

Course provider:
Brunel University London

Course approval:
MA Social Work
MSc Social Work (Full Time)
MSc Social Work (Part Time)
PG Dip Social Work (Exit Route)

Report date:	24 December 2021
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	7 March 2022
Date conditions met and approved:	TO BE ADDED

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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, new course approval and annual monitoring processes on our website.

What we do

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

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

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.

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 two to three-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. As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, inspections are currently being carried out via remote virtual arrangements, and typically last three to four days.

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

Inspection findings from Brunel University London course approval

15. Brunel University London ('the education provider') are seeking reapproval for their existing MA Social Work and MSc Social Work, in addition to approval of course changes relating to the structure, content and assessment of their MSc Social Work which if approved will come into effect from September 2022.

16. The MA Social Work is closed to recruitment and enrolled a final intake in September 2020. The current MSc Social Work is structurally the same course as the MA Social Work in terms design, content, and assessment with the exception that the award title was changed to 'MSc' in 2021. A part-time social work route for the newly titled MSc course was also introduced in 2021.

17. These changes were internally validated and approved by the education provider but had not been approved, at the point of implementation, by Social Work England.

Inspection ID	BULR1
Course provider	Brunel University London
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	MA Social Work MSc Social Work (Full Time) MSc Social Work (Part Time) PG Dip Social Work (Exit Route)
Date of inspection	09 – 12 November 2021
Mode of study	Full time
Proposed first intake	September 2022 (MSc Social Work)
Maximum student cohort	60
Inspection team	Rebecca Mulvaney (Education Quality Assurance Officer) David Ward (Registrant Inspector) Sophia Hunt (Lay Inspector) Daisy Bragadini (Education Quality Assurance Officer)
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Approval outcome	Approved with conditions

Language

18. In this document we describe Brunel University London as 'the education provider' or 'the university'.

Inspection

19. A remote inspection took place from 9th to the 12th November 2021. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students, course staff, employers, practice educators and people with lived experience of social work involved in the course.

20. The inspection team also observed the internal validation of course changes to the MSc Social Work as part of the remote inspection, which took place on the first day of inspection and involved a panel appointed by the university including external experts.

21. 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

22. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

23. The inspection team met with nine students currently enrolled on the social work course at Brunel University London. This included students who are enrolled on the MA Social Work which last recruited in September 2020 and is now closed to future recruitment, and the newly titled MSc Social Work which first recruited in September 2021.

24. The purpose of this meeting was to understand the social work students' experience of applying for their courses, of teaching and learning, preparation for placement, student support services, awareness of the regulatory body and the resourcing of their courses.

25. The inspection team also wanted to understand how students had been informed of the potential changes that would be taking place to the MSc Social Work from September 2022, and how they had been engaged in the design of the new course structure and modules.

Meetings with course staff

26. During the inspection the inspection team met with university staff members of the social work course team and several central teams within the university responsible for delivering student and professional services.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

27. The inspection team met with several people with lived experience of social work who volunteer their time and personal insight towards the design and delivery of social work courses at Brunel University London. These individuals attended as representatives of a

wider Brunel Experts by Experience Committee (BEC) at the university, who have been involved with the development of social work education courses for a number of years.

The inspection team were particularly interested to hear how this group had been engaged in decision making around course changes to the MSc Social Work.

Meetings with external stakeholders

28. The inspection team met with representatives from regional employers in addition to current Practice Educators who are supervising social work students from Brunel University London while on their practice placements. The inspection team also met with Practice Tutors, who are employed by the university to support Practice Educators and fulfil the academic requirements of supervision and assessment for practice placements.

Findings

29. 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(s) will ensure that students who successfully complete the course(s) are able to meet the professional standards.

30. For the purposes of this report 'the course' refers to the delivery of a postgraduate social work course at Brunel University London, which currently includes the MA Social Work and present form of the MSc Social Work, inclusive of the part-time route and PG Dip Social Work (exit route). The findings will make explicit where and when the inspection team was required to consider the proposed changes to modules, course content and assessment, which the education provider is seeking approval to implement from September 2022.

