

What can I do with a degree in Social Work?

Social Work.



What is Social Work?

Social workers help people to overcome personal, structural and institutional barriers to oranga (wellbeing) and live their best lives. They work with individuals, whānau and families, groups and organisations, hapū and iwi in a wide range of contexts.

The Bachelor of Social Work with Honours (BSW) is a great option if you are interested in working in a people-focused career. Professional Social Workers are needed to work in the social services, nationally and internationally.

Social Work students develop a strong academic and practical foundation by studying various courses from the social sciences and Māori studies and undertaking an internship in the community. This prepares students for employment in the social work profession, as well as in people-related, social policy and research occupations.

In Aotearoa New Zealand all social workers need to be registered by the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB). Graduates of the Bachelor of Social Work with Honours are eligible for registration as social workers.

Learn more

It is important to do some research when planning a future career. Speak with, ask questions of, and follow relevant professional bodies, organisations, companies, thought leaders and industry professionals to learn about:

- Career opportunities, work environments and salary information
- Education and training requirements.

Examples of professional bodies

- Te Rōpū Tauwhiro i Aotearoa | Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers www.anzasw.nz
- Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro Social Workers Registration Board www.swrb.govt.nz
- Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association <https://www.twsa.org.nz>
- Social Services Providers Aotearoa Inc www.sspa.org.nz

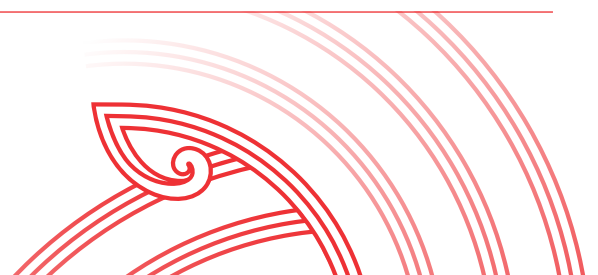
Career and study information

Some study pathways and degrees have a recommended school background, and some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional experience.

Gather helpful information from:

- Social Work study details www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/social-work
- Job profiles on career websites like www.careers.govt.nz
- Job adverts/vacancy descriptions
- Industry professional bodies.

This resource is part of a set of brochures focused on subject majors; many can also be studied as minors.





What skills can graduates gain?

Through studying a degree in Social Work, graduates develop a valuable set of skills such as:

- Advanced listening and verbal communication skills
- Self-awareness and a non-judgemental attitude
- Building/developing rapport or relationships, and conducting assessments
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi knowledge in practice
- Critical thinking and the ability to challenge ideas
- Negotiation and advocacy
- Interpretive and analytical thinking
- Problem-solving
- Awareness of discriminatory and inequitable systems/practices
- An understanding of how to engage with social justice activism
- A framework for values and ethics
- Self-management, resilience and adaptability.

Applied Learning

Opportunities to apply your learning outside of the classroom are available, including undertaking an internship in a community setting. This can deepen your skillset, awareness of others, working knowledge and employability.

What do employers look for?

Many employers look for generic skills such as communication, client/customer-focus, bicultural competence, cultural awareness, teamwork, and initiative.

With technology, globalisation, and other drivers changing society, skills such as resilience, problem solving, and adaptability is important.

Skills that are likely to grow in importance include analytical and creative thinking, systems thinking, technological literacy, AI and big data.*

*World Economic Forum: www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills

How can these skills be developed?

- Some skills are gained through studying
- Extra-curricular activities can help, such as getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work or volunteering
- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities, whether it is undertaking work experience, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group.

Where have graduates been employed?

In Aotearoa New Zealand, social workers are employed in the public and private sectors, providing both direct and indirect services. Graduates are employable overseas, particularly in the UK and Australia.

Direct services

Direct services include those for children, families, older people, those who have committed offences and people with disabilities. Employers can include:

- Education and welfare providers
- Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand
- Other healthcare and disability organisations e.g. CCS Disability Action
- Department of Corrections or Justice
- Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children
- Church missions e.g. Methodist Mission, Presbyterian Support
- Free from violence support services e.g. Women's Refuge, Aviva
- Not-for-profit agencies e.g. The Salvation Army
- Community work organisations e.g. Canterbury Men's Centre
- Addiction services e.g. Alcohol & Drug Helpline, Christchurch Central Service
- Rehabilitation e.g. Laura Fergusson Trust
- Advocacy support services e.g. Qtopia
- Ethnic specific and migrant organisations
- Community psychiatric services.

What jobs and activities might graduates do?

Graduates with this degree are employed in a range of jobs — see some examples below.

Note: This list is not exhaustive, and some jobs may require further study, training or experience. It is recommended to start with the section 'How can I gain a sense of career direction?'

Social worker

Social workers apply their expertise in a variety of roles with individuals and whānau, with communities, in direct practice roles, research, education, management, policy and leadership.

