



Inspection Report

Course provider: Durham University

Course approval: Master of Social Work (MSW)

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 June 2023

Report date:	3 August 2023
Inspector recommendation:	Approval
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	26 September 2023

Contents

Introduction	3
What we do	3
Summary of Inspection	5
Language	5
Inspection.....	6
Meetings with students	6
Meetings with course staff and senior management	6
Meeting with practice-based learning and placement provision staff	6
Meeting with pastoral and academic support services staff	6
Meeting with people with lived experience of social work	7
Meetings with external stakeholders.....	7
Findings	7
Standard one: Admissions.....	7
Standard two: Learning environment	10
Standard three: Course governance, management and quality.....	15
Standard four: Curriculum assessment.....	20
Standard five: Supporting students	27
Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register	32
Proposed outcome.....	33
Recommendations	33
Annex 1: Education and training standards summary	34
Regulator decision	41
Annex 2: Meeting of conditions.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Findings	Error! Bookmark not defined.

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, new course 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 appearance 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- or 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, 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 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. Durham University's Master of Social Work 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	UDUR1
Course provider	Durham University
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	Master of Social Work (MSW)
Mode of Study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	25 per year, 50 students over the two years.
Date of inspection	06/06/2023 – 08/06/2023
Inspection team	Caroline Reynolds - Education Quality Assurance Officer Jo Benn - Lay Inspector Graeme Currie - Registrant Inspector
Inspector recommendation	Approval
Approval outcome	

Language

16. In this document we describe Durham University as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the Master of Social Work as the 'the course' or 'the programme'.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 6th to 8th June at the Teaching and Learning Centre, Durham University where social work students are taught. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students, course staff, employers, 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 the 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 students from the course who were at different stages of their study. Discussions included teaching, learning and assessment including the receiving of meaningful feedback on their progression and performance, their placement experiences, access to student and academic support services, their reflections on the admissions process, input into course improvements, and preparedness for practice.

Meetings with course staff and senior management

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the social work course team including the two course co-directors, the executive dean from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health, the faculty manager, department manager and the director of education. The inspection team also met with staff involved in selection and admissions processes including the post graduate admissions co-ordinator. Discussions included the governance structure, governance groups and key roles, how students' performance, progression and outcomes are evaluated and monitored, the admissions processes and the content, structure, and delivery of the course.

Meeting with practice-based learning and placement provision staff

22. The inspection team met with staff involved in practice-based learning and placement provision including the practice lead, practice learning co-ordinator and practice educators (PEs). Discussions included placement capacity, placement processes and placement breakdowns, support mechanisms for students, placement attendance and professional currency of PEs.

Meeting with pastoral and academic support services staff

23. The inspectors met with a wide range of staff involved in providing disability support, student advice and wellbeing including counselling services, library services, careers and employability, academic study skills and college support staff. Discussions included the range of support services available to students, how students access these services and how the support works in practice.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

24. The inspection team met with five people with lived experience of social work who are involved in the admissions processes, the course design, development, and evaluation and the assessment of preparation for direct practice.

Meetings with external stakeholders

25. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including stakeholders from Workforce and Development, Durham County Council, Children's Services and Adult and Health Services, Cumbria, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear NHS Trust, and Families in Care. Discussions included their involvement in the interview processes, curriculum development, management and monitoring, and their approach to workforce planning.

Findings

26. 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

27. Prior to the inspection, the university provided an extensive range of evidence in relation to the selection and admissions processes, including the Postgraduate Taught Admissions Policy which was reviewed by the inspectors. The course entry requirements are clearly shown on the university's website and the inspection team discussed the admissions procedures and processes with the dedicated members of admissions staff.

28. ICT skills are assessed at all stages of the admissions process and candidates are required to navigate the university's online student admissions portal where they produce their personal statement and upload the required documentation. Initial applications are reviewed and checked against the Professional Capability Framework (PCF) entry-level requirements. The inspection team heard that interviews are carried out with all applicants who meet the entry-level requirements and whom the team feel are appropriate based upon their personal statement information. Candidates attend an online interview day which comprises a group discussion and individual interview, where students are encouraged to disclose criminal convictions, cautions and disabilities. The individual panel comprises three people: an academic member of the course team, a person with lived experience of social work and a professional practitioner. The activities undertaken on the interview day assess the candidate's command of English and their communication skills. Candidates are asked to provide details of their experience of working or volunteering in

social care fields, and their knowledge of the profession. The inspection team heard that unsuccessful candidates are provided with feedback.

29. During the inspection, the inspection team met with some students from the course, and they recalled the admissions processes and the information they received from the university. The inspection team were satisfied that the university had a multi dimensional holistic approach to entry onto the course and therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

30. The university assess prior experience as part of the admissions process which includes the review of the candidate's personal statement and curriculum vitae (CV). The entry requirement is six months relevant professional/personal experience, and this is explored further during the interview, including how candidate's prior experience has helped them to develop relevant knowledge and skills to aid them in working towards meeting the professional standards. In the meeting with students, they explained how the university drew out their relevant past experiences during the admissions processes. The inspection team concluded that applicant's prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions process and therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

31. As outlined in standard 1.1, the inspection team heard that there are always three people on the admissions panel. All panel members observe and assess the group discussion, with each interviewer taking turns to ask questions. Individual interviewers mark each question, and an overall score is calculated. All panel members reach a consensus decision to ensure candidates have reached the required entry requirements.

32. During the inspection employer partners spoke positively about their involvement in the interview panels and the strong relationships they had with the university, including their ability to have an ongoing dialogue to help them plan and prepare. In the meeting with people with lived experience of social work, they spoke positively of their involvement in the process including being able to input into the interview questions. An example was provided where they felt some of the interview questions were difficult for international candidates to understand, this had been taken on board and changes had been made. All parties overall felt the process ran smoothly, they felt valued and listened to and they understood what was expected of them.

33. The inspection team reviewed the 2022 admissions documentation provided by the university which demonstrated that a partnership approach is undertaken. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

34. The inspection team heard that students who accept a place on the course must undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check once they have received their offer, and this check is completed prior to the student starting their first practice placement. The process for disclosures of criminal convictions and cautions forms part of the admissions process as outlined in standard 1.1, and the inspection team reviewed the documentary DBS procedure. The inspectors heard that candidates with previous criminal convictions are not automatically discounted; a detailed review of the nature of the offence and their reflection on their learnings from their experiences is taken into consideration.

