

Placement Information Guide

PG Dip Step Up to Social Work

2024-6

College of Health, Science and Society

School of Health & Social Wellbeing

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to outline the processes and support relevant to students completing the PG Dip Step Up to Social Work programme at UWE. This guide is aimed at all students, Practice Educators, Practice Supervisors and Practice Tutors who make up the Practice Learning Team around students during both of their placements. Additional guidance is available via [Practice Support Net](#), Blackboard, the module handbook related to each placement and Pebblepad (electronic portfolio) which all students, practice educators/supervisors and practice tutors should read.

Students must spend 200 days in practice over the course of their programme. This is currently structured as;

- 70 day first placement – People and their communities module UZVS3C-15-M
- 100 day final placement – Social workers and organisations module UZVS48-15-M
- 30 skills days timetabled throughout the programme

It is mandatory for students to attend all placement and skills days, including any recall days to university. Any difficulties with placement attendance must be discussed with the Practice Educator/Placement Supervisor, and any difficulties with skills day attendance must be discussed with the Practice Tutor.

During placements, students will apply theoretical learning to practice with service users, carers, and other professionals. This offers opportunities for the development of practical skills, values and professional competence to meet the [Professional Capabilities Framework \(PCF\)](#) at each of the identified levels (readiness for practice, end of first placement, end of second placement), and ultimately reach the [Professional Standards](#) required to register as a social worker with [Social Work England](#).

Placements on the Step Up to Social Work programme are identified in partnership with the local authorities to which each student is linked. In order to ensure that students gain a breadth of appropriate experiences, their placements should offer a variety of different, contrasting learning opportunities. For example:

- Students could be placed in different relevant settings across their two placements. For instance, the first placement could be within a child protection setting and the second placement could be within a children's disability team.
- The large proportion of placements will take place in a children and families setting. However, it may be that one placement is within a team supporting adults with drug and alcohol misuse difficulties, given the relevance and impact of these issues on parenting and children.

- Students are encouraged to make the most of opportunities to shadow other relevant or linked teams in order to gain an understanding of the wider organisation context, and other relevant aspects of practice.

Overview of practice learning and placements

Students will attend preparatory skills day sessions prior to placements commencing, which include important learning in relation to the Professional Capabilities Framework, use of the electronic portfolio, understanding ethics and values in social work, and a range of practice issues, including safeguarding, risk, and cultural competence.

Actions prior to starting placement

Prior to the placement, students must have passed the Readiness for Practice written assessment (see below) in order to demonstrate the necessary competence to begin the placement safely.

Key tasks to be completed before 70-day placement:

- Disclosure Barring Service clearance (at admissions stage)
- Occupational Health clearance (at admissions stage)
- Reasonable adjustments and agreement of action plan, if required
- Student information and conflict of interest forms (at admissions stage)
- Good health/good character declaration form
- Pebblepad introductory tasks

Key tasks to be completed before 100-day placement:

- Successful completion (pass) of 70-day placement and portfolio
- Provision of the final 70-day practice report to the new Practice Educator
- Review/update of reasonable adjustments and action plan if necessary
- Review/update of good health/good character form if necessary

All students should have visited their placement prior to starting. This visit should include meeting with the Practice Educator and/or Practice Supervisor, and a general orientation of the placement and its function within the organisation.

Local authorities should provide a full induction for each student when they start which includes essential information relating to health and safety, personal safety, IT access, organisational policies, dress code and orientation within the team and setting. Specific guidance with respect to [induction](#) set out by Social Work England should be followed. Placement specific training should be identified in advance to ensure the student is able to attend. An induction plan should be provided by the agency and uploaded to the students' PebblePad portfolio.

If there are difficulties with completing any of the above then there may be a delay in the placement starting and, if required, consideration may be given to starting processes under [UWE's Professional Suitability Policy](#). This policy will also be considered if students are found to have misrepresented their circumstances within the Good Health/Good Character declaration (see relevant section below).

Working with the Practice Learning Team

Placements are designed to enable students to develop their practice with service users and carers in ways that are safe and supported. The Practice Learning Team consists of the student, the Practice Educator, and the Practice Tutor. Where the students' Practice Educator is not located within the placement team (referred to as an Off-Site Practice Educator, a Practice Supervisor from within the team will be allocated. The key roles of each are:

Student: The student has an overall responsibility to provide evidence of their capabilities, learning and development through engaging in the learning opportunities provided by the Practice Educator/Supervisor and the placement. They are responsible for ensuring that the portfolio information is kept up to date and that portfolio tasks are completed within the relevant timeframes (see the placement timeline available on Pebblepad). Students must abide by the policies and procedures in place within the placement and the university.

Practice Educator (PE): The Practice Educator is a qualified and registered social worker who has completed Practice Educator training. The PE has an overall responsibility for the student's learning experience and enabling the student to develop their capabilities, skills, and knowledge through relevant practice experience. The PE will act as a role model to students in developing their social work practice and will provide regular reflective supervision to support and develop the student's learning and reflection skills. The PE will review the student's portfolio work and provide written feedback in relation to direct observations, at the interim review point, and will complete a final written holistic assessment of the student. In most cases, the PE also acts as the Practice Supervisor (see below) and provides a daily management role for the student, overseeing the allocation of placement work.

Off-Site Practice Educator (OSPE): If there is no on-site PE (for instance due to a lack of appropriately qualified staff within the placement team), the student will have an off-site PE. The OSPE will fulfil the roles of the PE set out above, however will work with a Practice Supervisor (see below), who will supervise day to day work. The OSPE must establish a systematic method to assess evidence provided by the student and

meet regularly with both the student and supervisor. They are also a qualified and registered social worker with relevant Practice Educator training.

Practice Supervisor (PS): The Practice Supervisor provides daily management of the practice learning. This role is usually undertaken by the Practice Educator, however where no on-site PE is available, a Practice Supervisor is also allocated. They will meet regularly with the student and practice educator to verify evidence and facilitate learning. It is not a requirement that the Practice Supervisor is a qualified Social Worker.

