

Lancaster
University



Social Work
Undergraduate Degrees 2027



Welcome

We are proud of our standing as one of the best places to study social work in the UK, highly rated for the quality of our teaching, our outstanding record for graduate employment, and for the impact of our research and engagement. We are also proud to have been commended by Social Work England for our personal and collaborative approach to working with students on placement, such as individual student support whilst on placement, provided by highly experienced social workers.

Whilst providing an exceptional student experience is our priority, we also have a very real involvement in influencing policy and practice. Our aim is to inspire a new generation of qualified professionals to engage with and steer future social policy and practice.

Underpinning everything we do is our founding principle of valuing people, and promoting human rights and social justice.

At Lancaster, you will learn alongside enthusiastic lecturers, practitioners, carers and people who have lived experience of social work services. We aim to enable you to develop a critical but reflective approach to understanding social work in contemporary society, and your practice learning placements are an excellent way of getting to know the role of a social worker and gaining hands-on experience.

We look forward to welcoming you to the positive environment that we provide at Lancaster, and supporting you in achieving your career goals.



A social work degree that is reflective and critical.



Entry requirements

In addition to the academic entry requirements listed below, all applicants should have some experience of working with people in the community, for example, volunteering at a food bank, being a peer mentor in school, work experience in a residential unit or placement as part of a BTEC. There is no minimum required number of hours but it is important to explain what you have learned from your experience and how this has shaped your decision to apply for a degree in social work.

Interviews

Students meeting the entry requirements are invited for an interview and a short written test (which is a requirement for all social work degrees in England). This informal interview (which can be done online or in person depending on applicant preference) will provide an opportunity to meet our friendly staff team and chat to current students.

Contextual offers

We encourage you to read more about our contextual offer scheme, which looks at particular circumstances or challenges you may have faced during your education and may mean lower entry grades.

Check our website
for more detailed
information



Open days

All applicants are welcome to join us at one of the open days hosted by the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, where there will be an opportunity to meet some of our friendly staff and current students.

Qualifying programme

This degree is approved by Social Work England, the social work regulator, which means that our graduates are eligible to apply to join the professional social work register.

Degree title	Degree (Hons)	UCAS code	Course duration (years)	Typical A level offer
Social Work	BA	L500	3	BBB



Made for *learning*

The programme is full time, and comprises of time spent in lectures, seminars and workshops, as well as independent study and time on placement, where you will be expected to work the agency's hours.

Our programme uses a range of teaching and assessment approaches including:

- Workshops
- Lectures
- Seminars
- Group work
- Social work placements
- Action learning
- Skills development workshops
- Practitioner-led sessions
- Independent research study
- Written assignments (essays, blogs, case studies)
- Compilation of a practice portfolio
- Presentations

We also use our dedicated skills lab and mock court to enable students to practise communication and court skills in realistic environments.



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Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge; social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

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Global definition of the social work profession, as approved by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work in July 2014.



for research quality in Social Work

Times Good University

Guide 2026



Skills *practice* facilities

You'll be able to practise the social work skills you are learning in a range of facilities and learning opportunities.

Guest lecturers

Here at Lancaster, we invite those with lived experience of social work services to contribute to teaching as guest lecturers. You'll hear first-hand their experiences of being supported by a social worker, how social work impacted their lives and be able to reflect on the significance of your learning in real life contexts.

Skills lab

This space is equipped to look and feel like a real home environment. You'll be able to practise the communication skills you're learning in your academic studies in a practical context. The room is set up with audio-visual recording devices to replay and reflect on the way you handled a simulated situation. You'll learn quickly and enhance your approach through this reflective activity that mimics a real-life interaction as a social worker.

Mock court room

On campus we have a fully equipped mock court room. The court room features some of the same technology found in HM Courts and Tribunal System.

