

Title of Report	Review of the Requirements for Social Work Training.
Public/Confidential	Public
Summary/purpose of report	<p>The report provides a summary of, and rationale for, the proposed changes to the teaching, learning and assessment requirements for Social Work qualifying programmes outlined in the Requirements for Social Work Training in the Framework for Social Work Education.</p> <p>A full summary of the amendments can be found at Appendix 2.</p>
Recommendations	The Council is asked to approve the proposed changes to The Requirements for Social Work Training and timescales for implementation.
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Link to Strategic Plan	<p>The information in this report links to:</p> <p>Outcome 1: Trusted People who use services are protected by a workforce that is fit to practise.</p> <p>Outcome 2: Skilled Our work supports the workforce to deliver high standards of professional practice.</p> <p>Outcome 3: Confident Our work enhances the confidence, competence and wellbeing of the workforce.</p>
Link to Risk Register	<p>Risk 1: We fail to ensure that our system of regulation meets the needs of people who use services and workers.</p> <p>Risk 2: We fail to ensure that our workforce development function supports the workforce and employers to achieve the rights standards and qualifications to gain and maintain registration.</p>

Impact Assessment	An Impact Assessment (IA) was developed.
Documents attached	Appendix 1 – Full detail of the proposed changes
Background papers	Framework for social work education (purple Book).pdf Impact Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The SSSC approves and quality assures the delivery of Social Work education in Scotland.
2. The Review of Social Work Education recommended the revision of the teaching, learning and assessment requirements for Social Work qualifying programmes outlined in the Framework for Social Work Education.
3. A review of the Requirements for Social Work Training commenced in 2020 but was paused during the pandemic and has been updated and amended to reflect the changing climate of social work education in the post pandemic era.
4. As well as updates to terminology and wording there are several proposed revisions and additions to the existing requirements. These include:
 - a change to the minimum number of practice learning days
 - a requirement for students to gain experience of statutory social work functions on placement
 - a change to the minimum course attendance requirements for students
 - a requirement for Practice Educators to be a registered social worker
 - setting the definition of a practice placement
5. Council is asked to approve the proposed changes to The Requirements for Social Work Training and plans for implementation.

PROPOSED REVISION 1

REQUIREMENT M- NUMBER OF DAYS IN PRACTICE LEARNING

6. The Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) who deliver the social work degree were asked to clarify how many practice learning days are included in their courses, not including study days, recall days, observational and 'virtual' placement opportunities. It was important to examine practice learning in the context of the specific days spent in assessed Social Work practice experienced by students at each HEI institution rather than the broader interpretation. The information collated identified significant variance across degree programmes.
7. The HEIs acknowledge the value of experiential direct practice and in principle agree to the proposal that a minimum of 160 days should be spent in direct practice. They requested that in addition to the 160 days, some capacity for study time and recall to university should be built into the practice structure in order to avoid disadvantaging students. The proposal was amended to 180 days to take this into consideration whilst still raising the bar for experiential direct practice and offering the HEIs independence to deliver learning that it is appropriate to their organisation. The change of

minimum days aligns with the requirements of the other UK social work regulators.

8.

Current	Proposed
<p>Make sure that all social work students spend at least 200 days in practice learning, of which at least 160 must be spent in supervised direct practice in service delivery settings. This practice learning must be assessed. Up to 60 days of the supervised direct practice element can be subject to credit from prior experiential learning.</p>	<p>Ensure that all social work students spend a minimum of 180 days in practice learning. Practice learning is supervised, direct practice in a service delivery setting in which the student actively participates in the day-to-day work of the team and is formally assessed whilst doing so. The equivalent of half a day for every five practice days and a maximum of two university recall days are allocated to reflective study time and count as part of the practice placement.</p>

9. Funding for each day of practice learning is agreed and funded by the Scottish Government. Although the overall number of placement days will increase slightly, most HEIs previously counted study days and recall/workshop days in the number of placement days and sought funding accordingly. Additionally, funding for observational placement days has been removed. The actual difference in funding will depend on the HEI degree programme but will not be significant.
10. The proposed revision supports the ongoing work of Practice Educators who have traditionally been paid their daily fee when students were on study days or recall days. It limits the number of 'paid' recall days to two across the 180-day period although HEIs can create additional recall days should they wish to do so. Any additional recall days would not count towards the overall number of placement days.

