



Guide to Practice Education: FAQs

This is a quick guide for any social worker thinking about developing their practice skills by becoming a practice educator.

1. Do I have to do a course to become a practice educator?

In order to become a fully qualified Practice Educator, approved to sign off a final placement student, you do need to achieve Stage 2 of the Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS). Achievement of Stage 1 of the PEPS enables you to assess a first placement student only. You do need to be a qualified, registered social worker supported by your employer in order to do this course at Kingston University. Not all courses offer two stages in this way and not all trainee practice educators complete both stages. The term 'Practice Educator' can include those qualified to Stage 1 only. You can read more about the Practice Educator Professional Standards [here](https://www.basw.co.uk/resources/practice-educator-professional-standards-social-work).

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2. What does the course entail?

At Kingston University, this is offered as a two module, level 7, 60 academic credit course. The qualification you will gain is a Postgraduate Certificate in Practice Education. Each module entails 5 learning days at the university, in addition to practice teaching a student during a placement. Practice Learning workshops are offered alongside placements to support all Practice Educator and feedback is that these are extremely helpful to attend. Trainees will be invited to observe a Practice Assessment Panel during one of their modules and there are numerous other opportunities to contribute to teaching and assessing mainly first year students, throughout the year.

3. What if I have already done stage 1 elsewhere?

It is possible to bring in academic credit from another university and to join the programme directly at Stage 2; you can do this through our Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. For these and other similar situations, it is best to have a

conversation with the module leader about your particular circumstances, before signing up.

4. Do I have to work with a student? And when will this be?

You will be required to provide a placement for a student for each of your modules, following a period of learning and preparation during taught module days. Depending on when you start the course, this may be either an MSW or a BASW student from Kingston University. Usually for Stage 1 you would work with a first placement student for 70 days and for Stage 2, a final placement student for 100 days. Sometimes different local arrangements are made, usually negotiated with your employer. Examples of this might include allocation of a Step Up or Frontline student by your employer. Placement allocation takes place collaboratively between the university and employer partners.

5. Will I have a reduced caseload while I do the course?

Employer partners have different arrangements in place; mostly there is no caseload reduction, but students will usually be allocated work from your own caseload. You should talk to your employer about local arrangements and expectations, before you sign up.

6. Will I receive any payment during or after the course?

This varies across the partnership so you are advised to talk to your employer about this.

7. Will I have study days from work or other support?

This varies across the partnership so you should talk to your employer about local arrangements. Where you are allocated study days, you will be strongly encouraged by module leaders to book that time out for your own assessment preparation. Other forms of support are also provided by some employers. These range from Practice Education support/reflective practice groups, to access to research and teaching tools.

The Partnership also has a range of resources for Practice Educators to borrow, but trainees have access to online and print resources through the Learning Resource Centre, regular Practice Learning Workshops, peer support through the cohort and tutor support from module leaders. It is a very demanding course and so it is imperative that you have a support network in and beyond your workplace.

Team support in particular can be a critical component to both an effective placement and your own learning.

8. What will I learn on the course?

The course uses the 4 Practice Educator Professional Standards domains as a framework for learning: **managing a placement; teaching; assessing** and **critical reflection**, all within the **Values requirements**.

For Stage 1 there is a strong focus on preparing for and planning a placement, including the provision of supervision, teaching and assessing learning. You will design a Practice Curriculum during this module.

For Stage 2 the focus deepens around those areas, but the aim is to develop skills in and critical understanding of teaching, holistic assessment and dealing with difficulties. There is also a strong focus on critically reflective practice and at both stages you will be required to develop your own Professional Development Plan (PDP) as a Practice Educator. This is a Level 7 course so there is an academic requirement to read, write and critically analyse and evaluate at an advanced level.

9. Who teaches on the course?

Most of the teaching is led by the two module leaders, who are experienced social workers, lecturers and practice educators. In addition, you will hear from Teaching Consultants, graduates, the Learning Resource Centre subject specialist and the Disability Support Service within the university.

10. How will I be assessed? When and by whom?

Your practice with the student will be assessed by a Practice Assessor (PA), who is a Stage 2 qualified and experienced practice educator. This person may be someone within your own organisation or appointed independently by the university, at the request of your employer. The PA will review and provide feedback on your portfolio of placement documents, observe you in live supervision with your student and make a holistic assessment against the relevant PEPS domains. This will be a Pass or Fail decision. In order to pass the modules and course you must pass the practice assessment.

