

# Master of Science in Social Work

## Master in Sozialer Arbeit

### Study guide



Bern University of Applied Sciences, Department of Social Work

Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Department of Social Work

FHS St.Gallen, Department of Social Work

Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Social Work

## Table of contents

Overview of the M.Sc. programme in Social Work	4
Collaborative M.Sc. programme	4
Fundamental characteristics of the M.Sc. programme	5
The M.Sc. programme at a glance	8
Admission	12
Curriculum	15
Foundation modules	15
Areas of specialization	19
Elective modules	27
Final stage	29
People and places	31
What students have to say	32
Contacts	33

## Editorial

The demands placed on social work professionals have increased substantially. Today's job market requires social work specialists with sound knowledge of the discipline of social work and direct experience of how it is practised. Professionals ready to take the lead in the further development of social work – in strategic positions in practice, research and teaching – are increasingly sought after.

When Switzerland's universities of applied sciences adopted the Bologna system, the master's degree programme in Social Work was developed as the step 2 diploma in this discipline. This was both a significant milestone in the evolution of Social Work as an academic discipline and an important prerequisite for cross-border co-operation and international mobility within the profession. Working closely with practitioners and aligning their teaching to a profession's expectations are critically important to universities of applied sciences. In their master's degree programmes, these institutions' project and research work is focused on the issues confronting practitioners. Furthermore, it is through their work with practitioners that university of applied sciences faculty, at every teaching level, demonstrate their merit. That is how these institutions fulfill their mission of creating a learning environment in which a profession „can be studied“. Switzerland's M.Sc. programme in Social Work is a collaborative undertaking combining the resources of four established Swiss universities of applied sciences: the Bern University of Applied Sciences, the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, the FHS St. Gallen and the Zurich University of Applied Sciences. This close co-operation is the only one of its kind in Swiss tertiary education, enabling students and faculty to establish a network of professional contacts throughout German-speaking Switzerland.

We look forward to welcoming you to the programme.

*Professor Wiebke Twisselmann*

Director of Studies

## Overview of the M.Sc. programme in Social Work

### Collaborative M.Sc. programme

#### 4 universities – one master's degree programme

This curriculum, which is unique in Switzerland, promotes the exchange of ideas between four institutions in the country's German-speaking area. Enrolling in any one of these locations gives you access to four universities of applied sciences, so that you will get to know faculty members in all four institutions. Whether you actually visit all four cities is your decision. Each of the institutions has their own particular expertise to contribute to this partnership. Most notably, in the second half of the curriculum, each location offers a specific field of specialisation. The particular subject areas on offer are based on the fields in which each university of applied sciences focuses its research. This ensures a highly effective transfer of knowledge between research and teaching.

#### International mobility

With four universities working together in Switzerland, the scope for developing a strong international partnership network is unparalleled. We are working at all levels on developing the international dimensions of our programme. These initiatives include mutual recognition of student achievements, participation in international research projects and the organisation of specialist symposia.

## Fundamental characteristics of the M.Sc. programme

### Graduates' skills profile

The Swiss universities of applied sciences' master's degree programme in Social Work develops the knowledge students have acquired during their bachelor degree curriculum, providing them with a sound and comprehensive overview of the discipline. It teaches social work professionals:

- to develop new models and solutions for complex tasks;
- to present and implement a comprehensive, holistic approach to assignments involving co-operation with other disciplines;
- to lead large-scale interdisciplinary projects;
- to plan and carry out research assignments.

B.Sc. programme	M.Sc. programme
Practising the profession	Development of the profession
Case references	References to profession structure
Applying scientific knowledge	Critical comparison and promulgation of scientific knowledge
Interdisciplinary co-operation	Interdisciplinary discourse
Admission to M.Sc. programme in Social Work	Admission to Ph.D. programme

### Academic title

Graduates successfully completing this curriculum are awarded the internationally recognized «Master of Science in Social Work» title.

## Fields of work and job types

Both the bachelor and master's degree programmes provide their graduates with a practice-oriented preparation for a professional career in social work. While the bachelor degree teaches students the skills they will need in client-specific work, the master's degree programme provides them with the knowledge required to develop methods and theories. The master's degree programme qualifies its graduates for line-management and administrative positions in government welfare and healthcare departments, public social services organisations, foundations, non-profit organisations and private-sector companies with strong corporate social responsibility values.

New positions outside Switzerland or with international organisations increasingly require candidates to hold a master's degree.