31. The proposed changes do not impact on all areas of the current design and delivery of the course or all areas of the education and training standards, for example the changes will not impact how the standards in relation to admissions, student support and the learning environment are met compared with the current delivery.

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

32. Through the documentary evidence provided and their discussions with key stakeholders throughout the inspection, the inspection team were able to understand the selection and admissions process from start to finish – including the aspects of the process which are administered centrally by the university admissions team.

33. This included reviewing admissions materials for the selection process, which requires candidates to undertake a written test, to watch a presentation in relation to the course with the opportunity to ask questions of course staff, an observed group activity and an interview. These activities would normally take place across a single day on campus, during which time applicants would be assessed by academic staff, supported by members of BEC. The inspection team were made aware of current adjustments to the admissions process in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including an adaptation of the written test so that it can be undertaken online and the current suspension of the group activity.

34. During inspection the course Admissions Tutor expressed an interest in delivering the written test online going forwards, as they felt it was working well, and explained that this was being explored with colleagues from the admissions team. The inspection highlighted that if this became a permanent change, it may require further consideration in terms of

invigilation and steps to avoid plagiarism. However, for the 2022 admissions cycle applicants will have the choice of an online or face-to-face selection day depending on the public health guidance at the point of recruitment, and at the point of inspection no changes were being made to the existing admissions process. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

35. The inspection team was able to review examples of interview questions that would provide applicants with an opportunity to demonstrate prior relevant experience as part of the selection process. They also noted that the admissions process requires applicants to complete a reflective piece of writing at selection stage, which allows them to demonstrate prior relevant experience in addition to their suitability to study social work. The inspection team was satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

36. The inspection team met with several stakeholder groups as part of the inspection week including representatives from BEC, practice educators and employer partners. In meetings with these groups' questions were asked in relation to their involvement in the admissions cycle to ascertain how stakeholders were involved in the ongoing review and design of course admissions, in addition to their participation in selection activity.

37. Members of BEC expressed that they felt included in discussions and decision making around admissions, both in terms of process and the interview of individual applicants. This mirrored terms of reference for BEC which the inspection team were able to review prior to inspection, which detailed the responsibilities and tasks that BEC members undertake across social work education.

38. Employer partners expressed no concerns with regards to the university's admissions process or the calibre of applicants admitted onto the social work course. The inspection team also met with students to hear their perspectives on who had been involved in their selection day or interview, and they were able to describe engagement with academics, social workers, and people with lived experience of social work as part of the admissions process. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

39. The inspection team were able to review documentary evidence in relation to the suitability checks undertaken for applicants onto the new course, including criminal conviction checks. These processes were discussed further at inspection when inspectors had the opportunity to meet with students, course staff and the Admissions Tutor.

40. The inspection team were satisfied by the documentary evidence provided in relation to DBS checks and further assured by their meeting with staff involved in admissions that there is a suitable and effective process in place to ensure that these checks are carried out correctly. However, the inspection team were not satisfied by the evidence provided in relation to the assessment of further aspects of applicant's health or suitability and noted the absence of an identifiable process which could be referred to as a 'declaration of suitability for social work'.

41. This was explored further at inspection in discussion with the Admissions Tutor, Division Lead for Social Work and other members of the course team. The inspection team sought to establish if there were clear criteria for considering an applicant's suitability or health in relation to the professional requirements of social work, or which would assess the ability of employers to accommodate students on placement who may require specific reasonable adjustments or support. Although course staff could provide examples of enrolling students with health conditions or impairments onto the social work course, they could not evidence a process in place for considering an applicant's health needs in detail at the point of admission or discussing how reasonable adjustments should be implemented by employer partners.

42. In meetings with student social workers, which included Course Representatives speaking on behalf of their wider peers, examples were provided of some students with complex health requirements or impairments struggling after enrolment onto the course and experiencing a delay in accessing support and a stressful transition during their first few months. The issues encountered by students after enrolment highlight a potential gap that could be bridged by collecting and collating suitability and health information at the point of admission onto the course.

43. The inspection team also sought to understand if applicants were given the opportunity to declare prior or ongoing lived experience of social work, and how applicants would be made aware of the potential consequences of not declaring something which could affect their suitability for social work, or their ability to meet the requirements of the course. Further exploration of this topic at inspection did not satisfy the inspection team that a suitable 'declaration of suitability for social work' or health declaration process is currently in place.

44. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against Standard 1.4 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.5

45. The inspection team were able to ascertain from the documentary evidence provided, and discussions with course staff during the inspection, that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

46. Prior to inspection the inspection team were provided with the information made available to applicants, which included a 'preparing for your journey into social work' guide covering a broad spectrum of topics beyond the expected detail around course structure, cost, content and delivery. The guide provided an insight into key course staff and their research interests, tips on useful reading and preparation to undertake prior to further academic study and signposting to topical resources on the social work profession and matters of social justice, such as films and television shows.

47. The guide also included explicit reference to Social Work England's role as the professional regulator for social work and links to the website and social media accounts, which applicants were advised to familiarise themselves with.

48. The inspection team met with current students, who reported that they had felt well informed about the course as applicants and had the opportunity to ask staff questions as part of the admissions process. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

49. Prior to inspection the inspection team reviewed paperwork, such as the Practice Placement Handbook, pertaining to the 2020 – 2021 academic year in relation to practice placements. This paperwork referenced adjustments to the delivery and structure of placements which had been introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic which were not planned to continue into the 2021 – 2022 academic year, such as a reduction in placement days and the use of a 'consolidated' placement model which inspectors were concerned may not provide sufficient contrast in some placement settings.

50. This was discussed with staff involved in practice-based learning during the inspection, who confirmed that the adjustments required during the earlier stages of the pandemic were being phased out and would not continue into the next academic year unless there was a significant change in circumstances, such as the reintroduction of lockdown measures as experienced in 2020 and early 2021.

51. Despite these assurances, the revised Practice Placement Handbook for 2021 – 2022 had not yet been finalised by the course team and was not provided to the inspection team at the point of inspection. The inspection team agreed that in order to be satisfied that this

standard was met, they would need to review the updated placement documentation for the new academic year and confirm the information being provided to students and practice educators with regards to the structure, length and duration of placements meets the Social Work England Standards.

52. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against Standard 2.1 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.2

53. Evidence was provided of the placement opportunities available to students studying social work at Brunel University London, including placements in local authorities and private, voluntary and independent sector organisations across the London region. The education provider evidenced the process of assessing and onboarding new placement opportunities, including undertaking a mapping exercise of the types of experiences and skills a student could gain while on a specific placement against the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and Professional Standards. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

54. The inspection team were assured from the evidence provided and their discussions with employer representatives and students that while on placement, students would have appropriate inductions, supervision and support. There was evidence that concerns had been raised by students with regards to their workloads during the COVID-19 pandemic, which the inspection team discussed in further detail with the Practice Learning Coordinator. It was confirmed that this feedback had been picked up as part of the QAPL process and had been acted on to ensure that the experience wouldn't be repeated. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

55. From the documentary evidence provided and discussions with members of the course team and current students, the inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

56. The inspection team were able to review documentation in relation to readiness for direct practice for both the existing MA Social Work/MSc Social Work and the updated MSc

Social Work which is proposed for September 2021. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

57. The inspection team were keen to establish how the education provider would ensure that Practice Educators were on the register and whether there was a process in place to check this on an ongoing basis. From the documentary evidence provided and conversations with the practice placement team, they were able to check that this was enabled through the paperwork that practice educators are required to complete ahead of each placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

58. When meeting with Practice Educators the inspection team heard that they felt the education provider was providing very useful sessions and resources to support their role, such as an annual meeting to present QAPL feedback and analysis of this data. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

59. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to Standard 2.6. The inspection team recommends that the education provider considers developing a system to ensure that all Practice Educators engage with the sessions and training on offer, this could involve making some sessions mandatory or contacting Practice Educators who haven't attended any sessions within an academic year.

Standard 2.7

60. The inspection team were able to review the guidance and policies provided to students on whistleblowing and raising concerns around organisational wrongdoing as included in the Practice Placement Handbook. This was further explored during the inspection in meetings with the course team, students and practice educators.

