

# MA / PG Diploma in Advanced Social Work Studies

## For students entering in 2006

Awarding Institution: The University of Reading  
Teaching Institution: The University of Reading  
Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences  
Date of specification: May 2006  
Programme Director: Sally Richards  
Board of Studies: Modular Masters programmes  
Accreditation: Advanced Award in Social Work (re-accreditation being sought from Thames Valley Post-qualifying Education and Training Consortium)

### Summary of programme aims

The programme draws upon students' own work experience to develop critical reflection on social work and social care practice, policy and service provision and to enable research minded practice. Students extend their knowledge of the theories and assumptions that inform social care work in relation to ethical issues and standards of practice.

The programme promotes continuing professional development within an inter- professional learning environment. Students study in comparatively small groups alongside other health and social care professionals and improve their own knowledge and skills while contributing to the learning of others.

### Transferable skills

Students will develop the capacity:

- to critically analyse complex social work and social care issues;
- to define and sustain the values of social work;
- to respond to service users' perspectives;
- to promote inter professional collaboration;
- to analyse and undertake research;
- to learn independently and maintain continuing professional development

### Programme content

The programme consists of 2 phases: a taught modular stage, with 6 modules, followed by a dissertation stage, with a dissertation of 15-20,000 words. Full-time students will complete the programme in 12 months, part-time students within 36 to 48 months. Both full-time and part-time students take 3 compulsory modules, and 3 module options as part of the taught modular stage. The compulsory modules are:

		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
HCMS01	Research Methods, Health & Social Care	20	M
HCMS02	Policy and Practice in Health & Social Care	20	M
HCMS03	Leadership and Managing Change in Health & Social Care	20	M
HCMS09	Dissertation	60	M

The module options are:

		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
HCMS05	Substance misuse	20	M
HCMS06	Bereavement, loss & grief	20	M
HCMS07	Care of older people	20	M
HCMS08	Evaluation, quality & users	20	M

Because of the programme structure, these module options will not be available to full-time students.

Students may select M-level module options from other programmes within the School.

### **Example of module options from the PG Certificate in Education, Health & Social Care:**

		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
HCMJ01	Adult learning	20	M
HCMJ02	Methods/styles of teaching and learning	20	M

### **Part-time/Modular arrangements**

Modules (except for the Dissertation module) comprise ten three hour sessions, weekly throughout an academic term; the assignment is usually submitted 4 weeks after the module teaching is completed. For part-time students, the six taught modules must be completed within 36 months of registration, and the dissertation within a further 12 month period. The taught modular stage is commenced annually in October; the School dissertation programme commences annually in January for part-time students. (Full-time students commence their dissertation stage in June).

### **Progression requirements**

Students are required to successfully complete six taught modules (including the 3 compulsory modules) before receiving permission to proceed to the dissertation stage

It is possible to exit earlier from the course, and still receive an academic award. On successful completion of 6 modules, students are eligible to receive the Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Social Work Studies; on successful completion of 3 modules students are eligible to receive the Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Social Work Studies.

### **Summary of teaching and assessment**

Teaching styles will normally be interactive encouraging discussion and reflection. Teaching sessions typically comprise both lectures and seminar discussions, with an emphasis on case studies and experiential learning. There is a focus on shared learning; because the MA is part of a wider modular programme, students benefit from studying alongside other health and social care professionals within the School's range of post-qualifying and continuing professional development courses.

Teaching throughout the School's Masters programmes is student-centred, and the professional knowledge and life experience contributed by students is valued and used to facilitate new learning.

All assessed work is related to the individual student's area of practice, thus supporting the application of theory to practice.

#### Mark

70 – 100%

60 – 69%

50 – 59%

#### Interpretation

Distinction

Merit

Good standard (Pass)

#### Failing categories:

40 – 49%

0 – 39%

Work below threshold standard

Unsatisfactory Work

### For Masters Degrees

To pass the MA students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for HCMSO1, HCMSO2, HCMSO3 and the dissertation *and have no mark below 40*. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 40 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 70 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an

average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation and having no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

#### For PG Diplomas

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more *and have no mark below 40*. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 50 must be less than 40 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more and having no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

#### For PG Certificate

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50 or more *and have no mark below 40*.

#### **Admission requirements**

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained a first degree; those who are not graduates but who can demonstrate their ability to work at Masters level may also be offered a place.

Applicants should be qualified social workers, normally with a minimum of two years' experience post-qualification. **UK applicants should be registered with the General Social Care Council.**

All postgraduate programmes within the School of Health and Social Care have the flexibility to allow admission with advanced standing through accreditation of prior learning (APL) and accreditation of prior experiential learning (AP(E)L). In order for credit gained elsewhere to count towards this MA award, it must be relevant and at an appropriate level. The length of time since completing the prior learning will be considered; it should normally have been within the last five years. Applicants must produce certificated evidence of APL credits; prior experiential learning must be demonstrated in a personal portfolio.