At Stage 1 you will produce a Practice Curriculum for the placement, which is academically assessed and worth 40% of the final grade. This is a significant

document with many components, which takes time to compile well. You will be guided in this and have opportunities for formative feedback. In addition, there is an academic assessment at both stages, which includes critically reflective writing and a PDP.

All the assessments are due at the end of the module, after the placement has ended. The date will depend on when you started the course. All Portfolios of practice evidence are reviewed by a Practice Assessment Panel; module leaders grade the academic work and review portfolios; an External Examiner reviews a sample of all work and an Assessment Board ratifies results.

11. What happens if my student does not pass the placement?

This does happen sometimes. The student's inability to pass their placement does not necessarily mean you cannot pass yours, however, individual situations are managed individually, in order to give the trainee the best likelihood of success.

12. What happens if I don't pass the course?

It is rare for a trainee not to pass the practice component, but were that to happen, you would usually be offered another opportunity. This would have to be in conjunction with employer agreement and that of the Assessment Board. If you were to fail the academic component, you would usually be offered tutorial support and another opportunity to submit at an agreed date.

13. What if I start and then change my mind?

Once you have attended the first day of teaching you (your employer) are liable for the module fee. The university Placement Team will also be starting the allocation process before you start the module or shortly thereafter, and so once you withdraw or defer at that stage or any time thereafter, there are implications for the student who may have been allocated to you.

If circumstances mean that you do have to interrupt your study, from the university perspective, you can do just that, interrupt or defer and return at a later date, or you can withdraw completely. You would need to talk to the module leader and your employer were you thinking about that decision, so that bespoke plans can be made with and for you, as well as the student.

There are lots of implications for lots of people if you withdraw or interrupt once you have commenced the course and so it is REALLY important that you are fully

committed when you sign up. However, there are situations every year when trainees are unable to continue at a point in time and as long as you are in communication with course leaders and your employers, we will all do what we can to support you as a learner and plan for your return.

14. I am planning to take a month off over the summer, will this be a problem?

Taking more than 2 weeks off during a placement is ill-advised, for many reasons, unless that leave coincides with the student's planned leave. If you are unable to commit to being available for the whole placement, you are strongly advised to think about when you start the course.

15. What else do I get by doing this course? What's in it for me?

Each module represents 30 academic credits at Level 7, so by completing both stages you will achieve 60 credits and a Postgraduate Certificate in Practice Education. This is in addition to achieving the PEPS qualification. You could then build upon those credits by undertaking further study, enabling you to achieve a Postgraduate Diploma or even a Masters degree.

That may not be important to everyone. What trainees say regularly is that this course helps to refresh and develop knowledge-social work theories and research, supervision, teaching and assessing; it helps create a space for critical reflection on social work practice, which often then changes practice; it opens up opportunities for career development along pathways that would otherwise not have been apparent or available; it enables the development of a learning culture within their organisations; it provides opportunities to develop teaching and quality assurance skills within an academic context; it has helped developed confidence and revive their passion for social work and it has led to a sense of gratification in giving something back to the profession. The qualification is transportable and transferable. In the words of recent graduates:

"...the course provided me with a strong foundation in supervising and developing students. It encouraged me to critically reflect on my own practice as a social worker, and challenged me to creatively meet the learning needs of social work students, and indeed qualified social workers. The strength of this programme is the high expectations it places on trainee practice educators – the portfolio, reflective essays and observations of my supervision by an experienced Practice Educator were rich learning opportunities and really pushed me to develop my practice and be accountable for my own learning. The programme has highlighted

the importance of observation and feedback on my practice for my own development, and this will stand me in good stead for the upcoming assessment and accreditation of children's social workers....."

"I really valued my learning experience.....an opportunity to consolidate some of the professional experience I already had in assessing the occupational competence of qualifying staff.....given a very rich resource pack of theories, models, templates, reflective experiences and professional feedback to help me further develop my practice.

The practical focus of the course also really worked for me.....My tutor and the others I encountered from the faculty were simply excellent at supporting adult learners. There was appropriate recognition of my prior experience and more than ample encouragement as I made the stretch to my next level of professional development..... definitely the injection of professional inspiration that I needed at the time....."

16. How do I apply?

If you have any further question please contact Dale van Graan at d.vangraan@sgul.kingston.ac.uk. Before you apply you need to discuss your plans with your line manager and seek your employer support. You will then need to apply online.

<https://www.kingston.ac.uk/postgraduate-course/post-qualifying-social-work-modules/>

Further details about applying online can be found in the Sponsor Guide.