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*I've felt
supported
and
welcomed
from
the very
beginning.*
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Leon, second year

BA Hons Social Work

Studying social work at Lancaster has honestly been such a meaningful experience for me. As a mature student, I was a bit nervous at first, but I've felt supported and welcomed from the very beginning. The staff have always been approachable and understanding – there's a real sense that someone's always there if you need help, whether it's with uni work or just needing someone to talk to.

One of the most powerful moments so far was during the Compassion Project presentations – I heard the stories of two female refugees, one from Syria and one from Ukraine. Their experiences really hit me emotionally, and it reminded me exactly why I chose to go into social work in the first place.

The Contemporary Social Issues module has also been a big one for me. Some of the topics we covered were tough, but they really opened my eyes and confirmed that I'm on the right path. I've also found the mindfulness exercises in the Social Work Practice module super helpful for managing stress and staying focused.



Gain *real-world* experience

Practice learning placements

Practice learning is at the heart of social work education. At Lancaster, we provide 170 days of placement experience and 30 skills days, to enable you to integrate your knowledge, skills and values in a real-world practice-setting.

We have very positive relationships with a variety of placement providers both in the statutory and voluntary sector, primarily within Lancashire and Cumbria. Statutory placements are organised with Lancashire County Council, Blackpool, Blackburn with Darwen and Westmorland and Furness Council. Our Practice Learning Team are committed to developing and maintaining those relationships and have entered into partnership agreements with all of our placement providers to help this process.

Placements are supported by placement tutors who are experienced social workers, and during practice by qualified social work practitioners who have undertaken additional training to become practice educators. The Practice Learning Team work hard to ensure there is a good supply of placements and do offer students the opportunity to state an area of their interest for practice. All students will have the opportunity to meet the requirements of Social Work England across their first and final placements.



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The course has emphasised resilience and emotional awareness.

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Grayce, final year

BA Hons Social Work

In my studies I have really been enjoying all the topics covered in Contemporary Social Issues – a module that is compulsory for social work students. The module explores a wide range of social issues and encourages you to think critically about the structural and societal factors that impact individuals and communities. It has been particularly engaging because it links theory to real-world situations, helping me to better understand the complexities of social work practice. I have especially enjoyed learning about feminism and nationalism.

I have also learned the importance of reflecting on my practice, as one of the assignments I have completed so far was a reflective report aiding me to recognise what has gone well, finding areas for improvement, and continuously developing as a practitioner. Alongside this, the course has emphasised resilience and emotional awareness, which are essential when supporting individuals through challenging circumstances. Together, these skills have helped prepare me for the realities of social work and have given me a strong foundation as I move towards my future career.

The most valuable aspect of my Lancaster experience so far is without question the people, I have met people that I know I will have in my life forever. The bonds you form simply by moving out of your comfort zone are stronger than I ever would have expected.

Staff *profiles*

Lancaster University is a leading research intensive university. As a social work student you will benefit from being taught by academic staff who are leaders in their chosen fields.

From the study of child protection, through to mental distress, substance use, disability, poverty and migration; academics are shaping policy and practice nationally and internationally. The work of our staff can be accessed through books, articles and government reports that are often featured in the media. As well as undertaking teaching and research, many members of staff also serve as expert advisors within government departments, the courts, leading charities and service user organisations.



Dr Cath Hill

I completed my social work education at Lancaster University and was employed by the local authority where I did my final placement. I worked in Children's Services at Lancashire County Council, specialising in child protection and youth justice, and found my passion for working with young people who have experienced trauma. I feel privileged to have returned to the University as part of the teaching team, where I'm able to draw on my practice experience in lectures and to use my social work skills as part of my research and when lobbying the government and international agencies such as the United Nations.

My research focuses on support services for children and young people after disasters, with a particular focus on young survivors of terrorism. I lead on the Bee the Difference Project in partnership with the National Emergencies Trust, which advocates for consistent, trauma informed services for young people. Young peoples' opinions and lived experience can be overlooked when developing services – I am determined to ensure that their voices are heard and that they are able to shape and contribute to future policies.



