

Inspection Report

Course provider: Liverpool Hope University

Course approval: BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship

Inspection dates: 8th – 10th April 2025

Report date:	4 th June 2025
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	26 th June 2025
Date conditions met and approved:	TBC

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Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

9. During this time a draft plan for the inspection is developed and shared with the education provider, to make sure it is achievable at the point of inspection.

10. Once the inspectors and officer are satisfied that an inspection can take place, this is usually undertaken over a three to four day visit to the education provider. We then draft a report setting out what we found during the inspection and if and how our findings demonstrate that the course meets our standards. Inspections are carried out either on site at the education provider's campus, or remotely using virtual meetings.

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 previously been 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. Liverpool Hope University's proposed BA Social Work Degree Apprenticeship was inspected for approval against Social Work England's Education and Training Standards 2021.

Inspection ID	LHU_CPP496
Course provider	Liverpool Hope University
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Courses inspected	BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	15
Date of inspection	8 th – 10 th April 2025
Inspection team	Joseph Hubbard (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Michael Isles (Registrant Inspector) Sally Gosling (Lay Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Approval outcome	Approved with conditions

Language

16. In this document we describe the Liverpool Hope University as 'the course provider' or 'the university' and we describe the proposed BA Social Work Degree Apprenticeship as 'the course', 'the apprenticeship', or 'the programme'.

Inspection

17. An on site inspection took place from 8th – 10th April 2025 at the Hope Park campus of Liverpool Hope University. As part of this process the inspection team met with key stakeholders including students on existing programmes, course staff, employers and people with lived experience of social work.

18. These meetings formed the basis of the inspection plan, agreed with the education provider ahead of 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 a number of students from across several year groups of the existing BA and MA Social Work programmes. Discussions included admissions, placements, assessment, student support, and student voice.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course team, admissions team, senior management, practice-based learning team, and 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 design and delivery of the university's social work programmes through the SUGaH+ (Service User Group at Hope) group. Discussions included admissions, readiness for direct practice, course development and delivery, training and support.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Liverpool City Council, Merseycare, and Nugent. They also met with a number of practice educators, including independent practice educators.

Findings

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

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. The university provided documentary evidence for this standard which outlined the holistic process through which applicants will be considered. This includes through the submission of a written application, supply of a reference, preparation and delivery of a presentation, and undertaking an individual interview. Applicants' English language skills will be considered at each stage of the process, and ICT skills will be tested through submitting their application and delivering their presentation. It is indicated that applicants will need to hold English language and maths level 2 qualifications at a minimum of grade 4 on entry to the programme, or to achieve these whilst on the programme, in line with apprenticeship requirements at the time of making the evidence submission. It is also indicated that applicants for whom English is not their first language will need to hold an overall minimum IELTS score of 7.0. The inspectors were not clear from the documentary evidence how the university intended to assess applicants' potential capability to meet the academic standards required by the programme.

26. At inspection, details of the admissions process were triangulated with admissions staff. It was confirmed that, following the recent change to the apprenticeship requirements around level 2 English and maths qualifications, a decision has not yet been made as to whether these requirements will be removed for the programme. However, it was noted that all apprentices will undergo a standard English and maths assessment and have support put in place where needed. Regarding assessment of applicants' ability to meet academic standards, it was confirmed that while 120 UCAS credits are stated in the entry requirements, applicants who do not meet this requirement could still apply using the alternative assessment route. Further details of this route were requested and provided, and on review the inspectors found there to be anomalies with the marking criteria for this, making it unclear how academic capability would be assessed.

27. The inspectors determined that this standard was not met, and immediate assurances evidence was requested for this standard due to time sensitivity, as admissions for the programme was due to begin. The university provided immediate assurances evidence confirming the finalised entry requirements and admissions process for all applicants. Evidence included an amended admissions process document, interview questions and score sheet, and narrative confirmation of a number of aspects which had been unclear in

previous documentation, as outlined above. The inspectors agreed that the standard is now met, with a recommendation to standardise the use of terminology throughout the admissions process for clarity. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.2

28. The mapping commentary provided by the university outlined the points in the admissions process through which applicants will have the opportunity to indicate their relevant prior experience for the programme. This includes through their use of the written application form and supply of a personal statement within this, and at interview, with the scheduled interview questions seeking clarity on this topic. No specific type or volume of prior relevant experience was included in the entry requirements for the course.

