SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMMES

Preparation for tests and interview for the BA (Hons) or MA degree in social work

IMPORTANT.

Social work is a profession in which we have very privileged opportunities to work with people who are often at their most vulnerable, and in circumstances in which rights and obligations may be conflicting. For this reason, selection processes are rightly rigorous and thorough so that the very best opportunities are provided to select those who possess the unique combination of personal, academic and professional attributes that social work requires.

When applicants are offered an interview for Middlesex University Social Work Programme, they are expected to demonstrate their suitability for social work training. The following items are some of the key things considered during the selection process. We hope you will find them useful in clarifying Middlesex University's entry requirements and preparing for your interview:

1. Demonstrate your suitability for social work training (i.e. the knowledge, values, personal characteristics or attributes and skills, gained through education/work/personal experience).

2. Demonstrate evidence of the ability to develop and maintain collaborative relationships with colleagues and service users/cares, and a commitment to a service-user focussed approach.

3. Demonstrate knowledge relevant to the social work role and/or processes, gained through previous academic study, reading and other sources of information relevant to social work and social work training.

4. Demonstrate a level of literacy and numeracy, commensurate with The College of Social Work, Health and Care Professionals Council, and Middlesex University entry requirements for either undergraduate or postgraduate study. All applicants will be required to sit and pass a written test comprising a comprehension, spelling and grammar test, followed by a short essay critically considering a current social issue before being invited to attend an interview.

5. Demonstrate an ability to communicate clearly and accurately in spoken and written English. These requirements will be assessed in the written test, group exercise and during an individual interview.

6. Meet the requirements for personal and professional suitability and ‘fitness’ appropriate for academic study and professional practice placements (subject to provisions of the Equality Act 2010). Applicants will be required to complete a Declaration of Suitability for Social Work, and provide signed consent for Middlesex University to contact their General Practitioner, if so required, as part of appropriate and proportionate assessments of suitability for professional training. Students will also be required to inform Middlesex University of any health-related problems that may impact on their ability to continue safely and effectively with academic study and professional practice placements whilst enrolled on the Social Work Programmes.

7. Be prepared to undertake an enhanced DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) check [previously known as Criminal Records Bureau CRB check] and declare, for example, any criminal convictions or police cautions received prior to interview. Please be aware that candidates whose applications are successful will have to meet the cost of the CRB check (currently £44.00).
8. Candidates offered a place on the MA programme will be required to submit a reference from an employer (present or past, but within the last two years) in a social work or social care field who can confirm that the prospective student has had a minimum of six months work experience in a social work/social care or other relevant human services professional environment.

9. Demonstrate key motivations for undertaking social work training at this particular point in time, and an initial awareness of the realities of contemporary social work practice in the UK.

10. Outline how you will prepare to deal with the demands of social work training and academic study.

11. Consider any questions you may wish to ask at your interview and reflect on the preparation you can undertake between now and the interview.

In relation to the above, here are some suggestions of the kinds of issues which you may wish to spend some time considering and be prepared to discuss during your individual interview. These are not specific interview questions that you will be asked, but rather examples to give you an idea of the type and depth of questions that may occur:

- Think through a particular situation you have encountered (with an individual/group/agency). For example, if you have been faced with the following situations:
  - aggressive or violent behaviour
  - feeling anxious
  - needing to act assertively/authoritatively

- How did you react? An honest answer will benefit you and help identify learning needs.

- Looking back on the situation, what might you have done differently, and what did you learn from it? (this is often referred to as 'reflective practice' within social work)

- How did you endeavour to work in partnership with the service user/carer/person being helped?

- A reading list has been included with the documents on the web-page where this guidance is located in order to give you the opportunity to familiarise yourself with some of the knowledge, skills and values relevant to social work practice. You are NOT expected to have read all the recommended texts! However, during the interview you will be asked to refer to any reading undertaken to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of social work practice, AND to evidence your motivation. It is important therefore that you prepare by reading some of the recommended list.

- What aspects of your own background (e.g. age, gender, sexual identity/orientation, physical abilities, class, race and ethnicity) are important to you? How do you react to those who differ from yourself in these respects, and why are these aspects important in social work practice? What is meant by anti-discriminatory practice?