Practice Tutor (PT): The Practice Tutor is a member of academic staff whose remit is to support the student on placement. The PT will attend the Placement Learning Agreement and Interim Review (this may be face to face, virtually or a combination of both). Where is felt necessary the PT may also attend the Final Review. The PT will review the portfolio and provide feedback on the student's context analysis, additional written portfolio pieces, interim and final assessments. The Practice Tutor will also take responsibility for any action planning that may be required due to difficulties within the placement.

Practice Quality Panel: A team representing the university and partner local authorities, who work together to quality assure and moderate student portfolios and make recommendations around student practice, action plans and failing placements (see below for further information). The panel will also address other placement related issues including placement audits and recommendations in relation to practice educators.

Tips for a successful placement

Before starting the placement

- Students should review their student information and update the Practice Learning Team with any changes.
- Students should review their access plan, if one is in place, and advise the Disability Service of any changes.
- It is recommended that students research the placement provider's website and read the placement profile, or any other information given in advance.
- Students should ensure they are familiar with the [PebblePad Portfolio](#), (training on how to use Pebblepad will be provided in a skills day prior to the placement).
- Students, Practice Educators, Practice Supervisors and Practice Tutors should ensure they are familiar with the module handbook, assessment brief, Pebblepad

and the written pieces within the portfolio. It is important that students pay close attention to the module learning outcomes.

- Students must ensure they are familiar with the [Professional Capabilities Framework \(PCF\)](#) and the level relevant to each placement, [Social Work England Standards](#) and [UWEs Professional Suitability Policy](#). Social Work England do not regulate students; however, they expect students to understand and work towards their professional standards in preparation for when they apply for registration. It is particularly important that students do not do anything that goes against the professional standards.
- Students should contact the placement in advance of starting to arrange a pre-placement visit and firm up plans, which should include discussing working hours, start date, dress code, induction plans and any required access arrangements.
- It is helpful to research and organise travel arrangements to and from the placement. A practice run prior to starting placement can be helpful.
- Students must contact their UWE Practice Tutor once they receive their details.
- Students are responsible for uploading key information about the placement and the Student Information Form to Pebblepad.

When on placement

- Students should be enthusiastic and professional in their manner in keeping with PCF domain 1.
- Students must arrange to meet with the Practice Learning Team as soon as possible to discuss learning needs and complete the learning agreement on PebblePad (within 10 days of starting placement).
- Practice Educators/Practice Supervisors must provide the student with an induction plan. Students must undertake and complete induction tasks and upload the induction plan to PebblePad in the 'Uploads' section.
- Students are responsible for keeping their portfolio up to date with relevant documents and tasks.
- It is expected that students will adhere to the agency's policies, paying close attention to procedures around safeguarding, service user confidentiality, data protection, equality, diversity and inclusion and maintaining professional boundaries.
- Students should ask their Practice Educator/Practice Supervisor about any learning opportunities internal and external to the placement, such as shadowing other teams.
- It is expected that students will be provided with weekly reflective supervision, either with the PE or alternately between the OSPE and PS if relevant. Students are expected to prioritise and engage with supervision as a key element of their practice learning.

- Students are encouraged to reflect on experiences with their Practice Educator or Practice Supervisor and peers. A reflective diary can be useful for deepening critical thinking and reflection.
- Students must discuss any concerns with the Practice Learning Team as soon they arise.

Assessment

The assessment process is designed to enable students to demonstrate progress across the [Professional Capabilities Framework \(PCF\)](#). The assessment activities link with those used for the [Assessed and Supported Year of Employment \(ASYE\)](#) and [Continuing Professional Development \(CPD\)](#) requirements for qualified social workers.

Over the course of the programme, students' learning and development is holistically assessed against the relevant PCF domains, according to their level ([end of first placement](#) or [end of last placement](#)), and the module learning outcomes for both placement modules. Assessment is comprised of the following:

- Attendance at 200 days' placement learning across the programme, divided into 30 skills days, the 70-day first placement and the 100-day final placement.
- Completion of an e-portfolio via the Pebblepad platform and all required tasks alongside each placement.
- Holistic assessment and review by the Practice Learning Team throughout the placement.

Assessment is an ongoing, holistic process over the course of each placement. It is the student's responsibility to ensure their PebblePad portfolio is up to date throughout the placement and that attendance at all placement days are recorded in the ARC Placements on the Web system. Practice Educators, Practice Supervisors and Practice Tutors have access to the student's Pebblepad portfolio throughout the placement and will use this to review the student's progress and development, as well as to provide feedback through the completion of their sections. Student's learning, development and progress is reviewed at the initial, interim and final stage of the placement, and recommendations are made for further development.

It is important that dates for completion and submission of the portfolio are planned well in advance. Students are required to submit their portfolio by 2pm on the date two weeks after their final placement day and are responsible for ensuring that their portfolio is submitted online by the necessary date. Last submission dates are timed to allow consideration by field boards and are final. The student and their Placement

Learning Team must be aware of the submission deadlines. Any challenges with this should be raised with the Practice Tutor at the earliest opportunity. The Practice Tutor may discuss any difficulties with the Module Leader. Failure to submit the portfolio within [UWE submission guidance](#) will be considered a non-submission, and will prevent the student from progressing within the programme. Students receive a pass or fail recommendation when assessment is complete.

Please consult the placement Module Handbook and Assessment Brief on Blackboard for further details on the criteria, expectations, and guidance in relation to assessment and portfolio tasks for each placement.

Progression through the levels of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)

Prior to Placement 1 - Readiness for Direct Practice

Students must demonstrate [Readiness for Direct Practice \(RDP\)](#) through successful completion of the Readiness for Practice written assessment prior to starting the 70 day placement. The aim of the assessment is to ensure that students demonstrate appropriate skills and understanding equivalent to those set out at the relevant level of the PCF in order to safely begin practice learning in the placement setting.

