

Inspection Report

Course provider: Keele University

Course approval: BA (Hons) Social Work

Inspection dates: 26th – 29th of April 2022

Report date:	14.06.2022
Inspector recommendation:	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	09.08.2022

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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 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.
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. Keele University's BA (Hons) Social Work course was inspected as part of the Social Work England reapproval cycle; whereby all course providers with qualifying social work courses will be inspected against the new Education and Training Standards 2021.

Inspection ID	KUR1
Course provider	Keele University
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Course inspected	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	25
Date of inspection	26 th – 29 th of April 2022
Inspection team	Daisy Bragadini - Education Quality Assurance Officer Catherine Denny – Education Quality Assurance Officer Jo Benn - Lay Inspector Keith Burnett - Registrant Inspector
Inspector recommendation	Approved
Approval outcome	Approved

Language

16. In this document we describe Keele University as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the BA (Hons) Social Work as 'the course'.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from the 26th – 29th of April 2022 on the campus where Keele University 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 a variety of students from the BA and MA courses from a variety of years in their studies. One student invited from the MA course was a student representative. Discussions included their ability to access support services within the university, experience of teaching, learning and assessment, placement experiences, admissions processes, academic support and preparedness for practice.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the social work course team, senior leadership team, staff involved in practice learning, admissions team, library and academic support services, disability support services and student support.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in Keele University's Service User Carer Group. Discussions included involvement in admissions, involvement in skills days, access to training and how their feedback is incorporated into course design.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including employer partners from the local authority, local voluntary sector partners, a representative from the West Midlands Teach Partnership as well as practice educators.

Findings

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

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. The university provided a range of documentary evidence in relation to admissions processes including; process flowcharts, preparation for interview documentation, task examples and scoring sheets and suitability documentation (including reference to fitness to practice and ICT competency). Admissions processes were discussed with staff from the admissions team, course team, service user carer group, employer partners and students. The inspection team were satisfied that the university had a holistic approach to entry onto the course and therefore agreed this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

26. The university assesses prior relevant experience through the personal statement aspect of the application. Evidence provided by the university assured inspectors that course team staff pay close attention to prior relevant experience when reviewing personal statements alongside exploring this via interview questioning. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

27. The inspection team met with a selection of the university service user carer group during the visit. Members articulated their involvement in admissions processes, highlighting the interview as being their main form of participation. One service user shared that they are invited to ask questions in a formal, interview style and take part in observation of group discussions. This practice was echoed by students who were met with during the inspection.

28. Employer partners and Practice Educators were also consulted during the inspection and shared that they were invited to take part in interview panels during the admissions process, saying that their contributions were valued. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

29. The university submitted documentary evidence which assesses applicants' suitability in relation to their health, conduct and character. This included criminal records checks, health needs and disabilities and professional conduct. During meetings with the admissions team, the inspection team heard that communications have been amended to provide clarity of expectation for prospective students. This is outlined in a course information document which was submitted as additional evidence during the inspection.

30. The course team explained that random checks are made in relation to references provided by students which adds to assessment of suitability for social work courses. Service users and carers also outlined how they contribute towards assessing suitability during the interview process. The inspection team agreed therefore that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

31. The initial documentary evidence submitted did not fully outline how the university ensures that equality and diversity policies are implemented for applicants during the application and interview process. The inspection team requested further information in relation to how reasonable adjustments are accommodated prior to interview and information relating to the training received by members of the admissions process.

32. During meeting with the admissions team, it was outlined that students can identify any needs for reasonable adjustments on their UCAS application form. If a need is identified, the central admissions team approach the course team directly for advice around how this need could be met. The inspection team also heard that anyone involved in admissions must complete relevant Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training as a minimum and participation in training in unconscious bias is also promoted. All those involved in interview processes receive an induction to the process by the admissions tutors or nominated course team member as standard.

33. The inspection team heard that members of the service user carer group had been offered training in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and that refresher training was offered on an annual basis. The plan for training had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, however the inspection team were provided with plans to reinstate the training moving forward. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

34. Prospective applicants can view information about the course via the university website prior to submitting an application. Through the website, applicants can view information relating to course content, placements support services as well as links with local teaching partnerships. Offer holders are sent a document which prepares them to start their social work course prior to the UCAS deadline each year. This includes additional information

relating to suitability, academic readiness, attendance, travel expectations and fees and funding.

