

School of Social Work and Social Policy

**M.Sc. in Child Protection and
Welfare &**

MSc in Social Policy and Practice

Course Handbook
2025-2026

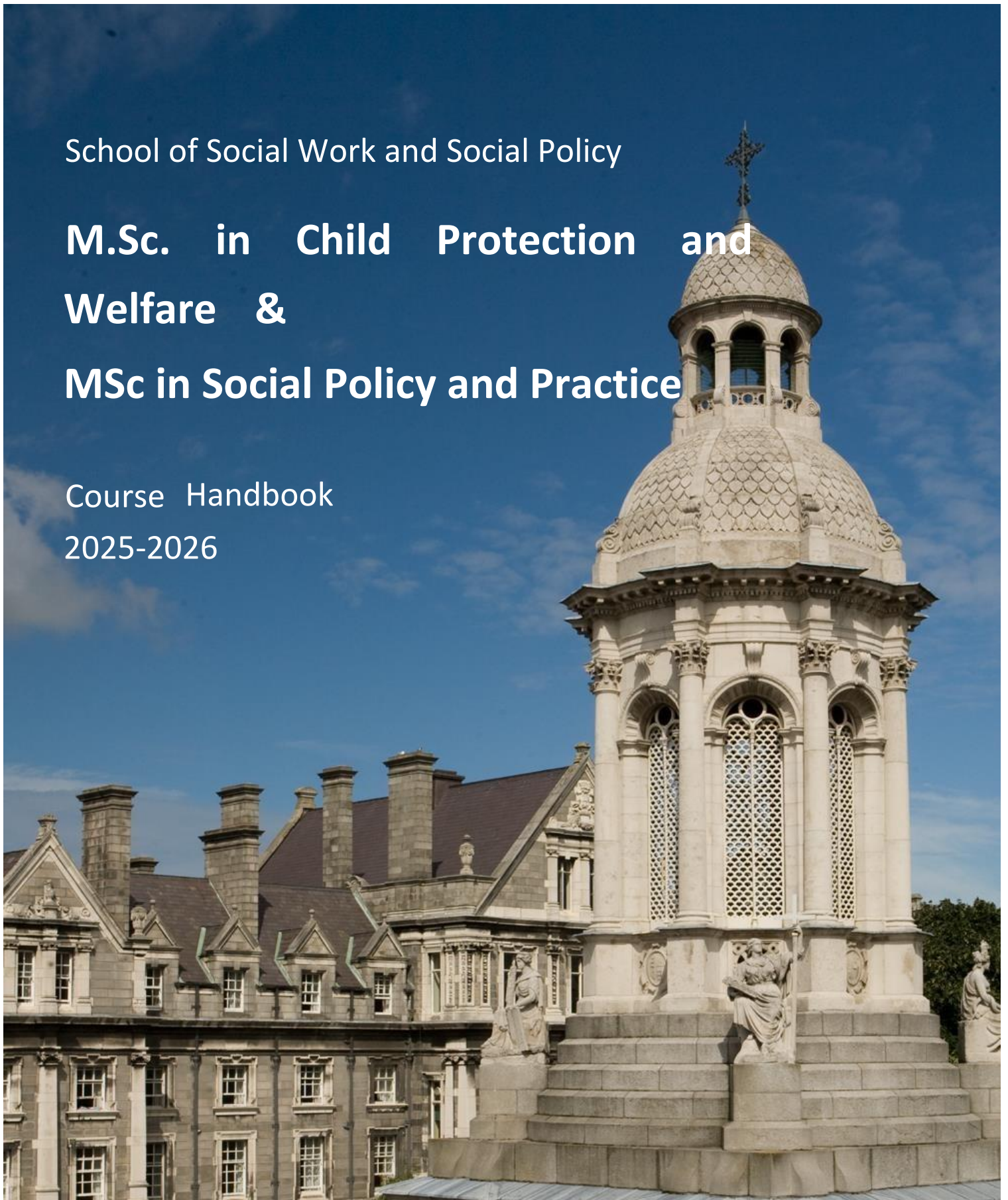


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Alternative formats of the Handbook can be made available on request.

In the event of any conflict or inconsistency between the General Regulations published in the University Calendar and information contained in this handbook, the provisions of the General Regulations in the Calendar will prevail.

Trinity College Dublin uses personal data relating to students for a variety of purposes. We are careful to comply with our obligations under data protection laws and have prepared a short guide at https://www.tcd.ie/info_compliance/data-protection/student-data/ to help you understand how we obtain, use and disclose student data in the course of performing University functions and services. This guidance note is intended to supplement the University's Data Protection Policy which can be found at https://www.tcd.ie/info_compliance/data-protection/student-data/.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the M.Sc. year in the Postgraduate Diploma/M.Sc. Programme in Child Protection and Welfare. As you are all aware, a sound knowledge of up-to-date research is essential for good child protection and welfare practice whatever professional context you are involved in. However, practitioners also need to be aware of how research is undertaken to apply it critically to their practice.

This course provides an opportunity for you to look, in depth, at a topic or issue relevant to child welfare and protection, in which you have a special interest. Furthermore, you will experience undertaking research first-hand.

