

Frequently Asked Questions - Graduate Apprenticeship in Social Work

What is the GA in SW framework development process?

OVERVIEW

GA Social Work

Development Manager: Abigail Kinsella

Approach: SDS led with collaboration from SG, SFC and SSSC

Additional Information:
 Joint SG/SDS/SF submission to SAAB Standards and Frameworks group supported GA proposal August 2024.

SG Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs announced development of GA on 25/9/24.

| Milestone | Date of start* | Additional detail |
|---|----------------|---|
| 2 (Approach agreed) | Oct 2024 | Subject to AAG approval |
| 3 (National Occupational Standards drafted i.e. employee consultation) (NOS - SSSC) | Dec 2024 | Consultation process initiated prior to AAG approval as part of business case development. Regulated professional occupation must meet SSSC requirements. |
| 5 (Framework complete – ADGs complete) | May 2025 | Aim is for GA pathway to be available during academic session 2025 -26. |
| 7 (AAG approval in principle – framework and qualification products ready) | June 2025 | Employer recruitment necessary prior to commencement in academic session 2025. Validation by HEI and SSSC also necessary. |

STAGE GATES 1-4

Overview of Approval Gates 1 – 4

| | Gate 1 | Gate 2 | Gate 3 | Gate 4 |
|------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| What is it? | Initial Evidence and ADG Approach to development | Draft standards and approach to external consultation (occupational profile) | Approval of Apprenticeship <u>Standard and Framework in Principle</u> | Approval of Apprenticeship <u>for delivery</u> |
| When? | At start of each development | Following employee inputs (consultations, workshops, 121s) and synthesis of all evidence inputs, outline of expected structure/apprenticeship | Following wider consultation and final ADG Standard and Framework, Occupation Profile and Qualification Design are complete Note: Submission to AAG Subgroup prior to AAG submission | Awarding body's codes inserted into apprenticeship standard Note: Submission to AAG Subgroup prior to AAG submission |
| Purpose | To inform AAG of the development, its scope and the approach being used | Ensure AAG understands process to date <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is content with shape of apprenticeship • Is content with approach to extended consultation | Ensure Principles of Apprenticeships have been met Qualification product has been submitted to Accreditation Co-ordination Group when all parties are in agreement that products are of a suitable quality. Awarding bodies and training providers engaged and committed to development SDS development activity ends | Comms and marketing plan Payment plan in place for FIPS upload Text ready for App.scot upload Provider readiness and commitment in place (letters of support) |
| Action required | Confirm Approach | Approve Gate 2 | Approve Gate 3 | Promote to partners and stakeholder, Take part in promotional activity |

GA Social Work – key milestones



Consultation



Planned consultation:

- Update key stakeholder mapping. Commence comms with key stakeholders on GA development **Sept 24**
- Sector wide comms with update on development process **Nov 24**
- Employees survey **Dec 24**
- Stakeholder update and sector wide comms including ADG inception meeting **Jan 25**
- Complete first draft of GA Standard, Framework and Occupational Profile **Mar 25**
- Qualification draft completed- **April 25**
- Documentation/ Wider sector consultation commences with key stakeholders **May 25**
- Triple approvals from HEI, SSSC, AAG **June 25**
- Framework launch **Sept 25**

| Milestone | Date of completion | Additional detail |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 2 (Approach agreed) | November 2024 | SSSC regulatory framework determines the work situations with some limited scope for flexible additions. |
| 3 (Work Situations agreed) | March 2025 | Workplace job role of the apprentice needs to inform the day- to- day activities of the Graduate Apprentice employee-how this will be supported by workplace supervisor and academic tutor. Opportunities for workplace practice activities to be mapped to learning outcomes for each academic year to be further refined. |
| 5 (Framework complete) | May 2025 | |
| 7 (AAG approval in principle) | May/ June 2025 | |

Additional Information:

GAs need to be recruited into job role prior to commencing academic learning led by HEI

How were the pilot learning provider and technical writing group sourced?

