

Inspection Report

Course provider: Staffordshire University

Course approval: BA (Hons) Social Work

Inspection dates: 28 – 30 March 2023

Report date:	24 May 2023
Inspector recommendation:	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	13 July 2023

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Introduction

1. Social Work England completes inspections as part of our statutory requirement to approve and monitor courses. Inspections form part of our process to make sure that courses meet our [education and training standards](#) and ensure that students successfully completing these courses can meet our [professional standards](#).
2. During the approval process, we appoint partner inspectors. One inspector is a social worker registered with us and the other is not a registered social worker (a 'lay' inspector). These inspectors, along with an officer from the education quality assurance team, undertake activity to review information and carry out an inspection. This activity could include observing and asking questions about teaching, placement provision, facilities and learning resources; asking questions based on the evidence submitted; and meeting with staff, training placement providers, people with lived experience and students. The inspectors then make recommendations to us about whether a course should be approved.
3. The process we undertake is described in our legislation; the Social Worker Regulations 2018¹, and the Social Work England [\(Education and Training\) Rules 2019](#).
4. You can find further guidance on our course change, approval, and annual monitoring processes on our website.

What we do

5. When an education provider wants to make a change to a course, or request the approval of a new course, they are asked to consider how their course meets our education and training standards and our professional standards and provide evidence of this to us. We are also undertaking a cycle of re-approval of all currently approved social work courses in England following the introduction of the Education and Training Standards 2021.
6. The education quality assurance officer reviews all the documentary evidence provided and will contact the education provider if they have any questions about the information submitted. They also provide advice and guidance on our approval processes.
7. When we are satisfied that we have all the documentary evidence required to proceed with an inspection we assign one registrant and one lay inspector. We undertake a conflict-of-interest process when confirming our inspectors to ensure there is no bias or perception of bias in the approval process.
8. The inspectors complete an assessment of the evidence provided and advise the officer if they have any queries that may be able to be addressed in advance of the inspection.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2018/9780111170090/contents>

9. During this time a draft plan for the inspection is developed and shared with the education provider, to make sure it is achievable at the point of inspection.
10. Once the inspectors and officer are satisfied that an inspection can take place, this is usually undertaken over a three-to-four-day visit to the education provider. We then draft a report setting out what we found during the inspection and if and how our findings demonstrate that the course meets our standards.
11. The inspectors may recommend in this report that the course is approved with conditions, approved without conditions or that it does not meet the criteria for approval. Where the course has been previously approved, we may also decide to withdraw approval.
12. A draft of this report is shared with the education provider, and once we have considered any comments or observations they may wish to provide, we make a final regulatory decision about the approval of the course.
13. The final decisions that we can make are as follows, that the course is approved without conditions, the course is approved with conditions or that the course does not meet the criteria for approval. The decision, and the report, are then published.
14. If the course is approved with conditions, we will write to the education provider setting out how they can demonstrate they have met the conditions, the action we will take once we decide that the conditions are met, and the action we will take if we decide the conditions are not met.

Summary of Inspection

15. Staffordshire University and the BA (Hons) Social Work course was inspected as part of the Social Work England reapproval cycle; whereby all course providers with qualifying social work courses will be inspected against the new Education and Training Standards 2021.

Inspection ID	SUR1_CP136
Course provider	Staffordshire University
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	65
Date of inspection	28 March – 30 March 2023
Inspection team	Surj Sall-Dullat - Registrant Inspector Brad Allan - Lay Inspector Sam Jameson - Education Quality Assurance Officer
Inspector recommendation	Approved
Approval outcome	Approved

Language

16. In this document we describe Staffordshire University as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the BA (Hons) Social Work as ‘the course’.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from 28 – 30 March 2023. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students, course staff, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work.

18. These meetings formed the basis of the inspection plan, agreed with the education provider ahead of inspection. The following section provides a summary of these sessions, who participated and the topics that were discussed with the inspection team.

Conflict of interest

19. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

20. The inspection team met with four students from the BA (Hons) Social Work course, two from the same year of the course and two from different years of the course, two of the students were student representatives. Discussions included their experiences of the teaching and learning within the course, their access to support services of the university, admissions process, placements and how ready they felt for practice.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection the inspection team met with university staff members from; the social work course team, senior leadership team, admissions team, staff involved in practice and placement learning, library and academic support services, disability support services and student support.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the development of the university's course, referred to as 'service user and carer group' in the documentary evidence submitted by the university. Discussions included what area(s) of the course they were involved with, how much input and feedback they had from the university and the course and what training they received in this role.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Stoke Childrens Services, Changes, Humankind, Age UK, and Practice Educators.