Previous students who have undertaken this course have described gaining a range of knowledge, skills and values which they have gone on to use in their workplace. For example:

- A number of students have developed innovative data gathering tools which they have gone on to use in practice settings.
- Students have developed a key knowledge base on a particular issue providing invaluable descriptive, exploratory and/or evaluative data as a resource for use in practice settings.
- They have gained deeper, more specialised, knowledge of a particular area of practice, client group or 'social problem'.
- They have presented their research findings, in both written and oral form, to organisations, health boards, families and individuals.
- Students have described an increased level of confidence in critically appraising policy, legal and theoretical initiatives.
- Some students have developed useful professional networks with individuals, groups and organisations.
- Some students have progressed on to Doctoral studies in this School and in others.

This handbook is designed as a guide to the year ahead. In it you will find the aims and learning outcomes of the course, the teaching/subject timetable, information concerning the process of undertaking your own research project and important milestones along the way. We have also included information about the form and content of your final dissertations. This seems a long way off, but you will find the year ahead will fly by.

We very much hope that you enjoy the course and look forward to working with you.



Assistant Professor Kasia Wodniak
Course Director

1. CONTACT DETAILS

| | |
|--|---|
| Head of School | Dr Catherine Conlon Email: conlonce@tcd.ie Telephone: +353 1 896 1312 |
| Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate | Dr Eavan Brady Email: bradye3@tcd.ie Telephone: +353 1 896 2009 |
| Course Director | Dr Kasia Wodniak Email: kwodniak@tcd.ie Telephone: +353 1 896 |
| Course Administrator | Emma Quill Email: quill.emma@tcd.ie Telephone: +353 1 896 4579 |
| School Office Location | School of Social Work and Social Policy Room 3063, Arts Building Trinity College Dublin Dublin 2 Ireland |
| Web | http://www.tcd.ie/swsp/postgraduate/childprotection/index.php |

2. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Students have a full range of the services available to them. This includes library services, careers advisory services and more. Four key student services for online postgraduate students are the Postgraduate Advisory Service, Student Learning and Development, Trinity Online Services and the Library. More detailed information about student services can be found [here](#).

Postgraduate Advisory Service

What?

The Postgraduate Advisory Service (PAS) is a free and confidential service available to all registered postgraduate students in Trinity College. PAS offers a comprehensive range of academic, pastoral and professional supports including one-to-one appointments, workshops and trainings, and emergency financial assistance.

Why?

PAS exists to ensure that all postgraduates students have a dedicated, specialist service independent of the School-system to whom they can turn for support and advice during their time at Trinity. Common concerns students present to PAS include stress; financial worries; queries about regulations or services available at Trinity; supervisor-relationship concerns; academic progression issues; academic appeals.

Who?

The Postgraduate Advisory Service is led by the Postgraduate Student Support Officers who provide frontline support for all Postgraduate students in Trinity. These Support Officers will act as your first point of contact and a source of support and guidance; they can also put you in touch with or recommend other services, depending on your needs.

For an appointment, please e-mail postgrad.support@tcd.ie

Website: <https://www.tcd.ie/seniortutor/students/postgraduate/>

To keep up to date with the supports and events for postgraduate please check out the regular PAS newsletter sent to all postgraduates via email or follow PAS on Instagram @TCDPGAdvisory

Student Learning and Development

Student Learning and Development (SLD) are here to help you achieve your academic potential while studying in Trinity. They have a range of online resources for postgraduate students. For more information on SLD please see their [website](#).

Trinity Online Services

Trinity Online Services are responsible for the quality and the delivery of online content. They will also be the point of contact for resolving any issues relating to the online environment that arise throughout the running of the course. Issues that can arise include access to material, submission of assignments etc. The preferred way of contacting Trinity Online for issues regarding the use of the online learning environment is through the discussion forum dedicated for this purpose in *SS760 Course Information* module on Blackboard. They can also be contacted at helponed@tcd.ie. These channels are monitored regularly during College business hours.

Library

The Library's history dates back to the establishment of the College in 1592 and it is the largest library in Ireland. Today it has over 6 million printed volumes with extensive collections of journals, manuscripts, maps and music reflecting over 400 years of academic development. The most famous of its manuscripts, the [Book of Kells](#) and the Book of Durrow, were presented by Henry Jones, Bishop of Meath and former vice-chancellor of the University, in the 1660s. The Library was endowed with Legal Deposit privilege in 1801 and continues to receive copies of material published in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The Library supports the learning and research needs across all disciplines of the College; it is a major research library of international repute; it provides services to a wide range of external users and institutions. The subject librarian for the School of Social Work and Social Policy is [Caroline Montgomery](#).

Off Campus Access

Access is available to licensed electronic resources (books, databases and journals) to registered students and staff, irrespective of where they are located. Off campus access is not available for UK electronic legal deposit, [eLD \(UK\)](#), material.

College members linking to an electronic resource from outside Trinity College Dublin campus locations will select a resource from Stella Search. When they click on the link to the resource, they will be directed to a secure login page to authenticate with their College username and network login password. Please see the website for more information [here](#).

Graduate Studies

The Graduate Studies Office offers centralised information on admissions, assessment, progression and funding. For more information about their services please see their [website](#).

Co-Curricular Activities

Central Societies Committee

The Central Societies Committee (CSC) is the sole body on campus with the power to grant recognition to societies. As the governing body of societies the CSC represents their interests in dealings with College authorities. More information about College Societies and the CSC can be found at [here](#).

Dublin University Central Athletic Club

Dublin University Central Athletic Club (DUCAC) is the governing body for Sport Clubs at Trinity. DUCAC is responsible for the overall administration of DU Sports Clubs in cooperation with Club Officers and for their interests and development in Trinity. More information about DUCAC can be found [here](#).

