

Education quality assurance – Course change review report

Report date:

21/12/2022

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Documentary review details

Inspection ID	TFO1039
Course provider	The Frontline Organisation
Validating body (if different)	Lancaster University
Course name	PgDip Social Work
Mode of study	Work based learning
Proposed first intake	01/09/2023
Maximum student cohort	450
Review type	Course change
Review team	Louise Robson – Registrant Inspector Rebecca Khanna – Lay Inspector Catherine Denny – Education Quality Assurance Officer
Review team recommendation	Approved
Outcome	Approved

About the review

In May 2022, The Frontline Organisation approached Social Work England regarding their plans to conduct a refresh of their curriculum. As their PgDip Social Work was due for reapproval in year 3 a discussion was held regarding potentially bringing forward the reapproval into year 2 and considering course changes as part of this. Following some consideration, the decision was taken by Frontline to keep their reapproval as planned and proceed with a course change request.

Alongside the curriculum refresh, Frontline are also requesting a change to their admissions criteria from a 2:1 to a 2:2.

Findings

Rationale for Changes

Curriculum Refresh

- A desire to remain current, innovative and relevant to the social work sector.
- In response to feedback from key stakeholders, including Chief Social Worker, Isobel Trowler.
- The Frontline Organisation decided that a refresh of the curriculum was required to secure a contract extension with DfE.
- To address programme design elements that were felt to be limiting student satisfaction (gathered through student survey data).
- To address concerns in relation to over assessment gathered from university partner (based on sector benchmarks and guidance from the OfS).
- To ease workload pressures reported across cohorts.

Recruitment and Admissions 2:2 Degree Classification Pilot

- To support the programmes widening participation agenda, recruit a more diverse cohort and allow people with relevant local authority children and families social work experience to apply.
- To address feedback from local authorities partners who have expressed they have skilled people who cannot currently access the programme due to the 2:2 requirement.
- To pilot new entry requirements in line with the proposal within the DfE tender for cohort 2024 which states that applicants with a 2:2 will be able to apply.

Evidence Review

Curriculum Refresh

See course mapping form for further details of rationale for points 1-3 below

The priorities for the refresh are identified as;

- To ensure systemic and relationship-based practices are prioritised within the curriculum.
- To enhance the teaching of anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice.
- To enhance teaching around aspects of child protection (informed by contemporary research) e.g., intrafamilial sexual abuse, working with fathers and other men in a child's life, domestic abuse, non-accidental injury in young children, Sudden Unexpected Death in Infants (SUDI).
- To improve alignment of Year 2 with the national ASYE programme.

- To increase flexibility of the Year 2 academic component.
- To streamline assessments and assessment points.
- To introduce more deliberate practice (an effective teaching methodology for practical skill development).

1. Module themes, credit weighting and module names

Module themes

- Module content has been updated to include contemporary practice, recent research, learnings from serious case reviews, and the impact of Covid-19 on the role of social workers.
- Module content has been restructured between modules to give each a clearer focus.
- Modules have been re-named and re-numbered to avoid confusion with the existing scheme.
- Programme and module learning outcomes have been refreshed for the updated content and structure and to represent golden threads and priority themes more prominently.
- Module weightings have been re-balanced to accurately reflect demand.
- Two new modules have been added in year 1 to house the placement elements of the programme.

Credit weightings:

- FLSW903 (Now FLSW913) has reduced from 60 credits to 30 credits.
- 30 credits have been used to create two new credit-bearing placement modules at 15 credits each (FLSW914a and FLSW914b)
- These contain the placement elements of the programme and the associated portfolio-based assessments (pass/fail) and direct observations of practice that previously sat within FLSW901 and FLSW903.

