

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Birmingham

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

Inspection dates: 9th – 11th April 2024

Report date:	23/05/2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	13.06.2024
Date conditions met and approved:	15.10.24

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.....	6
Findings	7
Standard one: Admissions.....	7
Standard two: Learning environment	9
Standard three: Course governance, management and quality.....	11
Standard four: Curriculum assessment.....	15
Standard five: Supporting students	19
Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register	21
Proposed outcome.....	22
Conditions	22
Recommendations	23
Annex 1: Education and training standards summary.....	24
Regulator decision	31
Annex 2: Meeting of conditions.....	32
Findings	33
Regulator decision	34

Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

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

Summary of Inspection

15. The University of Birmingham, Step Up to Social Work (Pg Dip) 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	UBIR2
Course provider	University of Birmingham
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Course inspected	Step Up to Social Work (Pg Dip)
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	55
Date of inspection	9 th – 11 th April 2024
Inspection team	Catherine Denny (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Monica Murphy (Lay Inspector) Lisa Brett (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe the University of Birmingham as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the Step Up to Social Work (Pg Dip) as ‘the course’.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from the 9th – 11th April 2024. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students, course staff, employers, practice educators and people with lived experience of social work.

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

Conflict of interest

19. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

20. The inspection team met with 9 Step Up to Social Work students who had commenced their studies in January 2024. 3 of the students were student representatives. Discussions included experience of admission to the course, how well prepared students were to begin their studies, knowledge of placements, curriculum, assessment and student support.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course team, lead agency representatives, placement teams, senior leadership team, administrative support staff, admissions and student 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 supporting social work provision at the university. Discussions included input into admissions processes, contributions to course delivery, involvement in assessment and feedback, training received and input into course review processes.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Stoke on Trent City Council (currently the lead agency for the Step Up partnership), Staffordshire County Council, Sandwell Children's Trust, Birmingham Children's Trust, Worcestershire County Council and Birmingham Adult's Practice Learning Team.

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 received in advance of the inspection included an overview of the assessment centre for the course (which was in line with the Department for Education (DfE) requirements), details of admissions tasks, guidance for interviewers and scoring templates used by assessors. The inspection team agreed that a comprehensive range of assessment was used throughout the admissions processes, including written tasks, role play and interviews, and that entry criteria for the course was clear. Student representatives confirmed that their experience of admission to the course was in line with the documentary evidence provided. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.2

26. All applicants to the course were required to have a minimum of 6 months relevant experience prior to applying to join the course. The inspection team heard that this could be from a variety of backgrounds including early help services, education, voluntary work or prior lived experience of social work, such as being a foster carer. This was in line with standard DfE requirements and supported successful applicants to engage with the fast paced, intensive nature of the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

27. During the inspection event, the inspection team heard how the university worked with employers from the regional Step Up partnership to administer assessment centres within the admissions process. The regional partnership had clear responsibility for the planning and coordination of the assessment centre and involved employer representatives from different local authorities. All interview panels included representation from an employer, Person with Lived Experience (PWLE) and an academic. Role play activities and discussion groups also included representation from local authority young people's forums. The expectations of all partners were clear and supported by necessary training. The inspection team heard that there were appropriate contingencies in place in the event of panel members being unavailable. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

28. The course provider outlined how the suitability of applicants was assessed during the application process with panel members having the opportunity to record any concerns for discussion between the regional lead and programme manager. At the point of an offer being made, all applicants were required to complete a declaration of suitability form, which included health and conduct, and was supported by character references.

29. Alongside the declaration of suitability documentation, all successful applicants were required to engage with an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The university outlined that this process was initiated as soon as possible, post offer to ensure that the necessary confirmation of DBS status was in place prior to commencing the course. The regional partnership had responsibility for the processing of such checks, with oversight from the university, and also required applicants to sign up to the update service.

30. Where suitability concerns were raised during the admissions process, the inspection team heard that there was the provision of a suitability panel which included local authority representation alongside university staff. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

31. During the inspection event, the inspection team heard examples of the ways in which the assessment centre design was inclusive of applicants from a range of backgrounds. This was supported by students who explained that they had a good awareness of reasonable adjustments available to support their admission experience.

