

Northern Ireland



# **Guidance on Individual Practice Development Days for the Practice Learning Requirements for the Degree in Social Work**



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# 1. Introduction

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council Practice Learning Requirements for the Degree in Social Work (Revised August 2010) specify that there are 15 days to be used for individual practice development. These days are in addition to current teaching time, linked to the curriculum and structured to meet the learning outcomes for Practice Development Days.

## 2. Aim and Objectives

### **Aim:**

To encourage students to take personal responsibility for their own professional development through participation in a range of individual practice development opportunities.

### **Objectives:**

- To enable students to address gaps in learning which are not already addressed within the course modules
- To provide opportunities for students to meet personal development needs not already met within other course modules
- To assist students in developing their knowledge, skills and/or values in the areas they feel least confident in
- To encourage students to be responsible for their own learning; to learn the importance of continuous professional development and to develop a commitment to life-long learning
- To give students the opportunity to be creative and innovative in their learning

## 3. Learning Outcomes

Individual Practice Development Days (PDDs) will develop students' knowledge and understanding of:

- The social work role
- The range of communication skills social workers use in practice
- The perspectives of service users and carers
- The organisational context of social work
- Social work as a professional activity

## 4. Underpinning Principles

- A holistic learning approach underpins the use of Individual PDDs
- Students will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and development
- Identification of Individual PDDs will be student-led and self-directed whilst at the same time being supported and coordinated by academic staff
- Students will be expected to adhere to the Social Care Council Code of Practice for Social Work Students when undertaking Individual PDDs
- Individual PDDs must be planned in a manner which enables the student to manage other aspects of their course effectively and which minimises the risk of them being put under undue pressure – in other words, the limitations on flexibility in terms of time and other commitments will need to be recognised

## 5. Requirements

All students are required to complete 15 Individual Practice Development Days (PDD) (equivalent of 90 hours -1 day = 6 hours and ½ day = 3 hours). The PDD's can be grouped into area specific blocks e. g., 3 different types of PDD over blocks of 5 days or 5 different types of PDDs over blocks of 3 days. Areas could include: paid work or voluntary experience; reading and on-line activities; self-care & resilience; organised lectures etc. Students can use up to 5 days of existing paid or voluntary social care work as long as learning in relation to social work is evidenced.

The requirements for each route to the degree in social work are outlined below;

### Degree in Social Work Route

#### 3 Year Undergraduate Route (UGR)



### Requirements

- Year 1 (Level 1) – 10 days (60 hours) to be completed. 5 days will normally be organised by the university and 5 days will be student-led.
- Year 2 (Level 2) – 5 days (30 hours) to be completed. These days should be completed following the first practice learning opportunity (PLO) and should address some of the learning needs identified at the end of the first PLO in preparation for the second PLO

## **Degree in Social Work Route**

### **2 Year Relevant Graduate Route (RGR)**



## **Requirements**

- Year 1 (Level 2) - 10 days (60 hours) to be completed. Some of these days may be organised by the university.
- Year 2 (Level 3) – 5 days (30 hours) to be completed. These days should be completed following the first practice learning opportunity (PLO) and should address some of the learning needs identified at the end of the first PLO in preparation for the second PLO.

## **6. Recording and Monitoring of Individual Practice Development Days (PDDs)**

Students will record details of their Individual PDDs in their Personal and Professional Development Workbook (PPDW)/Reflective Practice Log<sup>1</sup> using the following headings;

- 1. Number of Days/Hours Claimed**
- 2. Brief Description of Activity Undertaken**
- 3. Key Learning from this Activity**
- 4. Further Learning/Development Needs Identified as a Result of Undertaking this Activity**

Further learning and development needs which students identify as a result of their participation in Individual PDD activity can be incorporated into their Individual Learning Plan (ILP)<sup>2</sup>. Students will be encouraged to use their record of and reflection on their Individual PDDs, along with their PPDW/Reflective Practice Log, to assist them in developing their ILP over the course of their studies and in identifying their learning needs in the Student Transcript /Summary of Learning for their assessed year in employment (AYE).