29. At inspection, this standard was triangulated with employers to determine how they will take prior experience into consideration when shortlisting candidates for the apprenticeship. Employers' expectations for this varied in both length and breadth, with some stating they would require two years work experience within a social work environment, and others requiring six months in any role working with people. It was not clear to the inspectors how this potentially broad range of experience would be adequately catered to in terms of the content and delivery of the programme.

30. The inspectors determined that this standard was not met, and immediate assurances evidence was requested for this standard due to time sensitivity, as admissions for the programme was due to begin. The university provided immediate assurances evidence which included an amended admissions process document confirming that while each employer may have their own minimum experience expectations for their pre-sift, the university does not set any experience requirement for applicants meeting the minimum 120 UCAS points, nor require that those who meet the UCAS points requirement do so with qualifications in relevant subjects. Those who do not meet the UCAS points requirement, and therefore use the alternative assessment process for admissions, are required to have one year's experience related to social care.

31. The inspectors agreed that this standard was now met, with a recommendation that the team keeps the impact of their approach under review, particularly from the point of view of accommodating the potential variation in students' ability to engage with the demands of the course. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.3

32. Documentary evidence was provided to demonstrate that employer partners and PWLE (people with lived experience of social work) will be directly involved in the selection process, including through representation on interview panels. Employer involvement will also include

their management of the first stage of the process for shortlisting applicants and putting them through to the university-managed stage. In addition, the evidence stated that employers and PWLE have the opportunity to input into the design and review of the university's admissions process for its social work programmes.

33. At inspection, both stakeholder groups confirmed their involvement in social work admissions at the university, and that this involvement is regular and meaningful. Both groups reported having been involved in the design of the apprenticeship admissions process, and plans to be involved in its delivery. Within the immediate assurances evidence for other standards, it was confirmed that the university will implement a two-stage recruitment process with all employers, rather than potentially a singular process with some employers. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 1.4

34. The university provided documentary evidence demonstrating their processes for assessing the suitability of applicants' conduct, character, and health. A candidate's place on the programme will be subject to an enhanced DBS check, the results of an occupational health assessment, and submission of a health declaration. The university's overarching recruitment and admissions policy was provided, along with the health questionnaire that applicants for professional programmes are required to complete. It was indicated that if these suitability processes generate any potential issues, this will trigger the university's use of its fitness to study policies.

35. It was noted that the information provided in the documentary evidence regarding convictions was not consistent across all documentation. The university-wide policy provided stated that applicants with convictions would be considered on a case-by-case basis, whereas the definitive course document stated there is a bar on all applicants with any convictions within 5 years from the start of the course. This was raised with the university at inspection, and it was confirmed that the information in the definitive course document is incorrect and needs amending.

36. The inspectors determined that this standard was not met due to this information not yet being clear and consistent across course documentation. Immediate assurances evidence was requested for this standard due to time sensitivity, as admissions for the programme was due to begin. The university provided major modification paperwork as immediate assurances evidence for this standard, demonstrating that they have initiated the process of correcting information regarding convictions within the validated course documentation. The inspectors agreed that the standard is therefore now met.

Standard 1.5

37. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection indicated that there are a range of university-wide EDI (equality, diversity, and inclusion) policies that will be applied to the

admissions process for the programme. It was also indicated that the university will seek feedback from applicants on the admissions process and use this to inform how the process is refined on an ongoing basis. It was noted that the university's successful OfS (Office for Students) funding bid for this programme includes the requirement for the university to report on various EDI metrics for the course. In addition, the funding includes provision for an EDI officer with oversight of the apprenticeships.

