are most likely to be invited for interview if you have directly relevant experience.

Ideally we would expect applicants to mainly have directly relevant experience. You are more likely to be invited for an interview if, at the time of application, at least 3 of the 6 months experience you have gained is directly relevant experience.

Non-relevant

Though this work is of value, for the purpose of entry to the Social Work program, we are unable to count: personal experience of caring for a relative or friend where you have not had first-hand experience of social services or social work intervention; babysitting; non-formal mentoring or support of younger school children, college or university students; having a parent(s) who is a foster carer.

Service user experience

We welcome applications from people who have personal experience of being on the receiving end of social services or social work intervention. We are interested in what you have learnt from this experience. In addition, you should have relevant and/or partially relevant work experience as outlined above.

General pointers for your application

When completing your application, enter brief details of your social work related work experience (both paid and unpaid work experience) with dates in the employment section of the UCAS application form. Then, expand on this experience in the personal statement section of the UCAS application.

When writing about your social work experience, you will need to state clearly the following information: what role you held, how long you held the position for, what time commitment was involved, who the service user group was and the name of the organisation you were working for e.g. 'volunteer advocate, April 2009 to September 2010, 3 hours per week, X Advocacy Service for disabled people'. If you do not provide this information, your application is unlikely to be considered.

Whatever the amount and range of your experience, it will be important that you explain in your application what you have learned from this experience and how this has contributed to your understanding of the social work role and task. You should also reflect on what you have learned about yourself and the service user group(s) that you have worked with.