35. The inspection team reviewed the social work health questionnaire which applicants are required to complete before commencing onto the course, together with a letter which is sent out to candidates regarding occupational health assessments. Candidates are asked to declare any disabilities prior to attending their interview to ensure appropriate reasonable adjustments are made, such as making reading material accessible. Admissions staff outlined that whilst it is emphasised that any declarations would not affect the decision-making process, they felt some candidates had a reluctance to declare disabilities. The inspection team agreed that processes were in place to assess applicants' conduct, character and health and therefore concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

36. Admissions staff informed the inspection team that all information is clearly set out to enable all candidates to understand what is required of them during the interview assessments. The inspection team reviewed a range of admissions documentation including the Equal Opportunities Statement which outlines the requirement for equal opportunities. During the application process, applicants are asked to complete a confidential monitoring form in line with the university's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and they are invited to disclose and discuss any health conditions, impairments and accessibility needs to ensure that reasonable adjustments are considered. Admissions staff provided examples of how reasonable adjustments are put in place for candidates prior to them attending their interview and they outlined that international candidates are provided with appropriate interview times in their local time zone. In the meeting with students, one commented about the reasonable adjustments that had been made for them and the adjustments had been carried through into their studies and practice placements.

37. The inspection team heard that all staff are required to complete the university's mandatory training on EDI and unconscious bias, and all admissions staff are required to complete the university's mandatory admissions training which is monitored through the university's Oracle learning management system. Admissions staff explained that there is an established group of people with lived experience who are involved in the interview days, and training and support is provided to them.

38. Data identifying EDI trends are considered at the Programme Management Committee (PMC), and the course team provided an overview of how the data is utilised to direct processes within placement allocation and within the admissions processes. The inspection team reviewed the 2018-2022 EDI application tracking examples provided by the university. The inspection team concluded that equality and diversity policies are implemented in relation to applicants, and these are continually monitored. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

39. The inspection team reviewed the comprehensive course information on the university's website which included the entry requirements, the course details and course structure, learning, assessment and practice placement information, fees and funding including scholarships and the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) social work bursaries. The university's website also included links to the PCF, staff profiles and student accommodation information. The inspection team heard that the admissions process is supported by two open days, and these provide opportunities for prospective students to hear about the course and speak to programme staff. As part of the interview day, candidates are invited to ask questions, and they are also invited to ask questions via email. In the meeting with students, they commented that the information they received enabled them to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the course. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

40. The 2022-2023 Practice Learning Handbook reviewed by the inspection team clearly outlined that students must complete the 70-day 50 credit Social Work Practice One module which runs during year one between January and June. This is followed by the 100-day 70 credit Social Work Practice Two module which runs between October and April in year two. The university outlined that the additional 30 days of placement are conducted in taught sessions via a 30 credit skills Professional and Personal Development Module. The module taught sessions run throughout the first year of study and this is utilised to assesses student's readiness for practice in a formative manner. The Practice Learning Handbook also outlined that students must complete two practice placements in contrasting placement settings, with one of them being in a statutory setting. The 2022-2023 Practice Learning Agreement also reviewed by the inspection team evidenced the required learning opportunities. During the inspection students had a clear awareness of the number of mandatory days they spend in practice, including attending the mandatory Professional and Personal Development Module.

41. The inspection team heard that students who failed the Readiness to Practice Module could still progress to their placement with an action plan of support in place if required, this was judged on an individual basis. In the meeting with people with lived experience of social work they outlined how they are involved in the Readiness to Practice Module, where they undertake role plays with students and provide feedback. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

42. The module descriptors for the Professional and Personal Development Module, the Social Work Practice One, and Social Work Practice Two Modules, which were reviewed by the inspection team illustrated how students gain the relevant knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards. The 2022-2023 Practice Learning Agreement was mapped against the PCF, and this was further supported in the practice agreement documentation. The 2022-2023 Practice Learning Handbook and the Professional and Personal Development Module Handbook also illustrated how students gain the relevant knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards.

43. During the inspection placement staff provided an overview of the placement processes, including the pre-placement meetings, the responsibilities, accountability and the audit trail, and the opportunities students have to reflect upon their placement experiences. Staff outlined that there were some ongoing issues in relation to some students not having current UK driving licences; some of the placements within local authorities dictated the need to be able to drive. The team outlined that they were continually working with employer partners to ensure students who could not drive did not lose out on placement opportunities.

44. Students overall spoke positively about the structure of the course, the skills they developed during placement, and their ability to reflect on theory during practice. The inspectors met with a number of PEs who outlined that whilst some students dealt with challenging placements they were well supported and able to gain the relevant knowledge, skills and social work values to go out into practice.

45. During the inspection, placement staff talked through the process if a student asks to be moved to a different placement, and they outlined that they work alongside the student's PE to ensure that they have support in place. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

46. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the example practice learning documentation provided by the university. This detailed the induction, supervision agreement, and realistic workload information. The inspection team also reviewed the

2022-2023 Practice Learning Handbook which outlined the placement team's roles and responsibilities.

47. The preparation for the practice placement module is embedded in term one taught sessions during both year one and year two, and students are provided with reflective practice social work prompt cards to help promote reflective practice. The preparing for placement PowerPoint presentation reviewed by the inspection team outlined that workload parameters are negotiated in the context of the placement setting and that sufficient work is expected to be available to enable students to demonstrate capability in all nine domains of the PCF and in the application of social work values.

48. Following the review of the course teams CVs and through discussions during the inspection, the inspectors were confident that students were supported by appropriately qualified staff who work in partnership, and there was a clear rigorous process in place for supporting students which is monitored regularly. Each staff member supports between four to eight students across years one and two with their preparation for placement and that staff member attends the practice learning agreement meeting, the interim review, and the final review meeting. Student workloads and access to resources are monitored through their practice placements. There are two practice learning co-ordinators who work alongside the PEs and link workers to further monitor and support this process through three-weekly support sessions, and one to one sessions as appropriate. University placement staff meet fortnightly to discuss student progress and placement provision. Placement staff explained that due to the small cohorts of students, their established employer partnerships, and their geographical location, they can offer a good range of placement opportunities.

