

FAQ for SSI Higher Diploma in Social Service (HDSS)

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1. About the Programme

1. What is the HDSS programme about?

The HDSS is a programme for new entrants and existing Social Service Professionals in the Social Service Sector who aspire to be Social Work Associates. It comprises nine (9) individual modules and includes a compulsory Social Service Field Experience trip.

2. Why is the HDSS programme suitable for me?

The HDSS programme is suitable for individuals who wish to enhance their knowledge and skills to work in Social Service Agencies and/or related settings. It also provides an articulation pathway into the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree programme at Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), subject to meeting the relevant requirements.

3. Where can I find out more about the HDSS programme?

You may refer to the SSI programme webpage or email SocialServiceInstitute@ncss.gov.sg for more information.

2. Programme Structure, Delivery, Schedule and Commitment

1. What is the term structure and duration of the HDSS programme?

The HDSS programme is approximately up to 16 months long. All modules are generally held two to three weekdays per week, from 7.00pm to 10.00pm. Class days may vary depending on the module. The confirmed schedule will be shared by the programme administrator when available.

2. How many intakes are there each year?

There is one intake each year.

3. Will lessons be conducted online, face-to-face or in a blended format (a combination of both online and face-to-face)?

Lessons will be conducted in a blended format, combining both online and face-to-face sessions at SSI's premises.

4. Is there a minimum attendance requirement?

Yes. You must attend at least 75% of each module to be eligible to sit for its examination or assessment. To qualify for funding, you must also be assessed as competent.

5. Will there be assignments, group projects or examinations?

Learners are required to undertake and complete all Continuous Assessments and Written Examinations for each module. Continuous Assessments may include project work, reflective journals or presentations, while the Summative Assessment comprises an end-of-term written examination conducted as a closed-book examination

6. Will the class schedule be provided before I accept the offer?

Before accepting the offer, you will be informed of the programme start and end dates. As the HDSS programme is delivered over five terms, detailed class schedules will be shared before the start of each term. While we aim to keep to the published schedule, changes may occasionally be necessary due to operational requirements, e will notify you of any changes as early as possible.

3. Programme Fee and Funding

1. What is the course fee for the Higher Diploma in Social Service?

The full programme fee is \$10,800 before GST. If you are eligible for SWDA funding, the nett programme fee is \$3,240 before GST, subject to SWDA funding terms and conditions. Please note that this fee does not include the Social Service Field Experience fee.

2. Will the application fee be refunded if my application is unsuccessful?

The application fee is non-refundable and non-transferable.

3. Can SkillsFuture Credit be used to offset the course fee directly?

You may use SkillsFuture Credit for the programme fee. You will need to pay the fee upfront when you accept the offer and submit your SkillsFuture Credit claim when it becomes available. SSI will process the refund after receiving the disbursement.

4. When can I submit a SkillsFuture Credit claim?

You may submit SkillsFuture Credit claims by module when each module starts, subject to SkillsFuture claim requirements.

5. Can SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy (MCES) be used for HDSS programme?

Yes. Singapore Citizens aged 40 and above are eligible for the SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy (MCES) and may use it to offset the programme fees for the HDSS programme, subject to prevailing funding eligibility criteria.

6. Can PSEA funds be used for this programme?

Eligible applicants may use PSEA funds to supplement the nett programme fee payable. Applicants must inform SSI of their intention and make upfront payment first. Refund will be processed upon successful approval and receipt of funds.

7. Is payment required before the programme starts?

Yes. You will need to pay the programme fee within the stated timeline when you accept the offer.

8. Are fees refundable if I withdraw after accepting the offer?

If you need to withdraw after accepting the offer, any refund will be based on SSI's withdrawal and refund policy shown below. Please review the policy carefully before accepting the offer.

Written notice given to SSI	Refund Amount
At least 4 weeks before commencement	100% of nett fee
Between 2 to 4 weeks before commencement	50% of nett fee
Less than 2 weeks before programme commencement	No refund will be made

4. Social Service Field Experience

1. What is the Social Service Field Experience?

The Social Service Field Experience is a one-day field visit that allows you to visit a social service agency and better understand real-world practice.

2. Is Social Service Field Experience compulsory for HDSS?

In addition to the above nine (9) HDSS modules, you must attend one Social Service Field Experience trip during the programme.

3. Can I be exempted from SSFE?

Exemption for SSFE is granted to Learners who are graduates WSQ Advanced Certificate in Social Service. No further exemption will be available even if you are already working in the sector.

4. What is the fee for Social Service Field Experience?

The fee is \$180 before GST. As the Social Service Field Experience is not funded by SWDA, funding does not apply to this component.