## Not all master's degrees are the same

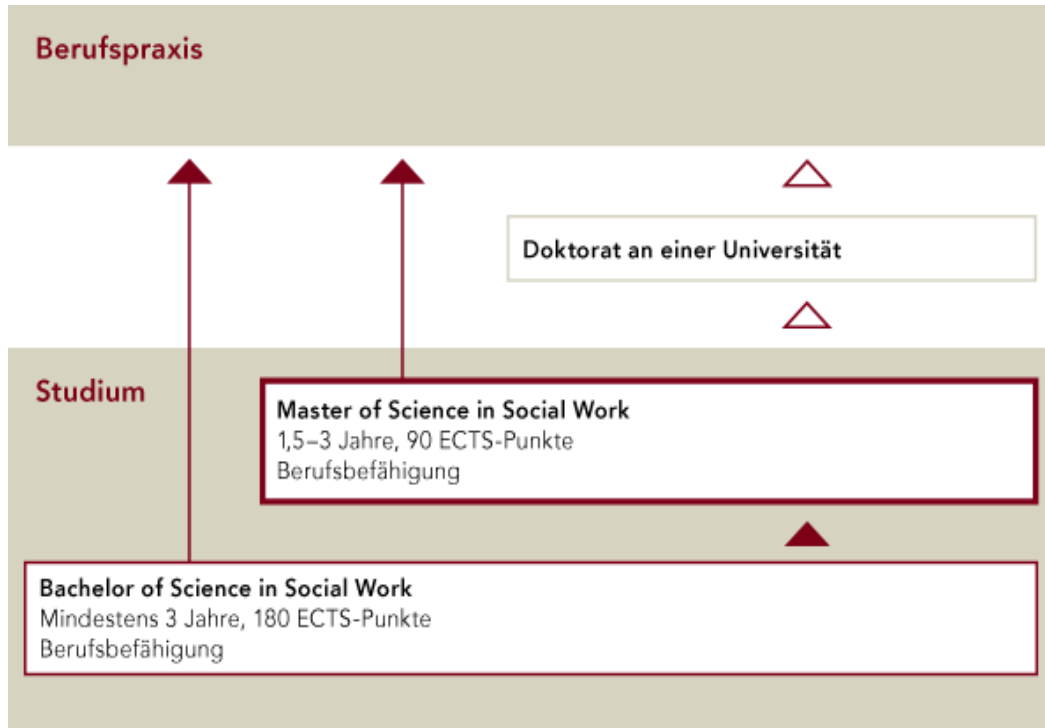
This consecutive master's degree programme in Social Work is a generalist curriculum which builds on the knowledge students have acquired while earning their bachelor degrees. It should not be confused with the various continuing education courses offered in specific subject areas, methods or functions which culminate in the award of a «Master of Advanced Studies – MAS» title.

## B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D.

In order to promote the development of independent theory in the field of Social Work, graduates from this master's degree programme in Social Work are eligible to go on to write a doctoral thesis and earn their Ph.D.

Admission to a Ph.D. programme requires a minimum of 300 ECTS credits. Students who have successfully completed their bachelor and master's degree programmes at a Swiss university of applied sciences will have earned a total of 270 ECTS credits.

This is 30 credits short of the formal ECTS requirement. As a rule, the university accepting doctoral candidates will decide whether they need to complete additional work after their M.Sc. and, if so, what form that work will take.



## The master's degree programme at a glance

### A two-stage curriculum

During the first part of the master's degree programme you will extend and develop your knowledge of the theories and methods of Social Work. In the second part you will focus on developing and deepening your knowledge in one of four subject areas. You will also familiarise yourself with the scientific approaches used in the field of Social Work and will develop your research skills. The latter part of the curriculum includes project work and writing your master's degree thesis, which together provide an opportunity for in-depth focus on a further field of specialisation. Your project work will create the outline for the master's degree thesis you will then go on to write. In writing your master's degree thesis you can choose between a primarily theoretical, empirical or practical approach.

<b>Basisstudium</b>			
<b>Theoretische und methodische Grundlagen</b>			<b>30 ECTS</b>
5 Pflichtmodule			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Forschungsmethoden FOM</li> <li>– Sozialpolitik im internationalen Vergleich SIV</li> <li>– Theorien und Methodenentwicklung der Sozialen Arbeit TME</li> <li>– Wandel und Innovation in Organisationen WIO</li> <li>– Wissenschaftstheorie und Forschungsmethoden WTF</li> </ul>			
▼			
<b>Vertiefungsstudium</b>			
<b>4 mögliche Vertiefungsrichtungen</b>			<b>30 ECTS</b>
Wahl einer Vertiefungsrichtung mit je 3 obligatorischen Modulen:			
Gesellschaftlicher Wandel und die Organisation Sozialer Arbeit (Bern)	Sozialpolitik und Sozialökonomie (Luzern)	Professions- und Methodenentwicklung (St. Gallen)	Soziale Probleme, soziale Konflikte und Lebensführung (Zürich)
Zusätzlich 2 Wahlmodule Forschung: quantitative Forschung / qualitative Forschung / Evaluation			
<b>Abschlussarbeit</b>			<b>30 ECTS</b>
4 Pflichtmodule			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Projektarbeit</li> <li>– Master-Thesis I, II und III</li> </ul>			

## Compulsory and elective modules, graded assignments

All five foundation modules in the first part of the curriculum are compulsory. After that, you yourself largely determine what you will study. You individualise your curriculum by choosing between one of four possible areas of specialisation. Each area of specialisation comprises three modules. In addition, students are required to complete a further two elective modules. For these, students can choose between three different research modules and the modules from the three other areas of specialisation they did not choose. The project work you then choose to carry out – and your subsequent master's thesis – will be on a subject of your own choosing. These two final assignments represent five modules.