38. At inspection, the admissions team confirmed that applicants will have the opportunity to request reasonable adjustments, which will be put in place as required. It was also confirmed that members of the SUGAH+ group receive regular EDI training to support their involvement in admissions. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

39. For their documentary evidence submission for this standard, the university provided a comprehensive slide show which has been developed for potential candidates. There was also a website available for the social work apprenticeship, which notes that the programme is awaiting Social Work England approval and that this is not guaranteed. The presentation provided includes details of the professional standards and placement opportunities as required by this standard. Details of social work staff members' research interests are available within another area of the university website. At inspection, students on existing programmes reported having been given all of the information they needed prior to accepting an offer of a place on their course. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

40. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection indicated that students would spend the required 200 days of learning in contrasting practice settings, including 30 skills days. The mapping document outlined detail of the skills days and how attendance at all 30 skills days will be monitored. The mapping document also confirmed that final placements will meet the definition set out in the standards for statutory placement.

41. At inspection, the course team and placements team were able to confirm how contrasting experiences will be ensured using the placement audit document and practice learning agreement. Employers outlined considerations they would make when determining whether apprentices could complete a placement in their home team. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.2

42. The documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard included a list of placement providers, formal training plan template, and placement handbook. The placement modules are mapped to Social Work England's professional standards, and students will be

required to maintain a learning portfolio while on placement, with their learning progress subject to quarterly reviews.

43. At inspection, the placements team, practice educators, and employer partners spoke about how students' placement learning is supported to ensure they develop the knowledge and skills required to meet the professional standards. Students on current programmes demonstrated a clear understanding of how their learning on placement relates to the professional standards. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 2.3

44. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection included a placement learning agreement which covers the arrangements for individual students' induction and support while on placement. There is also a separate document which provides guidance for employer partners specifically in relation to student induction. It is clarified that students' skills coach will be their main point of contact within the university while they are on placement. The respective responsibilities of all parties within placements are listed in the placement handbook, including in terms of student support.

45. The placements team, employer partners, and student support services outlined at inspection how this standard is ensured for students on current programmes, as well as additional considerations for how this will be ensured for apprenticeship students. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.4

46. The mapping document narrative for this standard explains the planned arrangements for seeking to ensure that students' learning opportunities will be appropriate to their stage of education and training. This includes through the use of a practice learning agreement, training plan and regular review meetings, with the latter including students' skills coach.

47. At inspection, practice educators discussed how they assess a students' stage of development and support learning in a structured way in accordance with each student's identified abilities and needs. Students on current programmes reported that they are confident their placement learning is tailored well to their stage of training, and an example was provided of how this was addressed and resolved when not the case. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 2.5

48. Prior to inspection, the university's mapping document outlined the nature, purpose and assessment of the readiness for direct practice module in the first year of the programme and signposts to key documents. The module descriptor indicates that the module will be delivered across the first year, with students compiling a portfolio of evidence of their learning, reflection and feedback from others including PWLE.

49. At inspection, it was confirmed that this module has been amended from the version delivered on existing programmes, to be tailored for apprentices. These amendments include having added a portfolio element, which aims to help students prepare for completing their placement portfolio in subsequent years. It was confirmed that PWLE are involved in the assessment process, and students discussed the value of this in preparing for direct work with service users. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.6

50. Prior to inspection, the university provided details of the processes that are currently in place for establishing practice educators' registration, qualifications, and currency. The mapping document narrative referred to the practice learning agreement form which requires the practice educators' name and registration number; however, it was not clear whether or how the registration details are checked against the register. It was outlined that the arrangements and responsibilities for checking practice educator credentials vary between independent and on-site practice educators.

51. Additional evidence and discussions during inspection confirmed that for local authority-based practice educators, the teaching partnership has processes in place to check their registration and currency. The university does not have oversight of these checks or receive confirmation that they have taken place. The university requires independent practice educators to provide their updated CV annually, including training and registration details, however no record is made of checking this against the register to ensure current registration. At inspection, the course team outlined potential solutions they are already considering ensuring they establish robust oversight of all practice educators, to meet the requirements of this standard.

52. The inspectors determined that the standard was not met. A condition is therefore being recommended against this standard. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.7

53. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that the placement learning agreement template includes a requirement for the placement provider to ensure the student has seen and read various policies, including the provider's whistleblowing policy. Additional supporting processes were also outlined, such as the university's protocol for addressing placement concerns, the university complaints procedures, and guidance for skills coaches on supporting students through problems on placement.

