

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Bedfordshire

Course approval:

BSc. (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship
Step Up Postgraduate Diploma

Inspection dates: 19th – 22nd July 2022

Report date:	21 September 2022
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	14 February 2023
Date conditions met and approved:	11 May 2023

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Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

9. During this time a draft plan for the inspection is developed and shared with the education provider, to make sure it is achievable at the point of inspection.
10. Once the inspectors and officer are satisfied that an inspection can take place, this is usually undertaken over a three to four day visit to the education provider. We then draft a report setting out what we found during the inspection and if and how our findings demonstrate that the course meets our standards. 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 of Inspection

15. The University of Bedfordshire's BSc. (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship and PG Dip Professional Social Work Practice Step Up course were 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	UBER2
Course provider	University of Bedfordshire
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	BSc. (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship PG Dip Professional Social Work Practice Step Up
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	30
Date of inspection	19 th July – 22 nd July 2022
Inspection team	Helen Challis, Education Quality Assurance Officer Priscilla M (Lay Inspector) Louise Hernon (Registrant Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Approval outcome	Approved with conditions

Language

16. In this document we describe University of Bedfordshire as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the BSc. (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship and the Step Up programme as 'the course'.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from Tuesday 19 July 2022 to Friday 22 July 2022. 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 students from different year groups including student representatives. Discussions included their experience as students, their experiences whilst on placement, the quality of guidance and support equality issues, access to resources, support during covid, and other issues relating to their course.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members including course lecturers, course coordinators, admissions staff, members of the senior management team and members of the admissions teams.

Inspectors also had discussions with support staff from central services within the university such as student support, health and wellbeing, library services, widening participation and pastoral care.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with three people who are members of the Experts by Experience group. Discussions with the group included their experience to date of involvement with the course, the range of activities they participate in, their recruitment into the group and training they have received for their roles.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including local authorities and independent contractors. Discussions included the involvement of

placement providers in development of the courses and provision of practice educators, as well as the experience of practice educators themselves.

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 documentation provided by the university prior to the inspection indicated a comprehensive and robust admissions process was in place.

26. During the inspection the support staff and students confirmed that support is available to applicants during the admissions process and examples were given to the inspection team of support for applicants with disabilities.

27. The inspection team was therefore satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

28. The applicants prior relevant experience is assessed via the interview process and the application itself.

29. The course team provided further confirmation of the process and provided an example of accreditation of prior experience learning (APEL) being used.

30. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

31. The inspection team were satisfied that there is evidence of clear involvement from employer partners, people with lived experience and staff in the admissions process.

32. However, although there is evidence that people with lived experience are involved in the admissions process, the inspection team was concerned that they do not receive sufficient training to ensure they are equal partners in the process. For example, members of the group have not been provided with equality, diversity and inclusion training and more specifically training in unconscious bias, support with questioning techniques etc.

33. The inspection team therefore considered that whilst the standard is met as there is evidence of involvement, this could be improved upon by ensuring that training and support is available to people involved in the admissions process.

34. The inspection team agreed that a recommendation be made that the university consider implementing sufficient training for people with lived experience involved in the admissions process. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.4

35. The university provided documentary evidence in the form of clear policies prior to the inspection. This includes a pre-course declaration which invites applicants to disclose any issues of concern, previous involvement with social workers, or disciplinary sanctions. Following their meeting with students and the admissions team, the inspection team was satisfied that the suitability of prospective students is checked prior to starting the course. A safeguarding panel and process is also in place to follow up on and make considered and evidenced decisions if issues are identified during the DBS check.

36. The inspection team therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

37. The inspection team met with the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) lead during the inspection.

38. The university provided additional evidence of the course implementation plan which showed where EDI data had led to actions being implemented.

39. It was noted by the inspection team that for the Step up course there had been an improvement in relation to the diversity of students as they now have over 25% BAME students.

40. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

41. The documentary evidence provided by the university indicated that there is sufficient information available to applicants prior to enrolment. The information is available through a number of sources including from the university, the Department for Education (DFE), through keep in touch days, assessment centres, and that it was clear that information is available to applicants before an offer is even made.