32. The university demonstrated how admissions processes for the course were in line with university requirements in relation Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), including through the provision of training in relation to issues such as unconscious bias. The inspection team also saw how the course team were able to gather data in relation to admissions through online platforms which supported future planning for the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

33. Documentary evidence demonstrated the wealth of information provided to applicants throughout the admissions process. Some of this was provided by the DfE, however the inspection team recognised that information which was bespoke to the university had also been developed to support applicants.

34. Following receipt of an offer to join the course, successful applicants were invited to keeping in touch or 'keeping warm' days which were led by the university and regional partnership. These were held at regular intervals between the assessment centre and official start date for the course which enabled key information in relation to the curriculum,

assessment, placements and support to be staggered over the pre-course period. Successful applicants also received early access to the virtual learning environment, Canvas, which offered opportunities to familiarise with systems and course documentation. Student representatives confirmed that they felt well informed prior to enrolment, particularly in relation to the intensity of the course and expectations as a student. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

35. Documentary evidence outlined the course providers approach to practice learning which included a 70 day and 100 day placement, in addition to 30 mandatory skills days. The inspection team learned that the course provider ensured contrast in placements through placing students within an adult social care setting for the first placement and a children's setting for the second placement. Where it was not possible to allocate an adult focused setting for the first placement, a community based Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) setting was offered. This approach showed recognition for the generic nature of the qualification and the relationship between adult and children's social work.

36. The inspection team also heard how the course provider aimed to consider individual student experiences in relation to placement allocation through the use of student profiles. Placement providers explained that they received student profiles, which detailed previous experience or individual interests, and used these to support allocation within their agency. Student trajectory was also considered during placement allocation, for example if a student had a first placement working with young adults with learning disabilities, they would not be placed in a children with disabilities team for their second placement.

37. During the inspection event, the inspection team requested further information about the allocation of skills days and the content of these days. The course provider submitted a calendar of planned sessions which included details about the topics covered and details of the lead for the session (i.e. academic, practitioner or PWLE team). The inspection team agreed that the additional evidence provided offered sufficient detail about skills day planning and the proposed content was deemed appropriate. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

38. As referenced in relation to standard 2.1, the course provider took an individualised approach to placement allocation through the use of student profiles. This ensured that placement experiences provided students with the opportunity to gain the required knowledge and skills to meet the placement learning objectives and work towards the professional standards. This was further explored through the Placement Learning Agreement (PLA) in conjunction with Practice Educators (PEs) and student tutors.

39. During meetings with practice partners, the inspection team heard that placement providers were able to offer a breadth of experience to students and PEs spoke positively about the nature of placements and their appropriateness to the student journey. During discussions with the placement team, the inspection team heard details about the processes in place to review placements and ensure that every placement mapped to the relevant part of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

40. The course providers expectations in relation to induction, supervision and support were clearly outlined within course documentation such as the practice learning handbook and PLA documentation. In addition to the documentation provided to stakeholders, the course team were proactive in ensuring that expectations were understood by involving placement providers in student induction weeks and pre-enrolment activities. Furthermore, the provision of the PE conference led by the university offered further opportunity to offer clarity about expectations. As a result of the above, the inspection team heard positive feedback from key stakeholders about their understanding of expectations and ability to support students effectively. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

41. As outlined in previous standard areas, the inspection team reviewed documentary evidence of a student focused approach to placement allocation through the use of individual profiles. This was supported by consistent messaging around expectations for all involved in supporting student development whilst on placement. The task of mapping placements to the PCF offered further assurance that student responsibilities remained appropriate for the stage of their education and training. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

42. Documentary evidence received in advance of the inspection outlined how students' readiness for direct practice was assessed during the skills, values and approaches module, which also included skills days. The assessment consisted of a role play activity with a lived experience contributor and a regional partner. During the role play activity, students were required to engage in a professional conversation/interview based upon a scenario developed by PWLE. Following the role play activity, students received written feedback from the panel and a link to a recording of the interview to support them to engage in a self-reflection activity. Students' written reflections and feedback from the panel both informed the summative assessment judgement which determined readiness for practice.