61. Staff from the placement team were able to provide a historic example of the process being used, but their memory of the process did not wholly reflect what was presented to students in the Practice Placement Handbook. Staff acknowledged that as a student had not raised a concern in recent years, they could not recall a more recent example and may need to refresh their understanding of the necessary steps in the process. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

62. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to Standard 5.5. The inspection team recommends that the education provider should increase staff and student awareness of the correct policies and procedures in relation to whistleblowing, raising concerns and organisational wrongdoing to ensure that if a student needs to raise a concern, the correct steps are followed.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

63. Evidence was provided prior to inspection to demonstrate the internal governance structures of the university at college, department, and division levels and how these shape and determine the governance, management, and quality assurance of social work education. Documentation was provided in relation to the College of Health, Medicine and Sciences Management Board, Board of Studies and the Student Experience Committee and the roles and responsibilities of various members of the social work course team. This included evidence pertaining to the skills and experience of course leaders, who were confirmed to be registered social workers with appropriate and relevant further experience.

64. During the inspection week, the inspection team were able to meet with senior university managers from the College of Health, Medical and Life Sciences (CHMLS), including the Dean of CHMLS, the Deputy Dean of Academic Affairs, the College Education Manager and the Director of College Operations. This meeting affirmed that several academic staff members within the social work division hold respected positions beyond their teaching and learning roles, for example as research leads or in senior leadership positions within the wider university. This gave credibility to the finding that social work was well-embedded within CHMLS and integrated alongside the other divisions and departments.

65. Senior managers were able to articulate and describe a clear vision for social work at Brunel University London, focused on a post-graduate pipeline of qualifying students and suite of post-qualifying specialist or research focused routes of study. These include courses for practice educators and an MSc Advanced Clinical Practice, in addition to the provision of CPD courses for local employers. This set the skills and expertise of social work staff in context, as the division has a high number of staff with postdoctoral qualifications. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

66. From the documentary evidence provided and meetings with staff involved in the coordination of practice placements and employer representatives, the inspection team established establish a thorough understanding of the agreements that are in place between the university and local social work employer partners and placement providers.

67. The education provider is not currently part of a social work Teaching Partnership and does not provide a qualifying social work route which is subject to any formal contracting with an employer partner, such as a degree apprenticeship or a Step Up to Social Work course. As such, all stakeholders agreed that placement agreements and numbers are reliant on maintaining good working relationships with local partners and responsive,

consistent communication, to ensure that the education and training meets the required standards.

68. There was honest reflection that dealing with placement breakdown and ensuring contingencies can be difficult, as there are several education providers in the region and most employers are partnered with more than one provider. However, staff involved in procuring and overseeing practice placements reported that despite these challenges any issues have always been resolved, and alternative placements have always been procured if needed. The employer representatives that the inspection team met with spoke favourably about their relationship with Brunel University London and the quality of their students, expressing a commitment to partnership working and continuing to work together into the future. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

69. From the documentary evidence provided and discussions with members of the course team and current students, the inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

70. The inspection team were able to understand from the evidence provided how employer representatives are involved in elements of the course, including examples of engagement in teaching, the admissions process, and in the facilitation of practice learning. Representatives from local employers are also co-opted onto the Board of Studies, to provide their expertise and views. Further examples were provided of employer representatives, including local Principal Social Workers, having attended the university as guest speakers and of the university hosting events focused on emerging research which were open to social work practitioners. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

71. The education provider was able to evidence that employer representatives, members of BEC and student course representatives have membership of the CHMLS Board of Studies, allowing them to participate in the ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and improvement of social work education at the university.

72. The inspection team explored how stakeholders had been engaged and involved in the recent curriculum review, which produced the proposed changes to course structure and module content. The inspection team were told by stakeholders that there had been opportunities to review documentation in relation to the review and for stakeholders to contribute their views as part of facilitated meetings and sessions hosted by the university.