42. The inspection team noted that in relation to the apprenticeship course the weblink still refers to the HCPC as the regulator which is incorrect. The inspection team were concerned that any incorrect information relating to the regulator needed to be amended whether this be on the university webpages or any other relevant documentation referencing the HCPC as the social work regulator. The inspection team therefore require the university to take the appropriate steps to ensure that this information is updated to reflect Social Work England as the regulator of social work.

43. The inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 1.6.

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

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

45. The university provided a copy of the placement handbook which showed that opportunities available for on-the-job learning are clearly outlined.

46. The inspection team discussed with employers, tutors, regional leads and students the issues around ensuring the contrast of placements and the challenges that this has brought. There is a teaching partnership in place where these issues are discussed. It was clear to the inspection team that robust discussions between the course team and the Teaching Partnership about placements to take account of any issues relating to the sufficiency of practice educators and high workloads.

47. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

48. The inspection team agreed that the documentary evidence outlined a clear process for learning agreement meetings cross referenced to the professional capabilities framework (PCF) domains.

49. The opportunities for learning whilst on placement are clearly outlined in the placement and mentor handbook and the Learning Opportunities Chart (LOC) is a key practice learning document which identifies the learning opportunities in a practice learning setting that will enable students to meet the professional capabilities.

50. The mentor also has a key role in ensuring apprentices receive learning opportunities during placement. The process of continuous review of placements indicated a robust process. This was further triangulated with students who confirmed that there is a robust process of review of placements and of students' experience of placement through discussions held during tripartite meetings and also through recording and reflection of experiences in reflective logs.

51. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

52. The university provided documentation prior to the inspection with clear policies and procedures evidenced in relation to supervision and support arrangements for students on placement and the roles of various staff in supporting students.

53. During the inspection this was discussed with students, practice educators, employer partners, and the course team who confirmed that these were in place. Students spoke positively of the support and supervision provided during periods of lockdown due to the pandemic.

54. The inspection team therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

55. Prior to the inspection the inspection team received documentation evidencing that there are learning agreement meetings, midway meetings and supervisions in place.

56. The learning agreement meetings set out expectations and the responsibilities and role of the apprentice coordinator who is a key part of the support arrangements for apprentices and students. The learning opportunities chart (LOC) is also an important part of ensuring placements are appropriate for apprentices.

57. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

58. The university provided clear documentation prior to the inspection of the pre-placement handbook which is contributed to by the student, the apprentice coordinator and a person with lived experience.

59. The direct practice workbook outlines how students prepare for direct practice and requires self-reflection by the student on practice readiness before being assessed as being ready for direct practice. It also includes performance feedback and an understanding of social work intervention models.

60. The inspection team met with the course team who provided further detail around the assessment for direct practice and confirmed that there is an assessment centre and work-based audit that takes place to ensure students are ready to undertake direct practice prior to placement.

61. The inspection team therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

62. There is a process in place to ensure practice educators are appropriately qualified for their role and they are required to complete an application form.

63. The inspection team agreed that the process was clear and could see that there is access to development opportunities and training for practice educators. There is also peer support available to enable them to learn from each other and to support each other. Practice educators spoke positively of working with the university.

64. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

65. The documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection showed that there are appropriate whistleblowing policies and procedures in place and that these are an agenda item in the mid-way meeting.

66. The inspection team also noted that students are asked not just to read the policies but to demonstrate their understanding of them.

67. There are also various opportunities available to ensure apprentices are aware of how to raise concerns, for example through the learning agreement meeting and mid-way meeting. The apprentice coordinator has key role in carrying out checks regarding any concerns raised by students.

68. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

69. Documentation provided of CVs and different mapping documents.

70. There is a clear system for quality assurance and oversight of academic standards and delineation of roles and responsibilities in the Quality Handbook.

71. The inspection team were therefore satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

72. The evidence provided by the university indicated that there are clear processes for approving and reviewing placements. The placement agreement covers all relevant areas of consents and processes for when a placement breaks down.

73. The inspection team met with practice educators, students, and with course team members who clarified and provided examples of support for students who were struggling and the actions and outcomes taken.

74. The inspection team was satisfied that there is a joint responsibility for placements with the employer partners and this reassured the inspection team that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

75. The university provided evidence of the policies and procedures in place to ensure that students are supported on placement by a practice educator but also with support from mentors.

76. The inspection team heard several examples of students being supported whilst on placement. The support worked well between the placement providers and the university with positive outcomes for the students.

77. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

78. The documentary evidence received prior to the inspection confirmed that there is a teaching partnership with clear terms of reference that set out its purpose and the role of members, and also considers labour market information and data. The teaching partnership includes local councils, service users and a voluntary organisation.

79. The minutes from meetings indicate that there is good joint working on areas such as admissions, course content, data collection for workforce planning and the establishment of start and finish task groups.

80. The inspection team was therefore satisfied that the development and review of the course is set up to include employers and that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

81. The documentary evidence indicates that there are clear processes for quality review including student feedback, annual course and unit reviews, involvement of people with lived experience in course planning, and annual review of placements. This was confirmed during the inspection.

82. The QAPL procedure is outlined in the placement handbook and employer partners and the people with lived experience group provide ongoing feedback. The practice learning team are involved in the quality assurance of placements and mentors and apprentice coordinators all play an active role in quality monitoring.

83. The inspection team was satisfied that employer partners and students have an input into quality improvement processes. However, the involvement of people with lived experience is ad hoc, and there was insufficient evidence of the impact of their input. The inspection team therefore feel it is necessary for the university to formalise the involvement of people with lived experience and ensure that they have structured input to improvements to the course.

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

Standard 3.6

85. The teaching partnership provides joint planning and support for sufficient practice educator numbers. It was noted by the inspection team that apprentices are largely from the statutory sector and are provided placements by their employer.

86. There is evidence of consideration of practice placements by the teaching partnership who reviews the labour market and data and placement opportunities.

87. The inspection team discussed this with the course team and employer partners and were satisfied that appropriate discussions take place amongst the relevant stakeholders to underpin this planning.

88. It was also noted that the step up and apprenticeship students are seen to be staying within the authority that sponsor them.

89. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

90. The inspection team were provided with CVs that outlined the relevant experience of staff. The course lead is not a registered social worker but overall professional responsibility for the course lies with another member of staff who is a registered social worker.

91. The inspection team were therefore satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

92. The university provided evidence prior to the inspection of the number of and qualifications of their staff. The CVs indicate that the staff have clear qualifications and are involved in research.

93. During the inspection the inspection team also heard from members of the course team with examples of their research and other CPD activities and staff confirmed they are given time to undertake CPD.

94. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

95. The inspection team were provided with evidence that there is an analysis of student performance and progression, and that the outcomes data was also analysed with respect to particular student cohorts.

96. The university analyses data about retention, progression and achievement and there is action planning for improvements. It was noted that the external examiners also review the achievement data.

97. During the inspection, further examples were given of how the university have used data to inform the quality enhancement plan.

98. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

99. There is a policy for the allocation of time for continuous professional development (CPD) in place and the additional evidence provided by the university around CPD showed a list of activities that staff are involved in such as research, professional practice, and courses attended.

100. During the inspection, the course team provided further evidence of their involvement in current practice and gave examples of this such as vice-chairing a fostering panel and consultancy work.

101. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

102. The inspection team agreed that the documentation provided outlined evidence of clear mapping documents which are mapped to the professional standards, PCF, knowledge and skills statement (KSS) and also to apprenticeship behaviours.

103. The inspection team heard from students who confirmed the professional standards are embedded throughout the course and referred to throughout.

104. The inspection team was therefore satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

105. The evidence provided by the university indicated that there are numerous structures in place to ensure that views and feedback are collected from various stakeholders including students and people with lived experience who inform the design and delivery of the curriculum.

106. There is a learning partnership with local authorities and the minutes of the learning partnership meetings evidence that there is input from local employers in the teaching of the course.

107. There is an Experts by Experience group which represents people with lived experience. Members of the group are involved in the formulating of the interview process and in the practice assessment panel.

108. The inspection team was satisfied that employer partners and students have a voice but the involvement of people with lived experience as per the comments in standard 3.5 is ad hoc, and that the connection between their input and what has been changed was not evident. The inspection team therefore feel it is necessary for the university to formalise the involvement of people with lived experience and ensure that they have structured input to the design, development and review of the course.

109. The inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 4.2. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that conditions are appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standards, and the inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 4.3

110. The inspection team agreed following a review of the evidence that the course is designed to be inclusive, and that good practice is reflected in the university such as the consideration given to the needs of care leavers, amongst others. This demonstrates that the course leaders are thinking beyond the typical barriers to learning and achievement. The support for students with disabilities was also reflected in the guidance given to students about the course.