43. During meetings with various stakeholders, the inspection team heard that the role play assessment was valued by all involved. There was clear guidance for those involved in

decision making, a good understanding of the assessment criteria and evidence of consensus decision making. Employer partners and PEs fed back that the outcome of university input and the final assessment, resulted in students who were prepared for practice and able to establish positive relationships with colleagues and service users.

Standard 2.6

44. Documentary evidence submitted by the course provider outlined the process in place to ensure that PEs were appropriately qualified, experienced and on the register. For PEs sourced from the regional partnership, the relevant checks and information gathering was undertaken by the lead agency. This information was then shared with the university for checking and monitoring before being recorded on a central register. Where a PE was sourced from outside of the partnership, the university led on the gathering and checking of information before recording on their central register.

45. The inspection team heard details about the provision of Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) training offered by the university and the expectation that all PEs involved in programme delivery be at least engaged in PEPS 1 training. In addition to the initial training and qualifications offered by the university, the course provider also offered ongoing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to all PEs in the form of workshops and conferences in collaboration with the West Midlands Teaching Partnership (WMTP). The regional partnership also provided further professional development opportunities which were well received by the PE network. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

46. Student representatives demonstrated an awareness of the importance of challenging unsafe behaviours or wrongdoing within organisations. There was clarity about the process in place to do this, both in the university and whilst on placement. The inspection team were able to see details of the process within the programme handbook as well as within placement induction documentation. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

47. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection outlined how the course management and governance structures fell within university regulations and codes of practice. During the inspection event, the inspection team heard details about the boards and committees which were responsible for maintaining strategic oversight of the course, including quality assurance, student experience, policy and standards. The inspection team also had the opportunity to meet with staff involved in the various strands of governance.

48. The inspection team learned throughout the course of the inspection that due to differences with the course, such as the significance of the regional partnership within governance and delivery which sat outside of the normal academic year, some of the usual approaches outlined had been adapted. Whilst the course provider offered assurance that the monitoring and reporting arrangements were compliant with organisational processes and policies, there was a lack of physical evidence of monitoring and review available. The inspection team had access to a cohort report from the regional partnership, however it was not clear how the university fed into this, or the actions and responsibilities resulting from this.

49. The inspection team also observed that there were some discrepancies in the programme level documentation provided, such as module hours, reference to the correct regulator and where amendments to the course had been made. As there was not a clear evidence trail available through annual reporting, it was not clear when or how course documentation has been reviewed.

50. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against 3.1 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.2

51. Documentary evidence received in advance of the inspection included details of partnership agreements and contracts which outlined the expectations for placements and information about how placement issues were addressed. The inspection team also heard details about the course providers low level concerns process which was in place to mitigate placement breakdowns.

52. During meetings with placements providers, the inspection team heard that documented processes were fully understood, and this was supported by the strength of the partnership arrangements in place. Where there were specific queries, these could be answered via reference to placement documentation or discussions with relevant stakeholders. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

53. Placement documentation provided to the inspection team clearly outlined expectations in relation to policies and procedures which should be in place for each placement. During meetings with relevant stakeholders, the inspection team heard that there were good relationships between the university, partnership and providers where specific support was

required to meet student needs. All parties agreed that there was a relational approach which supported students to succeed within the placement environment. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

54. The inspection team reviewed documentation which included evidence of consultation with employers, details of programme management boards and workstreams within the WMTP. Through the documentary evidence provided, there were examples of how the university sought to seek the views of employer partners in course monitoring and practice education. The course provider also outlined how employers were invited to sit on and support Fitness to Practise (FtP) panels.

55. During the course of the inspection, the course team also provided further details about the links with employers through the regional Step Up partnership, and documentation demonstrated that there were clear procedures in place to engage employer partners in the management of placements. Whilst there were clear lines of communication in relation to placement allocation and management, there was a lack of evidence of how employers received feedback on their contributions or support for placements. For example, the inspection team heard that not all PEs received feedback on their role or the quality of placement portfolio's. Whilst the course team explained there were agreed procedures in place to share this feedback with regional partnership colleagues, it appeared that these had not always been followed successfully.

56. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.5

57. As outlined in standard area 3.4, there were mechanisms in place to include employers in course management, development and design. However, the inspection team agreed that further work was needed to ensure that PEs received feedback on the impact of their role and the quality of placement portfolios.