54. At inspection, students confirmed that they were required to read the placement provider's whistleblowing policy and confirm they had done this when completing the practice learning agreement. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

55. The university provided documentary evidence ahead of the inspection which summarised the university's governance structure and quality assurance and enhancement processes. The mapping document outlined where the new programme is sited in the university's academic structures, including as a degree apprenticeship. Supporting documentation covered the university structure, generic course design principles, apprenticeship structure and staff development policy. The proposed apprenticeship would be situated in the School of Social Sciences, within the Faculty of Education and Social Science. All courses at the university are subject to the Annual Review and Enhancement process each year, and a Full Course Review approximately every five years.

56. At inspection, senior management clarified the faculty and school governance structures and where the apprenticeship will fit within this. Assurance was provided that the validation documents for the programmes include provision for additional staff as student numbers on the course increase. However, the inspectors noted that the OfS funding will only support the first academic year of the programme, and determined that evidence was needed of how the programme will be managed and resourced beyond this point.

57. A condition is therefore being recommended against this standard. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.2

58. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection included the mapping document narrative, supported by a teaching partnership agreement, placement handbooks, and placement learning agreement template. A placement concerns document was also provided which outlined the procedures for dealing with issues on placement, including placement breakdown. All aspects of the course, including placement modules, are mapped to the professional standards, and the practice learning agreement serves as a clear and thorough agreement with placement providers to provide training that meets the relevant standards.

59. At inspection, students confirmed that they are clear on the requirement to gain consent from service users, and identifying themselves as social work students. The placement breakdown process was triangulated with the placements team, employer partners, and students. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

60. Prior to inspection, the university's mapping document outlined the key role played by the placement learning agreement for recording the particular needs of an individual student, including if they have any additional learning needs or require reasonable adjustments. The placement learning agreement also checks for the necessary policies and procedures, and notes if the nature of the placement presents any particular health and safety risks, and how these will be mitigated. The placement handbooks establish that it will be the role of students' skills coach to maintain an overview of their placement arrangements being and remaining appropriate. At inspection, the university's student support services discussed how they will work with placement providers' systems to ensure apprentices are supported while on placement. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

61. Documentary evidence provided by the university explains how employers have worked with the university to design the apprenticeship programme. It is indicated that they will continue to have a strong role in the review of the programme, both on an annual basis and periodically, in line with the university's wider quality assurance and enhancement process and procedures. The definitive course document provided further information on employer involvement to date and how this will continue through employer participation in annual curriculum review meetings.

62. However, at inspection it was confirmed that beyond employers' participation in the initial codesign event for the programme, ongoing employer involvement is still nascent and requires formalising. While the documentary evidence referred to the Social Work Employer Engagement Board, at inspection it was noted that the name and format for this mechanism is still under discussion. A condition is therefore being recommended against this standard. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.5

63. Review of the university's documentary evidence submission confirmed the different ways in which the programme will be kept under review. This includes fortnightly team

meetings, an annual team away day, seeking stakeholder feedback, and an annual curriculum review meeting that will involve students, PWLE and teaching partnership representatives. It is also indicated that the placement provision will be monitored via the teaching partnership, and through the QAPL (Quality Assurance of Placement Learning) process, which involves input from stakeholders.

64. At inspection, students confirmed that the mechanisms for capturing and acting on student feedback are effective, their feedback is heard, and they are told how it is acted on. Employers and PWLE also confirmed that they are able to provide feedback to the university but reported that this is most often done informally rather than through involvement in formal monitoring systems. Additional evidence confirmed that employer and student feedback is integrated into each programme's Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) report, and PWLE input is provided through their regular meetings with the programme team.

65. A condition is therefore being recommended against this standard. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.6

66. The university's documentary evidence submitted for this standard confirmed that the target number of students has been determined as part of the university's successful bid for OfS (Office for Students) funding. The programme bid specifies targets for student numbers in the first three years of the programme, and provides significant data and narrative content on the designs for the new programme. It is noted that both the university's apprenticeship admissions lead, and the teaching partnership will monitor offers and acceptances to the programme in consideration of regional placement capacity.

