Contemporary Issues in Social Policy

7.1	Module Overview								
Module Number		**Module Title**	Contemporary Issues in Social Policy						
Stage of Principal Programme			**3**	**Semester**	**1**	**Duration.** *(Weeks F/T)*	**12**	**ECTS**	5
Mandatory / Elective (M/E)	M	**Hours of Learner Effort / Week**	**2**						
Analysis of required hours of learning effort									

Teaching and Learning Modalities	**✓if relevant to this module**	**Approx. proportion of total (hours)**
Contact Hours		
In person face-to-face	✓	24
Synchronous		
Indirect/Non-Contact Hours		
Asynchronous		
Work Based		
Other: • Independent reading, engagement with VLE, research and preparation of assessments	✓	101
Total		125

Pre-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title	N/A
Co-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title	N/A
Maximum number of learners per instance of the module	**60**
Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff working in this module.	

Role e.g., Tutor, Mentor, Lecturer, Research Supervisor, etc.	Qualifications & experience required	Staff - Learner Ratio X:Y
Lecturer	A minimum level 9 qualification in Social Science/Social Studies or closely cognate area	1:60

Assessment Techniques – percentage contribution						
Continuous Assessment	40%	**Proctored Exam – in person**	60%	**Practical Skills Based**	
Project		**Proctored Exam - online**		**Work Based**	
Capstone (Y/N)?	N	**If Yes, describe**			

7.2	Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs)	
MIMLO **On completion of this module a learner will be able to:**		**Related MIPLO #**
1. Identify the key ideologies underpinning the development of social policy		**1**
2. Explain the complexity of welfare provision through a consideration and review of key welfare models and policies in an EU context		**1**
3. Understand the characteristics of different methodological approaches in research		**2**
4. Locate the impact of welfare policy in society in the context of social care practice		**1, 4, 7**

7.3	Indicative Module Content, Organisation and Structure

This module will build on the previous module *Introduction to Irish Government, Politics and Policy* which focused on the key concepts of social policy. This module promotes learner engagement with contemporary social issues that frame social policy and to think critically about the policy context and services in which Social Care work is located.

Module Aims & Objectives:
The module Aims and Objectives are informed by the Standards of Proficiency for Social Care Workers (CORU, 2017). The module aims to facilitate learners develop critical thinking about the policy context of Social Policy. The module also explores different models of welfare in EU states and how these connect to and determine the range and quality of key social services in any country.

Indicative Module Content:
- Welfare ideology and social policy
- Origins and development of social policy
- Welfare regimes in the EU
- The importance of policy analysis for social care practitioners
- Contemporary challenges for social policy in Ireland
- Sustainable development and the local economy
- Future welfare and wellbeing
- Eco-social policies and models of sustainable communities

All of these themes will draw on case studies and examples of best practice in Ireland and selected EU countries (Employment, Welfare, Housing, Education, Migration, Disability, Sustainability)

7.4	Work-based learning and practice-placement *(if applicable)*

NA

7.5	Specific module resources required *(if applicable)*

NA

7.6	Application of programme teaching, learning and assessment strategies to this module

The module teaching and learning strategy is based on the core objectives of enabling learners to understand and develop critical thinking about the policy context of Social Policy. Activity-based strategies that allow learners to engage in individual or group learning opportunities through project planning (e.g. report writing) and content creation (e.g. written/digital content), Lectures, peer learning achieved through face-to-face classroom discussion, presentations and interactive group discussion, group exercises, case studies, video.
In keeping with the principles of UDL, material will be made available in a variety of modes on the VLE; text, video, podcast, with lecturer's slides posted the day before so that students may download in advance, should they wish.

Research Proposal
Through the analysis of different data collection methods, the Research Proposal serves as a cross-modular assessment with *Research Methods and Evidence Informed Practice module in Stage 3, Semester 1.* This assessment focuses on knowledge and skills of research methods and data collection and meets MIMLOs 3, 4.

Written Exam
The two-hour proctored exam asks students to answer two out of five questions. This examines the students understanding of the core concepts, empirical case studies and theories studied in the course. This is a must-pass assessment and meets MIMLOs 1, 2, 4.

