

2007/08

trends report

Annual review of trends in
qualifying social work training
in Scotland 2007/08



Scottish
Social Services
Council



trends report

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Introduction

Under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001¹ the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is responsible for the promotion of high standards of conduct and practice among social service workers and ensuring that high standards in their education and training are maintained.

As the regulatory body for social work qualifying training in Scotland, the SSSC has responsibility for quality assuring the 17 undergraduate and postgraduate social work degree courses² currently delivered by eight universities in Scotland. Whilst SSSC advisers monitor course delivery with the universities throughout the year, the formal monitoring also involves the universities completing an annual monitoring return for each approved course.

The annual monitoring return provides the SSSC with information to establish whether the course continues to be delivered in line with the **Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland**³, which includes the **Standards in Social Work Education** and the **Scottish Requirements for Social Work Training**, and the **Rules for Social Work Training**⁴. It is against this framework and these Rules that social work degree courses are approved by the SSSC. The information from the annual monitoring return can also be used to identify trends, common issues, and examples of successful innovation.

This report provides a profile of:

- who is applying for, and being admitted to, social work training
- the types of course being delivered and admissions onto these
- where practice learning opportunities are being undertaken
- how much funding is being spent on bursaries for postgraduate students
- how much funding is being spent providing practice learning opportunities for students
- information relating to student progression
- a baseline for establishing trends.

¹ Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, Scottish Parliament

² For ease of reference the term "social work degree" is used throughout this report and should be understood as encompassing the social work honours degree and equivalent postgraduate programmes

³ The Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland, Crown Copyright 2003, ISBN 0-7559-0652-7

⁴ The Rules for Social Work Training, Scottish Social Services Council, 2003

The people most likely to read this report will be academics, students, employers, practice teachers and qualified social workers, however others may also be interested.

This report is for the academic year 2007/08 but uses 2006/07 as a baseline for comparison of statistics and establishing trends. A similar report will be published annually with comment about emerging trends over a period of time.

Applications

In 2007/08, 4,182 applications to social work degree courses were made which is just over a two per cent decrease from 2006/07. However, this figure represents the number of applications rather than the number of people applying to social work courses; it should be noted that some people will apply to more than one course and therefore may be included more than once in these figures.

The number of applications made to postgraduate courses increased by more than three per cent in 2007/08 while the number of applications made to undergraduate courses decreased by almost five per cent.

Admissions

In 2007/08 721 students were admitted onto social work degree courses which slightly exceeded the target of 703 predicted by the universities. The target for 2006/07 was nearer this figure at 715, however, only 697 were admitted in that academic year. There is not a great difference between the target and actual figures however, and the figures do indicate a slight increase in the number of students admitted onto social work degree courses which has been the trend since the degree was introduced in 2004.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of admissions to each course in 2007/08.

Table 1

University	Course	2007/08 Admissions	
		Target	Actual
Robert Gordon University	BA (Hons) Social Work	65	85
	BA (Hons) Social Work RCC DL	36	24
	BA (Hons) Social Work DL	34	48
	PG Diploma/MSc Social Work	35	36
Glasgow Caledonian University	BA (Hons) Social Work	45	49
	MSc Social Work	32	34
University of the West of Scotland	BA (Hons) Social Work	40	39
University of Dundee	BA (Hons) Social Work	65	60
	MSc Social Work	40	37
University of Edinburgh	BSc (Hons) Social Work	32	30
	Masters Social Work	33	35
University of Stirling	BA (Hons) Social Work	23	28
	MSc PG Diploma	25	30
Glasgow School of Social Work	MA (Hons) Social Work	58	47
	MA (Hons) Social Work RCC	20	26
	Masters Social Work/PG Diploma Social Work	30	33
Open University in Scotland	BA (Hons) Social Work	90	80
Totals		703	721

Course providers are required, under the Rules for Social Work Training⁵, to have in place and operate arrangements to admit students with credit⁶, as required to do in accordance with the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework.

In 2007/08, 175 students gained admission with credit which is an increase on 2006/07. This includes a large number of students admitted onto distance learning and employment-based courses.

Routes chosen by students

Of the 17 social work degree courses, 11 are undergraduate courses and the remaining six are postgraduate. Undergraduate courses are mostly delivered full-time over a period of four years. There are some exceptions to this. Two of Robert Gordon University's courses are delivered on a distance learning basis, including their residential child care course which is funded by the Scottish Government through the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care. The other residential child care route funded by the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care is delivered by the Glasgow School of Social Work. The Open University's course is an employment-based route and students must be employed and sponsored by their employer to undertake this course.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of all students on social work courses admitted onto either the undergraduate or postgraduate routes in 2007/08.