Throughout the curriculum, each module concludes with a graded assignment (in German, "Leistungsnachweis") which will take the form of a presentation, a written paper or an examination.

## Individual study schedule

The study schedule can be adapted to the individual's work and family commitments. Thanks to its modular structure, the curriculum can be completed on a full-time or a part-time basis. Each semester, you decide how many modules you will complete. The curriculum may be completed in a minimum of three semesters (on a full-time basis) and a maximum of six semesters (on a part-time basis). About 30 percent of the course comprises classroom teaching, with independent study (some of which is supervised) representing the remaining 70 percent. In addition to the usual teaching and learning methods, web-based, e-learning methods are also used.

## Study workload

The time you are likely to need for completing the modules is as follows:

### Foundation, elective and specialisation modules:

6 ECTS credits are awarded for each module, which will take an average of 180 hours' work to complete.

- 8 x 1 day for classroom teaching

- 8 x 1 day for preparatory and follow-up work
- additional independent study before, during and after each classroom teaching session

### Project work and master's thesis modules:

The project module lasts an entire semester and is the only one for which 12 ECTS credits are awarded. The three master's thesis modules are awarded 6 ECTS credits each.

Project work: 6 x ½ day with classroom sessions and individual supervision by faculty

Master's thesis: 2 x ½ day with classroom sessions and individual supervision by faculty

In addition, the written papers will require independent study, which students are free to schedule as they wish within the timeframe allowed by the completion deadlines.

### Semester structure

Students can start the curriculum in either the autumn or the spring semester. Each semester is divided into two academic quarters, each of which lasts eight weeks. Each module's classroom teaching sessions are always held on the same day of the week and run for a whole quarter. When students are enrolled for all available course places, each module is offered once every quarter, the teaching location alternating between the Eastern region (in Zurich or St. Gallen) and the Western region (in Bern or Lucerne). This arrangement enables you to plan which modules you will study well in advance. The precise semester calendar can be found (in German) on: [www.masterinsozialerarbeit.ch](http://www.masterinsozialerarbeit.ch)

<b>Herbstsemester 11/12</b>		
<b>1. Quartal</b>	<b>2. Quartal</b>	<b>Vorlesungsfreie Zeit</b>
19.09. – 12.11.11	14.11. – 23.12.11 Weihnachtsferien 09.01. – 21.01.12	23.01. – 18.02.12

<b>Frühlingssemester 12</b>		
<b>1. Quartal</b>	<b>2. Quartal</b>	<b>Vorlesungsfreie Zeit</b>
20.02. – 04.04.12 Osterferien 12.04. – 21.04.12	23.04. – 16.06.12	18.06. – 15.09.12

## ILIAS, the central information and learning platform

The ILIAS internet platform is used to publish information, to make module texts available for download and to provide exercises for students. The platform also hosts a discussion forum to encourage the exchange of ideas. At the beginning of your studies you will be given a log in ID, as well as instructions and exercises which will help you to familiarise yourself quickly with the platform.

## Student coaching

Student coaching includes the usual student counselling providing advice on the organisation and planning of your studies. In addition, the student coaches will establish a study competences dossier for you which will be used to monitor your development during the curriculum. This personal portfolio will help you to recognise your various competences as you develop them. It can also be used to document them for future employers. A total of three student coaching sessions are scheduled over the duration of your studies:

- Student coaching 1 (group session): Introduction
- Student coaching 2 (one-on-one): Reflection on the student's individual learning process and study-planning
- Student coaching 3 (one-on-one): Reflection on the extent to which the student's competence objectives have been attained

You are welcome to arrange additional sessions with your student coach at any time. Should you have any questions before commencing your studies, you can also contact the student coaches at that stage.

For student coach contact information, see page 33.

## Admission

### Admission without examination

Candidates holding a bachelor's degree or other university of applied sciences diploma in Social Work (Social Work, Social Pedagogy or Socio-cultural Animation) with a grade of 5<sup>1</sup> or higher can be admitted to this programme without sitting an entrance examination. To qualify for this dispensation, such candidates must be able to demonstrate that they have completed 1,500 hours (equivalent to approximately 1 year of full-time professional work) of practical work experience in the field of social work. The fieldwork assignments carried out during the Swiss universities of applied sciences' B.Sc. programmes in Social Work generally represent 1,500 hours of practical work experience and will be recognised, as will equivalent, documented fieldwork assignments completed in other countries.

Candidates who have been accepted for a consecutive master's degree programme at another university are also eligible for admission to this programme without sitting an entrance examination.