New module names and numbers:

- FLSW911 Principles of relational social work practice (30 credits)
- FLSW912 The legal context of social work practice (30 credits)
- FLSW913 Relational social work practice for the modern context (30 credits)
- FLSW914a Practice learning experience – Stage 1 (15 credits)
- FLSW914b Practice learning experience – Stage 2/3 (15 credits)
- FLSW915 Advanced relational research-minded social work practice (60 credits)

**Figure 1: existing module structure
(28-month programme)**

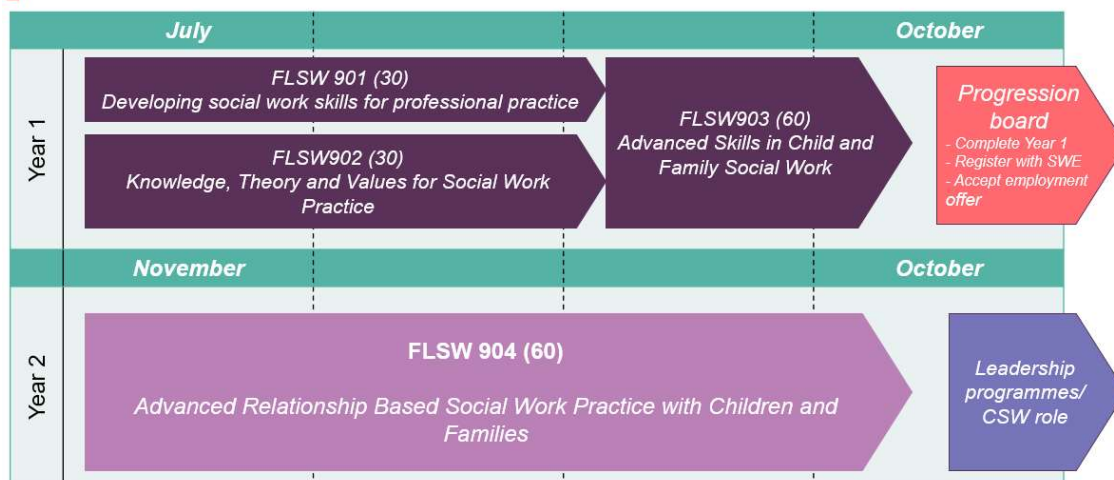
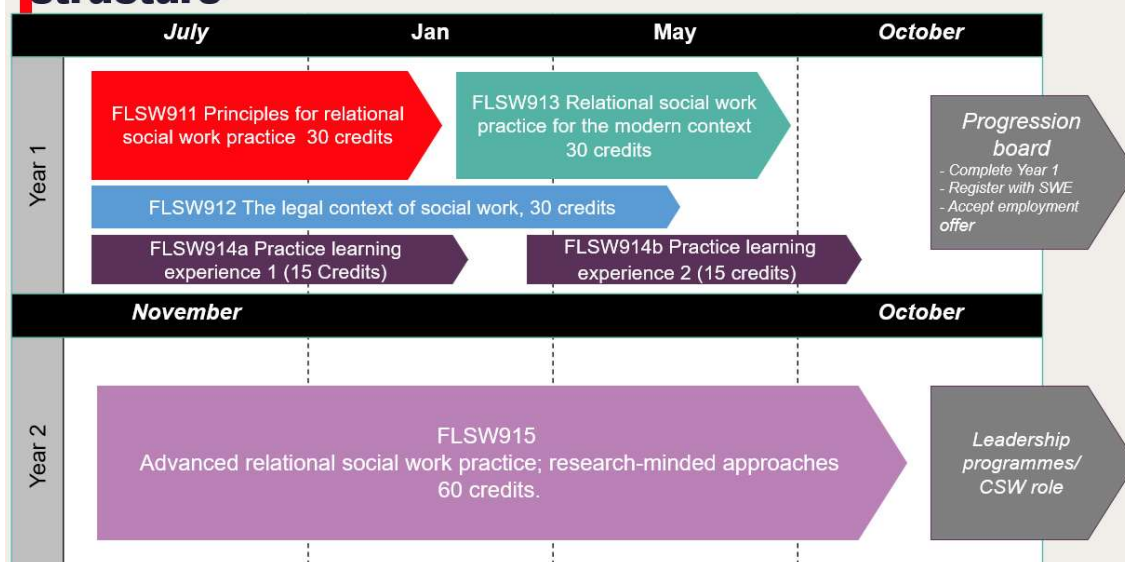