67. At inspection, employer partners discussed how the universities across the region tend to overlap the timing of placements, which puts some strain on placement capacity. They noted that a previous arrangement whereby placement timings were more staggered, was changed due to the financial strain for students able to undertake less paid work over the summer due to placement. As the financial circumstances of apprentices will be different, employers considered that it may be beneficial for regional placement capacity if the apprenticeship placements could be staggered from traditional routes. The inspectors agreed that the standard is met, with a recommendation to consider whether apprenticeship placements could be timed separately from other programmes. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.7

68. The mapping document outlined that the role of lead social worker for the programme will be shared between the programme lead and the social work subject lead. The members of staff in these roles are both registered with Social Work England and their CVs confirm that they are appropriately qualified for the role. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was sufficient to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

69. The inspectors' review of the staff CVs provided within the university's evidence submission confirmed that their backgrounds reflect a breadth of professional experience and expertise. The mapping narrative also noted that all members of the social work teaching staff are registered social workers. At inspection, it was confirmed that the entire team will contribute to the delivery of the apprenticeship programme. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.9

70. Documentary evidence provided for this standard included details of the university's Annual Review and Enhancement process. Additional evidence outlined that the APTM platform will be used for recording information regarding apprentices' progression and EDI data. At inspection, the course team confirmed that the OfS funding arrangements for the programme will also require regular reporting of EDI and progression data, in addition to the university's own established processes.

71. The inspectors agreed that the standard is met, with a recommendation that the university analyses the data from the apprenticeship (including data required by the OfS funding requirements) alongside the data for existing social work programmes, to assess the impact of the apprenticeship on overall progression and EDI metrics. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.10

72. The mapping document narrative outlined the range of support and opportunities the programme team will have to engage in their ongoing professional development. This includes both academic opportunities and opportunities to maintain links to professional practice. At inspection, course team members provided examples of practice-related research including doctoral study which has been sponsored by the university. Employers also confirmed that they seek to provide opportunities for university staff to engage with practice. The inspection team agreed that this standard had been met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

73. The documentary evidence provided prior to inspection included the Definitive Course Document, which indicates how the proposed programme is designed to align with and enable students' achievement of all relevant standards relating to qualification and securing registration to practise as a social worker. This includes mapping to the Social Work England professional standards, the occupational standard for the social worker degree apprenticeship, and the QAA benchmark statement for social work. The mapping document notes that students will be supported to understand how their learning aligns with these standards and frameworks. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met on the basis of the documentation provided.

Standard 4.2

74. As discussed within standards 3.4 and 3.5, review of the university's documentary evidence submission confirmed the different ways in which the programme will be kept under review. This includes fortnightly team meetings, an annual team away day, seeking stakeholder feedback, and an annual curriculum review meeting that will involve PWLE and teaching partnership representatives. It is also indicated that the placement provision will be monitored via the teaching partnership, and through the QAPL process, which involves input from stakeholders.

75. At inspection, employers and PWLE confirmed that they are able to provide feedback to the university but reported that this is most often done informally rather than through involvement in formal monitoring systems. Additional evidence confirmed that employer feedback is integrated into each programme's Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) report, and PWLE input is provided through their regular meetings with the programme team.

76. The condition applied to standards 3.4 and 3.5 is therefore also being recommended against this standard. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.3

77. The university's mapping document outlines that EDI principles have been embedded in the design of the curriculum and will inform the delivery of the programme. A range of university-wide EDI policies were supplied relating to delivery of the programme and student support. It was also explained how particular modules develop students' engagement with

EDI principles, and how the use of simulation resources will support students' learning in this area.

78. At inspection, the course team confirmed that they undertake ongoing review and addition of course content relating to EDI issues. The course team acknowledged the significance of local demography and the need to ensure students gain awareness of and sensitivity to communities beyond their own. Regarding the apprenticeship in particular, the course team noted that apprentices may not be immersed in best practice in their existing roles, and discussed how this may be unpicked during the programme. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

79. The documentary evidence for this standard included an explanation of the processes through which the programme and its constituent modules will be kept under review, to ensure they remain up to date with developments in legislation, practice, and research. The mapping narrative indicated that module leads will be responsible for ensuring their modules are kept up to date, with annual reviews required for every module. It was also noted that the university participates in an active teaching partnership in the region, which supports its awareness of recent developments in practice.