Shehzad Malik

I am a registered social worker and counsellor with over 35 years of experience with adults and young people. I worked with problem substance users in the NHS and voluntary sector for 15 years. Before joining the team here at Lancaster, I was a therapist in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Team at another university.

I have a lifelong interest in mindfulness; as part of my Masters in Mindfulness Based Approaches, I researched its use with problem substance users. This dovetails with my passion for wellbeing and resilience, and feeds into my teaching and therapeutic work.

I currently teach the Social Work Practice 1 module which runs through the first year. This provides foundation skills in preparation for first placement. I consider self-care and resilience as essential professional and employability skills and embed these throughout my teaching.

I passionately believe in bringing heart into the classroom and into our work. This is consonant with our commitment to relationship based and trauma informed practice.



Dr Joanna Kostka

I lead modules grounded in anti-oppressive practice, co-designed with people with lived experience, and mentor students to develop research that actually matters – research that questions, confronts, and changes.

I work at the intersection of social justice, research, and policy, with a focus on Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller communities. My research challenges the structural barriers these communities face – particularly in accessing social care – and centres the voices and knowledge of those most affected. I use Participatory Action Research to collaborate with communities, working toward epistemic justice and more accountable systems.

I'm also Director of Engagement at the Centre for Child and Family Justice Research, where I connect academics, frontline practitioners, and communities to drive policy change. From international partnerships to grassroots training, my work spans courtrooms, care systems, classrooms, and European institutions.

Whether I'm testifying in Parliament, designing culturally responsive training for social workers, or co-creating toolkits with Roma advocates, the throughline is always the same: real participation, real impact.



Social Work

BA Hons, Full time

Advocating for the human rights of people who face a diverse range of social challenges is what a social work education is all about. On this course you will get to explore the impact of contemporary social problems and learn how social workers fight for social justice.

Your first year lays the broad foundations for understanding social work as both a vocational and academic discipline. From a practice perspective, you will have the opportunity to understand the role of a social worker, develop important communication skills, learn about analysing social work scenarios and the importance of self-reflection. You will also consider the social problems that lead to social work intervention and the importance of critical thinking and anti-oppressive practice.

In your second year you get the opportunity to take what you have learned in the lecture room and experience social work in the real world. Working alongside experienced social workers, you will undertake a 70-day placement, where you can develop your social work skills. Bringing what you have learned back to the university, you will then deepen your knowledge by focusing on social work with children and their families and think about how you relate what you learned in practice to theory.

In your final year you continue to develop your specialist knowledge, learning about social work law and policy relating to safeguarding adults and those who experience mental distress. You will develop your intellectual and practice independence as you undertake a 100-day placement and explore a specific social problem relating to the setting you are working in. Finishing with placement means you are ready to be snapped up by employers.

Enhancing your curriculum

We continually review and enhance our course curricula to ensure we are delivering the best possible learning experience, and to make sure that the subject knowledge and transferable skills you develop will prepare you for your future. Information within this publication with respect to courses and modules is correct at the time of publication, and the University will make every reasonable effort to offer courses and modules as advertised. In some cases, changes may be necessary and may result in new modules or some modules and combinations being unavailable, for example as a result of student feedback, timetabling, staff changes and new research.

Year 1

Core Modules

Social Work Practice 1

Developing your understanding of the social worker role, this module will help you prepare for direct practice in your first placement, which takes place at the start of year two. As a central focus, you will learn the essential listening, communication and relationship skills for a role in social work, whilst developing the self-care and resilience skills that are essential for your employability.

Contemporary Social Issues 1: Power, Inequality and Everyday Life

Explore how ideas about success, poverty, gender, race and belonging are formed, challenged and changed over time. You will connect key ideas directly to contemporary life, from media narratives and political debates to everyday experiences. You will be encouraged to question taken for granted assumptions, recognise less visible forms of power, and understand how social problems come to be defined in particular ways.

