

Inspection Report

Course provider: Royal Holloway University
London

Course approval: MSc Social Work (PGDip Exit
Route)

Inspection dates: 18th – 21st April 2023

Report date:	01.06.2023
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	19.07.2023
<i>(Delete if not required)</i> Date conditions met and approved:	05.12.2023

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Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

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

Summary of Inspection

15. Royal Holloway University London, MSc Social Work (PGDip Exit Route) 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. During the inspection, consideration was given to proposed course changes which would affect future cohorts.

Inspection ID	RHULR1
Course provider	Royal Holloway University London
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	MSc Social Work (PGDip Exit Route)
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	40
Date of inspection	18 th – 21 st April 2023
Inspection team	Catherine Denny - Education Quality Assurance Officer Bradley Allan - Lay Inspector Jane Reeves - Registrant Inspector
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Approval outcome	Approved with conditions

Language

16. In this document we describe Royal Holloway University London as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the MSc Social Work as ‘the course’.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 18th -21st April 2023 in Senate House where Royal Holloway University London is based. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students, course staff, employers and people with lived experience of social work.

18. These meetings formed the basis of the inspection plan, agreed with the education provider ahead of 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 five students from years one and two of the course, all were student representatives, and one attendee was also a departmental representative. Discussions included selection and admissions, placements, curriculum, assessment and experience of student support services.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course team, senior leadership team, those involved in placement provision, admissions staff and student support services. Discussions included curriculum, governance and leadership, placements, admissions processes and support available to students on the course.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who were involved in the Insight group at the university as well as representatives from ATD Fourth World who also support with course delivery. Discussions included their involvement in different aspects of the course such as admissions and selection, course delivery, assessment and contributions towards course design. The inspection team also explored the support available from the university to enable members to undertake their role.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Barnet, Bromley, Croydon, Bexley, Richmond, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth and Surrey local authorities. Discussions included the processes in place around placement allocation, university processes, communication, practice education and support.

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 course provider website provided clear information in relation to admissions requirements which students confirmed were easy to access and understand. The selection process included a written test based upon a relevant social work issue, individual interview and group exercise which explored the knowledge and skills of candidates. The inspection team heard how the course team had ensured that all aspects of the admissions process remained accessible to international students via the use of online platforms. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

26. The course provider demonstrated how applicants' prior experience was explored at every stage of the admissions process. Within course marketing materials, there was a minimum expectation of 6 months full time or 12 months part time relevant professional experience required at the time of application. During a meeting with students, the inspection team heard that prior relevant experience was highlighted as a necessity by the university and was a key feature of their application. This was also explored in detail through the panel interview which encouraged candidates to further reflect on the skills and knowledge acquired through their prior experience. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

27. The inspection team heard that, post initial screening, a shortlist of candidates to be invited to interview was identified. The course team explained that, at this point in the selection process, contact with members of the Insight group was initiated to identify who could support with interview panels. The desire from the university was for all interview panels to include an academic, a person with lived experience and a practitioner, however, due to demands on professionals' time this was not always possible. The minimum standard for an interview to proceed was for a panel to include an academic and an Insight group member. All members of interview panels were involved in asking questions and scoring applicants based upon their responses. There was also a role for interview panels in observation of group discussions. Where employers were not directly involved in interviews,

their view was sought at different points in the admissions process, for example, to offer a view on the suitability of applicants where declarations may have been made.

28. During conversations with members of the Insight group, the inspection team queried whether specific training was offered to enable those involved in interviews to fulfil their role. Members explained that specific training was not undertaken but that they were able to discuss their experiences of interview with members of academic staff. During a conversation with the course team, the inspection team heard that there were plans to look at recruitment of someone with lived experience to coordinate the Insight group and that this might encompass working with university staff around training needs. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to the coordination of training opportunities for all those involved in interview processes. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.4

29. The course provider outlined the process for ensuring that the suitability of candidates was assessed. This included completion of a self-declaration form which detailed previous convictions as well as the health status of the applicant. The inspection team heard that, where positive declarations were made, the admissions lead referred these to the programme lead for further investigation. Programme leads across social work provision at the university explored declarations in more detail and sought advice from local authority partners where appropriate, particularly relating to placement suitability. Upon being offered a place on the course, a full DBS check was undertaken. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

30. The course team outlined how admissions processes were in line with overarching university Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies which could be viewed via the university website. Detail was also provided of the ways in which candidates could request reasonable adjustments through the interview process which included additional time to complete written exercises. Student representatives confirmed that the interview process felt supportive and accessible.