35. During meetings with students, the inspection team heard that the information available during application and admission was straightforward and clear. Notification of key dates was communicated in advance which supported the planning for applicants. As a result of documentary evidence and feedback from meetings, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

36. The inspection team concluded that the university had appropriate plans in place to ensure statutory placement requirements were met. The documentary evidence submitted outlined that all students were required to attend 170 days of placement-based learning alongside 30 classroom-based skills days. The course team, placement providers, Practice Educators and students all confirmed that the second placement undertaken by students would always be in a statutory setting. It was outlined within documentation that students were prepared for practice learning from their induction week where they are introduced to service users and placement providers. This is then built upon through pre-placement skills days and the readiness for practice module.

37. The inspection team raised questions in relation to students' understanding of attendance requirements for placements. In addition to this, there were queries about how the university was responding to challenges in relation to placement capacity as highlighted in documentary evidence submitted. The inspection team heard during meetings with all stakeholders that attendance at all placement days is considered mandatory. Attendance is reviewed regularly, and Practice Educators confirmed that they closely monitor attendance in liaison with the work-based supervisor. Expectations for attendance are outlined during the initial learner agreement meeting and reiterated during the mid-point review. Student portfolios contain an attendance record which is maintained by students and signed off by Practice Educators. In response to questions relating to placement capacity, the inspection team heard that the university is closely supported by the West Midlands Teaching Partnership to address capacity issues. The placement lead at the university has also developed links with placement providers within a wider geographical distance. The documentary evidence alongside the findings from meetings assured the inspection team that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

38. The inspection team met with the university placement team, employer partners, Practice Educators and students to discuss experiences of placements. The placement team outlined the allocation process which included matching of student needs and experience to

appropriate settings where relevant learning opportunities can be provided. This was echoed by Practice Educators who confirmed that they are provided with student profiles ahead of allocation to ensure they can meet student need and allow them to achieve relevant competencies.

39. Students confirmed that there is an appropriate matching process in place and whilst there had been some negative impact on their experiences as a result of Covid-19, they were able to experience valuable practice experience. One BA student was also able to give specific examples of tasks they had been given on placement which were appropriate yet allowed them to develop leaderships skills.

40. During meetings with relevant partners, some concerns were raised with regards the impact of Covid-19 and the preparedness of students for ASYE. The university had responded to this by encouraging students to attend university hours which mirrored a full-time working week. Employer partners also added that they were assured any concerns were appropriately addressed by the university due to their depth of knowledge in relation to students which comes as a result of having a smaller cohort. All employer partners agreed that the university carefully considers placement allocations and ensures that all relevant information to support placement is shared in a timely manner. The addition of monthly meetings to discuss placement learning also assures that any concerns are addressed rapidly. As a result of the discussions outlined above, combined with documentary review of evidence shared prior to inspection, inspectors agreed this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

41. The university shared a range of evidence to support this standard including training provided to employer partners, Practice Educators and students, induction checklists and the BA Placement Portfolio. During the inspection, meetings were held with students and practice educators to gauge how successful processes were and experience of induction for both parties. Students agreed that they all received induction to placement and that this was largely sufficient to prepare them for practice. Practice Educators explained that they felt well prepared to welcome students and benefitted from the policies and guidance provided by the university around expectations. The placement team within the university shared the view that induction should be seen as a longer-term process rather than a one-off event. Points are planned throughout the placement to ensure that students have all the information required and that their workload and responsibility remains appropriate. As a result, the inspection team agreed this standard is met.

Standard 2.4

42. The documentary evidence showed that there is a planned process in place to ensure that student responsibilities on placement remain appropriate for the stage of their training. The team were keen to further understand the ongoing management and quality assurance

of this process and hear about the experiences of all those involved including placement providers and students.

43. The inspection team heard that every placement is quality-assured prior to allocating a student. The practice lead has close relationships with both statutory and PVI sector colleagues and before initial placement meets with a representative from the organisation to establish support available and how the Professional Capabilities Framework can be met through available learning opportunities. There is strategic oversight of placement activity within the wider school where capacity needs are considered. An interview process has also been introduced to ensure an appropriate placement match is made.