TCD Student Union

The Students' Union (SU) is an independent body which represent all students in Trinity. More information about the SU can be found [here](#).

IT Services

IT Services is responsible for the planning, delivery and support of the University's main computing facilities. This includes the University's network systems, web infrastructure, email and calendaring, management services, research IT and student computing facilities. Students are provided with full IT support via the IT Service Desk and a wide range of IT training is also available either online or face to face. More information about the supports and services provided by IT Services can be found on their [website](#).

3. EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

Security Services provide a 24-hour service to the college community, 365 days a year. They are the liaison to the Fire, Garda and Ambulance services and all staff and students are advised to always telephone extension 1999 (+353 1 869 1999) in case of emergency.

Should you require any emergency or rescue services on campus, you must contact Security Services. This includes chemical spills, personal injury or first aid assistance.

It is recommended that all students save at least one emergency contact in their phone under ICE (In Case of Emergency).

For information on College Health and Safety please see the Estates and Facilities [website](#).

4. COURSE COMMUNICATION

On all course related matters, we will communicate with you primarily using the Blackboard learning environment and your TCD email account.

In Blackboard we use the 'Announcement' and 'Discussion Forum' in the module *SS8130 Introduction to Social Research Methods* to interact with you about course issues.

From time-to-time other services in college may use your telephone number or postal address.

You can communicate with us using email, the 'Discussion Forum' channels, telephone and MSTeams. We will endeavour to reply to your communication promptly. Unless otherwise advised you can expect staff to respond to queries in normal business hours i.e. 9.00am – 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

5. KEY LOCATIONS

Programme Office

The School Office is located in Room 3063, The Arts Building, Trinity College Dublin. The opening hours are Monday to Friday 09:00-13:00 and 14:00-16:00. During these hours you can contact staff remotely using email and MTeams.

Online Learning Environment

Blackboard Learn, which is located at mymodule.tcd.ie, is the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). You can use this to access lecture notes, online assignments and other activities through Blackboard. More information about Blackboard is available at <https://www.tcd.ie/itservices/our-services/blackboard-learn-vle/>.

The library of Trinity College Dublin

The Library can be accessed through the second floor of the Arts Building or from the Ussher Podium. Information about the opening hours is available at <https://www.tcd.ie/library/>

Academic Registry

The mission of the Academic Registry is to provide key centralised administrative services to students and staff supporting the best possible Trinity experience. AR provides administrative support during a student's time in the University. Their vision is to be an integrated, flexible team with a professional service ethos supporting all stages of the student lifecycle. More information about the Academic Registry can be found on their [website](#)

6. COURSE AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course will guide and support you as you plan, design and implement your own research project. The taught elements of this course, which are delivered fully online, will present the stages of the research process as well as explore how these stages are operationalised in your projects. By the end of the course, you will produce a reasoned, well-argued dissertation based on your own research project.

This course introduces you to the planning, design and implementation of research projects. In so doing it aims to equip you with knowledge of what each stage of the research process consists of and will support you in developing skills to undertake research. In addition to conducting your own research project, you will also develop further knowledge and an ability to critique existing research.

As an integral part of the research process, you will also be required to pay considered attention to the ethical issues related to research work and the similarities and differences between the ethical procedures in both research and practice. A part of this process involves at a minimum, the submission of an ethics application to the School of Social Work and Social Policy Research Ethics Committee. In addition, you may also be required to seek ethical approval from agencies external to TCD depending on the focus of your research such as Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, from the HSE and/ or from medical settings.

You will produce a final report of your research project, in the form of a master's dissertation, which will document each stage of your research project and interweave your own findings with the established evidence base.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate advanced understanding of the significance of research to child welfare and protection policy and practice;
2. Have the capacity to source and critique the empirical research and literature on any topic relevant to your area of expertise;
3. Understand and have the ability to critique research both methodologically as well as conceptually;
4. Have a knowledge of a variety of research methods including desk research, interviewing, focus groups, and surveys and appraise the suitability of employing different methodologies and data collection methods dependent on research needs;
5. Set out a strong rationale for research with a proposal documenting operational research questions, generate robust measures and design an appropriate and feasible research project to deliver evidence for the study;
6. Understand the process of access and consent and how this applies to research practice;
7. Have developed a number of core skills relating to critical appraisal, data collection and analysis, negotiation with gatekeepers and individual participants, managing own workload, liaison with supervisor, and written presentation skills;
8. Appreciate and commit to the ethical principles and guidelines of research in child protection and welfare;
9. Communicate findings in a clear and coherent manner by means of a final report.

Course Director**Dr Kasia Wodniak**

Kasia is a sociologist and an Assistant Professor in Social Policy in the School of Social Work and Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin. Her work focuses mainly on ecosocial policy, governance and alternative institutional arrangements in the context of inequality and climate change. Research methods are one of her main fields of expertise, with the most recent article concerning the issue of positionality in ethnically diverse contexts. In SWSP, she teaches a range of social policy and methods modules.