31. The inspection team questioned what level of training there was in relation to EDI principles provided for members of interview panels. The course team explained that they held regular workshops to explore issues around scoring, interview processes and unconscious bias and that these had been routinely offered to practitioners. Since the pandemic however, there had been changes in the pool of practitioners used and as a result not all were up to date. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met, however felt that the recommendation applied in relation to standard 1.3 was also

applicable for this standard. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.6

32. The course team outlined the ways in which key course information was shared with applicants which included a promotional video, PowerPoint, letters and a series of 'keeping warm' events which occurred post interview. The inspection team heard that successful applicants also had contact details for the course lead which they could use to ask questions specific to their circumstances. Students confirmed that they felt prepared for the demands of the course, including placement requirements, and that opportunities provided to them to ask questions were sufficient. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

33. The inspection team were able to review the placement learning handbook for the course which outlined the plan for students to undertake two placements. The first placement was planned in year one for 70 days and the second in year two for 100 days, alongside at least 30 skills days split across the duration of the course. The course team explained that they had planned additional placement days into the curriculum to ensure that there were opportunities for any missed days to be made up.

34. The course team confirmed that contrasting placements were provided for all students with one placement experience being within a statutory setting or a setting providing statutory social work. This was usually within a local authority setting where they engaged in high level decision making or risk assessments and legal interventions. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 2.2

35. Students on the course were required to complete a placement application form prior to each placement which outlined their previous experience and skills. This ensured that there were opportunities for any areas of development to be addressed within the practice learning environment. The Placement Learning Agreement (PLA) meeting also provided a forum for any learning opportunities to be mapped against both the PCF's and Social Work England Professional Standards.

36. Practice educator (PE) representatives confirmed that they had a strong understanding of what students required at different times within the placement journey and understood what was being taught on the course at different points. Student representatives shared their experiences of practice learning opportunities, confirming that they were appropriate to their stage of learning and development. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

37. The inspection team heard from students, employer partners and PEs that induction plans, spread over a series of weeks, were developed to support students' transition into placement. Some student representatives explained that they received pre-induction reading lists which supported them to better understand the teams they would be working in. Induction arrangements were further explored during the PLA meeting which focused on student access to policies and procedures, as well as the learning opportunities that would be provided during the placement.

38. PEs outlined how they contributed towards supervision and support throughout practice learning experiences. Where an offsite PE was assigned to a student, they explained that they met with the on-site supervisor (OSS) to discuss supervision and support arrangements which, at the direction of the university, was required to be at least one and a half hours per week. The placement learning handbook also offered staff involved in placement reminders about roles and responsibilities. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

39. The course provider explained that there were ongoing discussions about placement expectations and workload through regular meetings between the university and placement partners. On an individual placement basis, discussions around roles and responsibilities were often explored through the PLA and mid-point review meetings which were attended by key staff. Placement documentation was also reviewed by members of the course team which provided a further layer of assurance that issues would be picked up. A student representative from the course explained their experience of having different responsibilities to what they would have expected on a placement, however later reflection with their supervisor assured them that this was due to the different approaches used by individual teams. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

40. Documentation provided by the course team clearly outlined the arrangements in place for the readiness for direct practice module which was undertaken ahead of students' first placement. The module outline was clearly set out and included a range of assessments which were relevant to the skills being tested. Students were also required to confirm that they had completed their health declaration document and that there had not been any changes which would affect their placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

41. The course provider explained the processes in place to check the knowledge, skills, currency and registration of PEs. Where an offsite PE was allocated to work with a student, the university completed a check of their registration with Social Work England. The university also provided Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) training at level 1 and 2 which was available to all PEs who supported on the course. Where a placement provider selected a PE to work with a student, the university requested that they completed necessary checks to assure the university they are appropriate. The PLA documentation also required PEs to share their Social Work England registration number.