44. Student profiles ensure that the matching process for placements is appropriate and that Practice Educators recognise the developmental needs of the student prior to placement commencing. Upon starting a placement, the Practice Educator completes a Practice Learning Agreement with the student which outlines learning needs as well as opportunities for professional development. The tutor from the university also attends this meeting to agree the practice learning plan, roles and responsibilities. These agreements are shared with the university for quality assurance purposes and reviewed at set intervals throughout the placement duration.

45. Employer partners acknowledged that there is ongoing work required to ensure that students are always able to access appropriate learning opportunities during placement based upon their prior knowledge and experience. Whilst there are planned opportunities for this, the quality of how well this is led can vary. It was acknowledged that this is, in part, can be attributable to the fact that there are some Practice Educators who are early in their careers, with gaps in their own experience. Employer partners noted that in such cases, it is expected that workplaces will adopt a 'team around the student' approach to ensure outcomes are met. Employers also acknowledged that the university are taking a whole system approach to continuously improving placement experiences. The inspection team agreed that this standard was appropriately met.

Standard 2.5

46. The evidence provided in relation to assessed preparation for practice satisfied the inspection team that students are sufficiently prepared to undertake practice learning in a service delivery setting. The inspection team were keen to hear about experiences of preparation for practice from those involved in the delivery of skills days and students. The inspection team were able to hear about the content of the pre-placement skills module and the involvement of people with lived experience in a mock case conference which is formally assessed using an appropriate framework. Students are also required to present their learning from skills days to members of the course team ahead of their placement starting and unanimously shared that they felt prepared for practice because of university input. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

47. The university holds a list of all independent Practice Educators and there are written agreements with employer partners that state they are responsible for ensuring that Practice Educators within their organisation are appropriately registered with Social Work England. Practice Educators involved in meetings during the course of the inspection explained that the university was proactive in sharing information and ensured that all relevant policies were provided in relation to placements. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

48. The inspection team were provided with copies of the Whistleblowing Policy as well as an Appeals and Complaints Policy and placement specific documentation. Within the university, students have a range of means of raising concerns including speaking with their personal tutor or placement lead. Practice Educators and employer partners confirmed that they discuss processes through which concerns can be raised with students and feel supported in understanding the process through the documentation provided by the university. Students commented that they understand how to raise concerns and feel supported in doing so. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

49. The inspection team were provided with a comprehensive overview of the governance plan in place within the university alongside copies of relevant CV's. The Senior Management Team were clear about their responsibilities in supporting and enabling quality assurance for social work courses within the school and were committed to driving forward improvements based upon feedback from all stakeholders. There is a clear line of accountability within the school and leaders comprehensively articulated how action plans and annual monitoring feed into wider university processes. The inspection team therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

50. The education provider provided a range of documentary evidence to show how they plan for placements that meet the professional standards. The university works closely with the West Midlands Teaching Partnership and complete documentation ahead of placements commencing to ensure that there are necessary plans to cover absence or manage breakdowns. During inspection, Practice Educators confirmed that there is a clear framework to support placements and identify concerns which may arise. This is supported by ongoing communication with the education provider. Students reflected that whilst they had been aware of some placement breakdowns, these were generally managed well by the

university and appropriate support provided to the affected student. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

51. Through the review of documentary evidence alongside meetings held with those involved in practice learning, the inspection team were assured that the provider has developed appropriate policies and maintains strong relationships with placement providers. Employer partners acknowledged that documentation provided by the university in relation to health, wellbeing and risk is accessible and supportive. The inspection team heard that students always have access to ongoing support from the university whilst on placement. Further to this, there are online resources such as Health Assured (a 24/7 online service), remote counselling and a mental health support team. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard is met.

Standard 3.4

52. The inspection team were assured that employer partners are viewed as key stakeholders in the management and delivery of social work courses. Documentary evidence alongside consultation during inspection, showed that employer partners are involved in elements of admissions processes, course design and coproduction of key policies. The inspection team agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 3.5

53. Evidence provided prior to inspection showed that the university seeks feedback from a range of stakeholders on a regular basis and reviews this formally as a course team on an annual basis. The course team are also required to report on their quality review process to the School Education Committee and show evidence of consultation with others as part of this.