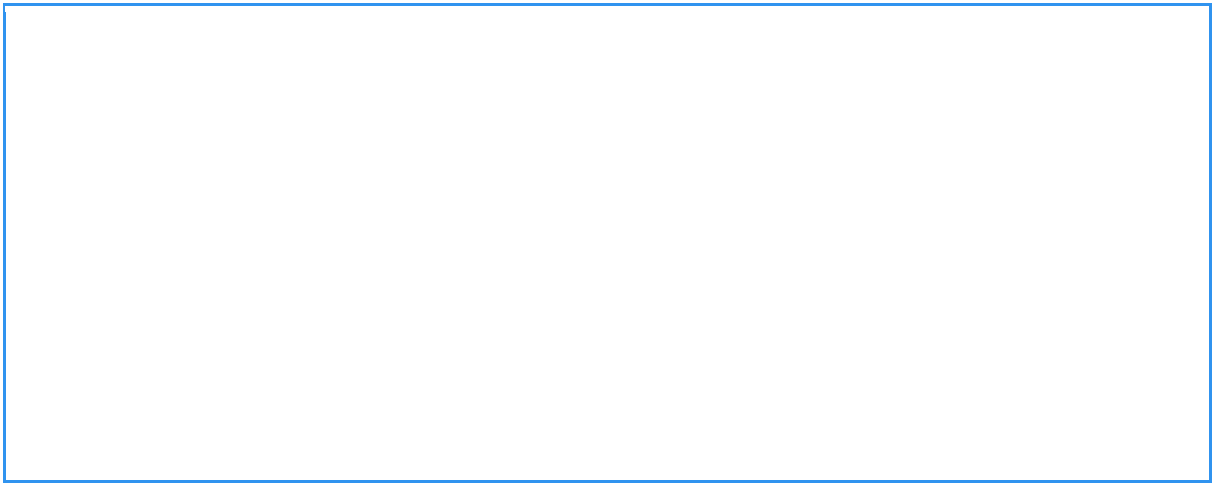
Profile: <https://peoplefinder.tcd.ie/Profile?Username=KWODNIAK>

Website: <https://katarzynawodniak.academia.edu/>

Head of School**Dr Catherine Conlon**

Catherine is Assistant Professor in Social Policy at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. Her research interests are: gender, sexuality and reproductive health; intergenerational family relations; sexual socialisation and; critical qualitative methodologies. Her teaching areas include Families and Social Policy, Introduction to Social Policy and Research Methods for Practitioners. She has a strong track record of applied policy research and is currently Principal Investigator of HSE commissioned study of Unplanned Pregnancy and Abortion Care (UnPAC) study. Academic publications include: 'Challenges When Using Grounded Theory: A Pragmatic Introduction to Doing GT Research' in International Journal of Qualitative Method (2018 with Timonen and Foley); 'Intergenerational Friendships of Older Adults why do we know so little about them?' in Ageing and Society(2017 with O'Dare and Timonen) and lead authored articles in Gender & Society" (Women (Re)Negotiating Care Across Family Generations: Intersections of Gender and Socioeconomic Status. 28, (5) 729-751, 2014) and Qualitative Research (Emergent Reconstruction' in Grounded Theory: Learning from Team Based Interview Research. 15, (1) 39-56, 2015). She co-edited (with Aideen Quilty and Sinead Kennedy) The Abortion Papers Ireland Volume Two published by cork University Press in 2015. An interest in innovative translation of applied policy research led to a translation of her PhD research with women concealing pregnancy into an Opera performance in collaboration with

colleagues in Music and English entitled 'The Pregnant Box' at Trinity College Dublin in 2014. Profile: <https://www.tcd.ie/research/profiles/?profile=conlonce>.



8. COURSE STRUCTURE

The M.Sc. comprises a designated Research Methodology module with materials on research methodology and regular contact with the student's assigned academic supervisor.

The formal teaching for this module is conducted online. This enables students to balance work commitments while engaging in postgraduate study. Due to the aims and nature of this course there is an expectation that you take an active role in the teaching sessions. Each class will have a theme on which direct teaching will be given. This aims to generate discussion and debate on the application of the theme to your own project. Classes provide an opportunity for you to raise issues, questions, dilemmas or success with regard to your own work.

The research methods teaching will be usually delivered by Dr Wodniak (September 2025). However, each student will be allocated an individual dissertation supervisor. Your supervisor will offer supervision complementary to the classes but you should not expect your supervisor to fulfil the teaching function. Your supervisor will expect you to have attended class online in order to receive the teaching input. It is your responsibility to contact your supervisor as soon as possible in order to commence the supervisory process. Your supervisor will have received a copy of your original proposal and will want to talk with you about it.

The supervisor appointed to your project is the staff member available to offer guidance and support during your course. Please note that supervisors will have other teaching and research commitments at various points throughout the year. Therefore, you need to plan when you will meet together, what issues will be covered and ensure that any work that you would want the supervisor to read and comment on is provided for in advance. It is the responsibility of the student to negotiate these dates and processes with their supervisors. You should expect to meet with your supervisor on a regular basis, in person, via MSTeams/Skype/Zoom or through the Collaborate function on Blackboard. You are encouraged to keep in regular contact via email. Additional guidance on what to expect from supervision can be found at the graduate students web pages of the college [website](#).

PLEASE NOTE

Supervisors will be involved, in a minor capacity, in the marking of your final dissertation and therefore can only read and comment on one draft of each chapter. It is therefore important that you ensure that work submitted to supervisors is of a good standard. It is also recommended that you discuss chapter plans with supervisors in advance.

Your supervisor is available to offer guidance; nevertheless each student is responsible for proposing their own substantive topic within the general field of child welfare and protection.

Remember your own special skills, practice interests and contacts.