80. At inspection, examples were provided of how developments in legislation and practice have been integrated into the curriculum, such as the recent update to the statutory guidance Working together to safeguard children. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

81. Evidence provided prior to inspection indicated that the programme has been designed and will be delivered to support students to integrate theory and practice in their learning. It was also outlined which specific modules will particularly support students with this. Reference was made within the documentary evidence to the plan to deliver integration days across the programme, and additional evidence provided further information about the content and scheduling of these days.

82. At inspection, students demonstrated clear understanding of the importance of integrating theory and practice, and employers and practice educators outlined how they support students in this. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

83. The university's documentary submission provided examples of how it is planned for different professions to contribute to students' teaching and learning on the programme. The documentation also indicated that students will be encouraged to ensure they work with people from a range of professions while on placement. At inspection, students on current courses were able to provide examples of having been taught by different professions, but not

learning alongside students of other professions. However, it was noted by the inspectors that these opportunities will be more available once the apprenticeship (and the university's other new apprenticeships) have begun. As the plans for interprofessional learning between the new apprenticeships are clear, the inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.7

84. Documentary evidence for this standard confirmed the basic requirements that will apply to students on the apprenticeship programme, reflecting apprenticeship funding rules regarding time spent in on the job and off the job learning. Information was also provided in the documentation regarding the minimum attendance students are required to maintain across the programme in terms of academic learning. At inspection, students on existing programmes confirmed that the attendance requirements are clear, and the university outlined the attendance monitoring systems in place to ensure students attend for sufficient hours to meet the required competence level. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met on the basis of the documentation provided.

Standard 4.8

85. The documentary evidence for this standard included details of the planned approach to assessment for the programme, and how this approach is underpinned by and adheres to university-wide assessment regulations and requirements. The definitive course document and programme handbook then provide more detailed information regarding the intended approach to assessment for each module. There will be an internal moderation process in place, in addition to an external examiner (EE).

86. At inspection, students on existing programmes confirmed that their studies have involved a good range of assessment types. An example was also given of how student feedback has informed changes to assessments which current students have found beneficial. It was noted that all academic assessments take place either before or after placement to allow students to focus fully on their practice placement. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 4.9

87. The university's documentary evidence confirmed that all assessments in the programme have been fully mapped to the curriculum, as well as the learning outcomes, and professional standards. The mapping document indicates that the range of assessments in the new programme and how they are scheduled within it have been given careful consideration to support students' learning progression. The inspectors noted the presence of a module entitled 'advanced practice' in the programme, and considered that this may give students the impression that they would be engaging in learning at a level beyond that expected in a pre-qualifying course.

88. At inspection, students on current programmes confirmed that the sequencing of assessments supports their progression through their course, particularly since having been amended in line with student feedback, as noted in standard 4.8. The naming of the ‘advanced practice’ module was discussed with the course team who clarified that this refers to being advanced in relation to the more foundational first year practice module. The inspectors agreed that the standard is met, with a recommendation to reconsider the naming of the ‘advanced practice’ module and/or provide clarity to students around what this does and does not mean. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.10

89. The mapping document provided prior to inspection outlined the planned approach to providing students with feedback on their development and progression against the learning outcomes and professional standards. The different approaches taken to this were outlined in the documentation, including through formative and summative assessment feedback. A particular emphasis is placed on how students will receive feedback during Year 1 of the programme as part of the readiness for direct practice module, including feedback from PWLE.

90. At inspection, students on existing programmes reported that they have received feedback throughout their programme to support their ongoing development. They noted in particular the value of feedback from PWLE in developing their professional practice. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.11

91. Review of course staff CVs and other relevant documentation prior to the inspection confirmed that all members of the programme team have completed a postgraduate certificate in learning in teaching, and all practice educators have completed the PEPS course and are required to engage in regular refresher training relating to their role. The processes and procedures for the appointment of External Examiners (EEs) were explained, and additional evidence included the details of the newly appointed EE for the programme. Inspectors confirmed that the EE appears to be appropriately qualified and is on the Social Work England register. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 4.12

92. The university’s documentary evidence outlined how the university arrangements will underpin students’ progression through the programme. Key programme documents expand on specific arrangements, including those for the readiness for direct practice module in year 1, the 70- and 100-day placements, and the use of progression and award boards, as set out in the definitive course document (014). It was indicated that different parties will be involved

in student assessments, including PWLE and practice educators. This information was triangulated at inspection, with PWLE reporting that their involvement in assessment of students is robust and meaningful rather than tokenistic. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.13

93. Evidence was provided ahead of inspection that set out how a structured, staged approach will be taken in the programme to develop students' understanding and engagement with an evidence-informed approach to practice. This explanation was supported by the content of programme modules, with examples provided of how evidence informed practice will be prepared for within university taught content. It was indicated that students will also be supported by their skills coach in reflecting on the development of their learning in this area.

