

Social Policy cont.

	Teaching quality %	Student experience %	Research quality %	Entry standards (UCAS points)	Graduate prospects %	Overall score
12 Leeds	79.2	79.1	48.5	151	72.5	89.3
13 Birmingham	75.8	71.3	61	144	73.1	89
14 York	75	69.3	58	134	77.9	88.2
15 Nottingham Trent	91.5	86.5	29.5	136	—	88
16 Sheffield	86.4	81.4	36.8	135	69.9	87.6
17 Bath	69.8	70.3	59.5	157	—	87.1
18 Salford	89.5	88.1	44.5	109	65.3	86.9
19 Stirling	73.8	72.1	47.5	161	—	86.7
=20 Cardiff	79.6	75.1	54	124	—	86
=20 Plymouth	79.7	76.7	50.5	119	69.7	86
22 Wales Trinity St David	87.1	77.3	11.8	—	75	84
23 Aston	77.9	77.5	42.5	121	—	83.1
24 Liverpool	69.2	71.2	55	127	—	82.6
25 Lincoln	76.9	75.3	51	107	—	82.5
26 Bedfordshire	83.8	78.2	50.2	102	51.6	81.9
27 Hertfordshire	78.4	76.2	48	99	—	81.6
28 Bangor	84	73.4	33.2	138	48.0*	81.4
29 Central Lancashire	69.5	69.1	51.5	117	—	80.6
30 Edge Hill	80.4	77.1	17.5	126	—	79.7
31 West of Scotland	87.6	73.8	13.2	134	50	79.4
=32 South Wales	75.8	67.5	33.5	107	59.1*	78.4
=32 East London	80.8	80.1	40	74	—	78.4
34 De Montfort	67	54.2	43.2	111	67.4	78.3
35 Northampton	84.5	78.9	—	111	52.9	75.8
36 Wolverhampton	83.3	74.9	12.2	92	54.0*	75.5
37 Ulster	63.3	56.4	53.8	112	41.6	73.9

Employed in high-skilled job	40%	Employed in lower-skilled job	33%
Employed in high-skilled job and studying	4%	Employed in lower-skilled job and studying	1%
Studying	7%	Unemployed	5%
High-skilled work (median) salary	£25,000	Low-/medium-skilled salary	£21,000

Social Work

In a table often characterised by universities rising and falling in the rankings, Lancaster takes over at the top, swapping places with the university that has been No 1 for the past two years, Edinburgh, now in third place. Lancaster performs strongly across the board – it has the third-highest entry standards, rates of student satisfaction which put it fifth for teaching quality and 11th for the wider experience, and places in the top five for research. Bristol, in tenth place in the table, was the top scorer in the field in the Research Excellence Framework 2021, followed by Kent (this year's runner-up overall) and then East Anglia (14th). Teesside outdoes all 74 other universities in the Social Work table for the warm reviews by its social work students, placing top for teaching quality and for the broad undergraduate experience in our latest National Student Survey analysis. At the opposite end of the scale, West of England (in =51st)

fares worst for both teaching quality and the broader experience.

Led by Glasgow Caledonian, which registered 97.7% of graduates in professional-level jobs and/or furthering their studies within 15 months, 18 universities had over 90% of graduates achieving these looked-for career outcomes. The Frontline programme, modelled on Teach First, aims to attract graduates of other subjects to train in the profession, and degree apprenticeships offer another social work route (though these are not profiled here), but social work degrees are still the main pathway to careers. Even so, applications declined by around 19% in 2023 and the numbers accepted onto courses decreased by 16%.

It comes as a surprise to some that graduate salaries for those with a social work degree compare very favourably with other subject areas. Average early career salaries of £29,885 rank social work 13th in our 70-subject pay index. It is comfortably in the upper half of the graduate table too, in 30th place. Added to the relative job security is a sense of purpose, as explained by Professor Anne Campbell, programme director of the master's in substance use and substance use disorders, School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Queen's University, Belfast: "A career in social work will make a positive difference in the lives of children, young people, adults and older people. You will promote social justice in health and social care settings, and in education, criminal justice and the voluntary sector. You will be supported in practice and with continuous personal and professional development opportunities throughout your career."

