Inspection Report

Course provider: Edge Hill University

Course approval: MA Social Work (part-time)

Inspection dates: 7th to 9th July 2026

Report date:	15 July 2026
Inspector recommendation:	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	28 September 2026

Contents

Introduction 3

What we do 3

Summary of Inspection 5

- Language 5

Inspection 6

- Meetings with students 6
- Meetings with course staff 6
- Meeting with people with lived experience of social work 6
- Meetings with external stakeholders 6

Findings 7

- Standard one: Admissions 7
- Standard two: Learning environment 9
- Standard three: Course governance, management and quality 12
- Standard four: Curriculum assessment 16
- Standard five: Supporting students 21
- Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register 24

Proposed outcome 24

- Recommendations 24

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary 25

Regulator decision 32

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 2018[1], and the Social Work England (Education and Training) Rules 2019.

4. You can find further guidance on our course change, new course approval and annual monitoring processes on our website.

What we do

5. When an education provider wants to make a change to a course, or request the approval of a new course, they are asked to consider how their course meets our education and training standards and our professional standards and provide evidence of this to us.

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 appearance of bias in the approval process.

8. The inspectors complete an assessment of the evidence provided and advise the

[1] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2018/9780111170090/contents

officer if they have any queries that may be able to be addressed in advance of the inspection.

9. During this time a draft plan for the inspection is developed and shared with the education provider, to make sure it is achievable at the point of inspection.

10. Once the inspectors and officer are satisfied that an inspection can take place, this is usually undertaken over a three- or 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.

11. The inspectors may recommend in this report that the course is approved with conditions, without conditions or that it does not meet the criteria for 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 decision about the approval of the course.

13. The 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 it we decide the conditions are not met.

Summary of Inspection

15. Course details: Edge Hill University wish to run a part-time MA Social Work course commencing in September 2027.

Inspection ID	EHU522
Course provider	Edge Hill University
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	MA Social Work (part-time)
Mode of Study	Part-time
Maximum student cohort	20
Proposed first intake	September 2027
Date of inspection	7 – 9 July 2026
Inspection team	Caroline Reynolds, Education Quality Assurance Officer Chris Stogdon, Registrant Inspector Jo Benn, Lay Inspector

Language

16. In this document we describe Edge Hill University as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the MA Social Work (part-time) as 'the course' or 'the programme'.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 7 – 9 July 2026 at Edge Hill University's main campus in Ormskirk, Lancashire. 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 several MA Social Work (full-time) students across year one and year two of the programme, some of whom were student representatives, in addition to graduates. Discussions included their preparation for direct practice, placement experiences, assessments, and experiences of utilising academic and student support services.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members including members of the course team, the senior leadership team, staff involved in admissions, student support services, and practice-based learning and placement provision.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with three people with lived experience of social work. Discussions were around their involvement in admissions, the design, delivery and monitoring of programmes, assessing students, and how they had been involved in developing the part-time programme.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from employer partners and placement partners from Wigan Borough Council, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Services, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Warrington Children's Services, Blackpool Carers Centre, Sahir House and the Be Free Campaign together with representatives from the Cheshire & Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP). We also met with several practice educators, some of whom were independent.

Findings

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

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. The inspection team reviewed comprehensive documentary evidence relating to the admissions process. Candidates were provided with detailed online guidance prior to the selection process.

26. Applications were submitted electronically through the university's central admissions department and included a personal statement. Applications were screened and shortlisted against the published entry requirements. Applicants were required to hold a minimum 2:1 degree in a relevant subject area, demonstrate a good command of English, and provide evidence of their ability to meet the professional standards. The inspection team heard that applicants from one or more widening participation categories could be considered with a 2:2 degree, where appropriate.

27. Non-UK applicants who did not hold an equivalent English language qualification were required to undertake either the university's language test or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) assessment.

28. Shortlisted applicants were invited to attend an online interview comprising an individual interview, a presentation and a written test. These elements enabled applicants to demonstrate their suitability for the programme, including their ability to use information and communication technology (ICT). The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

29. Applicants submitted a personal statement outlining their reasons for choosing to study social work and were required to have relevant paid or voluntary experience that provided insight into the nature of social work practice. Applicants' experience and motivation for entering the profession were explored further during the interview process.

