



STUDENTS
ORGANISING FOR
SUSTAINABILITY
UNITED KINGDOM

Feedback for the QAA SBS Advisory Group for Social Work

Overview

Students Organising for Sustainability ([SOS-UK](#)) has been working with the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges ([EAUC](#)) to support QAA Subject Benchmark Statement (SBS) advisory groups with increasing student voice in their process and integrating sustainability and climate justice into their subject. This is critical and necessary work that will help ensure SBSs are representative and inclusive, whilst providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge to go into green careers and support our collective sustainable future. On 27th November 2024, SOS-UK held an online student consultation to gather views relating to the Subject Benchmark Statement for Social Work. Current students and recent undergraduates from a diverse variety of UK universities reviewed the current SBS through a sustainability and climate justice lens, finding positive examples and developing suggestions for how the SBS can become more accessible, inclusive, sustainable and forward-facing.

Positive elements of the existing document

- Students reflected that they were unaware of the existence of the SBS before this session, but that it was ‘reassuring’ that Social Work, a critically important subject, has such a rigorous standard for universities to use when designing courses. Students reflected that the document has made them consider the interconnectedness of elements of Social Work and view the subject in a holistic sense.
- Students appreciated the importance placed upon context and applying learning to individual circumstances when practising as Social Workers.

Suggestions for improvements or amendments

- Students wished the new SBS to recognise and interrogate the significant barriers to enacting Social Work in modern society, including ecological, social and economic challenges, and explore the challenging context in which students will be applying the principles outlined in the document.
- Students would like the new SBS to place Social Work within a global context, and encourage students to see themselves as global citizens within a worldwide society. They would like to see exploration of differing international approaches to Social Work, especially in the global south.
- Students highlighted that the current document uses complex academic language and is not accessible for those with dyslexia, or younger students considering the subject for study at higher education. They suggested that an executive summary or shorter, bullet-point style document is produced that is aimed towards students in further or secondary education.
- Students referenced the significant current lack of content relating to sustainability and urged the group to use a forward-looking approach, that safeguards the future of this subject and of our planet. The group discussed the intersectionality of sustainability, and urged the group to also deeply consider justice issues, and how this can be interwoven into every section of the document.
- Students stated that the new iteration of this document must address the issue of emerging technologies, especially AI, although there was differing opinion within the group over the role that it should play. Some students particularly reflected on the environmental impact of AI data centres, and the potential negative impact on student knowledge and skills, and others were excited about the possibilities that AI may open up for Social Work.

The future of Social Work

- Students were highly positive in regards to the future of Social Work. They were excited about increasing meaningful representation of student voices within the QAA advisory groups and review process, and wished the panel to know that they were eager for the new Subject Benchmark Statement to be widely circulated to students following publication in 2026.

For more information about this student consultation, including more detailed feedback, please contact Hannah Fitzpatrick, Senior Project Manager for Education at SOS-UK: hannah.fitzpatrick@sos-uk.org.