End of First Placement

The first placement is 70 days in a practice setting where students will have the opportunity to work with services users and carers in a student social work role. Students must complete all necessary tasks within the placement portfolio and demonstrate the [End of First Placement](#) competencies to pass the placement.

End of last placement/completion

The final placement is 100 days in a practice setting where there are opportunities for students to prepare to undertake more complex practice including:

- the use of authority
- statutory tasks
- contributing to community networks
- inter professional working.

At the beginning of the final placement students are required to signpost their Practice Educator to their practice assessment report from their previous placement. Students must complete all necessary tasks within the placement portfolio and demonstrate [End of Last Placement/Completion](#) competencies to successfully pass the placement and

therefore complete the programme (provided that all other modules have been successfully completed).

Due to the nature of the PG Dip Step Up to Social Work programme's links to the consortium of local authorities, at least one of the practice placements, usually the second, will take place in a statutory setting. A statutory setting is likely to expose students to tasks linked to high-risk decision-making and legal interventions. A statutory placement is one which:

- Takes place in a local authority setting or settings delivering delegated statutory functions on behalf of the local authority (such as child protection functions), and;
- Involves a sufficient amount of work on either s17 and s47 cases (under the Children Act 1989) or on delivering requirements of the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005.

It is important that students, Practice Educators and Practice Supervisors are aware of the limitations of their role as a student social worker, and the need for appropriate oversight and supervision in relation to any placement tasks, in particular where statutory social work functions are concerned.

Standards, Conduct and Addressing Concerns

The information in this section sets out the expectations of students with respect to their professional suitability and conduct, good health and character. The section sets out steps to be taken in the event of any concerns within the placement, either as a consequence of the student's circumstances, achievement or issues arising from the placement setting.

Professional Suitability and Professional Conduct Policy

UWE has a responsibility to assess and monitor student suitability. This applies to programmes of study which lead to professional registration and/or a license to practice in a professional context. Such courses are characterised as being practice-centred and directed towards the achievement of professional competence and/or professional registration. In addition, these programmes are accredited and/or regulated by professional, statutory bodies which are involved in the design, delivery, and regulation of programmes. The PG Dip Step Up to Social Work programme is monitored and approved by Social Work England.

Students registering for and undertaking a social work degree are bound by UWE's [Professional Suitability Policy](#), and [Student Conduct Policy](#), which are included within the university's [Behaviour and Health Framework for students](#). Information in relation to these policies and processes are also included in the 'Additional Information' section of the Pebblepad portfolio. Students are required at all times to:

- demonstrate acceptable standards of conduct,
- demonstrate relevant values and attitudes,
- satisfy relevant criminal record requirements,
- satisfy relevant health requirements for the programme concerned.

The Professional Suitability Policy sets out how the University may respond to instances where a concern is raised regarding a student's professional suitability. It details the type of action the university may take to deal with the concern, and to support the student. In serious cases, the university has the right to suspend and/or terminate a student's registration on the programme.

These policies and procedures apply to students throughout their period of registration with the university, both on and off campus, and at all times. They are not limited to term time. The university will remain mindful of its duty of care and of its obligations to students under the Equality Act (2010) including in appropriate cases to make

reasonable adjustments. It will also remain mindful of the confidential and sensitive nature of professional suitability matters and of its obligations under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR, 2018).

Examples of where professional suitability concerns may arise include (but are not limited to) instances where a student has or is suspected of:

- Having health, mental health, emotional or inter-personal problems which indicate a lack of insight and appropriate management thereof, and which gives rise to concern about possible risk to self or others.
- Failure to comply with professional body requirements in relation to fitness to practice as specified at any point in time.
- Failure to act within the statutory frameworks which set out students' professional duties and responsibilities.
- Abuse or harassment, including verbal, physical, sexual or emotional.
- Violent, aggressive, or threatening behaviour (physical, verbal or other).
- Failure to treat others with dignity or respect, or practice in a non-discriminatory way.
- Dishonesty or untrustworthiness (such as the misrepresentation of qualifications or professional experience, or the forging of documents or signatures).
- Repeat or serious assessment offences.
- The commission or suspected commission of a criminal offence.
- Having an alcohol or drug abuse problem.
- Anti-social behaviour which adversely affects the proper operation of placement/work-based settings.
- Lack of motivation or interest and/or failure to participate in learning activities (e.g., small group/problem-based learning, portfolio development, practice placements, presentations, academic or pastoral tutorials, or multi/interprofessional focused sessions).
- Failure to demonstrate an attitude or demeanour appropriate for individuals working in the profession concerned.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- Inconsistent, unreliable, or inappropriate behaviour in placement/work-based learning settings, which may lead to health and safety risks or have adverse effects on the placement.

Concerns about a students' professional suitability may arise in a variety of ways. This may include observations of a student's practice, academic performance, observations of their conduct, concerns raised by university staff, other students, other professionals or placement providers.

The university may consider concerns regarding students' professional suitability however they arise. Action will be taken to deal with concerns promptly and fairly with a view to managing matters effectively and supporting students and other persons concerned (e.g., other students, staff, or service users in a professional setting). Dealing with matters in this way is critical not only to ensuring that relevant professional standards are maintained but also to supporting student learning and wellbeing.

Good Health/Good Character Declaration

Good health and good character are fundamental to fitness to practice as a Social Worker. Students are expected to work to [Social Work England Professional Standards](#) in readiness to apply to the register upon qualification. In addition to meeting the Professional Suitability requirements above, students must work within legal and ethical frameworks, use professional authority appropriately and make evidence-based decisions. They must be open, honest, and fair.