Figure 2: Curriculum 2023 Module structure



2. Content and module updating

- Content has been moved between modules as indicated in the individual module forms to reflect the refocusing of themes, and to create a more consistent and balanced volume of material appropriate to the credit weightings [see module forms FLSW911, FLSW912, FLSW913, FLSW914a, FLSW914b).
- Outside of the partnership with Lancaster University and the social work qualification, Frontline previously offered participants the opportunity to take the Association of Family Therapists (AFT) Foundation Level (Year 1) systemic qualification as an additional qualification using content from the MSc programmes as APEL towards the AFT qualification. However, take up was small and it has been decided that there is no longer demand for participants to take the AFT qualification and Frontline will no longer be offering the optional systemic portfolio for participants. Therefore, the systemic social work syllabus in this programme is no longer strictly aligned with the Association of Family Therapists (AFT) curriculum for a Foundation Level (Year 1) systemic qualification. Content that did not contribute directly to students developing their knowledge and skills for systemic social work practice has therefore been removed.
- A variety of content has been updated or replaced with new material that reflects the latest contemporary understanding of theory and practice.
- There have been updates made to the programme learning outcomes. The learning outcome relating to the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the three evidence-informed approaches to practice privileged by Frontline has been split to provide three unique LOs, one for each aspect of practice. Other revisions to the LOs have been minor as the core purpose and aims of the programme are unchanged along with purpose of the programme to prepare students to meet Social Work England's professional standards (SWE PS), The British Association of Social Workers' (BASW) Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) as illustrated in the mapping of the programme learning outcomes to those frameworks.

3. Assessment Changes

- Assessments have been streamlined in response to feedback from students, internal monitoring and evaluation, and from Lancaster University and wider HEI sector research that the course was over-assessing students.
- To better reflect credit weighting, the learning journey and diversity of learning needs, a variety of assessment modes are provided across the programme, with each module containing an assessment type and mode.
- As a result, we have been able to reduce the overall number of assessments and streamline others by increasing the clarity of the contribution of each assessment to the students' development of social work knowledge and skills

