



Consultation document

The Rules and Requirements for Social Work Education

Consultation closes on 10 August 2018

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**Other formats:**

This document is also available in Welsh.

Section 1 – What is this consultation about?

**1.1 Introduction**

Social Care Wales is committed to improving the quality and management of social work and social care training. High quality learning equips and supports the workforce so they have the right knowledge, skills, understanding and approach to provide exceptional care and support. It is therefore essential that social workers have access to good quality learning and development opportunities throughout their careers, to underpin and support professional practice.

As the regulatory body for social work training, we make rules for the approval and quality assurance of social work education at qualifying and post-qualifying levels.

We have recently reviewed the rules for both the qualifying programme for the social work degree and the Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers. The review has made proposals for change, which we now wish to consult upon. This document sets out the issues the review has considered and the proposed changes, and asks for your views and comments.

**1.2 The review process**

The review has been led by Social Care Wales, which coordinated a steering group to oversee the review. The group agreed three primary parts for the review:

* **Recruitment, selection and progression through the qualifying programme**
* **The qualifying programme content, practice learning and research**
* **The learning outcomes for the Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers.**

The review brought together a wide range of university and practice educators, employers, social workers and others to look in detail at these matters and make recommendations.

**1.3 The consultation document**

This document provides a summary of the matters we considered and provides a link to the proposed revised documents:

* Proposed revised Rules for the Qualifying Programme for Social Work
* Proposed revised learning outcomes for the Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers.

Section 2 – About you/your organisation

## Question 1

Are you responding to this consultation:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. **As an individual** |  | **or** | 1. **On behalf of an organisation** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **If an individual, are you a:** |  |  | **Is the organisation:** |  |
| Social worker |  |  | Central or devolved government |  |
| Social work student |  |  | A local authority |  |
| Learning provider |  |  | A learning provider |  |
| Individual using services |  |  | A private sector organisation |  |
| Carer |  |  | A third sector organisation |  |
| Member of the public |  |  | A health organisation |  |
| Other – please describe below |  |  | Other – please describe below |  |
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|  |  |  | Organisation name/type of work carried out: | |
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Section 3 – Proposals

**3.1 Recruitment, selection and progression through the qualifying programme**

At a time when social workers are working with increasing levels of complexity, we want to be sure qualifying programmes recruit new students with the potential to be highly skilled social work professionals. The selection criteria are therefore important considerations.

The review was aware of:

* some differences in the selection requirements for social work training between programmes
* a reduction in the number of applicants for social work qualifying training in Wales.

Throughout their training, we need to make sure students can progress through the different levels of the programme with appropriate development opportunities and assessment points. Concern had been raised that the current requirement for a 20-day Practice Learning Opportunity in level 1 on the qualifying programme was not providing sufficient evidence upon which to measure a student’s progress and there remains confusion as to the level of social work practice (as opposed to observation) the student should be required to carry out.  One of the consequences of this has been that the difference between the skills and knowledge required at level one and level two has been too great.

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| **Issue** | **Proposal** | **Reference in the rules and requirements** |
| Increase the prescription for programme selection requirements to ensure greater consistency | It is proposed that:  Programmes will need to show:  entry requirements are sufficiently robust for the academic level of study and for the professional role   * approved programmes must set requirements for relevant experience of social care of no less than 455 hours’ practice in a paid or voluntary capacity, apart from in occasional and exceptional circumstances when the experience can be shown to have been met though other ways   international applicants are required to have evidence of literacy through the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (or equivalent) with an overall score of 7.0 with no sub-score lower than 6.5. | See Schedule paragraph 3(1)(a)  See Schedule paragraph 3(1)(b)  See Schedule 3(1)(e) |
| Seek Welsh Government agreement to remove the requirement for a 20-day Practice Learning Opportunity | * It is proposed that if Welsh Government agreed to this change, the structure of the qualifying programme can change to create a better continuum between the current levels one and two.   This would enable programmes to either merge the first two Practice Learning Opportunities (PLO) (which may suit two-year programmes) or lengthen the first of three PLOs (which may suit three-year programmes). | See Rule 6(2) |
| **Consultation questions:** | | |
| 1. Do you think these changes are appropriate and will lead to better progression through the qualifying programme?   Yes / No  Comments | | |
| 1. Do you have any other comments about recruitment, selection and progression through the qualifying programme? | | |

**3.2 Qualifying programme content, practice learning and research**

Social work is a dynamic profession, which reflects social policy and the expectations of communities. It also has a growing body of knowledge and research evidence contributing to an increasingly solid foundation for effective practice. Social Care Wales’s rules for approving programmes need to allow sufficient flexibility for programmes to adapt to changing circumstances but enough prescription to ensure consistency in the knowledge and skills of students at the point of qualification. This will apply to expectations for both practice learning and programme content. The review has considered how best to describe learning requirements, and we have considered the level of detail and prescription required.

Additionally, for social workers to be able to use and build on the developing knowledge base and improve the professional standing of social work, we were asked to consider how to increase social workers’ awareness of the use of research and research practice in social work training.