49. Employer partners explained that comprehensive inductions and onboarding for students is carried out, and in some instances prior reading is sent to students before they start their placement. Some employer partners stated that they offer the same training programme to students that their staff receive. PEs outlined that students have clear expectations from the beginning of their placements, and they corroborated that rigorous inductions were carried out and students' workloads were continually assessed and negotiated with others within the organisation to ensure students have a broad range of learning opportunities, including the ability to develop higher level skills and to reflect on their learnings. The inspection team agreed that whilst on placements, students have a structured approach to induction, supervision, support, access to resources, together with having a realistic workload and therefore concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

50. The course team outlined that students are supported to complete the Practice Placement Form which provides them with an opportunity to detail their experiences. Completion of this document is supported by a practice tutor, and it is reviewed by a

practice learning co-ordinator before the university sends the document to the potential placement host's learning co-ordinator. Once this is reviewed by the learning co-ordinator the document is shared with the PE for their review, this is to ensure that the placement learning opportunities and responsibilities are appropriate to the student's stage of education and training. Once accepted by the PE, the student is then invited to arrange a pre-placement introductory meeting to discuss their learning needs and opportunities. The practice learning documentation reviewed by the inspectors demonstrated that reviews and monitoring of the learning opportunities are carried out to ensure they are consistent with the PCF, the student's individual learning needs and their stage of learning.

51. Students are required to evidence their learning and progression throughout their placements and recall days to the university. PEs monitor their progression and their levels of responsibilities including the complexities of their casework through practice-based discussions and reflections. During the meeting with students, they stated that they did not feel overstretched with their workloads, and they had the ability to discuss their work and receive support from their PE. The inspection team were satisfied that during placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training and concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

52. The inspection team heard that students must undertake the Readiness for Direct Practice Assessment at the beginning of their second term and this assessment has a partnership approach. A panel consisting of a course staff member, a person with lived experience of social work and a practitioner assesses the student's practice against a number of professional standards including core communication skills, the ability to produce written documents relevant for practice, and the ability to plan and undertake an interview and gather basic relevant information. People with lived experience of social work talk students through the assessment, the learning objectives, and the standards of assessment. Students receive constructive feedback on this assessment. The assessment documentation was reviewed by the inspection team. In the meeting with people with lived experience of social work they commented that support is always available to them when they are involved in any activities, and they spoke about how their confidence has increased. Students recalled undertaking the Readiness for Direct Practice Assessment and highlighted how they had found the constructive feedback useful, and how they were able to reflect upon the assessment.

53. Students' knowledge of the theoretical learning they have completed prior to commencing their first placement was evidenced in the Social Work in Practice Module which was reviewed by the inspection team. This involves the assessment of students' application of law and policy to case study examples and their ability to relate theory to lived experiences through verbal presentations and written exercises, as evidenced in the Social Work in Practice Module Handbook.

54. Students are required to undertake a shadowing day with a social worker within a statutory team prior to their first placement and this includes the requirement for them to complete a reflection on their shadowing experience. As highlighted in standard 1.4, students complete an occupational health assessment and enhanced DBS check to ensure safeguards and support is in place. The inspection team agreed that the university demonstrated that all students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice and were in agreement that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

55. During the inspection, the course team outlined the mechanisms and support that is in place for PEs, and the inspection team reviewed the Practice Educator Registration Checking Form, and the PE qualification and currency documentation. PE's qualifications, registration information including when they last supported a student is checked, recorded, and monitored by the programme co-director who has overall responsibility for the course.

56. The inspection team heard that local authority partners have their own checking systems in place and an example was provided where Durham County Council's workforce and development officer requests sight of the PE's qualifying certificates and continuing professional development (CPD) information. A spreadsheet of all PEs is maintained and this details the dates of when they have supported a student to ensure their currency is up to date and is consistent with the Practice Education Professional Standards.

57. The inspection team heard that PEs are supported through taught and support sessions in addition to one-to-one sessions with the programme's practice learning co-ordinators. The inspection team were satisfied that checking mechanisms and oversight is in place to ensure that PEs have the relevant knowledge, skills, and experience to support safe and effective learning, and therefore concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

58. The inspectors heard that policies and processes for raising concerns are discussed with students throughout term one, and during the sessions on preparing for placements. The 2022-2023 Practice Learning Handbook reviewed by the inspector, outlines the policy on whistleblowing, and it is a requirement of placement inductions/mandatory training that students access the Whistleblowing Policy. This is captured within the practice learning agreement meeting. The 2022-2023 Practice Learning Agreement, which was reviewed by the inspection team showed that concerns are recorded. PEs and workforce development officers receive the Practice Learning Handbook which details the university's expectations and procedures around whistleblowing and the support for students.

59. The course team provided an example where a concern was raised regarding a student's wellbeing on placement and that placement had been stopped. Support was given to the student, and processes were put in place, and issues discussed with the placement provider

and the PE. During the meeting with PEs, they provided examples of where students had challenged unsafe behaviours and cultures and had reported concerns. They outlined the processes, the support students received and how the issues were monitored and resolved. The inspection team were satisfied that there was a clear and transparent policy and procedures in place and therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

60. The inspection team reviewed the 2022-2023 Programme Handbook which provides transparent information on the governance processes, the roles and responsibilities of the social work course team and other key members of the Department of Sociology. As outlined in standard 3.7, one of the co-directors holds overall professional responsibility for the course and is accountable to the head of school and acts as the link to the teaching partnership. In the meeting with the senior management team, they outlined the lines of accountability at a strategic and department level.

61. The PMC adopts a partnership approach which includes student representations, people with lived experience of social work, and employer partners. The PMC oversees the quality management of the programme and this feeds into the department's Education Committee. An annual review of the programme is carried out at the PMC level, and this involves the review of the External Examiner's report and the Postgraduate Taught Student Experience Survey. The inspection heard that any changes to the programme go through a formal process, involving the PMC, the Education Committee, and the Board of Studies. Performance indicators, EDI, and student completion of the programme, including the patterns of student achievement and progression are also reviewed by the PMC. Details of the PMC and its function is documented within the Learning and Teaching Handbook which is made available to students.