Figure 3: Current assessments

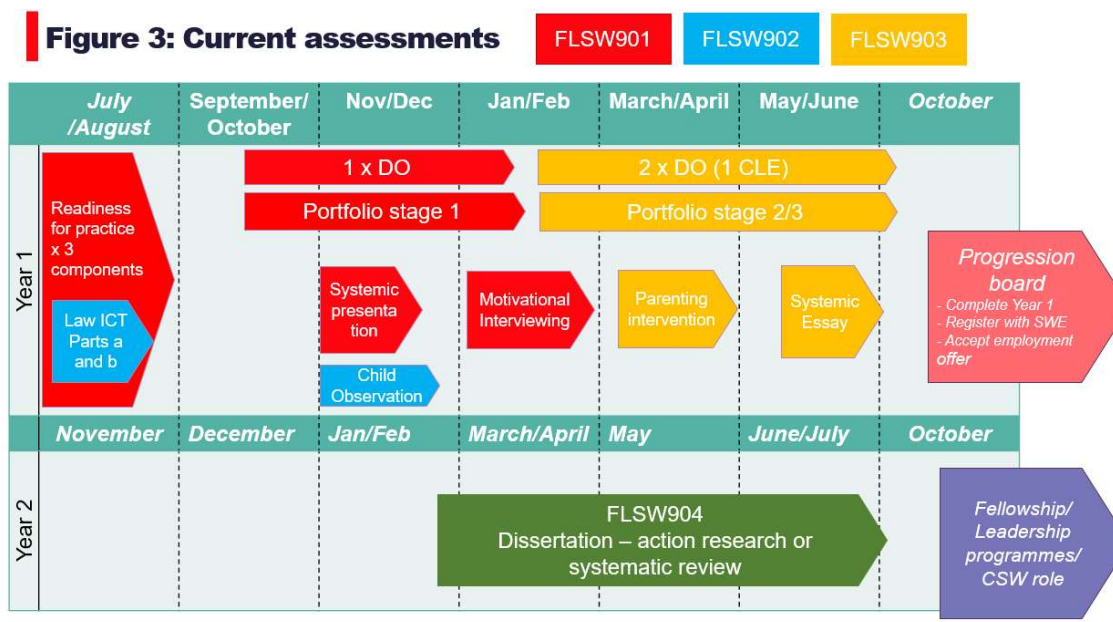
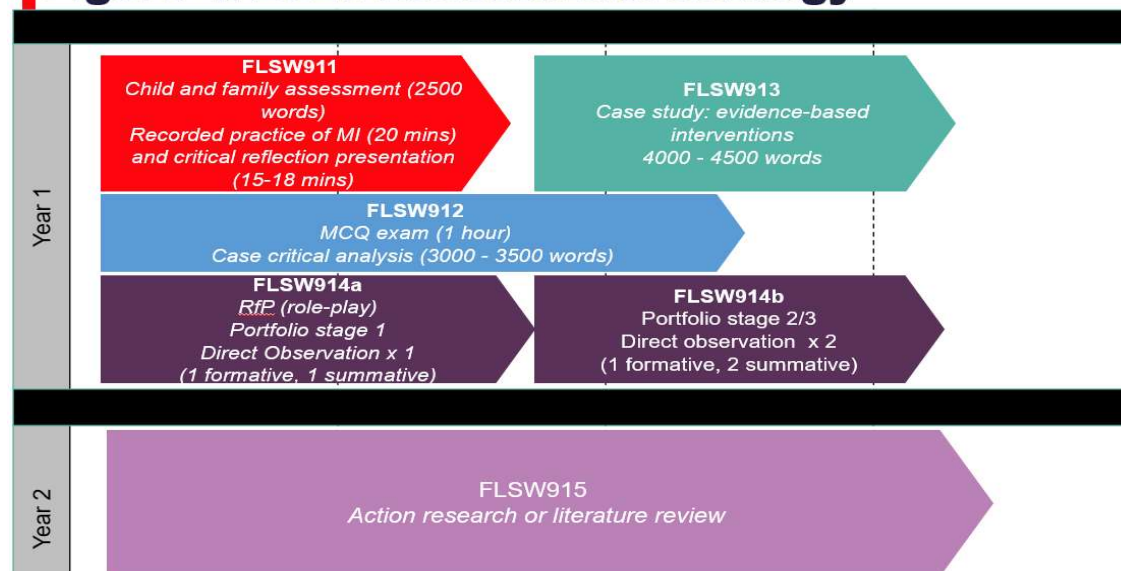


Figure 4: 2023 Assessment strategy



Standards impacted by curriculum refresh

Following review by inspectors, the following was identified:

1. For all standards with the exception of 1.6, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.12 the course provider showed that there was a continuation of their ability to meet the education and training standards via their current course model.
2. Standards 1.6, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.8, 4.9 were directly impacted by the changes and required evidence to satisfy inspectors that the course provider would continue to meet the standards. They related to information sharing during admissions, curriculum content, delivery and assessment.

Inspectors' review of impacted standards is summarised below and includes their recommendation as to whether standards continue to be met.

Standard 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.*

The conditional offer letter provides clear information and guidance in relation to the role and scope of social workers as well as Social Work England as the regulatory body. Applicants are provided with information in relation to course delivery and curriculum content through the course provider's website, this includes updated information regarding the curriculum refresh through updated module content. The bursary and finance policy, alongside supporting guidance, ensures that applicants are informed of costs associated with the course and potential funding options. The inspection team agreed that this standard continues to be met.