54. The inspection team heard from Practice Educators and Service Users and Carers that their feedback is regularly sought and that they feel their contributions are valued. Service Users and Carers commented that they feel able to see visible changes to elements of the course as a direct result of their feedback. It was noted by the inspection team however that consultation with Service Users and Carers appears to happen on an informal basis. The inspection team agreed that the standard is met but includes a recommendation for the education provider. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [Recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.6

55. The inspection team heard about plans in place to manage placement capacity at a strategic level and operational level. At a strategic level there is involvement from an external contractor who explores demand and supply in the region which includes the

impact of other courses being delivered locally. Following this, key stakeholders come together to look at planning with Local Authorities, including the supply of Practice Educators and links to future recruitment. Operationally, the university maintain relationships with local organisations and adopt a problem-solving approach to deal with any placement issues. Employer partners described the manageable class size for the course as being a strength for the university as there is direct contact and a wealth of knowledge of students which supports placement planning. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

56. Prior to inspection, the university provided details of the Programme Director Job Description and CV for the member of staff in post. The member of staff is appropriately qualified and registered with Social Work England. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

57. The inspection team heard that the staff team for social work has experienced several changes over the last two years but is now fully staffed with a wide range of prior professional and academic experience. All the team are registered social workers and CV's were available to provide detail of professional and academic achievements. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

58. The inspection team were provided with annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports and responses prior to the inspection. During the inspection, the course team were able to articulate how analysis of data feeds into action plans which are then reviewed by the programme board. Results of data analysis and subsequent action plans are shared with students which was corroborated during conversations with students from the BA course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

59. During the inspection, senior leaders were able to share the range of ways that staff are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice. Staff from the social work course team are allocated time back in professional practice to maintain the currency of their skills and knowledge. There is an annual appraisal system which supports development and opportunities for research and higher education fellowships. Research is a key area that the wider school intends to develop and here are two staff currently being supported to complete their PhD's. The inspection team agreed that this standard is met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

60. The university dictates that all professionally regulated courses complete a programme specification document which outlines how learning outcomes are mapped against professional standards and necessary frameworks. The course team have also designed student portfolios in a way that enables students to evidence how they have met relevant standards during professional practice. During placement, a learning plan is drawn up which links to the Professional Capabilities Framework and Professional Standards. This is reviewed at key points during the placement and supported by Practice Educators. Students were able to identify key elements of the course that prepared them for professional practice including recall days and specific case studies. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

61. As evidenced in standard 1.3 and 3.5, the university were able to evidence how employer partners, service users and carers and Practice Educators were involved in the design and ongoing review of the curriculum. Partners from the Local Authority commented that relationships between them and the university had strengthened with the appointment of an engaged course leader. They also shared that the university are eager to work with employers to strengthen awareness of contemporary issues affecting the social work profession which supports students to be better prepared for future employment. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

62. After reviewing the education providers overarching policies in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, the inspection team were satisfied that the course had been planned with appropriate principles in mind. The inspection team heard that the course had introduced modules which emphasised human rights and legal frameworks and were working to decolonise the social work curriculum. It was confirmed via discussions during the inspection that students felt well supported and individual needs were always considered by the course team to allow the best chance of success. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

63. As part of the reapproval inspection, the inspection team were asked to consider changes to the course structure of the BA. The reason for the proposed changes was to ensure the course content continued to reflect the current picture for social work following publication of serious case reviews and changes in practice contexts. As outlined in standard

4.2, employers felt that the university was open to strengthening understanding of contemporary issues through consultation with appropriate agencies. Staff CV's illustrated that members of the course team are involved in local, national and international networks and the senior leadership team outlined plans for the addition of a social work researcher to the course team. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

64. Students were able to articulate how theory integrates to practice throughout the duration of their course. Some of those who the inspection team met with highlighted the impact Covid-19 had in this area however where practice modules were delivered face to face the impact was positive. Where face to face learning hadn't been facilitated, this was addressed via the support from Practice Educators who ensured that theory was appropriately transitioned into practice.

65. The integration of theory and practice is also a key feature of the proposed changes to the BA which were considered by the inspection team. The development of more formalised tutorial groups with a curriculum framework running alongside will support students to reflect on how theory is reflected within their own practice. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

66. Currently, the opportunities to work with, and learn from, other professions are predominantly presented through practice placement and guest speakers from other professions in lectures (such as the police and NHS mental health services). Student's inspectors met with highlighted that interprofessional learning events had been planned within the School of Medicine that social work sits in however, students from the course weren't invited to attend.