In choosing your topic, please note the following:

- Choose a topic that interests you. Remember that you will be studying it for an academic year.
- All projects must be ethically sound and will be subject to ethical approval by the School Research Ethics Committee. Furthermore, you may need to seek formal ethical approval through the organisation/fieldwork setting in which you intend to collect your data. Parental consent will be required for research participants under the age of 18 years.
- Be sure to consider the issue of Library resources and, in planning your work, note that if materials are not available in the Trinity Library, you will need to allow time for them to arrive through the Document Delivery Service.
- If choosing a sensitive topic, consider all the implications for yourself, your supervisor and the subjects of your research.
- Ensure your topic is feasible in terms of the time allocation for the completion of the thesis; the substantive issue itself and how it relates to the orientation of this course; the practicalities of carrying out the study and its relative specificity i.e. make sure you have narrowed your focus and that your research topic can be usefully operationalised.
- Given that supervision is arranged with current teaching staff within the School of Social Work and Social Policy, topics for child protection and welfare studies should generally fall into the broad range of research interests and expertise in the School.

Deadlines

The MSc. in Child Protection and Welfare is awarded on the basis of the Dissertation (30 ECTS).

1. The dissertation is due for submission on 22nd May 2026.

Please also note you must submit a dissertation proposal to your supervisor by the 17th of November 2025. It is essential that this first deadline is adhered to, in the interest of timely completion of the dissertation by the 22nd of May 2026 deadline.

Students undertaking research in the School of Social Work & Social Policy must successfully apply for ethical approval from the School's Research Ethics Committee:

2. The ethics form is due to be completed by the 9th of December, 2025.

This is also a highly important deadline that cannot be missed. In many cases, the dissertation will not give rise to ethics issues that would need to be dealt with by the School Research Ethics Committee. However, where ethics issues do arise, students in consultation with their supervisor must submit the form to the Committee by this committee's deadline in November or December 2025.

Students may also be required to seek ethical approval from organisations/institutions other than TCD, including applications to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency or medical boards within individual hospitals. If this is the case, they must prioritise the ethics application early in the Autumn term.

9. STUDYING ONLINE

Online Student Code of Conduct

As a student in a post-graduate course in Trinity College, you are expected to behave appropriately when communicating and interacting with colleagues and staff. This expectation applies to all students, including those completing their courses online. While the standards set out below will not be onerous for the vast majority of students, those who exhibit inappropriate behaviours when interacting with colleagues and staff are liable to face disciplinary measures. For information about the College's Dignity and Respect Policy please see <https://www.tcd.ie/hr/staff-wellbeing/dignity-respect-policy.php> Two key elements to keep in mind when studying online are netiquette and privacy.

Netiquette

Netiquette is a term coined to describe the commonly accepted norms and behaviours used when communicating in online environments.

At one level, the same rules of regular communication apply when communicating online. By adopting the same respectful manner that you would expect in all communications, you are unlikely to encounter many issues.

That said, it has to be recognised that the online environment lacks the face-to-face element of regular discussions and interactions, where people can rely on body language and tone of voice to capture the full meaning. In the online environment, without these visual cues, miscommunications and misunderstandings can occur and some extra care when interacting can be warranted. Netiquette has slowly developed into an informal standard that helps transmit tone and emphasis when online and helps to address many of these communication issues.

Keeping the few simple rules of netiquette in mind will help ensure that what you say will be better understood by those listening and reading.

1. Typing in 'all caps' (all upper case letters) denotes anger when communicating online. A message delivered in all caps is likely to be read as if sent in an aggressive tone. When possible, refrain from using all caps, even when emphasising certain words in sentences (italics may be used as an alternative for emphasis).
2. Emoticons, also known as emojis, are commonly used in online communication to transmit the tone in which the message was sent. Emoticons/emojis can take the form of a series of characters or be little images of faces which aid in the transmission of the sender's facial expression when communicating. For example:
 - 'I got a great result in my first assignment. Yay! 😊'
 - 'I am unable to attend this evening due to work commitments, sorry. :-(

These can be more useful than it first seems to ensure messages are received in the spirit in which they were sent.

3. Be careful when using irony and sarcasm online. This can be easily misinterpreted by those receiving your message.
4. Conduct debates and discussions in a respectful manner. Do not attempt to provoke personal debates and remember that it's better to reply when calm should you ever feel provoked. If you feel angry it is often best to take a moment to think about what you are posting online. Keep all messages on the topic and aim never to get personal. Healthy disagreement can be very informative and lead to key learning but be constructive in any criticism you give and always aim to be respectful.

Other tips for effective online communication

Some tips for engaging with other students online to have a healthy and engaging online classroom experience include:

- Participate! Interact with other students and don't just 'lurk' in the background. This helps create a community of learners and allows you to better get to know your class. This will be very useful in terms of support as you progress through your course.
- Thank other students for their comments. Be mindful of the time and effort that has gone into posting comments.
- Acknowledge other students before disagreeing with them.
- Help other students. Some students may not have as much experience in communicating online.
- Comment using your own perspective (e.g., 'It is my opinion') rather than being dogmatic (e.g., 'it is a fact that').
- Quote other messages when replying to them. This helps other students follow the thread of conversation.
- Stay on topic. Don't post irrelevant links, comments or pictures.
- Read all of the comments in the discussion before replying. This helps avoid the same questions or comments being repeated.
- Write full sentences with correct spelling and grammar when communicating with other students and lecturers.
- Remember that online comments will shape how other students and lecturers will perceive you. Think about what you are going to post before submitting.

Privacy considerations

Considerations of privacy are critical when completing your course online. Remember the permanence of online communications. It is for that reason and your own protection that we employ a strict line on privacy and anonymity. It is best practice to anonymise all those who you mention in any tasks or assignments that you complete. Please do not mention any real company names, or disclose the names of any real individuals in your course. Be mindful that you do not know the personal histories of all your classmates, and all your academics who may be in view of your communications.