30. Students seeking to transfer from other institutions or programmes through Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning (RP[E]L) were considered against a defined set of criteria. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

31. The course provider's social work department was an active member of the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP). Employers, partner organisations and people with lived experience were involved in the development of the CMSWTP Admissions and Recruitment Agreement. We heard that these stakeholders contributed at both strategic and operational levels across all social work programmes, including from the admissions stage onwards.

32. We also heard that representatives, including people with lived experience, were invited to attend the course provider's Programme Boards, where discussions were held on matters ranging from pre-entry processes to final student assessments.

33. Shortlisted applicants were interviewed by a social work academic and either a person with lived experience and/or a social work practitioner, which was further corroborated during the inspection. We also heard that all interview panel members, including those with lived experience, received appropriate equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training. In addition, people with lived experience were involved in reviewing and developing the interview questions. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

34. The inspection team determined that clear processes were in place for self-disclosure, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, and occupational health assessments. Applicants were required to declare any cautions or convictions prior to entry to the programme, and evidence of an enhanced DBS check was required before students undertook the practice elements of the course. Applicants could be referred to an occupational health service for assessment and were required to inform the course provider of any recommendations arising from that assessment.

35. During the inspection, we further explored how the course provider considered applicants' health, conduct and character as part of its suitability and admissions processes. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

36. Documentary evidence demonstrated that the admissions process aligned with the course provider's EDI Strategy (2021–2025). Reasonable adjustments were made during interviews and selection activities for applicants with disabilities or specific learning needs. Clear arrangements were in place to support equitable recruitment processes, including the provision of appropriate EDI training for those involved in interviewing and selection activities. During the inspection, we further explored how EDI

policies and practices were monitored and reviewed at both university and programme level. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

37. There was a range of information and events available to help prospective applicants make an informed decision about joining the programme. This included comprehensive information on the course provider's website, which outlined the programme and the nature of social work practice. During the inspection, we further explored with admissions staff the information provided to applicants regarding Social Work England's regulatory role and the professional standards and expectations associated with the profession. Applicants had opportunities to attend open days, and clear information was available on the application process. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

38. It was clear that the programme provided students with 200 days gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings (including undertaking skills days). During the inspection, additional clarification was provided on the flexible placement model and how placements would operate, including the structure of the 70-day part-time placement and the 100-day full-time placement. The 70-day placement could be completed either full-time or part-time (a minimum of three days per week), providing flexibility for students. We were assured that all students would complete the full 70 placement days, with those undertaking the placement part-time doing so over a longer period. Given the relatively small cohort size, we heard that no significant issues were anticipated, and employers welcomed this approach.

39. We also heard about a new module that incorporated most of the skills days, known as university placement days, which were undertaken during the first year of study, with the remaining days distributed across the programme.

40. Students completed at least one statutory placement, and the CMSWTP had agreed a definition of statutory social work aligned with the regulator's guidance. We heard that placement contrast was achieved through engagement with different host teams or services and/or exposure to varied case management experiences. Additional variety was provided through different placement settings and casework opportunities.

41. All placements were audited, and signed agreements were in place setting out reciprocal expectations. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

42. Students were required to successfully complete the preparation for contemporary practice module activity, including the associated assessment, before commencing placement. Placement expectations were outlined in admissions information, and the placement request process considered students' experience, learning needs, career aspirations, reasonable adjustments, and placement preferences.

43. Learning needs were reviewed and incorporated into placement learning agreements to ensure alignment with available learning opportunities. The university placement days were mapped to the professional standards, and the placement handbook provided guidance throughout the placement journey.

44. Progress was reviewed through initial, midpoint, and final placement meetings, with evidence of achievement against the professional standards documented within the practice portfolio. Portfolios were moderated by the Practice Assessment Panel, a partnership of academics, employers, and people with lived experience, which also provided feedback to practice educators and personal academic tutors (PATs).

45. Quality assurance was maintained through placement audits undertaken via the CMSWTP pre-qualification stream, with oversight from the university's practice learning lead. The Quality Assurance of Practice Learning (QAPL) process was used throughout and following placements to monitor and evaluate the placement quality and the student experience. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

46. Placement learning agreement meetings documented the induction plan, supervision arrangements, and agreed workload expectations. The CMSWTP also provided guidance to practice educators on student workload expectations and induction requirements.