62. The inspection team heard that there are multiple ways for students to raise concerns. The student voice is represented through student representation and the Staff Student Committee which runs once per term, and students can feed back on their modules and raise issues with their module convenor, the co-directors and the director of education.

63. The inspection team concluded that the course is 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, and therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

64. The inspection team reviewed the generic Placement Agreement Form that is completed by placement providers. This agreement is supported by the Practice Learning Agreement

and the practice learning documentation details the role and responsibility of placement staff, and documents how placement breakdowns are dealt with. There is a clear process in place for addressing placement breakdowns and during the inspection meetings, students and PEs provided examples of placement breakdowns, and talked through the processes that were put in the place, the support that was provided and the positive outcomes. In addition, the placement team also outlined the process for addressing placement breakdowns, and provided details of actions plans and audit trails.

65. The inspectors reviewed PowerPoint slides detailing the preparation for placements, which outlined how preparation is operationalised in taught sessions with students, and during discussions and the sharing of paperwork with placement providers and PEs. During the inspection it was corroborated by students, PEs, placement staff and employer partners that the suitability of placements are carefully considered and matched to the student's knowledge and learning needs.

66. Following the review of evidence and the information provided during the inspection, the inspection team agreed that agreements are in place with placement providers to ensure education and training meets the professional standards, and that the education and training standards include the necessary consents and therefore concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

67. As outlined in standard 3.2, the inspectors reviewed the Placement Agreement Form which ensures that health, safety, and risk assessments are in place prior to students commencing their practice placements. This is further evidenced and monitored at each student's placement learning agreement meeting and during their interim review. The inspection team heard that students are required to undertake mandatory training including inductions at each placement provider, and this requirement is captured at the practice learning agreement meeting and is further monitored throughout the student's placement.

68. The inspection team reviewed the Department of Sociology's Health and Safety Policy which is provided to all university staff and students. The practice learning co-ordinators are members of the Department's Health and Safety Advisory Group which meets on a termly basis. The inspectors were satisfied that placement providers have the necessary policies and procedures in place in relation to students' health, wellbeing, and risk, including support systems and therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

69. As outlined in standards 1.1 and 1.3, information provided by the university evidenced that employer partners are involved in student admissions interviews. The inspectors heard that employers are invited to participate in the termly PMC; the PMC ensures that the course curriculum is continually monitored, evaluated, and reviewed. Employers are an

active part of the group; they can add and discuss any points raised on the agenda. During the inspection, one of the employer partners provided an example of changes made to the course based upon the workforce development needs, and employers present during the inspection meeting spoke of the strong relationship they have with the university, particularly Durham County Council as they are the main local authority placement provider.

70. Employers are invited into the university to speak to students directly in taught sessions around particular approaches to practice, policy, and social work issues, and during the final of year of study they are invited to speak to students about their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). The course team outlined that employers are heavily involved in the allocation of PEs; a large majority of PEs are employed by the local authority or voluntary sector organisation, and they are based onsite to work alongside students. The practice learning co-ordinators work closely with the workforce development/learning and development staff to ensure the allocation of PEs is supported and fit for purpose.

71. The university delivers practice education training modules for stages one and two, and these are accessed by social workers from local authority partners and private and voluntary sector organisations. The inspectors heard that these courses, as well as the general support and monitoring of PEs, are informed by the British Association of Social Workers (BASW's) Practice Educator Professional Standards for Social Work. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

72. The inspection team heard that during 2022 the admissions questions and process were reviewed by employers, placement providers, students, and people with lived experience of social work, and the document 'Admissions Process Review 2022' was reviewed by the inspection team.

73. As outlined in standard 3.4, the PMC is pivotal in addressing the standard course requirements and this adopts a partnership approach. An annual review of the programme is carried out and this involves employer partners, students, and people with lived experience of social work. People with lived experience of social work are included in the PMC termly meetings and there is a standing item on the agenda to discuss any service user issues which affect the programme. An example of meeting minutes was provided for the inspection team to review.

74. One of the people with lived experience led a review of service users and carer involvement in 2020 during the COVID pandemic, and the document 'Maintaining Involvement During COVID' was provided to the inspection team for review. This person with lived experience of social work sits on the PMC and the inspectors found that the people with lived experience involvement is very dependent upon this person. They act as the link to the university. The inspectors found that there were no formal meetings in place

for this person to formally gain the views of other people with lived experience of social work who are involved in the programme, this was undertaken on a more informal basis by the link person collecting and feeding back information. People with lived experience of social work spoke of their involvement in the skills and development days and the Social Work in Practice Modules. Overall, they felt valued and supported by the university.

75. The course team outlined that all taught and practice modules are reviewed annually via the university's Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ), an example of which was provided to the inspection team. The inspection team heard that PEs provide feedback via the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) processes.

76. Each course cohort selects two student representatives who feed into the programme via the termly Staff Student Committee meetings and the PMC meetings. A Staff Student Committee meeting is held three times per year which includes students from each cohort of the programme. The inspection team heard that these meetings provide an opportunity for students to discuss any issues and this feeds into the monitoring, evaluation, and improvement of the course. The inspection team met with a student course rep who outlined how they regularly ask for feedback from students, and report issues. Some examples were provided where students had fed back on issues regarding presentations and deadlines, both of which were taken on board and reviewed by the course team. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met. In relation to the feedback provided by the people with lived experience of social work, the inspection team would like to attach a recommendation to this standard. Further details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section](#) of this report.

Standard 3.6

77. The inspection team heard from the senior management team that the number of students admitted onto the programme had been consistent for several years, though numbers had decreased more recently. Admissions onto the course is aligned to the university's postgraduate strategy on student numbers and to the regional placement capacity. The practice lead is a member of the North East Social Work Alliance (NESWA), and chair of the Social Work Education North East Group (SWENE). NESWA is the regional teaching partnership, and the partnership frequently discuss workforce development planning and placement capacity. The inspectors heard that placement capacity and issues are also monitored through discussions with colleagues from higher education institutions (HEIs) at the SWENE meetings. The inspection team reviewed the 2017-2023 placement mapping document, where the alignment of student number to placement capacity was evidenced.