Note that information presented or shared throughout the course, from the academics and fellow students, should not be used for any purpose other than the course itself. Do not present others' opinions as your own and also make sure not to present content shared on the course for any other purpose outside of the course. Those deemed to have transgressed these privacy measures are liable to be disciplined by the School.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The Course Timetable can be found at the following ; <https://www.tcd.ie/swsp/timetables/>

Key Submission Schedule

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Submission Deadline | Research Proposal due | 17 th November 2025 |
| Submission Deadline | Ethics form completed & submitted | 9 th December 2025 |
| Submission Deadline | Dissertation submitted | 22 nd May 2026 |

10. MODULE DETAILS

| <i>MODULE TITLE</i> | <i>INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL RESEARCH METHODS</i> |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Module Coordinator | Dr Kasia Wodniak |
| Module Code | SS8130 |
| Module Description | <p>This module provides an introduction to the theory, knowledge, and skills of social research. During this module, students will be introduced to the planning, design, and implementation of research projects. In so doing, the module aims to equip students with knowledge of what each stage of the research process consists of and will support students in developing skills to undertake their own research projects. There will be an emphasis on qualitative research methods however, quantitative approaches will also be addressed. Students will produce a final report of their research project, in the form of a Master's dissertation, which will document each stage of the research project and interweave findings with the established evidence base.</p> |
| Module Learning Outcomes | <p>After completing this module, you should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a critical appraisal of social research and evidence • Explain the key concepts of the research process • Demonstrate knowledge of a variety of data collection methods including interviewing and surveys • Appraise the suitability of employing different methodologies and data collection methods dependent on research needs • Develop a viable research proposal based on existing research literature • Apply fieldwork skills so as to undertake a small-scale research project • Undertake a literature review • Carry out an analysis of data gathered for a small-scale research project • Write-up the process, findings, and conclusions of this research project in the form of a Masters dissertation |
| Start Date | Semester 1 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Length | 10 sessions delivered over Semester 1 (x9) and Semester 2 (x1) |
| Assessment | The module will be assessed by the dissertation (100%). |
| Indicative Bibliography | <p>Bell, J. (2014). <i>Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-time Researchers</i>. Berkshire: Open University Press.</p> <p>Bryman, A. (2012). <i>Social Research Methods</i> (4th Edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Carey, M. (2013). <i>The Social Work Dissertation: Using Small-scale Qualitative Methodology</i>. Berkshire: Open University Press.</p> <p>Flick, U. (2015). <i>Introducing Research Methodology: A Beginner's Guide to Doing a Research Project</i>. London: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Gray, D. E. (2014). <i>Doing Research in the Real World</i>. London: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Hart, C. (1998). <i>Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination</i>. London: Sage Publications.</p> <p>O'Leary, Z. (2017). <i>The Essential Guide to doing your Research Project</i>. London: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Robson, C. (2016). <i>Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-researchers</i> (4th Edition). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. (Earlier editions also fine)</p> <p>Thomas, G. (2013). <i>How to do your Research Project: A Guide for Students in Education and Applied Social Sciences</i>. London: Sage Publications. (Available as E-book)</p> <p>Whittaker, A. (2012). <i>Research Skills for Social Work</i>. London: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Additional readings and references will be given for each session and posted on Blackboard</p> |

11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The School of Social Work and Social Policy has a [Research Ethics Committee \(REC\)](#) which meets at regular points to consider all relevant research being undertaken at Trinity whether by staff or students. You will, as part of the course, be asked to submit a formal application to REC prior to any formal contact being made or data gathered for your projects. In conducting the research for your dissertation, you should follow the [Trinity Policy on Good Research Practice](#). You should also refer to the [School of Social Work and Social Policy](#) ethical procedure. Ethical approval forms can be downloaded from this site.

Teaching and a workshop will be given on the subject of research ethics and some time will be available in class to consider how such issues apply to your projects. However, you must take the lead in ensuring that the School's ethical procedures are adhered to.

You must download and complete an Ethics Approval form. This should be done in consultation with your supervisor and must be signed by him/her no later than 9thth December 2025. It must be assessed before your research gets underway.

To apply for ethical approval from the REC, completed application forms, together with supporting documentation, should be submitted by 4pm electronically to REC administrator swsprec@tcd.ie. Your supervisor must be copied on the email submission.

12. ASSESSMENT

This course is assessed by a 17,000-20,000 word dissertation. It is expected that this is based on a research project undertaken by the candidate. The dissertations are assessed by two examiners, the second of which will be your supervisor, while the first and primary examiner is identified from the staff team within the School. All dissertations are also read by the External Examiner. The External Examiner for the academic period 25/26 is Micheál Collins.

Extensions are not normally granted. If you are seeking an extension you must do so, in writing, to Course Director Dr Wodniak. In addition, appropriate documentation, e.g. a medical certificate, must be submitted. You must also discuss your extension request with your supervisor who will be asked for their view. Students will be notified of their progress following this.

Blackboard Submission

All written assignments should be submitted electronically via Blackboard. Please refer to your induction materials for detailed information on the Blackboard submission procedure and ensure that you are familiar with the procedure.

It is your responsibility to learn how to accurately submit your course work via Blackboard. We will not accept submissions via email, post or hand delivery.

You are strongly advised to give yourself an adequate margin of time when you are submitting via Blackboard.