94. At inspection, employers and course team members were clear about the importance of developing students for evidence-informed practice. Practice educators spoke clearly about the importance of students developing research skills and embedding these in practice once on placement. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

95. Documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard included narrative in the mapping document, accompanied by a range of documents and a link to the student support and wellbeing team website. This evidence demonstrated that the university provides a range of services including counselling, chaplaincy, health and wellbeing, and careers. Occupational health referrals are also available throughout the student's period of study, as required by this standard. The documentation included a recruitment pack for a specific skills coach for this programme, outlining that this role will provide both skills and pastoral support for students during their work placement experiences.

96. At inspection, details of the support available to students were triangulated with support services staff, and representatives from various services demonstrated an awareness of considerations relevant specifically to apprentices. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.2

97. The university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that students on the new programme will have a skills coach who they will meet with on a quarterly basis. It was clarified that coaches have a pastoral role, as well as running tutorial sessions with small groups of students. Students will also have access to mentors in their employed role as apprentices and while on placement. Other sources of support that will be made available to

students include a named professional mentor, resources on the university's virtual learning environment, 24-hour library access and access to library and study skills mentors.

98. At inspection, it was clarified that the skills coach role takes the place of what is the personal tutor role for non-apprentices. It was acknowledged that this role is primarily intended for pastoral support, and that students seeking academic support specifically would be signposted to module tutors and central academic support services. Inspectors noted that the documentary evidence confirms there is provision within the university's successful OfS bid for additional course staff as the programme grows, to ensure sufficient capacity to support apprentices. At inspection, senior management confirmed the university's commitment to the provision of sufficient staffing to support the apprenticeship as it grows. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 5.3

99. As discussed within standard 1.4, the university provided documentary evidence demonstrating how applicant's suitability for the programme is assessed at the admissions stage. Once on the programme, students are subject to a code of conduct which sets out the university's expectations and students' responsibility to report any development while they are enrolled on the programme that may compromise their suitability. The process for exploring concerns was outlined, supported by the university's attendance policy and fitness to practise policy.

100. Additional evidence confirmed that students will be required to sign an annual declaration while on the programme, and will be reminded during the course of each year of their responsibility to declare anything that may impact on their suitability. The declaration form was provided during the inspection, and inspectors confirmed this document is clear and comprehensive. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.4

101. Documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection providing a detailed overview of the university's approach to embedding EDI policies and practices into its academic delivery and student support. This documentation included links to a number of relevant university-wide policies, and outlined how arrangements for students with additional learning needs are managed within placements, with the placement learning agreement for social work students enabling any needs to be recorded.

102. This was triangulated at inspection with students, employers, and support services who confirmed the details of how these processes work on existing programmes and that they are effective. Support services staff discussed the details of aspects which will differ for apprentices, such as funding differences. It was confirmed that the student's consent would always be gained prior to sharing learning support plans with their placement provider and/or employer. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

103. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that the definitive course document, module specifications and placement handbooks will provide students with detailed information about the programme. All of these materials will be made accessible to students via the university's virtual learning environment for reference throughout their programme. Documentation also indicated that students will be made aware of AYSE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) arrangements in the final year of their programme, in preparation for transitioning to registered social work practice.

104. The inspectors determined that while most aspects of this standard were met, there were some references to registration which used incorrect wording, stating that graduates would be "eligible to register", rather than to apply to register. The inspectors also noted some discrepancy across documentation around the name of the degree programme, which they agreed could cause confusion.