Findings

24. In this section we set out the inspectors' findings in relation to whether the education provider has demonstrated that it meets the education and training standards and that the course will ensure that students who successfully complete the course are able to meet the professional standards.

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence relating to the course selection process, including the West Midlands Teaching Partnership (WMTP) and the wider university support mechanisms related to these processes. The documentary evidence included programme specification, recruitment process and WMTP best practice to admissions guide. These provided an overview of the course's entry requirements and the three-stage selection process involved, which includes a written reflective task which is based on a testimonial written by a person with lived experience, with a conversation with that person to reflect on the applicants work, and an interview panel aimed for having a person with lived experience, practitioner and academic on it. Through meetings with the admissions team, course team, people with lived experience of social work, and placement providers, the inspection team were able to gain insight into the admissions process on to the course. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met.

26. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a [recommendation](#) in relation to Standard 1.1. We recommend that the university considers reintroducing a group discussion activity to extend the holistic nature of the selection process.

Standard 1.2

27. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to inspection included the education providers recruitment process, what to expect at interview guide and their open day presentation. The inspection team were able to triangulate this documentary evidence within their discussions with the staff involved in the admissions process, in which the inspectors were satisfied that an applicants' prior relevant experience is assessed as part of the admissions process. The inspectors agreed this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

28. Following review of documentary evidence provided and their discussions with key stakeholders throughout the inspection, the inspection team were able to confirm that people with lived experience of social work and placement providers were involved in the admissions process. In discussions with the people with lived experience, one of the groups told the inspection team that they had worked alongside a member of the course team and

a practitioner to review parts of the admissions process. This provided narrative evidence of action that the university had taken following their feedback regarding the use of a written task within the admissions process, the weight given to this and its authenticity. The person with lived experience expressed they felt valued and listened to throughout their feedback and actions taken regarding this. The inspectors concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

29. The university demonstrated the process of assessing suitability of applicants' health, conduct and character through the documentary evidence submitted, and during inspection meetings. This included support during the process for applicants with health or learning needs. When meeting with members of the team involved in admissions, the inspection team were told of the support mechanisms whereby applicants can seek guidance to ensure their needs are upheld. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

30. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to the inspection included university admissions policy and university wide Access and Participation Plan (APP, a departmental APP was provided to the inspection team during the inspection). These documents were discussed within the inspection of how this is applied throughout the admissions process. Examples of reasonable adjustments that have been made for applicants were given during discussions with students and the admissions team. Students confirmed they are asked about any requirements they have when they are invited to their interview, as well as through their application form and that any disclosures made during this process would not impact on the decision to whether they are offered a place on the course. The inspection team were assured that all individuals involved in the admissions process must have completed training on unconscious bias and equality, diversity, and inclusion. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

31. The inspection team met with a range of students who all identified that they were given appropriate levels of guidance and information during their admissions process. They confirmed they felt in a position to make an informed decision regarding whether to take up an offer on the course. The inspection team were able review the documentary evidence which included guidance on the university website, admissions policy and the 'Get into Social Work' resource produced by Staffordshire University and the WMTP. The inspectors agreed this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

32. The inspection team were satisfied with the documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection which outlined the breakdown of the required two hundred days practice-based learning throughout the course, including mandatory skills days within the courses practice focused modules. This included mapping against Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) for Social Work in England, British Association of Social Workers (BASW, 2018) and the Professional Standards which assured the inspection team that students were provided with contrasting learning experiences, including statutory settings. The inspectors were able to triangulate this within discussions with the students and placement provider meetings. The inspectors agreed this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

33. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence which included the role of the Academic Practice Learning Manager and Placement Hub, which work at the university to ensure that students have access to quality practice learning opportunities. The inspection team were able to identify that there is an audit process of practice learning and were provided with samples of Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) forms, including feedback from students and practice educators (PE). There were clear links within the courses module descriptors to the PCF and Professional Standards, including student knowledge, skills and learning outcomes that were appropriate to their development within the course. The inspection team were provided with narrative evidence within their meetings with the students and placement providers, highlighting that students have wide-ranging placement experiences and exposure to appropriate learning to support them in their development and ability to meet the professional standards. The inspection team advised this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

34. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to the inspection covered the processes for induction, supervision, and quality assurance. The inspection team were told how the processes were used and monitored by both the course team and placement providers in the respective meetings, both highlighting the importance of the learning agreement meetings and placement portfolio to aid these processes. One student spoke of the support from their PE and academic mentor, explaining they had contacted them directly when they required additional advice and guidance whilst on placement. The student spoke openly about workload pressures within their placement but acknowledged that they felt able to work within this, access the support they required and felt at ease with who to contact and seek support from following their induction period in which this was clearly highlighted to them. Students also told the inspection team of having regular formal and informal support, including supervision, throughout their placement experiences and that the course team continues to check in with them consistently. This ensures that they have manageable workloads and access to required resources. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