Social Work

	Teaching quality %	Student experience %	Research quality %	Entry standards (UCAS points)	Graduate prospects %	Overall score
1 Lancaster	89.5	87.7	60.2	153	86.2	100
2 Kent	87.2	76.6	72.2	134	97.1	99.5
3 Edinburgh	78.5	70	55.2	171	—	99.4
4 Nottingham	92.1	87.5	54	140	91.4	99
5 Strathclyde	81.4	75	43.8	179	84.1	98.4
6 Queen's, Belfast	83.8	79.2	56.5	144	94.8	98
7 Hertfordshire	92.2	89.2	48	138	88.6	97.6
=8 Bath	84.2	81.1	59.5	140	92.1	97.5
=8 Glasgow Caledonian	89.4	82	26	152	97.7	97.5
10 Bristol	81.4	85.1	77.8	139	80.8	97
11 Hull	93.1	88.7	53.8	140	79.5	96.8
12 Essex	88.7	83	62.5	118	95.6	96.5
13 Salford	85.9	78.8	44.5	141	95.1	96.4
14 East Anglia	72.6	68.2	69.8	134	95.8	94.9
15 Manchester Metropolitan	92.2	89.3	32.8	142	81.9	94.8
16 Dundee	87.8	80.3	28.5	137	94.3	94.3
17 Plymouth	82.7	78.8	50.5	134	85.7	93.6
18 Central Lancashire	85	78	51.5	131	83.5	93.2
19 Middlesex	91	87.2	27.8	123	92.8	93.1
20 Ulster	87.8	84.1	53.8	123	80.3	92.9
21 Sussex	84.4	77.7	41	137	83.3	92.5
=22 Robert Gordon	91.5	85.6	—	141	93.1	92.3
=22 Teesside	93.9	90.8	18.2	124	89.1	92.3
=24 Portsmouth	87.2	81.2	33	128	88.3	92.2
=24 Northumbria	82.1	77.2	42	150	74.3	92.2

Social Work cont.

	Teaching quality %	Student experience %	Research quality %	Entry standards (UCAS points)	Graduate prospects %	Overall score
=26 Bournemouth	87.5	84.8	10.2	140	91.4	92.1
=26 Huddersfield	86	84.3	43.5	135	76.6	92.1
=28 Lincoln	88.5	76.8	51	128	76.9	92
=28 Bangor	86.3	77	59.8	113	—	92
30 Brighton	87.6	81.7	34	116	92	91.5
31 Keele	86.9	80.8	33.2	125	87	91.4
32 Swansea	85.8	84	46.5	127	75.6	91.1
33 Anglia Ruskin	85	75.9	30	122	93.4	91
=34 West of Scotland	88.6	80.3	13.2	140	83.5	90.7
=34 Kingston	92.3	84.5	38.5	116	79.4	90.7
36 York	69.1	61.8	58	138	—	89.5
37 Chester	88.4	80.6	12.8	128	85	89.2
38 Greenwich	82	74.4	17	146	78.4	89
39 Gloucestershire	81.8	70.5	16.2	122	97.2	88.9
=40 De Montfort	83.7	77	43.2	109	83.2	88.4
=40 Wrexham	89.1	78	20.5	—	79.3	88.4
=40 Suffolk	82.8	65.2	21.8	—	91.1	88.4
43 South Wales	83.8	76.1	33.5	116	84	88.3
44 Worcester	88.7	81.7	12.8	128	—	88.2
45 Liverpool Hope	80.5	76.7	21.2	126	85.3	87.9
=46 Nottingham Trent	87.6	83.3	29.5	117	75.5	87.8
=46 Solent, Southampton	86.6	74.6	9.5	117	93.2	87.8
=48 Birmingham City	84.2	79.9	25.8	120	80.3	87.6
=48 Coventry	88.7	84.7	—	130	81.4	87.6
50 Sunderland	90.1	82.7	39.5	122	58.7	86.7
=51 Staffordshire	82.3	78.3	18.2	123	80.4	86.6
=51 West of England	59.2	52.1	35.2	138	96.4	86.6
53 East London	80	65.7	40	113	81.2	86.3
=54 Sheffield Hallam	69.3	62	26.2	142	81.6	86.2
=54 Edge Hill	78.7	75.8	17.5	135	75.4	86.2
56 London South Bank	76.6	64.6	27.8	120	86.7	86
57 Oxford Brookes	76.7	64.6	37.8	113	80.6	85.2
58 Chichester	88.8	75.3	3	110	83.7	84.6
59 Goldsmiths, London	67.1	52.1	48	111	88.9	84.4
60 Leeds Beckett	83.4	81.7	17.8	112	73.8	84.1
61 Cardiff Metropolitan	81	73	—	124	82.2	84
62 Bedfordshire	85.4	76.9	50.2	111	52.7	83.8
63 Canterbury Christ Church	85.8	76.8	31.8	102	69.6	83.6
64 Derby	82	71.6	25.5	121	64.8	83.3
65 Winchester	85.1	72.2	16.5	114	70.1	82.9
66 West London	72.8	60.5	39	109	73.3	81.9
67 Liverpool John Moores	88.5	84.5	15.8	—	56.0*	81.8
68 Buckinghamshire New	91.9	79.4	12.5	101	63.7	81.5
69 Leeds Trinity	83.5	78.8	—	109	70.7	80.5