78. In the meeting with employer partners, they spoke of having regular partnership meetings, and of the collaborative partnership approach, the strong links with local

agencies, shared visions, and opportunities to discuss workforce pressures. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

79. The university outlined that there are two co-directors on the programme. One of the co-directors holds overall professional responsibility for the course. They are the practice lead and a registered social worker with experience of social work education at the university. The second co-director is academic lead and is a leading researcher in the field of disability, social work theory, and criminal justice. The co-directors stated that they do not make any key decisions without speaking to each other first. The inspection team reviewed both CVs which detailed the breadth of their knowledge and experience. During the inspection, the inspection team explored with the programme leads how the joint role works in practice and were satisfied that the lead social worker has overall professional responsibility for the course. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

80. Prior to the inspection, the university provided the CVs of the social work team. The CVs outlined their broad range of qualifications and experiences including their research interests which were broad and diverse. The inspection team heard that all taught modules involve sessions from appropriately qualified professionals, and this was evidenced in the Advanced Social Work Module Handbook. The Social Work in Practice Handbook also reviewed by the inspection team provided information on the practitioners and agencies who teach on the course. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

81. The inspection team heard that student performance, progression, and outcomes such as the results of exams and assessments are monitored and evaluated in multiple different ways. The PMC annual programme review, outlined in standards 3.1 and 3.5, regularly considers data on student progression and achievement and this was evidenced in the example of minutes provided by the course team. The exam board routinely monitors student statistics on performance across all modules, and each module leader compares the pass rates for each student in years one and two across the programme, this was evidenced within the module documentation. Module assessment marks are also reviewed against previous years to check for consistency and flux, and this is reviewed at the annual exam board, and data is considered by the PMC. During the inspection, the course team outlined how EDI data is monitored with respect to progression and assessment trends and there is a standing agenda item on EDI at the Department's Management Meeting, the Research Committee, and the Education Committee.

82. If a student fails an assessment, they are referred to the module convener. If a student fails multiple modules, they are referred to their personal tutor and the academic director

for support. This was further explored within the course team meeting during the inspection, and the team explained how support plans are put in place to help support students. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

83. The inspection team heard that staff development is addressed through a variety of mechanisms. Each member of the Department of Sociology has access to ringfenced funding to attend and present at conferences, aimed at promoting their research and maintaining and updating their knowledge and understanding of their professional fields. In addition, all academic staff have ringfenced research and scholarship time as part of their agreed workloads and they have membership of the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW), which includes free access to the membership area of the website. The EASSW promotes the development of social work education throughout Europe, develops standards to enhance the quality of social work education, encourages international exchange and provides forms for sharing social work research. During the inspection, the inspectors heard that some academic staff were out of the country on fellowships or undertaking research activities.

84. All staff have a mentor, and they have discussions about their academic and professional development. Social work registered staff evidence their CPD through the requirements of Social Work England on an annual basis, and all academic staff attend taught sessions delivered by external practitioners, professionals, and people with lived experience of social work, including undertaking shadowing days with students who are on practice placements. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

85. The course team outlined that the programme runs over a two-year period (21 months), and it consists of seven modules; four run in year one and three in year two. The module descriptors reviewed by the inspection team covered the required areas of adult and children's social work and they effectively demonstrated social work values and theory into practice. The inspection team also reviewed the 2022 Programme Specification, the module outlines and the marking criterion which showed the breadth of student learning opportunities enabling students to develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviours to meet the professional standards. Within the meeting with students overall they spoke positively about the curriculum, and their practice placements.

86. The 2022 External Examiner's report reviewed by the inspection team commended the course for the 'excellent programme and support to students'. The review of documentation showed that the programme has been developed in line with the social

work QAA benchmarks, Social Work England's professional standards and the PCF. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

87. Prior to the inspection, the course team provided a range of evidence which showed the close partnership working with employers, practitioners, and people with lived experience of social work at all levels including the design, ongoing development, and review of the curriculum.

88. The inspection team heard that people with lived experience of social work are central to the programme, and this was outlined within the university's policy on the involvement of people who use services. There are around 20-30 people with lived experience of social work who were engaged with the programme at various levels, and during the inspection some of those individuals commented on how they felt supported when they came into the university to take part in the programme. As outlined in standard 3.5, a person with lived experience of social work was supported to review and develop systems to ensure that people with lived experience of social work could continue to be supported and contribute to the curriculum during the COVID pandemic. During July 2022, a Programme Development Day was held, and this included a person with lived experience of social work.

89. As outlined in standard 3.5 there is a broad range of representatives on the PMC including employers and one person with lived experience of social work. The PMC formalises the involvement through its membership, this was evidenced in the formal membership of the board documentation reviewed by the inspection team.

90. During the meeting with students, they provided an example of where they had given feedback on their modules which had resulted in some module changes. During the inspection, the inspection team heard about the review of the admissions process which was led by the admissions lead and this involved practitioners, students, and people with lived experience of social work. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

91. The university's website features the EDI Policy which outlines that the institution follows certain Charter Marks to guide their work by identifying areas of focus and setting out accompanying aims against which they track progress. The university's Charter Marks includes their 2020-2024 Equality Objectives, Athena Swan, and the Race Quality Charter. The university has set out clear equality objectives to address gender inequality, racial and disability representation and elimination of any unlawful discrimination set out in the Equality Act.

92. The course team outlined that the Department of Sociology designs, develops, and monitors all of its programmes in accordance with EDI principles, and the Department has

its own EDI Department Group which monitors the inclusion of EDI principles for all staff and students, and this is monitored through quality assurance processes. The academic co-director of the course represents social work on this group. The inspection team were satisfied that the course is designed in accordance with EDI principles including human rights and legislative frameworks and concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

93. The course team provided the 2014 and 2022 Programme Specifications, which demonstrated that changes were made to the course as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice. The programme specifications included the changes made to the programme from the previous social work regulator [Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)] to Social Work England. It was evident from the evidence provided and from the inspection meetings that there is a strong research culture and best practice commitment within the team.