Standard 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.*

The inspection team were able to review a range of documentation in relation to this standard which included a comprehensive rationale for the proposed course changes. The course provider submitted a programme handbook, curriculum mapping form and module specifications which evidenced how the course meets the PCF's and Social Work England's professional standards. Students are also provided with clear explanations of the knowledge, skills and understanding they are expected to achieve by the end of the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard continues to be met.

Standard 4.3 *Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and human rights and legislative frameworks.*

The recruitment and admissions policy submitted by the course provider demonstrated how applicants with additional needs or disabilities are encouraged to apply to the programme and outlined the support available. In addition, the diversity strategy documentation outlined how the course provider is committed to widening participation and encouraging applications from a more diverse background.

The inspection team observed that the principles of EDI feature in the programme learning outcomes as well as within module outcomes. The overarching syllabus for the course has been

updated to include texts examining issues in relation to race and intersectionality and legislative frameworks and human rights documentation is central to module reading lists.

There was clear reference to the course providers commitment to racial diversity and inclusion through their programme handbook and links to their action plan available through the organisation's website. The inspection team agreed that this standard continues to be met.

Standard 4.4 *Ensure that the course is continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice.*

The inspection team acknowledged that the rationale for the curriculum refresh was rooted in this standard after acknowledging feedback from key stakeholders, reflecting on learning from safeguarding practice reviews and the impact of the pandemic on social work practice.

Documentary evidence submitted to support this standard included, terms of reference from the academic working group which includes course updates as a standing item, module specifications which directly reference recent research and outcomes and the details of scholarly activity that the course team are involved in. The inspection team also learned that the course provider employs three practice experts who contribute towards the three practice models to ensure that practice is evidence informed and current. The inspection team agreed that this standard continues to be met.

Standard 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.*

The course provider submitted a programme overview alongside an assessment mapping form which detailed new proposed assessments, with learning outcomes aligned to Social Work England professional standards. The course provider highlighted that the curriculum changes had been approved by Lancaster University as the validating body who are responsible for overseeing quality and standards on the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard continues to be met.

Standard 4.9 *Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course.*

The programme handbook submitted by the university details how students progress is assessed, including details of moderation. Within documentary evidence, it was possible to see the route of progression for a student on the course and within module information it was possible to view syllabus rules and prior modules that must have been passed to allow progression to the next stage. The inspection team were able to see details of assessment methods used on the course.

As referenced within standard 4.8, all assessments are aligned to module outcomes which are mapped against Social Work England's Professional Standards. The inspection team agreed that this standard continues to be met.

Standard 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.*

The course provider submitted a range of documentary evidence to support this standard including the programme handbook and module specifications (which detail the assessment strategies in place). Academic assessments are marked by practice tutors or external markers. There is a defined pass rate and all markers use the marking matrix provided. Within practice, students continue to be observed by consultant social workers and are formally observed via a summative assessment called 'direct observations of practice' which are marked against the Donald Forrester Marking Matrix.

A new addition to the course is that Prior to commencing placements participants are assessed against BASW's PCF readiness for practice domains via a readiness for practice scenario assessment. This is carried out by their consultant social worker.

The course provider adopts Lancaster University's assessment regulations, including the process for examination boards to consider results and student profiles for progression and award. The board of examiners include internal examiners who are members of Frontline and Lancaster university academic staff and external examiners. The inspection team agreed that this standard continues to be met.

Recruitment and Admissions 2:2 Degree Classification Pilot

The rationale for the degree classification pilot is outlined as follows;

- Local Authorities are our partners and they have expressed they have skilled people who cannot currently access the programme due to the 2:2 requirement.
- The DfE tender for cohort 2024 specifies that a 2:2 will be the new entry requirement. This 'pilot' will allow us to 'test' the new requirement in readiness for this change.