The use of Individual PDDs should be discussed with the student's personal tutor to ensure links with their individual learning and development needs and the learning outcomes for Individual PDDs (see Section 3 above). The student's recording of each Individual PDD activity should be shared with their personal tutor and should be dated and signed by both the student and the tutor.

Personal tutors will keep a record of the number of Individual PDDs completed by each individual student in their personal tutor group, (Appendix 1). This record needs to be signed by Tutors by the final day of PLO, and will be placed on the student's personal file at the end of their studies. Academic institutions should



ensure this process is managed through their internal assessment and monitoring processes.

**The Social Care Council may undertake an audit of PDDs undertaken by students by sampling Records of Completion as part of the quality assurance arrangements with the HEIs/Colleges.**

## **7. Examples of Ways Students May Wish to Use Their Individual Practice Development Days**

- Visits of observation to statutory or voluntary social work agencies

**Such visits will be arranged by tutors based on identified student learning needs. Agencies will identify opportunities and forward information to PLO Coordinators in HEIs/Colleges who will liaise with individual tutors. Individual students must not contact agencies directly**

- Visits of observation to relevant statutory agencies such as the Social Security Agency, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, etc
- Volunteer work for charitable or independent organisations
- 'Block learning' which may include working on a summer project, working abroad on a relevant social care programme, or attending a specialist training course
- Paid work in a relevant social care organisation
- Sessional social care work gained through recruitment agencies
- Functioning within the course's Staff-Student Consultative Committee framework as a tutor group or year representative
- Attendance at classes/courses to help with particular learning needs – e.g. drama classes to help a student with low confidence, writing classes to assist a student with particular difficulties in this area, ICT skills development training, etc
- Involvement in relevant research activity (paid or voluntary)
- Involvement in international student exchanges

## **8. Insurance Whilst Undertaking Individual Practice Development Days**

The university has a public liability policy which covers students whilst undertaking work experience. This only applies, however, to students who are engaging in work experience which is a compulsory element of their course and

essential in order for them to complete the course. Any voluntary work or work experience above and beyond the 85 & 100 days of practice learning and Individual PDDs, are not covered by this policy. Whilst voluntary and paid experience will greatly assist you in your studies, remember to distinguish them from your social work course. This type of work cannot be undertaken formally as part of the social work degree.

<sup>1</sup>All students will draw up an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with their personal tutor at the beginning of their studies. The ILP will be reviewed a minimum of three times over each academic year - as part of their preparation for practice learning tutorials, at their initial and mid-way practice learning meetings, and at least once within their college based personal tutor groups.

<sup>2</sup>All students are required to maintain a Personal and Professional Development Workbook (PPDW)/Reflective Practice Log which will be used throughout the course as a key learning tool. Whilst the PPDW itself will not be assessed, students will be required to use it to inform certain assessed pieces of work. Students are encouraged to be creative and flexible in terms of how they develop their PPDW/Reflective Practice Log and will be supported by their personal tutor and other academic staff in doing so.

# Record of Completion of Individual Practice Development Days

This form should be completed and retained by the Personal Tutor and should be placed on the student's personal file at the end of their studies.

**Number of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Number of Tutor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Activity	Brief Description of Activity	Duration of Activity (Days or Hours)*	Date Signed Off by Tutor & Tutor's signature



Date of Activity	Brief Description of Activity	Duration of Activity (Days or Hours)*	Date Signed Off by Tutor & Tutor's signature

**Total Number of Days Completed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Personal Tutor)**

\* All students are required to have completed 15 Individual Practice Development Days by the end of their studies (equivalent of 90 hours. 1 day = 6 hours and ½ day = 3 hours).

**Failure to complete the 15 Individual Practice Development Days, confirmed by the tutor, will mean that the student will be unable to complete the course.**

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