58. The course team had a designated member of staff to coordinate the involvement of PWLE in course design and delivery and the inspection team heard examples of how representatives had been involved in the programme management board. There was further evidence of the involvement of PWLE through admissions, readiness for practice and module reviews. During a meeting with representatives from the university PWLE network, the inspection team heard that there was a desire to expand their involvement into other

aspects of programme monitoring and evaluation, such as practice portfolio panels, which the inspection team recommend the course provider explore further.

59. The course provider outlined that students were involved in course monitoring, evaluation and improvement, via student representatives being invited to attend the programme management board and through all students being invited to give feedback on modules at the mid-point of delivery and at the end. Students also provided their views on placement experiences through Quality Assurance of Practice Learning (QAPL) documentation, which was reviewed by the course team and members of the regional partnership.

60. The inspection team agreed that the condition applied against standard 3.4 was also applicable here as there was an absence of evidence available to show how PEs were routinely involved in, and notified of, the review of practice placement provision. Full details of the condition can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report. The inspection team are also proposing a recommendation in relation to developing regular involvement of PWLE in course monitoring and evaluation. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.6

61. Documentary evidence reviewed by the inspection team provided clear evidence of strategic planning for student numbers on the course between the university and regional partnership. There was also evidence of capacity being discussed within the WMTP governance structures. During the course of the inspection, there was evidence of ongoing strategic planning in this area and a clear understanding from both the university and workforce managers about numbers and recruitment to the course. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

62. The inspection team reviewed the CV and registration details of the programme director for the course. The inspection team were satisfied that the member of staff was appropriately qualified and on the Social Work England Register. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

63. The inspection team learned that there were 19 members of staff involved in the delivery of the course. Capacity had recently been increased within the social work staffing team to provide expert advice and support on specific themes within the curriculum. During the inspection, the inspection team also met with staff from wider university support services who contributed well to course delivery. The addition of staffing within the regional partnership, both strategic and administrative, offered a further layer of assurance that

there was adequate staffing and expertise to deliver an effective course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

64. During the inspection event, the course provider gave a demonstration of their Tableau data monitoring system. During the demonstration, the inspection team were able to see how the course provider extracted cohort data in relation to protected characteristics and achievement which informed annual course review processes. At a course team level, personal tutors were also able to access details in relation to student performance to support with tutorial discussions. The size of the cohort also enabled an individual approach to monitoring of engagement and support.

65. The Step Up to Social Work report produced by the regional partnership offered details in relation to attrition rates and sought to identify possible factors in this. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

66. The inspection team saw evidence of the staff team having opportunities to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice, which was supported by the senior leadership team. The inspection team heard how the university was committed to progressing social work research and integration to practice through specific CPD opportunities and through the WMTP and their academics proximity to practice project. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

67. Documentary evidence provided assurance to the inspection team that the content, structure and delivery of the course was in accordance with the relevant guidance and frameworks. There was evidence of the course being mapped to Social Work England professional standards and the course handbooks also demonstrated mapping to the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).

68. Despite the above, when reviewing course documentation, the inspection team observed anomalies from the course as originally approved in relation to assessment, skills days allocation, course hours and reference to the appropriate regulatory body. As outlined in relation to standard 3.1, it was not possible to see how changes and modifications to the course since its original approval had been reflected in programme and module specifications. As a result, the inspection team agreed that a condition was required in relation to the updating of all course level documentation to ensure that it aligned with the current course and referenced the correct regulatory body. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for

approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.2

69. Documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection demonstrated the ways in which the course provider engaged with employers to discuss the content of the curriculum. This was achieved through curriculum consultation events, through discussions as part of the WMTP and via regional partnership meetings and discussions. The inspection team also heard from some PEs that they were invited to contribute towards the review of portfolios.