5. Entry Requirement and Eligibility, including E-learning Requirement

1. What are the admission requirements for the HDSS programme?

Applicants must meet the 4 entry requirements mentioned below:

1. Applicants must achieve a minimum grade of C6 for GCE 'O' level English (or equivalent)
2. Applicants must have at least 2 years of fulltime working experience
3. Applicants must have achieved one of the following:
 - a. WSQ Advanced Certificate in Social Service
 - b. SSI Advanced Certificate in Social Service (ACSS)
 - c. SGUS Social Service Assistant Programme
 - d. SSI Diploma in Social Service
 - e. SSI Diploma in Disability Studies
 - f. Diploma from local polytechnic
 - g. 2 GCE 'A' and 2 'AO' Level
4. Applicants must have completed SSI's Understanding Singapore's Social Compact and Social Policies e-learning course.

2. What qualifications are considered equivalent to GCE 'O' Level English?

Equivalent English qualifications may include recognised English proficiency qualifications such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Workplace Literacy (WPL) or Workplace Literacy and Numeracy (WPLN). For WPLN, applicants should have at least a Statement of Attainment at Level 5 covering Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing.

3. Can part-time work, internship, contract work or National Service be counted towards the working experience requirement?

Full-time National Service and full-time contract employment may be counted towards the working experience requirement. Experience gained through part-time work, internships, volunteer work, or other relevant experience may also be considered and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis based on the information provided in your application.

4. Is the e-learning course compulsory before applying?

Yes. The complimentary e-learning courses are part of the programme requirements. You should complete it and submit the e-certificate with your application.

5. Can I submit my application first and provide the e-certificate later?

No. You must complete the e-learning course and submit the e-certificate when you register for the programme.

6. Application Process and Submission

1. How do I apply for the programme?

You may apply through the [SSI portal](#) when applications are open. You must submit the online application with all required supporting documents and pay for the application fee.

2. What documents do I need to submit during application?

You will need to register online, pay the application fee, and upload all relevant academic certificates, transcripts, and other supporting documents through the SSI portal. If your submission is incomplete, your application may be delayed or rejected. Please check that you have uploaded all required documents.

3. What happens after I submit my application? How will I know if I have been shortlisted?

SSI will review each application based on the submitted qualifications, experience and programme criteria. You will be notified of the outcome by email.

7. Written Aptitude Test and Interview

1. What will be tested during the Written Aptitude Test?

The Written Aptitude Test assesses applicants' suitability and readiness for the programme. It also serves as an English proficiency test, covering areas such as grammar, spelling and sentence construction. The test includes two essay questions related to social services and must be completed within one hour.

2. How should I prepare for the Written Aptitude Test?

There is no specific reading material for the test. Applicants may prepare by reading widely about the social service sector.

3. Is the Written Aptitude Test required for all HDSS applicants?

All shortlisted HDSS applicants are required to sit for the Written Aptitude Test. Only applicants who pass the test will be considered for admission.

4. If I cannot attend or miss the Written Aptitude Test, can it be rescheduled?

No rescheduling will be available for applicants who miss the Written Aptitude Test. The applicant will be deemed absent, and the application outcome will be unsuccessful.

5. Is the interview required for all HDSS applicants?

Not all applicants will be required to attend an interview. Applicants may be invited to attend an interview as part of the admissions assessment process, to help us better understand their suitability for the programme. Interview requirements, if any, will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

6. I am unable to attend the interview. Can SSI arrange another date or time?

Applicants who are scheduled for an online interview we must ensure that they are available, as alternative arrangements will not be considered.

8. Articulation Pathways

1. How will this programme support my further studies?

Successful completion of this qualification will make learners eligible to apply to Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) in Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), but it does not automatically guarantee admission into the programme. Applicants must still meet the relevant admission criteria and pass the required assessment process.

9. Career Opportunities

1. Will completing HDSS help me enter the social service sector?

The programme can help applicants build relevant knowledge for the social service sector. Your employment outcome will depend on your suitability, experience, and available job opportunities.

2. If I am making a mid-career switch with many years of work experience outside the social service sector, which programme is more suitable?

Applicants who are new to the social service sector may find the SSI Advanced Certificate in Social Service (ACSS) a useful starting point, as it provides foundational knowledge of the sector and professional practice. Applicants who meet the HDSS entry requirements and wish to pursue a more advanced qualification may also apply for the Higher Diploma in Social Service (HDSS).

3. Will career services be provided for learners in this programme?

You may visit the Social Service Tribe webpage for information about the social service sector, career guides, and job opportunities.