

Education quality assurance – Course change review report

Report date:

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Documentary review details

Inspection ID	USU1267
Course provider	University of Suffolk
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Course name	BA (Hons) Social Work (Full time and part time) & BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship (full time)
Mode of study	Full time
Proposed first intake	01/09/2023
Maximum student cohort	BA (Hons) Social Work - 25 BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship - 20
Review type	Course change
Review team	Priscilla McGuire – Lay inspector Deborah Brown – Registrant inspector Daisy Bragadini – Education quality assurance officer
Review team recommendation	Approval
Regulator decision	Approval

About the review

The University of Suffolk is proposing changes to their BA (Hons) Social Work and BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship courses from September 2023. The changes they propose are mainly in response to the university wide move to a block and blend pedagogical approach. They propose to deliver the courses at level 4 and 5 using a model of 4 nine week block structures with a full day's teaching with 1 year long module. At level 6 they plan to have 1 block of teaching with 2, year long modules. Some teaching and learning will take place using an integrated approach with learners from both courses, and some will be separate. This

approach will extend the teaching and learning from September to June for undergraduate students and until July for apprentices.

The course provider has used the implementation of this approach to revise other aspects of the courses which have resulted in a proposal to update all modules, assessments and credits. It also includes a redesign of the final year modules for the apprentices.

The courses are due to be inspected in June 2024 as part of the 3rd year of the reapproval cycle. However, these changes were assessed as being significant in relation to their scope across different areas of the courses which required a course review process to consider them prior to their inspection.

Findings

The university identified a number of education and training standards which were impacted by the proposed changes which included standards: 1.1; 1.2; 1.3; 2.5; 3.1; 3.6; 3.7; 3.8; 4.1; 4.2; 4.3; 4.4; 4.5; 4.6; 4.7; 4.8; 4.9; 4.11, and 5.2. They submitted evidence in relation to those standards and the inspection team requested additional evidence following their initial review of the course change evidence, which was provided.

In addition to the standards noted above by the university, the inspectors also identified others where questions were asked and further evidence was provided by the course team. The inspectors were satisfied that they were met. These included: standards 1.4; 1.5 and 1.6.

Evidence reviewed by the inspectors included detail and commentary within the education and training mapping form and also within the Developmental Commentary document which covered the details of the changes being proposed in relation to: Ethos and values; content; delivery; assessment; skills and knowledge; stakeholders; quality and governance; sustainability, and rationale.

1.1 Confirm on entry to the course, via a holistic/multidimensional assessment process, that applicants:

- have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards;
- can demonstrate that they have a good command of English;
- have the capability to meet academic standards; and
- have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.

The inspectors were provided with evidence which illustrated the entry requirements for the courses, narrative evidence within the standards mapping document and an apprentice job description. They concluded that the standard was met.

1.2 Ensure that applicants' prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.

In relation to this standard the inspectors reviewed evidence which regulated recognition of prior learning and the apprentice job description, along with information within the education and training mapping form about how prior relevant experience is considered. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.

Narrative outlining the admissions process and stakeholder involvement was provided along with detail within the Developmental Commentary. This illustrated how people with lived experience of social work are involved in the admissions process. The inspectors agreed this standard was met.

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.

A review of the Preparation for Practice Module was undertaken as part of these changes which included the module aims, learning outcomes, content, delivery and assessments. The inspectors were provided with the detail included within the Developmental Commentary and the new module specifications for Preparation for Social Work Practice. The inspectors agreed this standard was met.

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.

The inspectors were provided with the strategy for the University of Suffolk's Transforming Lives and Our Region, Strategy and Vision 2020-2030, the Suffolk and Norfolk Social Work Teaching Partnership's Strategic Plan 2023-2025, the course handbook, the Developmental Commentary document, and evidence in relation to quality assurance processes. The inspectors were informed of recent staff changes including in relation to senior managers and course leader roles. Various team meetings and forums for staff and students were outlined as well as roles and responsibilities provided for lecturer posts being recruited to. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of local/regional placement capacity.