Applicants may also obtain credit for post qualifying study, if completed within the past 5 years. Those who have obtained their Practice Teaching Award are entitled to exemption from one optional module.

Those who have successfully passed the 3 taught modules of the Thames Valley Post Qualifying Child Care Award at Masters level (that is, eligible to receive the Postgraduate Certificate in Child Care Social Work) can transfer to the MA programme with advanced standing for 3 modules.

Those who obtain the practice teaching award within the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Health & Social Care) can similarly transfer to the MA programme with advanced standing for 3 modules.

Admissions Tutor: Sally Richards

#### **Support for students and their learning**

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Programme Directors, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

Students are supported and encouraged to become independent learners through feedback and discussion with tutors.

A web based learning resource, Blackboard, supports learning on a number of modules, and is particularly useful in the dissertation stage in supporting communication amongst dissertation students. A regular programme of twice termly dissertation workshops brings together dissertation students from all the School's Masters programmes.

### **Career prospects**

The majority of students registering for this course are employed by public, voluntary or independent providers of social care. This course will enhance their potential for career development and promotion.

### **Opportunities for study abroad or for placements**

Not applicable

### **Educational aims of the programme**

The programme aims to promote continuing professional development for social workers within an interprofessional learning environment. This environment facilitates shared learning amongst a range of health and social care professionals from diverse agency settings. Students will be encouraged to draw on their own work experience to critically analyse social work and social care practice, policy and service provision and to enable research minded practice. They will develop an understanding of social research, and be able to evaluate the evidence base informing social work. They will also be able to extend their knowledge of the theories and assumptions that inform social work in relation to ethical issues and standards of practice.

## Programme Outcomes

### *Knowledge and Understanding*

<p><b>A. Knowledge and understanding of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Legislation, policy and the theoretical models providing the framework for social work and social care practice</li><li>• Ethical issues, professional values, and the nature of social work in a diverse society</li><li>• Empowerment, anti-discriminatory practice and user involvement.</li><li>• Research, evidence based practice and the evaluation of social work interventions.</li><li>• Strategies to involve users in the development, delivery and evaluation of services</li><li>• The contribution, perspectives and constraints of other health and social care professionals</li></ul>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>A variety of teaching methods, including lectures, seminars, small group discussion and workshops will be utilised. The emphasis will be on experiential learning – participative methods that encourage reflection and the application of theory to practice.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>Assessment will be by coursework, predominantly essays or case studies. Further detail is provided within each module specification.</p>
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### *Skills and other attributes*

<p><b>B. Intellectual skills – able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Systematically analyse a wide range of complex issues that influence the provision of social work</li><li>• Understand the perspectives of service users and carers</li><li>• Justify the selection of a particular method of practice</li><li>• Make informed judgments in the absence of complete data, and make decisions which minimize the risk of unintended outcomes</li><li>• Critically analyse current social problems and evaluate proposed interventions</li><li>• Evaluate the research base for practice, and critique research studies</li><li>• Propose research questions with a sound rationale, and draw on appropriate research methods for their investigation.</li></ul>	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <p>As stated before, a variety of teaching methods, including lectures, seminars, small group discussion and workshops will be utilised, with an emphasis on experiential learning. Students will be supported to use the library effectively, and to search information databases.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>Coursework, as above, demonstrating skills of analysis in all module assignments and the dissertation</p>
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**C. Practical skills – able to:**

- Reflect on their practice and demonstrate self awareness
- Share their knowledge with other health and social care professionals, via discussion and more formal presentations
- Give constructive feedback to other students
- Communicate their conclusions clearly, both verbally and in written formats
- Use information technology to develop and inform research projects and the communication of knowledge.

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

As stated before, a variety of teaching methods, including lectures, seminars, small group discussion and workshops will be utilised, with an emphasis on experiential learning.

Students will be supported to use the library effectively, and to search information databases.

*Assessment*

Within all coursework through the demonstration of writing and presentation skills, and IT skills

**D. Transferable skills – able to:**

- Learn independently, in order to facilitate continuing professional development
- Exercise initiative and personal responsibility
- Make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances
- Learn and problem solve within an interprofessional environment

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

As above.

Students are supported by their personal tutor to devise their own pathway through the programme modules.

The interprofessional learning environment facilitates shared learning and information exchange amongst a range of health and social care professionals from diverse agency settings.

*Assessment*

Within all coursework, with its focus on the students' own area of practice.

**Please note - This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module description and in the programme handbook. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance processes or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.**