If you submit the incorrect version of your project, you may request a second attempt by emailing the Course Administrator. However, please be aware of the penalty policy for late submission of course work (section 9). If you request a second attempt after the deadline has passed, the appropriate penalty will be applied to your mark.

Course work can be read by the lecturer, any moderators, staff on the course and the External Examiner.

The course work of all students is held by the Course Administrator to be read by the External Examiner.

Please include a cover sheet on each assignment with your name, student number and assignment details (you may choose your own format).

Guidelines for the Presentation of Dissertation

You are required to consult your supervisor about the precise format for your dissertation, as this will vary according to the nature of the project. Typical section headings, however, might be: Introduction; Literature Review; Methodology; Analysis; Findings/Outcomes; Discussion/Evaluation; Recommendations; References; Appendices. For examples of how previous graduates have formatted dissertations please review the *Dissertation Library* available on the 'Local Access' page on the School website. You will need your username and password to access this page.

Length - There is a limit of between 17,000 and 20,000 words, and students are strongly urged to keep to this.

Presentation - The thesis should be word processed/typed on A4 pages, in 1.5 spacing, leaving a 1 inch margin on all sides. Pages should be numbered consecutively at the bottom centre of the page, with page 1 commencing after the table of contents. The report should be divided into sections which are numbered 1, 2, etc., with a section heading.

Layout - The thesis should start with a title page, followed by an abstract, preface/acknowledgments and table of contents in that order. The table of contents should list the chapters with page numbers.

Abstract - The abstract should contain no more than 200 words and should provide a succinct summary of the aims and results of the study.

References - Harvard Referencing style is commonly used in college and it is recommended that students follow this referencing style when writing up their dissertation. A guide to the Harvard Referencing System is available [here](#). However, you might use any other referencing style as long as it is consistent.

Only items referred to in the text of the dissertation should be included as references.

Appendices - Background material, which would not be appropriate in the text of the report such as sample questionnaires used, should be placed in appendices, labelled A.... to Z. The appendices should follow the list of references at the end of the report.

General Guidelines for the Presentation of Written Work

Care should be taken with referencing: cite author's name, publication date and page numbers in brackets in the text: e.g. (Parton, 1991: 27) or in a footnote. Your bibliography should be consistent in format. Loose generalisations such as "research shows that" should be avoided. Refer specifically to an author or source to back up your statements.

Recommended work lengths should be observed. Very short work or work that exceeds the recommended length by more than 20% may be returned for revision. All written work should be proof-read before submission to avoid mistakes in spelling, grammar and referencing. Careless presentation reduces the impact of the content and loses marks.

As all written work is retained by the School for the External Examiner, students are advised to keep their own copy to follow markers' comments.

Award of a M.Sc. in Child Protection and Welfare

To qualify for the award of the Master's degree students must, as a minimum:

- have successfully completed the Postgraduate Diploma at 60% or higher, and
- achieve a pass mark of 50% in the research dissertation
- Where a fail grade is being considered, students are entitled to an oral examination via collaborate with webcam functionality. Students whose dissertations have been awarded a fail grade have two options: re-register on the course as a continuing student to resubmit a dissertation for consideration for the award of M.Sc. in Child Protection and Welfare; or exit with the Postgraduate Diploma in Child Protection and Welfare.

Marking Conventions

The Court of Examiners is composed of the Course Director, Head of the School of Social Work and Social Policy, the Director of Teaching and Learning (Post-Graduate), the teaching staff on the Postgraduate Diploma Child Protection and Welfare and the External Examiner. Marks given throughout the course are provisional marks only until such time as the external examiner has approved them at the corresponding Exam Board. Under the regulations of the University, the external examiner can raise or lower the marks of students.

For the purpose of assessment feedback, lecturers may use the following grading scheme:

Pass with distinction: 70-100% (conditional on all credit modules passed without fail)

Pass: 50-69%

Fail: 0-49%

Information about Progression Regulations can be found in the [College Calendar, Part III, Section 3.8](#). The marking sheet used in the School of Social Work and Social Policy is available in Appendix B.

The Dissertation is worth 30 ECTS.

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is an academic credit system based on the estimated student workload required to achieve the objectives of a module or programme of study. It is designed to enable academic recognition for periods of study, to facilitate student mobility and credit accumulation and transfer. The ECTS is the recommended credit system for higher education in Ireland and across the European Higher Education Area.

The ECTS weighting for a module is a measure of the student input or workload required for that module, based on factors such as the number of contact hours, the number and length of written or verbally presented assessment exercises, class preparation and private study time, laboratory classes, examinations, clinical attendance, professional training placements, and so on as appropriate. There is no intrinsic relationship between the credit volume of a module and its level of difficulty.

The European norm for full-time study over one academic year is 60 credits. 1 credit represents 20-25 hours estimated student input, so a 10-credit module will be designed to require 200-250 hours of student input including class contact time, assessments and examinations.

ECTS credits are awarded to a student only upon successful completion of the programme year. Progression from one year to the next is determined by the programme regulations. Students who fail a year of their programme will not obtain credit for that year even if they have passed certain components. Exceptions to this rule are one-year and part-year visiting students, who are awarded credit for individual modules successfully completed.

