



# Bachelor of Social Services (Specialty)

Please note that our Capable NZ offering does not include the Counselling specialty.

## Location

- Dunedin Campus

## Duration

Three years full-time; up to six years part-time

## Delivery

On campus with placements in your second and third year

## Credits

360

## DescLevel

360

## Intakes

February

## Apply

Until start date

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With specialties in Career Practice,

# Counselling or Health and Wellbeing Practice

**Want to help people and their whānau improve their quality of life?**

Our industry-relevant programme will prepare you to enter the social service sector as a counsellor, career practitioner, or to offer holistic services in the health and wellbeing sector such as mental health support.

You'll learn how to empower clients to overcome social and personal disadvantages, achieve their aspirations and realise their individual and community potential. And you'll develop knowledge and awareness of the cultural diversity of Aotearoa, so you're prepared to work with clients in a culturally-competent way that upholds the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

At the end of your first year, you'll choose your specialty - Career Practice, Counselling, or Health and Wellbeing Practice - and then complete placements during your second and third year to build your industry experience and contacts.

Graduating with a high-level of self-awareness and the communication skills to engage a diverse range of people, you'll be able to provide professional practice within the community, demonstrate social responsibility and will meet the standards needed to be eligible for membership with the Professional Association for your chosen specialty.

## Choosing a specialty

You can choose to study one of the following specialties within this programme and would graduate with that specialty attached to the qualification name e.g. Bachelor of Social Services (Career Practice):

- Career Practice
- Counselling
- Health and Wellbeing Practice.

You'll choose your specialty at the end of the first year.

Entry into your chosen specialty is not guaranteed and is dependent on a number of factors including your suitability for the specialty, your fitness to practice and making sure it aligns with the career you're keen to pursue.

You'll have the chance to chat about this more with specialty lecturers during year one of the programme.

### Career Practice

Career opportunities include:

- Government agencies
- Youth organisations
- Disability services
- Liaison services

- Schools
- Human resources.

This specialty is a great choice if you're keen to help people understand what career would suit them best and to support people to realise their full potential through employment.

You'll explore things like career transition (people moving from one job to a very different one), career matching theories (how individuals have skills and attributes that 'match' them to a career) and supporting people with job search strategies. You'll also learn to apply career management theories in your third year as you develop your practice.

With guest speakers and case studies, you'll have plenty of chance to develop your ability to work with a diverse range of people and to understand how best to engage and support them. You'll discover how to use local and national networks, resources and organisations relevant to career practice, and will gain knowledge of the relevant legislation (e.g. Privacy Act, Employment Relations Act).

If you choose our Career Practice specialty, you'll have the chance to work as a Career Guide in the Otago Polytechnic Career Success Centre - set up to provide a career service to all students. You'll offer advice and assistance to students with the full support of our lecturing staff and professional career practitioners. Other placement opportunities include youth related work, community learning centres and volunteer organisations.

You'll graduate with a Bachelor of Social Services (Career Practice).

## Counselling

Career opportunities include:

- Community counselling agencies
- School counselling services
- Non-Government Organisations
- Tertiary settings.

If you want to develop the professional skills required to work as a qualified counsellor, choose this specialty.

You'll explore different cultural values and an understanding of how to work ethically (informed by the NZAC Code of Ethics), develop a deep understanding of your own values and beliefs, and gain knowledge of the Person-Centred approach to counselling. You'll also explore additional theoretical models such as Acceptance Commitment Therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Solution Focused Brief Therapy.

You'll gain experience working alongside clients in our on campus, student-run, community counselling service – the Kōwhai Centre. During this placement, you'll be supported by our lecturing staff, your individual supervisor, and the Kōwhai Centre Manager so you can begin to practice your approach in a safe and supported way.

By the end of your final year, you'll have experience of working in external placement settings and be developing your own model of practice. You'll be familiar with bi-cultural ways of working and be a culturally-responsive practitioner.