35. Following review of the documentary evidence the inspectors were reassured that there was a robust system in place to ensure that the students' responsibilities are matched to their stage of the course. The documentary evidence clearly outlined the university process for placement audit to generate the learning opportunities, legal framework, and level of complexity in the placement for the student, considering their place within the course. This was reinforced when meeting with placement providers where they spoke openly of the detailed information they receive regarding the student, and then look to match to appropriate learning and development opportunities in partnership with the university. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

36. The inspection team were satisfied with the evidence provided in relation to students assessed preparation for practice, which included the Preparation for Practice module assessed via a portfolio, and simulated interaction with a person with lived experience, and skills days. The inspection team were provided with narrative evidence during the inspection that was triangulated with documentary evidence that confirmed students must pass all components of the Preparation for Practice module before being able to progress through the course. The inspection team were informed of the university's pragmatic and supportive approach to providing extra teaching sessions and catch-up days to enable students to learn and develop their knowledge and skills. When meeting with placement providers, they raised no concerns regarding students' readiness to practice. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

37. Prior to the inspection the inspectors were able to review the documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard, and to demonstrate how the university ensures relevant criteria is met for the PE they work with. This included a placement handbook, PE CPD offer and personal details pack.

38. Within this documentary evidence it was identified that there are mandatory training requirements for all independent and off-site PE employed by the university, who are line managed by the course Head of the Department, and which is reviewed and recorded by the university practice learning team. There are annual checks for on-site PE regarding their Social Work England registration, using an internal database to record this.

39. Meeting with the course team identified to the inspectors that the university asks for Social Work England registration and details, which is then checked against the register, checked with employer partners regarding if any PE have left the register. The course team spoke of a series of events it was running, including in person and virtual opportunities. One example they gave was a session to focus on the support available for students who may be

having difficulties or needing additional support, and another event would be a refresher course if a PE currency had lapsed. As well as timetabled drop in and check in days throughout the course for PE. The inspection team were advised that the QAPL process informs PE process with its reflective checks and feedback. The course team identified that independent PEs have a yearly and consistent stream of students to uphold their professional currency, with placement providers auditing their PE. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

40. It needs to be noted that the inspection team were only able to meet with off-site PE during the inspection meeting. As a result of the meeting with the PEs the inspectors were uncertain, based on the narrative evidence from the PE group, of the strength in checks that mandatory training has been complete for off-site PEs, and that the PE group is aware and has a record of this. The PE group identified to the inspectors that they were unsure who their line manager was, they knew they had one but unsure of who specifically.

41. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a [recommendation](#) in relation to Standard 2.6. We recommend that the University reviews its' process for checking and reviewing the registration, skills, and knowledge of off-site Practice Educators. This is to consider if a formal and robust mechanism is in place. Whilst ensuring that all Practice Educators are undertaking mandatory training, that this is logged and recorded, and they are aware who their Line Manager is within the University framework.

Standard 2.7

42. Documentary evidence submitted prior to the inspection in support of this standard included the placement handbook and practice learning agreement. The inspectors were able to learn from these the processes which are required to be followed when a student needs to raise a concern. The inspection team were informed that, as part of the induction process the placement providers are required to ensure that students are provided with their organisation's whistleblowing policy. During discussions with the course team, it was identified that before a placement starts, the placement learning agreement is signed and includes the information students would require if they needed to report a concern, Including, sources of support and individuals to contact if any issues or concerns arise. The course team gave an example of a student on a MA course raising a concern about staff behaviour in their placement. Explaining that the student was involved and supported throughout this process to ensure that their well-being, linking into formal support and well-being services, and academic needs were upheld throughout this process and to address issues within the placement and those involved at that time and going forward. The students confirmed to the inspection team that they were aware of the relevant information contained in the placement handbook, who to speak to within placement and university if they have any concerns, and those students who had been on placement of their own examples of the placement learning agreement meetings. The inspection team concluded this standard was met.

43. From the inspection teams meeting with placement providers, it was acknowledged that their own whistleblowing policy and procedure in relation to the placement of and supporting students could be more robust. From the varied placement providers that the inspection team were able to speak to there was not a collective clarity regarding what the actions, stages and support a student should be given and expect if a concern through whistleblowing procedure is raised. The placement providers were clear that they did not see this as an issue directly with the university but rather the wider WMTP collective.

44. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a [recommendation](#) in relation to Standard 2.7. We recommend that the University considers a more robust process, to ensure that all relevant parties have a clear awareness of the whistleblowing policy and procedure, relevant to the placement setting.

Standard three: Course governance, management, and quality

Standard 3.1

45. The inspection team was provided with documentary evidence of the university course team CVs, external examiner CVs and an overview of the School of Health, Science and Wellbeing management and governance structure. From meeting with members of the senior management team, course team and placement partners the inspection team were able to triangulate that there is a system for quality assurance and oversight of academic standards, and allocation of roles and responsibilities within the course and university. The inspection team were therefore satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

46. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to inspection included the placement handbook, which outlined process for placement breakdown, and placement learning agreement meeting, including the work done to ensure all involved in the placement understand their role, responsibility, and expectations in a proactive manner. Within the meeting with the course team the inspection team were informed of the university working as part of the WMTP and the framework around placement work stream, capacity, and quality assurance process to ensure that placement providers can provide education and training opportunities that meet the standards. The inspection team received narrative evidence of placement provider and stakeholder events which the university hold, and documentary evidence of practice placement audits that the university completes to outline learning opportunities mapped to the professional standards for its placement providers. This adds into a robust feedback system to address any areas of development and ensure there is coproduction in upholding education and training opportunities that meet the standards within practice placements. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

47. Evidence submitted in support of this standard included health and safety checklist, redacted QAPL and practice learning agreement. The inspection team were able to meet with the staff involved in the administration and delivery of support services to students, which the course team confirmed extended to students when they were on their placements. The practice learning agreement highlights any requirements that a student may have including learning needs, any needs associated with a disability, caring commitments and reasonable adjustments required. The agreement also covers issues of risk such as whistleblowing procedures, supervision, and cover arrangements. Meetings with placement providers and students confirmed to the inspectors that the support mechanisms and processes in place were clear, accessible, and utilised. The course team identified its process for engaging with occupational therapy services at the university, with an example of supporting students with needs around mobility and access, and the placement involved and supporting with this. The inspectors agreed this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

48. The inspection team were assured that employers are involved in elements of the course. This was demonstrated within documentary evidence submission which included the placement matching process, handbook and WMTP teaching consultant role. The inspectors were informed during the inspection of a pilot for six teaching consultant roles to be established from within locally employed practitioners. This will have ring fenced days each year to use their expertise involving course development, teaching, and assessment. The inspection team were provided with narrative evidence during the inspection of placement providers and practitioners being invited and involved in course committees, consultation, and admissions, as well as the university attending regular regional and placement meetings coordinated by WMTP that focuses on placement numbers and allocation in partnership with employers. All aware of wider social work work-based pressures which can impact on availability but all in agreement of the university approach of being a collaborative one. The inspectors concluded this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

49. The inspection team met with placement providers, students, and people with lived experience of social work to hear how they are involved in practice and what impact they felt they had on course evaluation and improvement. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection identified how the above groups are engaged and involved in course monitoring, evaluation, and improvement systems, and gave an overview of how the course is subject to continuous monitoring and development. This evidence highlighted how the course is monitored in line with the university continuous monitoring policy, the mechanics of which include student feedback gathered from module evaluation which feeds into the teaching and learning strategies. The inspection team were informed of students and people with lived experience feedback in bi-annual course committees, that each of these groups attend respectively. The feedback within the inspection, from the above identified groups,

was positive and included practical examples of changes made because of their feedback. This included one student explaining how they can see the benefits of course changes that the other students had feedback about, which were discussed within the inspection meeting with the student group. One member of the people with lived experience meeting explained how they attend curriculum development meetings and course monitoring panels to evaluate and give feedback for potential areas for development within the course. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

50. The inspectors agreed that based on the documentary evidence provided and from discussions with the course team, senior management team and staff involved with placement provision, there was a clear strategy to ensure student numbers are aligned to a local and regional placement provision capacity framework. The inspection team were informed that the university is a member of the WMTP, one of its main objectives is regarding placement capacity and current student numbers are within the scope of placement availability across the region. The university provided evidence outlining that part of the QAPL process gathers how many students each placement can accommodate, as well as the placement team maintaining a database that tracks what capacity each provider has regarding student numbers and placement capacity. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

51. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to inspection included the course director's CV and Social Work England registration details. The inspection team were assured that based on this evidence and discussions with the course director they were appropriately qualified and experienced. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was able to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

52. The university was able to demonstrate, through documentary evidence reviewed by the inspection team and within meetings, that the course team are appropriately resourced and supported by the senior management team. The inspection team were provided with documentary evidence that identified that all the course team had completed or are working towards the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher and Professional Education, which the inspection team were able to triangulate when meeting with the senior management team. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to the inspection confirmed that all the course team are registered social workers. Their CVs were available to provide evidence of professional and academic experience and specialist subject knowledge. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