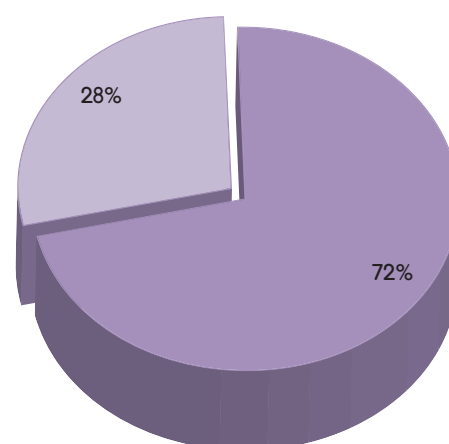
Figure 2 shows the percentage of students admitted onto employer sponsored, residential child care, and distance learning courses in 2007/08.

Postgraduate bursaries

On average 320 bursaries are made available for postgraduate social work degree students each year in Scotland and the funding is paid by the SSSC on behalf of the Scottish Government. The total funding awarded in 2007/08 was £2,511,738 which was a slight decrease on the amount awarded in 2006/07.

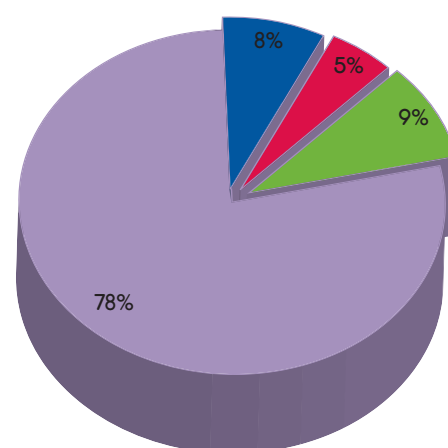
318 students applied for a postgraduate bursary to help fund their studies in 2007/08 and 287 were granted. 293 bursaries were granted in 2006/07.

Figure 1
Routes



■ Undergraduate
■ Postgraduate

Figure 2
Routes



■ Distance Learning Route
■ Residential Child Care Course
■ Employer Sponsored Route
■ Other

⁵ The Rules for Social Work Training, paragraph 6.1 (l), Scottish Social Services Council, 2003

⁶ Credit transfer is the process of recognising prior learning that has been credit rated in order to avoid duplication of learning. Further information can be found in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Handbook: User Guide; Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Quality Committee; 2009

Gender profile of admissions

Figure 3 shows the percentage of men and women admitted onto social work degree courses in 2007/08 and mirrors the split in previous years.

Historically more women than men have been attracted to social work education and this is something that universities are aware of and have been working on as part of the widening participation agenda. The number of men admitted to courses has increased slightly since the new degree started in 2004 and the percentage of men admitted onto social work degree courses is now comparable with the percentage of men working in social services as a whole⁷. If the number of male social workers is to be increased to be representative of the Scottish population, many more men need to be attracted into social work education in the future. Approximately 26 per cent of registered social workers who completed an equal opportunities form as part of the registration process are men⁸.

Age profile of admissions

Figure 4 compares the age profile of students admitted onto courses in 2007/08 and 2006/07. While the number of admissions in the 16-24 year age band is increasing, the number of 25-34 year olds being admitted is decreasing. This may be because the age barrier that used to apply for entry to social work courses no longer applies and that school leavers are more aware of this now.

There are far fewer people aged 45 years and over being admitted to social work education. It is known that a large percentage of the current social services workforce is aged 45 and over⁹ and almost 50 per cent of registered social workers who completed an equal opportunities form as part of the registration process are over this age¹⁰. This has implications for workforce and succession planning as workers near retirement age.

Ethnicity profile of admissions

Five per cent of students admitted onto social work degree courses have a black or minority ethnic background and this figure has remained relatively consistent since the degree was introduced in 2004. Figure 5 shows the breakdown of this split with the majority being Black or Black British. One per cent of admitted students are Asian or Asian British and a small number are Chinese or Chinese British or of mixed race.