A student's good character is based on their conduct, behaviour and attitude. It also takes account of any convictions, cautions and pending charges that are likely to be incompatible with professional registration. The university's policy and approach to addressing student health, character and conduct is set out in the [Professional Suitability Policy](#) and [Fitness to Study Policy](#), both of which are contained within the [Behaviour and Health Framework for Students](#).

Good health is necessary to undertake practice as a social worker. Good health means that students must be capable of safe, effective practice and decision making, supported by their Practice Educator or Supervisor. It does not mean the absence of any disability or health condition. Many people with disabilities and those with health conditions practice with or without adjustments to support their practice. Being a social worker in poor health means that the practitioner is affected by a physical or mental health condition that impairs their ability to practice safely.

Students must be in good health and are advised to be up to date with all routine immunisations that are required for working in health and social care settings. Students offered a place on one of the University's health and social care programmes may be required to complete a health questionnaire and may be asked to confirm their status in respect of a number of infectious diseases (tuberculosis, measles, mumps, rubella, chicken pox, varicella, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV [antibodies], Covid-19) and encouraged to have all required vaccinations. Please note that the list of required

vaccinations may change, in response to advice from the Department of Health. If a student's vaccinations are not up to date, this could affect their ability to attend placement. Concerns with regards to vaccinations should be raised at the point of application.

Social Work students must be fit to practice as per UWE Fitness to Study Policy principles (see above) and in line with [Social Work England's Qualifying Education and Training Standards 2021](#) specifically, **5.3** *Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character, and health.* During the programme, students will be required to provide a self-declaration confirming they meet the regulatory body requirements of good health.

Concerns About the Student while on Placement

If Practice Educators, Supervisors or Tutors become concerned about a student whilst on placement:

Practice Tutors should be alerted to any difficulties/concerns that arise within placement at the earliest opportunity.

The advice below sets out how the university will seek to deal with a range of possible difficulties that arise in practice, including those which relate to matters other than student circumstances.

What sort of difficulties might arise?

Difficulties could relate to one or more of the following areas:

- a) Students' personal circumstances affecting their learning and professional development.
- b) Lack of student progress in meeting assessment requirements.
- c) Suitability of the student for professional practice.
- d) Aspects of the practice learning opportunity such as the quality of supervision and support and the availability of suitable work.
- e) Standards of practice in agencies adversely affecting the well-being of service users or carers.

Who can raise concerns?

Concerns may be raised by the student, Practice Supervisor, Practice Educator, Practice Tutor, or anyone else involved in the student's practice learning.

How will concerns be addressed?

Issues are best discussed openly and as soon as possible between the student, Practice Educator and/or Practice Supervisor and Practice Tutor. A Practice Learning Team meeting should be arranged to explore the issues and review the practice learning agreement. Difficulties may be complex so placements should not be ended without this meeting.

The Practice Learning Team meeting will be chaired by the Practice Tutor. The Practice Tutor takes responsibility for taking notes from this meeting and ensuring that agreed actions with suitable deadlines are recorded within an action plan. This action plan should be reviewed at any subsequent Practice Learning Team meetings (such as the interim review, final review meeting or any other action plan review meeting agreed as required).

Following the meeting the Practice Tutor is responsible for informing the Module Leader and the Practice Supervisor or Practice Educator is responsible for informing the team manager and practice learning co-ordinator of any outcome, unless other arrangements for communication are negotiated.

Written records of communication, discussion and decisions will be kept. Records of meetings will be signed by all participants. Information will be shared in accordance with university policy, legal frameworks and Social Work England requirements. Efforts will be made to resolve concerns at the Practice Learning Team meeting. Should there be outstanding areas of concern, processes within the [Behaviour and Health Framework for Students](#), such as Fitness to Practice or Professional Suitability, may be relevant. Placements should not be ended without a meeting and where appropriate one or more of the policies noted should inform subsequent action.

The following sections set out the process for addressing the areas of difficulty identified above. It is important for Practice Learning Teams to recognise that all circumstances are likely to be unique, and that action plans should be tailored to the student's needs and include specific, time-based, realistic aims with clear identification of any relevant support if appropriate.

Difficulties due to the student's personal circumstances – withdrawal/intermitting

Students may experience changes in their personal circumstances, unexpected events or the impact of previous experiences that make it impossible for them to continue the placement. The student may need to discuss intermitting or withdrawing from the placement or programme for any other reason. Wherever possible the process for raising concerns outlined above should be followed, and an action plan should be developed to support the student in their practice learning. However, if this is not feasible or the best course of action then the placement may be discontinued.

The decision to intermit or withdraw will be considered with the Practice Tutor, Module Leader and Programme Leader. The faculty administrative process will be followed. Anticipated dates and arrangements for the student's return will be addressed, however it is important that the Practice Learning Team are aware of the limited flexibility of dates available within the PG Step Up to Social Work programme.

Intermitting or withdrawing can be a hard decision given the commitment already made by the student to the programme and the placement, and uncomfortable emotions may be raised by the issues involved. However, the programme team and partner agencies acknowledge that there are times when this is as an appropriate decision. It is important that students understand their professional responsibility to service users and carers, the agency, the profession and themselves.

Students are advised to consult a [student support adviser](#) to consider the implications with respect to the wider programme, assessment opportunities, bursary, fees and university regulations and make an informed decision.

Standard of the student's progress in practice module requirements

If there are any concerns regarding the standard of the student's practice, the process for raising concerns outlined above must be followed. Examples include where a student fails to make progress with aspects of their learning, fulfil the expectations of the Practice Learning Agreement, or complete portfolio or placement tasks as required.

The practice learning team should be familiar with the domains of the PCF at the appropriate pre-qualifying level, and the module learning outcomes, and with the process for creating, implementing and reviewing an appropriate action plan. As above, action plans should be specific, clear and identify appropriate support where relevant.

If the student continues not to meet the required standard, despite an action plan being in place, or does not complete the placement, the university will consider this to be an assessment opportunity completed. The Quality Practice Panel will consider and make recommendations to the Programme Leader for additional assessment opportunities that will be considered by the Faculty Award Board.

