



Post Qualifying Awards in Social Work

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Will work undertaken on the old PQ programme be recognised in the new framework?	The GSCC has confirmed that the PQSW will be regarded as the <i>professional</i> equivalent of the new specialist award. Those with a PQSW will be able to apply to Higher Specialist or Advanced programmes but may need to do an extra piece of work to evidence the ability to study at the higher <i>academic</i> level.
2	Are the new PQ programmes just for social workers?	No, other professionals in the health and social care field can also study on these programmes and will receive an academic award appropriate to the level of study. However, unlike social workers, they will not gain the PQ award in social work from the GSCC.
3	The new awards are at 3 levels. How will it be decided what level of award someone should study for?	The level of entry onto a PQ programme will usually be determined by the level you are working at as a social worker. You need to be employed in a position where you are able to evidence work of sufficient range and complexity to meet the programme requirements. In addition, you will need to demonstrate that you have the academic ability to study at the various levels.
4	What qualifications do I need in order to apply to study for a specialist award?	Anyone with a social work qualification recognised by GSCC could study for a specialist award.
5	I already have a social work degree. What qualification would I get?	A university may offer a Specialist award at both graduate and post graduate levels, in which case if you already have a degree, you could be awarded a Post Graduate Diploma (120 credits).

6	I have a Masters in Social Work. Can I go straight in at Higher Specialist level?	Higher Specialist is for those whose job role is to make complex judgements and discharge high levels of responsibility for the coordination of social support and the management of risk. Generally speaking, that would be senior practitioners or team managers. If you are newly qualified, you would do a specialist award first to demonstrate you have consolidated, extended and deepened initial professional competence in a specialist context.
7	I have a DipSW. What qualification would I get?	By studying for the specialist award, you could achieve a Bachelors degree. Some senior social workers or team managers who do not have a degree may study at Higher Specialist level. This could lead to academic credits at Masters level.
8	How could I gain a full Masters degree?	A full Masters degree is worth 180 credits, so you would need to study at higher specialist or advanced level to gain the credits. If you have gained a Higher Specialist award (120 credits at post-graduate level), you would need a further 60 credits to reach the 180 credits required. One way would be to undertake a module in research techniques and carry out a research project.
9	What about experienced social work practitioners who have not studied for many years, or who did not come through an academic route. Will they be disadvantaged?	Routes can be found which will be appropriate for people returning to study, e.g. a bridging module onto a specialist or higher specialist award. All applicants for a PQ programme will be assessed and advised on the most appropriate route for them.
10	Will my employer second me?	Some employers link the PQ with career progression and will consider sponsoring students to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake their work most effectively.
11	I'm currently self-employed and working as a freelance social worker. Is there any funding available for me?	Yes. You may qualify to apply for a Bursary from Skills for Care. Application forms are available on the Skills for Care Eastern website (www.skillsforcare-eastern.org.uk)

12	Is PQ a requirement for qualified social workers?	As a social worker registered with the GSCC, you need to demonstrate continuous professional development. This could be met in ways other than PQ, so PQ is not a requirement of CPD.
13	Will the fees be the same at Bachelors and Masters levels?	Masters level will cost more. Some international students may be charged at higher rates whatever the level of study.
14	Will I be allowed to study within work time?	Each employer will decide whether they will grant study time and how much. However, most students will be expected to undertake a significant amount of study in their own time.
15	I'm not currently working as a social worker. Can I still do a specialist award?	Yes, but you would need to create an opportunity to work in a social work setting in order to meet the practice portfolio element of the programme.
16	I have a consolidation module at specialist level from a university outside of the eastern region. Will I be able to APL this onto a local programme?	Your work will be matched against the learning outcomes of the consolidation module at the local university and credit-rated accordingly, but you may need to do an extra piece of work.
17	I have completed a number of in-house training courses. Will they count towards a PQ?	All learning is useful and the knowledge gained from in-house courses could contribute to PQ course assignments. Discussions are currently taking place to see whether some in-house training courses should be academically credit-rated. If they are, then they may be able to be APLd towards a PQ award.
18	I work with learning disabled adults. Which programme is suitable for my specialism?	The Adults pathway at Specialist level would be the starting point. The taught programme covers the commonalities across all adult service user groups and the practice portfolio is where the learning disability specialism is demonstrated.

19	Will all the programmes be based in universities?	The delivery of courses is the responsibility of universities. Some programmes are available as distance learning or e-learning materials, some are university based, some will be a mixture.
20	If I obtain a PQ award, will I benefit from my employer?	Each employer will have its own arrangements regarding career progression or salary enhancements as a result of PQ.
21	I am returning to practice after some years and have been qualified for more than two years. Will I need to do the consolidation module?	If you do not already have PQ1, you will need to undertake the consolidation module to access the specialist award in order to demonstrate consolidation and deepening of initial competence in a specialist context.
22	I have a consolidation module gained when working in adult services and am now moving to children's services. How can I progress to a specialist award in child care?	You need to undertake a child care consolidation module first, because it is set in a specialist service delivery context. However, some universities are offering a 'conversion' module, so you may not have to complete the whole of the consolidation module again.
23	I have a Practice Teaching Award. How does this fit into the new framework?	If you gained your PTA after 1996, you can APL it into a Specialist or Higher Specialist award. Practice teaching awards dated pre 1996 may not be recognised in the new framework.
24	Why is there no consolidation module in the mental health programme?	Because the mental health programme (AMHP) is at Higher Specialist level (equivalent to the ASW programme). It is aimed at experienced practitioners in mental health services, including those from different professional backgrounds.
25	How long will it take to achieve an award at specialist level?	Usually two years, based on part-time study.
26	Is there a fast-track route for obtaining the specialist award, e.g. a break from work to do it within one year?	It would be difficult to take time out of work to study as you would need to evidence the work-based practice whilst undertaking the course.

27	Is there a time limit within which the specialist award must be completed?	Yes. The maximum time to complete the award is 5 years. If you have completed the consolidation module, you would need to re-join within 3 years in order to complete the remainder within the time limit.
28	Will all the universities be offering all the awards?	Unlikely. The number of programmes available will be influenced by the number of students signing up for courses. Most programmes require a cohort of 15 students to make them viable, therefore there may be joint arrangements between universities across the region where numbers are small.
29	There are 3 levels of award in the new framework. Do I have to complete the specialist award before I can access the higher specialist award?	Experienced staff can access higher specialist and advanced awards without undertaking the specialist award, if they can demonstrate their professional and academic competence at this level.
30	What is the process for applying to do an award?	You will need to speak to your employer, particularly if you are looking for secondment. You will also need to identify suitable programmes at universities. Some universities have modules available at different times of the year and you should apply within their timeframe.

KEY

PQ	Post Qualification	APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
GSCC	General Social Care Council	PQSW	Post Qualifying Award in Social Work
DipSW	Diploma in Social Work	PTA	Practice Teaching Award
CQSW	Certificate of Qualification in Social Work	ASW	Approved Social Worker
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	AMHP	Approved Mental Health Practitioner

More FAQs can be found on the General Social Care Council website