In addition, you'll gain knowledge of the relevant legislation that relates to your

practice (e.g. Privacy Act and Child Youth and Family Act, Family Proceedings Act (1980), and Domestic Violence Act).

You'll graduate with a Bachelor of Social Services (Counselling).

## Health and Wellbeing Practice

Career opportunities include:

- Mental Health Assistant
- Support Work
- Health Education and Promotion
- Community Development Work
- Non-Government Organisations
- Mental Health/Disability Advocacy.

Organisations are increasingly offering strength-based services to their clients across both the mental health and disability fields. In addition, there has been a growth of generalist support roles in the health and wellbeing areas.

This specialty will ensure you develop a broad scope of practice in line with this contemporary approach to social service support provision, positioning you well to enter the workforce. It's underpinned by mental health and disability theories and models, which includes exploration of community-based approaches.

You'll learn how to use local and national networks, resources and organisations to provide referral pathways and will gain knowledge of the relevant legislation to work with people within health and wellbeing practice (e.g. Privacy Act, Health and Disability Act, Human Rights Act, Mental Health Act, and Children's Act).

You'll graduate with a Bachelor of Social Services (Health and Wellbeing Practice).

## You will study

During your first year, you will study a range of courses that will give you the foundation knowledge and skills you need across all specialty areas. At the end of this first year, you'll choose your specialty.

You'll take your foundational learning from the first year and re-focus this into your area of specialty – deepening your knowledge as you go. This means you can gain confidence in the theory before putting it into practice in the workplace.

During your second and third year, you'll do placements where you'll gain industry training in a supervised setting. This will not only enable you to gain valuable practical experience but will prepare you for what to expect when you enter the workforce. Plus, you will build a network of contacts - great for future employment options!

### Year one courses (all Level 5)

Course name	Description	Credits
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Personal and Academic Effectiveness	Provides you with academic, reflective and self-management skills needed for working as an effective professional in social services.	30
Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Ethics and Law	Explore the relationship between Te Tiriti o Waitangi and international, customary and New Zealand law and ethics, through a lens of social justice.	30
Applied Communication 1	Develop skills that enable you to communicate in effective, safe and professional ways within collaborative relationships in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand.	15
Theories of Human Behaviour	Be introduced to theories of social psychology and human development, in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand.	15
Careers, Specialties and Pathways	Gain knowledge about the changing world of work and career options relevant to social services. Explore your own career resources and aspirations and make informed decisions and plans for your career journey.	15
Diversity	Explore the notion of social construction of self and the concepts of social justice and social change and how this impacts on relating to others.	15

#### Year two courses (all Level 6)

Course name	Description	Credits
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Applied Communication 2	Integrate group work theory and practice and demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to facilitate groups based on the presenting needs of the group.	15
Research for Social Services	Develop an informed understanding of research paradigms and methodologies, and the current uses and practices of research within your chosen specialty area of social services.	15
Theory for Practice A (Career Practice) (Counselling) or (Health and Wellbeing Practice)	Gain the knowledge and skills required to articulate a theoretical value base for your chosen specialty area, and select and apply models, tools and skills suitable for work in this area in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand.	15
Integrated Practice A (Career Practice) (Counselling) or (Health and Wellbeing Practice)	Develop the skills, knowledge and experience to become a reflective practitioner who is able to work in a way that is values based, safe, informed and intentional in providing support in your chosen specialty context.	15
Safe and Ethical Practitioner	Become a safe practitioner who understands and recognises abuse, and is able to make sound ethical decisions for those at risk.	15
Addictions, Substance Use and Co-existing Problems	Explore an overview of substance use 'addictions' and co-existing problems and develop useful and culturally appropriate responses for helping people address these problems.	15
	OR	
Contemporary Issues in Career Practice	Investigate and develop expertise in significant and challenging areas of contemporary career practice. Broaden your knowledge and helping strategies by examining key issues and their impact on career development.	15