70. Within the course team, there was a dedicated member of staff who engaged with the university PWLE network to agree the ways in which they could contribute towards course development and delivery. During a meeting with PWLE representatives, the inspection team heard that one member had been involved in programme management meetings, however this had been limited and the group expressed a desire to widen their involvement in course review and improvement. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to strengthening the regular involvement of PWLE in the areas outlined within the standard. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.3

71. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection provided an overview of how the course provider had sought to design their course in accordance with EDI principles and legislative frameworks. Through the module specifications and handbooks, the inspection team were able to see how these principles were embedded throughout the course in taught sessions and assessment activities. In relation to the assessment strategy, the inspection team also heard how work had been undertaken to make assessments inclusive by design which had been welcomed by students on the course.

72. Through meetings held with stakeholders as part of the inspection events, the inspection team heard different groups refer to the relational approaches that had been adopted by the course provider and regional partnership, and their ambition to offer a sense of belonging to students and partners involved in course delivery. Student representatives shared their views that the course was inclusive in its design. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

73. The inspection team reviewed details about the research activity of lecturers involved in the course and heard how there were mechanisms for this to feed into the delivery of the course. The provision of course team staff who had both social work and legal professional

experience provided further opportunities to strengthen the knowledge of the course team and enhance delivery of topics in relation to law. During meetings with employers, the impact of efforts from the course provider in this area were recognised with representatives expressing the view that the course produced research informed students with knowledge that was reflective of contemporary social work practice. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

74. Documentary evidence provided in support of this standard demonstrated how the course provider had planned their curriculum with a focus on developing students ability to integrate theory into practice. Student representatives were able to identify the aspects of theory that informed what they were expected to do in placement, and feedback from PEs working with students was that student's ability to apply this skill was good. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

75. The course provider outlined two key activities within the course where students were able to learn with and from other professions. These included an activity with students from other professional disciplines during their first week and an interprofessional education day which took place later in the academic year. The inspection team heard that there were some opportunities for students to learn from other professions though course teaching. During the inspection event, the inspection team heard that there was currently a review of interprofessional education taking place within the school and agreed that enhancing opportunities for students to learn with and from a range of professional backgrounds would be beneficial. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met with a recommendation. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.7

76. The feedback from stakeholders during the inspection provided assurance to the inspection team that there was sufficient structured academic learning throughout the course which support student development. During their review of documentary evidence, however, the inspection team observed discrepancies in the hours allocated to module teaching following review of course content. The inspection team agreed that it was necessary to apply a condition against this standard and agreed that the condition applied to standard 4.1, in relation to updating course documentation, was also relevant here. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.8

77. The course provider submitted a range of documentary evidence to demonstrate that their assessment strategy was robust, fair, reliable and valid. The inspection team observed that the assessment strategy fit with the identified learning objectives and information provided about assessments was unambiguous. Further to this, the inspection team observed that there was a good range of assessments being utilised across the course.

78. During a meeting with student representatives, the inspection team heard that students understood expectations in relation to assessment and had a thorough understanding of grading boundaries. There were mechanisms in place for students to request feedback on specific elements of assessments to support their ongoing development. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

79. Mapping documentation and course timetables demonstrated how the assessment strategy was sequenced and where progression points were situated. During meetings with the course team, the inspection team heard that there had been efforts to review assessment scheduling to avoid clustering of assessments in response to student feedback. Feedback from students in relation to the planning of assessments was positive and all clearly understood progression points. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

80. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection demonstrated that there was clear university guidance in relation to student feedback and expectations surrounding this. This was supported by information within programme handbooks. Whilst student representatives involved in the inspection had not yet received summative feedback on an assignment, they reported that their experience of formative feedback had been positive. There was no evidence to suggest that previous cohorts had experienced any challenges in relation to this standard, as a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

81. The inspection team reviewed the CV and details of registration for the External Examiner (EE) appointed to the course and agreed that they were appropriately experienced and on the register. Where PWLE, PEs and course team staff were involved in assessments, the inspection team were assured that they received supportive and effective input to allow them to undertake their role. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

82. The inspection team observed clear points of progression for students on the course which included Readiness for Direct Practice (RfDP), direct observation of practice

(contained within the placement portfolio) and the final exam board (which was in line with university requirements). Assessments were informed by a range of stakeholders including PWLE and PEs, as well as course team staff, and all were appropriately supported to undertake their role. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

83. The course provider outlined how the ability to use and analyse evidence formed part of the marking criteria for assessed work across all modules. This was supported by module documentation and handbooks. During meetings with employer partners and PEs, the inspection team heard that students from the course were knowledgeable and evidence informed, and were able to apply their knowledge of research to practice learning experiences. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

84. The course provider submitted an overview of the services available to students in relation to wellbeing, inclusion and support which included the provision of wellbeing officers, specific mental health advisors, online resources and guides and careers advice. The inspection team heard that students were able to access support via workshops, online sessions and one to one appointments. There were also appropriate occupational health referral pathways in place for students once enrolled on the course.