47. The placement handbook provided clear and comprehensive information to support students throughout their placement experience, and students were encouraged to meet informally with their practice educator before the placement commenced. Placement learning agreement meetings were undertaken in partnership with the student, their PAT, practice educator, and onsite supervisor, ensuring all parties were aware of expectations, learning needs, and available learning opportunities. University support plans were considered throughout the placement process to ensure reasonable adjustments were implemented where required and reviewed in relation to identified additional support needs.

48. During the inspection, we heard from some students who had raised concerns about inappropriate workload. The students confirmed that these concerns had been

discussed with their practice educator and PAT and they were appropriately addressed. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

49. The CMSWTP set out clear expectations for placement workloads and provided guidance on the type and range of work appropriate for each stage of training. Learning opportunities and workload expectations were discussed and agreed during the practice learning agreement meeting with the student, practice educator, the onsite supervisor and the PAT. Practice module learning outcomes were aligned with the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). The suitability of learning opportunities and workloads were reviewed at the mid-point placement review. During the inspection, practice educators demonstrated a clear understanding of workload planning, including the depth of learning required, the number of cases, and the types of work appropriate to the student's stage of training and level of responsibility. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

50. We agreed there was a robust, multifaceted approach to ensuring students were safe to carry out practice learning. This included enhanced DBS checks, satisfactory health assessments, consideration of reasonable adjustments, and successful completion of the preparation for contemporary practice module component. The module included a workbook requiring students to reflect on professional values through a range of activities, as well as an assessed role-play with a person with lived experience. Students were required to pass this assessment before undertaking their practice placement, as well as completing university placement days.

51. During the inspection, practice educators described the induction processes and preparation provided to students before entering direct practice. We heard that the formal assessment helped them to prepare. We therefore concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

52. The university collaborated with the CMSWTP to provide training, updates, and support for practice educators. Placement audits assessed the quality of the placement experience.

53. The practice learning handbook clearly outlined employers' responsibilities to ensure that suitably qualified and experienced practice educators were in place. This was verified and documented during the placement learning agreement meeting and formed part of the placement audit and matching processes undertaken by CMSWTP.

54. Through further review of the evidence, we were assured that a robust, multi-layered approach was in place to ensure practice educators were appropriately qualified and professionally registered. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

55. The university had a whistleblowing policy in place for both staff and students. During placement learning agreement meetings, students were encouraged to raise any concerns, and practice educators provided guidance on organisational procedures, including agency whistleblowing and other relevant policies. Staff were supported through guidance on safeguarding, raising concerns, and whistleblowing to effectively support students.

56. The CMSWTP had an agreed anti-discrimination policy to address concerns identified during student placements. In addition, the QAPL specifically asked students to identify any factors that may have had a negative impact on their placement experience or performance.

57. During the meeting with students, an example was shared of a placement that had been changed following concerns raised by the student. The student reported that the issue had been addressed in a supportive and responsive manner. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

58. The social work programmes were situated within the course provider's established faculty and governance structures and were supported by a clear governance framework with defined staff roles and responsibilities. Programme leadership was provided by a qualified and registered social worker who oversaw programme development, delivery, student achievement, progression, and evaluation. Module leaders were responsible for module design, delivery, and review, while specialist roles supported key aspects of learning and teaching. Teaching fellows and researchers also contributed to programme delivery, with most staff being registered social workers.

59. During the inspection, senior managers provided further details of the quality assurance and governance arrangements. Quality management and evaluation processes had identified clear areas for development. The provider was transitioning from annual monitoring to a continuous curriculum monitoring approach to strengthen programme delivery, feedback processes, performance oversight, and staff-student engagement. The Programme Management Board formed a key part of the programme

monitoring and governance structure, providing oversight and supporting continuous quality enhancement. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

60. There were established arrangements in place to ensure agreements with placement providers were implemented effectively, including placement audits. Inspectors heard about the strong partnership with the CMSWTP and its focus on key practice learning priorities. At departmental level, the social work placement co-ordinator held overall responsibility for the management and quality assurance of practice learning. The co-ordinator was a key member of the CMSWTP pre-qualifying workstream and worked collaboratively with statutory, delegated statutory, and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) placement providers to help ensure a high-quality practice learning experience for all students.

61. The pre-placement learning agreement set out contact arrangements, learning opportunities to support achievement of the professional standards, consent requirements, induction arrangements, and processes for raising concerns.

