



Inspection Report

Course provider: Manchester Metropolitan University

Course approval: Pg Dip Social Work Step Up to Social Work

Inspection dates: 18th – 20th March 2025

Report date:	13 th May 2025
Inspector recommendation:	Approved without conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved without conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	9 th June 2025

Contents

Introduction	3
What we do	3
Summary of Inspection.....	5
Language	5
Inspection	6
Meetings with students	6
Meetings with course staff.....	6
Meeting with people with lived experience of social work.....	6
Meetings with external stakeholders	7
Findings	7
Standard one: Admissions.....	7
Standard two: Learning environment	9
Standard three: Course governance, management and quality	12
Standard four: Curriculum assessment.....	15
Standard five: Supporting students	20
Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register	23
Proposed outcome.....	24
Recommendations	24
Annex 1: Education and training standards summary	25
Regulator decision	32

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

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

officer if they have any queries that may be able to be addressed in advance of the inspection.

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.

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 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. Manchester Metropolitan University are already running a 14-month Pg Dip Social Work Step Up to Social Work course, they have made changes to this programme and the new version was inspected.

Inspection ID	MMU_CPP489
Course provider	Manchester Metropolitan University
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	Pg Dip Social Work Step Up to Social Work
Mode of Study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	165
Proposed first intake	January 2026 (for the new version of the course), that will be the ninth cohort of this programme for the course provider.
Date of inspection	18 th – 20 th March 2025
Inspection team	Sam Jameson (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Jane Jones (Lay Inspector) Aidan Phillips (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe Manchester Metropolitan University as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the Pg Dip Social Work Step Up to Social Work as ‘the course’ or the ‘programme’.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from 18th to 20th March 2025. 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. A second online inspection was carried out during the same dates, with the second inspection team focusing on the MA Social Work. The two inspection teams had joint meetings with the senior management team, people with lived experience of social work and student support services.

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

Conflict of interest

19. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

20. The inspection team met with 7 students at various levels of their study, including student reps and graduates. Discussions included their experiences of the application and admissions process, placements, skills days, social work theory and practice, people with lived experience of social work, teaching and learning, equality, diversity and inclusion, feedback, attendance, student and academic support and the Social Work England Professional Standards.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course team, senior management team, staff involved in placement-based learning, staff involved in selection and admissions, and student support services, library, careers and academic support services.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the course, including from REIGN (main group involved in the Step Up course) and Focus on Involvement (who are involved in the wider social work courses at

the provider). Discussions included what areas of the course they were involved with, how much input and feedback they had and were able to provide to the university, the course and what training they received in this role.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with practice educators and representatives from placement partners including Sheffield Council, Lancashire County Council, Darlington Council, Blackburn and Darwen Council, Durham County Council, South Tyneside Council, Rotherham County Council, Blackpool County Council, York County Council, and North Tyneside Council.

Findings

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

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard, and discussions with the course team and employer partners identified how the programme ensures that entry to the course is via a holistic/multi-dimensional assessment process. The inspectors were assured that this is upheld throughout the Department for Education (DfE) funded programme selection process, achieved through input from Peregrine, and examples provided of the admissions written task, interview questions, practice scenario and group exercise.

26. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

27. Information contained within the education and training standards mapping form identified that an applicant's prior relevant experience is initially screened by Peregrine on behalf of the DfE, with another check carried out by the Regional Partnership Local Authorities. This is to ensure that applicants are only offered an interview if they can

demonstrate a minimum of 6 months relevant prior experience with adults or children and families, including either as paid work, voluntary or charitable work, undergraduate student placement or informal work for friends or family (for example, as a carer for a family member).

28. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were able to check this information on the DfE's website and triangulate within their meetings with staff involved in selection and admissions.

29. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

30. Documentary evidence confirmed that employers are involved in the selection and admissions process as a result of the set up and organisation of a Step Up course. From their discussions with the course lead and employer partners the inspectors heard how people with lived experience of social work are involved in the selection and admissions process, including how this varies with each Regional Partnership and involvement can be online, hybrid or face to face.

31. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

32. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included the Declaration of Suitability and Occupational Health Check. The inspectors were able to triangulate this information within discussions with employer partners and staff involved in selection and admissions.

33. All applicants are required to complete a Declaration of Suitability, Enhanced DBS check and Occupational Health check prior to entry on the course. Criminal convictions are discussed with senior members of the staff team and the Regional Partners in terms of suitability to study.

34. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

35. Information submitted in support of this standard included the university's Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion document. The inspectors were assured from documentary evidence and discussions with staff involved in selection and admissions that if an applicant chose to disclose any health-related condition or impairment it would not impact on decisions taken about whether they are offered a place on the course.

36. During their meeting with student representatives, the inspection team were given examples regarding reasonable adjustments made for them, which covered tailored support provided to individuals during their admissions process. Prior to the process the Regional Partnerships ask candidates if they require any reasonable adjustments as part of the assessment centre, some examples included additional time for tasks, a reader for the written task or breaks during tasks.

37. The inspection team concluded this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

38. The inspection team heard of the various ways in which applicants can access information regarding the course, including from the university and DfE websites and Regional Partnerships directly, as well as pre-induction face to face sessions and online drop-ins. Student representatives confirmed that they felt like they had all the information they required to help them decide whether to take up a place on the course.

39. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

40. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included the Programme Handbook, Placement Handbook and the course timetable. The inspection team were able to identify and confirm that all students will spend 200 days on placement, with 70 days in their first and 100 days in their second placement, including 30 skills days spread across the modules.

41. The inspection team heard that the first placement will aim to be based in an adult focused setting and the second placement within a front-line children and families statutory service, where delegated statutory functions are embedded. The inspectors were assured that students are provided with the learning and experience of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions within their placement settings.

42. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

43. Information submitted in support of this standard highlighted how the course ensures that placements provide suitable learning opportunities that allow students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards. Throughout the inspection week the inspectors learnt of the Professional

Academic Supervisors who provide a robust link between the university, student and local authority.

44. Students that the inspection team met with spoke of the personalised approach to placements, ensuring that they had opportunities and were encouraged to shadow practice to support their development. One example included a student being matched with a practice educator who had similar learning requirements which helped to put them at ease, get the support they needed and gain the learning opportunities they required.

45. The inspection team were able to triangulate the documentary evidence within their meetings with student representatives and employer partners. The course has a range of mechanisms in place to ensure that administrative and practical information regarding placements is shared and accessible for students.

46. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

47. Information submitted by the course provider in support of this standard included but was not limited to, Support Briefing for Practice Educators, Learning Agreement Meeting Template and the Placement Handbook. The inspectors were able to triangulate documentary evidence in their meetings with staff involved in placement-based learning, employer partners, and student representatives.

48. Students that the inspectors met with identified that they felt that they had access to a range of information regarding their placement induction, including guidance and procedures for supervision, support, resources and workload. All this information is checked and signed off that it has been received and complete within the practice learning agreement meeting, as well as regular supervisions and placement reviews.

49. Employer partners that the inspection team met with identified that students also have access to all in-house training and support, alongside the university and course team support services.

50. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

51. The inspection team heard from employer partners of the work and planning that goes into the collaborative working relationship that they have with the course team. An example of this provided to the inspection team was of individual student data, including progression and attainment, that is shared with the employer and practice educators so that practice on placement can be personalised for each student and support their individual learning needs.

52. Documentary evidence submitted prior to the inspection provided an overview of the process and procedures in place from the course provider of how they ensure that whilst on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.

53. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

54. Documentary evidence and information contained within the education and training standards mapping form outlined the assessed preparation for direct practice that students must undertake to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting. Assessed Preparation for Direct Practice is completed and assessed in the first module called Professional Social Work Practice, Skills and Interventions and is undertaken before students commence their first practice placement.

55. The inspection team were able to triangulate this information within their meetings with the course team and staff involved in practice-based learning. Practice educators and employer partners identified that from their experience, students on the course were ready for practice in a placement setting.

56. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

57. The inspection team were able to speak to practice educators during the inspection week and triangulate how their registration and currency is checked and recorded. The placement lead and employer partners provided insight into how they each have their own databases to check and record practice educators' registration and currency, including the collaborative work between the course team and local authorities to share this information.

58. The inspection team were provided with documentary and narrative evidence of the ongoing training and continuous professional development opportunities that can be accessed for practice educators, including mentoring support for practice educators working towards stage 2 of the Practice Educator Professional Standards.

59. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

60. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included the Programme Handbook and the Placement Handbook. Information contained within the education and training standards mapping form outlined the information and guidance provided to students regarding policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, for

students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences.

61. The inspection team were provided with an example from one student that they met with of reporting a concern to a member of the course team. They spoke of the supportive mechanisms in place for them and that through the process they felt reassured, and felt no concerns about what they needed to do or how they would be supported.

62. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

63. During the inspection week the inspectors met with members of the senior management team. This enabled the inspection team to triangulate documentary evidence submitted by the course provider that detailed the structure and the governance of the programme, including the links between the course, committees and boards within the university.

64. As a result of these discussions, the inspection team were assured of the close working relationships and clear lines of communication and accountability across individuals and governing groups involved in the course management and governance. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

65. Information submitted by the course provider in support of this standard included the information and process for how the Step Up course is procured by the Regional Partners from the DfE. Within this information the inspectors learnt of how agreements between the Regional Partners and the DfE set out the framework for how placement providers must provide education and training that meets the professional standards and the education and training qualifying standards.

66. Documentary evidence also included the Placement Handbook with details of the process to manage any concerns during a placement and a placement at risk of breakdown. The Quality Assurance in Practice Learning serves to audit that the provision of placements and practice learning meets the standards and requirements. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

67. Documentary evidence and information within the education and training standards mapping form highlighted the work done within the learning agreement meeting to

discuss, check and record that relevant policies and procedures are in place to uphold students' health and safety whilst they are on placement.

68. The inspection team were able to learn from their discussions with staff involved in practice-based learning and employer partners of the processes for the audit of placements, including that of policies and procedures regarding safe lone working, equality and diversity, whistleblowing, and health and safety. These are all discussed at the learning agreement meeting and it is noted who will go through these policies with the student, with checks within inductions for students and further information within the Placement Handbook.

69. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

70. As a result of the organisation and management of the Step Up course with the DfE, alongside information contained within the documentary evidence submission, the inspectors were assured that employers are involved in elements of the course. Discussions with representatives from the Regional Partners confirmed that they are involved in the management of the programme, including allocation of practice education, course design, admissions and attend Programme Meetings and Regional Partnership Meetings to support the ongoing monitoring of the course.

71. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

72. As identified in standard 3.4, the inspection team were assured of the involvement of employers in the course. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard identified that the university operates a system of Educational Annual Reviews. The reviews inform the programme action plans, which feed into monthly module lead and programme lead meetings. At the biannual programme meetings, attendance includes representatives from both employers and students.

73. As a result of discussions with students the inspection team heard of the work done with the student union to recruit student representatives within the university, including at programme level there are 'course reps' for each year group. The reps meet no less than monthly with programme leads. All students on the course are invited to attend 6 weekly online drop-in sessions with the programme lead or practice learning lead, with formal student surveys carried out 4 times a year.

74. Members of the REIGN group spoke of their involvement within areas of teaching on the course. Information within additional documentary evidence supplied by the course team provided insight into plans for greater coproduction in this area.

75. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

76. As a result of their review of documentary evidence and discussions with the course team, senior management team and Regional Partners, the inspectors were assured that the number of students admitted to the programme is identified from a clear strategy. The inspectors were informed of student numbers being in-line with the DfE and Step Up course requirements and set through the Regional Partners bidding process and then commissioning with the university.

77. The inspection team were satisfied that this included consideration of local and regional placement capacity and ensuring that students can complete quality placements in appropriate settings. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

78. Documentary evidence submitted in the lead up to the inspection included detailed information of the lead social worker for the course and the head of department. The evidence identified their role, confirming their registration with Social Work England, appropriate qualifications, and experience. The inspectors were able to check and verify this information.

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

Standard 3.8

80. During the inspection the inspectors discussed the course team's wide range of expertise in relation to social work, covering many areas of active research and links to current social work practice. Members of the team spoke about their active social work research, supported by two development pathways within the university. Inspectors learnt of the Graduate Teaching Assistant role which was developed for a person with lived experience of social work, bringing their expertise and knowledge into the programme.

81. The inspectors were assured from information submitted prior to the inspection, including Staff CVs, and discussions with the course team and senior management team that there were an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, who are registered with Social Work England, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise to deliver an effective course.

82. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

83. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included the university Education Annual Reviews. Information contained within the education and training standards mapping form explained how this review process includes the ongoing analysis of student data against key performance indicators and metrics. This data includes monitoring of student progression, student attainment, awards, analysis of student feedback and student attendance.

84. The data, including equality, diversity and inclusion, informs the course monitoring and review, and there is a clear process and mechanisms for any students who may require additional support or adjustments. During the inspection, the inspectors were provided with examples of support services and reasonable adjustments that student representatives had received during their time on the course.

85. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

86. Prior to the inspection, the inspectors were able to review information submitted by the course provider in support of this standard. Evidence included the Teaching Consultant roles, university Professional Development Process and the Enhanced Tutor Model. As identified in standard 3.8, the inspection team were assured that research activity is evident in the information contained within the staff CVs and the inspection team heard examples of this being brought into course delivery.

