

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

B-degree in Social Work

Website: <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/faculty/arts/social-work>

GLOBAL DEFINITION OF SOCIAL WORK

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing” (IFSW & IASSW, 2014, <https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work>).

MISSION OF THE SU DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Cultivating thought leaders in social development

- Specific focus:
 - The integration of theory and practice, critical thinking and analytical skills within both a local and global context [*based on the standards of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the Social Professions Act (no110 of 1978 and amendments)*];
 - Essential practice-based and academic skills for the 21st century [*Determined by the Global definition and Global Agenda of Social Work and social development, and relevant local policies, legislation and context specific situations*];
 - Ethical informed behaviour [*according to the Ethical code of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and the Global statement of ethical principles of Social Work*].
- Generic focus:
 - Competencies suitable for **any work environment** in social development and beyond (thus not merely for specific welfare organisations);
 - A range of graduate attributes (such as to be a thought leader, engaged citizen, well-rounded individual and dynamic professional).

REQUIREMENTS OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME AT SU

- **Academic**
 - This programme is a selection programme from 2024 onwards. The selection policy is available from the Department of Social Work.
- **Personal characteristics**
 - Excellent verbal communication skills;
 - Good writing skills;
 - Assertiveness, adaptability, emotional maturity, energetic, creativity, passion for social justice and human rights, etc.

UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME CONTENT (See the SU calendar)

- The B-degree in Social Work leads to a professional qualification; students register at the SACSSP from their 2nd year onwards and as a professional Social Worker after graduation;
- Theory (class based) and practice education (in approved welfare organisations) from 1st to 4th year;
- Focus on Social Work methods (individual work, group work, community work, policy formation, supervision/management/administration, research); Social Work theories; applicable acts and legislation; contemporary social issues and phenomena in the human life cycle;
- Students need a certain number of credits of supportive subjects (for example from Psychology and Sociology/Anthropology) to register for the 3rd and 4th year of study.

UNIQUENESS OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME AT SU

- Students do continuous field placements (practice education) from their 1st to 4th year in all Social Work methods.
- The structured practice education programme of the Department was evaluated as a flagship in the country by the CHE:
 - o Students are supervised by registered Social Workers at both their field placement and at the university;
 - o The Department provides transport for students to their field placements.
- The diversity of the Departments' students and a value-driven teaching and learning philosophy is the hallmark of the Department.
- Alumni of the Department are high in demand in practice (as demonstrated by recent appointments – specific examples are available at the Department).
- The Department are highly rated in both academic and practice environments, and on local, regional and international levels. Some recent examples are:
 - o 2014 and 2017: The Department is unique in the country with two Stals prize awards by the South African Academy for Sciences and Arts for staff members' internationally acclaimed publications, contributing to sciences in South Africa, Africa and abroad;
 - o 2018: A staff member was accorded the highest research rating ever for a fulltime Social Work academic by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) as international acclaimed researcher;
 - o 2019: A staff member was awarded as the emerging academic of the year, and another staff member as the researcher of the year by the Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI);
 - o 2019: An undergraduate student received her B-Social Work degree *cum laude* and was nominated for the Stellenbosch University Vice-Chancellor award;
 - o 2019 and 2020: Postgraduate students of the Department attracted scholarships of more than R1 000 000 from private and parastatal donors/institutions (apart from University funded government scholarships).

CAREER OPTIONS WITH A SU DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK

- **As a Social Worker in settings such as:** the department of social development; correctional services; military; police; hospitals; department of education/schools; public works; local governments; generalist NGOs; specialised and international NGOs; child protection; family preservation; youth work; the elderly; substance abuse; mental health; disability; primary health care; Employee Assistant Programmes; private practitioner.
- **Specialisation in fields such as:** forensic social work; clinical social work; medical social work; school social work; statutory social work; sport social work; financial social work; family and marriage counselling; trauma counselling; adoption; probation; management and supervision; community development; mediation; life coaching; play therapy; policy development; research.
- **With additional postgraduate diplomas/degrees (and with specific undergraduate subjects at SU), career tracks are possible in a variety of disciplines such as:** psychology; law; education; marketing; sociology; anthropology; human resources management; public and development management; business management; organisation development.
- **Transferability and employability:** The Stellenbosch University B-degree in Social Work is well-accepted at other universities and employers all over the world (see our website).