67. The senior leadership team explained their current strategy in relation to interprofessional learning which included the addition of a simulation house where medical students and social work students could learn together. The inspection team considered current opportunities to meet the standard alongside those planned over the next academic year. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation around formalising next steps. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [Recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.7

68. The inspection team were able to review programme specification and module specifications for the course. These detail the contact hours and independent study hours for different elements of the course. The course team had also sought to standardise hours

allocated to modules as part of the proposed changes to the BA that the inspection team considered.

69. During conversations with students, there was not always a consistent understanding of mandatory elements of attendance, however it was felt that this was in part due to confusion created because of some remote teaching during the pandemic. The inspection team were assured that there is a strong plan in place to continue to promote and monitor attendance moving forward and were therefore confident the standard was met.

Standard 4.8

70. Assessments were detailed in the programme and module specifications made available to inspectors. Within the evidence provided there was detail of how assessment tasks seek to assess the professional and academic standards of the course in a proportionate way. Students also had access to an assessment guide for each module so that they could understand how their curriculum prepared them to meet the relevant standards. The inspection team were satisfied that a robust approach is taken to assessment and therefore agreed the standard was met.

Standard 4.9

71. As with standard 4.8, the inspection team were able to review documents in relation to assessment and progression. The inspection team agreed that the evidence provided demonstrated that assessments are carried out at appropriate stages during the course with stakeholders raising no concern about the delivery of assessment during the inspection. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

72. The course team outlined that students have multiple opportunities to receive and reflect upon feedback in relation to their progress on the course. During conversations with students, they agreed that, overall, feedback is timely and meaningful however on one occasion they received comments that did not support them to make progress. Students felt that lecturers who provided detailed guidance in relation to assessment expectations and provided feedback that was specific, supported them to perform to the best of their ability. After reviewing the evidence and discussing this with students, the inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

73. The inspection team were already able to review information provided by the university which detailed staff qualifications and registration. Details were also provided of the external examiner used for the BA course which confirmed suitability. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

74. The inspection team were provided with evidence in relation to the range of assessment processes in place to ensure that decisions about a students' progression through the course are made fairly and via a robust process. The inspection team heard that assessment activities included Practice Educators, employer partners, course team and external examiners. Students and professionals agreed that the current process was fair and robust, therefore the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

75. The inspection team agreed that evidence informed thinking could be seen throughout the course and this was supported in conversations with students. Some students in the third year of the BA commented that research skills could have benefitted from being introduced earlier in their study and this had been acknowledged by the course team who presented revised modules as part of their course change which placed earlier emphasis on research skills and confidence. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

76. Evidence of university support services were provided prior to the inspection including details of counselling, occupational health, careers, chaplaincy and personal tutors. The inspection team heard from staff involved in student services that information is provided about health and wellbeing support from the application and selection phase. Key agencies are referenced in course handbooks and all personal tutors allocated to students have had training in relation to reporting and referral systems. Students confirmed that they understood where to seek support from if needed and recognised the role of student services within the university. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

77. The documentary evidence provided ahead of inspection outlined the processes in place for personal tutoring within the university. There was also further information around planned group tutorials which would take place monthly to review academic and pre-professional development. The course team explained that all staff involved in tutoring had received specific training to allow them to undertake their role.

78. At inspection, the team also heard about the package of academic support available from library services. This included workshops and 1:1 sessions in relation to literature research and referencing. Students highlighted this as a valued resource during their studies. The inspection team agreed that the documentary evidence alongside experience of students confirmed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

79. The course team demonstrated how suitability of conduct and character was part of the admissions process and renewed each year for the duration of the course. All candidates are required to complete a 'Suitability Declaration Form' which requires disclosure of any criminal convictions, this provides the basis for decision making in relation to offer of a place on the course. Students confirmed that this process is followed and recognised what to do if there was a change to their circumstances part way through the course.

80. Practice Educators confirmed that they can refer concerns about students whilst on placement to the university and were able to give examples of where this had been managed successfully by the course team. The university confirmed that there is also a formal Fitness to Practice mechanism available within the School of Medicine which can be referred to where necessary. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

81. Prior to inspection, the university provided evidence of policies in place to ensure that students have access to appropriate support whilst studying with them. The course team also identified the role of a liaison officer within the team who takes direct responsibility for working with course staff and support services to ensure all understand possible adjustments required for students.