PROPOSED REVISION 2
REQUIREMENT N- PRACTICE LEARNING IN A STATUTORY FUNCTION

11. In recent years approximately 95% of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) have started their careers in local authority, statutory social work roles. We also know through considerable evidence from a range of research papers, including the SSSC's 5-year longitudinal study, that NQSWs are not always considered to be fully prepared for social work in a statutory setting. The retention rates for qualified social workers continues to be of significant concern and early career experiences are a significant factor.

12. It is important to value the learning opportunities for Social Work students in the private and 'not for profit' sectors and the need for practitioners to experience a range of practice to broaden the learning that they may well then take into the statutory sector.
13. Statutory duties are often contracted out by local authorities to their partner agencies. Although requiring each student to complete a full local authority statutory placement would ensure that they receive the robust learning and obtained the experience required to work in local authority statutory practice, in some areas of the country there is not currently the capacity to provide all students with a statutory placement.
14. Work is ongoing through the Social Work Education Partnership (SWEP) to develop capacity in local authority placement settings to increase the opportunities of placements in local authorities. Requiring that all students have one period of practice learning in an environment which offers a statutory function should be sufficient to provide a robust learning experience and could be implemented quickly.

Current	Proposed
<p>Make sure that this assessed practice learning is structured over the course of the degree to allow students to gain experience of and develop ability in:</p> <p>Carrying out statutory social work tasks involving legal interventions.</p> <p>Working in at least two contrasting service delivery settings (for students entering through the work – based routes, at least one of these should be out with their employing agency other than in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>Providing services to at least two user groups.</p> <p>And providing services in a way that takes account of and values diversity.</p>	<p>Ensure that assessed practice learning is structured over the course of the degree to allow students to gain experience and develop abilities through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertaking a minimum of one period of practice learning that lasts for at least 80 days and includes experience of statutory social work functions and tasks involving legal interventions, including but not limited to the protection of children and vulnerable adults ideally in a local authority setting. • Students must not undertake the primary or lead role in child protection, adult support and protection or the supervision and management of sex offenders. • Practice learning opportunities must offer contrast both between placements and the student's usual place of work, offering a breadth of opportunity between sectors of the workplace and the groups of people who use our services.

PROPOSED REVISION 3

REQUIREMENT P- MINIMUM ATTENDANCE ON THE TAUGHT PROGRAMME

15. The teaching and learning landscape has changed significantly over the last five years, hybrid models of delivery are now considered normal in most HEIs. There are obvious benefits to embracing different models of delivery and engagement although face to face academic learning is still an extremely important part of the learning, development and preparation for direct practice of the student.
16. It is proposed that a minimum attendance of 80% for taught modules be introduced to the requirements, taking into consideration disability/extenuating circumstances.

Current	Proposed
Make sure that the students spend enough time in structured academic learning, under the direction of an educator, to meet the required level of competence. This is expected to be at least 200 days or 1,200 hours.	It is a requirement that students attend 80% of taught sessions, regardless of the mode of delivery, although special dispensation can be allowed by negotiation to meet extenuating circumstances. Practice skills development may include learning in relation to, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• expectations of professional practice• assessment and interviewing skills;• group work;• communication skills; group practice and so on.

PROPOSED REVISION 4

REQUIREMENT S- REQUIREMENTS FOR PRACTICE EDUCATORS

17. There is currently no formal structure of regulation for Practice Educators and concern that some may not have an appropriate practice teaching qualification, be able to demonstrate continuous professional learning appropriate to the role and may not have an up to date PVG certificate.
18. There is currently no requirement for Practice Educators to be qualified Social Workers.

19. Some Practice Educators are registered as professionals in other fields and some are retired Social Workers who may have let their registration lapse.
20. This proposal introduces a requirement that all Practice Educators are SSSC registered Social Workers. This is a requirement in other parts of the UK.