### Admission by examination

Candidates holding a bachelor's degree or other university of applied sciences diploma in Social Work with a grade of less than 5<sup>2</sup> will be invited to sit an entrance examination. This ruling also applies to candidates holding a bachelor's degree or equivalent diploma in a related arts or sociology discipline, provided they can demonstrate that the subject they have studied is sufficiently closely related to the field of Social Work. In order to be invited to sit the entrance examination, all these candidates must be able to demonstrate that they have completed 1,500 hours (equivalent to approximately 1 year of full-time professional work) of

<sup>1</sup> This grade 5 relates to the grading scale from 1 to 6 which is used throughout the Swiss educational system. These grades have the following significance: 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = sufficient, 3 = insufficient, 2 = poor, 1 = of no value. Under this system, a grade of 4 or higher is a pass, while grades below 4 are fails. Suitably qualified candidates who have graduated from institutions outside Switzerland are encouraged to apply for admission. For these candidates, the Director of Studies will determine the equivalence, under the Swiss grading system, of the grade with which they graduated.

<sup>2</sup> This grade 5 relates to the Swiss grading scale from 1 to 6 referred to in footnote 1 above. Suitably qualified candidates who have graduated from institutions outside Switzerland are encouraged to apply for admission. For these candidates, the Director of Studies will determine the equivalence, under the Swiss grading system, of the grade with which they graduated.

practical work experience in the field of social work. Candidates who have completed their bachelor's degree programmes or equivalent diploma courses in Social Work shortly before the commencement of this master's degree programme and have not yet been advised of their overall grades may enrol for the entrance examination. Admission will be granted to all candidates who

- a) either pass the entrance examination, or
- b) despite not passing the entrance examination, are subsequently awarded a grade of 5<sup>3</sup> or higher for their bachelor degree.

### Admission examination

- Oral examination
- 60 minutes' duration
- Examination fee of 200 Swiss francs
- The examination assesses the candidate's ability to reflect on social work issues and his or her own actions and personal attributes, to think analytically and to draw appropriate conclusions.
- Examination content: each candidate is given a case-based assignment to review, after which he or she presents the results and discusses the social work aspects of the case with two faculty members
- Recommended preparatory reading: references are published on the website and are also included in the examination invitation sent to candidates

### Required language skills

In order to complete their studies successfully, candidates must have a good level of proficiency in spoken and written German. Because the syllabus includes literature in English, they should also be able to understand English scientific and academic texts.

<sup>3</sup> This grade 5 relates to the Swiss grading scale from 1 to 6 referred to in footnote 1 above. Suitably qualified candidates who have graduated from institutions outside Switzerland are encouraged to apply for admission. For these candidates, the Director of Studies will determine the equivalence, under the Swiss grading system, of the grade with which they graduated.

## Registration

Candidates may register for this programme at any time on [www.masterinsozialerarbeit.ch](http://www.masterinsozialerarbeit.ch). This website also provides details of all registration deadlines and examination dates as well as a list of documents which candidates must submit by post.

## Fees

As with the Swiss universities of applied sciences' bachelor degree programme in Social Work, the fees per semester amount to about 1,000 Swiss francs. This covers the semester dues and other fees (enrolment fee, flat rate contribution to the cost of materials, examination and diploma fees). The fees per semester vary slightly between the four participating institutions. These fees do not include the cost of purchasing literature and software.

## Curriculum

### Foundation modules

#### Five compulsory modules

At the outset of your studies you will complete five compulsory modules which will provide you with the fundamental knowledge you will need for this curriculum. The content of each individual module is not directly related to that of the others and students may therefore attend them in any sequence they choose:

- Research methods<sup>4</sup>
- Welfare policy from an international perspective<sup>5</sup>
- Development of Social Work theories and methods<sup>6</sup>
- Change and innovation within organisations<sup>7</sup>
- Scientific theory and research methods<sup>8</sup>

#### Research methods<sup>9</sup>

##### Key content

In this course you will learn a number of fundamental concepts of qualitative social research. In particular, you will familiarise yourself with methods of document and interview analysis. These skills are important for two reasons: first for future professional practice, in helping you to understand a case; second for the scientific analysis of social work practice. In order to put

<sup>4</sup> In German, „Forschungsmethoden – FOM“

<sup>5</sup> In German, „Sozialpolitik im internationalen Vergleich – SIV“

<sup>6</sup> In German, „Theorie- und Methodenentwicklung der Sozialen Arbeit – TME“

<sup>7</sup> In German, „Wandel und Innovation in Organisationen – WIO“

<sup>8</sup> In German, „Wissenschaftstheorie und Forschungsmethoden – WTF“

<sup>9</sup> In German, „Forschungsmethoden – FOM“

the methods they have learned into practice, students work in groups on a simple research case.