Suitability of the Student for Professional Practice

If there is a concern relating to the suitability of the student, for instance where a student fails to uphold the standards of professional conduct, or acts in a way that brings the university, agency or profession into disrepute, the University's Professional Suitability policy should be followed (see relevant section above). This is a formal process that provides support to the student and gathers the fullest information for consideration.

Outcomes to this process may include the following;

- resumption of the same practice learning period
- a temporary period of absence
- an alternative opportunity in the same assessment opportunity
- requirement to leave the programme.

Please see the relevant section above, and the relevant pages in the Pebblepad portfolio and on the UWE website for guidance with respect to the Professional Suitability and Conduct policy and process.

Difficulties due to aspects of the practice learning opportunity

If the practice learning opportunity/placement is not viable for reasons other than student's standard of practice, and it is not possible to resolve the problem at that stage, then the module leader and placement learning team should decide whether the student continues in the placement.

If the placement is halted an alternative should be identified and provided within the same assessment opportunity.

Concerns Regarding Practice in the Agency with Service Users/Whistle Blowing Policy

If an issue arises relating to agency practice that causes serious concern regarding service users' well-being, UWE Bristol has a policy on [raising and escalating concerns](#) where students are directed to contact the Practice Support Line in the first instance. The agency policy for whistleblowing should also be followed. The student should be supported by the university during this period.

The Practice Learning Team, in consultation with the Module Leader, will decide whether the student continues in the placement. If the decision is made that the student should not continue, an alternative should be provided within the same assessment opportunity.

If a student has a concern that someone who is registered as a social worker is not fit to practice because of a health or a character issue, they must be enabled to report their concerns as per [Social Work Englands Education and Training Standards \(2021\)](#) specifically, **2.7** *Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures, and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences.*

Students should discuss any concerns with their Practice Tutor or Module Leader as well as following any agency policy in relation to escalating concerns about practice. Students should be provided with, and familiarise themselves with the placement's whistleblowing policy during their induction period.

Support for students regarding concerns

The student may seek support from the [Student Union Advice Centre](#) and involve a student union representative or independent advocate at any stage of the process. The student may make a complaint at any stage, or an appeal and other policies may apply (e.g. Racial Harassment and Disability Discrimination) as detailed in the University Student Handbook.

Other relevant university, professional and agency policies and procedures will be followed where appropriate. A full list of [policies](#) can be viewed on the university's pages.

Summary

These policies seek to resolve issues in the earliest and most effective way between the people concerned. Placements should not be ended without a meeting and where appropriate one or more of the policies noted should inform subsequent action.

An alternative placement will be sought within the same assessment opportunity if:

- a) the placement is not viable due to agency situation,
- b) the student has initiated Whistle Blowing Policy and the module leader, in consultation with relevant others, considers it necessary to arrange an alternative placement.

An alternative placement will not be sought within the same assessment opportunity if:

- a) the issue concerns the standard of the student's progress,
- b) the student is found to be unsuitable for training under the Suitability Policy
- c) UWE assessment regulations do not permit such action.

Key Placement Procedures and Policies

Accident Reporting in Practice

If a student has an accident in practice, they must follow the organisation's Accident or Incident Policy. Students should also ensure that the accident/incident is reported to the university through [UWE Bristol online accident report form](#) in ARC. Students should also advise their Practice Learning Team of any accidents at the earliest opportunity.

In the unlikely event that a student sustains a needle-stick injury, they must follow the organisation's local needle-stick injury policy which will include attending Occupational Health as soon as possible. The student must also ensure that the incident is reported to the University by logging into ARC and using the accident reporting form above. The student should also make sure that their Practice Learning Team are made aware of this.

Accommodation for Placements

Students can arrange accommodation for placements if they are unable to travel to placement on a daily basis; however, this will incur additional costs. Students should contact the Student Advisors via the [Information Points](#) for further advice.

Adverse Weather

Students should check the University website for advice on university closures and the local radio for travel information. University sites may be closed during adverse weather conditions; however placements may be open and students should speak with their Practice Educator/ Supervisor to discuss appropriate arrangements. During periods of adverse weather, Practice Educators / Supervisors will work with students to consider any alternative arrangements that can be put in place, for example working from home.

Annual Leave

Social work students are not entitled to annual leave due to the short-term nature of the placements. The programme timetable clearly shows holiday periods that students are entitled to.

Students are strongly advised not to arrange leave during the weekend following the Readiness for Practice assessment, and the period following the end of both placement periods. These dates provide important flexibility within the programme, for instance so that any placement days missed due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances can be made up. Any time required to be made up during a holiday period must be discussed and agreed by the Practice Learning Team

If a period of leave is required for specific reasons or key religious dates fall outside of the timetable, this should be discussed with the Practice Tutor and Module Leader. Social work students are not required to attend placement on designated bank holidays.

ARC

[ARC](#) is a web-based system that holds student information, placement details and a record of placement days completed. Students will be notified of their placements through ARC Placements on the Web (ARC POW).

Students are required to use ARC to maintain an up-to-date record of attendance on placement days, and can use the system to check the number of practice hours/days they have completed. Students may also need to use ARC to complete the self-declaration of good health and good character, and evaluation of their placement.

Bursaries

Students registered on the PG Dip Step Up to Social Work programme are entitled to receive a bursary funded by the Department for Education. Arrangements are made with students prior to the commencement of the programme with respect to the bursary amount and frequency of payment. Any difficulties with respect to bursary payment arrangements should be addressed by the student liaising with the CPD administrator for the programme.

Disability Services

The [Disability Service](#) offer a wide range of support for students who have a disability or long-term health condition. Support services include assisted technologies, assessment, support for specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, and support with reasonable adjustments for placements via an access plan. If a student thinks they may have a specific learning difficulty, they should contact [Disability Services](#) for a diagnostic assessment.