Current	Proposed
There is no current requirement	The Practice Educator must be a SSSC registered Social Worker who also holds a relevant Practice Teaching qualification.

**PROPOSED REVISION 5
REQUIREMENT T- DEFINITION OF PRACTICE LEARNING**

21. There is currently no definition of a Social Work Practice Learning Opportunity and of how it should be conducted although general principles appear to have been adopted.
22. For the purposes of clarity it was felt appropriate to create a definition of a Practice Learning Opportunity.

Current	Proposed
There is no current requirement	<p>A Practice Learning Opportunity or Practice Placement is a period of time in which Social Work Students are based in a service delivery setting in the statutory, private or voluntary sector.</p> <p>The setting must provide the learning opportunities necessary for the student to meet The Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE).</p> <p>There should be a minimum of two periods of practice learning.</p> <p>Each period of practice learning should include a minimum of three observations of direct practice, two of which must be conducted by the allocated Practice Educator. The third must be conducted by someone approved by the allocated practice educator but who is not necessarily a qualified practice educator themselves. A minimum of two observations of practice must involve direct work with people using the service.</p> <p>The student must demonstrate the ability to use critical reflection and link theory to practice in both placements. The student must have a different practice educator for each period of assessed practice learning.</p>

OTHER PROPOSED REVISIONS ACROSS THE REQUIREMENTS

23. The Requirements for Social Work Training have been revised to update the language and terminology. All proposed changes to the requirements can be accessed at Appendix 1.

IMPLEMENTATION

24. The HEIs were consulted and contributed to the proposed implementation timescales in relation to the changes that would impact most on the delivery of qualifying awards. The implementation timescales allow for amendment, publication and publicity of the changes to the Framework for Social Work Education and longer periods where amendments to qualifying awards have to be considered.
25. The proposed implementation timescales are summarised as follows:

Requirement Subsection	Proposed timescale
E, H, I, J, K, L, N, Q, R, T	September 2025
M, O,	September 2027
S	September 2027*

(*) In relation to subsection S, it is proposed that as an interim measure, Practice Educators who are already practicing and are not Registered Social Workers must be supported in each Practice Placement by a Link Worker / Workplace Supervisor who is a qualified and registered Social Worker. This will commence in September 2025 and cease to be permitted in September 2027 when requirement S comes into effect.

CONSULTATION

26. The SSSC consulted and engaged with the HEIs, the Social Work Education Partnership forum (SWEP), and Social Work Scotland Learning and Development Sub-Committee. All partners support the proposed revisions to the requirements and plans for implementation.

RISKS

27. Developing and setting the standards for practice, setting the qualification requirements, and quality assuring the education and training are part of our regulatory function. There are principles criteria, established rules and requirements set around assessment and standards that we must adhere too. When the guidance allows, we take a proportionate approach, however

we are bound by the legislative framework that exists therefore we have a cautious risk appetite.

28. We are very conscious of the need to promote best practice whilst making recommendations that are manageable and can be implemented successfully, within timescales in the current, challenging landscape. A cautious risk appetite is prudent under current circumstances and decisions have been made in consultation with our partners on this basis. The implementation plan and interim measure outlined above provides a transitional period to allow for preparation and adaptation and has been broadly welcomed by partners.

IMPLICATIONS

Resourcing

29. Scottish Government provides funding for practice learning opportunities based on the number of days each student spends in placement. The SSSC disburse payment of the practice learning fee on behalf of Scottish Government. This cost is variable. The recommendations in this report may cause that cost to increase in some cases but will also result in a reduction in some other previously funded areas of practice learning (observational placements for example). The Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser chair SWEP and have been fully engaged in the revised proposals. There is no direct cost to the SSSC.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

30. We developed an Impact Assessment which forms a background paper to this report. There are no significant negative impacts which need to be considered. The Impact Assessment will remain under review during implementation of the changes.

CONCLUSION

31. Council is asked to approve the revised Requirements for Social Work Training and plans for implementation.