

Northern Ireland



**PROFESSIONAL IN PRACTICE**  
**INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT ROUTE**  
**CANDIDATE HANDBOOK**

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## **Introduction**

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Council) has responsibility for determining and managing the provision of post qualifying education and training for social work in Northern Ireland. This responsibility is carried out within the Social Care Council by the Professional in Practice Partnership which reports to the Board.

The Professional in Practice Partnership, chaired by a member of the Board, comprises the main social work employers and higher education institutions engaged in the provision of post qualifying education and training for social work in Northern Ireland.

The Social Care Council is required, as part of its key roles and functions, to have arrangements and structures in place to facilitate individual submissions through the Individual Assessment Route (IAR). This function is delivered by the Professional in Practice Assessment Panel.

This guidance has been developed to provide candidates with the information they require to complete IAR submissions across the range of assessment methods.

## SECTION ONE

### OVERVIEW OF THE PROFESSIONAL IN PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

The Professional in Practice Framework has four Professional Awards:

1. **Consolidation Award in Social Work:-**  
For those staff consolidating and extending the knowledge and skills developed at basic qualifying level and preparing to move into more specialist work.
2. **Specialist Award in Social Work:-**  
For those involved in complex work requiring high levels of responsibility and accountability.
3. **Leadership and Strategic Award in Social Work:-**  
For those influencing developments and influencing others.
4. **Advanced Scholarship Award in Social Work:-**  
For those who are involved in the acquisition and dissemination of new knowledge demonstrating a sustained commitment to innovation, policy and practice development.

Each of the four awards is a separate entity and therefore a candidate can achieve each award or indeed can achieve an award more than once across a range of routes. Candidates can work towards achievement by using any of the following routes;

- **Individual Assessment Route (IAR)** for candidates who work independently and submit for assessment by the Assessment Panel.
- **Approved Programme Route** for candidates who prefer formal taught programmes of study which may have academic credits at Post Graduate level.
- **Credit Accumulation Route** where candidates can log training leading to accreditation.
- **Work-Based Learning Route** where in-house training courses are approved for PiP Requirements.
- **Combined Route:** a combination of different routes.

### Enrolment

All social workers seeking to access the Individual Assessment Route to gain Professional in Practice requirements and awards must be registered on the social work part of the NISCC register. Once registered, social workers are automatically **enrolled with the Professional in Practice Framework**. Social workers intending to submit to the Individual Assessment Route must log onto their account on the NISCC portal and select the relevant award. This is referred to as "Enrolling on an award".

Where the candidate wishes to achieve academic credits, they are required additionally to enrol with the relevant academic institution.

Enrolment with academic institutions is an arrangement between the candidate, their employer and the academic institution and is not a Social Care Council responsibility.

## SECTION TWO

### ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Professional in Practice Assessment Framework provides two submission points per year within the Individual Assessment Route:

- Submission Point One – the first Monday in March
  - Submission Point Two – the first Monday in October
1. Candidates should make an appointment with their agency PiP Rep for guidance and support.
  2. Candidates upload their submissions prior to either of the two dates above.
  3. **Extensions are not normally available and late submissions will not be accepted.**
  4. Each submission **must** include:
    - Professional in Practice submission Front sheet
    - Statement of confidentiality
    - Statement of service user/stakeholder consent
    - Introduction to agency and role
    - Work to be assessed
    - Up- to- date references section
    - Line Manager's verification report
  5. Candidates are responsible for ensuring that submissions include **all the necessary components**. Submissions will not be assessed if they are incomplete.
  6. When candidates have submitted their work it will be assessed by two markers and results will be confirmed at the assessment panel.
  7. Following the assessment panel, results will be sent out to candidates. The whole process from submission to results can take up to 8 weeks in total.
  8. Candidates can contact their agency PiP Representative for feedback on their submission.

### Academic Recognition

Candidates are asked to indicate on the Front Sheet whether they want to claim academic credits in addition to their professional Requirements. If so, they need to enrol with Ulster University. Candidates can gain academic credits towards the MSc in Professional Development through submissions to the Individual Assessment Route.

**NB: Claiming academic credits is not possible if you have chosen an In-Service Training Schedule submission type.**

## Referencing Guidelines

Candidates must acknowledge their sources with evidence, quotations, ideas and concepts being carefully attributed. There are two elements to the referencing system: that which goes in the text of the work and that which belongs in the references at the end.