42. The inspection team queried how the university ensured that employer partners were completing satisfactory checks. The course team explained that this information was contained within Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) documentation which was signed by all agencies upon commencing their partnership with the university. The inspection team heard that work was taking place to review the MoCs in place with providers and make any updates as necessary. Further to this, the placement lead explained that there was work taking place to review the information held about PEs as there had been significant changes to staffing within agencies. The spreadsheet used also had the capacity to capture different information in relation to training and time since a PE last supported a student, but it required amendments to do so.

43. In relation to the currency of PEs, whilst the university offered PEPS training and PE workshops as an incentive for PEs and their employers, these were not compulsory and as a result, attendance was not routinely monitored. The inspection team agreed that there were some processes in place to monitor registration and background of PEs, however there was not currently appropriate oversight of the currency and training undertaken. 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 can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.7

44. The programme handbook submitted by the university provided detailed guidance about the guidelines for students to follow if raising concerns about the course. Guidance around the concerns process, including whistleblowing procedures, was also outlined within the placement learning handbook. During a meeting with student representatives, the inspection team were assured that students were clear about the policies and procedures in relation to concerns and as a result, agreed that the standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

45. The inspection team were assured that there were clear governance and management processes in place for the course. This was outlined in detail by the senior leadership team and supported by documentary evidence such as stakeholder meeting minutes and terms of reference from the West London Teaching Partnership (WLTP). In addition to the narrative and information provided around the management structures in place, the inspection team also heard details about the university quality assurance processes that the course was subject to and were satisfied that these were robust. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.2

46. Documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection included information relating to a placement pledge in place with the WLTP, a copy of the MoC with placement providers and the practice learning handbook. Within the documentation provided, there was clear guidance in relation to the expectation for placements to provide learning opportunities that met the Professional Standards and Education and Training Standards. There was also information relating to consents and contingencies for placement breakdown detailed within documentation which was explored with all stakeholders involved in the inspection event. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

47. Information relating to the necessary policies and procedures required within placement settings was evidenced through the practice learning handbook. Student representatives confirmed that they had been made aware of the necessary policies through their induction and PLA meeting. During a meeting with the course lead, it was confirmed that meetings were held with new partner agencies prior to student allocation, and within these there were checks to ensure that appropriate policies and procedures were available. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

48. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence including teaching materials, meeting minutes and admissions processes which provided evidence of employer engagement with the course. During the inspection visit, the university explained that meetings with employers occurred on a termly basis and included discussion around curriculum, practice education, placement provision and student progress. Employer partners confirmed that they were frequently involved in the course and some delivered teaching as part of the skills day timetable. Further examples of employer engagement with the course were provided via the management of the Practice Assessment Panel (PAP) and

through providing advice regarding issues of suitability. The inspection team agreed that employer engagement was varied and not limited to one area of provision. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

49. As outlined in standard 3.4, the inspection team were assured that employers were involved in the course in a range of ways. In addition to the areas outlined above, the inspection team also heard that employers contributed to the review of admissions processes and evaluation of placements, primarily through their contributions to the assessment of student portfolios and attendance at PAPs.

50. The course team explained that the Insight group had been involved in the review of the readiness for practice module and discussions in relation to wider curriculum review. The inspection team also met with representatives from Insight who highlighted their involvement in admissions and recruitment activities, including the review of questions used by interview panels. Further to this, detail was provided about the implementation of wellbeing sessions that had been developed and delivered by Insight members in response to perceived need and members participation in assessment observations and feedback to students.

51. Student representatives explained that they had the opportunity to meet with course leads on a six weekly basis to share their cohorts' views on the course. Staff and student committee meetings also provided a forum in which students could provide input into course development and evaluate the impact of support. In addition to this, the course team confirmed that students were invited to complete an evaluation form at the end of every module which would be considered by teaching staff. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

52. The course team acknowledged that the placement landscape within the region was subject to change and so monitored placement capacity via a range of forums and networks throughout the academic year. The inspection team were assured that placement numbers also considered contingency planning for potential placement breakdowns. Representatives from the senior leadership team also outlined their goals for student numbers and how staffing within the team supported this. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

53. The university provided a copy of the CV for the course lead which confirmed that they were appropriately qualified and on the register. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

54. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence which highlighted the level of qualification of course team staff and the range of research activity that staff were involved in. Staff explained the ways in which their research was able to contribute towards module development and articulated their research goals for the future. The interim executive dean, a professor of social work who is involved in a range of research projects, also remained closely involved with the course team, further supporting the development of the curriculum. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

55. Documentary evidence provided to support the standard included school annual review documentation and minutes from assessment boards where conversations occurred in relation to comparisons between student attainment data of different cohorts. The inspection team noted that annual review documentation demonstrated a review of student outcomes and the efforts of the course team to reduce the attainment gap.