### Structure

- Introduction to research design and data gathering methods
- Selected epistemological and scientific traditions; selected schools of social research
- Overview of various analytical methods; introduction to the application of a selected analytical method for non-standardised data
- Collation and integration of individual findings from the project; questions regarding the tenability of generalisation; presentation of qualitative social research findings; viability of qualitative social research methods as a means of understanding cases

## Welfare policy from an international perspective<sup>10</sup>

### Key content

This module focuses on the various different constellations and concepts found in various countries' national welfare policies. You will gain an understanding of the key concepts used in academic debate on the welfare state. The module's international perspective and comparative approach serve to bring the welfare challenges facing today's governments into sharper focus.

### Structure

- Key scientific terms and concepts in welfare state and social policy debate; country-specific challenges; welfare burden management strategies compared
- The historic background to the European welfare agreements; European institutions; the distribution of welfare responsibilities between the EU and its member states; EU initiatives in welfare policy

<sup>10</sup> In German, „Sozialpolitik im internationalen Vergleich – SIV“

## Development of Social Work theories and methods<sup>11</sup>

### Key content

Theories are a cornerstone of Social Work. Their tenets provide a structured framework within which the discipline's highly complex practice can be systematically described and explained.

This module focuses on a variety of theoretical substantiations of Social Work and their significance for current discourse in the discipline. It will provide you with an insight into the multiplicity and potential of theory development in Social Work.

### Structure

- Theory of the profession and discourse analysis (description and comparison)
- System theories and everyday theories (description and comparison)
- Utility of theoretical approaches in methodological development and practice
- Podium discussion with student participation

## Change and innovation within organisations<sup>12</sup>

### Key content

Social work professionals carry out their work in an organisational context. In order to design innovative projects and development processes effectively, you will need to be familiar with the way organisations with which you will be dealing in your future career function and the circumstances in which they operate. Among other things, this module will provide you with an introduction to organisational theories, organisational development theories and management models. A series of practical exercises will teach you how to apply these theories to practical situations.

<sup>11</sup> In German, „Theorie- und Methodenentwicklung – TME“

<sup>12</sup> In German, „Wandel und Innovation in Organisationen – WIO“

### Structure

- Social work and organisation; organisational theories and management models
- Conditions affecting innovation and change in organisations; possible approaches to innovation and change implementation; contiguous societal sub-systems and their interaction with welfare organisations
- Working with other societal sub-systems to create innovation

### Scientific theory and research methods<sup>13</sup>

#### Key content

In this module you will acquire a fundamental knowledge of quantitative social research techniques and will familiarise yourself with scientific and epistemological questions as well as issues arising in research ethics. The module focuses on the phases of the research process which precede the statistical analysis of numerical data. You will thus familiarise yourself with formulating questions and research hypotheses, developing appropriate research designs, measurement tools used in research, data gathering methods and data preparation techniques.

### Structure

- Introduction to the fundamental operations of descriptive statistics, based on an example data set; Excel-based exercises
- Scientific information as a specific form of knowledge; various scientific and epistemological premises used in sociological research; ethical issues in sociological research

<sup>13</sup> In German, „Wissenschaftstheorie und Forschungsmethoden – WTF“

## Areas of specialization

### A choice of four focus areas

During the specialisation phase of the curriculum, you can choose between four possible areas on which to focus your studies. Each area of specialisation comprises three modules. The content of each individual module is not directly related to that of the others, so they can be completed in any order.

- Societal change and the organisation of social work<sup>14</sup> – Bern
- Welfare policy and the welfare economy<sup>15</sup> – Lucerne
- The development of the profession and its methods<sup>16</sup> – St. Gallen
- Social problems, social conflicts and lifestyle<sup>17</sup> – Zurich

### Societal change and the organisation of social work<sup>18</sup> – the Bern specialisation

This course will help you to develop a greater understanding of societal structures, of the development dynamics affecting society and of the way in which social work is organised. This specialisation will appeal to students with an interest in analysing the effectiveness of social work interventions and in further developing the quality of the services the profession provides.

<sup>14</sup> In German, „Gesellschaftlicher Wandel und die Organisation Sozialer Arbeit“

<sup>15</sup> In German, „Sozialpolitik und Sozialökonomie“

<sup>16</sup> In German, „Professions- und Methodenentwicklung“

<sup>17</sup> In German, „Soziale Probleme, soziale Konflikte und Lebensführung“

<sup>18</sup> In German, „Gesellschaftlicher Wandel und die Organisation Sozialer Arbeit“

### Module a: Societal processes and the development of the organisation of social work<sup>19</sup>

This module analyses the way in which social work is organised as a reflection of the conditions and processes prevailing in society as a whole. Students will work on developing theories whose purpose is to facilitate an understanding of trends in societal development and an analysis of their effects. You will be dealing both with the values and objectives of social work and with empirical findings from its analysis. You will also familiarise yourself with some of the benchmarks used to measure the organisational development of social work strategies and structures.