Standards impacted by degree classification pilot

Following review by inspectors, the following was identified:

1. For all standards with the exception of 1.1 and 1.6 the course provider showed that there was a continuation of their ability to meet the education and training standards via their current course model.
2. Standards 1.1 and 1.6 were directly impacted by the changes and required evidence to satisfy inspectors that the course provider would continue to meet the standards. They related to admissions processes, support for candidates and information sharing.

Inspectors review of impacted standards is summarised below and includes their recommendation as to whether standards continue to be met.

Standard 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 capacity to meet the academic standards; and*
- iv. have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes*

Documentary evidence submitted by the course provider included reference to the recruitment and admissions policy and areas of the organisations website. In all places, documentation clearly reference candidates' ability to apply to the course with a 2:2 undergraduate degree and 2 years employment in a local authority working in a role in children and families' social work. This has been reflected in the recruitment and admissions policy as well as via the organisations website. The inspection team were also able to review some of the tasks used in interviews to ensure that the course provider was able to make a sound judgement in relation to their experience, knowledge of social work and ability to meet the academic and professional standards. Inspectors recognised that the introduction of the 2:2 undergraduate degree was welcomed by employers and that academic achievement was underpinned by professional experience. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard continues to be met.

Standard 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*

There is clear reference to the changes to admission criteria which are evidenced through the course providers website and in supporting documentation. The conditional offer letter provides clear information and guidance in relation to the role and scope of social workers as well as Social Work England as the regulatory body. Applicants are provided with information in relation to course delivery and curriculum content through the course providers website, this includes updated information regarding the curriculum refresh through updated module content. The bursary and finance policy, alongside supporting guidance, ensures that applicants are informed of costs associated with the course and potential funding options. The inspection team agreed that this standard continues to be met.

Further evidence submitted by the provider

In addition to the evidence provided to support the course meeting the standards based on proposed changes, the provider has also provided additional evidence against the standards outlined below. The evidence against these standards includes updated course documentation and examples of good practice but does not directly impact whether the standards continue to be met.

- 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.4, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.10, 4.11, 4.13

Conclusions

The inspectors are recommending that as all standards continue to be met, the course change is approved.

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Met</u>	<u>Not Met – condition applied</u>	<u>Recommendation given</u>
<u>Admissions</u>			
1.1 Confirm on entry to the course, via a holistic/multi-dimensional assessment process, that applicants: i. have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards ii. can demonstrate that they have a good command of English iii. have the capability to meet academic standards; and iv. have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.	☒	☐	☐
1.2 Ensure that applicants' prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.4 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes criminal conviction checks.	☒	☐	☐
1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	☒	☐	☐
1.6 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.	☒	☐	☐
<u>Learning environment</u>			
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:	☒	☐	☐

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Met</u>	<u>Not Met – condition applied</u>	<u>Recommendation given</u>
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
<u>Course governance, management and quality</u>			
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	☒	☐	☐

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Met</u>	<u>Not Met – condition applied</u>	<u>Recommendation given</u>
standards. This should include necessary consents and ensure placement providers have contingencies in place to deal with practice placement breakdown.			
3.3 Ensure that placement providers have the necessary policies and procedures in relation to students' health, wellbeing and risk, and the support systems in place to underpin these.	☒	☐	☐
3.4 Ensure that employers are involved in elements of the course, including but not limited to the management and monitoring of courses and the allocation of practice education.	☒	☐	☐
3.5 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.	☒	☐	☐
3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes 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.	☒	☐	☐
<u>Curriculum and assessment</u>			
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	☒	☐	☐

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Met</u>	<u>Not Met – condition applied</u>	<u>Recommendation given</u>
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.	☒	☐	☐
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	☒	☐	☐

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Met</u>	<u>Not Met – condition applied</u>	<u>Recommendation given</u>
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.	☒	☐	☐
<u>Supporting students</u>			
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Met</u>	<u>Not Met – condition applied</u>	<u>Recommendation given</u>
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	☒	☐	☐
<u>Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register</u>			
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor's degree with honours in social work.	☒	☐	☐