105. The inspectors therefore agreed that this standard was not met, and a condition is being recommended against this standard. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition and recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 5.6

106. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that the programme handbook and the course attendance policy set out the university's attendance requirements for its social work programmes. The documents explain which aspects form the mandatory programme components, in particular the readiness for practice days and the 200 placement days, and note the minimum attendance requirement for all other academic content (85%). The attendance policy document set out the process for monitoring and managing student attendance, and explained how issues with attendance are appropriately explored and escalated where required. At inspection, students on current programmes confirmed that they are clearly informed about the attendance requirements of their course. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 5.7

107. As discussed within standard 4.10, the mapping document provided prior to inspection outlined the planned approach to providing students with feedback on their development and progression against the learning outcomes and professional standards. The different approaches taken to this were outlined in the documentation, including through formative and summative assessment feedback. A particular emphasis is placed on how students will

receive feedback during Year 1 of the programme as part of the readiness for direct practice module, including feedback from PWLE. The university-wide feedback policy includes the guidance that students should receive feedback on written assessments within a four-week period.

108. At inspection, students on existing programmes reported that they have received helpful and timely feedback during their programmes. They noted in particular the value of feedback from PWLE in developing their professional practice. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.8

109. Review of the evidence provided prior to inspection confirmed there is a university-wide academic appeals procedure in place. The procedure is available on the university website and signposted to from the course handbook. At inspection, students confirmed that they are aware of the university's academic appeals process and where to find information on this. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

110. As the qualifying course is a BA (Hons) Degree Apprenticeship, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

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.

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	2.6	The course provider will evidence that they have a robust process in place to ensure oversight of all practice educators' registration, qualifications, and currency, including those based in local authorities.	26 th September 2025	Paragraph 50
2	3.1	The course provider will provide evidence of planning for how the apprenticeship course will be managed and resourced beyond the provider's receipt of external funding for its apprenticeship delivery.	26 th September 2025	Paragraph 55
3	3.4, 3.5, 4.2	The course provider will evidence that clear, formal structures have been established for stakeholder (employer, PWLE, and student) involvement in the management and monitoring of the apprenticeship.	26 th September 2025	Paragraph 61 Paragraph 63 Paragraph 74
4	5.5	The course provider will evidence that course documentation has been amended to ensure:	26 th September 2025	Paragraph 103

		1. Consistent naming of the degree programme 2. Correct phrasing regarding registration (“eligible to apply to register”)		
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Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	1.1	The inspectors recommend that the university ensures its consistent use of terminology within its admissions process to provide clarity for all parties.	Paragraph 25
2	1.2	The inspectors recommend that the university keeps under review the impact of its recruitment approach in terms of the potential for significant variation in students' engagement with the demands of the course, depending on their prior relevant experience.	Paragraph 28
3	3.6	The inspectors recommend that the university considers whether it may be feasible for apprenticeship placements to be scheduled at different times from those for students on other courses, to mitigate strain on employers' placement capacity.	Paragraph 66
4	3.9	The inspectors recommend that the university analyses the data from the apprenticeship alongside the data for its existing social work programmes, to assess the impact of the apprenticeship on overall progression and EDI metrics.	Paragraph 70
5	4.9	The inspectors recommend that the university reconsiders the naming of the ‘advanced practice’ module and/or provides clarity to students that this remains pre-qualification level content and so will not afford any advanced professional status.	Paragraph 87

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: 3. have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards 4. can demonstrate that they have a good command of English 5. have the capability to meet academic standards; and 6. have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.	☒	☐	☒
1.2 Ensure that applicants' prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.	☒	☐	☒
1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.4 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes criminal conviction checks.	☒	☐	☐
1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	☒	☐	☐
1.6 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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: 7. placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and 8. a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.	☒	☐	☐
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	☒	☐	☐
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	☒	☐	☐
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	☒	☐	☐
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.	☐	☒	☐
2.7 Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns	☒	☐	☐

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

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

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.			
4.12 Ensure that there are systems to manage students’ progression, with input from a range of people, to inform decisions about their progression including via direct observation of practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.13 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation.	☒	☐	☐
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: 9. confidential counselling services; 10. careers advice and support; and 11. occupational health services	☒	☐	☐
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☒	☐	☐
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students’ conduct, character and health.	☒	☐	☐
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	☒	☐	☐

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

Regulator decision

Approved with conditions.