94. Minutes were provided of the July 2022 Programme Development Day which discussed changes to the teaching for the 2022-2023 Social Work in Practice and the Social Work in Context Modules. The changes were as a result of in-class feedback from students, formal student feedback to the PMC, the latest MEQ results and the research expertise in violence, abuse and safeguarding amongst the course delivery team. Where module content and assessments are changed, the new module outlines are considered through the appropriate quality assurance governance structures. The inspection team were in agreement that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

95. From the review of documentation provided by the course team, it was clearly evidenced that theory appears in all taught programme modules. The Social Work in Context Module is the core theory module, and this includes organisational, psychological, sociological, social work theory, diversity, and transnational social work theory. All taught module assessments require students to evidence how theory and research underpin and integrate within their practice, this was evidenced in the general assessment criteria and within the module learning objectives as evidenced within the 2022-2023 Programme Handbook. The module learning objectives ensure that the integration of theory and practice is a core component on the programme and the course team outlined that case studies and interactive group sessions are held with students which look at the application of theory into practice.

96. Students are required to evidence the integration of theory and practice within their placement learning documentation (placement assessment) through their account of practice, preparation for and reflection on direct observations of practice, and through supervision notes. During the inspection students were able to articulate how they reflected

on theory during their placement experiences and the opportunities they had to look at other approaches to practice, depending on the nature of their placement tasks. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

97. The inspection team heard that all students on the programme are provided with learning opportunities that support multiagency and multidisciplinary working. Multiagency working is integrated into the course, and this was evidenced from the review of the module outlines and within the skills days information. Whilst there are less opportunities for students to learn with other professionals in classroom settings, opportunities are identified within practice learning. The Practice Learning Agreement reviewed by the inspection team encourages placement hosts and students to consider opportunities for shadowing other professionals and accessing work tasks across different agencies and disciplines. University staff outlined that placements are provided in integrated settings such as the Cumbria, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear NHS Trust crisis team. A further example was provided where students who are on placement within Families in Care learn alongside law students from the university's Pro Bono Society.

98. During the meeting with PEs, the inspectors heard about the different ranges of practice settings and experiences where students had the opportunities of working with and learning from other professions, including working with solicitors, barristers, police, safeguarding and public protection teams, health, and teaching professionals. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

99. The inspection team were informed that the course comprises 155 credits of taught modules representing 1550 hours of structured academic learning, in addition to 30 skills development days which students are required to undertake in their first year of study to complement their 70 days spent in practice settings. During year two, students are required to spend 100 days in practice settings. The inspection team reviewed the module outlines and the 2022-2023 Programme Handbook where the number of hours spent in structured academic learning was further evidenced. The inspection team concluded that the number of hours is sufficient to ensure that students meet the required level of competence and therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

100. The inspection team heard that the university's Examination Board holds overall and final responsibility for assessments, and the inspection team reviewed the programme assessment processes and criteria which are outlined in the programme regulations and module handbooks.

101. The Practice Assessment Sub Board (PASB) holds overall responsibility for the assessment of practice learning, and the board reports into the Examination Board with meetings held twice per year, per cohort. The inspection team heard that in situations where the PASB feels more evidence is required to secure a pass, the student's work is referred back to the course team, the PE and the student.

102. The course team outlined that the programme has its own assessment policy which references the professional standards and the PCF. The department outlined the arrangements for the quality assurance of assessments to ensure they are undertaken in a robust, fair, reliable, and valid manner. At programme level, the academic co-director has overall responsibility for assessment and academic regulation and the teaching and learning co-ordinator has responsibility for all assessment data and management processes, and they are supported by other members of the professional services staff team.

103. The programme has varied assessments including opportunities for formative feedback and summative assessments. Students receive formative and summative assessments throughout each module, and the number of assessments is aligned with the number of module credits. There is a minimum of two summative assessments for each module throughout the programme. The moderation process was externally confirmed by the External Examiner who is a qualified and registered social worker. The 2022 External Examiner's report and the 2021-22 Moderators' Report were reviewed by the inspection team. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

104. The 2022 Programme Specification reviewed by the inspection team maps the programme learning outcomes to the summative assessments at a modular level, and as outlined in standard 4.8 students receive formative and summative assessments throughout each module. Depending on the credits on each module depends on how many assessments are undertaken for each module. There is a minimum of two summative assessments for each module throughout the programme.

105. The inspection team reviewed the university's Assessment Policy and examples of the Board of Examiners minutes which referenced student progression, together with minutes from the PASB which referenced tracking student's assessment and progression whilst on placement.

106. Summative assessments are preceded by formative assessments which enable students to receive feedback on their skills before submitting their summative piece of work. This scaffolded approach to assessments is outlined within the module descriptors. In term one of their first year students prepare for, plan, and deliver a formative group presentation and then they prepare, plan, and deliver a summative group presentation. In the second term of their final year, students plan, prepare and deliver an individual summative presentation.

107. The co-directors outlined that assessments are continually monitored, and the course team continually think about ways to make the assessments innovative in line with the quality assurance benchmarks and the professional standards. The inspection team heard that any assessment changes go through the formal processes. The inspection team were satisfied that assessments are mapped to the curriculum, and they are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course, and therefore concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

108. The university's Learning and Teaching Handbook included information on the Department's Policy on Feedback to Students and this demonstrated that all modules offer the opportunity for students to undertake formative assessment or undertake an interim piece of summative assessments in which they receive written summative feedback. The inspection team heard from the course team and from students that feedback is received online through the university's Blackboard Ultra System which uses Turnitin, and an example of module feedback for the Research in Social Work Module was reviewed by the inspectors. During the inspection, the inspection team were given a demonstration of Blackboard Ultra, and were shown the module blocks, reading lists and recordings of past lecturers.

109. Summative feedback is usually given within four weeks; there has been some recent impact on timings due to university staff taking industrial action. Reminders are sent out to students about assessment deadlines, and when marks are released. Students stated that they effectively used the feedback to progress and develop. During the inspection, one student provided an example of where they have given feedback on the close timings of feedback, and the course team were responsive in addressing this issue. Students receive feedback on their skills from an assessment panel on their readiness for direct practice roleplay and they receive feedback on their shadowing day before going on their first practice placement. During placements, students receive both formal and informal feedback which identifies progression needs.

110. Students conveyed information about the university's Staff Student Committee where they can give feedback, and the inspectors reviewed copies of the April and May 2022 meeting minutes. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

111. The inspectors heard that marking and moderation of assessments is only carried out by core members of the social work team, including where appropriate practitioners and people with lived experience of social work. All core staff members are Fellows of the Higher Education Academy, and all assessments are moderated by another member of staff or a second marker. The inspection team reviewed the Learning and Teaching Handbook which

outlined the guidelines on peer observation of teaching. As outlined in standard 3.8 the inspection team reviewed the CVs of the course team, including the markers and module leaders which demonstrated their expertise and research interests. The inspectors also reviewed the External Examiner's CV who is an associate professor of social work in another higher education institution, and they are a registered social worker.

