

# **What to do if you have a concern about social work education courses**

A guide for people who use  
services, carers, practitioners  
and employers

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The standards are contained in the:

**1. Subject Benchmark Statement for Social Work** (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, February 2008). This sets out the requirements for achievement of an academic award in social work at degree level.

**2. National Occupational Standards for Social Work (NOS)** (Topss UK Partnership, 2002). The National Occupational Standards (NOS) define the competences that apply to social work in the form of statements of performance, knowledge and the evidence required to confirm competence.

**3. Code of Practice for Social Care Workers** (GSCC, 2003).

**4. Requirements for Social Work Training** (Department of Health, 2002). These specify what providers of social work qualifying education must do. In particular, they stipulate requirements with respect to the provision of practice learning

experiences of 200 days, in at least two settings, with at least two user groups, and of statutory social work tasks involving legal intervention (Requirement J).

### **Post-qualifying courses**

Requirements for the five post-qualifying (PQ) awards are contained in the PQ framework (GSCC, 2005) and published standards and requirements for each award. The awards are: Working with children, young people, their families and carers; Social work with adults; Mental health social work; Practice education; and Leadership and management. The standards and requirements can be found on the GSCC website: [www.gsc.org.uk](http://www.gsc.org.uk).

It is the role of the GSCC to make sure that universities are continuing to meet these standards and requirements for the social work degree and PQ courses and to promote high standards of social work education and training.

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**If you have a query or concern about a university not meeting requirements,** it is important in the first instance that you raise this directly with the university, for example through people who use services and carer groups, management boards, complaints procedures or other mechanisms that should be published by the university. This is normally the most effective way for concerns to be addressed.

**If your concern is about how the course is being delivered or its outcomes and you wish to discuss and clarify whether requirements are being met,** you should contact the GSCC at [sweggeneralenquiries@gsc.org.uk](mailto:sweggeneralenquiries@gsc.org.uk) or telephone 01788 532400. You will be put in touch with a GSCC regional inspector who will be able to offer advice about your concerns. In many cases, this will involve clarifying the requirements, and/or advising further action that you can take.

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**If it appears that there is a risk of standards and requirements not being met** then the inspector will investigate further and initially work with the university to ensure that any problems are resolved. In doing so, the GSCC undertakes this work in its role as regulator of social work education and is not acting on behalf of, or advocating for, a specific individual.

Where there is evidence that a university is not meeting requirements or serious concerns have been raised and these are not being put right within an agreed timescale, the GSCC will

undertake a formal inspection. Our underpinning approach, based upon regulatory best practice, is assisting to make sure that requirements are met to ensure that students are able to experience a good quality of social work education. However, the GSCC has the right to withdraw approval of courses in the most serious cases of failure to meet requirements.

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## The role of the GSCC

The General Social Care Council (GSCC) is the regulator of social work education in England, with the responsibility for approving and monitoring programmes of education and training for social workers at qualifying and post-qualifying level.

## How we do this

### Degree

We publish requirements that must be met by universities when delivering their social work courses. The requirements for the degree are contained in *Accreditation of universities to grant degrees in social work* (GSCC, 2002), which is available on our website: [www.gsc.org.uk](http://www.gsc.org.uk).

The GSCC must be satisfied that universities are delivering courses that will “enable persons completing them to attain the **required standards** of proficiency in relevant social work”. The **required standards** are “outcome statements” that set out what a student social worker must know, understand and be able to do to be awarded the degree in social work.

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The GSCC welcomes queries and concerns about social work education courses from all stakeholders, which assist us in ensuring that the quality of social work education remains high.

If you have a concern about the conduct of a Registered Social Worker please contact the GSCC Conduct team on 01788 532405 or by email: [conduct@gsc.org.uk](mailto:conduct@gsc.org.uk).

If you have a concern about a member of GSCC staff or about the way in which we provide our services, please contact the Complaints and Representations team on 0845 070 0630 or by email: [customercomplaints@gsc.org.uk](mailto:customercomplaints@gsc.org.uk).

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