Module Specification

Risk, Complexity and Decision-Making

Version: 2027-28, v3.0, Approved

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Part 1: Information

Module title: Risk, Complexity and Decision-Making

Module code: UZVSMJ-15-3

Level: Level 6

For implementation from: 2027-28

UWE credit rating: 15

ECTS credit rating: 7.5

College: College of Health, Science & Society

School: CHSS School of Health and Social Wellbeing

Partner institutions: None

Field: Health, Community and Policy Studies

Module type: Module

Pre-requisites: None

Excluded combinations: None

Co-requisites: None

Continuing professional development: No

Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements: None

Part 2: Description

Overview: This module takes decision making as its focus and explores how social workers approach the complexity and risk that is inherent in contemporary practice

Features: Not applicable

Educational aims: The aim of this module is to develop your knowledge and understanding about how social workers approach decision making. The module will help you to understand how managing risk and complexity constitute some of the

most challenging aspects of practice in health and social care, and how social workers play a significant part in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of citizens.

Outline syllabus: Lives and liberty depend on decisions undertaken in high-risk situations and at times of crisis but equally practitioners support people to make informed decisions for themselves on a day-to-day basis. Professional judgments and recommendations have to be based explicitly on evidence and sound reasoning using robust assessment tools, and collaborative, and sometimes contested, decision making processes. Equally, there are real challenges in identifying, integrating, and using different evidence, opinions and viewpoints to inform social work practice. Social workers are nevertheless required to be accountable for and to defend their decision making so understanding how and when decisions are made and how professional judgement is applied in practice are of crucial importance to the profession and people with lived experience.

In this module, you will draw upon relevant theory, research and ethical perspectives and values to gain a critical understanding of how ideas on risk and complexity shapes and influences decision making in social work. You will also learn about the challenges of the legal and policy framework as it applies to how decisions are made across different service settings and contexts. This module will provide you with the opportunity to examine, evaluate and develop the knowledge and insight needed to work legally, ethically, and confidently to advocate for and to safeguard people's legal and human rights.

You will have the opportunity to critique dominant discourses in this subject area, and to adopt a social constructionist approach that will enable you to develop an enhanced critical eye on theory, research, and practice. Key themes will include assessment and management of risk, working within a framework of human and civil rights, understanding, competing rights and differing needs , and the importance of autonomy and self-determination. The legitimate use of power to safeguard and support adults and children at risk from harm and abuse, risk and vulnerability in context- personal, interpersonal, environmental and organisational, will also be considered.

In this module the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (SDG) '1. No poverty', '10. Reduce inequalities', and ’16. Peace, justice and strong institutions’ will be considered.

Studying this module will also help you meet the requirements of the social work Professional Capabilities Framework: Domain 1’ Values 7 Ethics’, Domain 2 ‘Diversity & Equality, Domain 3 ‘Rights, Justice & Economic Wellbeing’, Domain 4 ‘Knowledge’, and Domain 5 ‘Critical Reflection & Analysis’.

The scheduled teaching and learning will count towards the 30 days of skills development required by Social Work England.

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: Teaching will usually include lectures, seminars, group based activities and access to online learning opportunities.

Module Learning outcomes: On successful completion of this module students will achieve the following learning outcomes.

MO1 Critically examine the nature of abuse and harm and the impact on the lives of service users, carers and their families, taking into account issues of, for example, intersectionality, social, cultural and economic contexts.

MO2 Crtically explore how the legal and policy framework for practice in this arena can be used to protect, safeguard and promote wellbeing as well as ensure that the legal and human rights of service users, families and carers are protected.

MO3 Analyse theoretical approaches to risk and decision making, and evaluate their application to professional practice, considering how social work values and ethically defensible practice inform professional judgement.

Hours to be allocated: 150

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 114 hours

Staff-guided learning = 36 hours

Reading list: The reading list for this module can be accessed at readinglists.uwe.ac.uk via the following link https://uwe.rl.talis.com/index.html

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: During the module there will be formative assessment opportunities through seminar and peer led groups, focused on key themes and in preparation for a creative poster presentation. You will gain feedback from your peers and teaching staff on your understanding, knowledge and critical evaluation skills within a supportive context. Formative feedback may also be provided in discussion with people with lived experience of using social care services.

The summative assessment is an individual presentation related to the module content. The assessment will last twenty minutes and include questions asked by your assessors. You will produce a poster and discuss what it represents, and then answer questions about your topic from the assessors.

Assessment tasks:

Poster (First Sit)
Description: 10 minute Individual Poster presentation with additional 10 minutes for question and answer based on the presentation
Weighting: 100 %
Final assessment: Yes
Group work: No
Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Poster (Resit)
Description: 10 minute Individual Poster presentation with additional 10 minutes for question and answer based on the presentation
Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Part 5: Contributes towards

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study:

Social Work [Glenside] BSc (Hons) 2025-26

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