Regardless of the work setting, social workers:

- provide support and guidance to communities, individuals, and whānau
- build relationships and links people to resources, services, groups and events
- advocate with and on behalf of people; mediates and resolves conflict
- apply in-depth relational skills to work with a range of complex factors
- identify and address danger and harm factors
- undertake psychosocial assessments, analysis and interventions
- enhance people's ability and capacity to address and manage challenges
- address wider societal impacts on people and actively challenge discrimination, inequity and social injustice
- collaborate with communities to develop their own solutions to issues
- Writes reports case notes

Care and protection social worker

- Gather information and is involved in working with families to ensure children are protected, safe and well
- Contribute to family group conferences

Residential / social worker

- Care for clients and their whānau in a residential setting e.g. emergency shelter/refuge
- Manage interactions and ensure safety

Mental health social worker

- Provide interventions for people who are experiencing mental health issues
- Assess their needs, supervises progress
- Aid independence and intervene if needed

Hospital / medical social worker

- Work with people who are ill or suffer a trauma

- Develop support plans for clients in their home
- Support the whānau and carers of clients

Youth worker, youth practitioner

- Keep young people informed and supported
- Nurture relationships with youth and networks
- Support adolescent parents
- Plan activities and share resources

Public policy social worker

- Develop improved social policies with lawmakers and stakeholders
- Conduct research, offer evidence-based recommendations, and implement effective social programs
- Engage communities, build coalitions, and educate stakeholders for social justice and well-being

Addiction clinician

- Support a client to voice their feelings, stories
- Listen to and reflects upon the client's issues
- Raise self-awareness and understanding
- Help client identify options and make choices

Probation officer

- Manage and supervise offenders
- Make offender risk assessments to identify the chance of recidivism and suitability for parole
- Monitor access to services and programmes

Community development worker / consultant

- Recognise problems and concerns within communities eg. mental health, youth facilities
- Raise awareness of local issues and work with other groups
- Develop programmes and seek funding to address issues

Examples of other job titles and careers include:

- Palliative social worker • Social policy researcher • Child health coordinator • Whānau support worker • Community domestic violence advocate • Equity, diversity and inclusion officer • Medical receptionist • Housing manager/officer • Volunteer coordinator • Mediator • Counsellor.

Further study options

Social Work graduates can progress into the Master of Social Work (by thesis) and the Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work. These degrees provide advanced research and writing skills and allow the chance to specialise. Postgraduate study can also lead to an academic career.

For those who have a degree in another subject, they can enter the social work profession via the Master of Social Work (Applied).

Further study may facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, entry into a specific occupation, higher starting salary, faster progression rate, and advanced research capability.

It is important to determine which, if any, further study options align with future career aspirations.

For further UC study options visit:

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study

How can I gain a sense of career direction?

Understanding yourself and others is important to gain a sense of direction. This grows with experience; therefore, trying new things and reflecting on an ongoing basis is important.

Career planning checklist

Discover and reflect on:

- Your values, interests, strengths, abilities, and aspirations
- Your connection to whānau, people, and places
- Lifestyle preferences and location
- The skills you want to gain, use, or enhance

Engage in a variety of experiences to learn about:

- How you want to contribute to society, the environment, and global challenges
- The tasks, responsibilities and work environments you prefer
- Your work values, priorities and interests

Learn more and gather career and study information

(refer to page one of this resource)

- Speak with people working in careers that interest you; check the realities of a job/career
- Gather information from various sources

Identify your next steps

- Talking to a career consultant can help you to identify your next steps. Visit: www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers



What have other students and graduates done?

Explore career stories of students' university experiences and UC alumni who make a difference globally in varied ways.

Visit: www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories



Rachel

Social Worker, Canterbury District Health Board, Christchurch Hospital

Bachelor of Social Work with First Class Honours

Why did you choose Social Work?

My older brother died seven years ago from a brain tumour, and I think this life experience led me to Social Work. I wanted to use my experience to support other people facing adversity and oppression. My dad is a Social Worker too, so this influenced my decision as well. I have always liked people and been passionate about making a difference and helping people.

What do you like about being a Social Worker?

The fact that every day is different. Even if you are working with a person who has the same injury as another patient, their needs and therefore the social work role to assist them is ever-changing. There are always so many different ways you can approach a situation.

What does it involve?

Much of my role is working with the Multidisciplinary Team (doctors, nurses, physios, occupational therapists, speech language therapists, etc) to coordinate the best treatment possible for our patients.

What are your career goals?

I would like to utilize my Social Work training and my interest in governance to be a director on a board. Another dream of mine is to be the CEO of a not-for-profit or charitable organisation one day.

Career guidance

Career services are available for future and current students, and recent graduates. To learn more, contact:

Te Rōpū Rapuara | Careers

T: +64 3 369 0303

E: careers@canterbury.ac.nz

www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers

Helpful career insights

- Speaking with employers is key to finding opportunities; not all jobs are advertised
- Developing an online presence is useful as employers can search for future employees online
- Learning about recruitment patterns and where to find opportunities is important.

Study advice

Student Advisors at UC help with questions focused on starting, planning and changing studies. To connect with Student Advisors, visit:

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support

Future students – contact:

The Future Students team

T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)

E: futurestudents@canterbury.ac.nz

First year students – contact:

Kaitoko | First Year Student Advisors

T: +64 3 369 0409

E: firstyearadvice@canterbury.ac.nz

Continuing students – contact:

Te Kura Mātai Hauora

School of Health Sciences

T: +64 3 369 3333

E: studyhealth@canterbury.ac.nz

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/health