111. During the inspection the university outlined the things that they are trying to develop in this area, such as various groups focusing on a range of issues relating to BME and LGBTQ+ and decolonising the curriculum.

112. The support team gave examples of reasonable adjustments that have been provided for students, such as software that is available to download documents in braille.

113. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

114. The university provided documentary evidence of the continual reviews and quality improvements embedded in the course structures. The teaching partnership minutes

showed that questions are raised in relation to course delivery. An example was given regarding the impact of research and legislation on new topics such as contextual safeguarding. There are also practitioner led units within the course.

115. The inspection team met with the librarian who talked about updating resources, and in particular an example was given in relation to the human rights act.

116. The inspection team was therefore satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

117. The documentary evidence indicated that there are links between theory and practice clearly outlined in placement and other handbooks, and students are encouraged to reflect on practice and theory during placements. The placement workbooks and reflective logs clearly and specifically require students to reflect on their learning and in particular on how theory and practice integrate.

118. The inspection team also spoke to students and the course team this further confirmed the link to theory and practice.

119. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

120. There is a module on inter-professional working and the practice learning team documentation has a section to tick if the placement offers opportunities to work with other professions. However, the inspection team noted that whilst opportunities are available on placement this is not monitored.

121. The inspection team heard during the inspection that there are plans to improve the interprofessional learning opportunities available to students and it was acknowledged by the university as an area for improvement. The university advised that they are looking at introducing a simulation suite and skills days to bring professions together.

122. The inspection team agreed that there needs to be planned opportunities for students to meet with other professions rather than this being on an ad hoc basis. The inspection team acknowledged that the university have indicated what they would like to achieve in relation to interprofessional learning and working but agree that this needs to be implemented by the university to ensure that students are given the opportunity to work with and learn from other professions.

123. The inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 4.6. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that conditions are appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standards, and the inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would

not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 4.7

124. The university provided documentary evidence prior to the inspection that indicated a clear course workload and that the course hours appear to be sufficient and indicated in the summary of learning hours for each unit.

125. The inspection team therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

126. The assessment strategy showed that student achievement is measured and assessed in different ways and that the assessments are robust. There are clear criteria for the expected learning and the grading structure is available in the assessment handbook and is cross referenced to the PCF.

127. The assignments are second marked and there is an external examiner, and plagiarism software is also used.

128. The inspection team met with students and staff who confirmed what the inspection team had seen from the documentary evidence prior to the inspection.

129. The inspection team was satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

130. As per the comments in relation to standard 4.8, the assessments are mapped to the curriculum and the inspection team agreed that the submission dates for assignments are appropriately spaced.

131. The inspection team therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

132. The university provided documentary evidence of a clear model of feedback in the assessment handbook with set timelines are given for the provision of feedback and mentors having a key role in providing feedback.

133. During the inspection the students confirmed that the feedback that they received was helpful for improving their work.

134. The inspection team was satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

135. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed documentation including staff CVs, and External Examiner information. The inspection team were satisfied that staff involved in the course had the appropriate qualifications, experience and skills.

136. It was noted by the inspection team that the current external examiner was at the end of their term of appointment and no replacement had been appointed at the time of the inspection.

137. The inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 4.11. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that conditions are appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standards, and the inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

138. A previous external examiner report suggested that they had not met with students. The inspection team felt that this is important as part of that role and agreed that a recommendation be made that the new external examiner should meet with the staff and students.

139. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.12

140. There is a clearly documented process for apprentices to be observed in practice prior to placements and during placements there are several direct observations of practice; including by the practice educator and people with lived experience.

141. The inspection team agreed that the tripartite meetings demonstrate that there are systems in place to manage student progression.

142. The inspection team therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

143. The university provided documentary evidence prior to the inspection of the specific units which address research skills and literature reviews. There is also a feedback form for the people with lived experience which is included in the placement assessment panels.

144. The inspection team also heard further evidence of the evidence informed approach to practice from the course team and students.

145. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

146. The documentary evidence indicated that students have access to counselling, a careers advice service and occupational health services. There was also mention of a new occupational health provider being commissioned and the curriculum change programme includes a commitment to UKK Step change and a mental health charter.