Figure 3

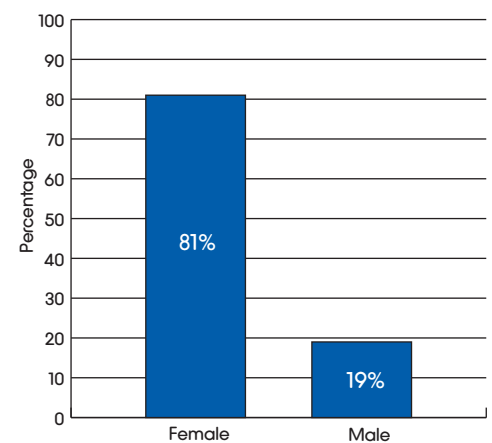
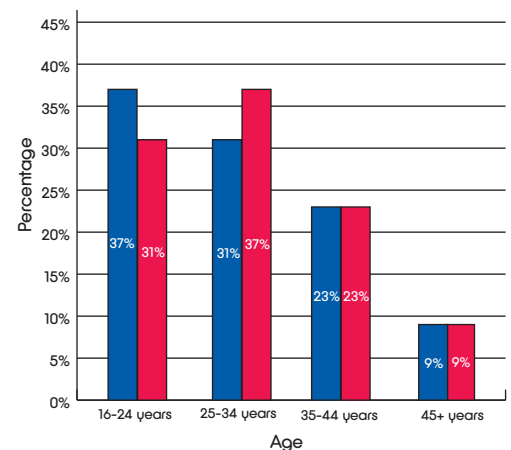


Figure 4



■ 2007-08

■ 2006-07

⁷ Scottish Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics, 2007

⁸ SSSC Social Work Register, December 2009

⁹ Scottish Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics, 2007

¹⁰ SSSC Social Work Register, December 2009

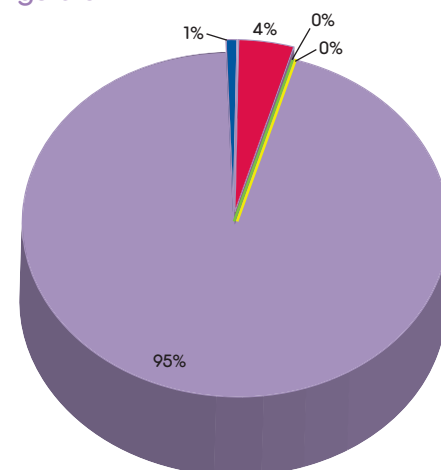
The 2001 Scottish Census¹¹ highlighted that 3.5 per cent of the Scottish population comes from a “non-white and any other white background”. On the face of it therefore it could be stated that as five per cent of students admitted to social work degree courses are from a black or minority ethnic background, that this group is adequately represented within social work education. However, further analysis of the figures is required to ascertain if the group is represented sufficiently on a geographical basis, across all programmes, across all cohorts, and to ascertain the number of international students admitted onto courses.

Disability profile of admissions

As disclosure of disability is optional, it is difficult to put a precise figure on the number of disabled students admitted to social work degree courses. Four per cent of students admitted in 2007/08 disclosed that they had a disability, which is a decrease from 2006/07 when six per cent disclosed one. We know from the annual monitoring of courses, however, that disability is not always disclosed at the application and admission stage, and can sometimes be disclosed, although not always, at a later stage in the degree programme. Work is ongoing with the universities to encourage students to disclose disabilities that might have an effect on their studies so that appropriate support can be put in place. Under three per cent of registered social workers who completed an equal opportunities form as part of the registration process have disclosed a disability¹².

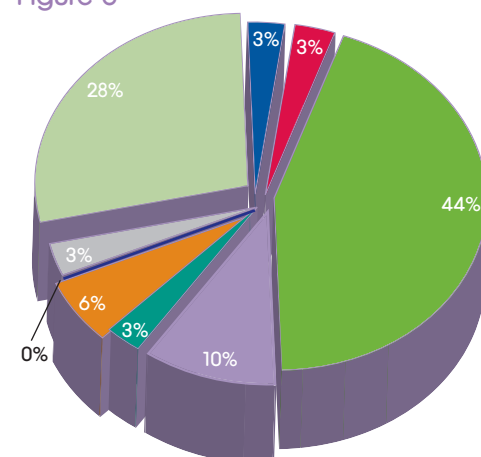
Figure 6 shows the types of disability that are disclosed by students. Dyslexia is the most common type of disability disclosed.