62. The inspectors reviewed additional documentary evidence relating to the management of placement breakdowns and explored this further during the inspection. This demonstrated that clear contingency arrangements and support processes were in place to assist students where placement difficulties arose. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

63. Students' specific needs relating to health, wellbeing, and learning were considered and documented as part of the practice learning agreement meeting. The meeting also addressed support mechanisms and reasonable adjustments required to facilitate learning. Potential hazards and risks were identified, and appropriate management plans discussed. This included considerations relating to lone working, raising concerns, and issues of discrimination.

64. The CMSWTP worked collaboratively to review and audit placement learning opportunities, processes, and protocols. The university supported students on placement through PATs, who monitored the implementation of relevant policies and ensured appropriate support was in place throughout the placement experience. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

65. The inspectors agreed that a strong partnership approach was embedded throughout the programme. The CMSWTP played a key role in several aspects of the social work programmes. The partnership consisted of 12 employers, staff from four

higher education institutions, people with lived experience, and student representatives who worked collaboratively to discuss and develop social work education and training at all levels.

66. Employers were actively involved in curriculum development, teaching, and quality assurance activities. They attended Programme Board meetings, which focused on quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation. CMSWTP members also participated in the Programme Board, which oversaw all social work programmes at the university. In addition, employers contributed to the allocation, organisation, and planning of placements through the CMSWTP.

67. The partnership approach was also evident within the Centre for Workforce Intelligence, where partners worked collaboratively to analyse trends in workforce development and inform future planning.

68. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met. However, a recommendation was made to ensure parity between employers, including equitable access to information for all employers and teaching partnership representatives. This was identified as an area for improvement, as employer representatives reported during the inspection that information had not always been shared consistently. Further details of the recommendation can be found in the proposed outcome section.

Standard 3.5

69. Monitoring of the programme was adopted through a partnership approach via the CMSWTP and the university's internal quality assurance processes, which aligned with the institution's quality strategy. The CMSWTP regularly reviewed and audited placement learning, while employers participated in the Practice Assessment Panels, which assured the quality of placement portfolios submitted by students.

70. The Programme Board included people with lived experience, students and employers. Modules were evaluated through established quality processes, and the programme was subject to annual review. At the time of the inspection, this was transitioning to a continuous evaluation model focused on ongoing enhancement.

71. Students were invited to complete module evaluations and were represented through a staff–student committee. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

72. The course provider aimed to recruit 20 students to the full-time MA programme; however, we heard that this target had not consistently been met. The introduction of the part-time MA route was intended to address this shortfall by attracting applicants

who were unable to commit to full-time study due to financial commitments or other personal circumstances.

73. As noted in previous standards, the university was a member of the CMSWTP. The partnership worked collaboratively to achieve relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), including the development of workforce and labour market plans that aligned student admissions with projected labour market demand. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

74. The inspection team reviewed the CV of the lead social worker who had overall professional responsibility for the course. We determined that the post holder was appropriately qualified, experienced and on the register. We therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

75. We concluded that there were sufficient experienced and qualified staff to deliver the programme across a broad range of practice areas, including children's services, adults' services, mental health, mental capacity, practice learning and practice education. Most of the programme team were registered social workers. Effective arrangements were in place to manage staff absences and minimise any impact on programme delivery. During the inspection, we met with staff from admissions, student support and welfare and were assured that adequate resources were available to support students. We therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

76. The course provider had clear mechanisms in place to monitor performance, progression, and outcomes, evidenced through systems that recorded assessment and examination results and enabled analysis of performance and EDI data.

77. Progression and achievement were monitored continuously, and rates were discussed through the CMSWTP. Feedback from modules and Programme Board meetings were communicated to students via the virtual learning environment (VLE).

78. Faculty Curriculum Approval and Modification Panels and Progression Boards oversaw marking standards and student outcomes. Performance, progression, and outcomes were reviewed through the university's quality assurance processes. Results were considered and ratified by the Assessment Board and subsequently informed Progression Board discussions through programme evaluation reports presented by the programme leader. Emerging themes and actions were discussed and acted upon, while programme modifications progressed through the university's curriculum

approval and quality assurance processes. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

79. Staff engaged in a range of professional development activities, with development needs identified and reviewed through annual appraisal processes. Opportunities to participate in research through the CMSWTP and to maintain involvement in social work practice were actively encouraged. The CMSWTP provided shadowing opportunities, continuing professional development (CPD) activities, and access to its research hub, where staff collaborated with practitioners and people with lived experience on practice-focused research. We heard that staff were also supported to engage with research via the university's Centre for Enhanced Learning and Teaching (CELT), and the research centre.