56. During the inspection visit, the course provider detailed their mentoring initiative which had been formed to address attainment gaps for Black and global majority students. Further to this, the inspection team heard that there had been work in relation to the decolonisation of the curriculum alongside MSc students. Whilst narrative was available about some of the initiatives that the course team had developed, the inspection team were not able to see evidence of the data analysis that had taken place which led to these being identified as a priority. They were also unable to see data analysis and evaluation which evidenced the impact of such interventions.

57. Following discussion and reflection against the requirements of the standard, the inspection team agreed that whilst the standard was met, a recommendation in relation to the ways in which data was presented and evaluated was appropriate. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.10

58. The inspection team heard how all academics within the course team had access to a conference allowance, which had recently been increased, to support the development of their professional knowledge. In addition to attending conferences, academic staff regularly presented at events such as the Joint Social Work Education Conference (JSWEC) and the European Social Work Schools of Social Work Conference.

59. The social work course team were able to provide examples of research that they had being involved in and the impact of this on the curriculum. This included research which had been completed alongside social work students. The inspection team heard that staff were involved in research clusters and were able to engage in joint bids alongside colleagues from

other disciplines. Cross teaching also supported the development of professional knowledge with examples being provided of teaching with staff delivering law courses and vice versa.

60. As a result of the partnership with WLTP, some staff had the opportunity to spend time in practice shadowing colleagues. Staff involved in course delivery had completed PHD's in practice-based issues and the course lead maintained their links with practice by offering advice to local authorities on practice-based issues. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

61. Documentary evidence included all module syllabi for the course which were mapped against the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), Social Work England Professional Standards and the Knowledge and Skills statements from both children and families and adult social work. The course provider also demonstrated how assessments on the course required students to demonstrate they had the appropriate knowledge and skills required to be a social worker.

62. The inspection team were satisfied with the mapping provided and were also able to review proposals for the new version of the course, which they agreed was appropriately planned in response to key learning of developments within the profession. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation that new modules be mapped to the PCFs in the same way as the current version. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.2

63. As outlined in standard 3.5, the course provider demonstrated a range of ways in which practitioners and people with lived experience of social work were involved in the course and curriculum development. During a meeting with representatives from the Insight group, the inspection team heard how group members had provided feedback on the ways in which sessions should be run and how this had been taken on by the course team. Representatives from ATD Fourth World provided a specific example on their contributions towards teaching about poverty and the impact of this on social work practice. Another representative explained how they offer a presentation to students followed by a question-and-answer session about specific topics.

64. Practitioners from local authority organisations explained how they had been involved in careers events hosted by the university and offered advice and support to students around their understanding of the Assessed and Support Year in Employment (ASYE). Details of the skills workshops on the course also demonstrated how practitioners had an active role in supporting course delivery. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

65. Upon reviewing the curriculum, the inspection team observed that there was clear evidence of the design of the course being in accordance with EDI principles, for example through modules in relation to human rights and skills day planning. The inclusion of Insight members, who represent a diverse range of experiences within social work, also provided evidence of the course teams commitment to embedding EDI throughout the course. Further to this, the inspection team acknowledged that the proposed changes to the course further recognised topics that needed greater emphasis within curriculum.

66. During meetings with student representatives, the inspection team heard about issues that had been experienced in relation to the accessibility of support due to services being based at a different campus. Students also raised how the physical environment had not been appropriate for some students and whilst this had been raised, there had not been a notable improvement. The inspection team raised the issues that were discussed and received recognition from members of staff about the challenges faced and the actions being taken to overcome these. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.4

67. As evidenced within standard 3.10, the research activity of social work academics on the course was provided during the inspection. The commitment to using research to inform teaching was also explored with staff and examples of direct links were provided. The inspection team also acknowledged how the proposed changes to the course, which were considered as part of the reapproval process, demonstrated that there was a desire for it to remain current and informed by relevant developments within the professions. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

68. The inspection team were able to see evidence of explicitly planned opportunities for students to be taught about how to link theory into practice through the design and content of modules. The use of assessment activities such as case studies also tested student capabilities in this area. Student representatives were also able to identify when they had been taught about the application of theory both through the curriculum and whilst on placement.