147. The inspection team met with the pastoral and academic support staff who confirmed that the support available to students is comprehensive and robust, and gave examples of how they supported students.

148. They also advised of support from the study skills centre, that there was specialist software available for students with dyslexia, and an interpreter for British Sign Language. An example of the learning from staff to further develop their resources was given and as a result they now include subtitles on all their learning resources.

149. Students confirmed that they felt well supported by the pastoral services provided

150. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

151. As stated above under standard 5.1, there is a study skills centre and there are processes for students who need to take leave from the course. Support is also available from the apprenticeship coordinator, mentor, practice educators and on-site supervisors.

152. The support staff confirmed that a range of support is there to support learning and study skills, including academic writing, and that students are able to access one to one sessions for support.

153. Students confirmed that they felt well supported by the study skills centre and by the library services.

154. The inspection team were satisfied that the support available was accessible and as such that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

155. The documentary evidence provided indicated that there are annual health and good character declarations completed by students and that there is a fitness to practise process in place.

156. The inspection team noted that whilst there is a process for safeguarding concerns and examples were given of the university taking appropriate actions in these instances, it was not clear where responsibility lay for ensuring the appropriate steps were taken nor what the reporting lines are in relation to the process.

157. The inspection team had concerns over making sure it is clear who is responsible for this given the nature of the course, whether this be the employer or the university, and agreed that this needs clarifying through clearer documentation about the safeguarding process. For example, it should be clear who is responsible for referring concerns to the LADO where applicable.

158. The inspection team is therefore recommending that a condition is set against standard 5.3. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that conditions are appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standards, and the inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 5.4

159. The documentary evidence showed that there are processes for identifying if reasonable adjustments are required for example, prior to interview, on health assessments and on learning agreements.

160. During the inspection examples were provided of reasonable adjustments and confirmation that support services are available for students and that this includes liaising with employers as well.

161. The inspection team therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

162. The university provided evidence prior to the inspection that students are provided with clear information about the end point assessment and that there is a comprehensive apprenticeship handbook and assessment handbook available to students.

163. The inspection team noted that a high percentage of students go on to be placed in the workplace where they have had a placement, and that there is a comprehensive ASYE plan in place to identify any gaps in learning.

164. The inspection team was satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

165. The documentary evidence indicated that all parts of the course are mandatory, and expectations are clear in the course handbook and learning agreements.

166. It was noted that both courses have an extra level of scrutiny from the DFE and the apprenticeship in relation to mandatory attendance of the course.

167. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

168. There are processes for feedback in the assessment handbook which sets out the strategy and assignment briefs and feedback on assignments is available from a variety of sources throughout the course.

169. During the inspection the students confirmed that the feedback that they received was helpful for improving their work.

170. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

171. The documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection by the university detailed the process in place for academic appeals and the inspection team were satisfied that this process was effective and as a result this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

172. As the qualifying courses are a BSc (Hons) social work apprenticeship and a postgraduate diploma professional social work practice step up programme, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcomes

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

BSc Conditions

Conditions for approval are set if there are areas of a course that do not currently meet our standards. Conditions must be met by the education provider within the agreed timescales.

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 1.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that the website and any other relevant documentation referencing the HCPC as the social work regulator is updated to reflect Social Work England as the regulator of social work.	28 March 2023	Paragraph 41
2	Standards 3.5 and 4.2	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates a formal process to effectively include people with lived experience in all the following: 1. the design, ongoing development, and review of the curriculum. 2. The regular and effective monitoring, evaluation, and improvement systems in place.	28 March 2023	Paragraph 81 Paragraph 105
3	Standard 4.6	The education provider will provide evidence of the incorporation of planned opportunities for students to work with and learn from other professionals in the course to support multidisciplinary working.	28 March 2023	Paragraph 120

4	Standard 4.11	The education provider will provide evidence to confirm the appointment of the new external examiner.	28 March 2023	Paragraph 135
5	Standard 5.3	The education provider will provide documentary evidence in relation to the safeguarding process which clearly states where the responsibilities lie for ensuring the process is followed, the reporting lines and escalation process.	28 March 2023	Paragraph 155

BSc Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	1.3	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider implementing sufficient training for people with lived experience involved in the admissions process.	Paragraph 31
2	4.11	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider ensuring that the external examiners meet with staff and students.	Paragraph 138

PG Dip Conditions

Conditions for approval are set if there are areas of a course that do not currently meet our standards. Conditions must be met by the education provider within the agreed timescales.