Candidates who fail to acknowledge their sources are guilty of plagiarism which is contrary to NISCC Professional in Practice regulations and contravenes the NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice.

The following link will take you to the [General Guide to Harvard Referencing](#) which is approved for use by Ulster University and the Professional in Practice Framework.

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## Assessment Outcome

The Individual Assessment Route has 4 possible outcomes:

1. **Competent:** Candidates will be awarded the PiP Requirements they have claimed.
2. **Partially Competent:** Candidates will be awarded some of the Requirements they have claimed.
3. **Referred:** Candidates will not be awarded the Requirements they have claimed.
4. **Not Assessed:** Submission has not been assessed as it is incomplete; in breach of the word count; or is not in a suitable form for assessment.

## Re-submission Process

If a candidate's Professional in Practice submission is referred for further work, the candidate will normally be given the option to **either**

- re-submit the same material with revisions for re-marking; **or**
- make a new submission.

A **resubmission** is work which:

- Is submitted within a three year period from the date of the first submission; **and**
- Uses the same method and case material and covers the same Professional in Practice Requirement(s) as the original submission.

A candidate may present **one** resubmission of a 'referred' piece in the same format (e.g., Direct Observation, verbal submission or assignment) as the original work.

After three years, the case material loses currency and a new submission must be made.

All resubmissions must include:

- the letter of referral from the Professional in Practice Assessment Panel;
- copy of the Agreed Summary completed by the assessors;
- any updated information on the candidate;
- an up- to -date line manager's report addressing the reasons for the 'referral'; and

- the date of the last submission(s) entered on the submission front sheet.

A resubmitted piece of work will normally be assessed by one of the original assessors and one different assessor.

## **NEW SUBMISSION\*\***

A **new** submission must differ from the original in **at least one** of the following ways

- Different case material.
- A different submission method (e.g. assignment, verbal presentation etc.).
- Different Requirements or Award.

### **\*\*CANDIDATES REGISTERED FOR ACADEMIC CREDITS**

*Please note that if a candidate is registered for academic credits with Ulster University, the University's resubmission policy differs from the Professional in Practice resubmission policy. For further information refer to the University's IAR programme handbook, or contact [pgsocialwork@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:pgsocialwork@ulster.ac.uk).*

## **Examples of work**

Candidates are informed on the front sheet of their submission that their work may be used as an example for training purposes. Submissions will be selected, anonymised and copied by the Professional in Practice office. These can then be used by Agency Representatives in work with prospective candidates and/or for standardisation or training events. Candidates can indicate on the front sheet if they do not wish their work to be used for these purposes.

## **Breaches of Confidentiality**

Breaches of confidentiality, as defined in the Policy on Confidentiality can be minor, moderate or serious. See the policy for more detail.



## SECTION THREE

### SUBMISSION METHODS

Candidates should seek guidance from their agency Professional in Practice representative as to which method best suits the piece of work being considered for submission.

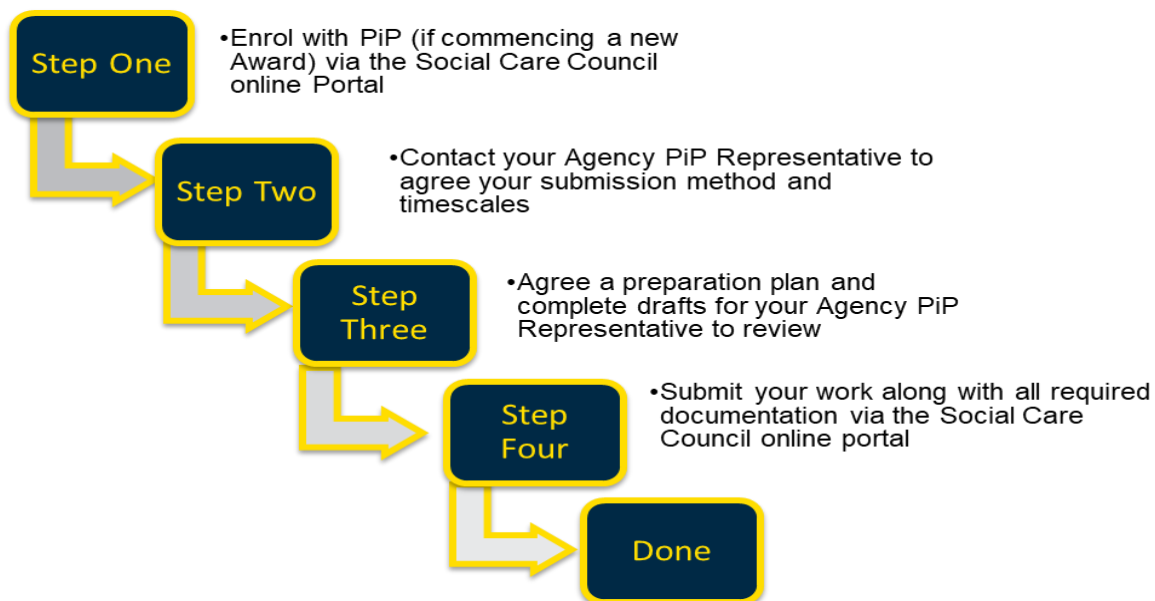
To obtain a full award, candidates must choose two methods of submission from the following options, one of which must be an assignment. Each submission should cover a maximum of 3 Requirements unless it is an APL submission which has no limit on the number of Requirements being claimed.