53. Evidence submitted in support of this standard included the course monitoring plan and notes from a continuous monitoring biannual meeting, where the course team, course director and head of department, chaired by a member of the academic quality and development leadership team attend to focus on and review any themes that are arising regarding student progression, retention, and attainment. The inspection team were satisfied that this evidenced the appropriate and proactive use of student data regarding their academic progression throughout the course, including challenges to address and action. The inspection team were provided with further evidence during inspection, the university and the courses access and participation plan, that highlighted evaluation and planned next steps regarding the equality, diversity, and inclusion data that the university had gathered. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

54. Following review of documentary evidence provided and their discussions with the senior management team and course team throughout the inspection, the inspection team were able identify how the university supports its educators to maintain their knowledge and understanding regarding professional practice. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included the university academic strategy 2020 – 2023, performance and review flowchart, and performance and development review. The inspection team were provided with narrative evidence of the recent launch of a staff development policy and process. As already identified in this report all the course team have completed or are working towards the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher and Professional Education, which the inspection team were able to triangulate within discussion with course and senior management team meetings. Including evidence of new "Your Career at Staffs" portal for all staff development and training opportunities, which links into the framework for continuous professional development that is reviewed at six month and annual reviews with line managers. The course team spoke openly about feeling supported and valued in their approach and interests to maintaining and developing their professional practice. The inspection team learnt about the WMTP working group pilot that will aim for the course team to have five days per year to be involved in frontline practice, 'academics into practice'. The inspection team concluded this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

55. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was able to demonstrate that this standard was met. The inspection team were able to understand how students are enabled to demonstrate they have the knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards. This was triangulated within meetings with the course team and students. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

56. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to the inspection included stakeholder presentation, Service User and Carer (SUC) strategy 2022-2025 and SUC report 2022, and minutes from people with lived experience of social work consultations in 2022. The inspection team concluded that these documents, alongside the information contained within the course teams opening day presentation, highlighted the university's intention and history of integrating employer partners, practice educators and people with lived experience of social work into the continuous review and development of the course and curriculum. During the inspection the inspection team heard positive examples of the strong working relationships that the university has with each of the groups. It was acknowledged by practitioners and employer partners that because of work-based practice pressures they are not as involved as they always want or invited to be, however they were very clear that they know the university invitation is always there and both groups spoke of how receptive the university is to their participation. The inspection team were given narrative evidence during the people with lived experience meeting which outlined members coproduction within curriculum development meetings and the course monitoring process, which they spoke of their feelings of equity throughout their involvement. The inspection team advised this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

57. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence that the university submitted regarding this standard, which included Inclusive curriculum health check, module descriptors and university equality, diversity, and inclusion framework. The module descriptors highlighted that the course had modules which emphasised human rights, legislative frameworks and that the university had worked to decolonise the social work curriculum. The inspection team were satisfied that the course had been planned with appropriate equality, diversity, and inclusion principles in mind. This was triangulated because of discussions during the inspection with meetings with the course team, students, and university support services. It was confirmed that students felt well supported and individual needs were always considered by the university, with examples of reasonable adjustments such as specialist equipment and technology, extensions, and adjustment to working conditions, which the university Student Inclusion Service supports with. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

58. The inspection team heard from the course team, practice educators and placement providers, alongside review of documentary evidence, of how the course is continually updated. The inspection team were told of the course teams research activity from the meeting with the senior management team, and steps that they take through scholarly activity to reflect best and current practice into the curriculum and university approach to

teaching. Narrative evidence was provided to the inspection team from the university support services that the course team receive library portal alerts to update them about any developments in research, legislation, government policy and current social work practice. The university has plans to continue this approach through its pilots of 'practitioners into academia' and 'academic into practice', which will enable both local social work practitioners and the university course team to bring direct current practice into the teaching of the course. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

59. The inspection team were satisfied with the documentary evidence which included module descriptors, reinforcing certain practice-based learning modules which puts greater emphasis upon students applying theory to practice. This was triangulated in discussion and meeting with the PE, where they spoke of the 'preparation for practice module' and its focus on applying theory to practice and their role in supporting to apply theoretical frameworks in practice. The course team provided examples of case study and scenario-based assignments, an example given of a person with lived experience who is a foster carer who co-teaches, reviews and designs on attachment theory and into practice, which draws upon the students learning and ability to apply theory to situational tasks that are developed in partnership with key stakeholders. Feedback from students was also positive regarding skills days being delivered at the correct time and blocked learning for theoretical teaching before then going into placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