### Module b: Public and non-profit management<sup>20</sup>

Management concepts play an important part in determining how public services are organised and directed. Over the last two decades, a policy of measuring the work of the welfare state in terms of its effect, quality and economic utility has become the dominant philosophy. Yet what do policies focusing on effective outcomes, innovation and quality mean in practical terms in the field of social work? How can management processes and structures be optimised? This module teaches you the key concepts necessary for an understanding of the structures and development processes in social work institutions and non-profit organisations. You will familiarise yourself with the theory, methodology and instruments commonly used in public management. By reviewing case studies and analysing planning and evaluation tools used in welfare management you will prepare yourself to contribute to shaping the future evolution of welfare organisations.

### Module c: Socio-ecological management concepts for social services<sup>21</sup>

In recent years, the advocates of socio-ecological concepts (social environment orientation, case management) have developed new concepts for the sustainable management of social

<sup>19</sup> In German, „Gesellschaftliche Prozesse und die Entwicklung der Organisation Sozialer Arbeit“

<sup>20</sup> In German, „Public und Nonprofit-Management“

<sup>21</sup> In German, „Sozialökologische Steuerungskonzepte für Soziale Dienste“

services. The objective here is to analyse how efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery can be reconciled with the technical quality standards the profession espouses.

This module provides an in-depth focus on current insights into how social services are managed. The key questions examined are: How can social services best focus on the interests of the client? How can clients' self-help impulses and individual initiative be effectively supported? How can clients' own resources and those of their social environment be put to use? How can co-operation and co-ordination with social services be most effectively achieved?

### Welfare policy and the welfare economy<sup>22</sup> - the Lucerne specialisation

A number of different areas of society exert a decisive influence on the actions and evolution of social work. Politics, the legal system and economic imperatives set the framework within which social work is carried out and determine the parameters for its development. This specialisation helps students to develop the skills needed to reflect on this context and to develop their professional skills. The course teaches them to analyse areas of tension created by diverging interests and differing sets of logic and to understand how opposing positions influence each other. You will also familiarise yourself with knowledge and tools which will help you represent social work coherently and factually. This specialisation will appeal to students wishing further to develop the skills needed for working on professional committees or in administrative positions and to contribute to the welfare policy debate.

#### Module a: Social work in the political, economic and legal context<sup>23</sup>

Here you will discuss arguments on how social work positions itself as a profession. Questions relating to justice from both a philosophical and a social work professional's standpoint form the basis for this debate. Within the tensions created by the conflicting demands of professional quality standards, concepts of political legitimacy, legal constraints and economic efficiency imperatives you will learn to recognise a variety of societal values

<sup>22</sup> In German, „Sozialpolitik und Sozialökonomie“

<sup>23</sup> In German, „Soziale Arbeit im Kontext von Politik, Ökonomie und Recht“

and to develop appropriate strategies for substantiating the mission and objectives of social work.

### Module b: Professional conduct at the interfaces with politics, the law and economics<sup>24</sup>

Our daily work teaches us how significant an influence political, legal and economic interests all exert on social work. In order to carry out their work effectively, social work professionals must be able to identify the key mechanisms at work in these areas. This module focuses on these three interfaces and uses case studies to demonstrate how processes can be initiated and implemented in the fields of politics, legislation and the economy. This course provides you with the skills you will need to deal with the conflicting expectations placed on social work.

### Module c: Welfare delivery systems<sup>25</sup>

In commercial organisations it is common practice to work with partners on strategic management and planning issues. While there is now increasing demand for this approach in the field of welfare, too, it is far harder to achieve than in the private sector. Calls for planned welfare and structured welfare delivery systems are becoming louder. The difficulty is the lack of an appropriate basis to build on and practical concepts for implementation. In addition, as the complexity of social work increases and social services become more specialised, the demands placed on delivery mechanisms and their structure are becoming more onerous. This module focuses on the analysis, design and further ongoing development of models for shared service provision and welfare delivery.

<sup>24</sup> In German, „Professionelles Handeln an den Schnittstellen zu Politik, Recht und Ökonomie“

<sup>25</sup> In German, „Versorgungssysteme“

## The development of the profession and its methods<sup>26</sup> – the St. Gallen specialisation

Social work is facing a multitude of challenges. These are compelling the profession to rethink and develop both its theoretical foundations and its forms of intervention. This specialisation enhances students' technical understanding of high-quality social work and helps them acquire the skills they will need to contribute to its ongoing development. Questions examined include: What are the attributes of high-quality social work? How can social work achieve its objectives? What results can social work interventions achieve? What works and why? This specialisation will appeal to students wishing further to develop their ability to formulate strategies and solutions for complex issues in a variety of practical social work fields.

### Module a: Aspects of professional conduct<sup>27</sup>

What are the key attributes of high-quality social work in a society like Switzerland's? Useful insights into this can be gained by systematically questioning social work practice. This module focuses on the current debate on professional social work conduct, examining its historical evolution and reviewing current empirical findings. The latter part of the course looks at how welfare professionals interact with each other in the work arena and with regard to social work organisations – always from the standpoint of professional ethics. This analysis helps to clarify positions and strengthen professionalism in welfare organisations.