69. PE representatives provided an insight into their commitment to supporting students to make links between their learning on the course and practice situations as well as developing evidence-based practice. Examples provided included the use of reflection cards within supervision, facilitating group supervision to look at specific cases and focusing supervision from a particular theoretical stance. PEs confirmed that they felt supported by

the course team via access to details of what was being taught at the university throughout the academic year. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

70. The course provider outlined the ways in which students were able to learn with and from other professions through taught content and via placement experiences. Taught module content included opportunities for students to experience teaching from professionals within clinical psychology roles, safeguarding, youth justice and law and criminology. Some modules and skills day sessions also incorporated assessment activities which required students to apply their understanding of working with other professions to formative and summative assessment tasks. During a meeting with the Insight group, the inspection team also heard how people with lived experience of social work contributed to a session on understanding poverty and working with service users accessing benefits.

71. Student representatives explained that through their induction to placement, there was a focus upon planning opportunities for working with other professionals and attending multi-disciplinary meetings. Students confirmed that their PE's and on-site supervisors also incorporated shadowing opportunities into their placement experience. The university maintained its oversight of multi-disciplinary learning opportunities through their oversight of placement portfolio's, which required students to demonstrate their experiences of working with other professions on placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

72. The evidence submitted by the course provider included details of academic learning and required contact hours, alongside an overview of the necessary placement days needed to complete the course. The inspection team were satisfied that the information provided demonstrated that the standard was met.

Standard 4.8

73. The course provider outlined the ways in which assessments on the course were compliant with wider institutional policies. Further detail was provided about the ways in which assessments were moderated to ensure they remained robust, fair and reliable. The inspection team reviewed details of assessment throughout the course and were satisfied that the range of assessments were varied and innovative, meeting the needs of a range of student abilities and strengths in their design. All assessments were mapped to the relevant frameworks to support student understanding of their acquisition of key knowledge and skills. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

74. All assessments on the course were mapped to the PCF domains and Social Work England Professional Standards. Detail was provided by the course team about their incremental approach to assessment which allowed students to receive appropriate feedback to support their development, whilst tasks increased in complexity. Through conversations with course team staff, the inspection team were assured that there was a shared understanding of the assessment design and calendar, which ensured that they were prepared to deal with periods where additional support for students might be needed in relation to assessment tasks. This was further supported by the library team who increased their presence and availability to support at key points within the academic year.

75. Student representatives explained that they were able to see the relevance of specific assessments being required at certain times in their study and could articulate how they supported progression on placement. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

76. Documentary evidence outlined the variety of ways in which students could expect to receive feedback on the course, this included formal feedback from assignments and presentations, informal feedback during lectures, skills days and on placement, direct tutor feedback on a termly basis and placement related feedback at the mid-point review. Student representatives explained that feedback was usually timely and received within 28 days. The course team also provided workshops and drop-in sessions which correlated with submission dates to support discussions. Whilst students felt there were some positive examples of feedback provided, there had been some issues in relation to consistency and comments which didn't support student progression, which resulted in discussions with lecturers on the course.

77. During a meeting with members of the course team, the inspection team heard that there had been an exploration of the concerns raised by students in relation to feedback with module leads. The course team acknowledged that there were different marking styles being used at times and that work could be done to try and gain more consistency. One action that the course team took in response to these concerns was to develop marking workshops amongst the course team. The inspection team were satisfied that, on balance, the standard was met.

Standard 4.11

78. Copies of CVs provided by the university assured the inspection team that staff involved in marking assessment had a wide range of expertise. The details of the External Examiner also provided assurance that they were appropriately qualified and on the register. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.12

79. Documentary evidence outlined the different mechanisms in place to monitor student progression on the course and the range of professionals involved in supporting decisions. It was evident that student progression was monitored via personal tutorials, marks on assessments such as essays and presentations, through mid-point review on placement and via submission of the final placement portfolio. A range of people contributed towards decision making in relation to progression. These included academic staff, PE's (who completed direct observations during placement), people with lived experience of social work and other professionals who the student may have worked with. Wider contributions were also invited via the Placement Assessment Panel (PAP), which included social work managers as chairs. Where concerns were raised in relation to progression, the inspection team were assured that there are appropriate referral mechanisms in place to address barriers or highlight practice concerns. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

80. The course provider detailed their approach to supporting students on the course to understand research and how to engage with this as part of their learning. All students on the course had experience of modules with research focused elements and those who completed the full MSc course worked closely with a research supervisor as part of their dissertation.