60. The inspection team were informed that the social work department at the university sits within the School of Health, Science and Wellbeing, which opens opportunities for multidisciplinary learning and working. The course team provided narrative evidence of members of its team delivering teaching to health-related cohorts and those lecturers from the health programmes in the delivery of interprofessional education to the social work cohorts. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included Interprofessional Education Strategy (IPE) 2022 and example of the IPE Welcome Presentation 2022. The inspection team heard from one of the course team regarding IPE at the university highlighting the integrated IPE teaching and learning, referencing this with cohorts from nurses, paramedics, and biomedical science cohorts. Detailing how the IPE modules include workshops, with built script of a scenario for a service user who needs to access support from a wide range of professions, this included at least two students from different professions involved and give their views/thoughts, guest speakers from different professions, service user and carer group involved throughout. The inspection team triangulated this from speaking to the student group, who also spoke of the positive learning they took from visit and input from mental health nurses and two-day legal court training as examples. The inspection team concluded this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

61. The inspection team reviewed the module descriptors and the information which the university provided within the mapping documents in support of this standard. The inspection team were assured this demonstrated that between designed teaching, learning activities and independent study the students had appropriate time in structured academic learning for them to meet the required learning outcomes and meet the professional standards. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was able to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

62. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to the inspection included the module descriptors, inclusive curriculum health check 2023, PCF, Professional Standards and QAA mapping. The inspection team were able to identify clear links from the module descriptors to learning outcomes, assessment methods, to the Professional Standards and PCF. The inspection team were provided with narrative evidence during the inspection from the course teams presentation regarding the new curriculum and assessment strategy. This illustrated how the changes to the curriculum design and assessment strategy were valid and robust, evidencing a diverse approach to the course assessments and in line with university guidance on fair and inclusive assessment. The coproduction from key stakeholders, people with lived experience of social work, current students, and alumni upholds the aim of the course reflecting contemporary practice. This satisfied the inspection team that those students who were successful in passing these assessments would have achieved the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards. The inspection team were informed that the assessment strategy and learning outcomes are subject to the university internal and external peer review and quality procedures. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

63. As identified within standard 4.8 the inspection team were able to review documentary evidence prior to the inspection in relation to the assessment and progression of students on the course. The inspection team were satisfied that there were clear differentials between the levels of the course, which illustrated how the course assessments were mapped to the curriculum and suitably sequenced to emulate a student's progression through the course. This was triangulated within the inspection teams meeting with the students, who raised no concerns regarding their assessment progression during their time on the course. The inspection team concluded this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

64. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to the inspection included module indicators with detail of formative and summative assessment strategies, programme specifications, social

work marking and feedback strategy and the link to the university assessment policy and procedure. During the inspection the course team explained that students have access to feedback on both a formal and informal level which encompasses a timely and meaningful approach for the students, aiming for feedback within twenty working days and going through a three-stage internal moderation and then external moderator. Through having access to module leads and academic mentors regarding summative assessments, as well as whilst the students are on placement from onsite supervisors and PE, students also have access to informal feedback both verbally and in writing in response to formative assessments, including feedback from people with lived experience in certain modules. The feedback received by the inspection team from the students, was mixed. Regarding not theirs, but other students that they knew, feedback, its consistency, and how timely and constructive this had been. However, none of the students the inspection team spoke to directly, raised any issues or concerns regarding the feedback they had received. After reviewing the documentary evidence, discussions with the course team and students the inspection team were assured this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

65. Inspectors were able to review the CVs of the course team and staff involved in assessment, which satisfied them that appropriate expertise, qualifications, and experience were held, including registration of the external examiner with social work England. The inspection team were able to learn that marking moderation is carried out, with new members of the course team being provided with proper training and induction including for the assessment and marking requirements. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was able to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

66. Documentary evidence provided in relation to the systems that manage student progression included module descriptors, academic regulations, academic mentoring policy, academic regulations, and placement portfolio. The inspection team identified that the module descriptors reflect the different learning needs, depending on the development stage/year of students and the mentoring policy explains how the 'Academic Mentor role' aids and informs decisions, including the monitoring of a students' progression throughout the course. Within the documentary evidence the module descriptors outline the requirements for direct observation of practice, with a range of key stakeholders involved in the assessment of the students, including academic staff, PE, people with lived experience of social work and external examiners. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was able to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

67. The inspectors agreed that based on the documentary evidence provided and from discussions with the course team and students, the course design facilitates an evidence informed approach to practice. The inspection team were informed of students being able to access novice research grants that link in with a professor to monitor and support, which feeds into and develops the student's awareness and ability in relation to research and evaluation. Narrative evidence gained during the inspection and these meetings also reinforced how students are encouraged to apply research to practice before the evidence informed practice modules. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

68. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed documentary evidence provided by the university regarding the access to support services that students on the course have in relation to their health and wellbeing. The inspection team were assured that these services provided support including careers advice and support, occupational health services and confidential counselling services. During the inspection the inspectors were able to meet and triangulate this documentary evidence in discussions with the university pastoral support services, including the student inclusion service, student wellbeing, safeguarding and experience managers and advisor and chaplaincy. This provided great insight and examples of the holistic approach and timely process that the university and course provide to its students, which clearly outlined the above-named areas of support but also illustrated other support mechanisms such as through the beacon app, Staffordshire edge and the role of the academic mentor, financial support, equipment, software and working conditions assistance and guidance. Students can access mental health awareness training and offer peer support, there is access to outdoor therapy and allotments as another option of wellbeing and therapeutic focus for students. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

69. The inspection team heard from the student group, course team and the university academic support services concerning the support and access to resources that students have regarding their academic development. From discussion with the course team and documentary evidence the inspection team reviewed, this evidenced the university approach to changing name from personal tutor to academic mentor to aid the greater holistic approach they wished to have regarding this role. This is underpinned by the university academic mentoring policy. With this change in name the university and course team sought to ensure that students accessed the academic mentor for personal and pastoral needs but also ensure greater awareness of academic guidance and support. Both documentary and narrative evidence provided the inspection team with an overview of students being able to access support whilst on the course, during placements and

assistance to access specialist support services regarding a range of areas, including but not limited to students with caring responsibilities, additional support needs and mature students. The chaplaincy service spoke of the support and outreach they provide to students who may be estranged from other personal support networks during holiday and festive times, where the service then offers any support that may be of benefit during these times to the student. Students spoke positively of how they can access this support and guidance in the form of one to ones, how accessible this support is and available whilst on their placements. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

70. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence that included annual declaration form, fitness to study and practice policy and procedure via university website and recruitment process. The inspection team were able to triangulate this information within meeting with the students and course team, highlighting that there is an effective and thorough system for ensuring the suitability of a student's conduct, character, and health from their application, into the course and throughout to graduation. The inspection team heard how this is reviewed annually and brought up by the course team via preparation for practice days and academic mentor sessions at regular points. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was able to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

71. The university has a specialist student inclusion team, and during the inspection the inspectors met with staff involved in this service and the support services it provides. Inspectors were also able to review documentary evidence, including APP, disability support services link to university website and strategic framework for EDI, which outlined how students are supported, including reasonable adjustments and individual support to develop their learning and assessment at the university. The inspectors heard from a student how their Learning Support Statement (LSS) was established and shared with appropriate staff within the university and placement providers to ensure they had the access to additional support and requirements they needed. The inspection team heard examples of the support which was provided and offered from academic tutors to students regarding accessing additional support and specialist services to enable them to progress through the course and meet the professional standards. The inspectors agreed this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

72. Documentary evidence, including assessment policy and procedure, open day presentation and course committee, clearly outlined that students are provided with substantial information regarding all elements of the course and curriculum, as well as the transition to registered social worker, including continuous professional development

requirements. The inspection team were reassured that this information was discussed at open days, offer holder days, welcome week and throughout the course including professional development days. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was able to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

73. The inspection team were able to review the course module descriptors, open day presentation and programme specification, they were satisfied this information provided students with clarity regarding parts of the course where attendance is mandatory. The inspection team learnt of the beacon app that monitors student attendance, with time specific codes for each session to log in and alerts the course team if attendance is low. The course team and wider university support services the inspection team met with spoke of examples where attendance has fallen for an individual student. Through this system it has helped to engage with the student and link in with support services and mechanisms put in place to assist the student. Students were clear in their understanding of the mandatory requirements for their attendance, what the process was for catching up on any missed placement or skills days, including potential repercussions if they did not. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

74. As identified within standard 4.10, the inspection team were provided with and reviewed documentary evidence regarding students receiving feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development. As already identified within this report this evidence outlined the mechanisms that the university has in place for formative, summative and placement activity feedback to the students. In the meeting with the students, they were very articulate regarding their awareness and application of reflective practice, and use of this regarding their ongoing CPD within the course and into ASYE. The matter of consistency of the feedback that the students have received was identified within the meeting, as well as mentioned within the external examiner report. This is an area which the course team, director and head of department were aware of and addressing through having a more standardised template, a marking quality champion to design this template and then team/department away day to share work and markings to strive for greater consistency. The inspection team concluded this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

75. The information identified within the university complaints and appeals procedure (post September 2022) illustrates that there is an effective formal appeals procedure for students. This was triangulated within meeting with the student group and their confirmation that they were aware of this procedure, what it meant for them and how to access it if they

required. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was able to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register

Standard 6.1

76. As the qualifying course is a BA (Hons) Social Work course, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

Recommendations

The inspectors identified the following recommendations for the education provider. These recommendations highlight areas that the education provider may wish to consider. The recommendations do not affect any decision relating to course approval.