### Module b: Reflection on selected social work methods<sup>28</sup>

This module provides a detailed analysis of fundamental methodological concepts, taking their historical context into account. Students will also familiarise themselves with overarching approaches to methodological reflection. The challenge here is to apply these approaches to current social work concepts (such as orientation towards day-to-day life or

<sup>26</sup> In German, „Professions- und Methodenentwicklung“

<sup>27</sup> In German, „Professionalitätsverständnis“

<sup>28</sup> In German, „Reflexion ausgewählter Methoden in der Sozialen Arbeit“

life management skills) in order to develop theory-based answers to questions of methodological practice, such as, How can I act? What is the purpose of my actions? In what direction should my actions lead? How should I act?

### Module c: The intentions and effects of professional intervention<sup>29</sup>

This module is devoted to the classical, fundamental questions relating to social work: How can the intended result be achieved? What works and why? Students will also analyse current debate from a strategic agenda perspective in the four fields of policy, the profession, organisations and science. The course will examine how the effectiveness criteria commonly applied to professional conduct standards can be put to productive use. It will also consider how the question as to what constitutes good professional practice can be used to develop quality criteria for effectiveness objectives.

### Social problems, social conflicts and lifestyle<sup>30</sup> – the Zurich specialisation

Students in this course will engage in a systematic and critical analysis of the contribution which social work can make to solving social problems. They will also examine how social work engages with social conflicts and how it addresses the practical problems facing individuals, families and groups when they are affected by social problems or conflicts. This specialisation will appeal to students wishing to engage in committed dialogue with specialised professionals working in the fields of social work, healthcare, the arts, architecture, politics, sport and education on the issues surrounding the identification and resolution of social problems and the adoption of beneficial lifestyle choices.

### Module a: The theory and development of social problems, social conflict and lifestyle<sup>31</sup>

It is not the case that everything which professionals designate and analyse as a social problem is perceived as such by those actually affected. This module enables students to

<sup>29</sup> In German, „Intentionen und Wirkungen professioneller Interventionen“

<sup>30</sup> In German, „Soziale Probleme, soziale Konflikte und Lebensführung“

<sup>31</sup> In German, „Theorien und Entwicklung sozialer Probleme, sozialer Konflikte und Lebensführung“

familiarise themselves with theories relating to the emergence, analysis, diagnosis, function, processing and resolution of social conflicts. These approaches are then examined in the context of identifying individual problem situations and developing appropriate intervention strategies to address them.

Fieldwork assignments and workshop sessions with guest speakers from the fields of science, business, politics and culture provide an opportunity to engage with representatives of other disciplines and professions in a discussion of social problems, social conflicts and lifestyle issues.

### Module b: Otherness and social inequality<sup>32</sup>

This module focuses on the analytical categories of „otherness“ and „social inequality“ as the fundamental parameters of social problems. These issues are reviewed from the standpoint of current theoretical discourse with reference to specific migration policy problems.

Based on an analysis of modern society, this module examines how social inequality can affect tensions and conflicts within society, be it within countries, Switzerland in particular, or in smaller social constellations such as schools, families or associations. Students will also review the implications of this for cross-cultural social work.

### Module c: Social problems and social work interventions<sup>33</sup>

When social work sets itself the task of tackling social problems, social conflicts and lifestyle issues, it obviously does so with the objective of achieving tangible results. Experience shows, however, that agreement on the objectives which social work sets out to achieve is not always as universal as might at first appear. Good intentions or actions taken with the best results in mind can fail to achieve their objective and there can be substantial disagreement between practitioners as to what constitutes an intervention's ultimate objective.

<sup>32</sup> In German, „Verschiedenheit und soziale Ungleichheit“

<sup>33</sup> In German, „Soziale Probleme und Interventionen“

Drawing on specific examples, this module sets out to examine the complex interaction between social problems, theoretical classification and professional social work practice and to analyse potential intended and unintended results.

## Elective modules

### Choices available

Your curriculum includes two elective modules. For these you can choose between

- Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Evaluation
- and the modules of the three specialisation areas you did not choose. One of the modules you choose should cover a subject which is of particular interest to you.

At least one of the two elective modules you choose must be a research module. Should you so wish, your second elective module may also be a research module.

### Qualitative Research

#### Key content

Qualitative social research is useful for social work because of its proximity to problems arising in everyday life. This module will teach you to carry out application-oriented qualitative social research projects on your own. Step-by-step you will review the various phases involved in the qualitative social research process, and will be given opportunities throughout the module of putting what you have learned into practice.

#### Structure

Key data gathering and collation methods, use of qualitative random sample analysis

Qualitative data evaluation methods

Data analysis quality control

Practical demonstration of research proficiency

### Quantitative Research

#### Key content

Social work involves working with statistics and quantitative research data in a number of ways, such as welfare benefit statistics. You will develop your knowledge of quantitative social research techniques and will learn to subject quantitative research results to critical

comparative analysis, with a view to assessing what quality criteria they will need to meet in order to support reliable conclusions. You will also learn how to design, evaluate and interpret simple quantitative analyses of your own. This course will often provide you with opportunities of examining the subject matter of your master's degree thesis.