You may find making some notes on these topics helpful. Think through these topics and perhaps consider them in advance of the interview with a social work colleague, your supervisor, social work referee, or a friend, so you can discuss them during the interview. The recruitment process can be highly competitive so you should prepare thoroughly in order to perform to the best of your ability. A lack of preparation may be interpreted as a lack of genuine commitment or motivation.
Test and/or Interview Days

The literacy tests will consist of two short tests to assess a) your literacy skills and b) your critical analysis skills. These tests will take place at the Hendon campus. It is very important that you arrive promptly as no candidates will be admitted after the tests have started. If you successfully complete the two tests, you will be invited to return to attend an interview day. If you fail one or both of the tests your application will not proceed further.

Interview days are important opportunities for you to see whether you would enjoy spending the duration of your course with us, and for us to assess your suitability in a holistic way. You will have succeeded in passing the literacy tests prior to interview – well done! However, it is a reality that there are more applicants for places than we can make offers to. In order to provide you with the very best possible opportunities to demonstrate your potential and actual ability, we have designed a rigorous, but fair recruitment process. All applicants will be assessed against the same standards, however there may be some slight variations in the timings of each interview day or the details of activities on each day at particular times in the application cycle as we need to balance speed of response to applicants with a more standardised approach. Generally, you should expect to be with us for a few hours if invited to attend an interview. This is hopefully a positive thing from your perspective, but we will of course make all reasonable attempts to accommodate travel requirements when planning individual interview times.

The structure of an interview day will usually be as follows:

9.00-9.30: Arrival, registration and ID document checking (plus handing in Suitability declaration). Please note that all candidates must arrive by 9.30 at the latest as late comers cannot be admitted as the assessed parts of the day take place under examination style conditions to avoid disruption to other candidates.

10.00-10.30: Informal meeting as whole group with course team representative/s (including current students where possible) to provide overview of main features of social work at Middlesex, answer any general questions you may have, and enable candidates to settle in before the interviews start.

10.30-11.15: Group task/exercise (for those with later interviews). You will be provided with more details upon arrival, but this provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to work collaboratively and to experience some of the ways in which our students will work in groups. Assessors will observe, keep time and will assess applicants according to the level of study for which they are applying. No specific policy/legal knowledge is required for this task. We are interested in your views and values, but even more interested in how you approach this task and how you work with others. A second group exercise will take place in the early afternoon, usually 1.45-2.30 for those applicants having morning interviews.

From 10.30 onwards, there will be individual interviews with panels usually made up of University tutors, service users and carers and local employers/practitioners. Each interview will last approximately 25 minutes. There may be multiple panels meeting on the same day, so there should always be other applicants for you to spend time with in between your various activities.

We will endeavour to arrange for campus tours led by current students at various times during your interview day. You will be provided with details upon arrival of the tour and time that best fits with your interview and group exercise times.
You will need to perform well in both assessed elements of the day. Where there is no group exercise for whatever reason, this will of course be taken into account in the way in which scoring is undertaken on those days. We will notify applicants of the outcome of their interviews as soon as possible. Once offers have been made, successful applicants will be invited to return to complete their DBS paperwork and will have the opportunity to ask any remaining questions about the course and related matters.

We are committed to ensuring that those with disabilities are able to participate fully and fairly in the assessment process. If you have particular access needs, please let us know at least five days in advance so that we may make appropriate provision. Please ensure that you bring with you evidence of the assessment that identifies your specific access needs relating to the written assessments and/or interview processes.

A note on NHS bursaries for MA social work applicants:

[This does not apply to BA social work applicants as the bursary changes are different and nominations for those take place at the end of the first year of study rather than prior to entry as no bursaries are available now for UG first year students]

As you may be aware, there have recently been reductions to the number of bursaries available within England, even where students meet the relevant eligibility criteria. At Middlesex, as at all other England universities, it appears that for the foreseeable future there will not be as many bursaries as places on offer, although all those meeting the eligibility/residence requirements will continue to receive some funding towards placement related travel. Universities are required to submit to NHS bursaries team a list of successful applicants in order of priority for receipt of a bursary. We have followed NHS and sector guidelines when deciding how to operationalise this. For 2014 intake, we will be using the overall interview day scores as the primary factor in these decisions. Where this process results in a tied situation, we may then take into account performance in the written tests, previous qualifications and then any other factor that in our professional judgement helps us differentiate fairly between applicants. We are aware that this may create an additional pressure on applicants, but the current situation means we must design and implement a fair and transparent way in which we can prioritise those nominated for NHS bursaries. We will provide you with more information later in the application cycle about the details of this and how it affects you individually, including whether we have included you on the list of those nominated for a bursary as we recognise the importance of this for many applicants.

Further information on the current bursary provision and eligibility criteria can be found at: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you success with your application.