Contemporary Social Issues 2: Social Issues in a Changing World

This module examines the complexities of the modern world, looking at issues such as the cost of living, housing insecurity, racism, gender inequality, mental health, digital harms and the environmental crisis. It explores why some problems gain public attention while others stay hidden, how media and political narratives shape understanding and why responses are often more complicated than they appear.

Optional Module

You will choose one optional module from subjects such as criminology, sociology or media and cultural studies.



Year 2

Core Modules

Placement 1

Your first placement will give you the opportunity to work in a social work or social care setting for 70 days. Our partner agencies offer you access to a wide range of placements including work with local authorities, health trusts, education providers, charities and other independent sector agencies. This experience will give you the opportunity to build fantastic working relationships and develop strong communication skills.

Social Work Practice 2

Building on skills from your first year and 70-day placement, this module is designed to continue the development of your social work knowledge, skills and values, essential for your future career in social work. You will be introduced to more social work theories and supported to think about how they may be used in practice. This will build your thinking skills, as well as develop your critical thinking and reflective skills.

Social Work with Children, Young People and Families

Join us as we learn how to keep children and young people safe and support their wellbeing in families and communities. We will consider the social, economic, cultural and other factors that bring children and young people into contact with formal services, including the criminal justice system.

This degree is the route into professional social work for applicants without a first degree. It is both an academic undergraduate degree and a professional qualification in social work, awarded by Lancaster University.



Year 3

Core Modules

Social Work Practice 3

This builds on your learning and prepares you for your final placement. You will engage in practical activities in a safe and supported environment to develop advanced communication skills. Topics covered will include working with risk, working with reluctance, ethical stress and moral courage.

Mental Distress, Disability and Decision-Making in Adult Social Work

In the third year, you will learn how to apply relevant law and policy to social work with adults with varied needs. You will be equipped to bring a human rights focus to your work with adults and their families, as well as evaluating existing legislation and policy. Using social models of disability and mental distress, you will gain a firm understanding of stigma and inequalities.

Placement 2

Your final placement is 100 days. You will have opportunities to manage a case load and work with varied professionals. You will also undertake formal needs and risk assessments within legal frameworks and organisational policies. By the end of your placement, you will produce a placement portfolio that evidences the skills, knowledge and behaviours you have learnt to be ready for practice as a registered social worker.

Careers and *employability*

Whether you are looking to become a social worker, or want to be engaged in continuing professional development after working in the field, we support you in developing and using your professional judgment in the complex situations that social workers face.

Modern social work is a fast-paced, dynamic profession that encompasses many different organisational and practice contexts, including:

- Statutory and non-statutory practice
- Independent, charitable and voluntary sector work
- Children and families intervention
- Child protection
- Adult and older adult social care
- Criminal justice and youth offending
- Mental health and safeguarding adults
- Substance use
- Work with refugee, asylum seekers and immigrant communities

Additional opportunities are available for social workers in broader contexts including:

- Management
- Fundraising
- Campaigning and advocacy
- Policy development and analysis
- International development and aid
- Research and teaching

Entering the profession

Most of our graduates go on to careers in social work. We are very proud of the high employability levels of our graduating students and love to see them going on to become leaders in the social work field.

A head start

The benefit of completing your degree directly after your final placement is that you'll be undertaking statutory work and managing a case load whilst you're applying for jobs. This works as a great boost for your confidence, competence and employability.

Professional accreditation

Our social work degree is approved by the regulatory body, Social Work England.

Specialist careers support

Each year we typically hold a social work careers event; this is open for students in each year group but is especially aimed at third year students. This is a great opportunity to meet with local employers and alumni, who can help you prepare for applying for jobs and commencing your careers.







lancaster.ac.uk/social-work

The information provided in this publication relates primarily to 2027 entry to the University and every effort has been taken to ensure the information is correct at the time of printing in June 2026. The University will use all reasonable effort to deliver the course as described but the University reserves the right to make changes after going to print. You are advised to consult our website at: lancaster.ac.uk/study for up-to-date information before you submit your application. Further legal information may be found at: lancaster.ac.uk/compliance/legalnotice.