73. Further to this, student course representatives have membership of the Student Experience Committee (SEC) and BEC have their own committee, through which they can engage with the development and delivery of the social work course. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

74. The inspection team were able to identify that the current student numbers for the course were clearly aligned to a strategy agreed with employer partners, reflecting the number of placements available and the needs of the local workforce. They were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

75. Prior to inspection the inspection team were able to confirm that the Division Lead for Social Work is a registered social worker, as is the Programme Lead for the qualifying social work course. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

76. The inspection team found evidence to demonstrate that staff were suitably qualified or experienced, and that the resourcing of the course would be sufficient to ensure that it is effectively delivered. It was noted that the staff student ratio is currently very positive, but that this should be considered within the context that a number of academic staff within the social work division are engaged in research activity and have responsibilities beyond their commitment to the teaching and delivery of the qualifying social work course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

77. Prior to inspection the documentary evidence provided in relation to this standard mostly addressed university policies, strategies, and processes in relation to students' performance and progression. This included the provision of documentation in relation to the role of moderation and external examining across academic sessions, comparing data from one year to the next.

78. The inspection team were keen to explore how this data was being used to impact change and whether any trends had been identified in relation to equality and diversity. In meetings with course staff, an example was provided by the Associate Dean for Equality and Diversity of how data from student assessments has been used to revise assessment models and close the awarding gap between white and black students within social work. This analysis had also informed the review of assessments undertaken as part of the proposed changes to the MSc Social Work, leading to fewer examinations and essay assignments and a greater variety of assessments. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

79. Evidence was provided of the training and development opportunities available to staff, including opportunities to undertake research or further qualifications relevant to social work education and training. During the inspection week the Division Lead for Social work and Programme Lead expressed a desire to bring staff more into the team who have more recent experience of practice, to ensure the currency of material and approaches that are taught. The inspection team endorsed this approach and encouraged the education provider to consider how further opportunities for existing staff to spend time back in practice could be developed with local employers. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

80. As part of the inspection process the inspection team reviewed course changes to the structure, course content, modules, and assessments for the MSc Social Work which are due to be introduced from September 2022. The inspection team were able to observe the internal validation of these changes as part of the inspection week, and received the paperwork associated with the internal validation. These changes predominantly impacted the standards in relation to curriculum assessment and are highlighted in further detail within this section of the report.

Standard 4.1

81. The inspection team observed that the qualifying postgraduate social work course at Brunel University London had been subject to a number of minor modifications and changes over a series of years, which had not been subject to consistent regulatory oversight or approval by a social work regulator. This use of the minor modifications process was acknowledged in the documentation provided by the education provider, who reflected that part of the rationale for a formal curriculum review was to streamline the course and ensure that it met all of the required standards.

82. Recent minor modifications included a change in course title and award from MA Social Work to MSc Social work in 2021, and the introduction of a part-time option for students studying on the MSc Social Work. The education provider assured the inspection team that these changes had not impacted the course content or assessment, and that further changes to the MSc Social Work were deferred to ensure the required internal validation by the university and inspection by Social Work England.

83. At the point of inspection, the education provider had students enrolled on the MA Social Work which is now closed to recruitment, the 2020 cohort is the final intake for the

MA and students will complete the MA programme in late 2022. The re-titled MSc Social Work which is identical in course content and structure to the MA Social Work recruited a cohort in September 2021 and has students enrolled on both the full-time and part-time routes. The education provider intends to recruit to the new redesigned version of the MSc Social Work in September 2022. There is also a PG Dip Social Work (Exit Route).

84. The inspection team were able to review the Programme Specifications and Module Outlines for the MA Social Work and MSc Social Work, in addition to mapping of these courses against the Professional Capabilities Framework, QAA Benchmark Statement for Social Work and the Professional Standards. The education provider also provided documentary evidence in relation to course assessment, such as examples of assessment materials linked to modules and areas of the Professional Standards.

85. The inspection team identified that although there was evidence of the education provider considering the required standards and frameworks, the mapping of these against the existing MA Social Work and changes proposed for the MSc Social Work was not clear or sufficient enough for them to be assured that the standard was met.

86. The inspectors agreed that the mapping lacked focus and did not address the transition between learning outcomes between the current course structure and the new course structure in detail. As an example of this, the inspection team did not feel that the link between the learning outcomes, assessment throughout the course and the Professional Standards was explicit or that there was clear evidence of how consideration of the Professional Standards had informed the revised learning outcomes for modules within the new course structure.

87. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against Standard 4.1 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.2

88. The inspection team were able to assess the degree of involvement from employers, social work practitioners and people with lived experience of social work in the curriculum review of the MSc Social Work and the subsequent design of the new course structure and modules. This acted as a suitable and recent example through which the inspection team were able to use to understand how the involvement of stakeholders had worked in practice.

89. Documentation was provided which detailed the stages of the design review, from consultation to development, and the various stakeholders involved. This included minutes from meetings of the Development Team which had been established to steer the curriculum review and course design process, which included membership of student, BEC and employer partner representatives in addition to university staff.

90. The consultation stage included sending surveys to practice educators, students, and alumni followed by an analysis of responses. A separate consultation of BEC members focused their contributions on the idea of the 'ideal social work graduate', and how to achieve this ideal through the refresh of the course. From the evidence provided and discussions with these stakeholder groups as part of the inspection process, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

91. The inspection team found sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the course had been designed in accordance with appropriate equality, diversity and inclusion principles, human rights and legislative frameworks. They agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

92. The inspection team were assured by the evidence provided that the course team are continually updating and revising the course content in line with developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice. However, they also observed that there is a reliance on the minor modifications process to make incremental changes to individual modules, which over time could accumulate in changes across the course as a whole that have may not be well planned or mapped against the required standards. This approach may also create a risk that course changes are not approved by Social Work England in line with our course change process.

93. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to Standard 4.4. The inspection team recommends that when making changes to course content, structure or design that the education provider informs Social Work England of any course changes which may impact on how the education and training standards are met, as they may require approval by the regulator.

Standard 4.5

94. The inspection team were able to assess from the documentary evidence provided that theory and practice would be integrated across the course, and that students would have the opportunity to apply theoretical frameworks in their practice and also engage in research. However, the inspection team observed that because members of the academic team do not fulfil the role of Practice Tutor or provide direct support to students while on

placement, there is a risk that students may experience a greater divide between what happens within their taught sessions and what they experience in the practice environment.

95. This was discussed with the course team who advised that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic there had been opportunities for academic staff and Practice Tutors to get together on campus and that there had been regular face-to-face communication and engagement facilitated through team events and team meetings. This contact had become less organised throughout lockdown, and it was reflected that steps should be taken to ensure that the academic team and Practice Tutors are brought together on a regular basis to ensure good working relationships and consistent communication. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

96. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to Standard 4.5. The inspection team recommends that the education provider consider how to bring academic staff and Practice Tutors together on a regular basis across the academic year to ensure that what students are learning in practice is integrated within the taught aspects of the course.

Standard 4.6

97. From the documentary evidence provided and discussions with members of the course team and current students, the inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

98. The inspection team were able to review documentation in relation to the overarching structure of the course in terms of modules and credits but were keen for further detail around how students on different routes (such as the part time route) would experience teaching and learning relating to the hours they would be spending in taught sessions, the balance of blended learning and classroom learning, and how this would be structured alongside practice-based learning. The inspection team were not satisfied that they had received enough evidence to provide the level of understanding and assurance they would require in order to agree that this standard was met.

99. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against Standard 4.7 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.8

100. The inspection team were able to understand from the documentary evidence provided that the course team had been very keen to explore a wide variety of summative and formative assessments within the new MSc Social Work and to use assessment methods which would allow students from a variety of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds to achieve their full potential.

101. In discussions with the course team there was clear consideration of the issue of awarding gaps, and the impact of large amounts of examinations or written work on students who may have struggled in earlier education or require reasonable adjustments because of a health condition or impairment. The inspection team recognised the enthusiasm among module leaders for innovation in assessment and an eagerness to embrace creative assessment, such as photography and film making which would be engaging to students from a wide variety of different backgrounds.

102. However, the inspection team noted that the structure of the new MSc Social Work is centred around 10 – 15 credit modules and that across the Module Outlines formative assessments for these modules include low word counts of 1500 – 2000 words for reflective pieces, essays and case studies. There are also short presentations of 15 – 20 minutes which comprise the formative assessment for the module. In order to be assured that the assessment strategy and design for the MSc Social Work is robust, the inspection team requires further mapping of the learning outcomes and assessments against the Professional Standards in order to demonstrate how the variety of assessments will ensure that students who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the required standards.

103. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against Standard 4.8 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.9

104. Based on the documentary evidence provided, the inspection team agreed that further mapping of assessments to the new curriculum for the MSc Social Work and the current curriculum for the MA Social Work are required in order to demonstrate students' pathway and progression throughout the course, particularly with regards to the part-time route and the PG Dip Social Work (Exit Route). The inspection team reflected that in undertaking a review of how the learning outcomes for the course map against the Professional Standards, they may find that revisions to assessment or modules are necessary to enable students to progress through the course in such a way as would ensure that they are able to demonstrate that they are able to meet the Professional Standards at the end of their studies.

105. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against Standard 4.9 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.10

106. The inspection team were able to review marking criteria which will be used across all courses and were able to establish the timescales for student feedback. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

107. The education provider confirmed to the inspection team the name and registration number of the external examiner for the social work course and provided examples of recent reports from external examiners. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

108. From the evidence provided the inspection team were able to understand the systems in place to manage students' progress, such as the Practice Assessment Panels (PAPs), and the range of people involved in them. At inspection positive feedback about the equal inclusion and involvement of people with lived experience of social work was provided by members of BEC, who confirmed that they were invited to participate in direct observations of practice to assess students' readiness for direct practice. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

109. From the documentary evidence provided and discussions with members of the course team and current students, the inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

110. The inspection team were able to review documentation in relation to the range and type of services available to students to support their health and wellbeing, in addition to meeting with representatives from student services during the inspection week and current students who were able to describe the services on offer in line with the evidence provided. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard as met.

Standard 5.2

111. Evidence was provided to demonstrate the services available centrally to students in relation to academic support, such as workshops and resources produced by the Academic Skills Team (ASK) and the Academic Liaison Librarian. The role of the Personal Academic Tutor was also evidenced and explored during inspection, as the inspection team were able to meet with course staff undertaking this role and speak to students about their experience of seeking academic support with their learning. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

112. The inspection team were assured from the documentation provided, such as university regulations and procedures in relation to Academic Misconduct and Professional Suitability, that there are clear processes and systems in place if a concern is raised in relation to a students' fitness to practise or fitness to study. It was understood that these procedures had recently been reviewed following the publication of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's 'Good Practice Framework on Fitness to Practise' published in 2019.

113. The inspection team were keen to hear examples from practice educators of how these procedures and systems had worked in practice, and whether they knew how to raise a concern about a student's behaviour or seek support from the university if they felt that a student was struggling due to their health or a change in personal circumstances. From the examples provided the inspection team were assured that stakeholders such as practice educators and employer partners were consistently following the required processes and were receiving responsive support from university staff when needed.

114. Likewise, current students were able to give examples of the response from course staff and staff involved in their practice placements when they had raised issues in relation to their health or wellbeing, such as the need to take sick leave or take time away from study due to bereavement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

115. In addition to reviewing relevant documentary evidence, the inspection team explored this standard during the inspection in their meetings with the course team, students, university support staff and practice educators. Specific examples were provided by stakeholders to demonstrate how individuals who required reasonable adjustments due to health conditions or impairments were supported. The inspection team was satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

116. Prior to inspection the inspection team were made aware that information for students is predominately available to them online via intranet pages, within the virtual learning environment (BlackBoard) and through the university website. These resources were demonstrated as part of the inspection and the inspection team found the range and accessibility of information to be acceptable. Feedback from students indicated that they were broadly satisfied with the information provided, but they reflected that the timeliness and accessibility of information could be improved in some areas.

117. An example was offered by two first year students who reported that they didn't know the name of their Personal Academic Tutor and had struggled to find their contact details. Another student reported that the lack of information around practice placements had caused anxiety for her and her peers, and although course staff had communicated to students that this information would be available from November, the inspection team felt that some of this anxiety could have been avoided if a Practice Placement Handbook had been provided to students at the start of term.

118. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to Standard 5.5. The inspection team recommends that the education provider should consider when information is made available to students in relation to practice placements and whether the Practice Placement Handbook and a programme planner could be made available from the point of induction onto the course, so that students can familiarise themselves with its content.