81. The inspection team observed how members of the course team supported the standard through their own research activities which had fed into course development. Staff modelled their own engagement with evidence informed approaches by developing a staff reading group in which they reviewed current research and discussed as a team. PE representatives were also able to reflect on how they used academic articles to support student understanding of key topics during placement. Staff involved in course delivery also showed recognition of the use of people with lived experience of social work as a key evidence base to support student development. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

82. Documentary evidence provided as part of the inspection process outlined the range of ways in which students could access support from university services. Support available included wellbeing services who offered confidential pastoral and counselling support to students throughout the academic year as well as referrals to occupational health support where necessary. The Disability and Neuro-Diversity Service (DNS) also outlined the ways in which students with additional needs could access enhanced support to allow them to

progress effectively on the course. Representatives from services explained that all support was available to students both face to face and remotely. Members of services also offered support via engagement with the course team during induction activity and planned delivery of sessions throughout the course.

83. Whilst there was a range of support services outlined within evidence, the inspection team heard via student representatives that support was not always easily accessible. This was linked to the fact that the majority of the university student support teams were based at the Egham Campus whilst delivery of the MSc was in central London. Students highlighted that there was often a cost implication with travel to an alternative campus and, whilst online appointments were offered, these were often challenging to access due to limited availability.

84. The inspection team explored the issues identified with representatives from student support services and the course team. There was an acknowledgement that the geographical location of services could pose a challenge, however discussions were already underway regarding how some services might be brought to a central London campus. Student support services also explained that, where online appointments were booked up, there was still potential to offer appointments at an alternative time. They reflected, however, that this may not always be clear to students and considered ways in which this message might be more clearly articulated. The inspection team agreed that, on the balance of evidence available, the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to developing ease of access to students who might be studying on a different campus. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 5.2

85. Student representatives spoke positively about the input they received from personal tutors and module leads which supported their progress on the course. Representatives from student support services also provided an overview of the services available to support the academic development of students which was predominantly provided via the library and the Centre for the Development of Academic Skills (CeDAS).

86. Library services outlined the ways in which they had adapted their provision to support students working remotely or on placement. This included 24/7 online services, daily chat support and 1:1 online support. Additional resources in relation to academic skills, language and writing styles were also developed and made available online via Moodle and 1:1 sessions were also provided by the library team and CeDAS. Support services were able to demonstrate an awareness of when their support was most likely to be required for students on the course and adapted their availability accordingly.

87. As with standard 5.1, there were some concerns about being able to access all academic support services consistently. As with the previous standard, the inspection team agreed

that the standard was met but that the recommendation applied was also appropriate for this standard. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 5.3

88. The course provider outlined how successful applicants to the course were required to complete a self-declaration form as part of the requirements for suitability for social work upon being made an offer to study. Where declarations in relation to suitability were made, discussions were held between members of the course team and candidates to ensure fitness for social work study and practice, and to offer appropriate support. Following completion of an initial declaration, students were required to update their self-declaration prior to commencing year two of their study. As with initial declarations, the course provider outlined the processes to ensure appropriate support was offered, particularly in relation to additional health needs. The inspection team also heard about the processes in place to consider issues in relation to fitness to practice and the range of professionals who were involved in contributing to such decisions. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 5.4

89. Where students declared a specific learning need or disability at the admissions stage to the course, contact was initiated by student support services to highlight the provision available to them to support their study. Student support services explained that, whilst engagement with services was encouraged it was not mandatory. As a result, they had built in further check points to try and ensure high levels of engagement. This included further contact at induction and via routine systems checks where needs were declared but students had not come forward.