Students will have been asked to declare any disability on their occupational health form on admission. If a student has a disability which may affect their placement, they should discuss this with the Module Leader. Some students do not realise that they have a specific learning difficulty until they reach university and may have developed strategies for dealing with difficulties within previous learning environments. However, the placement learning environment may have a different impact on a student's needs, therefore an assessment can be helpful to determine what support may be appropriate.

Access plans are designed to give the student an opportunity to set out their needs around placements. This includes any support or reasonable adjustments that could be put in place such as access to the placement, parking, travel and managing the working day, including shifts and weekend work. It may also cover equipment and documentation and anything else that is relevant to the student's learning experience on placement. It is the student's responsibility to share this plan with the Module Leader and their Practice Learning Team so that any support and adjustments can be put in place. If a student wishes to know more or feels that they may benefit from having an Access Plan, they should contact the Disability Service at the earliest opportunity. Academic Personal Tutors (APTs) can also support with this if required.

Disclosure Barring Service (DBS)

All social work students require an enhanced [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (DBS) check prior to starting the programme and will not be allowed to start placement until they have DBS clearance. Students must send their certificate to Admissions as per the joining instructions. Students should follow the guidance within the relevant section of the [UWE Admissions Policy](#). All students with a police conviction or caution on their DBS certificate will be seen by the Programme Leader.

It is essential for social work students to disclose any criminal or pending criminal convictions they may have. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) does not apply and all convictions, including those which are spent, must be disclosed. All information will be treated in confidence. If a student receives a criminal conviction during their

studies, it is a requirement of the university that they disclose this. In the first instance, this should be reported to their Academic Personal Tutor and Programme Leader.

Students must keep their DBS certificate safe as they may be asked to produce it for placement as part of the placement's safer recruitment process.

Emotional wellbeing

Some students experience challenges with balancing the demands of practice and academic work whilst maintaining a healthy work – life balance. If a student is struggling with their emotional wellbeing, they can consider the following:

- Talking to their Practice Learning Team
- Contacting their Academic Personal Tutor for advice
- Contacting the [Practice Support Helpline](#) at hscpsl@uwe.ac.uk or 0117 32 81152
- Accessing support from the university [Health and Wellbeing for students](#)
- Speaking to their GP

Whilst there is flexibility in the pattern of attendance at placement, there must be sufficient breaks between shifts, students must have an 11-hour rest period within a 24-hour period, e.g., a student cannot do a night shift followed by a late shift if both fall within the same 24-hour period. This would also mean; it is not acceptable to do a night shift and then attend lectures the next day in university.

Expenses

The agency policy around student expenses and how to claim expenses should be made clear to students as part of the induction process. This does not include travel costs to and from placement which are the student's responsibility. See also bursaries.

Failing a Placement

If a student does not pass a placement, their circumstances will be considered by the Module Leader, Programme leaders and Award Board as per Academic Regulations. All students need to have successfully completed their first placement to meet requirements for progression through the programme and into the final placement, and to have passed both placements in order to progress to qualification. A further placement may be sought in conjunction with the local authority consortium supported

by the Professional Practice Office and the programme team, but dependent on the circumstances, this may not be until the following academic year. Students will be required to complete a new Student Information form. This will need to be reviewed by both the Module Leader and Practice Tutor.

Information Points

Students can make general enquiries through the university's [Information Point](#). There are in-person Information Points on each campus. Glenside Information Point is located near reception and can support students with many issues. These include: academic university regulations and procedures; advice about fees, and providing replacement student ID cards.

Student Advisors can support students with a wide range of university matters and can be contacted through the Information Point at Glenside reception. They can also support students through professional suitability processes and can be contacted by emailing infopoint@uwe.ac.uk

Jury Service

Should students be called for jury service, they need to contact the Module Leader to explore the impact on their studies and develop a plan of action. People called up for [Jury Service](#) can ask to change the date or be excused.

Health & Safety

Students must read and understand the agency policies and procedures for Incident Reporting, Health and Safety, Risk Assessment and Lone Working. The student's understanding of such policies should be articulated in the Practice Learning Agreement and discussed with the Practice Learning Team.

Lone working may form part of the normal pattern of work in a placement. If lone working is considered appropriate for the student's stage of learning, this should be discussed and agreed at the Placement Learning Agreement meeting.

In order to develop the skills that are required of a qualified practitioner, students must be an active participant in practice. However, unaccompanied visits to service users/ carers should only be undertaken after careful consideration of the following factors:

- The student's stage of learning
- The student's capability/previous experience
- The type and nature of the skills being developed
- Staff knowledge of the service user/carers and any potential risks involved in lone working
- The student must not use their own vehicle if they cannot provide evidence of business insurance cover.

Learner Support Fund

The [Student Support Fund](#) is a fund provided by UWE Bristol to support UK undergraduate and postgraduate students who may need extra financial support to remain in higher education. Priority is given to care leavers, estranged students, students with caring responsibilities and students with a disability. All applications are means tested. If a student experiences exceptional financial hardship which will prevent them from attending or continuing the social work course, they should [contact a Money Adviser](#).

Manual Handling

Social Work students are not expected to undertake any manual handling and therefore no manual handling training is provided.

MyUWE Student Portal

[MyUWE](#) is the University's portal and is where students register online. It is where students find their timetable, provisional coursework marks and maintenance pages for their personal information. They can also find announcements advising of important faculty or course information, and links to services such as Blackboard, student email and the library.

Occupational Health Service

The University has a contract with the [Avon Partnership/UHB NHS Occupational Health Service](#) for assessment, advice and guidance in relation to fitness to engage on a Social

Work programme, fitness to return to the programme and practice placements following a time out, and other health related matters.

A student may be asked to contact the service directly for telephone advice before a referral is made for them. As per the guidance above relating to good health, all students should declare all health conditions before starting on the programme so that a judgement can be made whether they are fit to undertake the programme. If a student does not declare a known health condition, which compromises their ability to be on the programme, this may be considered under the UWE Bristol Professional Suitability and Professional Conduct Policy (see relevant section above).