112. The inspectors met a person with lived experience of social work, who is involved in assessing the social work in practice presentations, and they sit on the assessment panel for the readiness for direct practice. The admissions processes, the readiness for direct practice, and the Social Work in Practice Module group presentation are all assessed by panels which include people with lived experience of social work and practitioners.

113. The course team outlined that PEs are appropriately qualified through training and they are supported to assess students' practice through three-weekly university-based support sessions and the allocation of a mentor within their organisation. This was evidence in the PE Registration Checking Form and in the declaration of their qualification and currency document. It was clearly evidenced during the inspection that PEs are allocated in line with their expertise and knowledge. The inspectors were satisfied that assessments are carried out by people with the appropriate expertise and agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

114. The inspection team heard that there are systems in place to manage and support students' progression and a range of people are involved in progression decisions. The Readiness for Direct Practice process manages student progression to their first practice placement. Decision-making is underpinned by the PCF's 'readiness for direct practice' criteria and it is carried out by a panel including people with lived experience of social work, practitioners, and members of the course team. The Social Work Practice One (70-day placement) and Social Work Practice Two (100-day placement) both require students to be formally observed at least three times by an appropriately qualified professional. These direct observations of practice require students to evidence their planning and goals for the interaction, receive feedback from observers and reflect on their learning.

115. Formal progression is monitored through the Examination Board in line with the university's Learning and Teaching Handbook and trends are considered at the PMC. There are interim exam boards and final exam boards which look at individual students to see how they are progressing. Comparisons are made in relation to past cohorts of students to check for consistencies and any factors such as mitigations and industrial action. This is monitored through the university's data analysis.

116. Students are supported throughout the programme by various appropriately experienced and qualified individuals including course team staff, personal tutors, PEs and supervisors, practice learning leads, and people with lived experience of social work. There

are formal progression points and students do not proceed into practice until they have successfully passed the Readiness for Direct Practice Module assessment. PEs see students for 1.5 hours per five days of practice learning and they perform three direct observations of their activities. All observations and feedback are included within the practice learning documentation. One of the PEs spoke about the barrier of remote working, and ensuring that shadowing is undertaken, including the observations of tasks and the gradual progression into more complex tasks. Others spoke of the joint working nature of teams, and the observation of students with service users and ensuring that open lines of communication and seeking feedback on the progress of students from team members and onsite supervisors is in place. The inspection team heard that where students are experiencing difficulties in practice, additional support is provided, and an action plan is put in place.

117. The inspectors were satisfied 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 and therefore concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

118. The inspectors reviewed an example of the completed Practice Learning Document (Final Year), which is utilised to assess student's skills, knowledge and understanding of their application of social work policy, theory, and evidence-based practice. All students on the programme must complete an empirical research dissertation for the Research in Social Work Module, enabling students to further develop skills of research methodologies and evaluations. The inspection team reviewed the assessment marking criteria documentation which demonstrated that as part of the assessment criteria across all taught modules, students must demonstrate an evidence-informed approach to practice. The inspectors reviewed alumni testimonials which provided examples of former students utilising the skills they had developed on the programme to approach innovative and creative activities. The inspectors agreed that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice and agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

119. During the meeting with pastoral and academic support services staff and from the review of information on the university's website, it was evident that all social work students have access to a confidential counselling service, and occupational health services to support them during their time at the university and whilst they are on practice placements. The university's student support and wellbeing website shows the range of support services available and how students can access these services through various points of access. There is a student support hub within the department, where a dedicated

person helps to navigate students through the range of student support services, together with a college support team who tend to be the students first point of contact. They are available 24/7.

120. The inspection team heard that during the next academic year there will be new student support officers within the department, and they will have direct links to the social work course team to enable staff to triage and signpost students to the wide range of support services. It was clearly evidenced that student wellbeing is at the forefront of the university and the desire to enhance student support was also clear. The inspection team heard that social work students have a lot of wellbeing support due to the impact of situations they come across in practice settings. Occupational health is triaged based upon the need and the level of risk, and staff make referrals to NHS services and community support groups. As outlined in standard 5.4 the disability support staff ensure appropriate reasonable adjustments are put in place, and practical support is offered including providing information about the disabled student allowance. The inspectors also heard about the Students' Union who run associations to further support individual groups for example, students with disabilities.

121. The inspection heard about the new information management system for the case management of students which is going live later in the year. This would enable students to only have to provide information once, so they do not have to repeat their needs or provide details of the support they have previously received.

122. Students have access to a careers advisor who has specialist knowledge of social work employment, including the preparation for interviews and access to online resources in addition to further postgraduate opportunities. Employers and partner agencies deliver sessions to final year students and provide careers advice and support, and this was evidenced within the Gateshead Social Work Academy and Gateshead Adult Social Care PowerPoint presentations reviewed by the inspection team. The inspection team concluded that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing and agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

123. The inspection team heard that students have access to a range of resources to support their academic development through the Durham Centre for Academic Development (DCAD). The inspectors reviewed the information on the DCAD website which showed the broad range of support for students' academic learning.

124. Students have support through their personal tutor, this includes support during their practice placements; personal tutors support students throughout the duration of their study and this was evidenced in the 2022 Programme Handbook. The inspection team heard that students have the same personal tutor during the whole of their studies, but this could

change depending upon various factors and where it is felt appropriate for students to be allocated a different personal tutor. The personal tutor attends the placement meetings and meetings are held at least once per term with each student, with five formal meetings held over the course of each year of study. Students can request to meet their personal tutor outside of these meetings. The inspection team heard that students also have access to a college personal tutor to support their academic development and the university has a range of support services to support mature students, disabled students, students with caring responsibilities and students who are experiencing financial difficulties, and students are signposted to these services.

125. During the meeting with pastoral and academic support staff, the inspection team heard about the broad range of classes and workshops to support students' academic development, including academic writing skills and notetaking sessions, one to one consultation services, and the suite of online resources including videos and self-access worksheets. The inspection team heard that during the next academic year, there would be a relaunch of a new academic skills centre partly in response to the university's attainment gap and widening participation. This would feature new assignment clinics and focused workshops. Details of the library facilities were also outlined to the inspection team, including how they support all students from pre arrival to their final dissertations, access to reading lists, and other library facilities.