119. As part of the reapproval process, the education provider is provided with a copy of this report before a regulatory decision is made. The education provider responded with confirmation that all students were notified who their academic tutor was at the beginning of the programme and invited to tutorials. The students are briefed about placements and sent placement application guidance, prior to and during induction. It acknowledged that there can be some anxiety from students prior to the placement planning process and that they try to manage this appropriately in EDP modules. The inspectors reviewed this information and concluded that the detail provided to them from students as well as evidence available to them at the time of the inspection should be represented in their findings. On this basis the recommendation was made.

Standard 5.6

120. The inspection team were provided with documentary evidence which enabled them to understand how attendance would be monitored both within academic elements of the course and while students were on their practice placements. They agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

121. From the documentary evidence provided and discussions with members of the course team and current students, the inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

122. The inspection team was able to identify the university policies and procedures around academic appeals from the documentary evidence provided and saw examples of how information about these processes was made available to students. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

123. As the qualifying courses are an MA Social Work and an MSc Social Work, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

124. The inspection team recommend that the course be approved with conditions

125. 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.

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 1.4	The education provider will provide evidence of a 'declaration of suitability for social work' assessment and process in line with the requirements detailed in Social Work England's 2021 education and training standards guidance.	March 2022	Paragraph 44
2	Standard 2.1	The education provider will provide relevant documentation in relation to the provision of practice-based learning for academic year 2021 – 2022 including an up to date and current Practice Placement Handbook.	March 2022	Paragraph 52
3	Standard 4.1	The education provider must provide mapping of the learning outcomes for each assessed module against Social Work England's Professional Standards for the: MA Social Work/MSc Social Work MSc Social Work (Full Time) MSc Social Work (Part Time) PG Dip Social Work (Exit Route) The education provider must provide current timetables for the MA Social Work/MSc Social Work and an	March 2022	Paragraph 87

		indicative timetable and programme planner for the proposed changes to the MSc Social Work to indicate the structure of the course. This mapping should clearly demonstrate how the assessments for each module will ensure that students are able to demonstrate that they have met the required learning outcomes.		
4	Standard 4.1	The education provider must provide any updated documentation following the internal validation of the course, including Programme Specification and Module Outlines.	March 2022	Paragraph 87
5	Standard 4.7	The education provider must provide mapping of the learning outcomes for each assessed module against Social Work England's Professional Standards for the: MA Social Work/MSc Social Work MSc Social Work (Full Time) MSc Social Work (Part Time) PG Dip Social Work (Exit Route)	March 2022	Paragraph 99
6	Standard 4.8	The education provider must provide mapping of the learning outcomes for each assessed module against Social Work England's Professional Standards for the: MA Social Work/MSc Social Work MSc Social Work (Full Time) MSc Social Work (Part Time) PG Dip Social Work (Exit Route)	March 2022	Paragraph 103
7	Standard 4.9	The education provider must provide mapping of the learning outcomes for each assessed module against Social Work England's Professional Standards for the: MA Social Work/MSc Social Work	March 2022	Paragraph 105

		MSc Social Work (Full Time) MSc Social Work (Part Time) PG Dip Social Work (Exit Route)		
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Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

Table breakdown of standards met during preapproval and inspection.

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Met with recommendations
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	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Met with recommendations
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Met with recommendations
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 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.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Met with recommendations
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 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	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Met with recommendations
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 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.	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Met with recommendations
4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course.	☐	☒	☐
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☐
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.	☒	☐	☐
4.12 Ensure that there are systems to manage students' progression, with input from a range of people, to inform decisions about their progression including via direct observation of practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.13 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation.	☒	☐	☐
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: I. confidential counselling services; II. careers advice and support; and III. occupational health services	☒	☐	☐
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Met with recommendations
development including, for example, personal tutors.			
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☒	☐	☐
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	☒	☐	☐
5.5 Provide information to students about their curriculum, practice placements, assessments and transition to registered social worker including information on requirements for continuing professional development.	☒	☐	☐
5.6 Provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory.	☒	☐	☐
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	☒	☐	☐
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	☒	☐	☐
Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register			
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](#).

Inspectors will undertake the conditions review and make recommendations 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	Inspector recommendation
1			
2			
3			

Findings