Paid Employment Outside of the Social Work Programme

The PG Dip Step Up to Social Work is a full-time course. Students have a responsibility to ensure that they are fit to attend their practice placement and other commitments associated with their studies. Undertaking paid employment whilst on placement is not advised as it will be difficult for students to maintain their own wellbeing and achieve well in their studies. Students sometimes gain employment with the placement provider; this paid employment cannot happen whilst the student is still on placement with the agency.

PebblePad

Social work students complete an online portfolio of work while on each placement using the [PebblePad system](#). The portfolio contains all the tasks required to be completed by the student during the course of the placement, and the holistic assessment reports completed by the Practice Educator/Practice Supervisor. The portfolio is a live, working online document that the Practice Learning Team use to record formative and summative assessments of the student's practice and any learning needs. It is important that it is kept up to date, this is the student's responsibility. The PebblePad portfolio remains live until the point that the student submits their work.

Students will receive training in the use of Pebblepad prior to starting their first placement. There is comprehensive guidance available for students online via the module Blackboard page, in the 'technical help' section of Pebblepad, and from the [Pebblepad Support Pages](#). If students are unable to resolve any queries via these means, they can contact the Education Innovation Team on HASpebblepad@uwe.ac.uk

Service User/Carer Feedback

Service users and carers are also involved in student learning in university and in placements where possible and appropriate. Service user feedback is a key element of student learning and development on a social work programme. Information and detailed guidance is available on the Pebblepad platform, in the 'Portfolio Information' section of the portfolio.

Students are expected to obtain service user/carers feedback during placement to inform and progress their practice as a student social worker. Discussion and agreement on how this can be achieved should take place at the Placement Learning Agreement Meeting and Interim Review Meeting. All feedback should be carefully anonymised.

Placement Allocations

Placements on the PG Dip Step Up to Social Work programme are identified and allocated by the students' partner local authority, with liaison with the university's Professional Practice Office and the programme team. Each placement must meet the requirements of the programme.

Students sometimes identify a reason why the placement may not be suitable, for example where a family member is a service user or works in the organisation. Students are asked to complete a Conflict-of-Interest form prior to starting their placement. In the event that this information was not known or previously shared, the student should contact the Module Leader at the earliest opportunity.

Students must be prepared to travel to the placement within the university's geographical locations/placement circuits. This is as per the terms of their offer at admission. In order to maintain transparency and equity, students are not allowed to contact and/or organise their own placements.

Practice Absence

If a student is absent from placement, they must report it to the Practice Absence Support Line and their placement as soon as possible on the first day of absence. On contacting the placement, the student should make sure they:

- Speak to their Supervisor/Practice Educator or other nominated staff member
- Take the name of the person they are speaking to
- Inform them of the reason for the absence
- Inform them of when they intend to return

The student should email practiceabsence@uwe.ac.uk or call 0117 3283283 and leave a message with their name, contact number, current placement details and reason for their absence. Calls are not routinely returned from this number. If a student wishes to speak to someone, they should call the Practice Support Line on 0117 3281152. Students must ensure their online time sheet (ARC) reflects sickness absences and is recorded correctly.

If a student does not arrive at placement as expected and nothing is heard from them, the placement should contact the Practice Support Line on 0117 32 81152 to report this at the earliest opportunity.

If a student has fewer than 5 days sickness or absence in a block during a placement, they should negotiate with the placement to make up the hours/days missed and ensure the Practice Learning Team are aware and in agreement to the plan. A student cannot make up time lost in one placement at the next placement. In addition, they cannot carry forward hours to make up from previous placements into the next academic year and make them up in placements in that next year.

If a student is sick for up to six consecutive days, they must submit a self-certification form. These are available from the [Information Point](#) and should be submitted directly to the Professional Practice Office. If a student is sick for seven days or more, a medical certificate is required. This should also be submitted directly to the Professional Practice Office.

Students who have long periods of sickness, or frequent short-term sickness/absence, will meet with the Module Leader or Practice Tutor and may be required to attend Occupational Health for a health assessment, which the Programme Leader will request. Students may be required to intermit from the programme if the absence is lengthy as they may not be able to achieve the required competences in the available time.

Students should contact their Practice Learning Team if they require compassionate leave. Up to 5 days can be authorised by the Academic Practice Tutor, dependent on circumstances.

All other authorised absence needs to be negotiated by the student with their Practice Tutor/Module Leader or Programme Lead. The Practice Tutor may agree absence for hospital appointments and carer emergencies, the Practice Learning Team need to be informed of any absence.

Students need to contact the Programme Leader to discuss any issues around absence connected to military reserve personnel duties to explore the impact on their programme and to develop a plan of action.

All missed placement days will need to be rescheduled. **Placements cannot be completed without completion of full 70 days in the first placement and 100 days for the final placement.**

Practice Hours

To meet Social Work England requirements for qualification every student is required to complete 200 practice days. On the PG Dip Step Up to Social Work programme, these days are planned as follows:

- 30 skills days timetabled across the programme
- 70 day placement
- 100 day placement

A placement day is usually taken to mean no less than 7 hours (plus a lunch break), but exact hours and working patterns may vary depending on the placement provider. Students cannot work additional hours to reduce the total number of placement days they need to complete. Students are entitled to a 20-minute break for every 6 hours worked. They are also entitled to a lunch break which is usually 30 minutes; lunch breaks are not counted as hours worked. Lunch breaks must be taken.

Practice hours are recorded in [ARC](#) using the information provided from timesheets. Any queries about the information held on ARC should be directed in the first instance to the Practice Support Line hscpsl@uwe.ac.uk and/or 0117 32 81152.

Practice Support Line

The Practice Support Line is a confidential helpline for practice educators, supervisors, and students. Students are encouraged to use this line to report concerns whilst on placement.