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 1.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that the website and any other relevant documentation referencing the HCPC as the social work regulator is updated to	28 March 2023	Paragraph 41

		reflect Social Work England as the regulator of social work.		
2	Standards 3.5 and 4.2	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates a formal process to effectively include people with lived experience in all the following: 1. the design, ongoing development, and review of the curriculum. 2. The regular and effective monitoring, evaluation, and improvement systems in place.	28 March 2023	Paragraph 81 Paragraph 105
3	Standard 4.6	The education provider will provide evidence of the incorporation of planned opportunities for students to work with and learn from other professionals in the course to support multidisciplinary working.	28 March 2023	Paragraph 120
4	Standard 4.11	The education provider will provide evidence to confirm the appointment of the new external examiner recruitment.	28 March 2023	Paragraph 135
5	Standard 5.3	The education provider will provide documentary evidence in relation to the safeguarding process which clearly states where the responsibilities lie for ensuring the process is followed, the reporting lines and escalation process.	28 March 2023	Paragraph 155

PG Dip Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	1.3	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider implementing sufficient training for people with lived experience involved in the admissions process.	Paragraph 31

2	4.11	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider ensuring that the external examiners meet with staff and students.	Paragraph 138
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Annex 1: Education and training standards summary for both courses

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
Learning environment			
2.1 Ensure that students spend at least 200 days (including up to 30 skills days) gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. Each student will have: i) placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and ii) a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.	☒	☐	☐
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	☒	☐	☐
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	☒	☐	☐
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	☒	☐	☐
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.	☒	☐	☐

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

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

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☐
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.	☐	☒	☒
4.12 Ensure that there are systems to manage students' progression, with input from a range of people, to inform decisions about their progression including via direct observation of practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.13 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation.	☒	☐	☐
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: I. confidential counselling services; II. careers advice and support; and III. occupational health services	☒	☐	☐
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☒	☐	☐
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☐	☒	☐

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

Regulator decision

Approved with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of BSc Social Work Apprenticeship and PG Dip Social Work Step Up 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	1.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that the website and any other relevant documentation referencing the HCPC as the social work regulator is updated to reflect Social Work England as the regulator of social work.	Condition met
2	3.5 & 4.2	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates a formal process to effectively include people with lived experience in all the following: 1. the design, ongoing development, and review of the curriculum. 2. The regular and effective monitoring, evaluation, and improvement systems in place.	Condition met
3	4.6	The education provider will provide evidence of the incorporation of planned opportunities for students to work with and learn from other professionals in the course to support multidisciplinary working.	Condition met
4	4.11	The education provider will provide evidence to confirm the appointment of the new external examiner.	Condition met
5	5.3	The education provider will provide documentary evidence in relation to the safeguarding process which clearly states where the	Condition met

		responsibilities lie for ensuring the process is followed, the reporting lines and escalation process.	
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Findings

This conditions review was undertaken as a result of conditions set during course approval as outlined in the original inspection report above.

After the review of the documentary evidence, the inspection team are satisfied that all of the conditions set against the approval of the BSc. Social Work Apprenticeship and the PG Dip Social Work (Step Up) courses are now met.

In relation to the condition set against standard 1.6 the education provider submitted evidence to show that their website had been updated and reference to HCPC removed.

In relation to the condition set against standard 3.5 and 4.2 the education provider submitted an action plan which includes co-production of teaching and learning, and involvement of people with lived experience of social work in curriculum development and review.

In relation to the condition set against standard 4.6 the education provider submitted evidence of joint learning and planned opportunities for students to work with other disciplines and to be taught by people from other professions.

In relation to the condition set against standard 4.11 the education provider submitted evidence to show the appointment of an external examiner.

In relation to the condition set against standard 5.3 the education provider submitted a handbook as evidence of the safeguarding process which clearly states where the responsibilities lie for ensuring the process is followed, the reporting lines and escalation process.

Conclusion

The inspection team is recommending that as the conditions have been met, the course be approved.

Regulator decision

Conditions met.