# Assessment

Practice is central to a Social Work degree programme, with academic learning supporting practice rather than the other way round. The standards for the award of the Social Work degree are outcome statements that set out what a student social worker must know, understand and be able to do to be awarded a degree in Social Work. The Professional Standards of Social Work England set out what employers require social workers to be able to do on entering employment. These standards form the basis of the assessment of competence in practice. Social workers will be required to demonstrate competence across the full range of standards before being awarded their degree.

# The Assessment Process

The overall aim of assessment is to assess the student’s level of capability and suitability to practice, Ideas about capability are based on:

* The individual knowledge, skills, personal attributes and commitment that the student brings to practice.
* The student’s behaviour, the tasks and procedures they complete individual and their contributions to team processes.

Students must apply the knowledge they have developed within a university setting to practice. This transfer of knowledge and skills to practice is supported by Practice Educators (PEs). Some students may arrive on placement with only basic knowledge of systems, formal assessment and recording skills. PEs need to be familiar with the Social Work Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and the Social Work England Professional Standards clear about their own role in order to guide and support a student.

Critical reflection as an active participant in the assessment process is essential for both student and PE: Some questions that may help you to critically reflect on a situation are:

* What do I understand and feel about this situation?
* What information do I need to pay attention to?
* What are my biases and prejudices, strengths and weaknesses?
* What do other people understand and feel about this situation? Why?
* What do I intend to do and why?
* What is the potential impact of my own and other people’s actions?

All students need to be given the opportunity to apply knowledge to practice, and to reflect on their practice to enhance their knowledge and make links to theory. This reflective cycle may be useful in helping students to analyse and evaluate their experiences in practice:

* Description (what happened?)
* Feelings (what were you/the student thinking and feeling?)
* Evaluation (what was good and bad about the experience?)
* Analysis (how can you/the student make sense of what happened?) • Conclusions (what alternatives did you/the student have?)
* Action plan (what would you/the student do if it happened again?

Students learn at different paces and in different ways. Some students need to learn by doing, others need more time to observe, reflect and experiment. Some will need more support than others. It will always be useful to explore with the student how they learn best. Understanding the student will enable you to make decisions about the type, quantity and complexity of work they are to be allocated.

# How to identify evidence of capability:

As a PE, you will be setting tasks, allocating work and agreeing the quality and standard the student should work to. By linking this to the Professional Standards, you will assess and agree with the student what level of competence they have achieved. Using a range of methods will enable you to gain a clear picture of the student’s progress and allow you to assess their capability and suitability to practice. Suggested methods of assessment are:

* Day to day observation / contact
* Co-working
* Formal supervision
* Formal observation of practice
* Feedback from colleagues, other professionals and people with lived experience
* The student’s written work

Your student should be encouraged to write reflective accounts of their work and collect any other written evidence that demonstrates their ability to meet the Standards set out in the PCF.

Sometimes students lack confidence while others may overestimate their current level of capability. To assess whether the student is achieving the required outcomes, you will use your knowledge about your job, the role of the team, and the wider issues related to social work. You should use others to help you with this process: Evidence from other qualified social workers and professionals such as nurses, OTs, etc. can be useful. People with lived experience will also be able to provide evidence of a student social worker’s capabilities.

# The Final Report

The SWE Professional Standards and Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Work set out what Social Work England require social workers to be able to do on entering employment. These standards form the basis of the assessment of skills and knowledge in practice. Social work students are required to be able to meet all standards before being awarded their degree. By the end of the first placement it is expected that students will have demonstrated the ability to meet some of the Professional Standards and Professional Capabilities. By the end of the final placement it is expected that a student will have demonstrated the ability to meet all of the Standards and Capabilities. From the evidence provided and your observations of the student, you are asked to indicate in the reports provided how the student is progressing and to make a recommendation as to whether the student has passed their placement. Final placement reports will be reviewed by the Placement Tutor and subject to a university moderation process. A recommendation will then be made to the Examination Board. The final decision of the Board will be communicated to both the student and the Practice Educator.