- **Assignment**
- **Verbal Presentation**
- **Direct Observation**
- **Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**
- **In-Service Training Submission Schedule**

A **Combination** of these methods may be submitted at the one Assessment Point

**With every submission type, the candidate must make clear which Professional in Practice Requirements are being addressed and how they have been met.**

## GETTING STARTED



## SECTION FOUR

### SUPPORTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

#### Consent

Service user or carer permission must be sought before any material is submitted for assessment. A statement must be included in the submission indicating that permission was sought and confidentiality was explained to the service user. If consent was not sought or not granted, candidates must complete a thematic assignment which **does not directly identify casework**.

#### Confidentiality

Social workers have a professional responsibility to ensure that confidentiality in work submitted for assessment is maintained at all times. Failure to ensure that the identity of service users and others is protected demonstrates a breach of trust, a failure to meet the NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice, Professional in Practice standards on submissions and Professional in Practice Requirements.

- 1.8 *Respecting and maintaining the dignity and privacy of service users;*
- 2.4 *Respecting confidential information and clearly explaining agency policies about confidentiality to service users and carers;*

*(NISCC Standards of **Conduct** and Practice 2019).*

When submitting work for assessment to the Assessment Panel via the Individual Assessment Route, care must be taken to ensure that the information presented does not

lead to the identification of a service user. The Confidentiality Policy is strictly applied to all methods of assessment

## **Plagiarism**

The Professional in Practice Committee defines plagiarism as, where any candidate includes, in a mode of assessment, unacknowledged and verbatim, substantial material which has been authored by another.

This definition includes unpublished work, for example, web sources, other people's portfolios and dissertations. Plagiarism is dishonest, involves the appropriation or purchase of the ideas and work of others. Within the context of a Professional in Practice submission plagiarism involves the misrepresentation of the candidate's level of competence. In this context, plagiarism is a breach of professional ethics and the NISCC Standards of Conduct.

2.1 *Being honest and trustworthy;*  
(NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice 2019).

Further information on Plagiarism is available in the policy.

## **Review of Decision**

The Professional in Practice Partnership Committee has developed standards and systems to ensure consistency, impartiality and accountability in the assessment of submissions to the Individual Assessment Route. There may be circumstances when candidates consider the assessment processes to be flawed. In such situations the candidate can request a review of the decision making process.

A candidate may request a 'review' only on the grounds that there may have been procedural irregularities or administrative error of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the assessors would have reached the same conclusion had they not occurred.

The professional decision of the Assessment Panel and its External Examiner is **not** open to appeal. Further information is available in the policy.

Where a matter is not satisfactorily resolved through this route, a candidate may make a formal complaint to the NISCC using the procedures outlined in the Social Care Council Policy on Complaints.

## **Equal Opportunities**

The Social Care Council is committed to the provision of equality of opportunity and access to assessment in the Professional in Practice Framework regardless of any real or perceived differences.

The Professional in Practice Partnership is committed to fair and objective assessment.

Where a candidate feels he/she is being unfairly treated in respect of access to assessment or within the assessment process, an appeal may be made using the Policy on Reviewing

an Assessment Decision. Should further action be required the candidate should refer to the Social Care Council complaints policy

All documents, forms and policies referenced in this handbook can be assessed from or within the PiP Framework digital guide/s at <https://learningzone.niscc.info/professional-in-practice>