70 Newman	87	86	13.8	109	52.5	80
71 Northampton	81.1	78.6	—	112	68.5	79.9
72 London Metropolitan	83.7	75.6	—	113	65.6	79.8
73 Wolverhampton	77.5	70.9	12.2	107	69.1	79.3
74 Cumbria	68.7	58.3	8.2	111	—	75.2

Employed in high-skilled job	61%	Employed in lower-skilled job	19%
Employed in high-skilled job and studying	4%	Employed in lower-skilled job and studying	1%
Studying	4%	Unemployed	4%
High-skilled work (median) salary	£30,007	Low-/medium-skilled salary	£20,838

Sociology

The most applied-to subject within the social sciences grouping, sociology attracted over 80,000 applications in 2023 and more than 15,700 new undergraduates were accepted onto courses. Such levels are despite a year-on-year decline in applications and the third successive downturn in new starter numbers. There are not usually any required subjects, though the leading universities look for a broad selection of humanities A-levels – from classics and ancient history to English and psychology. The study of human social relationships and institutions, “Sociology encourages a profound and creative examination of the world,” explains Professor Sam Friedman, associate professor of sociology, LSE. “It trains you to question assumptions that are taken for granted, delve beneath the surface and think critically about how society is organised and how we experience our lives. In particular it enables an exploration of the multiple forms of power and inequality that shape the world today, and how they affect the lives of all of us.”

With entry standards across our table of 88 universities ranging from 200 UCAS tariff points at Glasgow to 24 institutions where entrants averaged 110 points and under, there are broad options for applicants. Cambridge is the top-ranked university to study sociology for the fifth consecutive year, its rank boosted by strong performances across the five measures in our ranking without topping any individually. For graduate prospects Cambridge is just behind Durham – which registered 88.7% of sociology graduates in high-skilled jobs and/or further study within 15 months. Entry standards are highest at Glasgow, followed by Cambridge, while sixth-place Loughborough has the edge for research in the field – based on results of the Research Excellence Framework 2021.

Glasgow Caledonian is the top-ranked post-1992 university, tying in 18th place with Birmingham and Manchester, with Lancaster in 14th place, while Worcester (40th overall) has the highest rates of student satisfaction with teaching quality and is behind only Surrey (joint eighth overall) for students’ evaluation of the broader undergraduate experience.

Courses cover topics such as gender roles, multiculturalism, media and culture, and can include options to study criminology or social policy. The subject’s academic breadth may be the source of its popularity, as it tends to offer little immediate gratification in terms of graduate prospects. In the new employment table, sociology ranks 64th out of 70 subject areas and it places =53rd in our salaries ranking. The latest data shows 43% of graduates were employed in professional-level jobs 15 months after their degrees, only 11% more than were employed in roles deemed “low-skilled”.