

Further resources

About social work and social work education

- The Department of Health's Social Work Website (England)
www.socialworkandcare.co.uk/socialwork/start/degree.asp
- Scottish Social Services Council – Becoming a social worker
www.sssc.uk.com/Social+Service+Careers/Becoming+a+social+worker/Training+as+a+social+worker.htm
- Northern Ireland Social Care Council – Social Work Education and Training
www.niscc.info/careers/qualify/default.htm
- Care Council for Wales - social work training fact sheet
www.ccwales.org.uk/careers/careers/quals/swork.htm
- Governmental fact sheet on 'NHS and social work students'
www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/StudentFinanceFactsheets/DG_10034874
- General Social Care Council – Become a social worker
www.gsc.org.uk/Training+and+learning/Become+a+social+worker/DG_10034874
- Social Work Student - This is a resource for students undertaking a social work qualification
www.socialworkstudent.co.uk/careers.asp

General student advice

- Student UK – Get the most out of student life at university or college in the UK
www.studentuk.com
- Governmental pages on education and learning
www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/index.htm
- The Student Zone
www.thestudentzone.com
- HERO is the official gateway to universities, colleges and research organisations in the UK
www.hero.ac.uk/uk/studying
- Unofficial guides – An organisation of students who provide the most student friendly and honest alternative information on higher education for prospective students and parents
www.unofficial-guides.com
- Push Online – all about what life is really like at university
www.push.co.uk/pushguide/index.jsp
- BBC Education – one life
www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/onelife/education/index.shtml

Books

Thompson, N. (2005) *Understanding Social Work: Preparing for Practice* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Davies, M. (2002) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Work* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.

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SWAP digest 3

Short learning and
teaching guides

The social work degree: preparing to succeed

SWAP Digest 3 is written for prospective and current social work students to help you get off to a successful start on your degree. The advice in this guide has been written by students on social work courses, so it offers insider tips!

Top tips

- 💡 Read the departmental pack/website. (Paula Doherty, Lancaster University)
- 💡 Do make use of your tutorials, which are a platform for you to share your concerns or difficulties with the course material. (Ufuoma Marcelo, Stockport College)
- 💡 Keep on top of deadlines (a diary is a must) and [do] not let work pile up. (Carla Rogers, University of Edinburgh)
- 💡 Be prepared to work hard, 'think outside the box' and be ready to learn from your mistakes. (Adetutu Goodwin, Suffolk College)
- 💡 Effective time management will mean you can retain a life and not be a victim of your work. (David Atherton, Staffordshire University)
- 💡 Get some experience in as many different fields as possible because it will ensure you get the right job for you when you qualify. (Carly Anne Evans, Swansea University)
- 💡 Make use of the support structures that are in place, they are there to help you. (Kate Wells, University of Sussex)
- 💡 Do get to know the Student Union, if you get in a muddle they are there to help. (Mary Foster, University of Bedfordshire)
- 💡 Appreciate what your course will give you. You will have privileged access into people's lives, and learn things you couldn't have imagined. (Fiona Bacon, Oxford Brookes University)

One of a series of short learning and teaching guides designed by SWAP to support learning and teaching in social policy and social work. Each digest includes some top tips, more detailed information on their application in practice and a list of further resources.





In the beginning

- Give some thought to time management and how you intend juggling home life and academic commitments.
- Look around for other funding sources that may be available to you.
- Make use of the support services available (e.g. library induction tours, IT help sessions, student support).
- Make time for yourself and your loved ones. Do not overload yourself.

Becoming a reflective practitioner

- Start the habit of reflecting on different experiences or conversations you have (e.g. in a learning journal). This is a key principle of social work and will shape your professional life.
- Do not expect to have the same viewpoint as others – we are all different and being out of your comfort zone will often lead to rich and powerful learning.
- Being self-aware will benefit you and embracing the challenges that arise will help turn you from a student into a professional.
- Turn potential criticism to your advantage by acknowledging and working on your weaknesses.

Carla Rogers says...

- Approach the course with excitement and a readiness to learn, as the course content is both stimulating and of great interest.
- Allow [your] basic values such as respect, patience, sensitivity, equality and compassion to shine through.
- Keep an open mind whilst bringing your own ideas and experience to the organisation you will be working in.
- Embrace the support [of university and agency] both in preparation for placement and whilst on placement in order to gain as much experience and skills as possible, and to enhance your understanding of social work as a profession.

(SWAP Student Essay Winner 2007, University of Edinburgh)

“Embrace the challenge; put aside pre-conceived ideas and personal issues and really listen; be prepared to contemplate new themes and don't dismiss theories because they don't immediately make sense.”

(Kim Kay, University of Hull)

“Just look at what you have to do this week. Break everything down into small tasks. If you look at the enormity of what you have to do it will blow your mind and you'll be discouraged before you start.”

(David Atherton, Staffordshire University)

Paula Doherty says...

- Have paperwork ready.
- Ask the department about anything you are unsure about.
- Buy a pocket diary.
- Read recommended material/reading pack material before a lecture.
- Speak to other people about any fears or worries.
- Look forward to your course.

(SWAP Student Essay Runner-up 2007, Lancaster University)

The importance of values

- Have an open mind and be prepared for your beliefs and ideas to be challenged - reflect on your own attitudes and outlook to life.
- The nature of social work is complex and there is often not a right or wrong answer to an issue or question.

- Try to find a balance between idealism and realism that may help you to remain motivated and enthusiastic when faced with boundaries and limitations in practice.

During the course

- Make the most of seminars and be an active member of group discussions and exercises to help you get to grips with and debate the more complex issues in social work.
- Be meticulous with your recording of notes – date each piece and mark the name of the lecturer/tutor involved.
- Do not be afraid to test your knowledge and if you get it wrong learn from it and move on - do not dwell on your mistakes.
- Remember that the purpose of assessments is for you to show your understanding of what you have been taught – lecturers want you to succeed.
- Be prepared to experience different practice settings, including those you might not be very keen on – they may change your mind.
- Be prepared to listen to new ideas and theories and give yourself time to understand them – engage your mind and your emotions.

“The social work degree (...) will prepare you for any field of social work. Once qualified there is an extensive job market for social workers either in the statutory or voluntary sectors, working with children and families, the elderly and mental health among others.”

(Carly Anne Evans, Swansea University)

“There will be moments of self-doubt, lack of motivation, stress and frustration, alongside laughter, success, accomplishment and the development of lasting friendships. Qualifying will not be the end, but the beginning of new challenges and opportunities. Go for it!”

(Vanna Changlee, Middlesex University)