### Structure

Formulating questions, scientific hypothesis, operationalisation, research design, quantitative data gathering and evaluation methods, inferential statistical analysis guidelines

Data preparation, data analysis, data interpretation

Critical assessment of empirical and quantitative research

### Evaluation

#### Key content

In recent decades, Evaluation has developed into a discipline in its own right. Demand for evaluation work can be expected to increase in the years to come, given the public sector's need to assess and demonstrate the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the services it delivers. Evaluation results are also crucial to the ongoing technical development and optimisation of social work. You will acquire the skills needed correctly to plan evaluations yourself or to commission others to carry them out and to supervise their execution. Students who have completed this module will have the opportunity of planning and executing an evaluation as part of a project assignment.

#### Structure

Key concepts and steps in an evaluation

Assessment of evaluation results and implementation of actions based thereon

## Final stage

### Project work and master's degree thesis

In the final stage of your studies you will carry out a project assignment and write your master's degree thesis. This phase comprises a total of four modules, during which teaching faculty members will supervise your work and provide you with academic guidance. If this suits your planned schedule, you may also carry out your project module alongside your specialisation modules. A member of teaching faculty will provide one-on-one supervision while you are engaged in writing your master's degree thesis.

### Project work: one module

This module culminates in your writing the outline (usually about fifteen pages) for your master's degree thesis. This will involve you using your theoretical and methodological knowledge to formulate a solution to a scientific or practical problem. The subject may be given to you by a practising or teaching organisation or may be one you have devised yourself. This module is essentially devoted to supervised independent study, classroom teaching being limited to six half-day sessions during the semester.

### Structure

- Part 1: Statement of the nature, objective and purpose of the project assignment; choice of subject;
- Clarification of any organisational issues; project execution process
- Part 2: Research of the literature; citation; problems encountered in formulating project outline
- Colloquium: Project outline presentation; feedback from fellow students

### Master's degree thesis: three modules

The master's degree thesis is an independent piece of academic work in the form of a written paper. The so-called "thesis defence" forms an integral part of a master's degree thesis. This takes the form of a discussion with teaching faculty and fellow students in which you are

required to demonstrate that you are able to respond appropriately to critical questions relating to your thesis. These modules are essentially devoted to supervised independent study, classroom teaching being limited to two half-day sessions per module.

### Structure

- Module 1: Objective and purpose of the master's degree thesis; formal and content-related requirements
- Module 2: Thesis question; interpretation and discussion of results; conclusions and recommendations
- Module 3: Preparation for master's degree thesis defence
- Colloquium: exchanges with fellow students; master's degree thesis defence practice

### Academic supervision

While you are working on your project assignment and master's degree thesis you will receive one-on-one supervision – in addition to the plenary session classroom lessons. Your supervisor will have practical and scientific knowledge of the subject you are covering in your thesis.

### Subjects and types of thesis

You are free to choose the subject of your project assignment and thesis in consultation with your supervisor. Your work must include theoretical, empirical and practical elements. The emphasis placed on each element may vary. The following types of thesis may be written:

- Empirical thesis: this will involve planning and carrying out an empirical investigation, integrating its theoretical aspects into the thesis and discussing its practical implications;
- Theoretical thesis: this will involve the evaluation of a social work theory, reflection on and discussion of relevant empirical studies and the derivation of practical recommendations;
- Practical theses: this will involve carrying out a development project in close collaboration with a practising organisation and contributing to the solution of a practical social work problem.

## People and places

### What students have to say

*Christina Egli, enrolled in the master's degree programme immediately after earning her bachelor degree in Social Pedagogy:*

«The master's degree programme modules are focused on the very subjects in which I was most interested after completing my bachelor thesis. Our classroom sessions give rise to exciting debate in which I, as one of the younger participants, derive particular benefit from the professional experience of the older students.»

*Heike Güdel, 18 years' practical professional experience as a social worker:*

«The master's degree programme provides me with the tools I need to be on sure ground when representing the social worker's standpoint in the current debates on social services. The course also provides me with many useful ideas for my day-to-day work.»

*Ginger Ineichen, five years' practical professional experience as a social worker:*

«The material we are covering in the master's degree programme also has a high degree of direct relevance to professional practice. The course is enriched by the fact that we are studying with students and teaching staff from different universities. Because the participating universities place the emphasis of their research on different areas, this provides a multiplicity of perspectives on social work.»

*Cécile Wisler, enrolled in the master's degree programme immediately after earning her bachelor degree in Social Work:*

«My expectations are being fully met, with plenty of attention being focused on the questions I would have liked to find out more about during my bachelor degree course. I am particularly interested in the wider implications of social policy issues and the economic aspects of social work.»

## Contacts

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## Student coaches

Each of the four participating universities of applied sciences has a student coach who will be happy to advise you on planning your studies:

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### Zurich University of Applied Sciences

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