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	1.1	The inspectors are recommending that the university considers reintroducing a group discussion activity to extend the holistic nature of the selection process.	Paragraph 26
2	2.6	The inspectors are recommending that the University reviews its' process for checking and reviewing the registration, skills, and knowledge of off-site Practice Educators. This is to consider if a formal and robust mechanism is in place. Whilst ensuring that all Practice Educators are undertaking mandatory training, that this is logged and recorded, and they are aware who their Line Manager is within the University framework.	Paragraph 41
3.	2.7	The inspectors are recommending that the University considers a more robust process, to ensure that all relevant parties have a clear awareness of the whistleblowing policy and procedure, relevant to the placement setting.	Paragraph 44

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
Admissions			

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
1.1 Confirm on entry to the course, via a holistic/multi-dimensional assessment process, that applicants: i. have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards ii. can demonstrate that they have a good command of English iii. have the capability to meet academic standards; and iv. have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.	☒	☐	☒
1.2 Ensure that applicants' prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.4 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes criminal conviction checks.	☒	☐	☐
1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	☒	☐	☐
1.6 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.	☒	☐	☐
Learning environment			

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
2.1 Ensure that students spend at least 200 days (including up to 30 skills days) gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. Each student will have: i) placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and ii) a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.	☒	☐	☐
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	☒	☐	☐
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	☒	☐	☐
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	☒	☐	☐
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.	☒	☐	☒
2.7 Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns	☒	☐	☒

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences.			
Course governance, management and quality			
3.1 Ensure courses are supported by a management and governance plan that includes the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability of individuals and governing groups in the delivery, resourcing and quality management of the course.	☒	☐	☐
3.2 Ensure that they have agreements with placement providers to provide education and training that meets the professional standards and the education and training qualifying standards. This should include necessary consents and ensure placement providers have contingencies in place to deal with practice placement breakdown.	☒	☐	☐
3.3 Ensure that placement providers have the necessary policies and procedures in relation to students' health, wellbeing and risk, and the support systems in place to underpin these.	☒	☐	☐
3.4 Ensure that employers are involved in elements of the course, including but not limited to the management and monitoring of courses and the allocation of practice education.	☒	☐	☐
3.5 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.	☒	☐	☐
3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
includes consideration of local/regional placement capacity.			
3.7 Ensure that a lead social worker is in place to hold overall professional responsibility for the course. This person must be appropriately qualified and experienced, and on the register.	☒	☐	☐
3.8 Ensure that there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise, to deliver an effective course.	☒	☐	☐
3.9 Evaluate information about students' performance, progression and outcomes, such as the results of exams and assessments, by collecting, analysing and using student data, including data on equality and diversity.	☒	☐	☐
3.10 Ensure that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice.	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum and assessment			
4.1 Ensure that the content, structure and delivery of the training is in accordance with relevant guidance and frameworks and is designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
4.2 Ensure that the views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work are incorporated into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum.	☒	☐	☐
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
principles, and human rights and legislative frameworks.			
4.4 Ensure that the course is continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.5 Ensure that the integration of theory and practice is central to the course.	☒	☐	☐
4.6 Ensure that students are given the opportunity to work with, and learn from, other professions in order to support multidisciplinary working, including in integrated settings.	☒	☐	☐
4.7 Ensure that the number of hours spent in structured academic learning under the direction of an educator is sufficient to ensure that students meet the required level of competence.	☒	☐	☐
4.8 Ensure that the assessment strategy and design demonstrate that the assessments are robust, fair, reliable and valid, and that those who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course.	☒	☐	☐
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☐
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.			
4.12 Ensure that there are systems to manage students' progression, with input from a range of people, to inform decisions about their progression including via direct observation of practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.13 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation.	☒	☐	☐
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: I. confidential counselling services; II. careers advice and support; and III. occupational health services	☒	☐	☐
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☒	☐	☐
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☒	☐	☐
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
5.5 Provide information to students about their curriculum, practice placements, assessments and transition to registered social worker including information on requirements for continuing professional development.	☒	☐	☐
5.6 Provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory.	☒	☐	☐
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	☒	☐	☐
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	☒	☐	☐
Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register			
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor's degree with honours in social work.	☒	☐	☐

Regulator decision

Approved.