80. Staff were supported to engage in practice through a range of practice-based roles, with time allocated for these activities. New staff were assigned a mentor for their first 12 months. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

81. The content, structure, and delivery of the modules were clearly aligned to relevant frameworks, including the PCF, the institution's quality assurance frameworks, and the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs). The programme learning outcomes coherently reflected both professional and academic requirements, and there was clear evidence that the programme had been developed in partnership with CMSWTP. Professional expectations were introduced during induction and embedded throughout the programme. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

82. Employers and people with lived experience were invited to and attended Programme Board meetings, which took place three times each academic year. The Programme Board monitored programme quality and effectiveness and made recommendations for enhancement. The views of people with lived experience informed the design, ongoing development, and review of the curriculum through quarterly steering group meetings. Employers, practitioners, and people with lived experience also contributed to the programme through CMSWTP-led collaborative development activities. We heard that the collaboration with the CMSWTP on workforce needs had directly informed the development of this part-time route. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

83. The course was aligned with the provider's EDI Strategy (2021–2025). Systems were in place to support students with additional needs through individual action plans, and reasonable adjustments were available in both academic and practice learning environments.

84. Student support was framed within an inclusive approach, with application processes encouraging students to disclose health needs so that appropriate support could be provided. The university had a clear monitoring strategy for reviewing EDI data and identifying areas for improvement.

85. The course provider worked closely with partners and stakeholders across the CMSWTP to promote a progressive, ethical, consistent and collaborative approach to EDI across both university-based teaching and practice learning opportunities. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

86. Robust mechanisms were in place to ensure the programme remained current, including comprehensive quality assurance processes, curriculum development days, and formal meetings. Module descriptors and content was informed by student evaluations, external examiner feedback, and discussions with internal and external partners across the CMSWTP, alongside developments in legislation, policy, research, and practice.

87. During the inspection, the course team described how case studies were used to illustrate changes in legislation and practice. We also heard how practitioner contributions to university placement days helped align teaching with current best practice and how staff regularly updated curriculum content on the VLE to reflect emerging developments in social work practice. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

88. Module content reflected developments in knowledge and supported evidence-based practice. The programme's emphasis on 'real-world social work' demonstrated a strong commitment to practice-based learning and the integration of theory and practice. Monitoring processes provided evidence of this integration through assessment design and student performance.

89. Programme learning outcomes aligned with the professional standards, and modules were structured to support knowledge development that was applied within practice learning settings. Assessments mirrored professional practice, with practitioners contributing to their development and delivery.

90. During the inspection, students provided examples of how they had applied theory in practice. They also demonstrated reflective learning through their practice placement portfolios, evidencing the integration of academic learning into professional practice. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

91. The programme provided a range of opportunities for interprofessional learning, both on campus and in practice settings. Scenario-based teaching and simulation activities brought together students from a variety of health professions, supporting collaborative learning and understanding of multidisciplinary practice.

92. Both practice placements offered opportunities to learn and work alongside other professionals, with these experiences identified through placement learning agreements.

93. The programme also benefited from two lecturers whose roles spanned social work and related disciplines, including nursing and mental health. These roles supported the integration of theory and practice and enhanced the range of teaching, learning, assessment, and interprofessional practice learning opportunities available to students. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

94. We heard that, in line with the university's standards for the design and delivery of academic programmes, the programme adopted a typical modular structure, with student learning aligned to the accumulation of academic credits. A variety of learning and teaching approaches were used to maximise learning, including lectures, interactive seminars, and independent study to support the development of learning skills. Practice-focused modules included additional learning activities to ensure students achieved the module learning outcomes. During the inspection, we sought clarification on the number of study hours available in each semester and were assured that these were appropriate for part-time study. We therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

95. Assessment strategies complied with the university's quality management policies and regulations. A diverse range of assessment methods was used, including reports, presentations and case studies, reflecting authentic social work practice and the connection of theory to practice. Each module included formative assessment designed to support learning and feed forward into summative assessment, promoting student progression and achievement.