During 2023 – 2024 OCSWA held a wide range of discussions with partners across the social work sector regarding a potential GA in Social Work. This scoping was supported by the GA Agile Working Group. Whilst a number of HEIs indicated interest in delivering a GA in SW, the University of the West of Scotland (“UWS”) were identified as being in the best position (in terms of organisation support and

readiness, experience in developing and supporting GAs in various sectors etc.) to act as the initial pilot university. UWS then also agreed to act as “Technical Writers” (resourced entirely by their organisation) to scribe and develop the documentation required to create the GA in Social Work framework. UWS colleagues are assisted in this by members of the Technical Writing Group, which includes representation from the SSSC, the SFC, the Open University in Scotland, SDS and SG.

Can other HEIs get involved?

Currently there are five further universities who will act as “critical friends” and will meet to review and participate in development activity as required. Input from a range of academic institutions ensures the GA in SW framework will be flexible enough to be utilised in a range of formats and organisations.

Communications have mentioned an “Apprenticeship Development Group” – what is this?

To develop the framework upon which universities can build their GA programmes, our partners in Skills Development Scotland lead and facilitate the Apprenticeship Development Group (“ADG”).

Chaired by Chief Social Work Officer for Aberdeenshire, Leigh Jolly, the ADG has a broad membership and offers a unique opportunity to shape the GA framework, ensuring the work-based training and skills development elements align with the regulatory requirements for social work education. Members meet at least monthly to collaboratively design and develop the content of the apprenticeship and confirm the skills which are relevant to social work.

The Apprenticeship Development Group is responsible for designing and developing an apprenticeship standard and framework ready to be submitted for approval to the Apprenticeship Approvals Group. Over several meetings the group will agree on the structure and content of the apprenticeship, approaches to assessment and delivery, enhancements that should be included, the length and duration of the apprenticeship and the meta-skills profile. The outputs from the group are used to inform the shape and content of any qualification developments which will be used in the initial development of the apprenticeship standard and framework.

The ADG – who is represented?

Membership of the ADG covers the social work sector and representation is invited from:

- Unions – UNISON
- Scottish Social Services Council
- Scottish Funding Council
- Local authorities

- SPDS
- Third sector
- Scottish Government
- University of the West of Scotland
- Open University in Scotland
- COSLA
- Social Work Scotland
- Professional Association - SASW

As a national framework, the Graduate Apprenticeship will be developed in partnership with social work sector representatives and draw on expert knowledge to ensure a high quality, robust programme, supporting enhanced capacity of an agile, future workforce.

The views of employers, trade unions and professional bodies representing Scotland's social work sector are needed to support the development to ensure the apprenticeship meets the sector's skills needs.

Employers

A Graduate Apprentice employer meets with the university learning provider, to agree the delivery of the Graduate Apprentice programme. This includes:

- assessment methods
- time spent at university
- projects that will need to be supported in the workplace

The employer also:

- attends regular meetings with the university and the Graduate Apprentice, who is their employee
- mentors the Graduate Apprentice and gets involved in training and assessment elements, as agreed with the learning provider

The role of the employer depends on the individual partnership between the employer and the university.

[Find out more about how employers work with Graduate Apprenticeships](#)

The Graduate Apprenticeship Standard and Framework is consistent across all of Scotland.

Graduate Apprentices will be just like any other employee of a business, so the employer pays their wages. It's good practice for employers to pay a salary that attracts the best people – [find out more about the Living Wage](#). Remember employers must meet National Minimum Wage guidelines for apprentices.

The apprentice should also have full access to any facilities or benefits that you provide for other staff.

The job description for a Graduate Apprentice in Social Work must allow for all elements of the Graduate Apprenticeship Standard and Framework in Social Work to be achieved. The terms and conditions of employment are individually determined by the employer. These decisions are made outwith the remit of the Apprenticeship Development Group and are crucial to the successful implementation of Graduate Apprenticeship delivery.

As the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) will be the first HEI to offer the GA programme, it is appropriate for UWS to convene an Industry Advisory Group to engage with employers to consider initial recruitment and selection processes for the first cohort of Graduate Apprentices planned for 2025/6. When other universities plan to deliver GA Social Work programmes, they can also develop and implement relevant employer engagement strategies and actions to support uptake and partnership delivery of available places within their Graduate Apprenticeship provision.

Graduate Apprenticeship funding

Graduate Apprentice learning costs are now funded by the [Scottish Funding Council](#) and [Student Awards Agency Scotland \(SAAS\)](#). Funding covers the full duration of the programme. Graduate Apprentices will apply directly to SAAS for the funding. We've produced [this guide for employers](#) about SAAS funding for Graduate Apprenticeships. If you need any further information, visit the [SAAS website](#). [More about Graduate Apprenticeships](#). There is no means testing for tuition fee funding for full time courses. This includes Graduate Apprenticeships.