87. Documentary evidence and discussions with the senior management team and course team identified that staff are supported in a range of activities to enhance their learning, development and teaching. Staff are supported through the university Professional Development Process, including time allocated to undertake Research and Knowledge Exchange, with members of the team working within a wide range of social work areas and expertise.

88. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

89. The inspection teams meetings with Regional Partners, practice educators and employer partners identified that students were able to meet the expected level of knowledge and competency for their stage of learning and development. The inspection team were assured that the course is designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards upon completion of the programme.

90. The inspectors were satisfied that the documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection was able to demonstrate that the content, structure, and delivery of the course is in accordance with relevant standards, guidance and frameworks. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

91. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included redacted minutes from Regional Partnership Meetings, Programme – Student Voice Committee, Consultation with Stakeholders and samples of teaching materials.

92. As identified in standard 3.5 of this report the inspection team were assured that people with lived experience of social work (REIGN and the Graduate Teaching Assistant role), social work practitioners and employer partners are involved in key areas of course design, development and reviews of the curriculum.

93. Discussions with key stakeholders triangulated the above documentary evidence and examples were provided of coproduction, teaching and reviewing of course materials from both people with lived experience and employer partner representatives that the inspection team met.

94. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

95. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a [recommendation](#) in relation to standard 4.2. The inspection team were made aware of plans for greater involvement in the course from people with lived experience. The team were shown the pro forma and the coproduction plans with REIGN. The inspection team recommend that these plans continue and come to fruition as soon as possible.

Standard 4.3

96. Prior to the inspection, the inspectors were able to review information submitted by the course provider in support of this standard, evidence included but was not limited to the University Inclusive and Diversity Policy and the Inclusive and Diverse Strategy. The inspection team were provided with details of support services for students on the course who may require reasonable adjustments, hearing from student representatives of some of the supportive measures and input they had received as a result of the joined up working between the course team and wider university support services.

97. During the inspection week the inspectors met with members of the university Disability and Inclusion Service, hearing of the proactive work that is undertaken with the course team, Equality and Diversity Lead and students on the course. Whilst students are geographically spread out, everyone that the inspection team met with spoke of the varied and supportive nature of services they can access through the university, which is reflected in the departmental equality networks.

98. Documentary evidence and discussions with the course team identified that changes to the course have included feedback from students. With a greater emphasis on supporting students' mental health, personal and individual circumstances, one example provided was of the built-in time off during the summer period to support students to have a break and support those with caring commitments. Students spoke of how supportive Structured Online Learning Days (SOLD) were to their learning and balancing personal and individual requirements with their academic learning.

99. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

100. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included Social Work England and QAA Mapping, Module Handbooks, Staff CVs and samples of teaching materials.

101. The inspectors were able to hear from the course team of how the curriculum stays relevant and that it is updated regularly in-line with research and developments or changes in legislation, government policy and current best practice. Mechanisms that uphold this process include the staff's own research activity, their robust working relationships with their Regional Partners, the university library and academic services, and programme meetings to review course content.

102. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

103. The inspection team were satisfied that the documentary evidence provided, including course materials, overview of skills days, Programme and Module Specifications, demonstrated that the integration of theory into practice is central to the course, and threads throughout its modules and teaching.

104. Documentary evidence and discussions with student representatives and the course team identified the links and integration of theory into practice, including both practice-based learning and practical learning within an academic setting. Practice educators and employer partners that the inspection team met with spoke of the proactive work that the course team carries out to ensure that they are provided with updates of where students are progressing with their academic work. These key stakeholders explained that this enables them to be kept up to date with students learning, and application of knowledge/theory can be applied appropriately within placement settings or ensure that areas for further focus and development are identified.

105. The inspection team learnt of the work done academically through course materials, learning outcomes and reflective practice, which is reinforced through the

practice educators, Professional Academic Supervisors, supervisions and wider placement-based team.

106. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

107. Prior to the inspection, the inspectors were able to review the Placement Handbook, Module Specifications and Programme Specification, in support of how the course teaching materials promote and ingrain the importance of multidisciplinary working.

108. The inspection team were able to identify the learning opportunities that students have within their placement settings that support multidisciplinary working from a wide range of other professionals. During the inspection week the inspectors were able to triangulate this information and hear how skills days include a focus on working in partnership within integrated multi-professional working environments and are designed to promote students learning and skills of multidisciplinary working.

109. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

110. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a [recommendation](#) in relation to standard 4.6. We recommend that the course provider considers more varied learning opportunities within the course design that supports interprofessional and multi-disciplinary working either online or in-person. This will help students to develop further when working with, and learning from, other professionals. The inspection team recommend that consideration is given to methods of integrated learning such as students from other disciplines coming together.

Standard 4.7

111. Documentary evidence submitted by the course provider prior to the inspection assured the inspectors that students spend enough time in structured academic learning for them to meet the required learning outcomes and meet the professional standards by the time they complete the course.

112. The inspection team were able to triangulate this information within their discussions with student representatives, employer partners and the course team.

113. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

114. Information contained within the education and training standards mapping form demonstrated the processes in place to ensure assessments are robust, fair, and equitable. The course provider submitted documentary evidence, the Assessment

Strategy and Assessment Handbook, which satisfied the inspectors that this is achieved through quality assurance processes of monitoring, reviewing and enhancement within the course team and wider university, with a varied range of assessment and teaching mechanisms in place to support individual learning styles and preferences.

115. As a result of their discussions with the course team and Regional Partners the inspectors were assured that all assessments are mapped to the module learning outcomes and appropriate standards, and that those who successfully complete the course will have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards. The external examiner report reflected this within their report and identified no issues regarding the assessment strategy or design of the course.

116. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

117. Documentary evidence submitted by the course provider in the lead up to the inspection included the Assessment Strategy, Timetable and Assessment Handbook. The information highlighted that there are varied assessments, and these are all mapped to the learning outcomes and scaffolded to increase incrementally throughout the programme.

118. The inspection team heard from employer partners and practice educators that they felt assessments were carried out at appropriate stages during the course, matching students' levels of learning and development, and that students were at the correct level of knowledge and learning for their practice within placements. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

119. Information contained within the education and training standards mapping form identified that the departmental assessment strategy requires all students to be provided with both constructive feedback and 'feed forward' for all submitted assessments, to aid their ongoing professional and academic development.

120. In addition to highlighting areas of strength, three development points must be identified by markers. The enhanced tutor model/professional supervision enables students to discuss their assessment feedback with their tutor/academic professional supervisor and to develop a plan to maximise their academic success, including accessing academic study support and graduate skill support.

121. All assessments are marked using a rubric matrix (all students have access to this and available on the e-learning portal Moodle) that outlines each learning outcome,

providing clear expectations and transparent feedback. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

122. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included Staff CV's, External Examiner reports and documentation detailing individual staff expertise. The inspectors were satisfied that there was appropriate expertise, qualifications, and experience held by staff who carry out assessments, including registration of the external examiner with Social Work England. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

123. The education and training standards mapping document provided the inspectors with an overview of the processes in place to manage students' progression, both in practice learning and academic development. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection, and discussions with the course team, was able to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

124. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were able to review the Programme Specification, Module Specifications and a sample of course teaching materials. Several members of the course team are research active and incorporate their subject expertise within the course teaching materials.

125. The inspectors agreed that based on the documentary evidence provided and from discussions with the course team and students, the course design facilitates an evidence-informed approach to practice. The inspection team were informed of students being able to access specialist library support services, which feeds into and develops the student's awareness and ability in relation to social work research and evaluation. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

126. The inspection team were able to meet with university student support services during the inspection week. This enabled them to triangulate the documentary evidence submitted prior to the inspection, that highlighted the comprehensive range of resources and services that students have access to, to support their health and wellbeing. This included access to occupational health, careers guidance, wellbeing support including: one to one counselling, mental health and wellbeing support (virtual

1:1 support), wellbeing workshops, online self-help resources and guidance for students needing 24/7 and emergency support.

127. The course team and university support services confirmed that students who study off campus can also access this level of support and services. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

128. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included information regarding the Enhanced Tutor Model. The inspectors were able to triangulate documentary evidence that outlined how students on the course have access to resources to support their academic development throughout the programme.

129. Information contained within the education and training standards mapping form identified that each student has a dedicated academic tutor/ academic professional supervisor to provide ongoing pastoral and academic support. When out in practice, practice educators are also required to provide support for ongoing practice and academic development. The academic tutor facilitates regular review meetings to ensure the student is meeting the required level of progression.