85. Student support representatives explained how all staff who worked with students had been trained in the variety of referral pathways available to ensure early intervention for students in need. Those involved in offering mental health support recognised the remit of their role and had a good understanding of how to refer for more specialist support where required. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

86. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection outlined the provision of academic support that was available to students, which included study skills through the library service, online study guides and individual and group workshops. The library outlined their approach to ensuring that resources were kept up to date through regular reviews of module reading lists, adopting an e-first policy to texts and providing electronic journals. In addition to the standard offer of provision, students on the course were also able to access a series of workshops and support titled 'PG essential' which was specific to supporting post graduate students.

87. At a course level, all students had access to a Personal Tutor (PT) who had oversight of academic, personal and practice development. PTs also acted as a placement tutor for students which offered a level of consistency. During a meeting with student

representatives, the inspection team heard that students had clarity about who to approach within the university and placement environments to support their ongoing development. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

88. To ensure the ongoing suitability of students on the course, the regional partnership paid for students to undergo a DBS which included access to the update service. Students were also required to complete a declaration of suitability in relation to their health, conduct and character upon commencing the course, which was resubmitted during their reinduction at phase 3 of the course. The inspection team heard that there were effective arrangements in place to check and monitor declarations and triage for further action by the academic professional suitability lead, if required. This was clearly communicated to students through course level documentation. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

89. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection provided a clear overview of the processes in place to make supportive and reasonable adjustments to students on the course. This was overseen by the student disability service who managed the implementation of Reasonable Adjustment Plans (RAPs) which were then shared with personal tutors and module leads for implementation. The inspection team also heard that RAPs could be shared with placement providers, with student consent, to facilitate continuity of support. Representatives from the disability services also gave examples of additional support available to students with RAPs which included extensions to submission deadlines, additional time in exams or specialist software, if required.

90. During a meeting with student representatives, the inspection team heard that there had been some delays in RAPs being implemented for the start of the course. The inspection team heard that there was work ongoing between the head of wellbeing services and head of disability services to consider how more intensive programmes could be prioritised by the disability and wellbeing service to implement plans rapidly, and apply additional support where RAPs were pending. This project was due to be reviewed in the summer to consider next steps. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

91. Documentary evidence provided details of how students were made aware of information relating to the curriculum, timetabling, assessments and progression points. Students were also clear about expectations in relation to transition to qualified and registered social worker, as well as the requirements for ongoing CPD.

92. As outlined in standards 4.1 and 4.7, during their review of documentary evidence, the inspection team observed some discrepancies in module documentation in relation to hours, assessment, skills days and reference to the appropriate regulatory body. As a result, the inspection team agreed that condition applied against standards 4.1 and 4.7 was also relevant in relation to this standard. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and review can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 5.6

93. There was clear information provided through the programme handbook about the attendance expectations for students on the course. Student representatives articulated their understanding in relation to academic attendance, skills days and practice placement, which was in line with expectations. The university monitored attendance via an electronic system which was also backed up by paper registers. Where learning was missed, there was an effective process in place for students to make this up to ensure that they had met mandatory requirements. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

94. As outlined in relation to standard 4.10, there was a clear process in place which outlined the expectations in relation to student feedback. The EE report commented positively on the scope and content of summative feedback provided to students and current students offered positive comments about formative feedback opportunities. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

95. Documentary evidence offered a clear overview of the academic appeals process which was understood by students on the course. The inspection team heard about the provision of support available through student support services where independent advice could be provided. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

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

Proposed outcome

97. The inspection team recommend that the course be approved with conditions. These will be monitored for completion.

Conditions

98. Conditions for approval are set if there are areas of a course that do not currently meet our standards. Conditions must be met by the education provider within the agreed timescales.