7.7	Summative Assessment Strategy for this module	
MIMLOs	*Technique(s)*	*Weighting*

3, 4	Research Proposal (co-assessed with Research Methods and Evidence Informed Practice module)	**40%**
1, 2, 4	Written Exam	**60%**

7.8	**Sample Assessment Materials**

Research Proposal (1,500 words) (40%)

This module will be partially co-assessed with the Research Methods and Evidence Informed Practice Module. The Research Proposal will require the student to develop a research question, provide a rationale and engage with policy and previous research. The proposal will specifically direct students to appraise social policies most closely associated with their chosen topic. This will form part of the proposal's literature review but will be assessed primarily based on its merits as a review of a current policy area. The headings of the project include:

- Introduction (1-2 paragraphs)
- Statement of the Problem/Research Objectives
- Research Questions
- Review of a Policy Area (Select one social policy related issue of concern (e.g. Housing; Transport; Employment; Leisure and Recreation; Education; Welfare, Disability, Migration).
- Research and Data Collection Methods (What research methods are used to obtain data on your policy? Secondary analysis of existing data: census data, research reports, observation, etc.)
- Strengths & Weaknesses
- Conclusions

Written Exam (60%)

The two-hour proctored exam asks students to answer two out of five questions. This examines the students understanding of the core concepts, empirical case studies and theories studied in the course.

Sample Exam Questions:
1. Historically there has been low public investment in the Irish childcare sector especially when compared to other EU countries. Discuss.
2. Assess Matzke and Ostner's (2010) claim that there has been a large-scale transformation in family policy across Europe.
3. Describe the key features of the Assisted Decision-Making Act (2021) and the implications of this for the disability sector in Ireland.
4. Critically evaluate the challenges for the mental health services in Ireland today and discuss how the new Sharing the Vision (2020) aims to address this.
5. Explain why the system of direct provision has been deemed 'unfit for purpose' and the steps outlined in the White Paper on Ending Direct Provision (2021).
6. The principle of universalism has been central to the success of the Swedish welfare state. Discuss.
7. Outline the main issues and problems with the Fair Deal scheme and the Home Care package for older people in Ireland.
8. Critically evaluate the key features of the neoliberal perspective of social welfare and outline the implications of this perspective for social care practitioners.
9. Critically evaluate the extent to which the principles of sustainable development and sustainable wellbeing reflected in Irish social policies and practices with reference to a case study.

Marking of assessments will be in line with the Marking Assessment Guidelines as outlined in Section 3.3 of the College's Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards unless otherwise indicated.

7.9	**Indicative reading lists and other information resources**

Indicative Core Reading:

Considine, M. and Dukelow, F. (2017) I*rish Social Policy; A Critical Introduction*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.
Esping-Andersen, G., Gallie, D., Hemerijck, A. and Myles, J. (2002) *Why We Need a New Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Farnsworth, K Irving, ZM (2011) *Social Policy in Challenging Times*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Other Reading:

Bonoli, G. (2007) 'Time Matters, New Social Risks, and Welfare State Adaptation in Advanced Industrial Democracies. *Comparative Political Studies* 40:5.

De Haas, H. (2023) How Migration Really Works. A Factful Guide to the Most Divisive Issue in Politics. UK: Viking House.

Ellingsaeter, A.L. and Leira, A. (Eds.) (2006) *Politicising Parenthood in Scandinavia; Gender Relations in Welfare States*. Bristol: Policy Press.

ESRI/TCD. (2006-). *Growing Up in Ireland*. Dublin: Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Fanning, B. and Rush, M. (2006). *Care and Social Change in the Irish Welfare Economy*. Dublin: UCD Press.

Matzke, M. and Ostner, I. (2010) 'Introduction; change and continuity in recent family policies' *Journal of European Social Policy*. 20:387.

Indicative Other Resources:
Peer-Reviewed Journals
Critical Social Policy, Sage.
Journal of Social Policy, Cambridge Core.
Journal of European Social Policy, Sage.

Essential Websites:
www.nwci.ie
www.welfare.ie;
www.citizensinformation.ie;
www.eapn.ie;
www.ispa.ie;
www.esri.ie;
www.dohc.ie
www.socialjustice.ie

Students will be asked to engage with newsfeed and commentary on current affairs from a variety of resources, as well as content written by high-quality journalists, policymakers and/or academics. Current affairs will be circulated via email and uploaded to the VLE.
Sample List:
- Newsfeed and Political Commentary
- Print-Newspaper Websites
- TV/News Channels