126. The inspection team heard that all areas of student support work in collaboration with each other, and they refer students to other support services where relevant. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

127. The course team outlined that as students' progress through the programme, they have fair and supportive processes in place to continually assess and reassess their conduct, character, and health. The inspection team heard that there is ongoing informal and formal monitoring in place throughout the programme to support this. Health declarations, enhanced DBS checks and occupational health assessments are undertaken at the admissions stages as outlined in standard 1.4. At interview stage, during induction and during the preparation for placement sessions and throughout placements students are advised to immediately inform programme staff if there are any changes to their health, wellbeing or if there are issues of conduct. During placement this information is captured in the Placement Profile Form and within the Practice Learning Agreement. The inspectors heard that open and robust relationships are in place with PEs and the workforce development team ensures that any issues are discussed.

128. The programme regulations detailed the process for dealing with concerns raised in relation to students' conduct, performance or ethics and processes are further supported by the university's student conduct officer and the university's non-academic misconduct and

discipline procedure. During the inspection, the course team gave an example of a student being removed from the course due to a police matter. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

129. Within the meeting with pastoral and academic support staff and together with the information provided by the university, including the review of the student support information on the university's website, the inspection team concluded that there is a wide range of support in place for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through the course to meet the professional standards. Students have access to disability support and reasonable adjustments through the university's disability support team, including access to occupational health services. Students also have access to disability support information through their colleges. Students can apply for extensions for all academic assessments and placements and the inspection team reviewed the process documentation for serious adverse circumstances.

130. With the student's consent, the university discloses disabilities and reasonable adjustments to the student's PE. This is discussed as part of the student's initial placement practice agreement and is referenced within the Placement Handbook and the Practice Learning Agreement. Students provided examples of where reasonable adjustments had been made including the changes to support; one student elaborated on the changes that had been made to their placement hours to enable them to attend counselling. Overall, students commented favourably about the supportiveness of university staff and PEs.

131. During the meeting with PEs, one person outlined that they had raised concerns about a student who they felt was struggling, and they didn't feel the placement was right for them. They talked through the process, outlined the partnership working approach with the course team, and the action plan that was put in place to support the student.

132. During the meeting with employer partners, they outlined that they encourage students to make disclosures early on especially if they have accessibility issues. Overall, they outlined that flexible and adaptable adjustments are put in place such as making adjustments in hours for childcare, and additional time for reading. One employer partner spoke of challenges if expensive equipment is required and of working together with the university to enable those requests to be put in place. The inspection team agreed that the university makes supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

133. The inspection team reviewed the 2022-23 Programme Handbook and the Practice Learning Handbook which provides information to students about the course curriculum,

practice placements and assessments. Individual modules outlines and module handbooks also reviewed by the inspection team further outlined the curriculum content and assessments.

134. The Advanced Social Work Module which is conducted in the final year, focusses on employability and the transition to registered social worker status, and appropriately qualified staff deliver taught sessions on the requirements for CPD, the process to apply for employment, including application and interview support. In the final year students and PEs are encouraged to include employability as a standard agenda item within their meetings, and this was referenced within the Practice Learning Agreement.

135. Students corroborated that they received timely information about their curriculum, practice placements, assessments, and transition to registered social worker status, including the requirements for CPD. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

136. The 2022-23 Programme Handbook reviewed by the inspection team clearly stated that attendance on the course is mandatory, including the requirement that students must complete the 70-day placement in year one, and the 100-day placement in year two. The 30 professional skills days within the Personal and Professional Development Module are mandatory, alongside all taught-module sessions. The inspection team also reviewed the Learning and Teaching Handbook which incorporates students' absence, illness, and adverse circumstances information.

137. Within each class registers are taken, and this is monitored by the social work learning and teaching co-ordinator. The inspection team heard that if a student's absence drops below 90%, a meeting is held between the academic co director and the student and this is formalised within documentation. Attendance on placements is monitored by PEs, and the inspection team reviewed an example of a placement record of attendance. During the inspection, PEs overall said they had no attendance issues from students. The placement staff talked through the process if there were concerns with student attendance issues on placement and this process involved liaising with the PE, the placement host and the student.

138. The inspection team heard that low attendance is usually as a result of personal issues, and students are offered leaves of absence and student support is put in place. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

139. The inspection team reviewed the policy on student feedback which clearly stated that students receive feedback within a normal four-week period. The inspection team also

reviewed the 2022-2023 submissions/feedback and marking schedule, the Programme Handbook, and the programme modules. During the inspection, the inspection team were given examples of placement activity feedback and the interventions that were put in place to support students' ongoing development.

140. In the meeting with students they outlined that feedback is timely and it is generally received within four weeks. As outlined in standard 4.10, there have been some recent delays due to the industrial action. Students are aware that they can go back to their module leader to discuss their feedback, and they felt reassured with the process due to the fact that there is a second marker. The inspection team were satisfied that the university provides timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance and agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

141. Information on the process for students to make academic appeals is outlined in a number of documents including the 2022-23 Programme Handbook, the Teaching and Learning Handbook and the university's academic appeals and academic misconduct webpages. The appeal regulations are detailed on the university's general regulations website, all of which were reviewed by the inspection team. The appeals process is also represented in a flowchart for students to enable them to follow the process. During the meeting with students, it was clear that they knew where to find the information and they were aware of the process. The inspection team were satisfied that there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals and concluded that this standard is met.

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

Standard 6.1

142. As the qualifying course is the Master of Social Work (MSW) 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 recommendation for the education provider. This recommendation highlights an area that the education provider may wish to consider. The recommendation does not affect any decision relating to course approval.

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	3.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider implementing in-house mechanisms to mitigate the risk if the lead person with lived experience of social work was unable to participate in the PMC and seek the views of other people with lived experience of social work who are involved in the course.	Paragraph 76

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
Admissions			
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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
Learning environment			
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.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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 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	☒	☐	☒

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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 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,	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
ongoing development and review of the curriculum.			
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion 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.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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 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.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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.	☒	☐	☐
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