Wanaka	Gain the knowledge and skills necessary for working with Māori in social service, counselling, career practice, disability support and mental health support contexts.	15
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### Year three courses (all Level 7)

Course name	Description	Credits
Applied Social Issues and Social Policy	Critically examine how issues are addressed through social policy and social service provision in a New Zealand context.	15
Practitioner Inquiry	Undertake a systematic review of relevant research material and literature in order to answer a question which has direct relevance to practice in your chosen specialty.	15
Theory for Practice B (Career Practice) (Counselling) or (Health and Wellbeing Practice)	Further develop your understandings of the underpinning theories, research and models of practice relevant to health and wellbeing practice, career practice and counselling. Build on the skills and strategies which inform your practice and further develop a framework which supports safe professional practice.	15
Integrated Practice B (Career Practice) (Counselling) or (Health and Wellbeing Practice)	Engage in further supervised practice with clients within community placements, and participate in individual, small group and peer supervision of your integrated practice. Demonstrate your application of theory into practice and your ability to meet the membership requirements of relevant professional bodies.	15

Communicating with Families/Whānau and Communities	Become acquainted with theoretical approaches to working with families including Family Development Theory, Narrative Therapy and Systems Theory. The influence of family in relation to clients in the practice domains of social service, counselling and career practice will be explored through experiential and reflective learning.	15
Socially-Responsible Leadership	Develop and consolidate skills, knowledge and strategies that will enable team, community development and leadership in social service contexts.	15

## Entry requirements

- NCEA Level 3 including:
  - 14 credits at Level 3 or above in each of three NZQA approved university entrance subjects, and
  - 10 Literacy credits at Level 2 or above, made up of:
    - 5 credits in reading and 5 credits in writing, and
  - 10 Numeracy credits at Level 1 or above, made up of:
    - specified achievement standards available through a range of subjects OR
    - package of three numeracy unit standards (26623, 26626, 26627- all three required).

### COVID-19 adjustments to NCEA requirements

- If you completed your NCEA Level 3 during 2020, you only need 12 credits per Level 3 subject (i.e. a total of 36 credits).
- If you completed your NCEA Level 3 during 2021, please visit [this page on the NZQA website](#). There are different adjustments depending upon which part of New Zealand you studied in.
- You must submit references and a health declaration, declare any criminal convictions and give permission for a Police Check (to demonstrate good health and good character sufficient for safe and effective practice in social services).
- If English is not your first language, you must provide:
  - New Zealand University Entrance OR
  - Overall Academic IELTS 6.5 with no individual band score lower than 6.5 (achieved in one test completed in the last two years), OR
  - Acceptable alternative evidence of the required IELTS ([see here for NZQA proficiency table](#) and [here for list of recognised proficiency tests](#)).

If you need to improve your English Language skills, we offer a [wide range of English](#)



[programmes.](#)

## Being ready for study

If you have had experiences of trauma or abuse, mental health challenges or life events causing emotional harm, you may experience some emotional risk during this programme.

Otago Polytechnic have services available to support you in this situation. We'd recommend that you ensure you're ready for studying at this time and that you have your personal support network in place before beginning this programme.

## Covid-19 vaccination information

If you want to apply for this programme, we'll need to see evidence of your Covid-19 vaccinations (including types and dates). You need to have had three doses. We're legally obliged to collect this additional information from you as this programme is covered by the Covid-19 Public Health Response (Vaccination) Order 2021.

Please just complete our online application process as normal. As part of the application process, you'll be asked to provide your vaccination record.

The Government have advised that the only proof of vaccination that we can accept is a vaccination record PDF from your My Covid Record.

[Find out how to get your vaccination record here >](#)

## Don't meet the entry requirements?

If you don't have the entry requirements needed to enter the Bachelor of Social Services, our [New Zealand Certificate in Health and Wellbeing \(Social and Community Services\) \(Level 4\)](#) can help you bridge the gap. This programme is open entry so you don't need any previous academic achievements.