96. The course team demonstrated awareness of the challenges posed by students using AI and had measures in place to monitor its impact and minimise potential risks. Students were permitted to submit assessments up to five days late, with marks capped in line with regulations, and processes were in place to support approved extensions where required. Assessment outcomes and standards were subject to external examiner scrutiny. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

97. Learning outcomes were mapped to progression levels, with assessments sequenced to support students' development across the programme. All assessments were aligned to module learning outcomes.

98. Where modules included more than one assessment component, the release and submission dates were scheduled to manage assessment workload and enable students to engage fully with each component before progressing to the next. Assessments were generally scheduled at the end of module delivery to allow sufficient time for students to complete their work, except for practice-related assessments where we heard that alternative timings were necessary. Consideration was given to the timing of the dissertation submission to minimise any impact on practice performance. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

99. Students received formative and summative feedback and were encouraged to access VLE skills guidance to support the development of their submissions. Feedback was aligned with the university's Learning and Teaching Strategy.

100. Current and former students reported that formative and summative feedback was timely and useful, and that opportunities to submit draft work for feedback supported their development and progression.

101. Practice educators provided ongoing feedback during supervision, through reflection on practice, and from direct observations of students. The midpoint meeting enabled progress to be reviewed and action plans to be agreed.

102. Summative feedback included feedforward points for further development and complied with the university's Quality Management Handbook. Students were also supported by their PAT and received detailed feedback through Turnitin and the VLE Gradebook. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

103. Assessments were conducted by experienced staff, the majority of whom were registered social workers. Staff were kept informed of developments in assessment and marking through the university's CELT. We heard that new staff were supported, and their marking was reviewed and moderated. All assessment processes complied with the university's Quality Management Framework.

104. People with lived experience contributed to assessment activities and were directly involved in assessing direct practice. Appropriate training was provided to prepare them for this role.

105. In practice placements, students were assessed by Practice Educators working towards or holding PEPS 1 or PEPS 2 qualifications in line with the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) guidance regarding appropriate support and/or responsibility at each level. Portfolios were moderated and quality assured through the internally convened Practice Assessment Panel.

106. The external examiner was appropriately qualified, experienced, and professionally registered. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

107. Student progression was subject to scrutiny through the university's assessment board processes. A two-tier system operated, with an Assessment Board comprising programme staff and external examiners reviewing and ratifying individual results and making decisions on failed assessments. Recommendations were then considered by the Progression and Awards Board, which confirmed progression decisions and awards. An appeals process was in place, and this was communicated to students.

108. Robust measures were in place to monitor students' suitability to continue the programme, including whistleblowing, fitness to practise (FtP), and practice-based concern procedures. We heard that decisions relating to student suitability were made through a partnership approach with employers.

109. The assessment of practice learning was further supported by the CMSWTP and its established practice learning protocols. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

110. The course team were actively involved in research and professional practice to inform teaching and learning. Staff profiles evidenced a wide range of research publications and scholarly activity, supported by the CMSWTP research hub, which was accessible to both university staff and practitioners. We heard that staff also integrated

current research evidence into their teaching, fostering students' research-mindedness and professional practice. Links with wider university research facilities, including the Health Research Institute and Faculty Research Network, further strengthened the research culture.

111. Library and VLE resources supported evidence-based practice and research-informed learning. The dissertation module developed students' research skills and their ability to apply research in practice settings. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

112. Students had access to a comprehensive range of support services, including counselling, occupational health, disability support, mental health and wellbeing services, careers advice, financial support, and academic guidance. Applicants were encouraged and supported to disclose any health needs at the application stage so that reasonable adjustments could be considered for the interview process.

113. Support services were available throughout the year, including outside term times and during the summer period. Students were introduced to available support before the programme commenced and during induction. ‘Wobble Week’ was designed to support students’ transition into higher education, particularly those returning to study after a period away, by helping them build confidence, settle into university life, and access early support where needed. Students could also access support through their PAT, who could refer them to specialist services, including occupational health.

114. During the inspection, we met staff from student and academic support services and heard how support was tailored to meet the needs of part-time students. Students and graduates corroborated that they felt well supported. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

115. Students were allocated a PAT during their first week on the programme and met with them regularly, with a minimum of four meetings each year. PATs also attended students’ pre-placement and mid-placement meetings within their practice settings.

116. Individual support needs were discussed during PAT meetings, and referrals could be made to specialist university services where required. Students and graduates confirmed that they felt well supported and had access to a wide range of resources.