Contact details are: hscpsl@uwe.ac.uk and 0117 32 81152.

Professional Communication

During a student's professional course, they will engage in communication across a range of sectors, including with colleagues, services users, carers, and academic staff. This will include written and verbal communication conducted variously across a range of mediums. Communication skills are a significant feature of social work practice and students should ensure that they communicate in ways that are in line with expectations of their conduct and professionalism.

Advancements with digital technology, the increased use of ICT and home working increase the risk of breaches in confidentiality of service user information due to the use of agency hardware outside of office spaces, and the potential for confidential conversations being overheard. Use of paper-based resources (notepads, consent forms etc) also increases the risks of breaches in confidentiality due to the potential for them to be lost or seen by third parties.

Care should be taken to ensure service user safety and confidentiality is not compromised. All confidential information should be securely stored, as per the agency policies and procedures. Emails should be used appropriately and only for professional correspondence purposes and details of service users and their families/carers should never be discussed via social networking sites. Students should read and follow their placement agency's policies around the acceptable use of ICT/digital technology.

Professional Practice Office (PPO)

The Professional Practice Office manages the administration related to all student placements allocations, the PracticeSupport Line, Practice Absence Line and ARC. Please use PPOallocations@uwe.ac.uk for contact.

Study time during Practice Placements

Students should be allocated protected time each week, equivalent to half day a per week for the purpose of placement related study activity and the completion of their PebblePad Portfolio. This time is flexible dependent on the working arrangements in

the placement and is to be negotiated by the Practice Learning Team at the Placement Learning Agreement Meeting.

Students are not entitled to self-directed study days during practice placement for the purpose of other academic study. Study time cannot be negotiated for coursework preparation or other programme work which should be conducted outside of placement days.

Social Networking

Many students use Social Networking as a means of communication. UWE encourages appropriate use to promote positive social and working relationships, the sharing of information and ideas, learning and good practice. However, this should not be used as a forum to express personal dissatisfaction relating to the Practice Learning Team, service users or academic staff/elements of the programme. Service user/ carer details should never be posted on any student's social media.

Students must also ensure that they are aware of the placement agency's policies in relation to social media use. For instance, there are often strict policies in place around the use of social media to communicate with, or gather information about, service users or carers.

Any individual deemed by the university to be using a social networking site in an inappropriate or offensive manner may be subject to action under the [Professional Suitability and Professional Conduct Policy](#).

Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Adoption and Partner Leave -

Students who become pregnant during their studies should inform their Practice Tutor at the earliest opportunity. If students are on placement during this time, they should inform their Practice Learning Team at the earliest opportunity to ensure that an appropriate risk assessment can be undertaken, in line with the agency's policies. For more information, see [Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Adoption and Partner Leave](#) web pages.

Supernumerary Status in Placement

Students have supernumerary status and should be not counted as part of the staffing numbers. [Social Work England](#) states that:

"Students are not part of the normal staff team so should not be asked to cover staff shortages or absences or respond to pressures being experienced in the team/setting, unless doing so is consistent with meeting their learning needs." and that *"Allocation of all workload for students should not, therefore, be determined by the volume of work within a team or setting but should be at the professional judgement of the practice educator/work-based supervisor and appropriate to the student's level of capability and agreed learning needs"*.

This ensures that as a students undertake the placement as a learning experience and are not considered part of the workforce. When supernumerary status is not upheld, this may have a negative impact on mentors, students, and service users. If a student experiences this as a problem on placement, they should discuss with their Practice Tutor.

Time Keeping

Good time keeping links with professional conduct and the expectations within the PCF. Students are expected to demonstrate motivation, reliability, and commitment. Social work placements may involve a variety of working patterns. To be and feel part of a placement team, it is essential to experience the setting fully. This includes being on time to attend any shift handover, team meetings, supervision and team debrief. It also ensures that students are up to date with the day to day running of the placement, any changes which may have occurred since their last shift and any safeguarding issues.

If a student knows they are going to be late, it is courteous and professional for them to let someone know. In placement this should be the student's Practice Supervisor and/or Practice Educator.

Timesheets

Timesheets are completed using the ARC online timesheets system (see above) and must be completed to accurately reflect the students' time in practice. Guidance can be found on the [ARC guides and forms page](#) of Practice Support Net.

Timesheets should be authorised by the Practice Educator/Supervisor at least once per week. Guidance for PE/PS use of ARC Timesheets is also available on the [ARC guides and forms page](#). Timesheets should be submitted promptly following each placement, students should refer to their module handbook for deadline dates. Failure to submit timesheets will be classed as a non-submission against the module.

Falsification of timesheets will be referred to Professional Suitability proceedings within the university and may result in the discontinuation of studies.

Travel Arrangements

Students may be placed anywhere within the region of the local authority with whom they are partnered and are responsible for the costs associated with travel to and from the placement.

Students using their own vehicle in the course of their placement work must ensure their car is appropriately insured, taxed, and has a valid MOT certificate. Students will need to ensure that 'business cover' is added to their insurance policy for any driving they do during placement hours and for the purposes of transporting service users in their vehicle. This should be confirmed in the Practice Learning Agreement. Car parking whilst on placement may be limited or non-existent in some areas. It is therefore advisable for students to find out before starting their placement if there are any facilities and arrangements in place for parking.

Students who are required to undertake travel either by public transport or when using their own vehicle should be entitled to claim expenses from the organisation they are placed with. This should be discussed and agreed at the Placement Learning Agreement meeting.

University Health Centre

The [University Health Centre](#) based on Frenchay Campus aims to provide accessible healthcare for everyone working or studying at the University. All UWE Bristol students can register with the Health Centre.

Document Owner: Module Leader for People and Their Communities – Practice Placement 1 and Module Leader for Social Workers and Organisations – Practice Placement 2.

Updated: December 2023

Due to be updated: August 2024