Within the narrative in the standards mapping document, the inspectors were provided with detail that the university had won the bid for Suffolk County Council Social Work Apprenticeship provision for 72 social work apprentices over 3 years. This included an option to

extend this for a further 2 years and 132 apprentices. The course provider proposes to have 18 apprentices in 2023 and 30 by 2025. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

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.

The inspectors were informed of the changes to the course leader for both courses from September 2023 who will also hold the role as lead social worker and is registered. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

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.

In relation to this standard the inspectors were provided with narrative evidence about the changes to the staff team since 2019 which was included within the mapping document and the Developmental Commentary document. The course provider described a reduction in the staffing team from 8 members of full and part time staff, to 5, with a further 2 resignations tendered more recently. The course provider gave assurances that 2 full time lecturers were in the process of being recruited, with one already having been recruited successfully. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

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 course provider provided the Learning Outcomes Mapping Template 2023-24, the module specifications for 2023-24, a draft timetable and the University of Suffolk's Block and Blend course design information. The course learning outcomes are mapped to the professional standards and the modules are mapped to the Professional Capabilities Framework. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

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.

In relation to this standard the course provider submitted feedback from consultation groups and the Design Event Day from May 2023, the student voice forum and the apprentice development day from April 2023. They also provided detail about the feedback processes in place with Suffolk County Council. The Developmental Commentary document provided further detail about the involvement of people with lived experience of social work and stakeholders, in the courses. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

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

The course provider submitted the Developmental Commentary document in relation to this standard and the narrative detail included in relation to the ethos and values and the blended learning approach. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

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

The inspectors reviewed the CVs of academic staff involved on the course and detail within the Developmental Commentary documents which provided information about how the course provider updates their courses. Further detailed evidence was requested and provided about the work the course team are undertaking in relation to decolonising the curriculum. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

4.5 Ensure that the integration of theory and practice is central to the course.

The course provider provided information about the Practitioners into Teaching initiative through the teaching partnership and the work undertaken by practice educators and people with lived experience of social work. The inspectors reviewed evidence within the module specifications and the course handbook's course aims and learning outcomes. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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.

The inspectors were provided with evidence in relation to the Integrated Care Days which were held alongside other professions, the draft timetable and details of the range of placement settings students and apprentices gain learning experiences from. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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.

The inspectors reviewed the Definitive Course Record for both courses and the draft timetable which illustrated the nature of the course delivery. Narrative evidence highlighted that the previous module design involved 12 weeks of half days of teaching. The newly proposed course delivery is for 6 weeks of full days, and 3 weeks for assessment. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

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 inspectors were provided with evidence which outlined that the assessments for both courses had been reviewed, with some being redesigned. The end point assessment for the apprenticeship course has been redesigned and now comprises of an Independent Project, rather than 2 final assessment modules. The inspectors were provided with the assessment schedules for both courses for 2023-24. Other changes included level and complexity of assessments, assessments involving integration of learning in some areas between the 2 courses, changes to summative assessments, changes to the word counts and assessment schedule and a redistribution of credit weighting across modules.

Further evidence reviewed by the inspectors included the course handbooks which also contained the assessment schedules, the Developmental Commentary document which detailed the changes to the assessments, and the University of Suffolk's Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment 2023-2030. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

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

In relation to this standard the inspectors were guided to the module specifications and course learning outcomes and learning and teaching activities outlined in the course handbook. Details within the Developmental Commentary on the delivery provided further information about the shift to block and blend teaching. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

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.

The course provider provided evidence of the new external examiners and the Developmental Commentary highlighted the recent changes to these posts. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.

In relation to this standard the course provider provided the overview of their new coaching model, the Personal Academic Coaching Approach, which is a university wide model with scheduled sessions in the timetables. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Conclusions

The inspectors are recommending that the changes be approved.

Regulator decision

Approval.