117. Additional support included an on-site library hub, academic support services, UniSkills resources, and assistance with online learning. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

118. Admissions and selection processes clearly set out suitability requirements, including DBS checks and health and wellbeing assessments. Students were required to report any changes in circumstances throughout the programme as evidenced in programme documentation, and expectations regarding professional conduct were communicated from admission onwards. Formal FtP, disciplinary, and academic malpractice procedures were in place and outlined in programme documentation.

119. We heard that concerns about a student's suitability were usually managed initially by the PAT or programme lead. Lower-level concerns were addressed through action plans, while more serious concerns were managed through formal FtP procedures. Students were directed to the university's Student Disciplinary and Academic Regulations. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

120. The course provider had a dedicated disability service and offered a range of support, including assisted learning and reasonable adjustments. Students were encouraged to disclose any support needs during the admissions process, and those requiring adjustments had individual support plans in place. Reasonable adjustments were also considered within placement learning agreements.

121. Applicants and students who disclosed a disability were referred to a faculty panel, including university and practice representatives, to determine whether reasonable adjustments could enable them to practise safely and effectively and meet programme requirements. PATs provided ongoing support throughout the student journey.

122. During the inspection, we heard examples of the flexible support provided to students, including those experiencing mental health difficulties. Practice educators and employers also described a collaborative approach to supporting students on placement, supported by effective communication from the course provider. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

123. We reviewed the content of the full-time MA Social Work programme handbook, as a dedicated handbook for the part-time route was not yet available. Supplementary evidence provided by the university was also reviewed, alongside the information available to students about the part-time route. This included curriculum content,

practice placements, assessment requirements, and preparation for the transition to registered social worker status, including CPD expectations. The course provider advised that a dedicated programme handbook would be produced following regulatory approval.

124. Students received comprehensive information during induction, which focused on transition, programme orientation, and use of the VLE. Assessment requirements, including timelines, formative and summative assessments, and resit arrangements, were set out in module handbooks. Placement handbooks provided information on placement arrangements and portfolio-based assessment.

125. Employability was embedded throughout the programme, with a greater focus in the final year on CPD, interview preparation, and the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and Early Career Framework (ECF). Students also had access to a dedicated careers and employability service. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

126. Attendance requirements were clearly communicated during the admissions process, at induction, and through programme and module handbooks. Mandatory elements of the programme, including university placement days, placement attendance, and placement recall days, were clearly set out and reinforced through preparation and briefing sessions.

127. Attendance was monitored through the university's Qwickly system. Where non-attendance was identified, students received an automated notification and were encouraged to contact their PAT. Concerns about attendance or engagement were initially addressed by the PAT through supportive discussions to identify any issues and agree appropriate support or interventions.

128. Processes were in place to make up missed learning time, and attendance at placements and university placement days was monitored. Placement attendance was verified by the practice educator, and expectations regarding engagement were regularly reinforced. The programme recognised that many students balanced study with employment and caring responsibilities and therefore adopted a flexible and supportive approach where appropriate. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

129. Formative assessment took place through a range of methods, including tutorials and interactive learning activities. Summative assessments included written reports, portfolios, and practice-based outputs.

130. Summative feedback was normally provided within 20 working days of submission and focused on constructive feedback and feed-forward guidance to support future development. During the inspection, students praised the timeliness and quality of feedback and reported opportunities to submit drafts for comment and seek further clarification from markers.

131. Assessment in practice learning was continuous and incorporated feedback from a range of sources to support students' performance and development. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

132. We reviewed documentation that demonstrated a clear, transparent, and accessible process for students to challenge academic outcomes. Students were introduced to the academic appeals procedure during induction and were reminded of it through module handbooks and programme documentation. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

133. As the qualifying course is the MA Social Work (part-time), the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

Recommendations

The inspectors identified the following recommendation for the education provider. This recommendation highlighted an area that the education provider may wish to consider. The recommendation does not affect any decision relating to course approval.

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	Standard 3.4	The inspectors are recommending that the university ensures parity between employers and teaching partnership representatives, including equitable access to information.	3.4

It should be noted that all qualifying social work courses will be subject to re-approval under Social Work England's 2021 education and training standards.

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

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	☒	☐	☐

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

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

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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.	☒	☐	☐
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			

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor's degree with honours in social work.	☒	☐	☐

Regulator decision

Approved.