Reporting expectations

All reporting for Graduate Apprenticeships will be captured through a university's HESA returns and through engagement with the Skills & Coherent Provision Team at the Scottish Funding Council. There is no requirement for additional bespoke reporting.

All GA Social Work places will be funded through an institution's non-controlled funded places. No distinction is made either in terms of funding or eligibility between a GA place or a non-controlled undergraduate place.

SFC publishes yearly Graduate Apprenticeship Guidance outlining the role of universities in Graduate Apprenticeship provision.

Wider engagement opportunities

Scottish Government. Skills Development Scotland and SSSC representatives are also engaging directly with relevant social work professional forums to update stakeholders and partners on the development of the GA in Social Work. These partnership groups and agencies will be fully involved in all consultation activities throughout the Graduate Apprenticeship Development process. These include:

OCSWA -Office of Chief Social Work Advisers- group
SWEP – Social Work Education Partnership

Approval process

The Graduate Apprenticeship in Social Work requires a triple approval process before the Graduate Apprenticeship Standard and Framework can function and candidates can begin their Graduate Apprenticeship employment and training.

The Apprenticeship Approvals Group (AAG) has responsibility for approving all Scottish apprenticeships. It is an employer-led group aimed at ensuring Scottish apprenticeships meet the needs of employers.

The group's role and purpose is to:

- approve all Scottish apprenticeships
- ensure that apprenticeships fit with policy
- oversee and ensure quality assurance in apprenticeship development activity

SSSC approval

The SSSC engages with the development of the graduate apprenticeship in an advisory role to ensure that the Graduate Apprenticeship is developed to be an equitable and alternative route to achieving the entitling qualification BA (Hons) Social Work or equivalent. The framework developed must map to the Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE) and incorporate the Requirements for Social Work Education (2024). Any providers wishing to come forward for approval to deliver the award will follow the current process and must be able to demonstrate through the SSSC approval process how they will meet the rules and requirement.

QAA/ University Approval

GAs include nationally recognised degree qualifications. These are SCQF credit rated by the universities that deliver them and they meet the same quality standards as conventional degree qualifications. They go through the same processes of validation with the universities involved and are quality assured by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). In addition, SDS worked with QAA to develop complementary processes for compliance and quality, based on annual reporting. A GA pilot led by SDS was delivered in 2019/20 with five learning providers across five different apprenticeships. The pilot mapped 18 existing quality assurance frameworks against the framework used for SDS National Training Programmes. This strengthened employer engagement in GA work-based learning design, development and delivery and in apprenticeship quality assurance.

Any university interested in delivering a GA programme in social work will undergo its own internal validation process alongside SSSC approval procedure for validating all qualifying programmes, after ratification of the framework by the Apprenticeship Approvals Group. New providers

will need to undertake a validation event with SDS / SFC as per all providers taking on a new GA framework.

Pilot

Who will pilot the graduate apprenticeship?

The University of the West of Scotland will pilot the GA in Social Work subject to full approval by AAG, SSSC and the validation by the HEI. It is envisaged that the first cohort of learners will begin during academic session 2025/6.

How long is the pilot and how will it be evaluated?

The pilot will be evaluated by stakeholders during the lifespan of the programme, with an evaluation being completed after the conclusion of the first year of the GA's intake.

Other universities will be able to offer this framework following the successful evaluation of the pilot after year one of the programme. Subsequently, the GA in Social Work will be added to the list of completed GA frameworks and new providers may deliver the programme following the completion of a successful validation event as outlined in SFC's Graduate Apprenticeship Guidance.

New providers will need to consider employer demand, and the graduate apprenticeship approval process outlined in SFC's Graduate Apprenticeship Guidance.

Important Weblinks- Further Information

<https://www.apprenticeships.scot/become-an-apprentice/graduate-apprenticeships/>

<https://www.apprenticeships.scot/learning-provider/graduate-apprenticeships/>

<https://rise.articulate.com/share/ADZ3XR77IBjTiW0-vd5Bo-GohTJn1YBz#/>