14. ACADEMIC WRITING

The Skill of Academic Writing

As a postgraduate student, you will have to demonstrate your ability to produce essays and assignments based on investigative research, critique and analysis. It can be challenging to produce written work for academic purposes, particularly if it has been a while since you last had to do so. However, academic writing is a skill that is worth mastering. There is a common form to academic writing that can be used across multiple assessment types. It is worth getting to know this form and reproducing it in your own work. There are many resources available to help and guide you on writing at a postgraduate level. Please explore this resource:

<https://www.tcd.ie/sld/services/academic-writing-centre/>.

Academic integrity, misconduct and plagiarism

Academic misconduct and plagiarism of any kind is unacceptable in academic work and is penalised. To ensure that you have a clear understanding of academic integrity and what plagiarism is, how Trinity deals with cases of plagiarism, and how to avoid it, you will find a repository of information at <https://libguides.tcd.ie/academic-integrity>

We ask you to take the following steps:

- i. Visit the online resources to inform yourself about academic integrity and how Trinity deals with plagiarism and how you can avoid it at <https://libguides.tcd.ie/academic-integrity>. You should also familiarize yourself with the 2025-26 Calendar entry on plagiarism and the sanctions which are applied which is located at <http://tcdie.libguides.com/plagiarism/calendar> (also set out below).
- ii. Complete the 'Ready, Steady, Write' online tutorial on plagiarism at <https://libguides.tcd.ie/academic-integrity/ready-steady-write>. **Completing the tutorial is compulsory for all students.**
- iii. Familiarise yourself with the declaration that you will be asked to sign when submitting course work at <https://libguides.tcd.ie/academic-integrity/declarationAcademic>
- iv. Contact your Course Director, or your Supervisor if you are unsure about any aspect of plagiarism.

Calendar Statement on Plagiarism for Postgraduates - Part III, No 66

<https://www.tcd.ie/calendar/graduate-studies-higher-degrees/complete-part-III-hl.pdf> (See pages 23-24)

15. COURSE REGULATIONS

College Calendar

As well as containing key dates, part 3 of the College Calendar contains all information concerning graduate studies in Trinity College, Dublin including all general regulations. See <http://www.tcd.ie/calendar>.

College Policies

Students are expected to familiarise themselves with and adhere to the College's policies. Details available at <http://www.tcd.ie/about/policies/>.

Attendance

Attendance is expected at all tutorials. When students are not able to attend they should inform the instructor via email as early as possible.

Participation

It is well established in educational research, especially involving adult learners, that members of a group learn a great deal from their peers. Without physical interaction it can require extra effort for members of an online class to feel like members of a group. To build an effective group and enhance everyone's learning it's important that each individual makes an effort to participate in group discussions whether on the discussion forum or during tutorials. This will involve sharing your experiences and opinions. Students are encouraged to be prepared for group interactions by studying the relevant materials and thinking about their contributions and those of others. Fulfilling these commitments will enhance the learning experience.

Peer Support and Respect

Along with academic staff, every student shares the responsibility to help create a supportive and respectful learning environment. This involves accepting that there will be different learning needs in every group, allowing peers to contribute and treating colleagues and lecturers with respect. For effective group learning, class members need to know that interactions will be conducted in a safe and confidential environment. Please be respectful of others' contribution and don't discuss individual details outside of the class. Refer to section 9 of the handbook for information on netiquette and privacy.

Non – Satisfactory Report

Students are expected to attend scheduled tutorials and to complete all course work assignments on time. All students must fulfil the course requirements as communicated in this handbook and on Blackboard with regards to course work and attendance. Where specific requirements are not

stated, students may be deemed non-satisfactory if they miss more than a third of their course of study or fail to submit more than a third of the required course work in any term.

At the end of the teaching term, students who have not satisfied the School's requirements may be reported as non-satisfactory for that term. This may mean that the student is required to repeat some or all of the term. If illness or severe domestic upheaval are affecting your participation on the course, you should inform the Course Director.

Problems, Complaints and Grievances

If you have an academic-related problem, you should discuss it first with the lecturer or supervisor concerned. General issues affecting the class should be channelled through your student representative to the Course Director. If you have a course related problem, you should contact the Course Administrator who may refer it to the relevant service. If you have a problem with a Trinity service, you should contact the relevant service.

If you have a complaint which discussion with the relevant academic, Course Administrator or Trinity Service cannot resolve, you should contact the Course Director. If the problem remains, you should consult the Head of School or the Dean of Graduate Studies. More information about the Student Complaints Procedure can be found [here](#).

Student Evaluation and Feedback

Information about the College requirements for evaluation and feedback can be found at <https://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/quality/qualityassurance/evaluation.php>.

16. COMMENCEMENTS

All candidates for conferral of degree must make application by completing a Notice of Candidature form, and submitting it to the [Student & Graduate Records](#) Team by the specified closing date.

Candidates are advised that closing dates are very strictly adhered to, and late applicants will not be admitted to the selected ceremony; however, they may be admitted to the next available commencement session.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A

MARKING SHEET FOR DISSERTATIONS:

MASTERS IN CHILD PROTECTION AND WELFARE, 2025 -26

| Student Name: Dissertation Title: | Marks |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Topic, title, abstract & references (10 max) | |
| 2. Coverage of background to research (literature review and context of the research, including rationale and background for the research) (20 max) | |
| 3. Research design and methodology (20 max) | |
| 4. Quality and extent of the data analysis (including presentation of findings) (20 max) | |
| 5. Evaluation of findings in terms of relevant theories and previous research (20 Max) | |
| 6. Overall Structure and presentation (10 max) | |

| | |
|--|--|
| FINAL OVERALL MARK AND COMMENT (out of 100) | |
|--|--|