Please note: Due to the high demand for places, successful completion of this certificate programme will not automatically guarantee entry to our Bachelor of Social Services degree.

## Want your existing skills recognised?

### Recognition of Prior Learning

If you have extensive knowledge and skills due to practical experience in the social service or related fields, please ask us about our Recognition of Prior Learning process (RPL). You may have already gained credits towards this qualification.

[Find out more here >](#)

Once you've read this info, if you have further questions or want to chat about this option, please email [Amanda.HensonMolloy@op.ac.nz](mailto:Amanda.HensonMolloy@op.ac.nz)

## Independent Learning Pathway

If you have:

- a two-year NZQA Level 6 Diploma in Counselling, and
- extensive experience (7+ years) working in a professional capacity as a Counsellor

you may be eligible for an Independent Learning Pathway (ILP) option.

For more information, please email [Steff.Revell@op.ac.nz](mailto:Steff.Revell@op.ac.nz)

## Completing your application

You can enter information and upload documents directly into the application form. You may wish to prepare some of the required documentation beforehand.

To begin your application, click the Apply button at the top of this page.

You will need to provide:

1. Academic records
2. A written statement (up to 600 words). In this, you'll need to briefly describe your reasons for wanting to work with people in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. You may wish to consider the following:
  - your values
  - previous experience of working with people, and
  - life experience.
3. Your Curriculum Vitae
4. A mental health and substance history status.
5. Police vetting and declaration of any criminal convictions. (Applicants who have lived in countries other than New Zealand need to provide a Police Clearance from each country). Please note that some types of criminal conviction may limit the ability to secure placements for you and therefore will impact on your ability to complete the programme.
6. Contact details for two referees
7. Certified copies of proof of identity
8. Proof of residency (where appropriate).

## During your programme

As you'll see above, during the application process you need to provide a mental health and substance history status, and declare any criminal convictions. During the time you are studying with us, it's also vital that:

- you continue to let us know about any changes to your mental health status or substance status (if you don't do this, we may need to withdraw you from the programme), and
- you declare any new or pending convictions (a conviction or failure to declare a conviction may result in you being withdrawn from the programme).

## Selection process

Applications will be assessed when they're received, and you will be invited to attend

an interview. Selection will be made on the basis of the applicant being able to demonstrate a reasonable likelihood of success in the programme.

If the number of applicants who meet the entry criteria exceed the number of places, we'll create a waitlist based on the date order of applications.

## Your workload

This is a taught, in person programme and distance or online study options aren't available. Classes are typically held on campus two to three days per week, for up to six hours per day. And then in your second and third year, you'll spend one or two days a week on placement in addition to days in class.

You'll also need to then undertake your own, self-directed learning in your own time.

If you're learning with us full-time, you'll need to spend an average of 37.5 hours studying per week.

Part-time study options may be available. This is decided on a case-by-case basis. If you do study part-time, you can expect to spend an average of 18 hours studying per week and this may increase if it includes placement hours.

## Further study options

Our [Graduate Diploma in Social Services](#) pathway enables you to gain a further specialty with one year's additional study. Increase your career prospects with postgraduate study at Waikato, Massey or Auckland universities.

## Additional costs

Work placements form part of this programme and you'll need to budget for these. You'll be expected to pay for your travel expenses to and from your placement and any meals/accommodation.

## Student loans and allowances

Student loans and allowances are for domestic students only. For information about student loans and allowances please visit the [Studylink website](#). It is important to apply for your student loan/allowance at the same time as you apply for this programme, due to the length of time Studylink take to process. Loan/allowance applications can be cancelled at any time if you decide to withdraw your programme application or if it is unsuccessful.

## Intakes:

Course	Description	Dates
24-WBL-FY Capable NZ	Capable NZ applicants - 2024 variable start dates	
25-DUN-Y1 Dunedin	On campus in Dunedin - February 2025 start	

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