99. Having considered whether approval with conditions or a refusal of approval was an appropriate course of action, the inspection team are proposing the following conditions for this course at this time.

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 3.1	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that there is a plan for formalising the process of monitoring and review for the programme, with an intention to create clear audit trails supported by documentary evidence. The plan should include identified responsibilities within it and details of how processes will feed into academic registry.	13 th September 2024	Paragraph 50
2	Standards 4.1, 4.7, 5.5	The education provider will provide evidence that all course level documentation has been updated to ensure that it is aligned and provides accurate information about module hours, assessments, skills day allocation and accurately references Social Work England as the regulatory body.	13 th September 2024	Paragraph 68 Paragraph 76 Paragraph 92
3	Standards 3.4, 3.5	The education provider will provide evidence that it has reviewed and updated its processes in relation to the management and monitoring of practice education, ensuring appropriate feedback to PEs following student placements.	13 th September 2024	Paragraph 56 Paragraph 60

--	--	--	--	--

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	Standard 3.5 and 4.2	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider developing a PWLE strategy which will support them to embed PWLE in more regular and effective course monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems and consider the specific experience and knowledge that could be offered by representatives.	Paragraph 60 Paragraph 70
2	Standard 4.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider increasing opportunities for students to learn with and from other professions in the university.	Paragraph 75

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 with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of conditions

101. If conditions are applied to a course approval, Social Work England completes a conditions review to make sure education providers have complied with the conditions and are meeting all of the [education and training standards](#).

102. A review of the conditions evidence will be undertaken and recommendations will be made to Social Work England's decision maker.

103. This section of the report will be completed when the conditions review is completed.

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1	3.1	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that there is a plan for formalising the process of monitoring and review for the programme, with an intention to create clear audit trails supported by documentary evidence. The plan should include identified responsibilities within it and details of how processes will feed into academic registry.	Condition met.
2	4.1, 4.7, 5.5	The education provider will provide evidence that all course level documentation has been updated to ensure that it is aligned and provides accurate information about module hours, assessments, skills day allocation and accurately references Social Work England as the regulatory body.	Condition met.
3	3.4, 3.5	The education provider will provide evidence that it has reviewed and updated its processes in relation to the management and monitoring of practice education, ensuring appropriate feedback to PEs following student placements.	Condition met.

Findings

104. This conditions review was undertaken as a result of conditions set during the reapproval process for the course as outlined in the original inspection report above.

105. After the review of documentary evidence, the inspection team are satisfied that the conditions set against the reapproval of the Step Up to Social Work PGDip course, are met.

106. In relation to the first condition set against standard 3.1 the course provider submitted narrative evidence which outlined the processes for monitoring and review of the programme. The submission included a range of relevant supporting documentation demonstrating the component parts of quality oversight, audit trails and responsibility. The inspection team concluded that these processes were fully compliant with the university's academic registry. The new quality assurance framework takes precedent over the West Midlands Teaching Partnership and places clear responsibility on the university to oversee the evaluation and review of the programme. The inspection team agree that this is now met.

107. In relation to the second condition set against standards 4.1, 4.7 and 5.5, the course provider submitted a range of course material documentation. This included module descriptors and a timetable which evidenced the changes which had been made to ensure students were provided with accurate information. The inspection team were satisfied that students were provided with information on hours, assessment and skills days, and that Social Work England was accurately referenced. The inspection team agree that this is now met.

108. In relation to the third condition set against standards 3.4 and 3.5, the course provider submitted documentation which illustrated the new process for quality assurance for practice learning. This included evidence of the Practice Learning Assessment Panel and the Quality Assurance of Practice Learning electronic feedback process, which facilitated the collection and presentation of data collected from practice educators, students and on-site supervisors. The inspection team also reviewed evidence which outlines how the feedback they collect will be shared with the local authority and expected to be disseminated, and also shared with the Review Record and Action Plan for the teaching partnership to use. The inspection team agree that this is now met.

Conclusion

109. The inspection team is recommending that as the conditions have been met, the course be approved.

110. It should be noted that all qualifying social work courses will be subject to reapproval under Social Work England's 2021 education and training standards.

Regulator decision

Approval.