Figure 5



- Asian or Asian British
- Black or Black British
- Chinese or Chinese British
- Mixed
- White

Figure 6



- Blind/partial sight
- Deaf/partial hearing
- Dyslexia/other learning disability
- Mental health
- Mobility/wheelchair user
- Multiple disabilities
- Need for personal care
- Unseen disability
- Other

¹¹ Scottish Census 2001, General Register Office for Scotland

¹² SSSC Social Work Register, December 2009

Practice learning

The SSSC pays out the practice learning daily fee on behalf of the Scottish Government. This daily fee is intended to support the provision of practice learning opportunities and is paid by the universities to practice learning providers such as local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and private sector organisations. Further details of the daily fee can be found in **Confidence in Practice Learning**¹³ and the **Revised guidelines on funding for practice learning: financial year 2008/09**¹⁴.

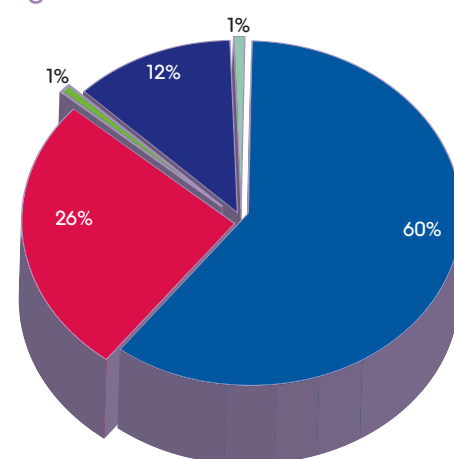
The total practice learning funding paid out by the SSSC in 2007/08 was £1,963,129 which is a slight decrease on the 2006/07 spend, but by less than one per cent. A £212,937 administration fee was disbursed which is used by the universities to administer the process and co-ordinate practice learning activities.

The total number of practice learning days undertaken by students in 2007/08 was 96,826 which is a slight decrease (less than four per cent) on the 2006/07 total.

Figure 7 shows in which sectors these days were undertaken. There was a slight decrease in 2007/08 on the number of days undertaken in local authority settings, but an increase in the number of days undertaken in voluntary and private social service organisations. 12 per cent of days undertaken in 2007/08 and 2006/07 were supported by Funded Practice Teaching Units (FPTU) which were provided with additional core funding to support their activities. These units are no longer in operation and it is expected that the number of days previously accommodated by them will in future be supported by agencies in the statutory, voluntary or private sector.

The majority of students started their practice learning opportunities on time in 2007/08 and the SSSC has, over this year, approved five courses to deliver the Practice Learning Qualification (Social Services) Stage 3, which helps to ensure future supply of quality-assured practice learning to the social work degree programmes. 73 practice learning opportunities were delayed in this year, some by as much as seven weeks. The most common reasons were practice learning opportunities and Practice Teachers not being available on time. The number of late starts continues to be monitored closely by the SSSC and discussions are ongoing with universities and employers to understand what improved planning is in place to ensure that students do not suffer delays.

Figure 7



- LA days
- Voluntary days
- Private days
- FPTU days
- Other days

¹³ Confidence in Practice Learning, Scottish Executive, January 2004

¹⁴ Revised guidelines on funding for practice learning: financial year 2008/09, Scottish Government, 2008

Profile of progression of students undertaking social work courses in 2007/08

Progression rates were good across programmes in 2007/08. Key reasons for withdrawals were related to personal and family circumstances, financial circumstances and ill health. 89 students withdrew from their studies which is a slight increase on 2006/07. The number of students failing their course or a part of it also increased. However, the number of students who deferred their studies for a period of time decreased by over 50 per cent from 2006/07 to 2007/08. The number of assessment decisions referred remained the same in 2007/08 compared to 2006/07 and four students had their studies terminated.

Of the 466 students who completed the degree in 2007/08, 254 were at undergraduate level and 212 at postgraduate.

Conclusion and key points

The profile of the applications and admissions to social work education continues to be explored and is being taken forward under the widening participation agenda. The SSSC will work with universities and other stakeholders to increase the representation of under represented groups in social work education.

2007/08 saw steady progress across all social work degree courses and the first graduates from the four-year undergraduate course.

The provision of practice learning continues to be a high priority and will be monitored closely in light of some late starts.

As well as monitoring the provision of social work degree courses, the SSSC will work with key stakeholders to identify areas of the course that could be enhanced and will work with the universities to put these enhancements in place.



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