90. Where students did engage with support services, they were offered the provision of a support plan which could be shared with relevant members of the course team. Representatives from student support services also highlighted that they could support placement planning on the course by attending 3-way meetings with placement providers and academics. In situations where needs were identified during study, the same level of support could be accessed, including referrals for assessments where required. Where this had happened, the inspection team heard that students were offered assessments within a timely manner, usually approximately four weeks from referral. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.5

91. During induction to the course, students received focused sessions which highlighted key aspects of the course handbooks including timetable, assessments, placement provision and details about their transition to registered social worker. Student representatives

confirmed that they felt equipped to understand key elements of the course and agreed that online materials and course handbooks were routinely used to source information.

92. In addition to course literature, the course team explained that they delivered taught content in year 2 of the course which focused upon preparation for their application to join the Social Work England register. This was supported by sessions delivered by the regional engagement lead for the university from Social Work England. Following this session, the course provider also facilitated a skills day session which also explored the ASYE year and how this fits with career development. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

93. The inspection team reviewed evidence including the course handbook, practice handbook and internet resources which outlined the requirement for students to attend all lectures, seminars and placement days on the course. There was also clarity provided about the ways in which attendance could be made up if impacted by unforeseen circumstances, such as ill health. Student representatives confirmed they understood attendance requirements for the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

94. As outlined within standard 4.10, the course team heard that feedback to students was timely overall and complied with the university expectations of 28 days. Whilst there had been some concerns about the consistency of feedback provided and the effect this had on supporting progression, the inspection team were satisfied that actions had been taken to address this by the course team and that it did not reflect the overall experience of students on the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

95. Documentary evidence submitted by the course provider demonstrated that there was an appropriate academic appeals process in place which was robust. During conversations with the course team, there was assurance that the process had not highlighted any specific trends in relation to appeals, providing assurance about the quality of assessments and marking.

96. Whilst the inspection team were assured that the academic appeals process existed, during conversations with student representatives, there was a lack of clarity about the process and its purpose. Whilst the inspection team agreed that the standard was met, they agreed that a recommendation in relation to refreshing student understanding of academic appeals was appropriate. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

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

Standard 6.1

97. As the qualifying course is a MSc (PGDip) Social Work, 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	Standards 2.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that there are processes in place to ensure that all practice educators who work with students on the course have been subject to appropriate checks in relation to registration and currency.	19 th October 2023	Paragraph 43

Recommendations

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	Standards 1.3, 1.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider developing a consistent approach to training, and monitoring training undertaken, for all people involved in interview processes.	Paragraph 28 Paragraph 31
2	Standard 3.9	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider documenting clearer data sets	Paragraph 57

		and evaluation in relation to their analysis of EDI data with action planning to support.	
3.	Standard 4.1	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider mapping the new version of the course against the PCF's.	Paragraph 62
4.	Standards 4.3, 5.1, 5.2	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider formalising and sharing their plans for student support services to meet the needs of students across campuses.	Paragraph 66 Paragraph 84 Paragraph 87
5.	Standard 5.8	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider providing a session for students which outlines the academic appeals process.	Paragraph 96

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

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](#).

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

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1	2.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that there are processes in place to ensure that all practice educators who work with students on the course have been subject to appropriate checks in relation to registration and currency.	Condition met.

Findings

In relation to the condition set against standard 2.6, the course provider submitted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) document, PE update training document, placement planning spreadsheet and Royal Holloway University London practice learning handbook. The inspection team reviewed all documentation, along with a narrative which outlined the actions undertaken by the university, to support them in making a recommendation as to whether the condition was met.

The MoU document submitted by the university clearly outlined that the university, in partnership with the placement agency, would ensure that all PE's were suitably qualified and registered with Social Work England. The annual update document also required PE's to provide details of their registration with the regulator and information about relevant training courses and development activities that had been undertaken over the previous two years. In addition, the practice learning handbook submitted by the course provider reinforced expectations, along with evidence of how completion of required documentation was monitored via the placement planning spreadsheet.

Further to the evidence submitted above, the inspection team were also able to review a narrative about information and learning sessions provided by the course provider to support PE currency, provide a forum for discussion and ensure that PE's understood university guidelines. As a result of the evidence provided, the inspection team were

assured that there were necessary processes in place to ensure all PE's working with students had been subject to appropriate checks in relation to their registration and currency. The inspection team agreed that the condition was now met.

Regulator decision

Approved.