82. The inspection team were able to meet with a range of professionals from the university who were involved in student support services, this included the disability support team. Staff articulated the range of support available to students with specific health or learning needs which can be provided whilst at the university and during offsite placements. Students confirmed that they understood services available and were often supported by their personal tutor if any reasonable adaptations were required. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

83. Students have access to information about the structure and content of the curriculum through the programme specification which is supported by individual module specifications and assessment guides. Students are reminded of curriculum, assessment, placement expectations and the nature of social work as a regulated profession during induction and re-induction weeks on an annual basis.

84. Students receive taught content on the nature of CPD within the profession and how to maintain accurate records. There is support provided by the university careers service to ensure there is sufficient knowledge around transition to employment during the final year of the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

85. The inspection team reviewed the Course Handbook and Programme Specification where information is provided in relation to mandatory attendance throughout the course. During meetings with students, there was a shared understanding that attendance at all aspects of the course is a requirement however some concerns were raised about instances where they do not see this happening.

86. The inspection team questioned what strategies were in place to tackle attendance issues. The course team identified that issues in relation to attendance at lectures and skills days are monitored by personal tutors. Students are contacted to discuss any factors affecting attendance and actions are put in place to address these. Contact between tutors and students are recorded on an electronic system which is monitored by the Programme Director. When on placement, Practice Educators monitor attendance and sign off records in relation to attendance. There is an expectation any missed days are made up before the placement is signed off. The Programme Director outlined plans to enhance attendance monitoring which included the introduction of an app which students must sign into to record attendance. As social work sits within the School of Medicine, it was agreed that the threshold for attendance issues which require formal action will be set to the same as medical students at 80%. Where attendance causes a concern, students can be referred to the engagement committee and the support to study process within the school and where problems persist, Fitness to Practice processes are followed. The evidence provided, alongside plans to strengthen monitoring, assured the inspection team that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

87. The inspection team reviewed the Marking and Moderation policy which is followed by all schools within the university. The course team also provided a marking template which is used by all staff in the course team to ensure a consistent response to student feedback. Students can request 1:1 sessions with their marker where their feedback can be discussed. Alongside formal assessments, the course team have introduced formative assessments into specific modules which enable students to receive feedback on their writing and academic approach to work during each year of their course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

88. Students are informed about the university academic appeals policy through the course handbook. There is an advice service available within the university where students seeking an appeal can receive appropriate support. Students confirmed that they understood the process and knew how to use this route if required. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

89. As the qualifying course is a BA (Hons) in Social Work, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

Recommendations

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	3.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider developing a formalised strategy for engagement with Service Users and Carers. This strategy may consider detailing how engagement with Service Users and Carers is planned annually and set out plans for monitoring of the impact of their feedback.	Paragraph 54
2	4.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider developing an action plan which outlines what interprofessional learning opportunities will be provided within the school of medicine with timescales for when these will be introduced.	Paragraph 67

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

Table breakdown of standards met during preapproval and inspection.

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	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 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Recommendations
offer of a place on a course. This will include information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
Learning environment			
2.1 Ensure that students spend at least 200 days (including up to 30 skills days) gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. Each student will have: i) placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and ii) a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.	☒	☐	☐
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	☒	☐	☐
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	☒	☐	☐
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	☒	☐	☐
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Recommendations
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 employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.	☒	☐	☒

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Recommendations
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, ongoing development and review of the curriculum.	☒	☐	☐
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Recommendations
principles, and human rights and legislative frameworks.			
4.4 Ensure that the course is continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.5 Ensure that the integration of theory and practice is central to the course.	☒	☐	☐
4.6 Ensure that students are given the opportunity to work with, and learn from, other professions in order to support multidisciplinary working, including in integrated settings.	☒	☐	☒
4.7 Ensure that the number of hours spent in structured academic learning under the direction of an educator is sufficient to ensure that students meet the required level of competence.	☒	☐	☐
4.8 Ensure that the assessment strategy and design demonstrate that the assessments are robust, fair, reliable and valid, and that those who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course.	☒	☐	☐
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☐
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Recommendations
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.	☒	☐	☐
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Met with conditions	Recommendations
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

Course Approved.