130. The inspectors met with library, academic and study skills support services during the inspection week. Throughout these discussions the inspectors learnt of the robust and varied support services that students on the course can access to support their academic development, including input from the Programme Support Tutor. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

131. As identified earlier in this report all students are required to complete pre-entry checks including DBS, Occupational Health and Suitability Form. Within the Pre-Entry Declaration of Suitability, it is identified that the applicant must read and confirm/sign that they understand that they must complete the form again, if at any point during their studies their situation and initial declaration changes.

132. The university has clear mechanisms for referrals and support for any issues that are flagged and do not call into question issues of professional suitability, including university Fitness to Practice Procedure if this route is identified as appropriate. Student representatives that the inspectors met with spoke of the input and support they had received from occupational health services, reasonable adjustments and the timely manner these were acted upon. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

133. Information and links contained in the education and training standards mapping form provided an overview of the university Disability Service and Personal Learning Plans, both are available on the university website. During the inspection week the inspectors met with members of the Inclusion and Disability Service, who provided examples of how this service manages the assessment and development of personal learning plans.

134. As a result of documentary evidence review and discussions during the inspection week, the inspectors were assured that the course makes supportive and reasonable adjustments for students to enable them to progress through the course and meet the professional standards. Therefore, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

135. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included the Programme Handbook, Module Specifications and information regarding Employment and Continuous Professional Development for students. Prior to the inspection the inspectors were able to identify that students have a comprehensive programme handbook, this includes details about the curriculum, practice placements and assessments.

136. Information contained within the education and training standards mapping form confirmed that in the final module of the course, students are supported to consider employment, the requirement for professional registration and the need for ongoing CPD. In the last 3 months of the course, the Regional Partners hold employability events. These have a focus on securing employment, the Assessed Supported Year in Employment, ongoing continuous professional development and how to apply for professional registration. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

137. The Programme Handbook clearly identifies the course requirements for attendance, which is monitored via an online system for academic modules. Practice placement is monitored by the practice educator and onsite supervisor (if different), students are also required to confirm their attendance using the online placement portfolio.

138. During the inspection week, the inspectors were able to triangulate documentary evidence and confirm that students are aware of the mandatory attendance requirements for the course, including mechanisms of supporting students if they do not attend. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

139. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard, such as the Assessment Strategy and Assessment Handbook, clearly outline the university policy for a 4-week turnaround from submission to return of feedback and grades. The external examiner report that the inspection team was able to review provided positive feedback regarding the approach to feedback by the course team.

140. As identified within standard 4.10 of this report, feedback for students has a standardised format. All students will be provided with both constructive feedback and 'feed forward' for all submitted assessments, to aid their ongoing professional and academic development.

141. In addition to highlighting areas of strength, 3 development points must be identified by markers. The enhanced tutor model/professional supervision enables students to discuss their assessment feedback with their tutor/professional supervisor and to develop a plan to maximise their academic success, including accessing academic study support and graduate skill support.

142. All assessments are marked using a rubric matrix (all students have access to this, and it is available on the e-learning portal Moodle) that outlines each learning outcome, providing clear expectations and transparent feedback. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

143. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard by the course provider included the university MMU Taught Postgraduate Assessment Regulations, with further information and guidance for students in the Programme Handbook regarding the process for academic appeals, confirming that there is a formal appeals procedure for students. Student representatives that the inspection team met with confirmed their awareness of this information and how to access it/when they required it.

144. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

145. As the qualifying course is a Pg Dip Social Work Step Up to Social Work course, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved without conditions.

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	Standard 4.2	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider greater involvement in the course from people with lived experience. The team were shown the pro forma and the coproduction plans with REIGN. The inspection team recommend that these plans continue and come to fruition as soon as possible.	Paragraph 91
2	Standard 4.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university considers more varied learning opportunities within the course design that supports interprofessional and multi-disciplinary working either online or in-person. This will help students to develop further when working with, and learning from, other professionals. The inspection team recommend that consideration is given to methods of integrated learning such as students from other disciplines coming together.	Paragraph 107

It should be noted that all qualifying social work courses will be subject to re-approval under Social Work England's [2021 education and training standards](#).

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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
Learning environment			
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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.			
2.7 Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns 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.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendati on given
3.5 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.	☒	☐	☐
3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendati on given
that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards.			
4.2 Ensure that the views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work are incorporated into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum.	☒	☐	☒
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendati on given
necessary to meet the professional standards.			
4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course.	☒	☐	☐
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☐
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendati on given
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☒	☐	☐
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☒	☐	☐
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	☒	☐	☐
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			

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendati on given
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor’s degree with honours in social work.	☒	☐	☐

Regulator decision

Approved without conditions.