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| **Issue** | **Proposal** | **Reference in the rules and requirements** |
| Simplify the learning requirements for the prescription of qualifying programme content through stronger reference to the Benchmark Statements for Social Work | It is proposed that:   * the learning requirements for content are revised to reflect the Quality Assurance Agency Subject Benchmark Statements for social work[[1]](#footnote-1). Additional requirements can be added where they are not covered by those statements. | See Schedule para 5(2) |
| Promote an outcome-focussed approach to learning on the qualifying programme | It is proposed to:   * revise the assessment framework for the initial stages of the qualifying programme to reflect the changes in the structure of the degree. Assessment of practice in the early stages of the qualifying programme will therefore concentrate on the key professional roles as described in the National Occupational Standards (NOS), rather than specific NOS. This aims to make sure social work students develop a broad understanding of the social work role and professional requirements, as well as meeting individual assessment requirements. | Assessment framework to be revised accordingly |
| Increase awareness of the use of research and research practice in social work training | It is proposed to:   * add to the learning criteria a requirement that to be approved, an institution must make sure that students understand research methods and can make appropriate use of research in decision making and professional judgements about practice and in the evaluation of outcomes. | See Schedule paragraph 5(2)(h) |
| To strengthen the support to practice learning | It is proposed to:   * introduce the term “practice educator” in documentation to emphasise the educative and assessment role of social workers supervising social work students. * to introduce a requirement that in assessing students the institution makes sure that where the designated practice educator is not also providing on-site, day-to-day management of the student, that the person who holds that responsibility is provided with appropriate and timely preparation for the role. | See Schedule paragraph 6(1)(j)  See Schedule paragraph 6(1)(k) |
| The requirement for all qualifying students to have a practice learning opportunity in a local social services authority | It is proposed that the current requirement is re-worded to say:   * at least one such practice learning opportunity of not less than 80 days was in a Local Social Services Authority and included experience of statutory social services’ functions including safeguarding * It is also proposed to provide clarification on what constitutes an appropriate practice learning opportunity that meets this requirement. | See Rule 6(2)  Assessment framework to be revised accordingly |
| **Consultation questions:** | | |
| 1. Do you think these changes will make sure social work students receive appropriate learning opportunities that prepare them for contemporary social work practice?   Yes / No  Comment | | |
| 1. Do you think these changes will help increase awareness of the use of research and research practice in social work?   Yes / No  Comment | | |
| 1. Do you agree with the changes in relation to the practice teaching and assessment of social work students?   Yes / No  Comment | | |
| 1. Do you support keeping the requirement for a local social services authority practice learning opportunity?   Yes / No  Comment | | |
| 1. Do you have suggestions as to what should be in the guidance about what constitutes an appropriate practice learning opportunity?   Comment | | |
| 1. Do you have any other comments about the content, practice learning and research aspects of the qualifying programme? | | |

**3.3 The Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers**

The independent evaluation of the framework for social workers’ Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) recommended a review of the learning outcomes for the Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers.

It was considered appropriate to incorporate the recommendation into this review to make sure there is coherence between qualifying and post-qualifying training. The review was keen to make sure:

* the elements of learning within the programme are still appropriate
* the new legislative framework for social services in Wales is properly reflected
* the learning outcomes achieve an appropriate balance between consolidating learning from the qualifying programme and development of new learning.

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| **Issue** | **Proposal** | **Reference in learning outcomes** |
| The review found the elements of learning within the programme to still be appropriate | The current three elements under which the individual learning outcomes are grouped are retained[[2]](#footnote-2) | See learning outcomes |
| That learning outcomes should be revised to properly reflect the new legislative framework | The learning outcomes are revised to better reflect the new legislative framework and its underpinning principles | See learning outcomes, eg 1.2.5 |
| The learning outcomes achieve an appropriate balance between consolidating learning from the qualifying programme and developing new learning | Some learning outcomes are re-worded to make sure new skills and knowledge are developed from the point of qualification. | See learning outcomes, eg 2.1.10, 3,2,7 and 3.5.1 |
|  | The provision for programmes to attract a minimum of 30 credits at level 6 of the HE framework was appropriate and acceptable | See learning outcomes |
| **Consultation questions** | | |
| 1. Do the proposed changes to the learning outcomes for the Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers properly reflect the new legislative framework for social services in Wales?   Yes / No  Comments | | |
| 1. Do the proposed changes to the learning outcomes for the Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers achieve an appropriate balance between consolidating learning from the qualifying programme and developing new learning?   Yes / No  Comments | | |
| 1. Do you have any any other comments about the proposed changes to the learning outcomes for the Consolidation Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers? | | |

Section 4 – How to have your say

**4.1 Return details**

You can provide your answers to the questions in this consultation document online at:

[www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/6RR97MW](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/6RR97MW)

Alternatively, you can fill out the questions in this document and return it to:

By email: [**consultations@socialcare.wales**](mailto:consultations@socialcare.wales)

By post: **Consultations,**

**Social Care Wales,**

**South Gate House,**

**Wood Street**

**Cardiff CF10 1EW**

**Thank you for your time**

1. [The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=3120#.Wp6-QcFo2rk) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These are:

   * Applying analysis in assessment to inform interventions
   * Working collaboratively with service users, carers and other professionals
   * Intervention and application of professional judgement in increasingly complex situations.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)