



Subject Benchmark Statement: Social Policy

The Basics

This summary is designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the Subject Benchmark Statement for **Social Policy** for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries, of subject discipline.

This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); accessibility and the needs of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); enterprise and entrepreneurship; and the impact of generative artificial intelligence on the subject.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.



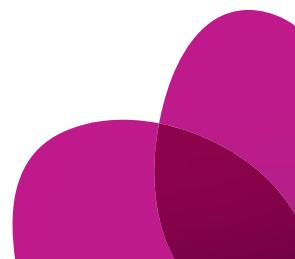
Why study a degree in Social Policy?

Social Policy is distinctive in its subject matter, as it critically examines policies and practices through the lens of human welfare, often underpinned by the critical interrogation of social need, social justice, and resource distribution. The subject aims to identify, describe, and explain social problems.

Social Policy does not stop at analysis of current interventions to improve human welfare but also advocates for alternative policy approaches. Consequently, Social Policy is both an academic as well as an applied and problem-oriented subject: bridging the gap between academic theory and policy practice.

To this end, Social Policy draws on a range of other academic subjects to be applied to its core focus on human needs and welfare. Social Policy scrutinizes the governmental and non-governmental division and allocation of financial, in-kind, and informal welfare resources in society. Social Policy critically examines the ways that this division and allocation directly and indirectly improve or harm the human welfare conditions of populations and groups.

This includes a particular focus on visible and invisible divisions in society that can predetermine the outcomes of policy, such as class, gender, sex, race/ethnicity, age, disability, and sexual orientation. While Social Policy is concerned with analysing the role of states in providing welfare systems, the scope of inquiry has always been much broader and incorporating the roles of individuals, families, commercial organisations and community and voluntary sectors in providing welfare. As such the study of Social Policy encompasses welfare states, but also the broader welfare systems and organisations involved in the delivery of welfare.





What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Social Policy?

Social Policy teaching in the UK is situated in local, national, international, and global contexts, with students acquiring insights into:

- the features of the welfare systems of the UK and its devolved nations
- cross-national differences and commonalities in social policy responses through comparative perspectives (devolved and international)
- global dimensions of social policy and their impact on the national and local level
- the consequences of social policy interventions for the welfare of individuals and social groups
- the application of this knowledge to different fields of social policy, such as, but not limited to: Crime and Criminal Justice; Digital and Technology, Education; Eco-social policy; Family and Childhood; Health and Social Care; Housing and Urban Regeneration; Income Maintenance and Social Security (including Pensions); Migration; Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion; Work, Employment, and Labour Markets.

Students of Social Policy use a range of learning methods, including:

- critical reading of a wide range of texts, including documents, monographs, scholarly articles, statistics, newspapers, textbooks, and sources on the internet
- independent research using both primary and/or secondary sources and appropriate methods of enquiry
- group discussion for communicating ideas and presenting their own work in a variety of formats, including, for example, debates, case studies, role plays and simulations
- contact with policy makers, professionals, and interest groups as well as with service users or organisations representing them and their 'lived experience' of social policy in a variety of settings, and through visits, speakers, websites, public events, and experiential learning such as internships, placements or action research for organisations and community groups
- where suitable offer opportunities to students to attend webinars and other events to encourage their engagement and participation in the wider development and the subject.



How are students assessed?

Assessments (both formative and summative) ought to be accessible and inclusive through the coherent implementation of the following principles.

- The use of varied types of assessments across modules.
- The provision of alternative assessment formats for students with support plans.
- Consistent accessibility checks for assessment tasks.
- The use of clear marking criteria, if possible, including rubrics.
- Measures to develop assessment literacy throughout the teaching period.
- Students should be supported to complete assessments with competing deadline.
- Monitoring of award gaps to develop interventions if necessary.



Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold, typical, very good and excellent standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours and/or Master's degree in **Social Policy** are outlined on **pages 22-27** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on page 30 of the Statement.

Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as an expert quality body on behalf of the higher education sector.

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